

ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
"Part XXIV: God's Equipping OUR Plans To Fit HIS Plans FOR Us"
(Romans 15:17-33)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Sometimes it seems hard to know how to plan in God's will:

(1) As a Church, you have annually taken up a gracious Christmas Eve offering for my family, an offering that is quite large.

I like to take the offering and direct it towards "special" things like savings for a quality vacation, or special decorations for the living room or needed new clothes for a party or two. But, this year, other needs arose: our car's transmission broke down the Friday before Christmas Eve; we were also looking at medical deductible costs for the New Year with upcoming family medical procedures in Hartford or the UCONN medical center. Then, due family changes, there arose an uncertainty regarding IRS taxes due in April.

What was I to do? Was I to "trust the Lord" with these other costs and delegate the Church's money out to the more "special" things in life or was it "wise" to hold onto the love offering for taxes, car repair bills and medical needs? For some time, I had no way of telling exactly how God wanted me to deal with your love offering!

(2) Throughout our congregation, I have noticed the same need to know how, in **practical** terms, just **how** to tell God's will:

(a) Several heads of households in our Church are right now wondering if they are to stay in their current jobs, or look elsewhere. **The fact is, God does not communicate audibly with them on just what to do, so HOW are they to know WHAT to do?** (b) A believer I know faced the dilemma of trying to meet needs that rose due to a wrong done by another in an accident. The believer properly did not like having to take legal action -- a fact in keeping with various directives in the book of Proverbs. However, there was no other logical way to recover damages lost, and the believer was in great need of having costs reimbursed. **Was it God's will to go to a lawyer or not, and HOW could this one KNOW?**

How can we properly plan as believers when we run across confusing and complex circumstances in life where there is no clear directive from God? Where do we start to plan well?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I want to do GOD'S will in life, but when it comes to actual PLANNING, I never hear God's voice telling me EXACTLY WHAT to do, and WHEN and HOW! Can you offer Biblical insight here?"

- I. **The Apostle Paul expressed PERSONAL goals in his ministry that are NOT seen in Scripture as arising from GOD'S plans FOR him:**
 - A. Paul planned to evangelize where no one else had gone, Rom. 15:20f.
 - B. In fact, due to this goal, Paul delayed coming to Rome, 15:22-23.
 - C. He then revealed his visit to the Romans would be part of his more extensive plan to continue on to evangelize in unreached Spain, 15:24.
 - D. Yet, due to the desire of Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia to help Jerusalem's poor Christians, Paul planned to take a brief ministry furlough to carry a love offering from these Gentiles to the Jerusalem believers before heading off to Rome en route to Spain, 15:25-28.
 - E. **In each of these plans, Paul is seen as authoring them HIMSELF.**
- II. **Indeed, these plans were submitted to God in prayer for His help, showing they were NOT directly authored by God, Rom. 15:29-33:**
 - A. Though Paul was sure he would arrive in Rome to the mutual edification of all involved (Rom. 15:29; 1:11-12), he still asked for prayer to God that he might have safety from persecutors in traveling to Jerusalem with the offering for the needy believers, Rom. 15:30-33.
 - B. Hence, Paul's plans here were **his own, not dictated** to him **by GOD!**
- III. **However, due to Paul's working relationship with God, we see practical helps from God that MODIFIED Paul's planning efforts:**
 - A. As a believer, and in accord with Paul's teaching in Romans to this point, Paul was indwelt and **led** by the Holy Spirit, cf. Romans 8:9b.
 - B. As such, the Lord was at work **in** him, helping him both **WILL as well as PERFORM** God's perfect will, cf. Philippians 2:12-13.
 - C. Looking closely at Paul's **reasoning behind** his personal plans, we see just **HOW** the **Lord** worked **in concert** with Paul in his **planning**:
 1. **Interaction One** - Paul's **initial** apostolic calling and direction was given by way of **credible fellow Christian church leaders**, Acts 9:10-19 with 9:25 with 9:26-27 with 11:25-26 with 13:1-3. Hence, God expected him to **follow** that basic **initial pathway** in his **life**.

2. Interaction Two - As Paul incorporated **Scripture** in his *planning*, God **used** his application of it to *guide* him, Romans 15:20-21, 22.
 - a. Paul's desire to minister only to the unreached arose from his appreciation of the Isaiah 52:15 prophecy, Romans 15:20-21.
 - b. That prophecy predicted Gentiles who had not heard of Christ's salvation by His death for them would be stunned into silent awe upon hearing of it, cf. E. J. Young, Isaiah, vol. III, p. 339.
 - c. Paul wanted to be part of that Scripture's fulfillment! Since God delighted in this **intent** on Paul's part, He gave Paul *room* to go *often* where **he** chose in reaching these Gentiles!
 - d. **Note how Paul's plan to take a ministry furlough to aid poor believers in Rom. 15:25-27 is condoned by God as his doing so came from Scriptural directives in 1 Cor. 9:9-11, 14.**
3. Interaction Three - As Paul *planned* via applying the Scriptures to his life, **God intervened** to equip him to meet his **Scriptural** goal **more effectively** than had Paul been left to his own insight alone!
 - a. While on his first missionary journey, Paul was **blocked** by **God** from **even ministering** in Asia and Bythinia, Acts 16:6-8.
 - b. Upon thus not knowing **where** to go, God gave Paul a vision of a Gentile who was open to the Gospel in Macedonia to equip Paul to know his work was more **urgently** needed **there**, 16:10.
4. Interaction Four - God's leading Paul from Troas east by northeast across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia in Acts 16:8-10 fit the east by northeast route God had let him take since being sent to evangelize out of Antioch in Syria, cf. The Macmillan Bible Atlas, p. 167, map No. 264. Hence, the Biblical signal of **God's precedents** also revealed God's leading to Paul, cf. also 1 Kings 19:1-3, 8-9!
5. Interaction Five - When Paul became too self-reliant, **God** led him into trials to learn to trust more upon the Lord, 2 Cor. 1:8-10a!

Application: *For God's help in planning, (1) believe on Christ for salvation from sin to be led by God, Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:9b, 14. (2) Then, lean on the Holy Spirit and heed Scripture to plan, Gal. 5:16; Phil. 2:12-13. This includes (a) heeding valid Church leaders, (b) using Scripture itself to plan, (c) noting God's blocks or openings in life's paths and (d) recalling His precedents for us to date. (4) If we err or become too self-reliant, God will override (Rom. 8:14), using trials to direct and correct us, 2 Cor. 1:8-10.*

Lesson: *As Paul had BELIEVED in Christ, to the degree he YIELDED to the Spirit's leading in the life of faith in God, God worked in his planning to equip Paul to plan well. When Paul's faith or human limitations hindered him from effective planning, God overruled by letting Paul experience trials that kept Paul on the track of God's will for him!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

This past Tuesday, a bunch of challenges arose, blocking my getting into the office to begin doing God's will -- lesson preparations:

(1) First, it snowed, meaning I had to take time to clear off my driveway. (2) Since we had arranged through the car insurance people for that day to make the switch, my son, Greg and I needed to dispose of his old car and get his replacement, the Buick, into the DMV for inspection and registration. His time, the Winsted DMV's schedule and the car insurance company paperwork all meant Tuesday morning was tied up with car switching. (3) Then, our family car, still in repairs at Torrington Ford, was supposed to be finished that afternoon, and the shop agent was not sure if the warranty insurer would cover its costs. The bill was going to be between \$106 for the deductible and its tax to a haunting \$2,600.00 plus, depending on the insurer's decision! (4) Finally, Zana Johnson was set for surgery the day before at Charlotte Hungerford, so I wanted to get in to visit her that Tuesday!

As it turned out, by the time I saw Zana, I still had not been to the office nor to Torrington Ford to pick up my car. She noted "You look like I'm supposed to feel!" She spoke of the rings under my eyes.

I respect Zana's walk and faith in the Lord, and took my signal from her as from the Lord, and returned home and took a nap! I knew I couldn't afford to get sick, something Zana, God and I all knew well!

Upon snoozing for 20 minutes, and feeling significantly better, I went to the office to study for the Prayer Meeting lesson due the next day. Guess what? The lesson scheduled was out of Leviticus 23:1-3 on the Sabbath **rest**, and it foretold of our **rest** in Christ! I realized the Lord had arranged these events for me to have to **apply** that **lesson** not only for the good of the listeners at Prayer Meeting, but also for **me**!

So, **resting** in the Lord about the car repair costs, I drove to the repair shop to pick up our car. The cost came to \$106.00. Yes, the warranty insurer had indeed covered the big costs. The repair agent said he had never had such a tough time getting the warranty insurer to cover a repair job as he had my car, but it had come through anyway!

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