

The Book of Romans

The Occasion for Writing

Romans 1:8-15

Paul's Decision to Go to Rome

Romans 1:8-13; 15:22-25

The Historical Setting of Paul's Plans

Paul determined to go to Rome on his way to Spain. As God's sovereign will unfolded, Paul's goal remained the same, recognizing the sovereignty of God and adapting to it along the way with an obedient heart. *Acts 19:21-22; 23:9-11; 25:10-11; 28:11-16*

When there was no clear biblical direction, Paul made a decision based on the best information at hand. He never qualified his decisions by saying God had directed him to it. Paul accepted responsibility for his choices. *1 Thess. 3:1-2; Phil. 2:25-26; 1 Cor. 16:3-4, 7, 12, 15* Paul sought to make God-honoring decisions, and submitted everything to the Lord's sovereign will.

Sorting Out God's Will

God's Sovereign Will

God's sovereign will is His predetermined plan for everything that happens in the universe (also called God's decrees or secret will). God has a perfect plan for all of history and nothing can frustrate His sovereign will. God is the first cause of everything. We see parts of God's sovereign will, only as it unfolds in time. No one has ever been out of the will of God, if by that we mean God's sovereign will.

Rom. 11:36 Ephesians 1:11; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Daniel 4:35

God's Moral Will

God's moral will is scripture (also called God's revealed will). God's moral will is His revelation in scripture to us that teaches how men ought to believe and live. God's moral will is what ought to happen. Scripture provides everything we need to know in order to obey God's moral will. *1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:2-3*

Believers are held responsible for knowing the will of God for their lives. This assumes that the will of God for our lives can be identified in some objective way. Therefore the will of God can be known, if by that we mean God's moral will. *Eph. 5:15-17*

God's Individual Will

God's individual will is said to be the secret, detailed life-plan of every believer. It is therefore the responsibility of every believer to find God's individual will for their lives through leadings, impressions, and circumstances, etc. The problem with this idea of searching for and finding God's individual will before it actually unfolds is that it doesn't appear in the texts of scripture and is therefore, unbiblical. God does have a detailed plan for our lives, but that is called the sovereign will. *Deut. 29:29*

What About "Open Doors"?

The concept of an "open door" is a biblical one. An "open door" is simply an opportunity to do something. In the NT, it is used in reference to doing ministry. An "open door" is an opportunity that God sovereignly brings our way. While every "open door" should be seriously evaluated, our circumstances may make it acceptable to bypass a given opportunity. A believer is not under moral obligation to take advantage of every "open door" if circumstances make it an unwise choice. An "open door" does not imply that God is leading in a certain direction. Remember the ship waiting for Jonah? In addition, we see from Rom. 1:13 that hindrances are not always evidence that our purposes are wrong. *Eph. 5:10, 15-17 (compare with Phil. 2:25 & Rom. 12:1-2); 1 Corinthians 16:8-9; 2 Corinthians 2:12-13*

What About the “Leading of the Spirit”?

By definition, every believer is led by the Spirit. Being led by the Spirit is the changed life that every believer receives. It is synonymous with being “controlled by the Spirit”. Looking back we can see how the Spirit of God has sovereignly led us. What a comforting truth! *Romans 8:9, 14; Galatians 5:16-26*

What About Laying Out a “Fleece”?

When Gideon put out the fleece, it was not to gain direction from God, for direction had already been clearly given. The fleece was an indication of Gideon’s lack of faith in God’s stated promise.

Judges 6:36-40