



World Christian Fellowship

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Romans 129

Will of God

Romans 15:17-21

Romans 15:22-33, *For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. ²³But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, ²⁴whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. ²⁵But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. ²⁷It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. ²⁸Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. ²⁹But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

³⁰Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, ³¹that I may be delivered from

those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,³² that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and maybe refreshed together with you.³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Paul sees himself as a priest, offering up to God a sacrifice of redeemed Gentiles which God has used him to reach.

Paul sees himself as a prophet whose task is to proclaim the saving gospel of Christ in every place the Lord calls him.

Paulk sees himself as a pioneer whose desire is to serve in areas where the message has never been heard, and not to build on any man's foundation but his own.

We find him here the underlying characteristic in all his ministry, whether seen as a priest or a prophet or a pioneer, and that is that what he did he did under the direction of what he believed to be the will of God. Always!

The ruling principle in the life of any person and in the pattern and direction of any ministry.

We can see how much Paul was committed to function in the will of God.

His sermon at Antioch of Pisidia, in Acts 13, right after he was sent out from the church in Antioch to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

Acts 13:22, *And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'*

God having removed the prior king Saul and made David as king.

Acts 13:36, *"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;*

Paul marks out David as one who did the will of God.

Now, that becomes a pattern for Paul's own ministry.

Romans 1:10, *making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.*

Romans 8:27, *Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

Romans 12:1-2, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

Paul sees the importance of the will of God in David as he preaches.

In his own ministry, writing to the Romans, Paul emphasizes how important it is to know and discern and be in the will of God.

This became almost a byword for him.

1 Corinthians 1:1, *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*

2 Corinthians 1:1, *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia:*

Ephesians 1:1, *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:*

Colossians 1:1, *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,*

The primary preoccupation for Paul in his ministry was to do the will of God.

Acts 21:10-14, *And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "* ¹² *Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."*

Acts 22:12-14, *"Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, ¹³ came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴ Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.*

The hallmark of the man's ministry was that he functioned within the will of God.

How significant that knowledge is to a servant of Christ?
You live every day of your life with a 100 percent confidence that you are doing the will of God.

Paul lived within the will of God and was committed to the will of God.

This must be the overriding attitude in all effective Christian service.

What are the results of functioning in the will of God?

Because Paul functioned in the will of God, he knew spiritual triumph.

Because Paul functioned in the will of God, he could praise God.

V 17-18, *Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. ¹⁸For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—*

Serving in the will of God brings about spiritual triumph.
It means usefulness and success in the work.

Because Paul was in the will of God, he knew supernatural power.

Paul knew the meaning of satisfaction.
I have done what God wanted me to do.

Paul, when he came to the end of his life.

2 Timothy 4:6-7, *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

Paul was a man who functioned within the will of God.

We see the results.

- Spiritual triumph,
- Supernatural power, and
- Satisfaction of the call of God.

But what are the elements in his life that lead him to such thrilling results?

Paul gives us the elements really, the features of a ministry in the will of God.

1. Precision.

It is on time.

it is without flaw, without error.

Anyone who functions in the ministry of God in accord with His will know precision.

V 20, Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15.

Paul said that his calling was to places where they didn't know about Christ, not places where they did.

A great precision in his ministry.

- He understood his calling from the Lord.
- He understood his giftedness for ministry.
- He understood exactly what he was directed to do.

Any effective servant of the Lord is one who has a very clear perspective on the purpose of God for his life.

When they know their calling and purpose then they can most efficiently and effectively maximize the calling of God in their life.

The Lord economized his life in an almost unimaginable way for one who was supernatural.

Christ stayed in a little country in an earthly small location, never ever going 200 miles away from His home.

John 5:30, *I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.*

Very narrow in terms of His plan.

Very narrow in terms of His timing.

Repeatedly He would say, "My time has not come."

John 7:30, *Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.*

John 8:20, *These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.*

He had a very narrow plan.

He had a very narrow time frame.

Jesus also had a very narrow perspective on people.

He said He was not come but for the lost sheep of the house of Israel but for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Luke 19:10, *for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

Jesus had come for those who acknowledged their sin among the people of Israel. Very much economy of effort.

He even had a very narrow message.

Acts 1:3, *to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

Whenever He opened His mouth, it was always the kingdom. Very precise.

Jesus spent most of the three years of His ministry working with 12 people. Great precision.

This is frightening to people that feel they have no limits. Megalomaniacs are greatly distressed by such economy of effort.

Paul knew that same kind of precision, and that's why he was so effective.

Paul went all the way from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and that maybe as much as **1,400 miles**.

Paul took three missionary journeys basically covered the same area.

He kept going back and strengthening, repeatedly.

Each time he would go back, and then he would extend it a little further.

Finally, the reason Paul got as far as he did was because of his imprisonment, which took him all the way to Rome. But he had great precision in terms of his ministry from the very beginning.

Acts 9:6, *So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

Paul went into the city, and that's when he met Ananias, who was God's instrument.

Acts 9:15, *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel."*

Paul had a very specific calling.

Acts 22:21, *Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'* "

Paul had this sense of mission that was very precise.

Acts 26:15-18, *So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'¹⁶ But rise and stand on your*

feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. ¹⁷ I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

Acts 20:22-27, *And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. ²⁴ But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

I am going to keep doing what I have always done, and that is to do exactly what God called me to do.

Galatians 2:7-8, *But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the*

gospel for the circumcised was to Peter⁸ (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),

Paul knew precision.

He knew exactly what God had laid upon his heart.

Any successful servant of God realizes that success will come when he understands his calling, his gifts, and his opportunities in line with clear goals.

You may say that it is little frustrating because I don't know if the Lord's revealed that to me yet.

You need to be on your knees before the Lord until such a time until you clearly understand your gifts and callings and know where the opportunity that God has for you lies.

Remember that it may change as life goes on. But whatever it is, know it and function within it with great commitment and precision.

Paul never felt, and Jesus never felt that they had to do everything in the world that could possibly be done, but rather to function with limits on the ministry consistent with the will of God.

You ask only one question:

is it the will of God?

Believe that if God has a will, He would like you to know it. if you have difficulty finding it then it's that the channel of reception is on the wrong station.

The message is going out and your receiver isn't right.

2. Providence.

V 22, *For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.*

I have been so busy doing what is the priority ministry, what God has called me to do.

"For this reason"

V 20-21, *And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation,²¹ but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; And those who have not heard shall understand."*

The verb hindered is **egkoptō** means to cut out or to cut in. To prevent the enemy from getting to the fortress, they would cut a deep trench. Cut as an impediment or a hindrance in the path of attack.

I have wanted to come for a long time. Behind that I have wanted to be with you, and beyond you to go to Spain for a long time, but God has always cut a big trench in my way and filled it with my ministry to the Gentiles. So, I have never been able to get past that.

This is providence.

God, by moving Paul here, and moving him there had providentially controlled his life.

God controls us.

God controls human history basically one of two ways:

Through miracle, which is the direct interruption of the natural course. God has done that in history in the past.

But throughout history, where no miracles appear, God still controls things not by interrupting natural history, but by controlling all its events so that all the events blend together to result in His purpose.

Paul has been under providence, the controlling elements of providence.

Acts 16:6-9, *Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.⁷ After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.⁸ So*

passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

How did the Holy Spirit forbid them?

It doesn't say.

It doesn't say it was miraculous.

It doesn't say they heard a voice out of heaven. Somehow the Holy Spirit didn't allow them to go to Asia.

Paul knew what the Spirit wanted. The direction was go over across the water to Macedonian call.

But here is God ordering the circumstances to bring about His own will.

The classic illustration in the Old Testament is **Joseph**.

When he was sold into slavery by his brothers becomes his brothers' saviour. Later, when the famine comes, they go down to get food, and Joseph is the prime minister and gives them food.

The other classic Old Testament illustration is **Esther**.

Because she was so beautiful is chosen by the king because of her beauty. When a decree goes out to slaughter all her people, she is in a vital position as the beauty who attends the king

himself as the queen of the land to preserve her people from total destruction. God, by controlling all the elements of history, brought about His will.

Paul knows what it is to function within the realm of God's providence.

3. Planning.

While it's wonderful to trust providence, that's no excuse for poor planning.

You will never really experience the providence unless you have got some plans for God to work on. Planning.

V 23, *But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you,*

Waiting on the providence of God does not preclude planning. He had plans.

The implication of verse 22 is that Paul had planned to come but was hindered, but at least he had a plan.

He had planned also to visit Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 2:17-18, *But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face with great*

desire. ¹⁸ Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us.

God allowed Satan to hinder them from reaching Thessalonica. God is not the victim of Satan, nor is the servant of God.

God allowed Satan to hinder that ministry for a divine purpose. But Paul had a very positive and definite plan.

Romans 1:13, *Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.*

He had a plan.

You must make some plans for God to adjust them.

Trusting in the providence of God is no excuse for a lack of planning, or a lack of purpose, or a lack of direction, or a lack of goals.

People just simply sitting and saying that we are waiting to let the Holy Spirit lead. A poor excuse for laziness.

Believe in the leading of the Holy Spirit, but effective ministry just doesn't happen without very careful planning and strategizing.

Proverbs 16:9, *A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.*

But man makes his plans. We spend a lot of time around here planning. Things happen because we plan.

So, Paul reveals his plan.

V 23, *But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you,*

I have evangelized from Jerusalem to Illyricum and there's no sense in staying around. The church is growing.

There are others who can carry on the ministry.

There are elders ordained in the various places.

The work will go on.

There are no more regions where Christ is not at least named in this area.

V 19, *in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.*

Since this is thoroughly covered and he wasn't going to move on till he had done the work where he was.

“But now” least 15 plus years of labour, the church was founded in that part of the world and the church was strong.

Does everyone was saved? No.

Every Christian was mature? No.

But the resources were there.

People were saved.

Leaders were ordained.

Spiritual resources were in place.

Now Paul’s heart true to his calling.

“Having a great desire these many years to come to you”.

This isn’t a new feeling; this plan’s been burning in his heart for years.

He could set duty before desire.

Duty before desire.

He had the self-discipline to do the difficult task at hand and set the dream aside until God, in His providence, made it possible. if ever a person on your staff comes and says they are leaving for another ministry, you might as well let them go the next day, because once their heart is turned toward another ministry, they are useless where they are.

Mark of a man in the will of God that he can have a strong desire maybe someday to pastor his own church, or someday to reach a mission field, or someday to teach a class, or whatever it might

be, and even though that's the dream and the plan that's burning in his own heart for a long period of time.

The measure of that man's commitment to the will of God is having that great desire, how faithful is he to the task at hand.

V 24, *whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while.*

I want to see you.

I want you to support me when I go on beyond that on my way to Spain.

Very likely Aquila and Priscilla had told him of the believers in Rome, about six years earlier when they were together in Corinth.

Paul for six years had carried this desire to meet these wonderful Christians and to use them as a beginning point to launch his ministry.

The kind of visit he had in mind was a brief one.

I want to draw all the spiritual richness I can out of you.

Romans 1:11-13, *For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— ¹² that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith*

both of you and me. ¹³ Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

Paul wasn't thinking of a few days, but he wasn't thinking of a few months either. It was a long enough time to be refreshed and to solidify an intimate relationship.

Then to gather support from them so that he could be brought along on his way to Spain.

What would be the point of him staying in Rome when Rome was already evangelized?

Rome had opened up Spain because they had Roman roads going all the way to Spain.

To this very day, you can see the ruins of Roman architecture in Spain.

In Paul's time, there was a blaze of greatness in Spain.

Many great figures writing their names on Roman history and literature at this time were Spaniards.

Martial, who was the master of the epigram.

Lucan the poet.

Columella and Pomponius Mela, famous for literature.

Quintilian, famous for oratory.

The greatest Spaniard of all in the Roman Empire was a man named **Seneca**, the great stoic philosopher, **tutor of Nero**, and prime minister of the Roman Empire.

So, Paul saw Spain as a vital place to minister.

What an opportunity to reach Spain?

He was a master strategist. He made his plans.

The providence of God does not preclude our planning.

There is no evidence Paul ever made it to Spain.

The Holy Spirit isn't revealing that he went there, the Holy Spirit is only revealing it was in his heart to go there, although very likely he never made it.

It wasn't until the year **251 A.D.** that the gospel finally was planted in Spain.

But 200 years before that, Paul no doubt prayed daily for Spain, though it was 200 years later before the gospel finally reached here.

How about you?

Do you make any plans?

Do you lean on the providence of God?