

## “Jesus People Pray to a Sovereign God” Acts 12:1-17

Believers can sometimes feel the tension between praying with faith and confidence *and* knowing that God may say “no” or “not yet,” to their prayers. Acts 12 demonstrates that tension and has **lessons that encourage believers** in the area of prayer.

- **Lesson #1: BELIEVERS ARE TO PRAY WITH BOTH CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S POWER AND SUBMISSION TO GOD’S WILL.**

*About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. <sup>2</sup>He killed James the brother of John with the sword, <sup>3</sup>and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup>And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. <sup>5</sup>So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Acts 12:1-5 (English Standard Version)*

Faith isn’t a psychological certainty about what God will do; it is confidence about what God can do.

*Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup>“Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” Mark 14:35-36 (New International Version)*

### Reasons Why God May Not Intervene

- Because non-intervention may be part of His sovereign plan

*Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end. Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NLT)*

- Because non-intervention may preserve human freedom

- Because non-intervention makes growth possible

- **Lesson #2: WHEN GOD DOES INTERVENE IN ANSWER TO PRAYER, HE DOES SO ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE, FOR OUR GOOD.**

*Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. <sup>7</sup>And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands. <sup>8</sup>And the angel said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” <sup>9</sup>And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. <sup>10</sup>When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. <sup>11</sup>When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” Acts 12:6-11 (ESV)*

See 1 Peter 5:7 and Romans 8:28.

- **Lesson #3: BELIEVERS’ PRAYERS ARE IMPORTANT AS GOD WORKS OUT HIS SOVEREIGN PLAN.**

*When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. <sup>13</sup>And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. <sup>14</sup>Recognizing Peter’s voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. <sup>15</sup>They said to her, “You are out of your mind.” But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!” <sup>16</sup>But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. <sup>17</sup>But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Tell these things to James and to the brothers.” Then he departed and went to another place. Acts 12:12-17 (ESV)*

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? <sup>2</sup>My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1-2 (NIV)*

*He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, <sup>11</sup>as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. 2 Corinthians 1:10-11 (NIV)*