

2 Corinthians 11:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

Analysis

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. Four more categories of suffering pile up: tris errabdisthēn (τρίς ἐρραβδίσθην, 'three times I was beaten with rods')—Roman punishment for citizens improperly (Acts 16:22-23 records one). Hapax elithasthēn (ἅπαξ ἐλιθάσθην, 'once I was stoned')—at Lystra (Acts 14:19), left for dead. Tris enauagēsa (τρίς ἐναυάγησα, 'three times I was shipwrecked')—none recorded in Acts before this letter; Acts 27 occurs later.

A night and a day I have been in the deep (nychthēmeron en tō bythō pepoiēka, νυχθήμερον ἐν τῷ βυθῷ πεποίηκα)—24 hours adrift in open sea, clinging to wreckage. The perfect tense pepoiēka (πεποίηκα, 'I have spent') suggests the trauma remains vivid. This goes beyond shipwreck to describe floating helpless in the Mediterranean awaiting death or rescue.

The rapid accumulation—rods, stones, shipwrecks, drowning—creates breathless effect. Each item is life-threatening. Paul's casualness ('thrice... once... thrice') about near-death experiences reveals how normalized suffering had become. These aren't complaints but credentials—marks of authentic apostolic ministry.

Historical Context

Roman citizens were legally exempt from beating with rods (virgae), making Paul's three such beatings illegal (Acts 22:25). Stoning was Jewish execution for

blasphemy (Lev 24:16; cf. Stephen, Acts 7:58). Shipwrecks were common in Mediterranean travel; Paul's three occurred before Acts 27's famous Malta shipwreck, indicating extensive sea travel and danger.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's matter-of-fact recounting of near-death experiences reveal a perspective radically different from our safety-focused culture?
2. What does it mean that Paul's worst suffering came not from pagans but from religious authorities (Jews) and unjust government (Roman beatings)?
3. In what ways might modern ministry avoid suffering not out of wisdom but out of comfort-seeking that Paul would consider unfaithful?

Interlinear Text

τρίς	ἐρράβδίσθην,	ἅπαξ	ἐλιθάσθην	τρίς	ἐναυάγησα
Thrice	was I beaten with rods	once	was I stoned	Thrice	I suffered shipwreck
G5151	G4463	G530	G3034	G5151	G3489

νυχθήμερον	ἐν	τῷ	βυθῷ	πεποίηκα·
a night and a day	in		the deep	I have been
G3574	G1722	G3588	G1037	G4160

Additional Cross-References

Acts 14:19 (Parallel theme): And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Hebrews 11:37 (Parallel theme): They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Acts 16:37 (Parallel theme): But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

Acts 16:33 (Parallel theme): And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.