



God & *the* Pandemic

**Thinking deeply
& living hopefully
in our real world
of pain & suffering**

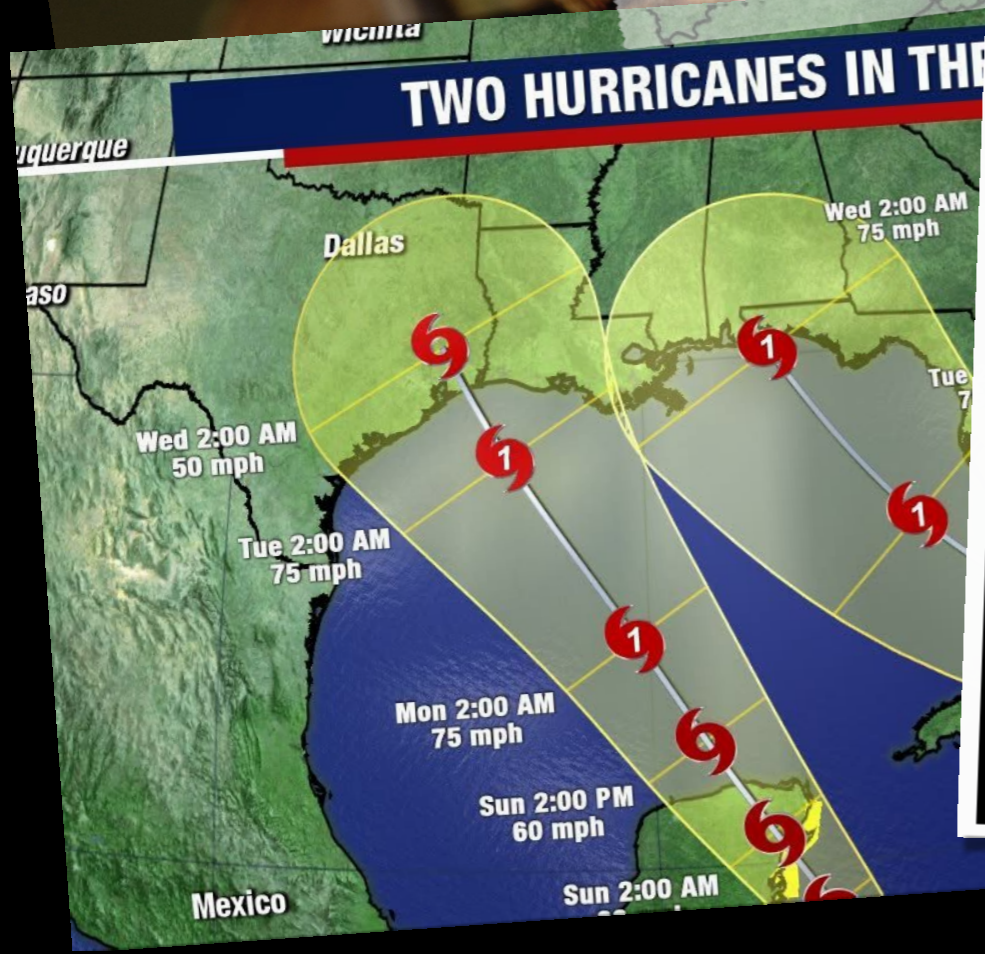
Mercy Hill Church



**2020 is
craaaaaazzy!**



Mosquitoes test positive for West Nile Virus in Bryan confirms Brazos County Health District



Giant Meteor

— 2020 —

JUST END IT ALREADY

**An Impact On the Election? Asteroid
Hurtling Toward Earth Has November 2
Due Date, Says NASA, Because 2020**

By Caleb Howe | Aug 22nd, 2020, 3:46 pm

COVID is causing increase in suicidal thoughts, decrease in mental health

[According to recent report](#) from the Centers for Disease Control, “40 percent of American adults have reported struggling with mental health or substance abuse” during the COVID-19 pandemic. One-third reported feelings of anxiety and/or depression, and one-quarter said that they were struggling with trauma-related issues. One in eight reported either developing or increasing substance-abuse problems.

Worst of all, 11 percent reported that they seriously considered suicide in the last few months. Two years ago, by comparison, that number was just one in twenty-five. And, the CDC study revealed that certain segments of the population have struggled more than others. For example, one in five “essential workers” reported suicidal ideation, as have one in three unpaid caregivers for adults, and one in four 18- to 24-year-olds. And of course, there are others who don’t fit into categories like these, but who were already struggling with mental health issues before the pandemic.

**Where is God
in all of this?**





God & *the* Pandemic

Part One:
**Life in our real world
of pain & suffering**

Mercy Hill Church



The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

2 There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. 3 He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.

1:13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 14 and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, 15 and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck

down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you. 16 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

17 While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you. 18 While he was yet speaking, there came another and

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

said, “Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and stuck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

1:20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped.

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

2:7 ...and Job [was struck] with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in ashes. 9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.”

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place....

They made an appointment to come to show him sympathy and comfort him.

12 And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him.

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

**And they raised their voices and wept,
and they tore their robes and sprinkled
dust on their heads toward heaven. 13**

**And they sat with him on the ground
seven days and seven nights, and no
one spoke a word to him, for they saw
that his suffering was very great.**

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

**3:1 After this Job opened his mouth
and cursed the day of his birth.**

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

2 And Job said: 3 “Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that was said, ‘A man is conceived.’ 4 Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor let light shine upon it.

The Book of Job, chs. 1-3

3:20 Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, 21 who long for death but it comes not...?

25 For the thing I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. 26 I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes.

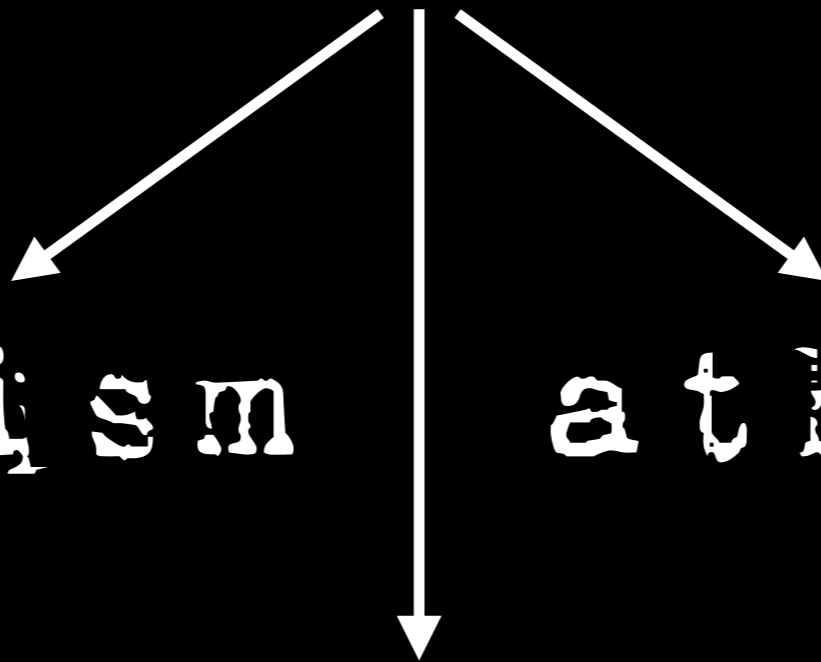


Why is Job suffering?



How do we make sense
of suffering?

How do we make sense
of suffering?



pantheism

atheism

theism



Buddhism

Hinduism

KARMA

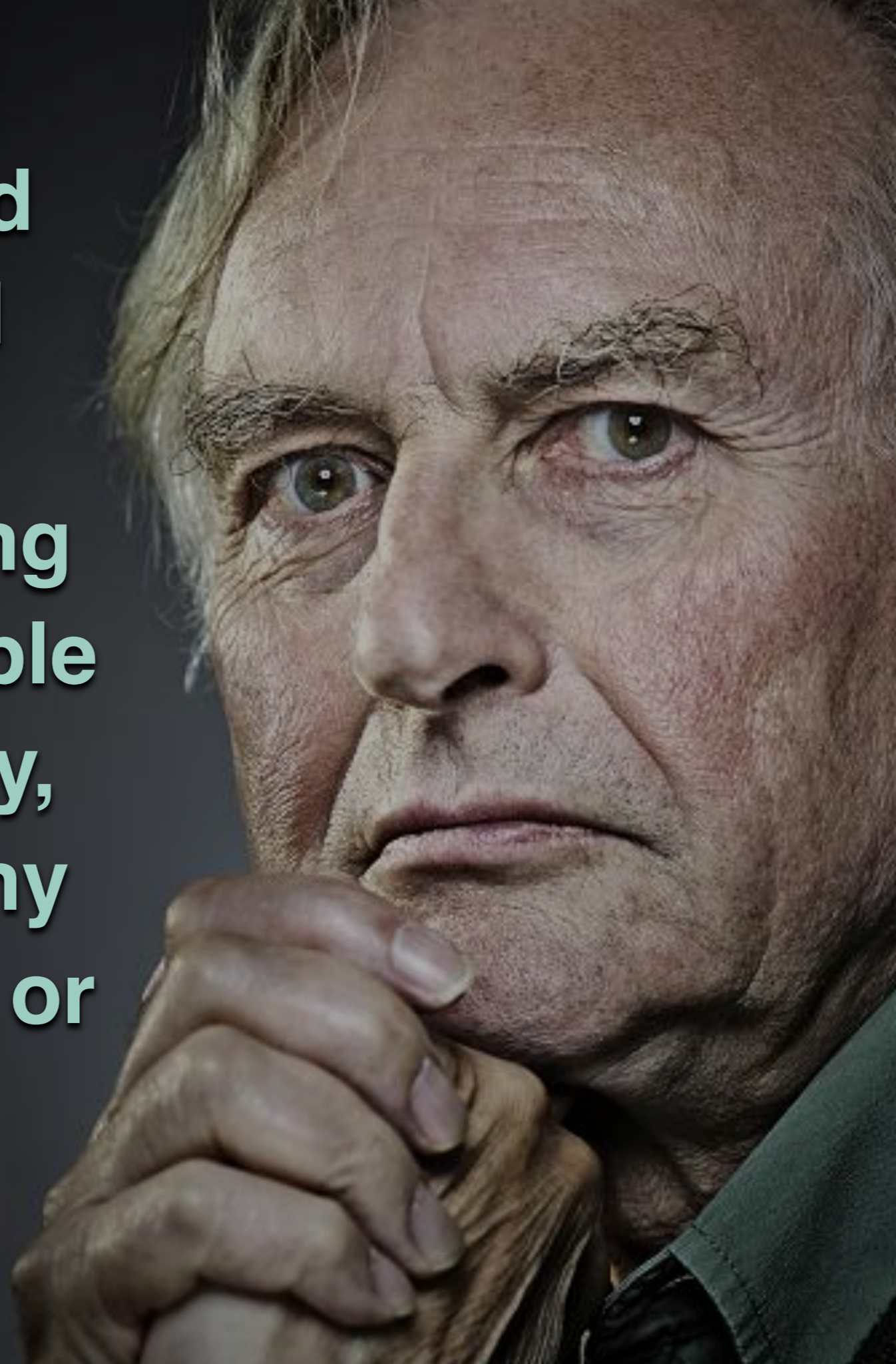
Within a pantheistic
worldview,

suffering is always
your fault.

Atheism



**In a universe of blind
physical forces and
genetic replication,
some people are going
to get hurt, other people
are going to get lucky,
and you won't find any
rhyme or reason in it, or
any justice.**

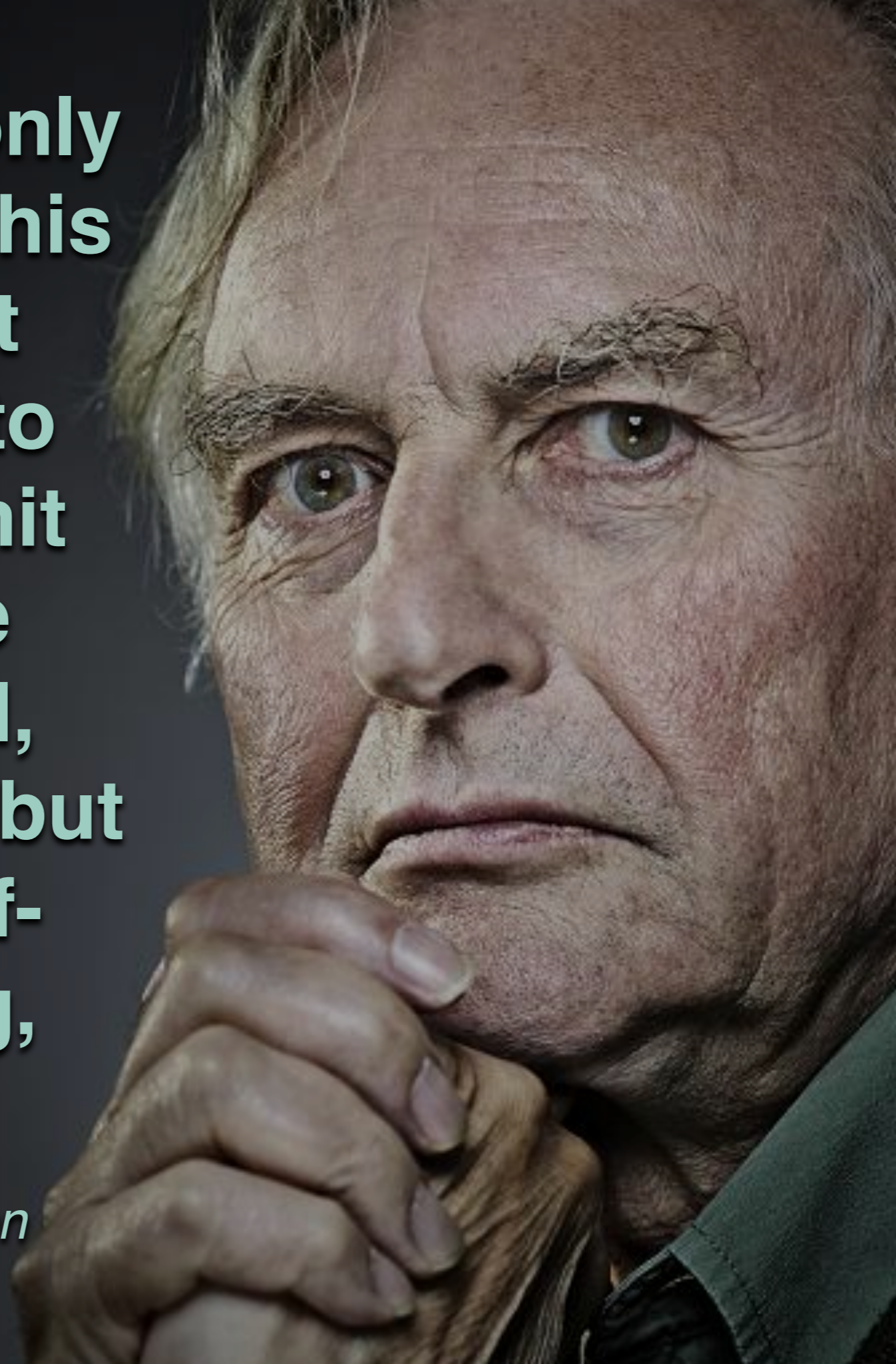


**The universe that we
observe has precisely
the properties we
should expect if there
is, at bottom, no design,
no purpose, no evil and
no good, nothing but
blind, pitiless
indifference....**



**...nature is not cruel, only
pitilessly indifferent. This
is one of the hardest
lessons for humans to
learn. We cannot admit
that things might be
neither good nor evil,
neither cruel nor kind, but
simply callous—indif-
ferent to all suffering,
lacking purpose.**

Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden*

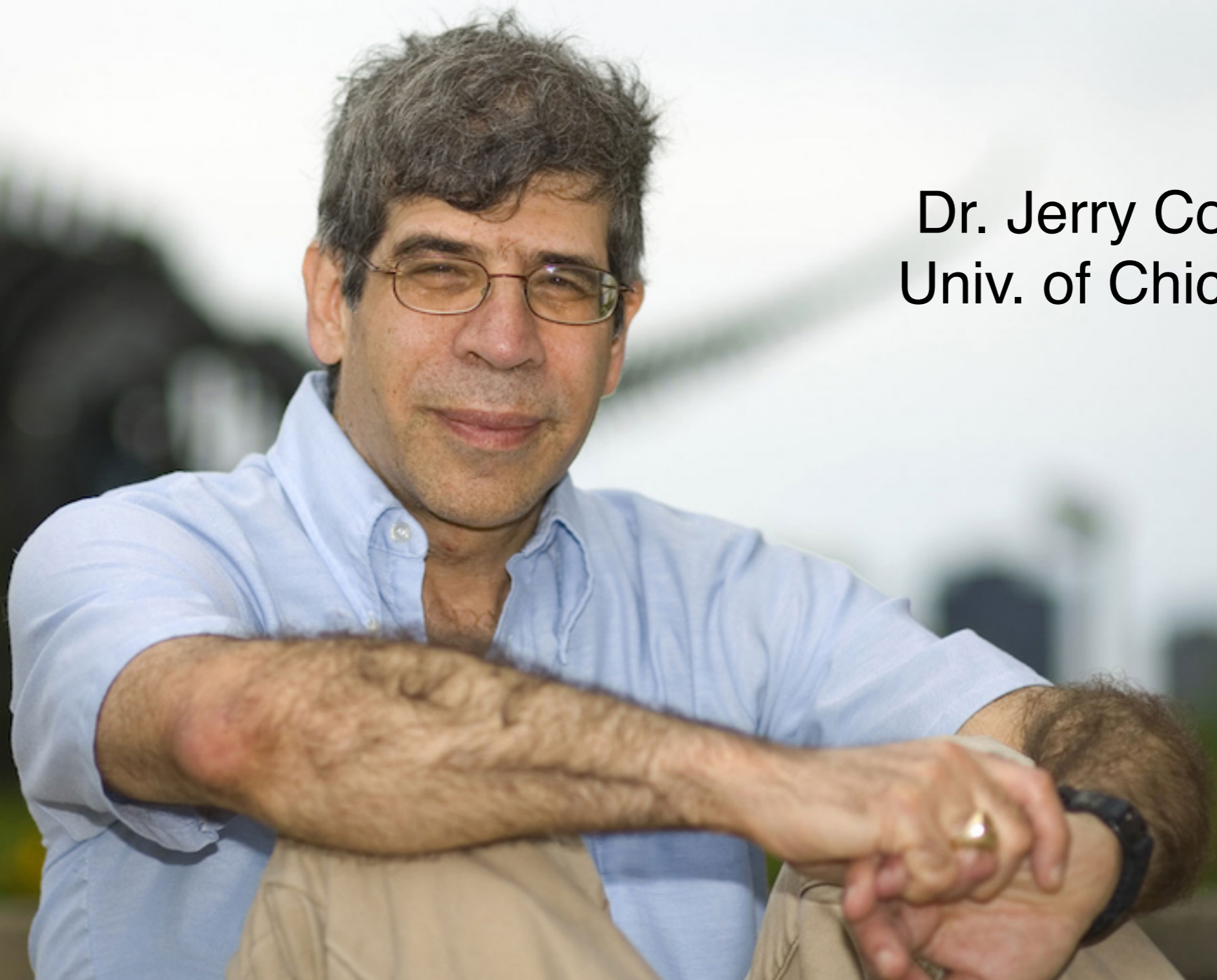


Secularists see a universe without apparent purpose and realize that we must forge our own purposes and ethics....



**But although the universe is purposeless,
our lives aren't.... We make our own
purposes, and they're real.**

Dr. Jerry Coyne
Univ. of Chicago



Within an atheist,
secular worldview,
suffering always wins.



In a theistic worldview,
suffering is a mystery.



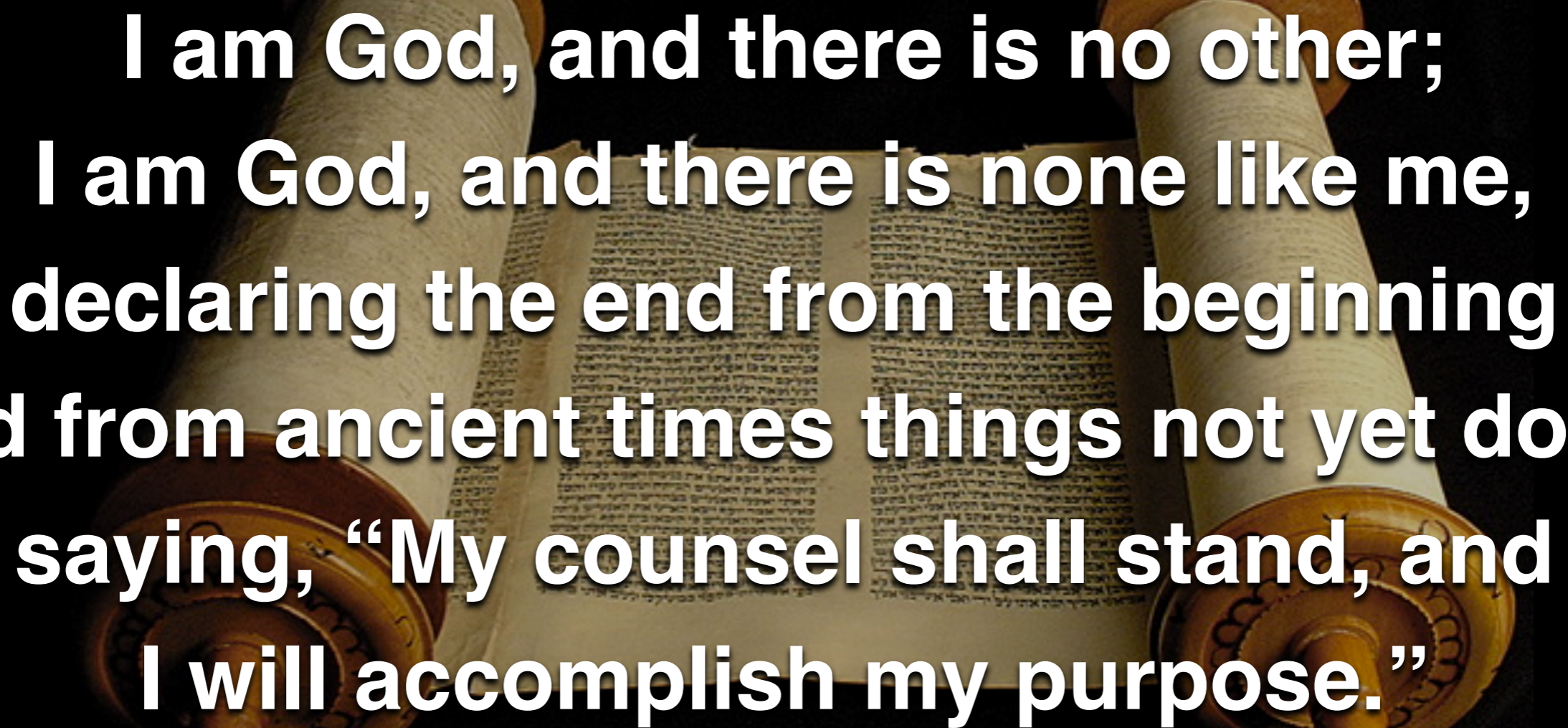


I know that you can do
all things, and that no
purpose of yours can
be thwarted... I have
uttered what I did not
understand, things
too wonderful for me
to speak, which I did
not know.

-Job, Chapter 42-

The Sovereignty of God





**I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, “My counsel shall stand, and
I will accomplish my purpose.”**

— Isaiah 46:9-10 —




**Whatever the Lord pleases, he does,
in heaven and on earth....**

— Psalm 135:6 —



**The lot is cast into the lap,
but its every decision is from the Lord**

— Proverbs 16:33 —



**Are not two sparrows
sold for a penny?
And not one of them
will fall to the ground
apart from your
Father. But even the
hairs of your head
are numbered.**

Jesus of Nazareth
The Gospel of Matthew 10:29-30

**In Him we have
obtained and
inheritance, having
been predestined
according the purpose
of Him who works all
things according to
the counsel of His will.**



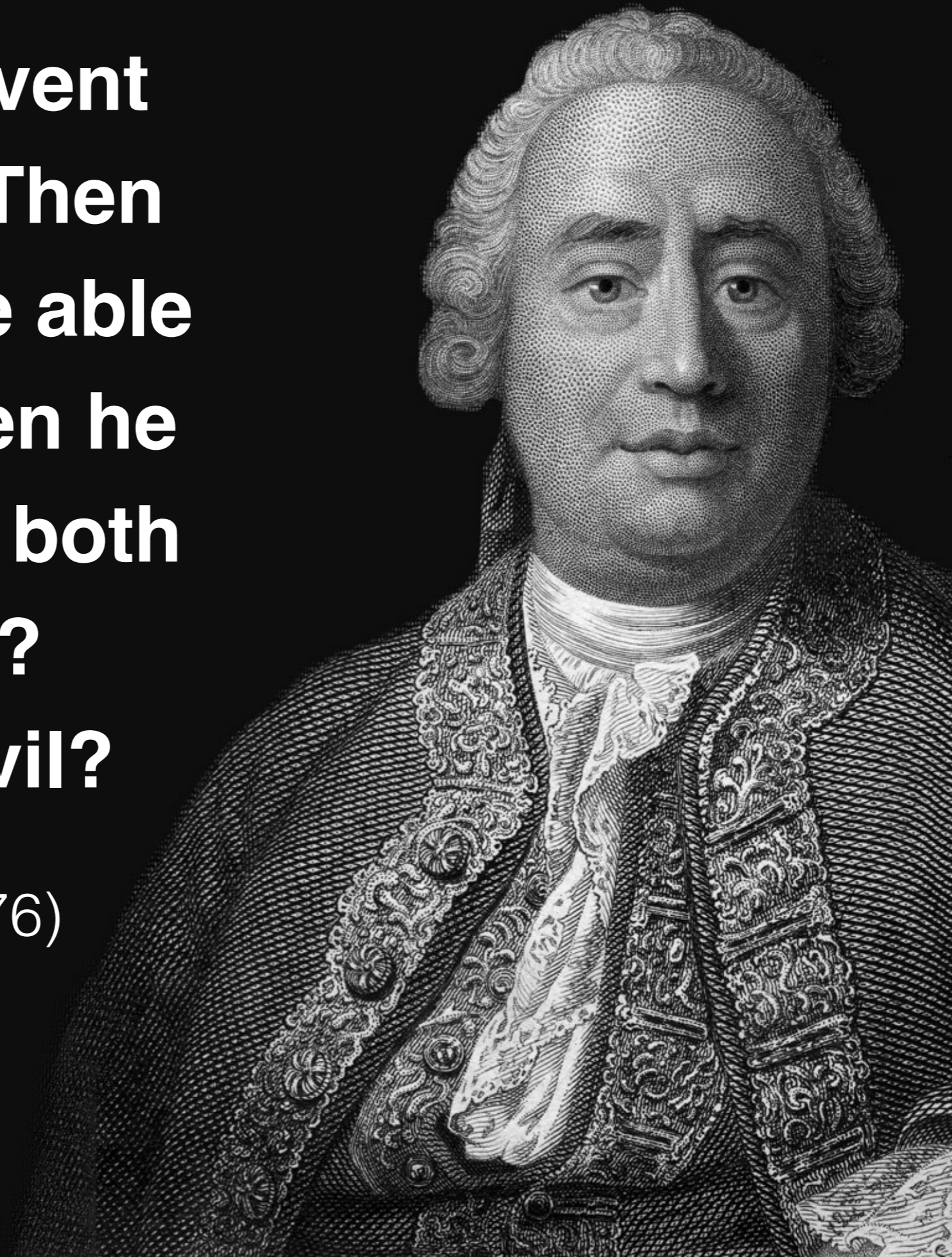
**The Apostle Paul
Ephesians 1:11**



Then why...?

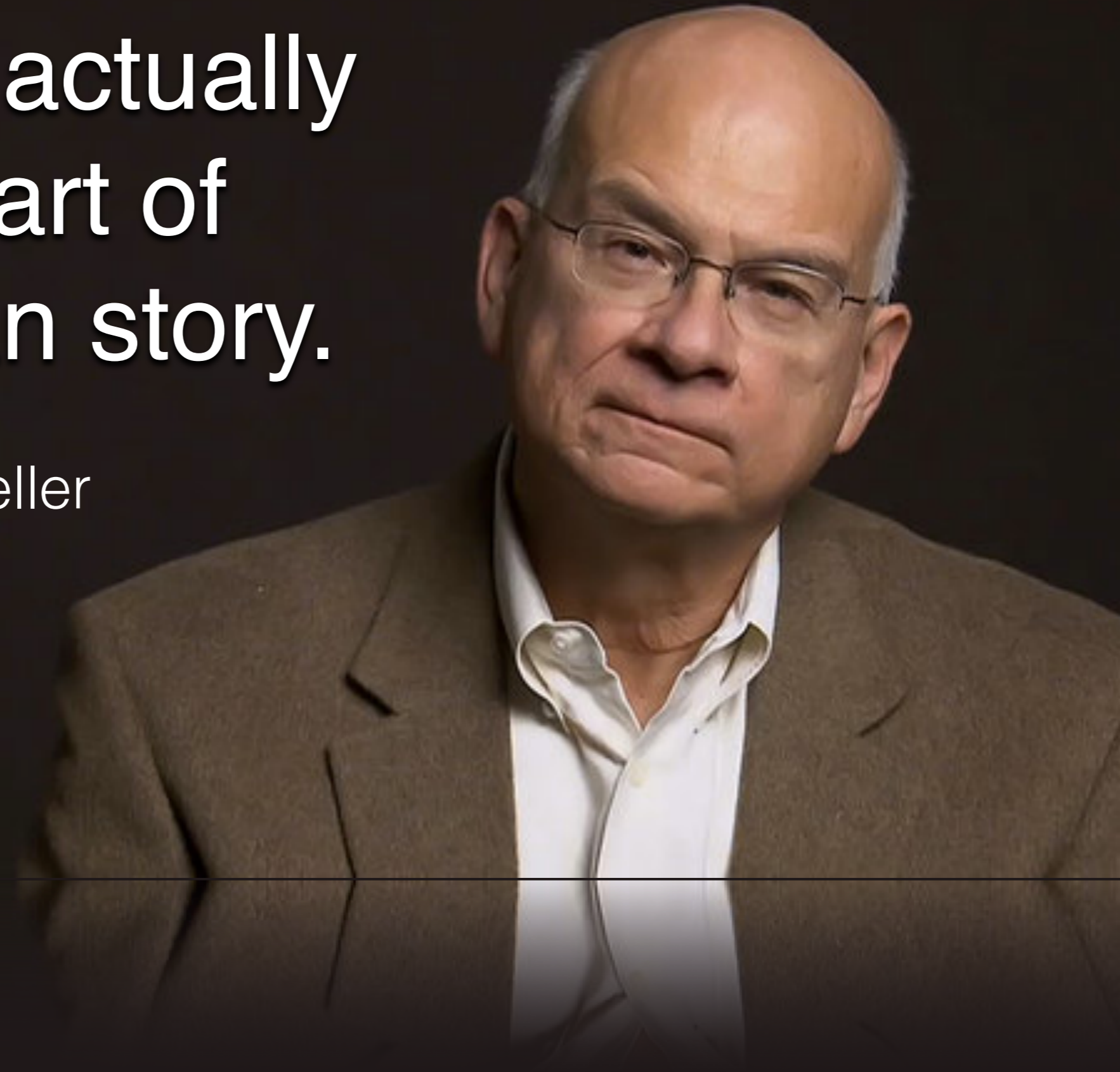
**Is he willing to prevent
evil, but not able? Then
he is impotent. Is he able
but not willing? Then he
is malevolent. Is he both
able and willing?
Whence then is evil?**

David Hume (1711-1776)

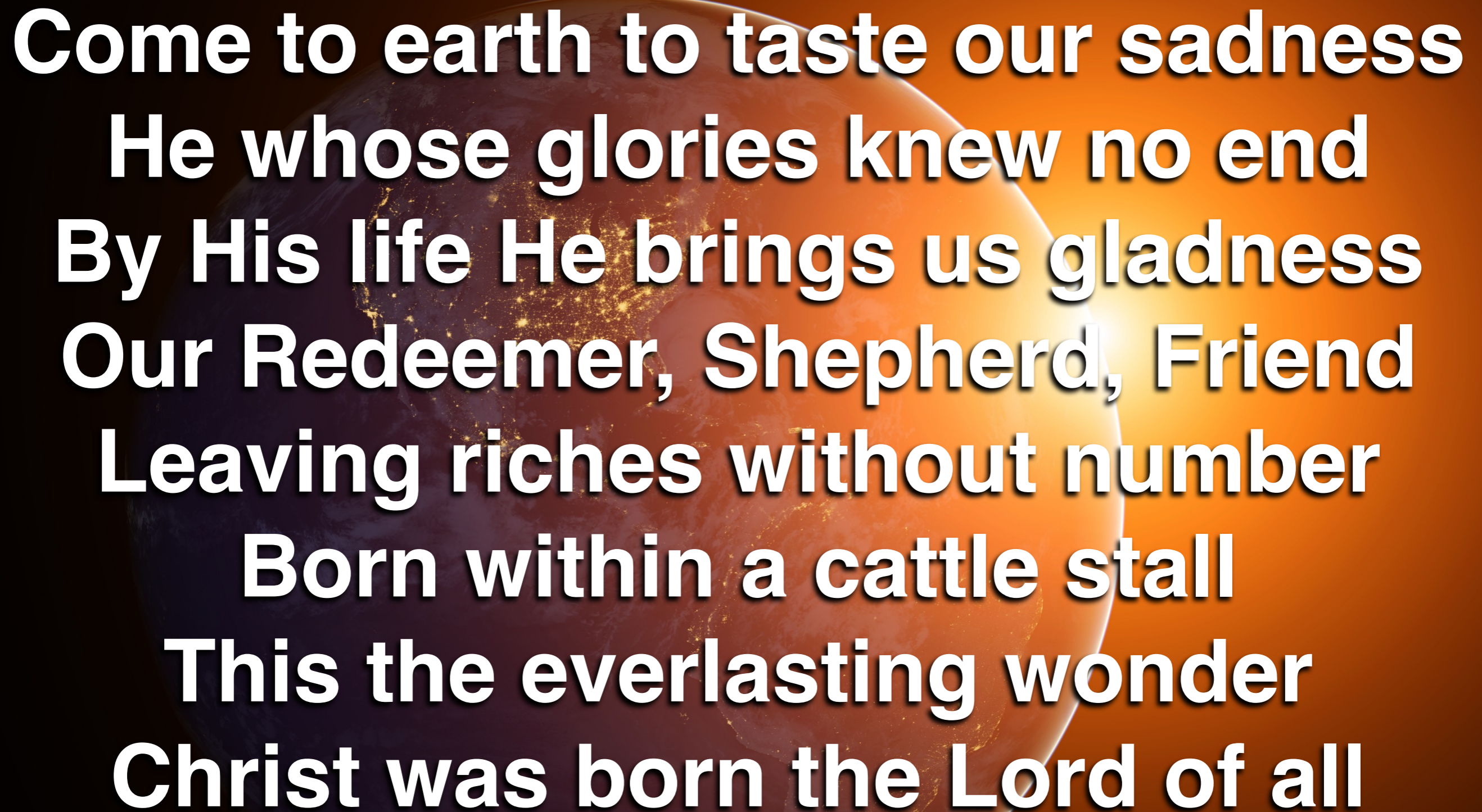


Suffering is actually
at the heart of
the Christian story.

Timothy Keller







**Come to earth to taste our sadness
He whose glories knew no end
By His life He brings us gladness
Our Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend
Leaving riches without number
Born within a cattle stall
This the everlasting wonder
Christ was born the Lord of all**

— Charles Wesley, “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus” —



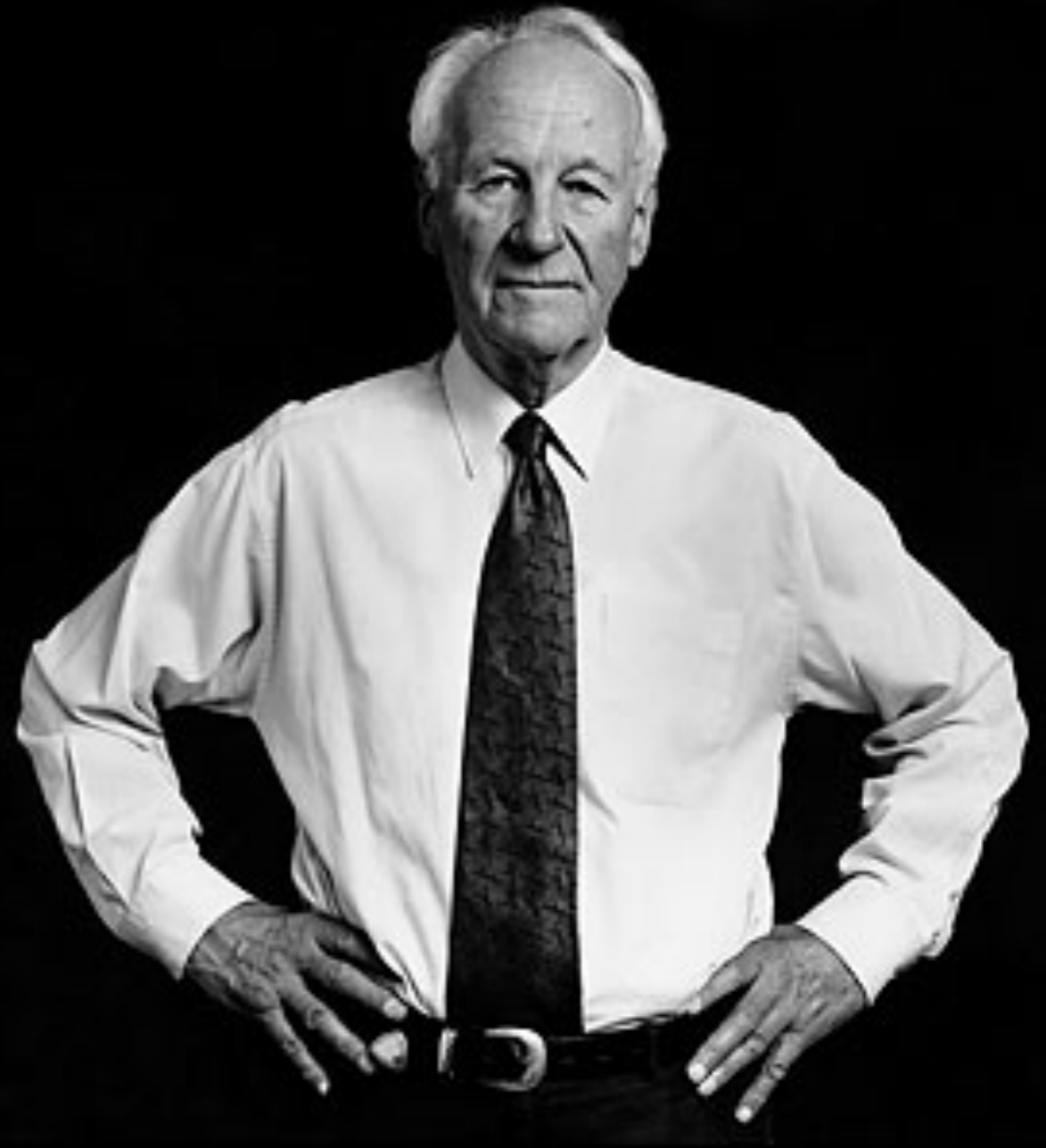
**CHRISTIANITY PROCLAIMS THAT
GOD IS COMPLETELY SOVEREIGN
AND GOD HAS SUFFERED DEEPLY**

**Any discussion of how
pain and suffering fit into
God's scheme ultimately
leads back to the Cross.**

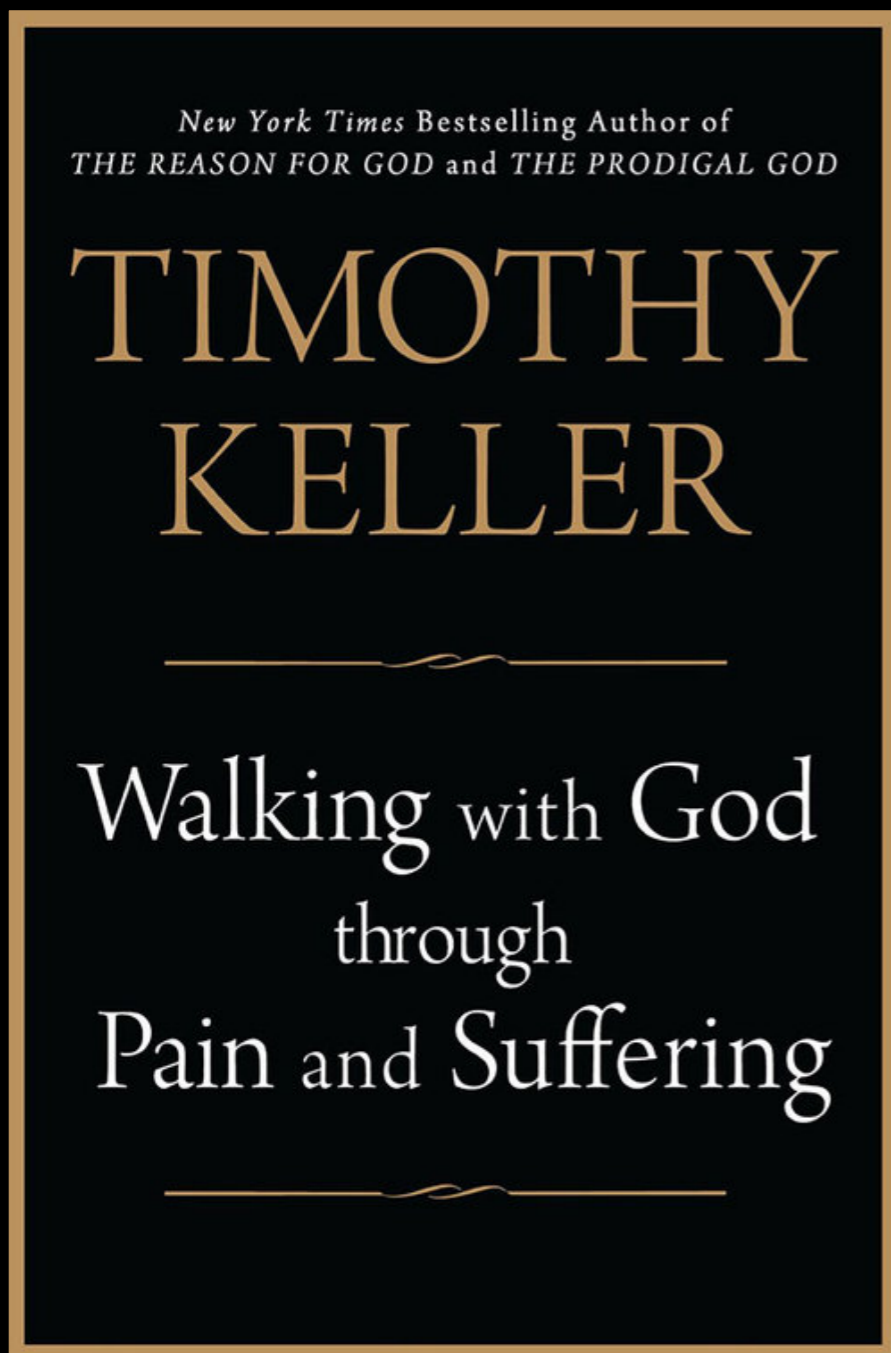
— Phillip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts* —



**I could never believe
in God if it were not
for the cross. The only
God I believe in is the
one Nietzsche
ridiculed as “God on a
cross.” In a real world
of pain, how could
one worship a God
who was immune to it.**



John Stott
(1921-2011)



The answer of the book of Job—that “God knows what he’s doing, so be quiet and trust him”—is right but insufficient. It is inadequate because alone it is cold and because the New Testament gives us more with which to face the terrors of life.

New York Times Bestselling Author of
THE REASON FOR GOD and *THE PRODIGAL GOD*

TIMOTHY
KELLER

Walking with God
through
Pain and Suffering

**We turned from God, but
God did not abandon us.
Only Christianity, of all the
world's major religions,
teaches that God came to
earth in Jesus Christ and
became subject to
suffering and death
himself.**

New York Times Bestselling Author of
THE REASON FOR GOD and *THE PRODIGAL GOD*

TIMOTHY
KELLER

Walking with God
through
Pain and Suffering

**See what this means? Yes,
we do not know the reason
God allows evil and
suffering to continue, or
why it is so random, but
now at least we know what
the reason is not. It cannot
be that he does not love
us. It cannot be that he
does not care.**

New York Times Bestselling Author of
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TIMOTHY
KELLER

Walking with God
through
Pain and Suffering

He is so committed to our ultimate happiness that he was willing to plunge into the greatest depths of suffering himself. He understands us, he has been there, and he assures us that he has a plan to eventually wipe away every tear.

New York Times Bestselling Author of
THE REASON FOR GOD and *THE PRODIGAL GOD*

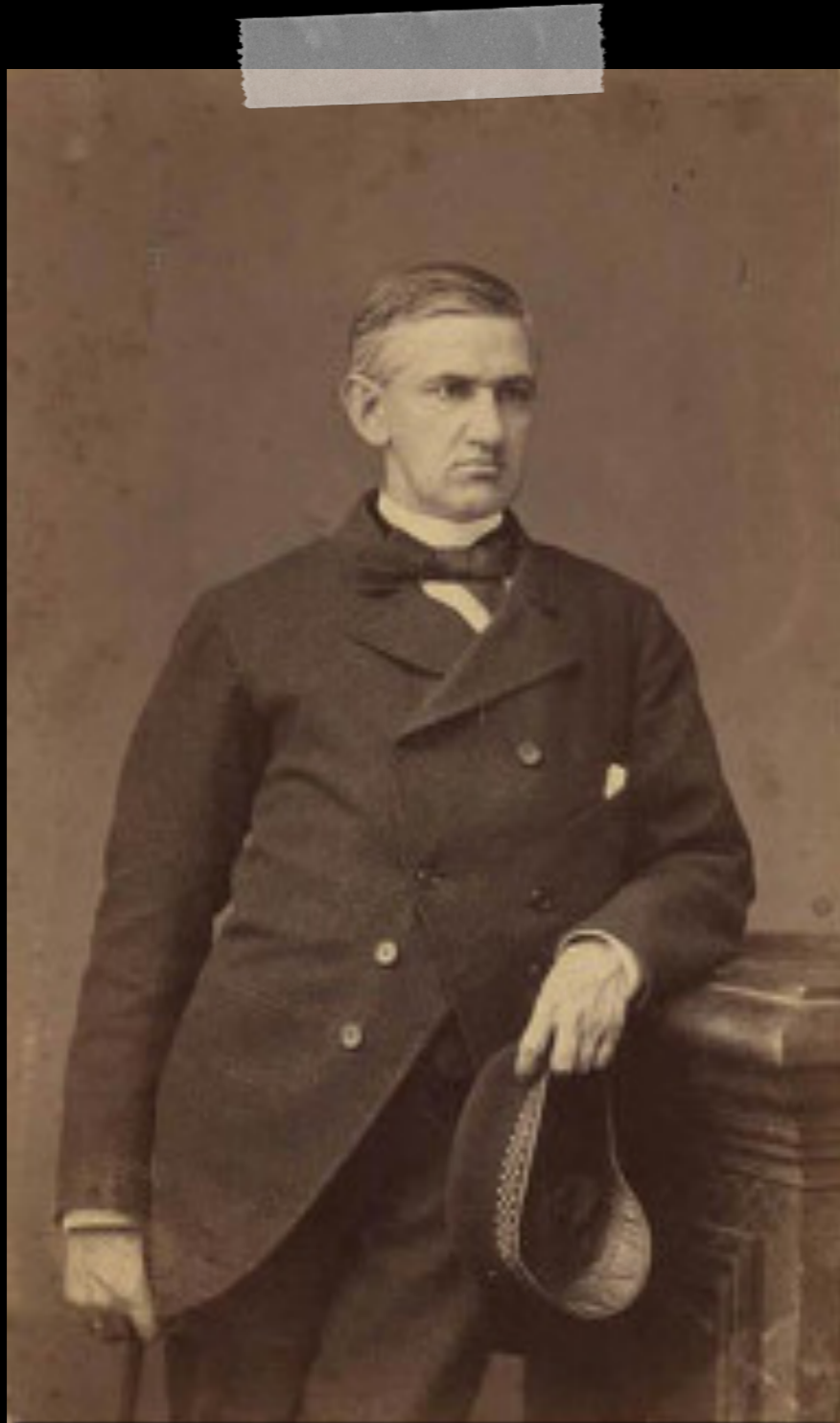
TIMOTHY
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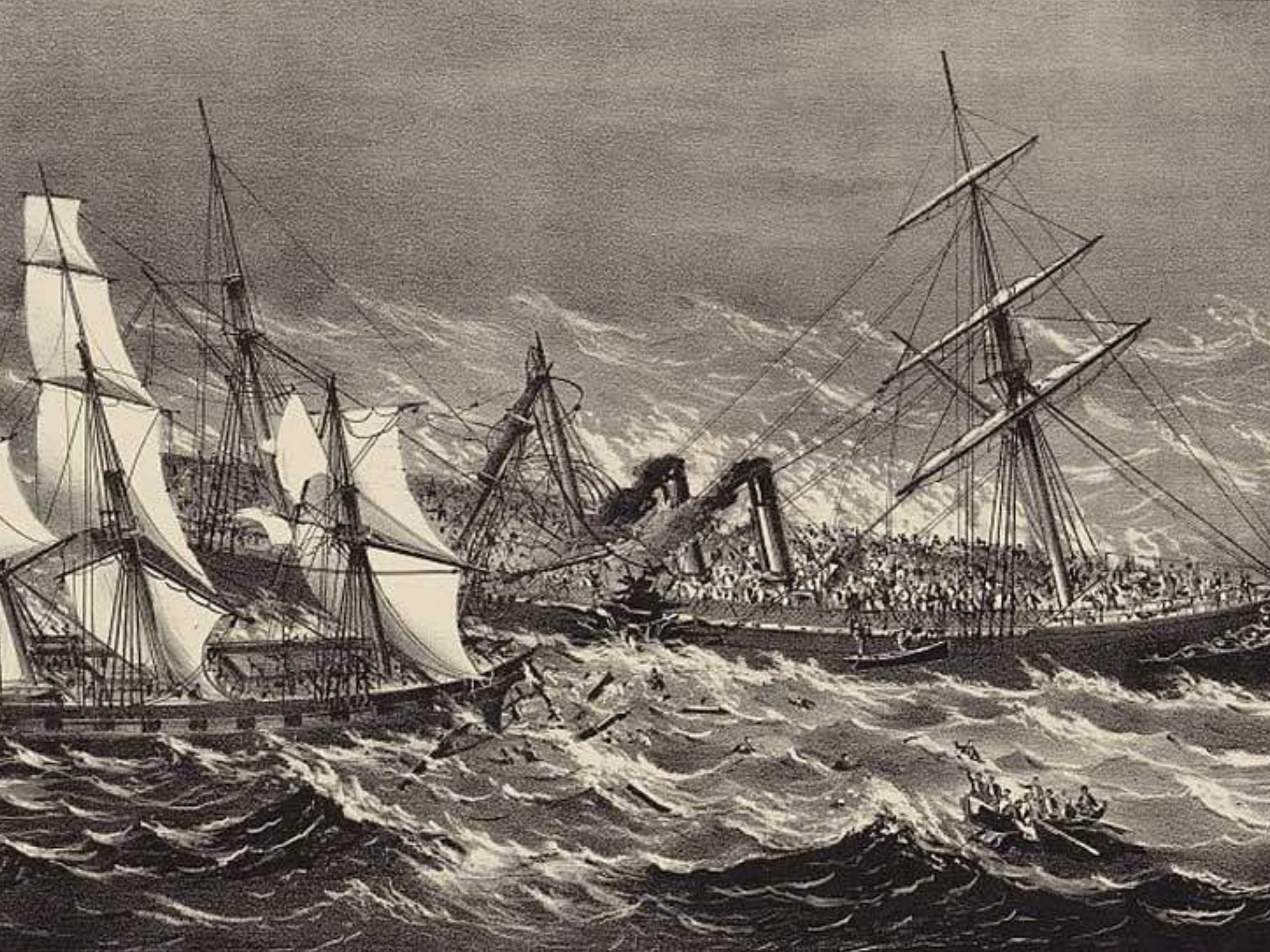
**Someone might say,
“But that’s only half an
answer to the question
“Why?” Yes, but it is
the half we need.**




**JESUS GIVES US A MEANING
AND A HOPE THAT SUFFERING
CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY**

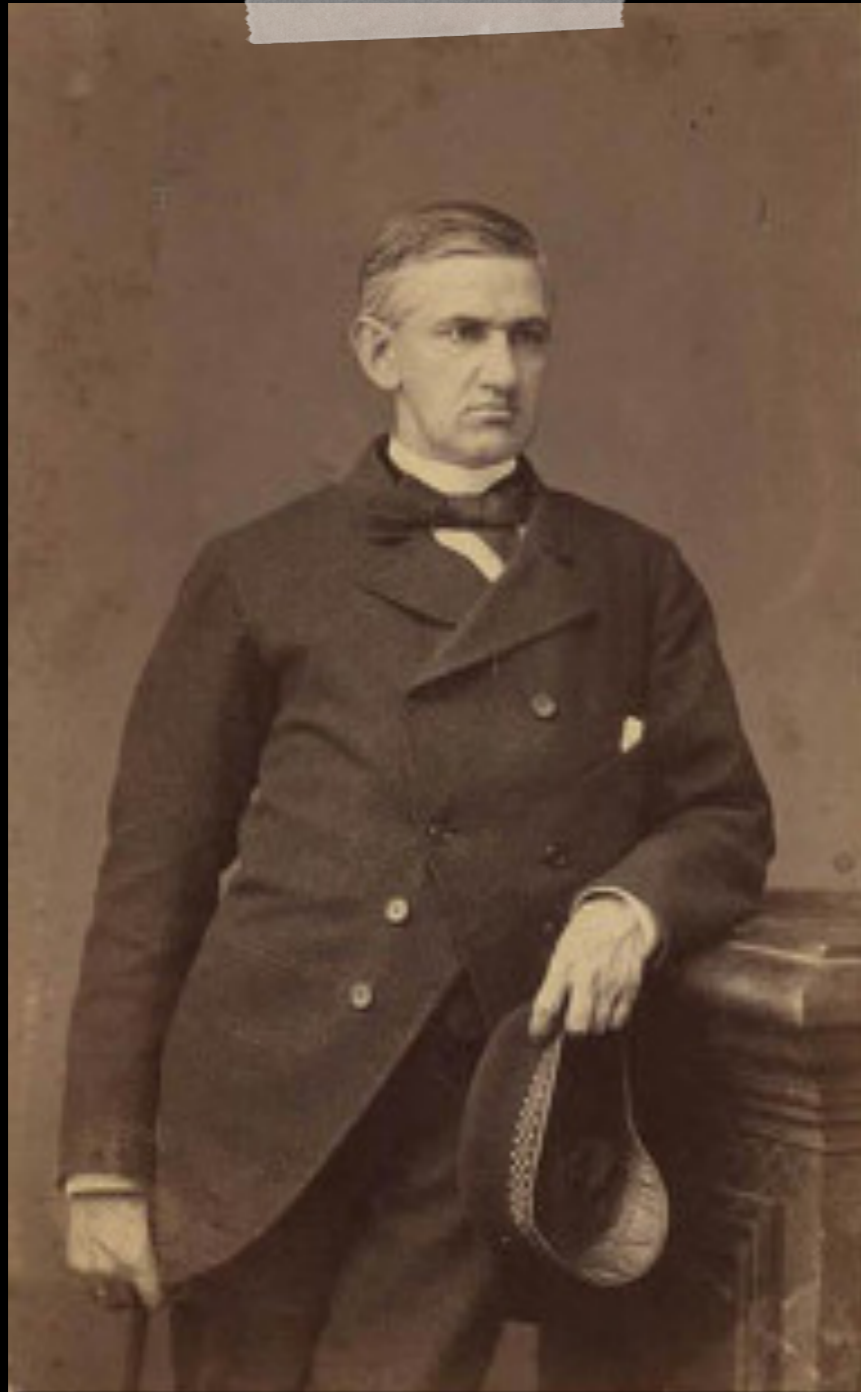


Horatio Spafford
1828-1888



The background image is a dark, grainy, and high-contrast photograph of a maritime disaster. It depicts a large, multi-masted sailing ship, possibly a ship of the line, that has been wrecked or is in the process of being wrecked. The ship's masts and rigging are visible against a dark, stormy sky. The sea is turbulent with white-capped waves. In the lower right foreground, a small rowing boat with several people is visible, struggling in the rough water. The overall mood is one of tragedy and isolation.

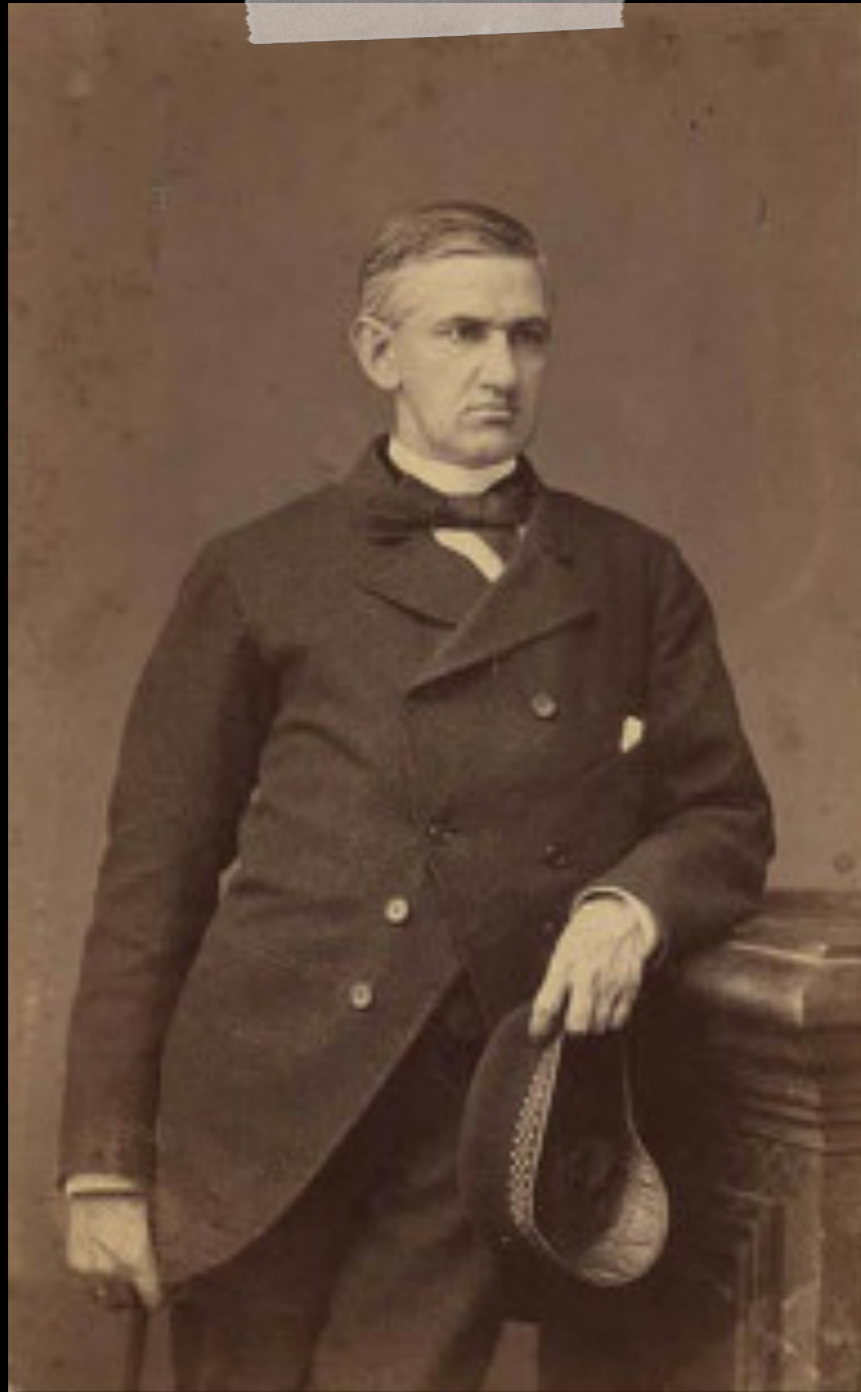
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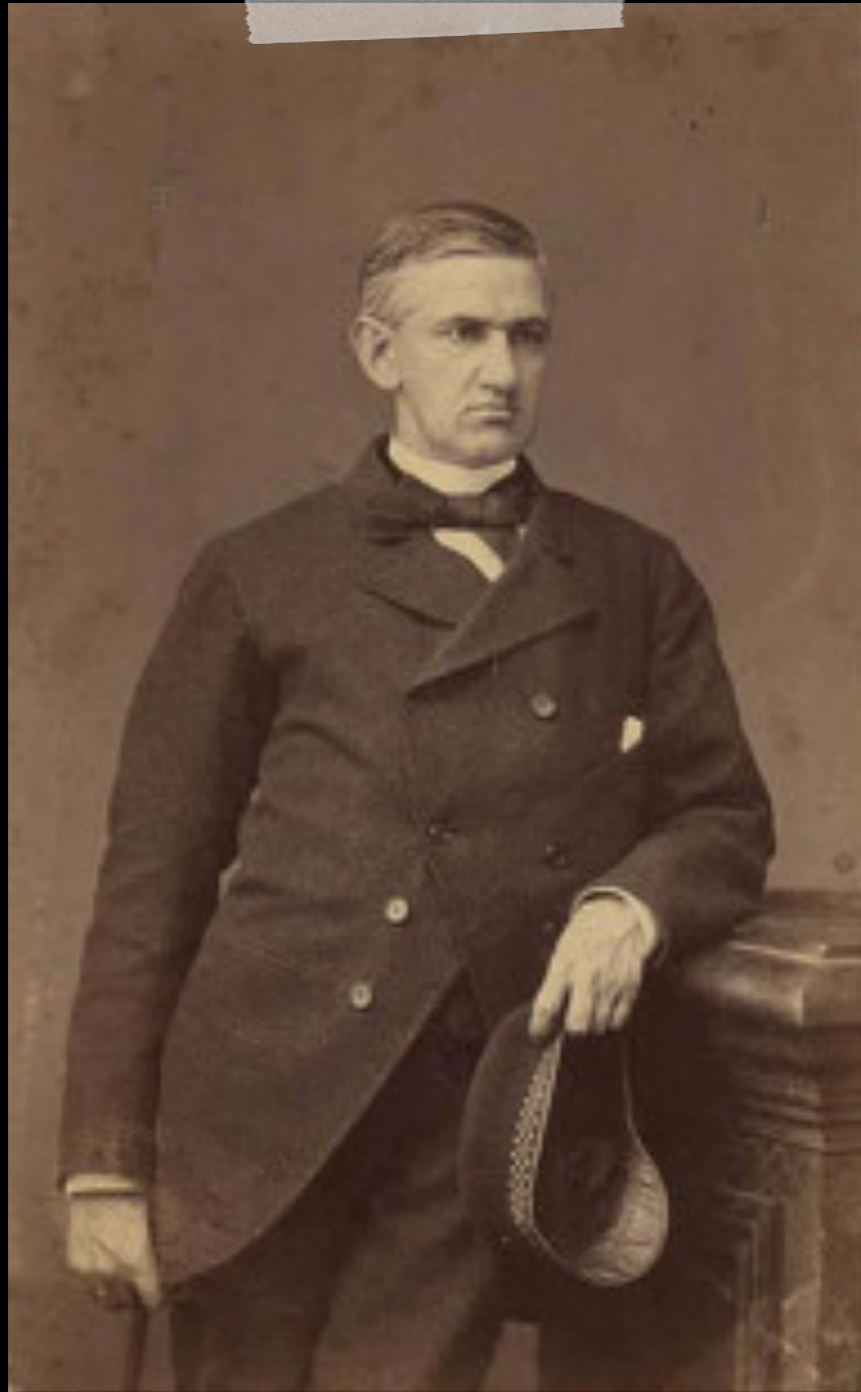
**When peace like a river
attendeth my way
When sorry like
sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot,
Thou hast taught
me to say, “It is well,
it is well with my soul.”**



**Though Satan
should buffet, though
trials should come,
let this blest assurance
control: that Christ
has regarded my
helpless estate,
and has shed His own
blood for my soul**



**My sin—O the bliss of
this glorious thought—
my sin, not in part,
but the whole,
is nailed to the cross
and I bear it no more,
praise the Lord,
praise the Lord
O my soul**



**O Lord, haste the day
when my faith shall
be sight, the clouds
be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound
and the Lord shall
descend, “Even so” —
It is well with my soul**

The Lamb in the midst
of the throne will be
their Shepherd,
and He will guide them
to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away
every tear from their eyes.

- Revelation 7:17 -



**1: Life in a Real World
of Pain & Suffering**

**2. And Then It All
Went Wrong**

3. When Jesus Wept

**4. Lament, Longing
& the Hope of Heaven**

**5. Love & Sacrifice—
Living in the Meantime**