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Control, Acts 27:13-36

By Aaron Shamp

Introduction

- This series is looking at God's plan to give us victory from the problems that cause breakdown in our lives. But we're looking at how his plan is counterintuitive to our common sense.
 - This story provides a vivid depiction of something that we all deal with on a daily basis: control.
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Pain in Storms

- Have you had a delayed flight on vacation or work trip? It's the worst.
 - In that moment, you are acutely aware that there is *nothing you can do about it*.
- That's the same experience of being on the sea in a storm.
 - The storm makes you realize that you have very little (or no) control.
- **Point:** God allows storms in life to remind us that we are not in control.
 - Is life a land journey or a sea journey? On land, you can get to safety in storms. You still have some agency. At sea, you have no control.
 - One of the goals of modern life has been to exercise control.
 - The difference between agrarian and industrialized societies.
 - We now have apps, machines, metrics, diagnostics, hacks, and optimizations to control every aspect of our lives. We attempt to become gods.
 - We often live with the illusion of control but occasionally something will happen that reminds us that we aren't ultimately in control of our lives.
 - Sickness, job loss, betrayal, natural disaster, etc.
- **APP:** How do you respond to the storms?

- Do you do everything you can to stay in power? Or do you abandon ship?
 - Paul alerted the men that God was in control of their situation. We must recognize the same in our lives—in storms and in calm.
- Why does God allow the storms?

Purpose in Storms

- Viktor Frankl said, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”¹
 - Responding well will depend on knowing God’s purpose for the storms.
- **Point:** God allows storms in life to accomplish his purposes.
 - First, the general purpose is *good*.
 - Joseph’s betrayal by his brothers leads to the salvation of God’s people. His life was one bad thing after another, just like a storm. In the end, he saved a nation from starvation as well as his own family. See Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28.
 - They aren’t saying that every terrible thing that happens has some good in it. Rather, from the vantage point of heaven, everything will work together for good.
 - He got to the end of his life and saw how all the bad things worked together for good. But we may not...
 - An example is the book of Job. Job never saw the greater purpose for his suffering.
 - Another example is the crucifixion of Jesus. His family and followers couldn’t possibly see what good would come out of it.
 - God allowed that storm on Jesus because he accomplished resurrection and atonement.
 - Though you may never see God’s good reason, faith requires we believe that they are there.
 - Second, the specific purpose is for *growth in godliness*.

- Towards the end of the passage, Paul is still encouraging those on board and tells them, “Not one of you will lose a single hair...” That’s nearly a direct quote from Jesus in Luke 21:18.
 - “You will even be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends. They will kill some of you. 17 You will be hated by everyone because of my name, 18 but not a hair of your head will be lost. 19 By your endurance, gain your lives.” -- Luke 21:16-19 (CSB)
- Do you really possess your soul? If you live for your job, your job owns you. And if anything goes wrong you’re destroyed. Same is true for anything else. Storms can take your life.
 - But if you love God more than anything, then you will possess your soul. You’ll be able to handle storms.
 - In fact, it’s usually the storms that rattle you and re-orient your love to God. Then in the next storm you will be okay.
 - The storms teach you patient endurance.

Power in Storms

- Suffering does not automatically make you a better person. The same suffering can push one person closer to Christ and another person bitter and cynical.
 - What made the difference for Paul?
- He said, “The God *I belong to*...” He uses language of intimacy.
 - When we suffer we often think, “God is punishing me... He must be mad at me...” But Paul knows God’s love for him and that love is with him in the storm.
- How can we *know* that God loves us in the storm?
 - Jesus called himself the greater Jonah...
- **Point:** God allows storms in life to teach us trustful obedience.
 - When you are in the midst of suffering it’s not time for answers but time for God’s presence.

- Suffering is a philosophical problem until you are hurting. Then it's a personal problem.
- Only Christianity claims that we have a God who is with us in our sufferings.

End Notes

¹ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*.