

## *How do you respond to suffering in your life?*

### III. The Presence in the storm

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

Only Christianity says God is with you.  
Only Christianity said God has been tortured.  
Only Christianity is crazy enough to say God cried out in pain.  
Only Christianity says God lost a Son.

How do I know he has a reason for this suffering?  
How do I know God has purposes in the cancer diagnosis, the sudden tragic loss of loved ones? **Jesus Christ on the cross.**

#### **Community Group Questions:**

1. Have you struggled with senseless suffering in the face of a loving God?
2. How would you defend the idea that God does accomplish things in suffering?
3. Is there an example of how suffering has strengthened your character and faith?
4. How would you apply Philippians 3:10,11 to your life?

*...That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; <sup>11</sup> in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*



### **Paul's Journey to Rome (The Theological Complexities of Suffering) Acts 27:1-44**

**The events of chapter 27** With Paul's influence in the decisions concerning the storm helps us to better understand how the problem of evil and suffering works with a loving and good God.

*"No amount of money, power, planning, can prevent illness, accidents, ... or any number of other troubles from entering your life. Human life is fragile, and (almost impossible to manage) In short Life is tragic. I think we all know this intuitively. (Secondly) 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 -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. For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, 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.' So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. But we will be shipwrecked on an island." Acts 27:22-26

Paul knows the prediction can't be changed, yet later he says: 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. But Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, "You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard." So, the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.

Acts 27:30-32

### Here's where it gets complex.

Paul says, "It is absolutely sure we're all going to be saved. But if the sailors get off of here, we're all going to die."

### Which one is it?

To our minds it has to be one or the other. If Paul's absolutely sure everybody is going to be saved, because God has said so, why not let them take the boat?

One presupposes our destiny is fixed; the other says our outcomes depend on our choices! Yet God is in absolute control and at the same time our choices absolutely matter.

### Here's how this bible text helps us:

*A lot of people, are unable to trust and even believe in God because of what they would call pointless evil and suffering.*

**Here's how the argument goes.** A God, who is an all-powerful and all-loving, would not fill a world with pointless suffering. Therefore, God can't exist.

### Here's the wrong assumption of this argument:

"If I can't see any point to why this happened. I can't see anything it accomplishes."

*When you assume because you can't see a point there can't be a point. You've missed the possibility your thinking is flawed.*

*Tim Keller*

## II. What God produces in you 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. "Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish." Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat— 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

### Well what kind of assurance is that? "not a hair of your heads will perish"

This is a way to say God has a detailed, loving plan for your life. Secondly, he's also saying that plan is to bring peace, and salvation to you, **but it will entail suffering**. Yet when that hits, through patient endurance you will win your souls.

Paul actually explains this concept in his second letter to Corinth. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes.<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. 2 Corinthians 11:24,25

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. <sup>17</sup>For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

2 Corinthians 4:16,17

<sup>17</sup>For our present troubles are small ... Compared to what?

What's being achieved for me through the suffering, a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

### What does that mean?

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. <sup>2</sup> Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

<sup>3</sup> We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. <sup>4</sup> And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. <sup>5</sup> And this hope will not lead to disappointment. Romans 5:1-4

**Suffering produces character as it waits in hope for God's salvation!**