

THE FEAR OF LONELINESS!

Acts 23:11-12

INTRODUCTION: We all face times of loneliness; in fact loneliness is one of the greatest problems that Americans face today. One of the loneliest places to live today is a large city where no one knows your name. Separation causes loneliness as we move away from those we are close to. The apostle Paul also experienced loneliness: Acts 23:1-10: Paul was rejected by his own peers. Now Paul is placed in a dungeon, his friends had rejected him and now he is cut off from his fellow believers. Acts 23:11-12. When we take a stand for something that is unpopular at the time it can be very isolating.

I. GOD IS NEAR!

Paul is in a dungeon at night alone, but the Lord stood by him. When we become lonely we often forget the nearness of the Lord: Hebrews 13:5-6. Joseph in the Old Testament had the same thing happen to him: Genesis 29:1-2. Our Lord is present with us also in our times of loneliness. Our Lord Jesus knew loneliness also and He sympathizes with us in our loneliness: Hebrews 2:17-18. A Christian can never truly be alone, our Lord stands with us and will strengthen us. Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 4:15-16.

II. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS PLAN!

Not only did the Lord stand by Paul but He also revealed His plan to Paul: Acts 23:11. Jesus told Paul to take courage because He still had plans for Paul and they did not end in a dungeon in Jerusalem. God has a plan for our lives as well: Philippians 2:13. Our Lord wants us to cheer up and stop being discouraged with our loneliness and the setbacks of life. Matthew 9:2: Does it bring cheer to your heart to know that your sins are forgiven? Matthew 14:27: We need to stop fearing life and realize behind all that goes on in our lives is the Lord: 2 Timothy 1:7. We need to take heart, because our Lord has overcome the world so shall we! John 16:33; Romans 8:31-38. Many times we don't think anyone sees or knows how lonely we are but Jesus always sees and knows our hearts. Acts 20:22-24.

III. THE POWER OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE!

God can and will bring us through all our times of loneliness and trial on this earth. Acts 23:12-14. These enemies of Paul thought they were doing God's will. God always has a way of protecting His own: Acts 23:16: God has his angels all around us, He knows the plans of Satan and He is always one step ahead of him. Acts 23:22-24: God used a pagan Roman Captain and pagan Roman soldiers to guard the apostle Paul and he wasn't lonely any more. God has His way of letting us know He is near and is protecting us; this is God's providence. Acts 23:31-33. In the midst of our times of loneliness we must remember the reality of God's presence. Whatever happens in our lives God is not against us He is always for us. Jesus always takes care of His own: John 19:25-27.