

Purpose and Plans

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INTRODUCTION

Christians should live with purpose. In the physical and spiritual realms, proper planning is an important part of achieving success. Benjamin Franklin once said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." Without a definite plan, goals are mere wishes. Plans must be put into action.

Individually, we make plans, both small and large: buying a vehicle or purchasing household appliances, building a new house or renovating an older home, achieving personal goals and professional advancement, etc.

Considering this subject from a biblical standpoint, we recognize that God has a purpose and plan. So also does man. While the former are perfect, the latter are often flawed. It is imperative that our purpose and plans match those of God.

Definitions

The Greek word *boulē*, derived from *boulēma* (purpose, will) and defined as "counsel" is rendered "counsel" (1x), "decision" (1x), "motives" (1x), "plan" (4x), "purpose" (5x) in the NASB (Thomas).

BDAG say it is defined as "(1) that which one thinks about as possibility for action, *plan, purpose, intention*; (2) that which one decides, *resolution, decision*; (a) of humans; (b) of the divine will; (3) an assembly that takes up proposals or deliberates, *council meeting*."

Occurrences

This word occurs 12x in 12 verses (Luke 7:30; 23:51; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38; 13:36; 20:27; 27:12, 42; 1 Cor. 4:5; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17). Collectively, these occurrences provide a full portrait of purpose and planning, human and divine, good and bad, righteous and unrighteous, acceptable and unacceptable.

OF A RIGHTEOUS GOD

Beneficial

God's purpose and plans are beneficial (Eph. 1:3-14, esp. v. 11). He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. God chose us. He loved us. He adopted us as sons He freely and lavishly bestowed His grace upon us. He redeemed us through the sacrifice of His Son. He revealed the message of truth, making known the mystery of His will. He offers us an eternal inheritance. He sealed us in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Predetermined

God's purpose and plans are predetermined (Acts 2:22-24, esp. v. 23; 4:23-30, esp. v. 28). Wicked men conspired to crucify Jesus Christ, but God was in control. While Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were held accountable, each acting according to their free will, God's hand guided the process and His predestined purpose was realized.

Unchangeable

God's purpose and plans are unchangeable (Heb. 6:13-20, esp. v. 17). The Greek word *ametathetos*, occurring twice in this context, and translated "unchangeable" and "unchangeableness," refers to that which is "immutable, unalterable, or unchangeable" (Thomas & BDAG). Gamaliel rightly understood, "If this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God" (Acts 5:33-39, esp. v. 38-39).

OF UNRIGHTEOUS MEN

Sinful

Man's purpose and plans are often sinful: in plotting to crucify Jesus, the Jewish Council committed the crime of the ages (Luke 23:50-53, esp. v. 51).

Self-Willed

Man's purpose and plans are often self-willed: in rejecting Paul's inspired advice, the ship's captain decided to continue sailing to Rome, with disastrous consequences (Acts 27:9-15, esp. v. 12).

Evil

Man's purpose and plans are often evil: when Paul's ill-fated ship floundered on the rocks, the Roman soldiers planned to kill the prisoners who were aboard (Acts 27:39-44, esp. v. 42).

CHOICES

Reject

Like the Pharisees and lawyers, we may reject God's purpose (Luke 7:24-30, esp. v. 30).

Serve

Like King David, we may serve God's purpose (Acts 13:32-37, esp. v. 36).

Proclaim

Like Paul, we should faithfully proclaim God's purpose (Acts 20:25-32, esp. v. 27).

CONCLUSION

Man's purpose and plans are often hidden, but one day they will be revealed. What will happen when God discloses the motives of your heart (1 Cor. 4:1-5, esp. v. 5)? What does your future hold?

Sources:

"Benjamin Franklin Quotes." BrainyQuote. Accessed November 29, 2016.
<https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/b/benjaminfr138217.html>.

BDAG = William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

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