

Jim Martin
P.O. Box 291962
Dayton, Ohio 45429

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WHOSE PLAN WILL COME TO PASS?

Dear Friends,

It is probably safe to say that all of us have made decisions that we have regretted. How many times have we had thoughts like, "If I only had it to do over again...Why in the world did I do that?...If I could go back, I'd do things differently."

The truth is, if we could go back we would make the same decisions all over again, nothing would change. The answer to the question, "Why in the world did I do that," is answered in scripture,

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

The word "death" in this verse can mean more than simply the end of physical life. It can mean destruction, corruption, devastation, ruin, etc. Therefore, the way chosen as described above could lead not only to physical death, but also to financial hardship, material loss, conflict in relationships and so on. The reason we make decisions we later regret is because, at the time, we were convinced we were making the right choice. I'll explain.

A particular set of circumstances arose which required action on our part. We thought about what we were facing. We analyzed all the available information obtained through observation and listening to others. Then, we developed a short list of potential outcomes that were based on that information and what we could choose to do. The outcome which seemed to be of the most benefit to us is the choice we made.

When the results are not what we anticipated, we sometimes can't understand what went wrong. We were absolutely, positively convinced that what we did would work the way we planned. We then wonder, "How could I have missed it? How could it not have worked out?"

Thinking, "If only I could go back, I would do things differently," is not true. You see, if we could go back, we would still have the same information we had when we made the decision in the first place and would still make the same decision. The only way we would ever make a different choice is if we had access to more information. Someone might comment, "But Brother Jim, the information I had was all there was. I couldn't have had more details. The only way I could have known more is if I could see into the future, and we both know that can't happen!"

It is this way of thinking which has led so many Christians to make wrong decisions in their lives and ministry. Using our natural, analytical thinking and rationalizing process, we make choices according to what we think would be best, what we think will work,

and what we think would be pleasing to God and what He would want. But if the end result is hardship, strife or problems, then what we chose to do was obviously not what God wanted. God has much to say about all this in scripture.

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. (Psalm 32:8)

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:21)

How can God guide you, direct your paths or tell you which way to turn if He doesn't already know what lies ahead? Unless He can look beyond where you are and see where you should go, He cannot give you insight as to what you should do.

⁷But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. ⁹After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:7-10)

But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. (Luke 22:42)

How can God know what you need before you ask if He did not already know the need would arise? How can He supply the need if He did not already know what supply would be necessary? How can His will be done if He has not already laid out a will?

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. (John 16:13)

[Concerning the Gifts of the Holy Spirit] ***To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10)***

How can He show you things to come if He doesn't already know what is coming? How can He give prophecy of future events if He doesn't know the future?

In all of this we see that God truly wants to help us make the right choices. He desires to give us information that only He possesses; information that goes beyond what natural circumstances, reasoning and analysis can produce. Many people mistakenly believe that

what God wants is going to be done no matter what. But these verses prove otherwise. Why would He need to tell us which way to go, which way to turn and give us direction if His desires were going to happen regardless of what we do? He has given humanity free will. He will provide insight and information; we are to use that information to make the decisions He knows are best.

We live in a world that is bound by time; God lives in the realm of the spirit and He is not bound by natural time. He created time; man had to learn how to measure time (sun dials, clocks, watches, etc). Time is linear in that it has a beginning point and (as we know it) an ending point. God existed before He created time.

In a way that our natural minds cannot comprehend, God is able to look ahead on time's linear plane and know what is going to happen. He is then able to give us input for our decision making. This input involves every possible scenario connected to every possible outcome of every possible choice we could make in a given situation. But there is even more involved:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. (Jeremiah 29:11)

God knows the events of our history's timeline before they happen. But His plans for us are not to bring us to a place of calamity. Instead, He has already determined in His heart to give us an expected end. Think of it in this manner: God knows the best choice we could make in every situation we will ever face. He has already determined that, according to what He knows, we can have an end result of peace and not of evil. However, these expectations are totally dependant on us doing what He knows is best.

As I was praying about all of this, the Holy Spirit said, ***God knows what is supposed to be the correct outcome of a situation. He also knows what the actual outcome will be. The difference is how much you hear and obey Him.***

Our Father knows His expected end for the choices we should make during our life's journey here on Earth. He knows what will happen if we do what He tells us. But He also knows what the outcome will be if we lean to our own understanding and make decisions according to what seems right to us. In the midst of all of this, He makes Himself available to us:

Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. (Isaiah 45:11)

This is an incredible revelation. To paraphrase, God is saying, "I have established a rule to which I am bound. If you will ask Me about the decisions you should make, I will see it as though you are commanding Me to answer. And, according to what I have said through My Son Jesus in John 16:13, the Holy Spirit is the One Who will give you those answers."

As we pray in the Spirit, one of the things the Holy Spirit is doing is revealing the will of God for our lives, which includes information we need to make correct decisions.

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. (1 Corinthians 14:2)

²⁶Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)

Until divinely revealed unto us, God's will is a mystery. Unveiling this mystery is part of the Holy Spirit's responsibility. Additionally, a lack of information is a variation of an infirmity when it comes to making correct decisions. As we pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit is providing the words to the prayer we need to speak, and it is perfectly in line with God's will and knowledge.

Herein lies the challenge: Many Christians have never been taught how to pray in the Spirit to receive knowledge from God. Some Christians do not believe in such prayer. But generally speaking, it seems that few Christians truly know how to pray and seek God for answers, and then wait to receive those answers. For the most part, it seems we set the course of our life with decisions that are driven by our emotions. God has addressed this in the Bible:

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Consider this verse in the following manner: There are two choices we can make. One is based on what we imagine will happen according to how our emotions have responded to a given set of circumstances. The other is based on information God wants to impart to us out of His heart and mind. In order to make the correct choice we must cast down the imaginations produced by human reasoning and emotions because those imaginations want to exalt themselves against the knowledge God will give us.

Before us are two plans: One laid out according to natural, event-driven analysis; the other laid out by God who knows the beginning from the end. Whose plan will come to pass in our lives? It is totally up to us. But keep this in mind: God will never lead us to make the wrong choice. Therefore, it truly is possible for us to live and never again make a bad decision. After all, 1 Corinthians 2:16 confirms that we have the mind of Christ.

By relying on the ministry of the Holy Spirit we can avoid the heartache, disappointment and distress that has impacted the lives of so many Christians. He will help us circumvent those, "I have no clue what to do," moments that can be so frustrating. He will help us learn that the best thing we can do is simply wait on the Lord.

All of what I have shared in this letter is a lesson I freely admit I have not yet perfected in my own life. There are still too many times my decisions are made without spending the proper amount of time in prayer and fellowship with God to be sure I am doing the right thing. However, I am much further along than what I was years ago. It truly is a

battle to change the way I have always approached decision making. But I have learned that the victory is worth the battle.

In His Grace,

Jim

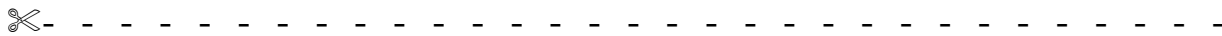
P.S. Not long ago I preached a sermon titled, "Whose Plan Will Come to Pass?" that is the basis for this letter. You can order a CD of that sermon below.



WE ARE RETURNING TO KENYA!

In a little over three months, Kathy and I will be returning to Migori, Kenya to minister in another Prayer and Power Conference. The dates are Sunday, August 10 through Sunday, August 17. God was able to lay a strong foundation this past August, and He will be building upon it when we return. This year, Pastor Bronc and Candy Flint of The Family Prayer Center in Immokalee, Florida will be going with us. I am excited about them joining us for this trip as it will only strengthen the work that God is doing in that region.

As you could imagine, such a trip can be very costly: airplane tickets, meals, hotels, immunizations and so forth. We are believing God to supply all that is needed. If the Lord speaks to your heart to give a special offering to help us with this trip, simply be obedient to His instructions.



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JIM MARTIN MINISTRIES
P.O. Box 291962 • Dayton, Ohio 45429 • USA
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