
RELATED SCRIPTURES

Psalms 33:11 | Ephesians 1:11 | James 1:13-14

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 11.19.23

SUMMARY

Throughout several chapters in Acts, beginning in chapter 21, we read of authorities bouncing Paul across various courtroom-like settings. The Jewish leaders and Roman officials were unable to agree upon Paul's fate. In the eyes of the Jewish authorities, Paul was a distorter of the faith, leading the people away from the law and the prophets because of his belief that Jesus was the fulfillment of them. On the other hand, the Romans were largely indifferent on these religious matters, willing to punish him for—at most—disrupting the peace, but not willing to punish him with death as the Jewish authorities wished. The Roman governor would ultimately direct Paul's case to Caesar himself which required a journey across the Mediterranean during a season where sailing its waters was often unfriendly to the vessels that navigated them. As the ship was facing the hostile waters, we see a tension emerge between the sovereign will of God and human responsibility. If God sovereignly ordains whatsoever comes to pass, does human responsibility matter? With the ship's crew fearing losing their lives, Paul assures them of the heavenly message he received, telling them the Lord would spare "all those who sail with you" (v. 24) from the dangerous seas—everyone *will* survive. Yet further along in the account, we read that several sailors attempted to escape from the ship. Paul tells them, "Unless these men stay in the ship, [they] cannot be saved" (v. 31). Ultimately, the men remained in the vessel and survived the harrowing circumstances, just as the Lord told Paul. The Lord's will prevailed—as it *always* does; the men were saved. Yet, at the same time, God's sovereign decrees do not negate human responsibility—they *had* to stay in the ship. There is an element of mystery at play when God's sovereign will interacts with human responsibility; God's will is done, *and* our actions *do* matter.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Acts 27:13-44.

Do your actions affect God's will? If not, do you find assurance in his will always being done, or does it make you feel helpless that his will is done regardless of what you do?

If you had a friend who struggled with how God's sovereign will interacts with man's responsibility, how would you explain how they both matter?

If there's one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today's themes in what you bring before God.