

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 7/11/93 PM  
Romans 15:32 "Why Plan If God Has A Will?"

Overview of Series:

"The Will of God and the Word of God" Ephesians 5:17

"How to Find the Will of God" Romans 12:1-2

"Why Plan If God Has A Will?" Romans 15:32

"The Value of Doing the Will of God" I John 2:17

"The Work of the Spirit and the Will of God" Romans 8:27

"The Place of Prayer in the Will of God" Colossians 4:12

**Intro:**

This morning, I shared with you the story of Jim Elliot, a missionary who was martyr for Christ at the age of 28. There was a man with a passion to serve God. He had a great burden to reach the Auca Indians in Ecuador. He wanted to take the gospel to this stone age tribe. But it was not God's Will.

Tonight we want to probe a difficult question: If God has a will, why plan?

When Jim Elliot was 23 years old, he wrote these words, "Wherever you are, be ALL there. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God."

That's the way he lived his life. Whatever he did, he did it to the hilt. He was ALL there. That meant he gave it 100%--whether studying for a college class, or doing Bible study, or praying, or discipling, or wrestling, or just having fun--he was ALL there. He lived out Eccl 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

Again, I want to raise an uncomfortable, yet relevant question.

Q: If God has a will for your life, why plan? Why plan if God has a will?

What's the point of spending 4 years in college, of cracking the books to graduate summa cum laude, of learning a foreign language, of developing a plan to reach a lost tribe, if God was going to take him home to heaven at the age of 28 anyway?

Is it God's Will for us to make plans? Obviously, we know it is. But how should we go about making plans in a way that pleases God?

Tonight, we want to do a Case Study in the Bible. We want to investigate the decision-making process of a godly man, who definitely yielded his life to God's will, and even eventually gave his life in Christ's service, yet who also made plans.

Our case study character is Paul. Specifically, we want to investigate the decision-making process Paul went through in Rom 15:32.

Review: "Decision-Making and the Will of God"

Week #1:

God's Will will never contradict God's Word.

Q: But what about decisions involving areas where God's Word is silent?

Week #2: (see Transp)

Romans 12:1-2 To understand the Will of God, I must...

Principle #1: I must be in the place of Total Surrender to God.

Principle #2: I must be aware of the Conflict of Values.

A. The Will of the World

B. The Will of God

Principle #3: I must emphasize the importance of my Mind, and not my Feelings.

Principle #4: I must evaluate the alternatives with these questions:

A. Is it Good?

B. Is it Acceptable to God?

C. Will it help me be more Mature in Christ?

We all make decisions.

Stats: Several years ago, Dr. Erich Klinger at the Univ of Minnesota conducted a study in which he determined that all of us face between 300 and 17,000 decisions every day! (Robinson, 164-5)

Illust: Ronald Reagan (ibid)

Planning is a big part of decision-making. So let's turn to our case study of Paul. We'll begin with a question.

Q: Was Paul in God's Will?

One of the things that strikes me about Paul is his confidence.

I Cor 1:1 "Paul, called to be an apostle through the will of God"

II Cor 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God"

Eph 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God"

Col 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God"

II Tim 1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God"

Paul knew it was God's will for him to be an apostle. He had no doubts whatsoever about that. He knew he was doing what God wanted him to do.

Note: By the way, do you have confidence that you are doing what God wants you to do? What motivated you to pursue your vocation? Are you in the job you're in today because of money, or prestige, or because you know it's the will of God?

So Paul could say, "I know I'm in the will of God. I'm doing what God designed me to do."

Yet I would suggest to you that there was another sense in which the will of God was not quite so black and white to Paul. Let's investigate a specific decision-making opportunity this man of God faced in Rom 15.

READ Rom 15:30-33

Background of Romans 15

- When Paul wrote Romans, he was in Corinth, during his 3rd missionary journey. The year was about 57-58 A.D.
- Paul had never been to Rome, the capital city of the Empire.
- Paul had a great burden to go to Rome and minister there (1:8-12; 15:23).
- Paul had even tried several times to go to Rome, but was prevented (1:13).

Q: Why did Paul want to go to Rome?

1. He knew it was God's Will for him to be an Apostle to Gentiles. Acts 9:15 (at his conversion) "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings..."
2. Paul's missionary strategy was to go to the large, strategic urban centers of the Roman Empire. He went to the masses, to Ephesus, to Thessalonica, to Corinth, to Philippi. He expected the people he reached in the urban centers to spread the gospel to the surrounding towns and villages.

So you can see why Paul wanted to go to Rome. Rome was the hub of the known world. So guess what Paul did?

He devised a Plan. He reveals his plan in Rom 15. Let's look at the steps involved in Paul's Plan:

A. Overall Objectives:

1. To go minister in unreached Spain (24)
2. To stop in Rome on the way (24)

B. Intermediate Objectives:

1. To leave Corinth and go to Jerusalem (25)
2. To take a Benevolent Offering from the saints in Greece to the saints in Jerusalem (26)
3. To leave Jerusalem and head for Spain, via Rome (28)

C. Paul's Assumptions in his Planning:

1. He anticipated Roadblocks to his plan (30, NIV "struggle")
2. Prayer was essential.
  - He asked the Romans to pray...
  - for him (30)
  - for his deliverance from dangerous men (31)
  - for an acceptable ministry in Jerusalem (31)
3. He submitted his Plan to the Will of God (32).

### **Paul's Plan in Romans 15:**

By this time in his life, Paul had been on 3 missionary journeys. He had gone hundreds, even thousands of miles, taking the gospel to lost people.

Yet Paul operated by a principle--He didn't infringe on someone else's turf. 15:20 "...I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named..."

Notice his objectives...

A. Overall Objectives:

Paul was constantly looking for new, unreached areas needing the gospel. So he developed a two-fold aim:

1. To go minister in unreached Spain (24)
2. To stop in Rome on the way (24)

To accomplish that, there were some intermediate steps...

B. Intermediate Objectives:

1. To leave Corinth and go to Jerusalem (25)
2. To take a Benevolent Offering from the saints in Greece to the saints in Jerusalem (26)

An economic recession hit Palestine. The church in Jerusalem was especially hard hit. The churches in Macedonia and Achaia took up an offering to help. Paul coordinated the collection, and was responsible to hand deliver the gift.

Note: Paul had future plans. He planned to go to Spain. But his future plans didn't interfere with past commitments. Years ago, as recorded in Acts 15, Paul promised the leaders in Jerusalem, he would remember the poor. Here he is, years later, fulfilling that requirement.

Problem: Some Christians are always jumping into new things before they finish the old...

3. To leave Jerusalem and head for Spain, via Rome (28)

Think about it. Those were lofty objectives! Don't underestimate the magnitude of Paul's vision! This was more than a 7 day trip!

Transp: Map

From Corinth to Jerusalem was at least 600 miles. From Jerusalem to Rome would be over 1000 miles. And from Rome to Spain would be at least another 600 miles. And remember, there were no 747's or interstate highways!

So Paul devised a plan, a lofty one at that!

Application: It's Ok to plan. God has given us minds. He wants us to use them, in dependence upon Him.

Illust:

C. Paul's Assumptions in his Planning:

What strikes me about Paul's plan is his confidence. Listen to him...  
Vv 28-29 "When I have performed this...I WILL COME by you into Spain."

Paul's confidence is pretty interesting in light of the impending danger.

1. He anticipated Roadblocks to his plan (30, NIV "struggle")  
V 30 "How I beseech you...strive together with me"  
V 30 NIV "...join me in my struggle."

Paul knew there could be, and probably would be roadblocks to his plan. He knew there was danger. In fact, he talks about the danger in the record in Acts:

Acts 20:22 "I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen"

Acts 21:4 "...urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem"

Acts 21:10-11 "Agabus...Jews will bind you"

Q: What was Paul's attitude towards this possible setback to his plan?

A: Acts 21:13 "I am ready to die in Jerusalem!"

Don't miss that. Paul had plans. He planned to go to Jerusalem, then to Rome, and then to Spain. But his plans were realistic. He knew only God knows the future.

Paul operated by another assumption in his planning...

## 2. Prayer was essential.

He asked the Romans to pray...

--for him (30)

--for his deliverance from dangerous men (31)

--for an acceptable ministry in Jerusalem (31)

In his commentary on Romans, Ray Stedman stresses the importance of prayer. He says, "Prayer is particularly powerful at this point; it can protect someone in danger. After Paul arrived in Jerusalem, as we learn from the book of Acts, he was set upon by a mob in the temple courts. They were out to kill him right on the spot. They had rocks in their hands and were ready to stone him to death. But at this critical moment, the commander of the Roman legion on the other side of the wall, in the castle of Antonia, looked over into the temple court and saw what was going on. He came down with a band of soldiers and rescued the apostle in the nick of time." (208)

A coincidence? No. Prayer was answered.

## 3. He submitted his Plan to the Will of God (32).

V 32 "That I may come...by the will of God..."

James put it this way.

James 4:13-15 "...For ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall..."

So that was Paul's Plan. To minister in Rome, and then in Spain.

Q: Was it God's Will for Paul's Plan to be accomplished?

A: Yes, and No!

What eventually happened? Well, yes, Paul made it to Rome...in chains. And apparently, he did make it to Spain...after a 3 to 4 year prison term.

Tran: What's the point? What can we learn from this case study of Paul?

### **Application:**

Discuss: What principles can we learn about Decision-making in this case study?

Principles about Decision-Making and the Will of God  
from Paul's Experience in Romans 15:

1. It's OK for me to PLAN. God often utilizes our plans to accomplish His Will.
2. I must make sure my plans reflect God's Revealed Will.

Paul knew God had called him to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Any plan he made had to be in line with that clear commission.

eg--Wives deciding whether to take a job outside the home.

Q: What did God say is to be the wife's primary responsibility? To her home

Q: Will this job opportunity enhance my ability to fulfill my God-given responsibility?

3. I must submit my plans to God's purposes and timing.
4. I must not be intimidated by Roadblocks.
5. Prayer is a vital part of the Decision-making process.
6. I must seek ways to invest my life in God's service.

Paul didn't just coast home in life. He was constantly thinking, "What can I do to please the Lord with my life?"