

A TAROT CARD GOD: ARE YOU BETTER OFF IN VEGAS?

I. FINDING GOD'S WILL SO FAR

A. DEMYSTIFY GOD'S WILL—LIBERATION

1. God's will is not an endless maze of dead ends with only one way out
2. God's will is not a bulls-eye target with only one center shot
3. God has a plan for my life but not one I have to know completely beforehand

B. LIVE TO CHRIST, DIE TO SELF—Be more concerned with who you are than what you do. God's will for our lives: I Thess. 4.3, 5.16-18, Col. 1.9, Eph. 5.17-20, Matt. 22.34-40. So, when you make a decision, ask is this Biblical? Is this good for my sanctification, beneficial, enslaving? Will it help me to love God with my whole being? Will it help me to rejoice and cause me to pray? 95% of our decisions will be made off the cuff so to speak without much thought or reflection—this is why character is important. “Out of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6.45).”

C. RISK IS RIGHT—Peaceful easy feelings are not always the means by which God communicates His Will, otherwise 99% of grooms would never actually walk the aisle. I have met with people who felt a great “peace” about their adultery. Conversely, I have met with those who are very disconcerted over large and difficult financial or medical decisions. Jesus Himself was troubled at times (see Luke 22.39-46; John 11.33, 38, 12.27). I would not say that He had a “peace” about going to the cross though He very clearly knew it to be God's will.

1. All of life involves risk
2. This risk is God's Will for us so that we will depend on and seek Him
3. Risk for adventure or simply risk's sake is unbiblical, but risk for the sake of God's glory and others' good is not only permitted but commanded in Scripture.
4. We should not let the risk in a situation be the determining factor for whether or not something is God's Will or not. We will consider risk wisely but also recognize that God may be calling us to take serious risks for great purposes. It is better to lose our lives for Christ than to waste it on anything else.

II. THE CHARACTER OF GOD AND OUR DECISIONS

A. GOD IS NOT SNEAKY. Luke 10.21, Hebrews 1.1-3. God does not play little games with His children, nor does he treat us like pawns on a chess board (Battle of the Titans), all the while laughing at us falling over ourselves down here. It is His “gracious will” or “pleasure” to reveal His will to us and to offer us His own Son. Yes, God's secret, sovereign (Deut. 29.29) will is not on display for us, but He does not try to confuse us or play hide n seek so that while we're looking in the pantry, he's giggling at our ineptitude in the closet. **Ex. Kid's hide n seek with Psalm 103.14.**

B. TRUST AND REST—Trust in God's Sovereign and providential will: We can make our lives miserable but we cannot screw them up! Not like Vegas/Market/Tarot Cards, Matt. 6, John 10, Galatians 5 and freedom. **Ex. horseback riding.** What does this assume about God? On the contrary, God gives what we needs, so whatever info is lacking, we don't need!

III. FLIPPING THE TARGET



IV. PAUL'S PLANS AND OURS¹

Romans 1.8-13: First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

A. PAUL PRAYED (v. 8-10)

B. PAUL PLANNED BY SPIRITUAL GOALS (v. 13)

1. Provide spiritual ministry to Roman believers (v. 11)
2. Establish and encourage the Roman church (v. 11-12)
3. Receive encouragement from them (v. 12)
4. See non-Xians converted (v. 13-15)

C. PAUL PRIORITIZED (ROM. 15-20-29)—Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom

Romans 15.20-29: Thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation... This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

¹ Adapted from Gary Friesen's very good book, *Decision Making and the Will of God*

1. Evangelize Greece (v. 20-21)
2. Deliver the gift to Jerusalem—a symbol of unity between Jew and Gentile (2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 15.27; Eph. 2.11-22)
3. Take the Gospel to Spain
4. Rome as a way to accomplish the overall priority of reaching the ends of the earth.
5. How did this priority list make the Romans feel? Wisdom requires honesty and stewardship. Application to those who give, those who serve, those who please people. **George Robertson**

Paul did not have special revelation telling him to take the Gospel to Spain or to reach the world for Christ in his lifetime. He calculated these priorities based on God's moral will (Matthew 28.18-20, Acts 9.15), personal wisdom, and spiritual gifts. He had both *freedom* and *responsibility* to choose this course. We want IMPACT for the Kingdom!

D. PAUL PLACED HIS PLANS IN GOD'S HANDS

1. Arrested, imprisoned, and delayed for over two years
2. Shipwrecked

E. PAUL PERSEVERED—Perseverance is one way to know if you are truly called/passionate. Every dream runs into a nightmare somewhere along the way.

1. Arrest gave him all expense paid trip to Rome
2. Imprisonment gave opportunity to minister incarnationally (Phil. 1.12-14, Col. 4.3-4). Notice here that Paul is not seeking "God's will;" rather, he is praying for his motives and desires to accomplish God's will. He is praying for God to be present and powerful in His work. JOY
3. Used time to write other N.T. letters; at least Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians (**Example of John Bunyan in prison**)
4. Redeemed the Time (Col. 4.5)
5. What do we do when plans fail? What if ministry I support fails? Was it not His will?

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense
 But trust Him for His grace
 Behind a frowning providence
 He hides a smiling face

His purposes will ripen fast,
 Unfolding every hour;
 The bud may have a bitter taste,
 But sweet will be the flower

V. CONCLUSION

How do we speak of a decision we believe to be God's will? What are my spiritual gifts? Passions? Have I developed priorities in life? Missional focus with neighbors? Do I trust that interruptions are new opportunities in God's providence? Do I trust that they can be used for my sanctification and the advancement of the Gospel (Ps. 119.71)? What dreams do we have and what are our plans to pursue them? Are they based on spiritual goals?

Discerning Your Calling: Evaluate with the following questions.

Love or Loathe? What have I done that I loved, loathed?

Look Forward or Dread? What could I not wait to do and what did I dread?

Refreshed or Drained? What refreshed me emotionally even if it physically exhausted me? What sapped my emotional ministry?

Alive or Dead? What do I feel like makes me really alive?

Affirmed/Encouraged vs. Discouraged In what areas are others encouraging and affirming me?