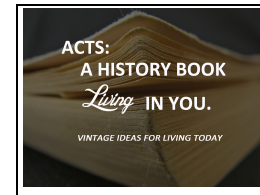


- Only Christianity says God is with you.
- Only Christianity said God has been tortured.
- Only God has been the victim of an act of violent injustice.
- Only Christianity is crazy enough to say God cried out,
- Only Christianity says God lost a Son.

Sierra Community Church August 10th, 2014-Dan Wilvers



Part 27:

Acts 27:1-44

**God is in the Storm**

**“Why?”** He has been through suffering with us.

**Jesus Christ said:**

“As Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days, so the Son of Man will be in the belly of the earth for three days. ...For one greater than Jonah is here.”  
Matthew

12:40,41

**Jesus is saying: I am the ultimate** Jonah. I was thrown into the **ultimate** storm.

**The Gospel says, “Embrace the suffering.”**

Because of Christ’s work on the cross, do you realize what’s going to happen on the day of our own resurrection?

Our salvation is not just going to eliminate suffering. The reality of the resurrection will “relativize” the reality of anything that has ever happened to you. It will all become untrue, and you will be infinitely happier than you ever would have been if you had never suffered those things.

Stay close because I am going to tell you a mystery—something you may have trouble understanding: we will not all fall asleep in death, but we will all be transformed. 52 *It will all happen so fast*, in a blink, a mere flutter of the eye. The last trumpet will call, and the dead will be raised from their graves with a body that does not, cannot decay. All of us will be changed! 53 We’ll step out of our mortal clothes and slide into immortal bodies, *replacing everything that is subject to death with eternal life*. 54 And, when we are all redressed with bodies that do not, cannot decay, when we put immortality over our mortal frames, then it will be as *Scripture* says: *Life everlasting* has victoriously swallowed death. 55 Hey, Death! What happened to your big win? Hey, Death! What happened to your sting? 1 Corinthians 15

No amount of money, power, planning, can prevent illness, accidents, betrayals, financial disasters or any number of other troubles from entering your life. Human life is fatally fragile, and subject to forces beyond our power to manage. In short Life is tragic. I think we all know this intuitively, and those who face the challenge of suffering learn all too well that it is impossible to do so in one’s own strength.

Tim Keller in *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering*

## 1. The Paradox of the Storm

There are two different things Paul says in the midst of this storm:

Take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. 23 For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, 24 and he said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What’s more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.’ 25 So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. 26 But we will be shipwrecked on an island.”  
Acts 27:22-26

Paul knows that prediction can’t be changed and yet he says later:

Then the sailors tried to abandon the ship; they lowered the lifeboat as though they were going to put out anchors from the front of the ship. 31 But Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, “You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard.” 32 So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.  
Acts 27:30-32

### Which one is it?

If our destiny is fixed, then our choices don’t matter. But if we believe our choices matter, that means we would think that our outcome depends on our choices.

**But the paradox here in the story is that it's neither.**

Yet God is absolutely in control, and our choices absolutely matter, and we are completely responsible for them.

**What this means:**

We have a relationship between God and the events of human history that is infinitely more sophisticated than an either/or approach.

**Here's how the secular atheist argument goes.**

**Part A** -God, who is an all-powerful and all-loving God, would not fill a world with pointless suffering.

**Part B**-The world is filled with pointless suffering.

**Part C**- Therefore God can't exist. Because God would not fill the world with pointless suffering if he was the God of the Bible.

**The fallacy:**

When you assume because you can't see a point, there isn't a point. You're refusing to submit to the possibility your thinking is incomplete.

## 2. God's Product Through The Storm.

Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. "You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks," he said.

34 "Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish." 35 Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. 36 Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat— 37 all 276 of us who were on board.

Acts 27:33-37

Jesus said, "You will be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends. They will put some of you to death, but not a hair of your head will perish. So by patience and endurance you will possess your souls."

Luke 21:16-19

**What did Jesus mean by:**

"So by patience and endurance you will possess your souls."

Paul actually explains in a reference to the things he's going through in this storm to one of the later writings of his life.

"I have been in prison, flogged, five times I received thirty-nine lashes, three times I've been beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times shipwrecked." Three times. (This shipwreck was his third.)

"Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, for when I am weak, then I am strong. Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day, for our light momentary afflictions are achieving for us an eternal weight of glory that outweighs them all." 2 Corinthians

**What is Paul saying?** No suffering, no glory. You're not a person of substance. You're not a person of depth.

**What is glory?** The word *glory* means weight. It means ballast. It means something that lasts, something that can't be blown away. The suffering turns you real. Suffering makes you someone who's not blown about by the circumstances.

## 3. The Presence in the Storm

**How do you receive suffering in your life? Look again at verse 23**

For last night an angel of the **God** to whom **I belong** and whom **I serve** stood beside me,  
Acts  
27:23

*In the midst of this storm, there is the secret.*

Where other people are wondering if there is a God, or other people are saying, "Yes, I thought there was a God, but it looks to me like he has abandoned me," No, no.... the God whose I belong, stood beside me,