



## Approaching God

Read Psalm 23 and use it as a basis for your own opening prayer

*The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

## Acts 12:1-25

**Passage Introduction: Peter Rescued from Prison**

This section is filled with intrigue, politics, and drama. Luke's opening words, "About that time" (12:1), shift the setting away from the previous scene at Antioch. But these words also signal a shift in the narrative. Luke is going to take his readers back in time to recount what had happened to the church at Jerusalem.

## Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

**Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.**

### Notes:

#### Verse 4:

The prison was probably the Tower of Antonia, which was at the northwestern corner of the temple complex and was the quarters of the Roman garrison. The use of four squads of soldiers reflects Roman practice: one squad of four soldiers for each of the four three-hour watches of the night.

**Acts 12:1-25 - 1** 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, bound with two chains, 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

Notes:

happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. **10** They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. 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. Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. **20** He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. **21** On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. **22** They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." **23** Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. **24** But the word of God continued to spread and flourish. **25** When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark.

## Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- Consider the stories of James and Peter. What does this tell us about God's sovereign plan for those who follow him?
- How do these verses encourage you to pray boldly? Why is sometimes hard for us to believe God answered our prayers.
- What difficult situations are you facing right now - whether physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, professional or in any other way - for which you need to offer prayer and expect God's answers?

### Key Takeaway:

As you read today's passage, what are 1 or 2 main takeaways that you wrote down in the margins? How would you briefly summarize your observations and meditations for today?

### Close in Prayer:

Spend some time in prayer over one of the situations you wrote down for the third question/bullet point today.