

Why Are We Surprised When God Answers Prayer?

Acts 12:6-19

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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!" But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. - Acts 12:15-16, ESV

In our last devotional, we saw the church responding to violent persecution with prayer. The church was praying for Peter, who had been arrested and was being kept in prison. Today, we see God answer their prayer in a miraculous way, and they are completely shocked and left in stunned disbelief at the power of God. This raises two questions in my mind, one historical and one still relevant today:

1. Is it true that ancient people were gullible, more willing to believe in the supernatural and the miraculous?
2. Why are we so often surprised when God answers our prayers?

The first question deals with a charge that critics of the Bible often level against the miracles recorded in Scripture, They say that ancient people living in a pre-scientific age didn't understand as much as we do and so they were more readily willing to accept miracles as labels for things they didn't understand. Today's passage directly contradicts such misconceptions of ancient peoples: The disciples knew what it meant for someone to be locked in prison and kept under guard, and they certainly were not expecting to see Peter show up at the gate of the house.

The second question deals with the surprise of the disciples from a different angle: These men and women had seen God do miraculous things before. Many of them saw Jesus raised from the dead. Many of them saw Peter perform very Christ-like miracles. Why did they think it was impossible for God to bring Peter out of prison miraculously? Well, before we judge too quickly, don't we need to confess that we do the same thing?

We may not live in an age of such miraculous works as they did, but we have seen God answer prayers and provide for His people in truly remarkable ways. We have seen people cured of cancer. We have seen money come to pay our bills. We have seen people come to faith in Christ after years of rebellion. We have seen the Gospel advance into hard, unreached lands. Yet so often, when God chooses to answer our prayers directly and powerfully, we act surprised. We are as stunned as the disciples were at the report of Rhoda.

God is so good and so patient with us. He answers our prayers, even when they are offered up without much faith and with too much doubting. Though we are warned that those who doubt should not expect to receive anything from the Lord ([James 1:6-7](#)), God still graciously answers and provides. Our surprise reveals both the depth of our doubt and the strength of His grace!

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your generous kindness to us. Thank You for answering our prayers and extending Your favor to us, even though we don't deserve it. You are good! Strengthen our faith in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.