

God's Plan for Our Salvation

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(Act 10:43) "To Him (Jesus) all the Prophets bear witness, and testify that through His 'Name' all who 'believe' in Him receive the forgiveness of their sins."

It is very important that we understand what it means to 'believe' according to Scripture, because that is the first step for us to follow in the order of God's 'divine plan' for our Salvation. John the Baptist was sent to preach 'judgment' and 'repentance',... and to announce 'the appearance' and 'ministry' of Jesus Christ (the appointed Savior of all who will believe God's 'Message' sent through Him and will call on His Name).

(Matt. 3:1-3), "About this time John the Baptist made his appearance, preaching in the Desert of Judaea. "Repent," he said, "for the 'Kingdom of the Heavens' (meaning, that Jesus our Savior) is now close at hand." (and He is bringing to you the 'Way' to the Kingdom of God). "He it is who was spoken of through the Prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying aloud, 'In the desert prepare ye a road for the Lord: make His highway straight.'" (NIV says), "Prepare the 'way' for the Lord, make straight paths for him."

We first must believe God's message about His Son, Jesus Christ, and what He would come to do in our behalf, to save us from the 'death penalty' for our sins (for we have all sinned). This 'divine plan' of God for the salvation of mankind, is called the 'Message of Life' by the 'angel of the Lord', who came to release the apostles from the public jail (Acts 5:19).

The one thing we all want to realize is, that God's plan for our lives is directly opposite to man's plans and ideas for our life on earth. (Isaiah

55:8 tells us), "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord." So, it would, (naturally speaking) go against the grain for us to even want to recognize and accept God's plan, (when our own plans of the self-life are so much different than His).

If we will (and do) believe God's message, then we can be made willing to follow God's 'divine plan' for Salvation, which is to 'repent' (as John the Baptist said), be 'baptized' (have our sins washed away) and receive the Holy Spirit. By first believing God's message about His Son, (Who would come to do the work of atonement for us), God will give us His gift of the Holy Spirit to enable us to love and obey Jesus Christ. (John 14:15, Jesus told us), "If you love me, you will obey my commandments."

The apostle Peter knew (before he had received an in-filling of the Holy Spirit) that Jesus had said that, so (after he had testified before the Sanhedrin about Jesus' atonement sacrifice for us, and His resurrection to life)(so that we may also be raised to life), Peter was inspired to say (Acts 5:32), "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who 'obey' him."

When we believe God's message about His Son, and we receive His gift of the Holy Spirit Who enables us to love and obey Him, ... 'He' (through His sanctifying work) will remove self from our heart(which must be done in our life). He will replace self with a divine nature in our heart(and spiritual light), so that He can prepare us for Eternal Life in Heaven with God and His Son... because,... we believe and trust on the power of the atonement Blood of His Son, (the sacrificed Lamb of God). (Rev. 21:23) "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp." (Vs.27) "And no unclean thing shall ever enter it, nor any one who is guilty of base conduct or tells lies," (NKJV says, "or causes an abomination or a lie"), "but, only they whose names stand recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life."

"The object of considering this subject is, so that we might be led more easily into God's way" (the late Pastor said),(and to realize that we must pray to have self removed from our heart, and choose to follow God's 'divine plan' for our Salvation), "because not only our happiness in

this life, but our eternal Life depends on getting into God's will during our life here."

To begin with, we were born with a nature of self, which is directly opposite to the way God ever intended. His ways and plans are the only true ones, and the only place of perfect happiness... where all burdens are taken away, all needs are met, and desires fulfilled by Him. Yet it is very hard for us to see this at first, and the pathway to reach that end is generally different from what we might expect it to be.

God's plan is the 'pathway of humility'. That sometimes may mean much to us, and sometimes little, but let us take it as a way of expressing His plan for our life... the 'pathway of humility'. God, inspired Peter to say (1 Pet. 5:5), that we are to "be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (God gives us the responsibility to humble ourselves). (Vs. 6-7) "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

The world's plan (on the other hand) is always one of self-exaltation, aggrandizing one-self', and human efforts to gain prosperity in our life. The world's way is to always have a fine 'reputation', to be looked up to, be well thought of, to reach a 'high position', and to have financial prosperity,... [and all else that those things of worldly importance would include].

God's plan is directly opposite. His plan is to go down instead of up (at first); that is, not to be successful in having 'fine position' among men, a good salary and financial prosperity (humanly speaking), nor to be held in high esteem by everyone. God's plan for us at first (in our Christian life), is to "be clothed with humility,... humbled "under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (Jesus supported that, Matt. 11:29), "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

So, how much, or many 'things' that we obtain in this life is of no importance, but how we obtain them is the all-important part, because it is absolutely necessary to obtain things in God's way,... and it is vital toward our spiritual growth

and development in a true Christian 'life of trusting faith' on God.

We are to cast all of our cares on God, depending on Him like a little child depends on its parents, and not be depending on efforts of the 'self-life', for Jesus said, (Luke 18:17), "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child... will never enter it."

God gave us an example in the life of Jesus Christ, which was one of real humility. The humble manner of His entrance into the world, was really the plan of His whole life in a nutshell. He was born in a manger and without any attendants to help care for Him, (or we could say), without any attention given Him. Really it was a stable for animals. They did not have even a house for Jesus to stay in after He was born. The Son of God, the Maker of Heaven and earth, being born in a manger. What a wonderful 'humble example' for us!

We may read from time to time of the birth of a child to someone of high position in life, and we should notice the great contrast to Jesus Christ's birth. The birth will cost thousands of dollars, with much more spent on a room with its furnishings, (and all the attendants, nurses, and physicians). Certainly, grand surroundings for a birth, 'but directly opposite to the humble surroundings in which the 'Ruler' of Heaven and earth came into the world (in a manger for animals).

Then He went through life on this earth dressed like a bond-slave; clothing of poor quality (the same as common people wore); His companions were poor and unlearned people (by the world's standards). His close friends (like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus) lived in humble dwellings. His actions were like those of a true servant, and no one thought very much of Him, but He did not mind that either (while He set an example for us to follow). His disciples had a hard time trying to see, that the greatest thing (or place) in God's sight is a humble place, (even when Jesus tried to explain this to them).

The disciples had conversations among themselves, debating which one would be considered the greatest, and who would be awarded the most honorable place. "But Jesus called them to Him, and said,(Matt. 20:25-28), "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it

over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you; but whoever desires to be great among you shall be your servant, and whoever desires to be first among you shall be your bond-servant; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as the redemption-price for many."

We can easily see from this, that the humblest and lowest position that a person takes, is the greatest and highest position in God's sight. How opposite it is from the world's way!

We may recall that a man came to Jesus (Luke 9:57) and said, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus then warned the man what it was going to be like to follow Him (Vs. 58), "The foxes have holes," said Jesus, "and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

He did not even have a rented room to retire to, and to say, 'this is my home'. But what a valuable 'place of humility' that was to be in. (1 Pet. 5:5), "be clothed with humility", for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

(That is not to say that "we are wrong to have a nice home", (if we have received it in a right way according to God's plan of trusting Him to provide), (and not through the plans and ways of man and the self-life, by borrowing money, and taking out a mortgage to buy, etc.). But, what a great example the Son of God left for us to follow. In the natural state of mind and heart that we are all born with (and which must be gotten rid of), we are so much concerned with what other people think and say about us. But, Jesus had none of that in His heart.

If the surrender of our heart to God is sincere and final, He can eliminate that 'pride' from our heart and life. God will bring us to the place where we will not care what other people think of us, if what we are doing is pleasing in His sight, (and according to His plan and example of humility for us to follow). We will have only one main desire, that is, to be pleasing in God's sight and to know what He thinks of what we are doing, what He thinks of us, and whether or not we are 'humble' in His sight.

In the 5th. chapter of John, Jesus had justified His Deity to the unbelieving Jews, explained to them that obedience leads to Eternal Life, and that everyone will be resurrected and

judged in the last days. He then added, that "they who have done what is right to the resurrection of Life, and they whose actions have been evil (no faith or trust on God),... to the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:29).

He then warned those unbelievers that He knows what is in our heart, and He gave them a personal example of being humble and obedient before God. (John 5:41-42), "I do not accept glory from man, but I know you well, and I know that in your hearts you do not really love God." (Vs. 44), "How is it possible for you to 'believe', while you receive glory from one another, and have no desire for the glory that comes from the only God?"

That was true sarcasm from the 'Son of God', for anyone with pride in their heart. We must allow God to remove pride (in order to enter His Kingdom).

The only thing really worth-while in life, is to know what kind of a God we have, what He thinks about us, and to know what He has revealed to us in His Word. We do not need to care what others think of us, when we are doing God's will, (and God will always take control of the other person for us, as Scripture says). "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

So, it should certainly be satisfying enough for us when God "exalts you (lifts you up) in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6), and just to know that God is pleased and that He is with us when we are doing His will (as He promised that He would be).

We need to know God's Word so we can understand and put it into 'practice' as Jesus said we must do, and we will not fall away from our faith on God. (Luke 6:46-48), "And why do you all call me 'Master, Master' and yet not 'do' what I tell you? Every one who comes to me and listens to my words and puts them in 'practice', I will show you whom he is like. He is like a man building a house, who digs and goes deep, and lays the foundation on the rock; and when a flood comes, the torrent bursts upon that house, but is unable to shake it, because it is securely built."

Putting God's Word into practice, is doing His will. Jesus said, only those who do the will of my Father will enter His Kingdom. Trusting on the Son of God is the 'way' (as John the Baptist taught), and it is the only 'way' to enter through the narrow gate' (humbly.)

We want to seek the same type of spirituality that true Christians showed in Bible times. Moses chose to be 'clothed with humility', and to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather, than to enjoy the pleasures of a life of sin, and of not trusting on God to provide and to help him meet circumstances. He well knew that he would have had human prosperity right in his hand, and probably succeed to the throne of Egypt, with plenty of money and honor from other people, and everything else the world has to offer. But, he would have taken himself out of a 'place of trust on God', which (spiritually speaking) is the most valuable place one could ever be in. So, Moses made the wisest choice that any human being could ever make in their life. (Heb. 11:24-26), "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward."

As a result of Moses' right choice to trust on God, he was taught and trained in the Truth by God, Himself for eighty years, before God called him to lead His people out of the land of Egypt. It is a remarkable story of how Moses was led and taught by God, personally (and He will do the same for us). God allowed him to be humiliated for His sake. Instead of having a 'high position', he had no 'position'. He had to start right out in life living by faith in God for each day, but He 'believed' that God would provide. He had to go to bed at night without anything in for breakfast, which of itself would clothe a person with humility (humanly speaking), but Moses had chosen to live a 'life of humility' and 'faith on God'. He would be cast down, tempted, and tried, have people murmur and complain behind his back (and to his face), yet he chose to allow God to teach him through humility, and to 'exalt him in due time'.

It was a wise choice, because Moses got Eternal Life, and he did not really suffer any harm in the meantime (having placed himself in the 'will of God'). He had wonderful health of body, (for the Bible says, at the time of his death at one hundred and twenty years of age), his natural force was not abated, nor his eyesight dim. He

was as strong and vigorous as when he was a young man. That is very remarkable.

God led the Israelites into a wilderness where He humiliated them and suffered them to hunger, so that He might perfect their spirituality. It was just opposite to the world's ways and ideas, but it worked out well for them, because God used it to prepare them to go into a land of milk and honey, where they would have all needed things in abundance.

That is what we all must allow God to do with our life. It is those people who are chastened, humiliated, and of no reputation, whom God can take under His wing and lead them to 'Eternal Life'. The humiliating things (from a worldly point of view), that God allows us to go through, is to enable us to die to 'self', (and to all else that pertains to this world's ways and doings). If we are truly surrendered into God's hands, and meet things with humility, we will be brought to 'divine prosperity', (exalted by God in due time), and most importantly be prepared for Eternal Life with a faith for Salvation. That is God's plan. (Prov. 10:22 says), "The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, And He adds no sorrow with it."

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