



Week#5: The Prayers of The Church

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ² He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. ³ When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

⁵ So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

⁶ The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, with two chairs, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵ "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸ In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

Acts 12:1-19 (NIV)

Understanding Faith, Prayer and How God Answers

FAITH

- Biblical faith is an _____, not a _____.
- You can have _____ while dealing with _____.

Three bad ideas about faith

1. Great faith = taking great _____.
2. Great faith = great _____.
3. Great faith = no _____ or _____.

PRAYER

- Biblical prayer is an _____, not _____ or _____.
- The power of prayer is based on _____, not _____.

HOW GOD ANSWERS

- Our job is to _____; God's job is to do what's _____.
- We believe in God's _____; we trust in God's _____.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Acts 12 reveal about the power and posture of the early church's prayer life in the face of persecution?
2. The early church prayed "earnestly" for Peter (v. 5, v. 12). What does this passage teach us about the communal aspect of prayer? How can we grow in praying together with that same sense of urgency?

3. In what ways might God be inviting you to shift from striving to trusting, from self-reliance to dependence on Him through prayer? How can this kind of surrender shape your character and deepen your spiritual formation?

Recommended Resources

- [Prayer in the Night: For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep by Tish Harrison Warren](#)
- [Meditations of the Heart by Howard Thurman](#)
- [Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times by Soong-Chan Rah](#)
- [A Rhythm of Prayer edited by Sarah Bessey](#)
- [Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools: An Invitation to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer by Tyler Staton](#)
- [How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People by Pete Greig](#)

(NIV) New International Version

Week#5: The Prayers of The Church - **FILL**

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. ² He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. ³ When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

⁵ *So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.*

⁶ *The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, with two chairs, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord*

appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹ Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵ "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. ¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

¹⁸ In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

Acts 12:1-19 (NIV)

Understanding Faith, Prayer and How God Answers

FAITH

- Biblical faith is an action, not a feeling.
- You can have faith while dealing with doubt.

Three bad ideas about faith

1. Great faith = taking great risk.
2. Great faith = great confidence.
3. Great faith = no fear or doubt.

PRAYER

- Biblical prayer is an action, not thoughts or good vibes.

- The power of prayer is based on who I pray to, not how well I pray.

HOW GOD ANSWERS

- Our job is to ask; God's job is to do what's best.
- We believe in God's goodness; we trust in God's sovereignty.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Acts 12 reveal about the power and posture of the early church's prayer life in the face of persecution?
2. The early church prayed "earnestly" for Peter (v. 5, v. 12). What does this passage teach us about the communal aspect of prayer? How can we grow in praying together with that same sense of urgency?
3. In what ways might God be inviting you to shift from striving to trusting, from self-reliance to dependence on Him through prayer? How can this kind of surrender shape your character and deepen your spiritual formation?

Recommended Resources

- [Prayer in the Night: For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep by Tish Harrison Warren](#)
- [Meditations of the Heart by Howard Thurman](#)
- [Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times by Soong-Chan Rah](#)
- [A Rhythm of Prayer edited by Sarah Bessey](#)
- [Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools: An Invitation to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer by Tyler Staton](#)
- [How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People by Pete Greig](#)

(NIV) New International Version