

Acts 19:23—41

The account of the growth of the Church



At 11:11 AM every Veteran's Day the sun aligns perfectly with the Anthem Veteran's Memorial in Arizona to shine through the ellipses of the five marble pillars representing each branch of the Armed Forces illuminating The Great Seal of the United States.



What do you see?



An attractive young woman?



An old woman?

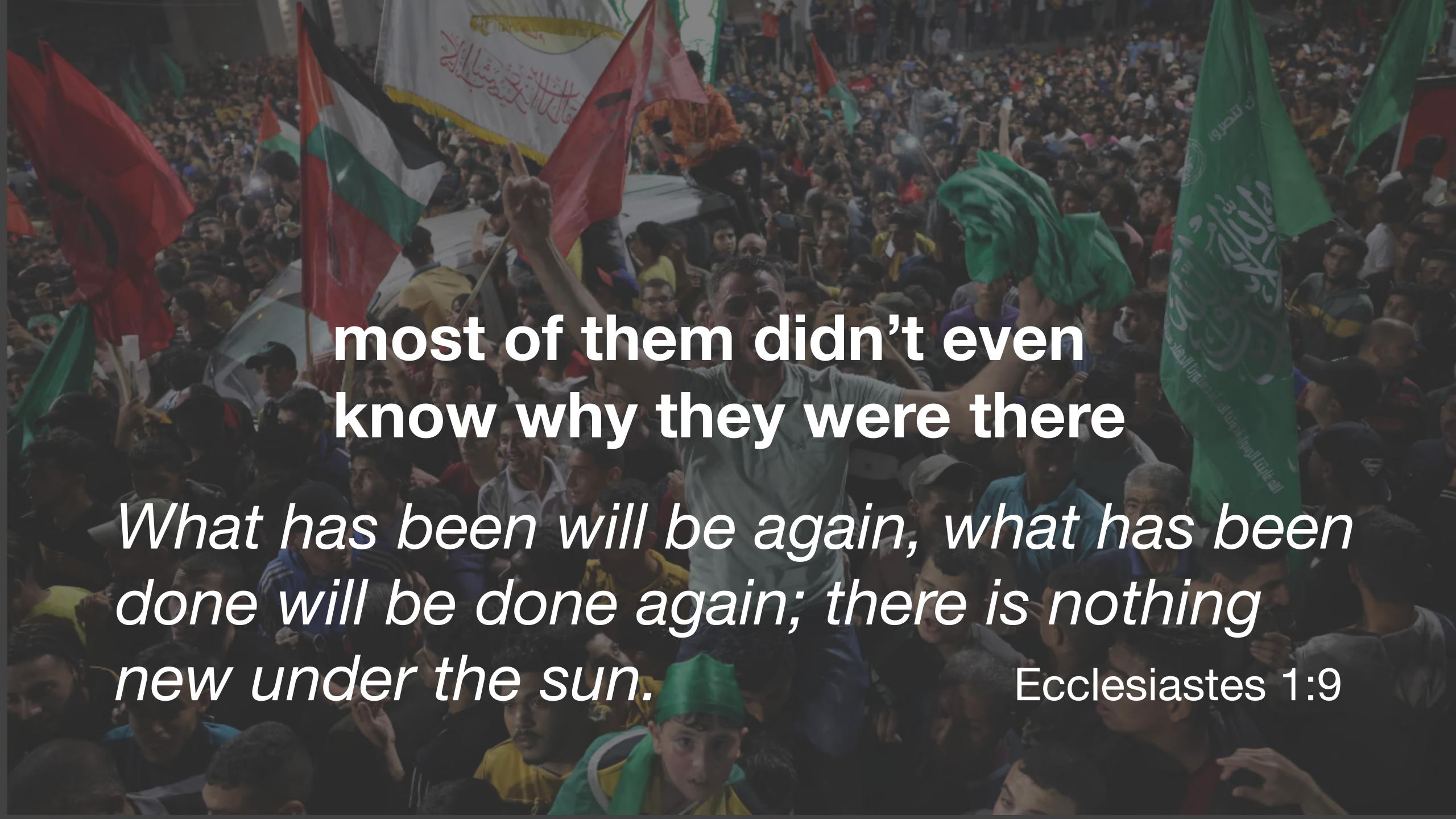
<sup>23</sup> About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. <sup>24</sup> It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy. <sup>25</sup> He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows:

<sup>25</sup> "Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. <sup>26</sup> But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren't really gods at all. And he's done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! 27 Of course, I'm not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I'm also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!"

<sup>28</sup> At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. 30 Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn't let him. 31 Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater.



<sup>32</sup> Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn't even know why they were there. 33 The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward and told him to explain the situation. He motioned for silence and tried to speak. <sup>34</sup> But when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they started shouting again and kept it up for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"



35 At last the mayor was able to quiet them down enough to speak. "Citizens of Ephesus," he said. "Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell to us from heaven. 36 Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. 37 You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess.

38 "If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make formal charges. 39 And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly. 40 I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won't know what to say." 41 Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.

After a long and fruitful stay in Ephesus during which "the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing," a disturbance broke out that caused things to unravel for Paul's ministry. Throughout this uproar and upheaval, Paul kept his head, able to stay calm in spite of the panic of difficult circumstances. His attitude and actions of peace and calm in the midst of panic and confusion are worth pondering as we consider how we ought to respond to disturbing events in our life that threaten to undo us.



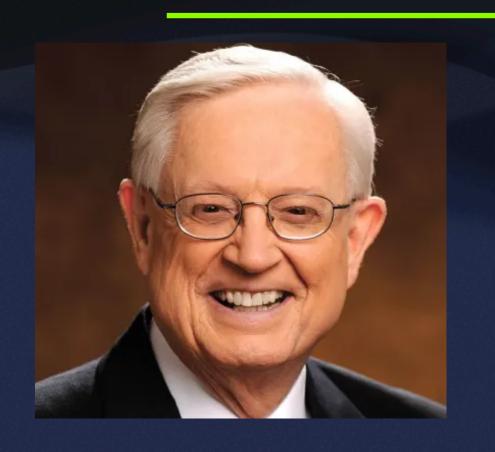
Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, Acts

If you're facing an uncertain future or uncontrollable situation, remember that God knows the future and He's always in control. Not for a second did Paul wonder whether the world somehow got away from God's sovereign grip. Though he desired to enter the crowded theater to come to the aid of his companions and perhaps proclaim the gospel to such a large crowd, it became clear that this wasn't the wisest course of action. Instead of panicking and pushing his own will, Paul stepped back and let the circumstances unfold.



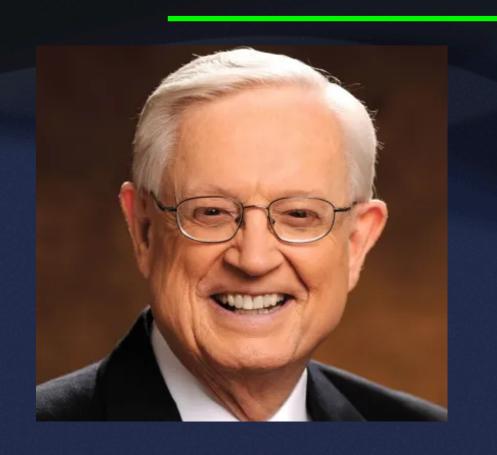
Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, Acts

I'm sure a few wondered what was wrong with Paul. Why wasn't he losing his mind? Why didn't he try manipulating the situation from behind the scenes? How could he be at peace in the place of panic? Instead of asking what was **wrong** with Paul for letting go of the situation, maybe we should be asking what was **right** with him that he could find such peace in its midst.



Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, Acts

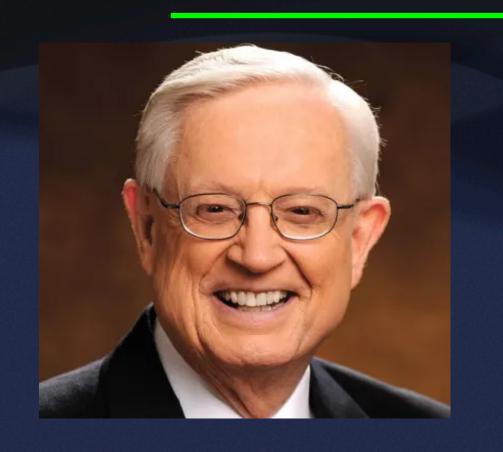
The fact is, Paul had his spiritual feet planted firmly on the rock of Christ. He knew what the Lord would have said in that situation, when the tempests of controversy were breaking loose on the city of Ephesus, where his closest friends were at the brink of suffering severely for the cause of Christ at the hands of jealous idolaters. The Lord would have said, "You can't stand on your own? Lean on Me. You can't control the situation? Depend on Me. You can't manipulate things? Wait on Me. Relax. I've got this under control."



Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, Acts

And He did, too. Rather than making a way for Paul to slip in and save the day, God orchestrated circumstances so that an unnamed town clerk single-handedly calmed the crowd and dismissed them. Clearly, God is bigger than a crowd of thousands, and He's greater than a wealthy idolater. Learn to focus on people and circumstances through God's eyes. No mob is out of His control. Even if you can't handle the situation, He can.

This is why Paul could have peace in the place of panic. And so can you.



Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, Acts

IT IS CRUCIAL that we know God well enough to be confident in his character: That HE IS GOOD, HE IS TRUSTWORTHY, and WE CAN TRUST HI

<sup>23</sup> During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. <sup>24</sup> God heard their groaning, and *he remembered his covenant* with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup> So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

- <sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the **Lorp**, who made heaven and earth.
- <sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. <sup>4</sup> Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. <sup>5</sup> The **Lord** is your keeper; the **Lord** is your shade on your right hand. <sup>6</sup> The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. 7 The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. 8 The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

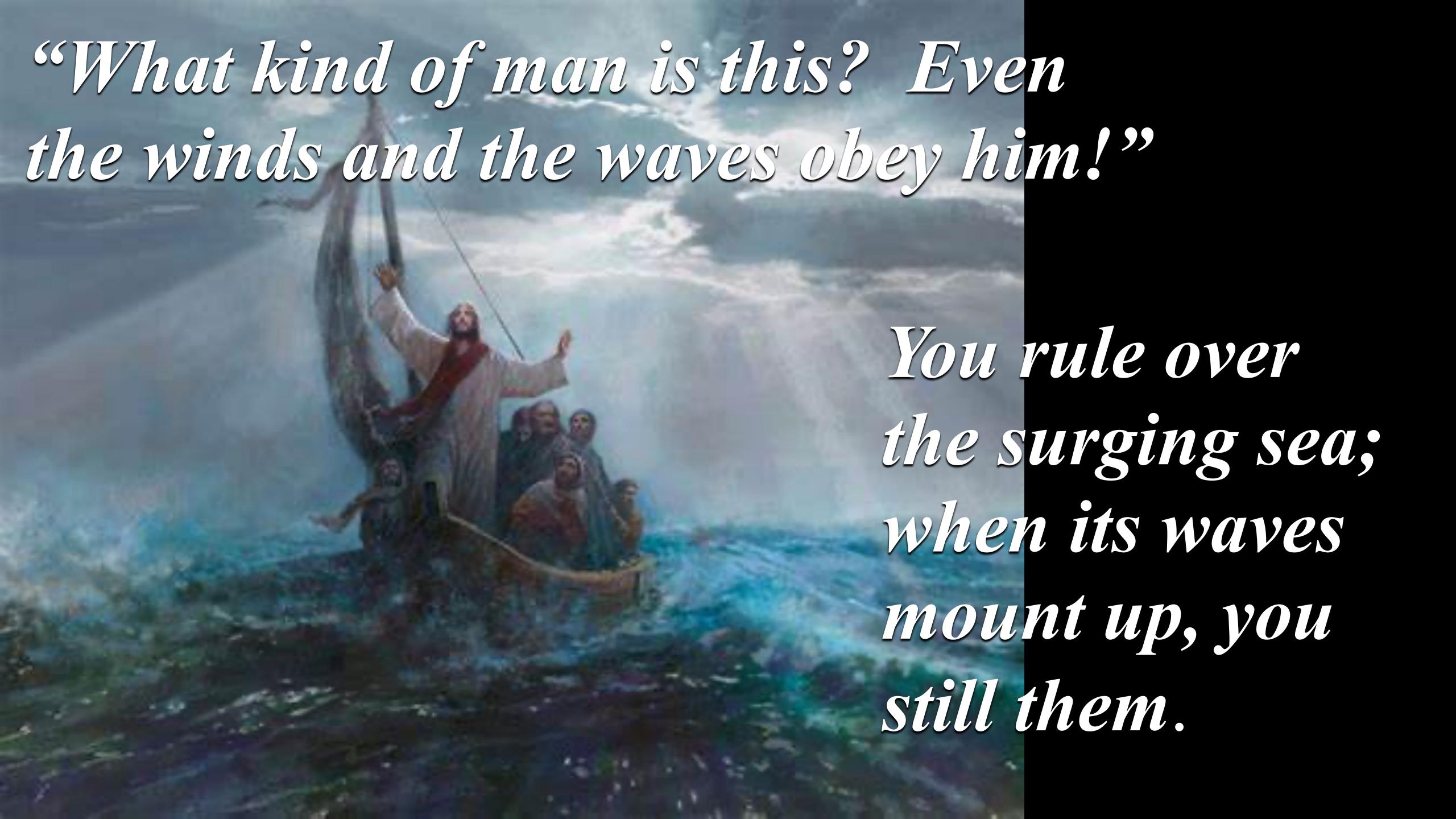
### Psalm 121

<sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. <sup>5</sup> Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." <sup>6</sup> So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

"I will by no means leave you; I will by no means forsake you."

Hebrews 13:4-6





"You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have."



Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.