

## Survival Mode?

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*He [king Herod] had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. Having secured 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. On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." 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. (Acts 12:20-23, NIV)*

Admittedly, from close range it must have been a horrifying and disgusting spectacle witnessing Herod being struck down unexpectedly by an unseen force and then eaten up by worms. However I chose this passage for a different reason. Its the attitude of the people of Tyre and Sidon that struck me this time like never before. Herod cherished bitter animosity and hostility for them and although the reason for it is not explicitly mentioned, their openness towards the Gospel and an emerging church in their midst might have played a crucial part in this, especially considering that madmen Herod, seeing that it pleased the Jews, went on a personal vendetta against the church.

The people of Tyre and Sidon were surely aware of this, yet, feeling economically dependent on Herod for their survival, they chose to avoid any confrontation with him. Instead, aided by a trusted personal servant of the king, they tried to curry favour with Herod, ultimately flattering and worshipping him as a god. Well, knowing that they finally got rid of this despot, we could, in retrospect, interpret their behaviour as a clever diplomatic approach, although we don't know whether that secured their future food supply. However that would be a pure worldly interpretation of the events. No-one knew that the Lord would remove Herod then and there this way, when the people worshipped him as god.

So as I read this I wondered how we as God's children operate in similar situations today:

- Many countries depend on other nations for their economical survival (e.g. supply of energy, gas, oil, petrol, water, food, etc.). So as those concerned, would we ingratiate ourselves with despotic governments to keep the provision flowing?
- If our company or organisation appears to depend on specific suppliers, customers, contacts, etc. would we allow them to manipulate us and exploit our ostensible dependency just to keep us going and survive?
- Or on a more individual basis, would we try to curry favour with an oppressive, manipulative, cunning and evil employer, flatter and sort of worship him to avoid being sacked and cut off from our regular monthly paycheque that allegedly secures our sustenance?
- Being supported through donations and gifts as God's servant, would we allow those givers to dictate and control what we can and cannot do and say instead of following the Lord's orders and directions obediently, just to avoid the supply running dry?
- Would we courageously stand up for Christ and what is right in God's sight, even if it costs our worldly source of income? Or would we cave in to the fear of our provision drying up and thus keep the ball low, compromise, avoid confrontation, use flattery, adulation and other weapons from a worldly arsenal to keep the supply flowing?

From a biblical perspective our livelihood does not depend on man but solely on the Lord (e.g. *Deuteronomy 28:1-14, Ecclesiastes 3:13, Matthew 6:33, Colossians 3:23*) as long as we obediently take care of God's business the way He asks us to. If however we don't believe in Jehovah Jireh at all or simply don't trust the Lord we proclaim to believe and trust in, then chances are high that we switch into a similar survival mode like the folks from Tyre and Sidon did back then. No matter how cleverly justified, any attempt to help God out providing for us will leave us dependent on and at the mercy of man, man's temper, mood swings, benevolence and surely man's subjective, selfish opinions and decisions to make ends meet. The question is, would that bear testimony to the omnipotence of our Creator God and truly give Him glory? Its very doubtful ...