

Whatever Will Be?

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- [0 : 0 0] The Proverbs kind of stand on their own, all of them. They're not necessarily related to any of the ones before them or any ones after them. Sometimes they're repeated, sometimes they just are individual.
- And I'm going to look, as I'll explain a little bit more as we go on why I'm doing this, but I'm going to look at the third Proverb in Proverbs chapter 16, which will be the theme of this week and the next number of weeks.
- Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established. Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established.
- We're going to look at that in a minute. In 1978, there was a very famous World Cup song, World Cup for those of you who are visiting, maybe from other parts of the world, I'm talking about football, soccer.
- And Scotland, I think it's probably the last time just about Scotland, qualified for a World Cup finals. But there was a very famous song by a very famous artist called Rod Stewart and it was called Que Sera Sera.
- [1 : 1 2] We're off to the Argentine. It was an ignominious song and an even more ignominious performance by the team when they got there.
- It wasn't one of Rod Stewart's finest moments. But Scotland fans have been singing that ever since, Que Sera Sera, whatever will be will be. And sometimes I think we have taken that and we apply it into our thinking as Christians, whatever will be will be.
- And I think within that there's a great danger of theological imbalance in our thinking. I think sometimes we use that kind of philosophy to have an imbalanced understanding of who God is and who we are and our responsibility and our relationship with Him.
- We believe in God's sovereignty. I've prayed about that. We understand that, that God knows the end from the beginning, He's the sovereign King of Kings. But I think we can sometimes use that knowledge of God to excuse laziness or justify a kind of spiritual fatalism that, you know, well, whatever will be will be, you know, because God has ordained it.
- You know, that's not a biblical text, whatever will be will be. You don't find it anywhere in the Bible. Or you know, I'm not sure if this is a worldwide one but it's certainly a Scottish one which we hear sometimes is, what's for you will not pass by you.
- [2 : 4 1] It's theological nonsense. But it has a half truth about it, even if it's God's will it will happen. Now that's true at one level but it's kind of a half truth.
- You know, if you're applying for a job or you want a new job and you see that you're dream job, you don't just sit back and say, well, if it's God's will it will happen.
- You may recognize the importance of God in it but you will apply. You will fill in a CV. You will give your best account of yourself because it's not simply just that if it's God's will it will happen.

We have a responsibility as people, as believers who trust in God to recognize our responsibility as well. And on the other side, sometimes I think people, Christians are in danger of saying, oh, planning things, planning the future is unspiritual.

It's taking undue control of your life. It's not recognizing that every day is God's gift and in God's hands and we can't make plans. That too, I think, is a half truth.

[3 : 52] It's a half truth. It's not biblical. So what I want to do over the next five weeks today and the next four weeks is have a short series where we're going to look at the plans we make and praying about them and praying in a planned way for certain things, specific things.

I want us to think about praying as a people together, as a congregation praying in certain focused ways to motivate our lives and the action and the responsibilities we take.

Praying prayer as an indisputable foundation for the positive planning we need to make in our lives. We need to be planning because we all do it, but we need to be doing it.

Independence on God, commit to the work, commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established. And the question, you know, when asking the plans that you're making in your life, what are you praying about and planning in your life?

We're going to be looking at the gospel and Jesus Christ and the part He plays. We're going to look at your involvement within the church and also within society. I'm going to be asking you to pray in a planned way about certain things in the world in which you live.

[5 : 09] So we're going to do four. Next week will be my, this is introductory, next week will be my life in Christ. In other words, where's the gospel and Jesus Christ in my plans?

Is He an extra or is He central to my plans? And does His mind matter to my plans? Then the second one, we're going to look at my city and Christ.

What's my part in God's plans for this city, Edinburgh? The city that we're right in the center of. Increasingly they're closing all the streets so we can't get here, but we're still here.

Okay, and that's great. The third week, we're going to look at the wee ones and Christ. It's our prayerful response to the reality of abortion in our society.

And how do we respond to that in a loving and gracious and yet strong way defending the rights of the most vulnerable in our society? And the last one I want to do in terms of focus planned prayer is a community to be reached for Christ.

[6 : 09] How do we pray for prayerfully longing for the LGBT community to have Christ's love broken into their society and their community?

How can we best pray for that community which seems to be so defensive against any Christians and the gospel and yet their need like ours is just as great?

Because I live with two fears, generally speaking, in my life and generally, I guess. First is that prayer is marginal for us. That's one of my great fears.

It's not a priority that we pray sometimes superstitiously, almost in vague generalities, that it's not sacrificial either individually or it's not sacrificial as we live in community as a church, that prayer together doesn't really matter that much.

Because it's our pathway, our daily pathway to God and it's absolutely our lifeblood. So that would be one concern that I have in my own life.

[7 : 13] John 15 says, you know, remain in me as I remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. I am the vine, you're the branches, if you remain in me and I in you, you'll bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

That would really be a great logo for the church, wouldn't it? Apart from me, you can do nothing and a great logo for our own lives that we recognize the importance of being connected to God in prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

So that's my first fear, I guess, and my prayer is marginal. And my second fear in my own life and maybe generally is that the gospel is largely irrelevant to us beyond these walls.

That as you leave here on a Sunday, that in your day to day life and in my day to day life and in our plans and in our future thoughts, the gospel in Jesus Christ is kind of irrelevant.

It's just like the spiritual fix that we plug into on a Sunday but really doesn't really affect our relationships and our life generally throughout the week. We have no intentional plan towards holiness and growth.

[8 : 17] We live and plan with God on a kind of distant horizon. It occasionally turns up like a bad penny.

Besties our insurance policy for when we die. Well, when we die, it's okay because I trust in Jesus, I'm going to go to heaven. But we're relying on a past experience of coming to faith in Jesus Christ, not a living transformation in Him.

So it's not real, is really what I'm saying. And planning and the gospel don't seem to go together because I'm just getting on with my life.

So why do we make plans? Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established. Why do we make plans at all? Well, we make plans because God makes plans and we are made in His image.

We reflect the character of God by many of the things we do say and think. And so He's a planning God. We know that the Bible is a clear revelation of God's purposes and God's plan.

[9 : 23] And so as Christians we have a biblical worldview, not just salvific view about salvation. We have a worldview about the environment, about the world that we live in, about society, about people, about community.

It's based on, you know, when Cody was with us, it was one of his favorite phrases, creation, all redemption, renewal. It was that pattern that the Bible tells us who we are made by, where our identity comes from, how that identity has been lost because of sin, how it is renewed through Jesus Christ and His grace and love for us and His work on our behalf, and how that transforms us now and will transform the universe in which we live in the future.

So God is our purpose. You know, Christ says that He had a plan from before the foundation of the world. He knows He has a purpose and a plan.

Everything He does, nothing He does is random and meaningless and reactive. Everything is purposely and perfectly planned. We have biblical examples of lives that were planned.

You know what they was, what we've got, we've got Adam, we've got Abraham and David, Solomon, Paul and the New Testament apostles. Their lives, evidence, thoughtful, responsible planning, independence on the living God.

[10 : 50] And God has plans not just for the world but for us. You know that great verse in Jeremiah, I know the plans I have for you, plans to do you good not to harm you, plans to give you a future and hope. This is the great God that we trust in, transcendent in that amazing knowledge of the universe and imminent, close in the personal individual plans He has for your life and my life.

That's the kind of God we have. And the text, which is God's word, presumes that we live in a world that is a world governed by work and plans, commit your work to the Lord, your plans will be established.

So why do we make plans? Because God does. And we make plans because everyone does. All of you here, all of us here are making plans.

Maybe consciously sometimes, maybe unconsciously. But we are planning people. And sometimes you will, if you sit back and think about it, you will consider the plans you make will reflect the worldview that you actually have, whether God and Christ is the center of that worldview or not.

Many people have a kind of meaningless plan, nihilistic. So they are planning, but they're planning into a vacuum of meaninglessness because they don't believe in any ultimate or bigger purpose in the world.

[12:16] I hope nobody here thinks like that. Very despairing. Many people drift with an unconscious plan, almost no plan, kind of aimless.

But even the aimlessness is a plan, a plan to be aimless. And so it's kind of a bit ironic. And I suspect many of us, without really thinking through it or certainly not admitting it, especially spiritually, are drifting.

We just, we'd not get any plans for our spiritual life. We're just aimless. We believed, yep, we accepted Jesus, but well now we're just getting up in the morning and going to bed at night.

We've got no plans really, spiritually, and God is not involved at that personal level in our lives. We're drifting. You know, Alison Wonderland, when she meets the Cheshire cat, which way should I go?

She says, he says, depends on a great deal on where you want to go. I don't much care of where. Then it doesn't matter which way you go, does it?

[13:17] And so sometimes that's what we're like. It doesn't really matter where we go because we don't care. We're just drifting in our lives. Then we sometimes have a kind of social plan, traditional plans where we live to do the best for us and our families, you know?

Family and community are important and we plan around that. And that's good within that. Or an individualistic plan, just plan for number one.

Number one's all that matters. Easy for us to fall into that. Generally that can be there for at the expense of other people. I don't, as long as my plans go okay, I'm not so concerned about others.

Or it can be an idealistic plan that you have in your life, maybe environmental or ethical, a member of extinction rebellion or green peace where you see humanity as sovereign and the need to control the world and the universe.

These are up to us, very much thinking of many of our millennials. And there's good elements within that, within that individualistic, social and idealistic plans.

[14:32] But as believers in Christ, as those who are Christians and profess to be Christians today, if that is where you are in your life spiritually, what does it mean?

What does life planning look like for the Christian? Commit your plans, your work to the Lord, your plans will be established. Well the Bible says, lots of things probably, I'll just mention one or two of them.

First, planning for us as Christians should be transformational, okay? We should allow the gospel and Jesus Christ to influence what we think and how we plan, rather than the other way round.

Romans 12, chapter 1, you know, do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by what? By the renewing of your mind. And that's what you do, the planning, isn't it? In your mind. By the renewing of your mind.

And that's the biblical pattern, that you know, don't let the world squeeze you into its mold but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So we have to plan, but it's planning in a way that takes Christ into the center and is therefore transformational.

[15 : 40] It's gospel cent... It's transformational, it's gospel centered. And that is because as Christians we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, a relationship of love with Him and of debt because He is freely offered as salvation and we've accepted that.

We don't earn it, it's nothing good in ourselves. He has done that great work on the cross for us. Our death is the great foghorn that reminds us that we are one day to be separated from life and life is God's gift and God is the author of life.

And so it speaks of a separation from God and that has come about because of our sin. But Jesus on the cross has paid that, we'll remember that at the Lord's Supper shortly.

And therefore our love for Christ and our debt to Christ makes our planning gospel centered. It's very easy to be stagnant, to have no vision, to have no goals, spiritually some people think spiritual goals are a kind of dirty phrase.

But it's easy for us spiritually to have no reflection, to have no measurement of whether we're growing spiritually because we've got no real purpose, we don't really know what we're doing.

[16 : 59] And we're just imbibing the philosophy of the world around us and living sometimes without God in our hearts and our lives and in our perspective. What does it look like to glorify God?

How do we plan to do that? What does it mean to enjoy Him? How do we plan to put on the armor of God every day, to clothe ourselves daily with Christ, to live in the light?

Does that just happen? Do we just rumble on and get up in the morning and all of a sudden we're clothed with Christ? And all of a sudden we're wearing His armor.

Is it just something that we're passive about? Or do we plan our lives in such a way that is gospel centered and our behavior? Where, as we ask the questions, where in my life do I need to change direction?

What attitudes need to change? What behavior? What choices? What do I need to do? What resources do I need? To whom am I accountable?

[17 : 58] Who will help me in this? How do I allow God to speak into my ambitions, my relationships, my attitude to drink, and to entertainment, and to money, and to parenting?

Is the gospel at the center of these things? Or do we just rumble on our own way and somehow passively expect God to bless us or to enable us to live?

So it should be transformational, it should be gospel centered, it should be growth focused, our plans and our prayer lives. It involves intentionality, doesn't it?

And mystery. The parable of the sower, it involved a great deal of work in order to see and long for that growth to happen, but it also involved the mystery of the seed in the ground and coming to fruition.

But you know, if growth is so important to us spiritually, which I hope it is, that we're drawing closer to Christ, then isn't it important that we have some way of measuring that growth?

[19 : 06] You know, and there's a door frame in the house, the mans that we live in, in the living room, some of you will know this, that it's full of notches all the way up the door, because we measured all the boys and Amy's height as you know, every year, and so the notches get higher and higher.

We were just marking their growth. We knew that they'd move from one place to another, and we registered and measured that growth for some, it didn't go quite as high as they wanted, for others it would just be too quick.

But anyway, that's what we had. And you know, is there any way that you are able to or have you thought of, or do we think about measuring spiritually? Have I grown as a Christian since this time last year, since last summer?

Have I developed? Have I matured? Have I learned lots of the, what have I learned? How can I put it into practice? What has Jesus taught me? Because we are planning and praying, transformational gospel-centered, growth-focused, and of course, within all of this, embracing it all, prayerful.

The life that we live is absolutely key, that the trust that we have in Jesus as our Savior is reflected in the way that we allow Him into the center of our plans.

[20 : 26] And that's what this text is all about, commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. The word for commit there is a great word. The Hebrew is much, much more illustrative and imaginative than the English language.

But the word there for Hebrew means just, it describes rolling something over, roll it over. And that's what commit means. It means rolling something completely over to someone else and trusting it to them, pushing, giving it into their trust and into their responsibility.

And we are to, that's what prayer is, isn't it? It's just rolling things over into His presence. It's committing things to Him, it's praying to Him, and it's praying to Him as our Lord.

So this is speaking of God as the Redeemer here, the Lord, the Yahweh, the one who redeemed His people. And the assumption is here that we are praying to the one in whom we trust, whom we know as the Redeemer and as the Lord.

We know who He is, we know His character, we know His Lordship, we want to know Him more, we want to trust Him more. You know, you can't roll over something into somebody's presence that you don't know.

[21 : 43] It would be a foolish thing to do. You know, if our Bible is closed, if the pathway to heaven is silent in prayer, if we're not learning and submitting to the living God, it's going to be very difficult for us to roll over our life and our plans and our thinking and our prayers to Him.

So in St. Columba, we always have the wedding season, and this has been the wedding season. We had six weddings connected with St. Columba over the summer, and at each of these weddings, the bride and groom take vows.

Can you imagine two things? If the bride and groom took vows, but the foolishness of them taking vows to one another, if they didn't know each other, it would be so difficult for them to vow for the rest of their lives to one another and to roll over that great trust and push over everything into the life of the other if they didn't know one another.

It would mean that their relationship was based on a whim, based on maybe an outward attraction, a lack of knowledge and trust. It would be crazy to take these really solemn, joyful, solemn vows, rolling over, committing to another without knowing them.

But at the same time, can you imagine taking and making these vows and making these vows in front of everyone and then never spending any time together, never growing and learning and sharing that all that mattered was about the actual wedding day and being married, but then they go their own way, separate lives, separate bedrooms, separate everything, they just go their own way.

[23 : 27] And there's no rolling over at all, not even in a bad double bed. There's nothing. There's no rolling over. There's no entrusting to one another. They're just living for themselves.

But they've taken these serious vows. That would be crazy, wouldn't it? But do we sometimes do that spiritually? Oh, yeah, yeah, I entrusted my life to Jesus 30 years ago, but I never speak to Him now.

I don't include Him in my plans. I'm good enough to just get on with my own plans. Or saying, well, I trust in Jesus, but I don't need to listen, know Him. I don't need to know what He asks of me.

I don't need to understand Him. Both of these things are irrational, aren't they? If we know and love Jesus and have given our lives to Him, then we roll over, we entrust, we push into His will and mind, our work and our plans.

And that's that intentional, planned, focused prayer for specific realities in our lives. That is where the impossible happens. Our Christian lives are really dull and dread filled and distant from Jesus.

[24 : 44] It's maybe because we don't know Him and we don't recognize what He's done and we're not entrusting our life and our plans and our thinking to Him. And so the last thing, before we sing and celebrate the Lord's Supper, is going to be gospel-centered, transformational, growth-focused, prayerful and confident.

Our lives will be as confident as we do so. Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established. Now, this is a general principle, as in all the Proverbs, we don't have specific promises, but we have general principles that as we root ourselves in the will of God and as we commit our ways to Him, we will find that our lives and our thoughts and our plans are established, they're well-grounded because they link in with what God wants for us.

That's really what He's saying. As you understand and know and trust God and commit to Him, then you'll know the kind of things to be asking for and praying for and the plans you do and the work that you're engaged in.

And they will be well-established. This isn't kind of a carte blanche statement, where he says, just, you know, doesn't matter what you're planning, but just pray about it and God will make sure it happens.

That's not what we have here, because we know that His will for us sometimes is different from what our will is for us, because He knows what's good for us.

[26 : 11] We sometimes, what we want is not necessarily for our good. So it's not a Janus Joplin prayer, Lord, won't you buy me a mercy to his bands?

It's not that kind of prayer. That's not what we have here, that we just ask for God whatever we want. And as long as we ask Him for it and pray about it, then He'll give us it.

It's not like that. It's acknowledging His Lordship that He knows better than us that His will and our will as we entrust our lives to knowing Him will be confused and will be established in our lives.

His good for us might be different, and we recognize that. But nonetheless, our lives become secure and solid when we're resting on Him.

So today, I don't know what's brought you into church today. If you're vesting with us, what is your philosophy of life? Have you thought about that?

[27 : 10] Do you have a philosophy? What's the overarching philosophy of your life? Who you are, where you're from, what's the point of living, why you're here?

Big, big, important questions. Who is God? Is there God? Who is Christ? Is Christ real? What does the gospel mean?

And if the gospel is real, how does it transform and impact my thinking and my life, and particularly my plans and my prayers? Are you prayerless today as a person?

Can I say that's the loneliest place to be in the universe? Because if you're prayerless, you're saying, I'm on my own. There might be other people around us, but you're in this great, big, impersonal universe and you don't recognize anyone higher.

That's a hugely lonely and in many ways meaningless place to be. But are you a Christian who doesn't pray?

[28 : 17] Or are you a Christian who doesn't plan prayerfully? Can I ask you, as I have to look at myself, to ask you to take a hard look at the kind of faith you have, the kind of understanding you have of the living God.

If you're able to go from day to day, week to week, month to month, prayerless, not committing your plans or your work, and these are two different words, work and plan.

The work is really the kind of things you're doing every day, your employment, your studies, whatever it might be. Your plans or your kind of, your vision and your thought process and your dreams, looking forward.

The two might be different. But are you committing them prayerfully to the Lord? If you're not, I would plead with you as I have to plead with myself that we're missing out so much on this relationship with God.

We're missing out on the impossibilities and the miracles of Godly growth. So I'm wanting over the next few weeks to look at specific areas that we can all pray together about. I'm not trying to spoon feed anyone.

[29 : 23] I'm just wanting to direct us to certain areas to think about over the next few weeks, so that we're not aimless. And it just encourages us not to be aimless, but to be much more thoughtful about planning our lives in a gospel-centered way.

Amen. Let's bow our heads and pray. Father God, we ask in prayer that you would help us to understand and know who you are and understand your grace and your love in our lives.

Amen.