

Philippians 2:19, 23-24

1. Specific plans that are open and flexible prepare us for open doors

Paul's not exactly sure what's going to happen in his future; he's not sure what the Roman court will decide; but he's making plans in the interim.

Key concept: instead of effectively sitting on his hands, Paul was busy strategizing with Timothy, so that as soon as God opened the door they were ready.

This is the attitude of Nehemiah. Nehemiah is burdened for his city and his people in Jerusalem. Nehemiah had already figured out the route he'll take to Jerusalem, the papers he would need to allow him to pass through other countries and how much timber he's going to need for the gates. Nehemiah was ready when the king asked. *"If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah; and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress."* (**Nehemiah 1:7-8**).

2. Holding specific plans open and flexible forces us to hold our agenda lightly

The guardrail around Paul's plans is, *"But I hope" "in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you."*

The Greek work implies a sense of confidence that it's going to happen; but Paul's plans are in the "boundaries" of the will and purpose of the *"Lord Jesus."* Paul is saying, "Jesus is *Lord* to me which means, I am His servant and my life is not to do my will, but His will.

The Model prayer: *"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ..."* "The Lord willing" isn't a cliché, and it isn't a cop-out either, it is a pause point, and it is a mental and verbal reminder to hold lightly to our agenda.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian, was put into a concentration camp during World War II and then executed by Adolph Hitler's personal orders just three weeks before Hitler committed suicide. Bonhoeffer wrote, *"We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God."*

Author Graham Cook's book *Embracing Change* – *"God is always faithful in His perfection, but often difficult to follow in His purpose; in fact, He is often unpredictable in His ways. As a believer, you can be assured where you are with God, but you seldom know where you are going to be taken by God."*

3. Keeping specific plans open and flexible protects us from being lethargic (Vs. 19, 23)

Paul is anticipating things are going to happen soon. Notice in verse 23 Paul says, *"...immediately."* As soon as God gives the go-ahead; however, God may change Paul's plan.

The truth is, every believer who, in thinking logically and has mapped out plans with humility and commitment, will not be tempted toward lethargy or apathy.

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4. Open and flexible plans remind us that God is sovereign

Proverbs 16:9, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."

Our sinful nature influences our thinking and our direction. **Jeremiah 17:9** *"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; who can know it?"* Notice again how this impacts our paths in life from **Jeremiah 10:23**, *"O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps."*

Paul demonstrates the attitude that we ought to have, verse 23, paraphrased *"... as soon as I see what God has in mind for me; I'm going to send Timothy to you."* There's only one way a person can come up with this attitude. It's when God is sovereign and we recognize we are His servant ... submitted . . . surrendered . . . to our sovereign Lord.

5. Being open and flexible with specific plans reminds you that God's grace will be sufficient (Vs. 24)

In chapter 1, Paul clearly stated that whatever happened to him would be a win-win situation. Whether released from prison and reunited with them, which was for their benefit, or be executed and be released to be with God. Paul makes it clear that one fact was certain: Paul would find God's grace sufficient either way.

Here is a checklist of what to do to ensure readiness during those times when God places us at a pause point:

- Am I preparing for open doors?
- Am I holding my own agenda lightly?
- Am I lethargic or apathetic?
- Am I submitting to God's revision plans?
- Am I surrendered to God's sovereign revision?
- Am I trusting that God's grace will be sufficient?

*Day by day and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause for worry or for fear.*