

## **1 Corinthians 16: The Plans of Paul**

**Pastor Dave Scherrer – June, 4, 2017**

There is a personality test out there called the Myers Briggs. It tests for combinations of 16 personality indicators and when you are all done with the test you can be labeled for the rest of your life. Sound like fun? I actually like these kinds of tests as long as you don't forget about the God who designed and made you in the first place for His purposes. (Anyone take this inventory??)

In this Myers Briggs test there is one continuum that I think is particularly interesting – how can I describe these two kinds of people . . . I heard it said that there is one kind of personality who know that a doorknob is for opening doors and another kind of personality who know with equal confidence that a doorknob is for hanging up their coat. The letters conscripted to these people are 'J's' and 'P's.' J's like to plan; they like to have their ducks in a row. Their tendency is to consider everything that might go wrong and put plans in place to mitigate against those possibilities. They prefer a planned or orderly way of life, like to have things settled and organized. They feel more comfortable when decisions are made, and like to bring life under control as much as possible. That's a "J" - any of those in the room?

Now the other person type is the "P" – they like the spontaneous life, they like to see what life will bring and then ride the wave and see where it takes them. They like to trust their instinct and prefer a flexible and unfettered way of life. Those labeled with a "P" would rather adapt to the world than organize it. "P's" love the feeling of excitement that happens when they get to that city at 2 in the morning only to find out all the hotel rooms are indeed full. After all its only 145 miles to the next town! (Anyone here fit this description?)

Now going back to the "J's" – any of you married to an "P"? My wife is . . .

Now my natural tendency or inclination is to be that spontaneous fun loving guy. Now don't get too excited fellow "P's" – because I have learned that in Christ, my life . . . that I sometimes like to call a life of faith . . . is really me just being lazy. Over the years I have become a believer in being strategic and I believe that it is a very sad thing to build a tower without first counting the costs. I believe that Jesus was indeed a man who by faith followed the will of His Father, but that did not mean that he did not have a plan and a goal. He made His way to Jerusalem in the last week of his life he set his jaw like a flint toward the cross. His intentions were so intense that on that walk to Jerusalem, his disciples were afraid of Him it seems. Everything He had lived for set up this moment for everything that he would die for. I do not think that there was a wasted moment in our Saviors life. I believe he laughed and ran and jumped and went new places and met lots of new people, and had hundreds of meaningful and spontaneous conversations. But each of these were done with an intentionality to live into the reality of being fully God and fully human. And to complete the work of the Triune Godhead.

Paul was like that too, though I must admit he comes off pretty driven. A fair amount of “J” in Paul. And frankly, I do not think that being a faith focused spirit led person and being fiercely driven to make a difference are at odds. I have lived my life known at home as David F. Scherrer where the F stands for “*fun*”, but many who know me deeply know that I am fiercely driven and have personal and professional goals that sometimes consume me. And interestingly, I don’t feel particularly conflicted. I am convinced that a person can be deeply spirit led and incredibly driven.

Let’s read this portion of scripture that I think most of us kinda skip because it seems kind of like Paul is just saying a long good-bye, but I think there is a reason God saw fit to include this chapter in the Bible.

### **1 Corinthians 16:1-9**

Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. <sup>3</sup> And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, <sup>6</sup> and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup> For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup> But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Just for fun let’s look at one other passage that is quite a bit the same, this one from Romans.

### **Romans 15:20-28**

I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, <sup>21</sup> but as it is written,

*“Those who have never been told of him will see,  
and those who have never heard will understand.”*

<sup>22</sup> This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. <sup>23</sup> But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, <sup>24</sup> I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. <sup>25</sup> At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. <sup>26</sup> For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. <sup>28</sup> When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.

### **The Plans of Paul**

Look how Paul describes his intention, not casual or cavalier in the least

*I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup>But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup>for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. (do you see the planned intentionality in these words?)*

*<sup>20</sup>I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named . . .*

*<sup>28</sup>When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. (Spain, a hope or a reality??)*

### **Establishing strategic goals – Having it in mind to advance the Kingdom**

I suppose it is possible that Paul thought about things like saving for a rainy day or going on vacation to see the great national landmarks of his day or visiting every country on his bucket list. But maybe not so much. It is clear though that Paul established strategic goals to advance the Kingdom.

The ultimate reason for planning is that God is a God who plans and we are created in his image to exercise dominion in the earth under his lordship. We should plan and pray to impact the kingdom for Christ. We intentionally ask ourselves what I am doing today, this month, this year that deepens and extends Christ's rule and reign.

I don't think it is even possible to conceive a God who does not act according to his own eternal planning—that is, a God who has knee jerk responses to stimuli rather than deliberate actions that fit into a wise purpose.

**Isaiah 46:9-10**, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, *and I will accomplish all my purpose.*'"

**Ephesians 1:9-10**, "God has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, *according to his purpose* which he set forth in Christ *as a plan for the fullness of time*, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and on earth."

**Acts 2:23**, "This Jesus [was] delivered up according to *the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.*"

Here is the point this morning - God has a plan and your salvation is part of His plan and now your obedience to Him is now your plan and purpose in Christ.

### **Planning includes measurable goals and financial considerations**

We see that Paul understands this. He plans well. From the Corinthians we read in verse 6 -

*I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go.*

From this Romans passage we learned that Paul had a general guideline: he wanted to preach where no one had preached before. Then he developed a specific plan from this guideline: he would take a financial gift back to Jerusalem; then he would go to Rome to establish a western base, from which he would then go to Spain.

What makes this especially significant is that as far as we know the plan fell through. He was arrested in Jerusalem. He went to Rome as a prisoner and probably never got to Spain. God is the one who finally makes the future. But we plan nevertheless. God uses our planning even if he aborts it.

For example, if Paul had not planned to use Rome as a base of operations for a trip to Spain, he probably never would have written the greatest letter the world has ever known—the epistle to the Romans. Planning is crucial in Christian living and Christian ministry—even when God overrules our planning.

### **The Prayers of Paul**

Here is something I have learned over time The More time you put in seeking the plan of God in prayer, the more successful you will be in your endeavors.

#### **Romans 1:8-10**

I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. And that God is my witness how constantly I remember you <sup>10</sup> in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

#### **Phil 1:3-5**

I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup>In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now

In Col. 1:3-4, the letters to Thessalonica, his personal letters to Timothy and Titus

Not that praying for God's plan is assurances that the plan is actually 'the plan.' Sometimes the interruptions are the plan. I have found that interruptions often are the ministry ...

### **Accounting for interruptions - Because interruptions are the ministry**

My life is filled with interruptions, inconveniences, frustrations, and unexpected events. Things break. Accidents happen. The phone rings just as I climb into bed. Traffic makes me late. Just when we don't need another added expense, an appliance breaks. Unexpected illnesses change my carefully crafted plans. I could go on and on. You probably could too. Though these interruptions are unexpected and catch me off guard, they do not catch God off guard. They are not random, meaningless events. In fact, these interruptions are

divinely placed in my path for a reason. God uses these interruptions to change me to be more like Christ.

Slow traffic, a sick child, or a costly home repair may not seem like important tools in our sanctification, but they are. We often overlook these interruptions and inconveniences and instead expect God to work in our lives through huge life-changing circumstances. But the reality is, we often won't have major events in our life that cause us to trust God and obey him in some deeply profound way. We won't be called to build an ark or take an only child up Mount Moriah. Rather, it's in these small frustrations and interruptions, the little things in our life, where we are given opportunities to rely on God, to obey him, and to bring him glory.

Paul Tripp puts it like this:

"You and I don't live in a series of big, dramatic moments. We don't careen from big decision to big decision. We all live in an endless series of little moments. The character of a life isn't set in ten big moments. The character of a life is set in ten thousand little moments of everyday life. It's the themes of struggles that emerge from those little moments that reveal what's really going on in our hearts" *Paul Tripp, [Whiter Than Snow](#)*

These ten thousand little moments come in the form of our children asking us to play a game with them when we are tied up with something else. They are moments like when we get stuck behind a school bus when we're already late to an appointment, or when we have a flat tire on the way to work. They are in all those moments all throughout the day when things don't go our way, our plans fail, and our life is interrupted.

It's these moments where the rubber meets the road — where our faith is stretched and we look down to see whether we are standing on rock or sand. Do we really believe that God is in control of all the details of our life? Do we really believe that his grace is sufficient to get us through the day? Do we really believe that the gospel of Christ is powerful enough not only to save us for eternity, but also to sustain and strengthen us in the midst of life's interruptions? Do we really believe that Christ is enough to satisfy all the deepest needs of our heart?

These interruptions are acts of God's grace. They force us to work through these questions. They make us face our sin. They are God's way of taking off our blinders and making us see that we need the gospel in every moment of the day. They are a light that shines on the darkest recesses of our heart, revealing the truth of what's really there — the sins and idols that we've pushed off into the corner, thinking that if we can't see them, they must not exist.

**The Plan of God is the Communion Table!**

“You are very concerned with making the right choices about your work. You have so many options that you are constantly overwhelmed by the question “What should I do and what should I not do?” You are asked to respond to many concrete needs. There are people to visit, people to receive, people to simply be with. There are issues that beg for attention, books it seems important to read, and works of art to be seen. But what of all this truly deserves your time?”

Start by not allowing these people and issues to possess you. As long as you think that you need them to be yourself, you are not really free. Much of their urgency comes from your own need to be accepted and affirmed. You have to keep going back to the source: God’s love for you.

In many ways, you still want to set your own agenda. You act as if you have to choose among many things, which all seem equally important. But you have not fully surrendered yourself to God’s guidance. You keep fighting with God over who is in control.

Try to give your agenda to God. Keep saying, “Your will be done, not mine.” Give every part of your heart and your time to God and let God tell you what to do, where to go, when and how to respond. God does not want you to destroy yourself. Exhaustion, burnout, and depression are not signs that you are doing God’s will. God is gentle and loving. God desires to give you a deep sense of safety in God’s love. Once you have allowed yourself to experience that love fully, you will be better able to discern who you are being sent to in God’s name.”

Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love*