

GOD’S GUIDANCE FOR PAUL – AND US

Acts 15:36 – 16:10

I. The “Macedonian Call” of Paul was not the normative experience of the apostles (16:6-10)

A. The “call of God” in New Testament Usage

1. In the teaching and parables of Jesus, “call” = “summon” or “_____” (Mat 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24).
2. Paul used “call” to refer to “God’s gracious work within a sinner whereby He _____ brings that person to faith and salvation” (Romans 8:28-30).
3. The call to a specific function or _____.
 - a. NT examples
 - 1) God’s call of Paul to be an _____ (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1);
 - 2) God’s call of Barnabas and Saul to be the Church’s first _____ (Acts 13:2);
 - 3) God’s call to Paul and his companions to take the gospel to _____ (Acts 16:9-10)
 - b. Characteristics of these “calls”
 - 1) The means of communication was some form of _____ revelation.
 - 2) Each “vocational call” was issued only to certain _____ at certain times.
 - 3) In every instance the special call of God was unsought and _____.
 - 4) While the concept of “the call of God” is a prominent one in the New Testament, the vocational sense of the term occupies only a _____ place.
3. When the apostles set out spiritual qualifications for church leaders (elders and overseers), any requirement of a “call” is glaring by its _____ (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). According to these passages, a church leader must be a *spiritually* _____ Christian who _____ a position of leadership in the church, and is able to *lead* God’s people and *teach* God’s Word.

B. Distinctive characteristics of Special Revelation

1. God’s moral, wisdom, and sovereign guidance is normally _____. God does not promise, but may give revelation for guidance when He sovereignly chooses.
2. Revelation is God supernaturally transferring His _____ accurately to another.
3. Revelation has divine _____ – that is, it must be believed and obeyed.
4. Special guidance by revelation is self-evident because it is _____ confirmed and in harmony with the Scriptures.
5. Most often, special guidance is given for the purpose of enhancing evangelism.
6. If God gives revelatory guidance, the recipient’s freedom is reduced and God’s moral will is enlarged for that individual.

II. The normative approach of the apostles to decision making is described in Acts 15:36-16:5.

A. Summary of the “Way of Wisdom:” Christians are called to make _____ decisions within the _____ will of God, trusting in the _____ will of God to accomplish his good purposes in and through us.

B. Definitions

1. The *moral* will of God = God’s revealed commands in the Bible that teach how men ought to believe and live (Rom 2:18; 1 Thes 4:3; 5:18; 2 Cor 6:14; plus all other direct commands in Scripture).
2. The *sovereign* will of God = God’s secret plan that determines everything that happens in the universe (Dan 4:35; Pro 21:1; Rev 4:11; Eph 1:11; Pro 16:33; Rom 9:19; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Rom 11:33-36).

C. Principles of Decision Making (From *Decision Making and the Will of God* by Garry Friesen with J. Robin Maxson. See http://www.gfriesen.net/sections/willofgod_principles.php)

1. Where God commands, we must _____.
2. Where there is no command, God gives us _____ (and responsibility) to choose.
3. Where there is no command, God gives us _____ to choose.
4. When we have chosen what is moral and wise, we should _____ the sovereign God to work all the details together for good.

III. Applying Acts 15:36-16:10: Some Practical Ramifications

A. Special revelation is _____

1. Any “input” that is less specific than special revelation, such as an inner impression, is not to be regarded as _____. It is to be judged by God’s moral will and wisdom.
2. I am not _____ by unsubstantiated “prophetic pronouncements” of others who claim to speak for God
3. If God wants me to do something beyond what He has already revealed in the Bible or what I am inclined to do by means of the normal processes of decision making, He is perfectly capable of revealing it to me in a way that I will neither misunderstand nor _____.

B. Most of us will live our entire lives without receiving special revelation. For us, the normative paradigm for planning is provided by Paul’s decision to go to Rome, explained in Romans 1:8-13; 15:20-29.

1. _____: Paul adopted spiritual goals that were based on divine revelation.
2. _____: He arranged his goals into wise priorities determining what should be done 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.
3. _____: Next, he devised plans that gave him a strategy for accomplishing his objectives.
4. _____: Through prayer, he submitted himself and his plans to the sovereign will of God. (No doubt, he also prayed for wisdom in the formulation of his plans, though not mentioned in this context.)
5. _____: When providentially hindered from accomplishing his plans, he assumed that the delay was God’s sovereign will. This conviction freed him from discouragement. Since his plans were sound, the only thing he adjusted was the timetable.
6. _____: Paul explained his decisions on the basis of God’s moral will and his own personal application of wisdom.