

God Is In Control: Finding Peace in Life's Storms

Life has a way of throwing unexpected challenges our way. Sometimes it feels like we're playing a losing game of chess against an opponent who seems to have all the advantages. But what if I told you that the King of Kings still has one more move?

When Leaders and Loved Ones Die Unexpectedly

In Acts chapter 12, we encounter a story that begins with tragedy. Herod Agrippa I decided to gain favor with the Jewish people by persecuting Christians. His first target was James, one of Jesus' closest disciples, whom he killed with the sword.

The death of James was sudden, unexpected, and seemingly unjust. Here was a key leader of the early church, cut down in what appeared to be a senseless act of political maneuvering. Perhaps you've experienced something similar - the unexpected loss of a spouse, friend, mentor, or spiritual leader who meant the world to you.

How Do We Process Unexpected Loss?

When tragedy strikes, it's natural to question God's plan. We might find ourselves saying, "This isn't fair," or "I don't understand why this happened." These feelings are valid, but they don't change a fundamental truth: God remains in control even when our world feels like it's falling apart.

The tears we shed for those we've lost are evidence of how much we valued them. Grieving is part of the human experience, but in the midst of our sorrow, we can still plant our feet firmly on the foundation that God hasn't abandoned us.

Facing Suffering for Our Faith

After killing James, Herod saw his approval ratings climb, so he decided to arrest Peter as well. This wasn't Peter's first time in prison - it was actually his third arrest in ten years. Each time, God had delivered him, but that didn't make the experience any less frightening.

When Following Jesus Costs Us Something

Sometimes we suffer not because we've done something wrong, but simply because we're following Christ. James wasn't in sin when he died. Peter wasn't in sin when he was arrested. Suffering can be part of the Christian journey, and the world watches to see how we respond.

Your suffering doesn't spoil your witness - it can actually launch it to new heights. When others see you clinging to God through difficult times, it encourages their faith and demonstrates the reality of God's sustaining power.

The Power of Persistent Prayer

While Peter sat in prison, chained between two soldiers and guarded by four squads, the church did something powerful: they prayed. The Bible tells us they offered "constant prayer" for Peter - not casual, passing mentions, but intense, laborious prayer that stretched them to their limits.

What Does Constant Prayer Look Like?

The word "constant" here means to stretch out all you can for something, like stretching a muscle to its limit. This wasn't "Oh Lord, save Pete, pass the food" kind of praying. This was the church getting down on their knees and wrestling with God in prayer.

There are times when we need to drop everything and head to prayer:

- Times of insecurity when we don't know what will happen
- Times of persecution or difficulty
- Times of spiritual complacency

When the church prays together, there is power, peace, perspective, and God's plan is unleashed.

God's Perfect Timing and Miraculous Power

God didn't deliver Peter immediately. He waited until the very night before Peter was scheduled to be executed. This teaches us several important truths about how God works:

God's Patience in Our Trials

God's delays are not evidence of His disinterest. He's working even when we can't see the full picture. The church didn't start praying the night before Peter's scheduled execution - they had been praying from the moment they heard of his arrest.

God's Peace in Our Storms

What was Peter doing on his last night? Sleeping. Not writing his will, not plotting revenge, not panicking - sleeping like a baby in his mother's arms. He was sleeping so soundly that when the angel came to rescue him, the heavenly light didn't wake him up. The angel had to nudge him awake.

This is what prayer does - it brings supernatural peace that guards our hearts even in the most dire circumstances.

God's Power Over Impossible Situations

When God moved, He moved powerfully. The chains fell off Peter's hands. The iron gate opened by itself. Guards who should have been alert to any movement remained completely unaware. This was no Houdini escape - this was pure divine intervention.

Sometimes we get so focused on the chains that bind us or the iron gates that block our path that we lose sight of God's power. It's okay to say, "I don't know how God is going to work this out, but I'm trusting Him."

Our Partnership with God

Even in this miraculous deliverance, Peter had a part to play. The angel told him to get up, get dressed, put on his sandals, and follow. God's power was displayed, but Peter had to obey and take action.

There's always a part we play in God's plan. We must obey His instructions and allow Him to lead, even when it doesn't make complete sense to our minds. Faith often requires us to take chances and trust the Lord rather than always playing it safe.

When God Doesn't Work as Expected

The church was praying for Peter's release, but when he actually showed up at their door, they didn't believe it! The servant girl Rhoda ran to tell them Peter was there, and they said, "You're out of your mind!"

This is encouraging because it shows us that God moves through prayer even when our faith isn't as strong as it should be. Sometimes we pray with doubt, saying, "Lord, I don't even have mustard seed faith, but I believe You can work." And God responds, "Watch this."

Divine Justice Always Comes

After Peter's escape, Herod was furious. He searched everywhere, couldn't find Peter, and in his rage, had the innocent guards executed. Then he left town, seemingly getting away with his crimes.

It might seem like powerful people just get away with sin, that there's no justice in the world. But God is a God of justice, and His judgment will come.

Herod's Downfall

Later, when Herod was giving a speech in his silver robes that gleamed in the sunlight, the people began flattering him, calling him a god. Instead of rejecting this blasphemous praise, Herod accepted it. That was his tipping point.

Immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him down. He was eaten by worms and died in excruciating pain over five days. The same God who delivers also judges. Pride had eaten him up from the inside out.

God's Work Continues to Grow

Despite all the persecution, despite the deaths and imprisonments, verse 24 tells us, "But the word of God grew and multiplied." God not only sustained His work but expanded it. He turned what Satan meant for evil into good, bringing glory to His name.

The Bigger Picture

As we approach Easter, we're reminded of the ultimate example of God's control. On Friday, Jesus was crucified and it looked like the enemy had won - checkmate. But Sunday came, and God said, "No, I win." He always does, and He always will.

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life where you've been trying to maintain control instead of trusting God. Maybe it's a relationship that's struggling, a financial situation that seems impossible, or a health concern that keeps you awake at night.

Choose to surrender that area to God daily through prayer. Instead of worrying or trying to manipulate the outcome through your own efforts, commit to praying about it consistently and trusting God's timing and methods.

Questions for Reflection:

- What "chains" in your life do you need to trust God to break?
- How can you partner with God in your current circumstances while still trusting His control?

- When you face difficulties, do you run to worry or run to prayer?
- Are there areas where pride is "eating you up from the inside" that need to be surrendered at the cross?

Remember, you may be in a dark chapter of your story, but don't close the book. Keep allowing the Holy Spirit to lead you through it. God hasn't dropped you, so don't let go of Him. The King of Kings still has the final move, and He always wins.