

Discipleship and the Sovereignty of God

One thing illustrated in the book of Acts is that Jesus' disciples live in light of God's sovereignty. In the passage we are looking at today, we see how Paul live out this truth. He knew God wanted him to return to Jerusalem even though he would face "imprisonment and afflictions" (20:22-23). As a faithful disciple, Paul went. He indeed ended up in prison. While there, Jesus appeared to Paul encouraging him and letting him know that he must also bear witness in Rome (23:11). Then over the next several chapters (23-28), wild things happened to Paul – assassination plots, hearings and trials, a shipwreck, a snake bite, etc. Through it all Paul does and says things that make clear that he believed God would protect him and get him to Rome. He lived as if God were sovereign over all these things (. . . because He is). God is still sovereign over everything and everyone in this world. Therefore, as his disciples we can and should live our lives as if God is sovereign (. . . because he is).

Opening Question: What are we saying when we say that God is sovereign?

Read Acts 24:24:1-12

1. The last passage we studied was Acts 22:30-23:11. What has happened to Paul since then?
2. Acts 24:27 tells us that Paul had been in jail now for two years. After all this time, why do you think the Jew's were still raging about Paul?
3. What can we infer about the nature of what the "many and serious charges" were (v. 7) from what Paul says in verse 8?
4. Paul knows that God has told him he must testify about Jesus in Rome (23:11). How does this knowledge affect how Paul interacts in this situation? In other words, how do we see Paul living in light of God's sovereignty?
5. As you think about the flow of what is happening to Paul, how do we see the sovereign hand of God moving to get Paul to Rome?

6. Though we may not face imprisonment or assassination plots like Paul, from time to time, we too experiencing challenging situations that seem daunting or out of control. What, if any, situation(s) come to mind right now that falls into this category for you?

7. What questions do you tend to ask God when you find yourself in such difficult situations?

Steve said:

If you are a disciple of Jesus, you want to do the will of God more than anything else. Jesus died for you, so you want to live for him. That changes the questions you ask when you find yourself in difficult situations. It's okay to ask "Why, God, is this happening to me?" But God doesn't promise to answer that question. Perhaps a better question for a disciple to ask would be, "God, what is your will here?" Once you discern his will, then you ask the sovereign God of the universe for all the grace you need to do God's will. And then you walk into your days by faith.

8. How might the question, "God, what is your will here?" be a better question than, "Why, God, is this happening to me" when we are walking through challenging situations?

9. One of the core messages that Steve communicated in the sermon is that we should live in light of God's sovereignty (. . . because He is). What is the main way that you sense God is calling you to live in light of this truth right now?