

"NO 'PLAN B'"
(Acts 20:1-38)
(Chuck Swindoll)

Luke's accounts of Paul's hampered journey to Troas and his miraculous restoration of Eutychus's life serve a literary and theological purpose. The rest of Paul's life would be a series of adaptations to challenges presented by unfortunate circumstances, and his flexibility would become the means by which God would advance His agenda. Although Paul was prevented from spending Passover in Jerusalem, we have the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts because he adapted his itinerary to avoid danger and picked up Luke in Philippi. Although a boy fell to his death during Paul's teaching at Troas, Paul's compassionate response gave the Lord an opportunity to miraculously affirm the apostle's authority, validating his ministry.

The Lord didn't stop working in the first century. He still has a plan and He will continue to see it through. Therefore, we would be wise to observe Paul's experience to find principles we can apply today.

First, *hold all personal plans loosely*. If anyone in the world could claim a direct line to heaven, it was Paul. He was fulfilling his calling and accomplishing his divine purpose. God used the apostle as His mouthpiece and He channeled His power through this servant to heal illnesses, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. Yet Paul encountered circumstances he could not change. He established noble plans to carry out his mission with selfless abandon, yet enemies forced him to adjust. If Paul had to remain flexible and adaptable, we shouldn't be surprised when our plans come unraveled. Make detailed plans and follow them when YOU can. But hold them loosely. Expect changes.

Second, *don't waste time lamenting a ruined plan*. I've served in ministry long enough to remember multiple occasions when a busted plan turned out to be a gift in disguise. I look back on those episodes and I shudder to think what might have happened if my plans—as good and as well thought-out as they seemed—had not been preempted by some unforeseen difficulty. I also recall how upset I was when my plans got dashed. On one occasion, I remember feeling like my life had been completely ruined. Today, as I reflect on the past, I see God's loving, gracious hand steering me toward a future I could not have imagined. Having so many of these gifts of broken plans in my past, today I accept much more easily what I cannot change.

