

Proverbs / “Plans”

Jonny Kiedrowski | Proverbs 16:1-9

May 9th, 2021

Proverbs 16:9

9 The heart of man plans his way,
but the Lord establishes his steps.

When we talk about God’s sovereignty, the idea that God is the supreme authority over everything and is ultimately in control, we can be tempted to bristle against it. It’s a human thing. Part of our DNA. Having a rebellious heart against authority begins in Genesis 3 and continues through to today. Can anyone, even God be trusted with this kind of power?

And no wonder we bristle against it. The examples we have of a “sovereign will” in media don’t paint a very good picture for us. We think of things like the Truman Show, or the Matrix. These are stories where there are characters that go through life unaware that every moment is being controlled, every aspect of their life is manicured and interfered with by an outside force: an architect or a director. Predictably, stories like this always end the same way - the hero discovers the controlling force, successfully rebels against it and moves on to a life that is finally free and autonomous, exiting a false reality and, come what may, stepping into true reality.

But our life is not the Truman show or the Matrix. This is real life, not a movie and God’s sovereignty isn’t something oppressive to be overcome as if there was a real reality outside of him. God himself defines reality, and it is a good thing that he does. Because God is infinitely wise, gracious and faithful. As the Apostle Paul states in Acts 17 V 28 “In him we live and move and have our being.” This life, your life, It’s all from God and through him, and for him.

And so, to turn into the plans and ways of God, is to step into real reality and to turn away from him isn’t an escape from oppression and control its actually a surrender to the oppressive control of sin.

To turn toward God’s ways, over and above our own, with humility and commitment will take effort. This is active, it’s not passive. It will take work to actively hold our lives, our comfort, and our aspirations loosely in our hands so that we might join hands with God in building his kingdom. In this light, we need to redefine success and failure.

Do you guys know what FOMO is. It stands for “fear of missing out”. And everyone wrestles with this. The work of following Christ will require turning FOMO on its head.

Turning our hearts toward God’s ways will mean that we don’t fear missing out on worldly pleasure, or experiences, or the praise of our peers. Instead, we’ll fear missing out on a life that pleases and honors God, lived out in relationship with him -fully known, understood and loved by him.

And God knows that for our rebellious hearts to turn to him, we’ll need his help. And he does help. This is the Gospel, that God takes our dead hearts and makes us alive through faith in Christ. Waking us from our sleep and unplugging us from the Matrix of sin we have been falsely living in so we might see the truth and live lives of worship in response to his great love for us. A love he demonstrated most clearly in Jesus who died in our place so that our sins might be forgiven.

So this is our big idea for today and the points that we’ll be looking at in this message

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We can trust in the Sovereign will of God because of his steadfast love and faithfulness

And as we go through this passage, we'll see three things:

We'll see that

1. We may plan, but God will establish
2. Sin does not change God's plans
3. God's love changes our plans

So to our first point today

(SLIDE)

We may plan, but God will establish

In the first three verses here there are three different ways of speaking about the same subject. Maybe you noticed it

The subject is this: Our lives, or more specifically, our lives in relationship to a Sovereign God.

- 1 The plans of the heart belong to man,
but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.
- 2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the spirit.
- 3 Commit your work to the Lord,
and your plans will be established.

So in just three verses Proverbs wraps up our hopes, our deeds and our work.

Said another way, our inner desires and goals, our actions and the way we live, and where we should direct our labor. These verses account for all of our internal and external lives.

In all three areas we are reminded that while we may plan and hope and work and do, God is the Lord over it all. Weighed by God, our ways are right or they are wrong. What comes to pass is his will - what does not come to pass was not his will.

And if you are anything like me, this is provoking a response.
Maybe that bristling feeling I talked about earlier.

Maybe you find comfort in the fact that God is in control, but you resent the idea that God's control might affect your plans? How do we respond to God when his plans are drastically different than our hopes? We need to humble ourselves before him and like it says in Romans 12:3 "not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to"

What we endeavor to talk about today is humbling, but as Jesus says in Matthew 5

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are the poor in spirit
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

We cannot worship God without humble hearts.

As the past year has shown all of us, we don't know what's ahead of us. Who could have planned for this? And It's not as though our plans need to be held a *little* looser. The correct posture we should adopt is open handed. Are there areas in your life or are there plans that you have made that are closed off to God?

Today God wants us to see that he has better plans for us, a better way for us and work to do now that will remain forever. Because without God's Sovereign will being worked in our own hearts, we'd be content to build sandcastles instead of a kingdom.

Jesus has spoken about building on sand before.

(SLIDE)

Matthew 7:24-27

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Building in the sand is a lot easier than building on a rock. But the results don't last.

You could spend a day or lifetime on a sandcastle, but when the rain comes or the tide rolls in, what will be left? If you want your hopes fulfilled - then your hope must be in God, the God who knows you in all of your ways - but who doesn't turn away. He comes near and acts.

Instead, in Ezekiel 36:26 he says

I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Without this necessary heart transplant, we'd be blind to our sin. Like it says, All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes; even the evil man, the sinful man, the abusive man. Still it's the lord who weighs the spirit and he's the only one with weights that work.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. The span of our life is laid bare before him and without his intervention in our personal universes, without the answer of his tongue about where, when, how far and how long, the lives of everyone in this room would be a ruin of self-gratification and self-exaltation. A life lived only in pursuit of desires and passions for us to consume that would eventually consume us.

There are greater pursuits that God has in store for us.

(SLIDE)

Proverbs 16:3

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.

Among the three verses we've looked at so far, this is the only time that we are told to do something. We're told to commit. To commit our work our efforts and our labors to the Lord. This isn't a passive thing. It's active. When someone commits a crime, it means they've done it. When you're committed to someone else in marriage - you are married. A threshold is crossed and everything is different.

Committing our work to the Lord will often take us places we couldn't have dreamed of. Both difficult and good. God's way is often not how we imagined things working out. Think about the shock that the disciples of Jesus experienced seeing him crucified. They thought Christ had come to overthrow Rome. Instead he came to overthrow sin and death. God's plan was different than theirs. A disappointment to them at first, and then infinitely better than all they could have asked or imagined.

Committing your work to the lord will mean laying down your plans, and humbling yourself enough to imagine that God's plans are better than yours, that Kingdoms are better than sandcastles. Committing to God's plan is a work of believing.

As much as it is possible, we should seek to be in step with God's plans - seeking his will, obeying his commands, pursuing holiness. Humbling ourselves so that we might follow his lead so that our plans and our work might establish his kingdom and exalt him as Lord. So we don't just do good deeds, we plan for them. We plan differently about our finances, about our time. About the configuration of our living rooms. As Tyler talked to us about last week, we devise and scheme for the sake of good.

But we will not always do this well. God knows this. Thanks be to God that my sinful heart will not stand in the way of his good purposes and when my plans conflict with his, he'll win. His plans will be established this is what's sure. What is not sure is whether or not we were faithful to humble ourselves, and to hold our lives and our plans loose enough so we would be a part of God's mighty works.

How many times have we formed our plans and purposes only to have them changed? And yet, as we think about how things have turned out, we can recognize that it was by God's grace that He led us in a different direction, to a better and more fruitful outcome.

To follow God and honor him, we work towards a growing commitment in our hearts. We go to Church and help one another follow Christ in discipleship. We stir one another up to love and good works. We're faithful to make plans, even some that go off into the next 50 years, and for those who trust in Jesus, even when we fail we can trust that God's plans will stand firm forever. We may plan, and we should, but it is God who will establish.

His kingdom will come, and there will be those who commit to build it but there will also be those who stand against it.

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but weighed on God's scales of perfection it is obvious that all the ways of man are not pure.

This brings us to our second point for today.

And that is that

(SLIDE)

Sin does not change God's plan

And we'll pick up in our passage at verse 4

4 The Lord has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.

5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord;
be assured, he will not go unpunished.

We have talked a lot about the necessity of a humble heart when it comes to believing and trusting in a God who is Sovereign over everything. In verse 4 and 5 we encounter the opposite posture: an arrogant and wicked heart. And before you think that the Bible is only speaking a warning to someone out there somewhere, I want to call our attention to a few passages of scripture.

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Romans 3:10-12

None is righteous, no, not one;

no one understands; no one seeks for God.

All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good, not even one.

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Later in verse 32 the Apostle Paul continues
all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

(SLIDE)

Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way

(SLIDE)

1 John 1:8 and 10

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make, [God] a liar, and his word is not in us.

So who were the wicked and the arrogant destined for a day of trouble?
All of us.

May of the truth of these passages bring humble reflection to our own hearts and may they also give us compassion for the lost who are living lives that are pure in their own eyes and yet they are far from God. We are born in sin and our desires, our hearts, are shaped by sin and while the danger is real for **us** and **our plans**, it never stands in God's way. It will not frustrate his plans. He will use it all.

In fact, in our passage we see that nothing is outside of God's control, even sin. Even sinners.

(SLIDE)

Proverbs 16:4

*4 The Lord has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.*

Sin will be punished, the plans of the wicked will be judged and God's purposes will prevail.
So when we see injustice, wickedness and evil in the world, we need not ever wonder "Where is God?"

Let me back up.

"Where is God?" Have you every thought that?

Have you ever looked at the evil in the world and wished that today would be the day. The day when Jesus Christ comes in all his glory and judges the sins of the world?

Where is God? Until the day that the Lord returns he is being merciful to others in the same way that he has been merciful to us. His ways are truly higher and better than ours.
We never need to wonder about where God is.

He's the Lord over all and though it can be difficult to understand at times we can remember the words of Joseph as he spoke to his would-be murderous brothers in Genesis 50:20

you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

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Romans 8:28 says it this way,

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Though at times it may seem that evil wins the day, behind it all are God's good plans. Just, yet merciful and never frustrated.

One of most amazing places that we see this is in the book of Acts.

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Acts 4:24-28

24 They [the believers] lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

*"Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?*

*26 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed'—*

27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

In this instance not only were God's great plans not frustrated by sin, God used the sinful actions of men to accomplish his will, bringing about our salvation through Jesus' sacrifice.

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Proverbs 16:4-5

*4 The Lord has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.*

*5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord;
be assured, he will not go unpunished.*

For God's perfect justice to be satisfied our sin has demanded that a day of trouble would be stored up for us. But God in his love and mercy looked upon us and had compassion on us and sent his son Jesus. Jesus, perfect and sinless, willingly gave his life as a final sacrifice for sin, experiencing the day of trouble that we deserved so that we might not. According to God's plans all sin will be judged but people will either be judged according to their wicked and arrogant hearts or they'll be judged according to Christ's righteousness given through faith.

If you have ever wondered about how God feels about you, look to Jesus and see his love for you.

1 John 4:10

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Jesus didn't die in our place because of our great love for him as though we could have ever earned it. He loved us first and our response to that love, faith and belief, brings the salvation of our souls.

The change we desperately needed to make is a change that God initiates.

And in our final point we see that

(SLIDE)

God's love changes our plans

Let's finish our text for today

Proverbs 16:6-9

*6 By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.*

*7 When a man's ways please the Lord,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

*8 Better is a little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice.*

*9 The heart of man plans his way,
but the Lord establishes his steps.*

“Steadfast love and faithfulness”

If you have read your Bible, maybe your a part our church’s reading plan this year, you have heard this phrase before. That’s because on Mount Sinai, Moses is with the Lord and makes a request.

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Exodus 33:18

18 Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” 19 And [God] said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

In the next chapter we see what it means to God that he would show Moses his glory

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Exodus 34:6

6 The Lord passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

It was God’s steadfast love and faithfulness that led Moses and the Israelites through the desert until they arrived at the promised land. It was God’s steadfast love and faithfulness that mercifully provided for the atonement of sins through the temple sacrifices. God’s Steadfast love and faithfulness preserved a remnant of believers through generations of trial, war, unfaithfulness, and exile. And in Jesus Christ we see God’s steadfast love and faithfulness in the flesh. Moses asked God to show him his glory, and in Jesus Christ we have seen it.

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As **Hebrews 1:3** says

3 [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Jesus is the steadfast love and faithfulness of God and when our eyes are opened to this our lives begin to change.

Proverbs 6 says that

by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.

Again, this is language we’ve heard before. At the start of the book of Proverbs

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Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Pastor Tyler has said before that the book of Proverbs gives us wisdom in advance.
It's also wisdom from the outside in. That's because we could have never dreamed of a God like this.

Psalms 14:1 says
The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

And once we were all fools.

In and of ourselves we would not know right from wrong or good from evil.
In our flesh we are so stained by sin, that we might even call evil "good" and good "evil".

It's by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.

God in his Sovereign majesty is awesome.
Perfect in all of his ways. Pure and holy, just and righteous. And supremely good.

Through the power of the holy spirit and with a heart changed by faith in Christ we begin to see God as he is. And when we do, we are exposed. When we see God rightly we see ourselves rightly and it's devastating. But this is the wound that heals us. By his steadfast love and faithfulness, through Jesus, God's changes our plans and sets us on a new path. Godly sorrow over sin brings repentance and the fruit of repentance is peace with God and peace with others.

God in his mercy gives us this wisdom from the outside in and produces a change from the inside out. In our passage today, it finishes with two examples of this change. These are things that we can judge our hearts and lives by. Examples that help us determine whether or not we are turning into the stream of God's sovereign will.

The two examples are this

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- 1. Because we have peace with God through Christ we can be at peace with others**
- 2. Because our treasure is in Christ we can refuse to sin against others for personal gain**

(SLIDE)

Proverbs 16:7

*7 When a man's ways please the Lord,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

If you're like me, when you read bible passages that talk about your enemies - it can seem kind of melodramatic. It's not like I'm out there fighting people with swords. Vanquishing my foes. My neighbor Jim might be wondering when I'm going to fix my fence, but I wouldn't say he's my enemy. Jim, if you're watching, I'm working on it.

Maybe you don't have enemies, but Christ does. And saying that some actions or behaviors are sinful - that's not always going to win you friends. As you grow closer in your relationship to the Lord, your life will stand in contrast to others - and the fearsome goodness of God will shine through you. And God's enemies may become enemies of you.

But *"When a man's ways please the Lord,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."*

Though people in this world may be opposed to what you think or believe, your actions shaped by the gospel can still remain winsome and kind. There is a way to live that God is calling us to that is radically different than the defensive posture that our flesh tempts us to pursue.

Jesus himself calls us into this way in

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Matthew 5:44

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

In the gospel, God has called us to love our enemies, those who are against us - He's done this because we were once his enemies and in this we can reflect his love to the world. Maybe you're not like me, and you feel as though you do have enemies. Even so, take Jesus' words to heart. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Let's make this practical for a second. Sometimes we don't know where to start.

What would it mean for you to love your enemies on social media? If someone only knew you through your posts or your tweets, would they know more about what you are for or what you are against? Would they know more about the dynamic relationship you have with God or is would they mostly see how feel about

Lives changed by the Gospel should desire to see other lives changed by the Gospel and it would be wise for us to remember that what captivated our hearts when Christ saved us is the that grace that we received when we deserved it the least.

The final example we're given shows us that

2. Because our treasure is in Christ we can refuse to sin against others for personal gain

(SLIDE)

Proverbs 16:8

*8 Better is a little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice.*

Christ himself is our righteousness. At the cross he took all the punishment that we should have received for our sin and we received all of his righteousness. The faith that we have in Jesus is our most valuable possession. If we really believe this, it means that all other possessions become less valuable. We can loosen our grip.

This short proverb is a little more pointed than just a call to live generously. It brings in how our wealth can be tied to justice or rather injustice. Now last week we spoke a lot about justice so I don't feel the need to expand much more.

But Loosening our grip and even letting go of being ultimately in control of the plans of our life so that we might be open to the sovereign plans of God can mean that we also hold on to comforts, material possessions and status symbols more loosely. We can now become generous in just ways because of the way God has generously loved us in the gospel.

It means that we stay away from the shady business deal or from making the sale that takes advantage of someone. It can even mean that we're free we think about the ethical impact on the communities that produce the goods we consume. Seeking to do justice with our finances will change what we invest in.

When we treasure Christ above everything, we realize that success is not about dying with the most stuff. It's about what Jesus called the greatest commandment

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Matthew 22:37-39

37 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus perfectly fulfilled these commandments and he calls us to follow him into his beautiful plan of redemption.

The steadfast love and faithfulness of God revealed, Jesus Christ, has taken away our sin and has awakened our hearts to see reality as it truly is.

Maybe today you've realized that you've been fighting against God's plans. You've been holding onto an idea of what you want your life to be like so tightly that you've found yourself sinning to get what you want. Maybe today you've seen the beauty of the Gospel today and in contrast you've seen something ugly in your plans, or your deeds or your behavior. Make a change today. Cross the threshold and commit your plans to the Lord. The only thing you have to lose is everything. Everything that hasn't satisfied the longing of your heart yet.

How can we trust in a Sovereign God? We can trust in him because it's his sovereignty that has brought about our salvation. God loved us enough to change our hearts and put us on a new path. And in response his miraculous work, we can lay down our plans to join his. We can stop building sand castles and be a part of building a kingdom on a sure foundation.

Jesus himself encourages us to this end in Matthew 16:24-25

(SLIDE)

Matthew 16:24-25

24 "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

9 The heart of man plans his way,
but the Lord establishes his steps.

When we walk with Jesus, we won't always know where our steps will take us but we know that the God who does is always with us.