

## GOD'S PLAN

**G**od has a different plan for each person and each church. He is the only one who knows what that plan is. So why do we look to others to find God's will for us? Bible book stores are filled with books on how to be "**successful**". Some books are founded on psychology, some on statistics, some on polls, some on the experience of some pastor or church. The authors are sure that they have the answer for what ails the church today, and if you will just follow their formula you will be successful too. It may be seeker friendly services, cell groups, evangelism explosion, or any number of other schemes. This all may seem reasonable but is that a hallmark of God's will or plan?

I would submit to you that God's plan is seldom, if ever, reasonable. I am fully aware that this statement sounds like heresy, but if we examine the Word of God we will be hard pressed to find an example of a "**reasonable plan**". We know all of the Bible stories from both the Old and New Testaments and they sound reasonable to us because we know the end result of each of them, but what if you were a participant at the time not knowing the outcome. Would they sound reasonable to you then ?

Suppose you were a soldier and your commanding officer told you to " go around to some mulberry trees and wait till you heard marching in the tops of the mulberry trees and then attack the enemy because The Lord is going before you". Would that inspire great confidence in you toward your commanding officer ? (see II Samuel 5:23-25 )

Suppose you are arrested and you are to appear before a judge and your councilor tells you not to prepare or even think about what you are going to say but to just say what is given to you by The Holy Spirit. Would you get other council ? ( see Mark 13:11 )

Would you feel comfortable going into battle hopelessly outnumbered because your commander gave most of your company leave. Then he says you are going to use a trumpet, a lamp, and a pitcher as weapons? ( see Judges 7:16-20 )

So what is the point of all of this ? The point is that God's plans are often not our plans and if we knew what they were, we would think that they were stupid. There are dozens of instances in the Bible that we accept as reasonable only because we know the results. But

what about the people who lived on the other side of those results ? How did they view Gods instructions? And isn't that where we live? Don't we live on the front side of the results? If you were going on a witnessing trip for several days to other towns, and were told that you shouldn't take a suit case, a change of cloths, food, or any money and don't make any arrangements for lodging, wouldn't you think that would be strange? But that is the instructions Jesus gave to His apostles. Does that mean we are to follow the same pattern? Of course not. So why do we think that God is so devoid of imagination that He would have one or two plans that would apply to all churches?

Maybe we no longer believe that God can speak to us concerning His will for us today. Maybe we are too lazy to spend the time in His presence listening for His voice. Maybe we need to make no move at all until we hear from Him. And what if He tells us to do something that we would consider to be "off the wall"? Would we do it? I think that I can say, based on the record of Scripture, that the plan that God would reveal to us would be so outrageous that anyone would consider it to be ridiculous. If you question what I am saying, give an example from the Bible of a plan of God that would sound reasonable to anyone that was living through it at the time.

So why does God come up with such outrageous plans for us to follow ? I think that can be answered best by asking some simple questions. What if Abraham and Sarah had Isaac when Abraham was 40 years old and Sarah was 30 ? Would anyone think that it was a miracle? No! "But", Abraham would say, "God promised this child to us". What impact would that have? If Joshua, Gideon, David, or any of the other military leaders were given "reasonable" instructions, who would be given the credit for the victory? They would!

This brings up still more questions. Who gets credit for the plans for "SUCCESSFUL CHURCHES" that we read about in the, "**do it like I did**", books that flood the book stores today?

I wonder what would happen if a Pastor and Church Board would determine to come together in prayer and ask The Lord to purge them of all self ambition and ask Him to give them a passion for the lost in their area. Then to ask that He do a sovereign work so that none of them could take any credit for anything that God was doing. I believe that the question of Who gets the credit matters to God for a lot of reasons. The greatest of these is because it is destructive to us when we take credit for what God does. I have never known of

anyone who has ever been used mightily of God, who has not been through the fire to burn away the layer of self that encrusts us all. But does this have to be? Can we see that this layer of self is destructive to us and voluntarily abandon it without having to have it burned away in the furnace of trial and difficulty? **I DON'T KNOW**. But it would be interesting to try.

I am convinced that God will give us all of the power that He **DARES** to give us. Let me explain what I mean. What would happen if God gave you the ability to heal the sick, raise the dead, and move mountains at will. As you walk down the street you see someone in a wheel chair and you walk over and say "**in the name of Jesus rise and walk**", and the person would get out of the chair and begin to walk. You are passing a church and see a lot of cars there in the middle of the week and you realize that it is a funeral, so you go into the church and say to the one in the casket, "**RISE UP AND LIVE**" and the person in the casket rises out of the casket and begins to walk and talk. Would that appeal to you? But what would that do to your ego? I would bet that you would start to think that God trusted you above others. Next you would begin to think that you were better than others and soon this power would destroy you because there is too much of **YOU** in you. We must die to self before God would dare to **trust** us with more "success" than we now have. I think that we need to ask Jesus to help us empty ourselves of self. To make the taking of credit **abhorrent** to us. To seek **only that which exalts Him** so that when we do or say anything people will say, "**What a great God he has**"! and not "what a great person he is". The prophet Micah put it well. "*With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts? He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*"

So how do we find the will of God for our lives??? To answer this, I read the book of Acts to see how the apostles were lead from place to place. It is amazing to realize that they were guided by, dreams, prophecies, conditions, persecutions, ship wrecks, the courts, circumstances, and many other conditions beyond their control. Actually they were out of control! So why should that be so

surprising? If God is going to be in control, wouldn't we have to be out of control ?

When I hear people say that they would like to know the will of God for them, it usually means that they want God to point out each step to take, everything to say, and every thing to do. They envision a life of one adventure after another and one miraculous victory after another. They see people standing in awe at the great miracles that the Lord has wrought through them. They see themselves standing in front of great crowds of people, hanging on every word they say, waiting in great anticipation to see the hand of God work before their very eyes. The truth is that what they envision doesn't exist in the real world. In our day of microwave ovens, Fast foods, instant pudding, Quick oatmeal, and drive through service, we just don't want to spend the time to become a Moses, (it took him 80 years of training for the job God gave him). Abraham walked with God for 100 years before he received the promise that God made to him. Some times the time is shortened; but that seems to involve great testing. Daniel was younger when God could trust him to lead but his journey lead through war, captivity, and a lions den. I was reading a book that listed the gallery of the heroes of the faith. And it went like this; (Hebrews 11:17-35), ***"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, 'In Isaac your descendants shall be called.'*** ***He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking for the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he***

*endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace. And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight."* I find it interesting that the writer of the book stopped there because the list doesn't stop there, but in this day of all things positive, it doesn't surprise me. The last six verses read as follows; *"Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in the deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect."* God gives us both sides of the story. Heresy comes when we emphasize one side of the story to the exclusion of the other. Christianity is not for the faint of heart, but the retirement benefits are outstanding. In Proverbs 3:6 we read; *"In all your ways know, recognize and acknowledge Him, and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths."* (Amplified Bible) Take it by faith.

I think that the will of God is like driving a car. Let the car represent your life. You are the driver. When you are born again you

take a passenger to travel with you. He is the Holy Spirit. You have a choice to let Him be a passenger or the driver. He will not force you to let Him drive, that is something that you will have to decide. If you decide to drive He will not grab the wheel out of your hands and insist that He drive. If you are smart, you will insist that He drive. But the hard part is to keep your hands off the wheel. This takes a great deal of trust. That is what we call FAITH. There is one other aspect of this analogy that must be pointed out. No matter who is at the wheel, the car can not be steered unless the car is in motion. So many people sit and ask God what His will is for their life. They are expecting a voice to come from Heaven and say, "RISE **AND GO THREE BLOCKS NORTH, TURN LEFT AND I WILL TELL YOU WHAT TO DO THEN.**" That is not the way it works. "*The just shall live by faith.*" Not voices! When Jesus chose His disciples he said "come and follow me." He didn't set down and diagram their life for them. He still says "you furnish the forward motion and I will furnish the guidance". We are saying "What do you want me to do with my life?" He says "Move". And as we move, He will steer. So how do we know that it is Jesus who is steering and not someone else? That is where discernment comes in. "But" ,you may say, "I don't have the discernment that is needed to detect that". TRUE, but you can ask God to give you that gift, and He will. Doing Gods will is like walking on a huge flat surface after a snowfall. There are no paths to follow, just a sheet of white in every direction. You start to walk and as you do you leave tracks in the snow. As you go ahead it seems that the direction that you are going is purely random but as you look back you can see where you have been and it is then that you will be able to see a pattern. We can see how God lead the apostles in the book of acts because we can see their footprints but they saw no footprints ahead of them. These men walked by faith just as all who follow them must do.

I can tell you what the will of God is for you so listen carefully. Tomorrow morning, get out of bed if He gives you the strength. Next, ask God to guide you and make you a blessing to those that He will bring you in contact with today. Then get in motion doing what ever there is to do. If God doesn't give you the strength to get out of bed, then ask Him to make you a blessing to those that He brings to you today. As you so walk, always look for the opportunity that God gives you to be the blessing that you have asked Him to make you. That is the will of God for you.

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