

Weekly Newsletter

20th January 2026



Reflection: Finding a Way in the Will of God

By Joe Barnard

“I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you” (Rom. 1:9 NKJ)

The density of Paul’s writing is part of what makes it so interesting. Each phrase is like a piece of origami. What looks small can be unfolded into something much bigger. This is why preachers like Martin Lloyd-Jones and John Piper have been able to spend years preaching through Romans. Each sentence is an archaeological site. The more you dig, the more you find.

I’m fascinated by Paul’s turn of phrase “find a way in the will of God”. On first reading, it sounds paradoxical. We tend to think of the will of God as something fixed and immovable like a lane in a motorway. You don’t “find a way” in the will of God; you submit to it, surrender to it, resign to it.

But Paul seems to have had a different, more nuanced understanding. For Paul, the will of God does not eliminate the relevance of prayers, means, discerning, attempting, or planning. Somehow God’s Providence can be fixed without such immutability cancelling the weight of human action.

Perhaps we might illustrate this by imagining the will of God to be like a pass through a mountain range rather than a lane on a motorway. A motorway leaves very little room for planning and navigation. You simply stay in the lines and – if you do so – arrive at the appointed destination.

Following a mountain pass is a different experience. In one sense, the pass is fixed. It is immovably there and must be followed to complete a journey. Yet, a pass through a mountain still requires skilfulness, even creativity, from a mountaineer. Planning is required. One looks out and sees multiple potential routes and has to decide which one is best. Likewise, due to flooding or snow, one might discover a path to be unusable. Thus, in the midst of a journey, one might end up retracing his steps and looking for a different way forward.

This seems to me to be closer to Paul’s mindset. Evidently, for some time, Paul had had it in his heart to visit Rome. He had prayed about it, planned for it, and attained a sense of peace that preaching in Rome was part of his calling. Yet, time and again, Providential circumstances had interfered. Pastoral needs had called him to other places; unexpected persecution had resulted in redirection; again and again the tyranny of the urgent had stolen his attention. And so, as Paul writes Romans, he’s still trying to figure out some means by which he can “find a way in the will of God” to come to Rome.

Now, what is the relevance of this for us?

Have you not, at times, felt a concrete sense of direction from the Lord – even a sense of personal promise – that slips through your fingers like water every time you try to grasp it? You hope, and pray,



but nothing happens. Doors you were certain would open instead slam shut, one after another. You make plans, but contingencies intervene. Months and years pass with no progress toward fulfilment. What should we do when we feel confident that God has directed us, but one hurdle after another impedes our ability to act on the direction?

I think we see a picture of what we should do in Romans 1:6.

First, we should keep praying. The heart is notoriously deceitful. Feelings often reflect human desire more than divine direction. Therefore, it's important that we continue to test our sense of direction to make sure that our hearts are coming behind God's and we're not trying to force God's heart to come behind ours (c.f. Rom. 12:2). Nothing is better for testing the heart than leaving it on the coals of prayer for an extended period of time.

Second, we should keep planning. Notice how Paul says "by some means" (vs. 9). I love how, for Paul, praying and planning did not contradict each other. Paul prayed, prayed, and prayed *and* planned, planned, and planned. He understood that God's usual method of answering prayer was not parting the Red Sea, but simply enabling safe passage across it. Paul did not expect his hope of visiting Rome to be confirmed by miracles. He was just looking for Providence to give him the time and freedom needed to plan a normal passage to the great capital city.

Third, Paul embraced the unchosen. Paul knew that God's wisdom was higher than his. If God wanted Paul in Rome, then Paul would eventually get there. The thing to do in the meantime was not to give in to despair or frustration, but to keep being faithful in the interim. For Paul, that meant writing a letter to people he had hoped to be able to visit in person. For us, this may mean being content to stay in the same job or situation in life – with joy and steadfastness – until hidden prayers give way to long awaited fulfilment.

Prayer Meeting

We're looking forward to meeting to pray on **Wednesday this week** from 7-8pm. Hayley Macaskill will share about her time with Mercy Ships in Madagascar. Refreshments will be served from 6.45pm.

There is also an online prayer meeting for those who cannot make it into the building and Zoom codes will come out on Wednesday morning.

Women's Discipleship at Holyrood

Our in person Women's Bible Studies will resume on **Thursday 22 January** at 10.30am in the church. We'll be continuing our studies in the book of Acts and coffee and scones will be provided!

Please save the date! Our next Ladies' Breakfast will be on **Saturday 21 March**. We're going to try the later time of 10.30am and we'll be finished by 12 noon. So it's more of a Ladies' Brunch than a breakfast...



Missionary Update

By Shona MacDonald

Do you want to know more about the missionaries we support in Holyrood? Join us on a zoom meeting on **Saturday 31st January at 9am** to hear stories of what our missionaries have been doing and support them in prayer. We know it's early on a Saturday morning but it really is worth it! Zoom codes will be sent out nearer the time.

Christmas Appeal 2025

The final amount for the 2025 Christmas Appeal came to **£15,523.75**. Praise God for such generous giving! The money has been distributed as follows -

- £6209.50 - Women's Workers for Tranent Community Church
- £6209.50 - Cross Training Ministries
- £1552.37 - Craig Anderson and the Church Plant in Galashiels
- £1552.38 – the East of Scotland Gospel

Christian Institute Scotland Tour – Guarding Lives

We are hosting the Christian Institute on **Tuesday 3rd February from 7.30pm – 9pm** as they seek to raise awareness and persuade MSPs not to legalise assisted suicide. They have identified key MSPs who may be open to changing their vote at Stage 3 and so they urge us to come along to this meeting. There are flyers for the tour in the church foyer, please take some and pass them on.

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting from 7-8pm (online option available) with refreshments from 6.45pm.
- Thursday:
 - Women's Bible Study from 10.30am-11.30am in the church
 - Session Meeting from 7pm in the church
- Sunday:
 - Morning Service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Evening Service at 6pm – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
- Monday: Baby and Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am

