

## During The Hard Days

### Introduction:

- A. **[Damaging Storms & Storms of life]**
    - a. The days that feel that the whole world is against us
      - i. Days when our faith is tested...
      - ii. Days when we are suffering or emotionally wrecked...
      - iii. Days when we feel all alone...
    - b. During those hard days what do we do?
  - B. Peter
    - a. We find Peter facing some hard days.
    - b. He is imprisoned a 3<sup>rd</sup> time.
  - C. “It is during the hard times in life that we need to remember the Lord.”
  - D. Acts 12:1-24
  - E. What is there to remember?
    - a. [Warren Wiersbe & 1 Peter]
    - b. “*For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.*” - 1 Pet. 3:12
      - i. {quote from Ps. 34:15&16}
      - ii. This was written several years later.
    - c. But this phrase helps us understand this passage.
  - F. There are 3 truths we must remember.
- I. The Lord sees our trials.
- a. The New Testament church faced grave trials.
    - i. They faced trials under King Herod. (1)
      - 1. Who is this Herod?
        - a. He is Herod Agrippa I
        - b. He was the grandson of Herod the Great (who was enthroned during the birth of Christ)
      - 2. However, He was hated by the Jews.
        - a. He was an Edomite
        - b. So, he like his grandpa tried to do things that would make the people like him.
    - ii. They faced trials under King Herod. (2)
      - 1. He killed James
        - a. “The brother of John”
          - i. Of the gospel of John.
          - ii. Christ called them the sons of thunder.
        - b. But here we have the record of him being martyred.
          - i. “Sword” – beheaded
          - ii. James is the first and only Apostle recorded being martyred.
          - iii. However, all but his brother John were!
      - 2. Herod then sought to kill Peter. (3&4)
        - a. It must have brought the Jewish leaders great joy to see Peter captive.
        - b. Herod placed Peter under heavy guard.
          - i. 16 soldiers a day guarded peter.
          - ii. 2 were chained to him & 2 stood at the door.
            - 1. Why?
            - 2. Remember Peter had a habit of getting out!
        - c. (vs. 4b)
          - i. KJV – “Easter”
          - ii. But should be understood as “Passover”
- i. H. G. – the expansion of the temple
  - ii. H. A. – began persecuting the church.
    - 1. Why? (3a)
    - 2. The Jewish leaders despised the church.
- ii. So, Herod attacked with deadly force. (2)
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        - i. Of the gospel of John.
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- b. Today, the Lord sees when we face trials.

- i. It is great hope to know that we are not alone.
  - 1. *“For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous”* – 1 Pet. 3:12a
  - 2. Where is God?
    - a. He’s there!
    - b. He knows what is happening, He knows how we feel, & He knows we need Him!
    - c. **[4 year old = Jesus is taking my picture]**
- ii. It is also great hope to realize that God is in control.
  - 1. Sometimes we don’t understand what God’s plan is.
    - a. Why James & not Peter?
    - b. Everyone struggles at some point understanding God’s plan.
      - i. Peter didn’t fully understand!
      - ii. *“Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.”* – Jn. 21:20-22
  - 2. But we must understand that God’s way is best.
    - a. *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* – Rom. 8:28
    - b. Remember every trial you face is being used by God for your good.

- c. **[1876 - Plimsoll Mark]**  
 “The next truth to remember...”
- II. The Lord hears our prayers.
  - a. The New Testament church was a praying church.
    - i. The prayer of the church is the turning point of the story. (5)
      - 1. *“Never underestimate the power of a praying church”*
        - a. The N.T. church proves it!
        - b. *“The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel.”* – Thomas Watson
      - 2. They didn’t just pray once.
        - a. “Constant prayer”
          - i. “without ceasing” – KJV
          - ii. Idea = “earnestly”
        - b. This means the church offered intense, steady prayer.
    - ii. Everything that happened to Peter was a result of prayer.
      - 1. The fact that Peter could sleep was due to prayer. (6)
        - a. Could you sleep?
          - i. He was chain to 2 soldiers
          - ii. He was facing certain death
        - b. But Peter slept!
          - i. He even had to be awoken (7b)
          - ii. Why?
            - 1. Because the church was praying.
            - 2. Through their prayers, the Lord gave Peter peace & confidence.
      - 2. God sending His angel was due to prayer. (7-11)

- a. An angel came and illuminated the room and made Peter's chains fall off.
  - b. He gave Peter instructions to put his garments & sandals and follow him.
  - c. Peter followed, but thought it was a vision.
  - d. The angel delivered Peter from the prison & then departed.
  - e. With that Peter realized what the Lord had done.
3. Peter being able to return to the church was due to prayer. (12-17)
- a. Peter goes to the prayer meeting:
    - i. The meeting was at John Mark's mom's house.
    - ii. Rhoda came to answer the door.
      - 1. "Rhoda" – Rose
      - 2. But when she heard Peter's voice, she got so excited; she forgot to let him in.
    - iii. Those present didn't believe her.
      - 1. They said she was out of it.
      - 2. Some said it was Peter's guardian angel.
    - iv. However, after Peter continued to knock, they let him in & he explains all that happened.
    - v. {vs. 17 – "James" = the brother of Jesus }
  - b. However, notice the irony:
    - i. The church folk prayed earnestly, night & day, for.... possibly days on end, and for Peter's release...
    - ii. But Peter is at the door & they don't believe it.
    - iii. Peter can get out of jail, but he can't get in a prayer meeting!
- b. Today, the Lord hears when we pray.
- i. In spite of our hard times, God hears us pray.
    - 1. "*And His ears are open to their prayers*" – 1 Pet. 3:12b
    - 2. It is comforting to know that our prayers don't stop at the ceiling.
      - a. When we cry out, God is listening.
      - b. When we share our heart, God cares!
      - c. **[No hearing aids needed]**
  - ii. It brings us comfort to know that power doesn't come from prayer, but the God of prayer!
    - 1. "*The power of prayer is not in the one who prays but in the one who hears it*" – **Max Lucado**
    - 2. We can be weak in faith and still approach God like the N.T. church did.
    - 3. Remember God does great things through our prayers.
      - a. "*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*" – James 5:16
      - b. This also gives us a mandate to pray!
        - i. We should pray for all.
        - ii. We to should pray for the imprisoned.
        - iii. "*Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.*" – Heb. 13:3

“This brings us to the final truth to remember...”

III. The Lord handles our enemies.

a. The New Testament church’s enemies were dealt with.

i. Herod dealt with Peter’s prison guards. (18&19)

1. Can you imagine what was going on in the minds of those soldiers?

- a. When the relief came there “*was no small stir among*” them.
- b. They knew they were in serious trouble.

2. Herod showed no mercy and had the guards killed.

- a. He questioned them.
- b. Then he executed them.
- c. Besides it being an act of governmental rules; no doubt he was still trying to please the Jews

ii. However, then God dealt with Herod. (20-23)

1. Herod’s heart was carried away for wicked flattery.

- a. The people of Tyre & Sidon need food from the Herod.
- b. Even though they had angered Herod, they befriended Blastus the King’s personal aid.
- c. When these people came to the king, he dressed up in his finest and listened to what they had to say.
- d. He loved the words of the people, “The voice of a god and not of a man!”
- e. Immediately an angel struck him.

i. Why?

- 1. “He did not give glory to God”
- 2. He liked being thought of as a god.

ii. How did he die?

- 1. History records this account by Josephus.
- 2. Herod died 5 days after being in front of the people.
- 3. He died from a violent illness in his bowels.
- 4. What was in him?
  - a. The Bible tells us.
  - b. WORMS!!

2. Herod wasn’t able to stop the church. (24)

b. Today, the Lord handles our enemies.

i. It brings comfort to know that God protects his children.

1. “*But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil*” – 1 Pet. 3:12c

- a. Often the hard times and trials of life are brought on by others.
- b. It is comforting to realize that God is against them.

2. However, we have to let God do the protecting.

3. “*Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.*” – Rom. 12:19

4. **[Women beating the wrong car]**

ii. God will handle our enemies in His time.

1. Go promises to a bring justice to our enemies.

- a. “*Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people.*” – Deut. 32:43

b. Even Satan will receive justice.

c. *“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”* – Rev. 20:10

2. However, God works during His own time.
  - a. Some, like Herod, He will handle right away.
  - b. Others in the future.
  - c. But remember leave it in the hands of God.

#### Conclusion

- A. Do you have confidence in the Lord?
- B. Have you been going through some hard days?