

## Uncertain, Altered, And Aborted Plans

*"And when I arrive whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty to Jerusalem; and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me. But I will come to you when I shall have passed through Macedonia; for I pass through Macedonia; but with you it may be that I shall abide, or even winter, that ye might set me forward on my journey whithersoever I go. For I do not wish to see you now by the way; for I hope to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:3-9).*

It is not wrong to make plans for things we hope to do — these verses from Paul show he had made plans for a number of things: he would remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; he would go to Corinth to be set forward by the brethren there on his way, whithersoever he went. Yet, Paul was conscious of life's uncertainties and appended his plans with these words "If the Lord will." James urged his readers to recognize life's foibles and uncertainties and to know that he should recognize that all plans should be made with an eye on the will of God. Thus he wrote, *"For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that ..."* (James 4:15).

There were some things Paul was uncertain about. His letter indicates that when he wrote, he wasn't sure what he would do; whether he would accompany the messengers of the churches to Jerusalem or else would send letters with them to the brethren there and while they made their way eastward, he might be traveling westward: to Rome (as a temporary stop on his way to Spain as he suggested in his Roman epistle, Romans 15:28) or to some other field of labor. He just didn't know. Of course we know that as the days passed, the importance of the contribution for Jerusalem saints grew and Paul was drawn more and more to accompanying the messengers to Jerusalem although the Holy Spirit warned him in every city that bonds and afflictions awaited him there (Acts 20:23). He jeopardized his personal safety because the magnitude of this contribution from Gentile Christians to Jewish brethren promised a greater benefit to the well being of the church as a whole. Paul's uncertain plans hardened into concrete ones: but ones he took into account as consistent with the will of God.

One of Paul's plans had to be aborted. When he wrote the Corinthians a great and effectual door was open for him in Ephesus. Just what that constituted we do not know: perhaps the great influence he was experiencing because of the marvelous signs God was working through him was opening doors which formerly had been closed (Acts 19:11). We do

know he had become friends with some people of prominence and influence in the city, Asiarchs (Acts 19:31). Yet, wisely Paul knew that Satan was stiffly resisting his efforts. He knew there were many adversaries (1 Cor. 16:9). He planned to stay at Ephesus until Pentecost because of that great open door; but the riot caused by Demetrius and other silversmiths closed that open door abruptly (Acts 19:28-20:1).

Then, some of Paul's plans had to be changed. He hoped to be set forward on his journey by the Corinthians whether he went westward to Rome or eastward to Jerusalem. When he did arrive in Corinth, it was his plan to sail directly to Jerusalem from Corinth. But a plot against his life by the ever present, opposing unbelieving Jews made it necessary that he double back and retrace steps he had just made; returning back to Macedonia to get to Jerusalem (Acts 20:3).

Just as Paul urged the rich *"that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy"* (1 Tim. 6:17), so in all our plans we should always take into account our frailty and the swiftness of our days and make plans for things we hope to do with the ever conscience knowledge that we must plan our affairs *"if the Lord will."* Then, we must learn to wait on Him who possesses an infinite knowledge of what is best for us and will do all things accordingly!

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