

TITLE

THE LORD'S GOOD PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Have you considered lately whether your plans for life aligns **with** God's plan for you?

When life doesn't go according to your plans, how do you respond?

I'd like to share an example from Scripture of a disciple walking with Jesus and facing a moment when his plan didn't align with God's plan.

We will see how both the disciple and our Savior responded to God's plan.

And we will see how our Lord and Savior spoke truth to the disciple,

which ultimately—though not immediately—changed the disciple's plan to align with God's plan.

Like any plan, we need direction. As Christians, we have direction in God's Word,

which reveals the LORD'S good plan for our lives. With this background in mind we are going to see...

CENTRAL POINTS (1)

God's plan provides us with the right course to follow.

God's plan guides our conduct in life.

God's plan helps us correct our choices.

TEXT

Mark 8:31-34 NKJV -

31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things,

and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

33 But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples,

He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them,

“Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

CENTRAL POINT (First)

God’s plan provides us with the right course to follow.

CONTEXT

(Prior verses)

For context, Jesus had just healed a blind man. Following this, He and His disciples departed from Galilee

and made their way to the villages near Caesarea Philippi, where Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ.

It is after this interaction that, according to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus begins teaching His disciples, saying that the Son of Man must suffer...

COMMENTARY (Believer’s Bible Comm.)

8:31 The name Son of Man is Jesus’ most common title for himself.

It comes from Daniel 7:13, where the Son of Man is a heavenly figure who, in the end times, has authority and power.

The name refers to Jesus as the Messiah, the representative person, the human agent of God who is vindicated by God.

In this passage, Son of Man is linked closely with Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ and confirms its messianic significance.

From this point on, Jesus spoke plainly and directly to his disciples about his death and resurrection.

He began to prepare them for what was going to happen to him by telling them three times that he would soon die (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34).

CONTEXT
(Son of Man)

We can understand from the title 'Son of Man' that Jesus is speaking about Himself and that His death is approaching.

Let's look at the other two verses where Jesus shares His fate with His disciples...

TEXT

Mark 9:31-32 NKJV -

31 For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men,

and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

32 But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

TEXT

Mark 10:32-34 NKJV -

32 Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed.

And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him:

33 "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes;

and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles;

34 and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

CONTENT
(Course - God's plan for Jesus)

We can see that Jesus was teaching and preparing the disciples for what was going to happen to Him,

revealing God's plan for His life—even though the disciples did not fully understand or were afraid to ask.

Yet Jesus was fully aware of God's plan for Him. Why was it important for Him to teach the disciples?

I want to point out that the Gospel of Mark depicts Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant.

At this point, we see a shift: Jesus, who is a servant, begins to introduce the Suffering Servant.

So, what do I mean by that?

Jesus asked His disciples to follow Him in the beginning of His ministry. As they followed, they saw Him as the example of a servant of God.

He used servitude as His means to reach people—healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and meeting people's needs.

He shared the good news, calling people to repentance and teaching God's Word, the truth.

He came to save the lost, to fulfill the law, and to point to Himself as the way, the truth, and the life.

Yet God's plan meant facing rejection, suffering, death, and His resurrection.

So we see a shift—from Jesus as a servant to the Suffering Servant—so that the disciples

...could be taught and eventually come to understand after Jesus would be crucified.

As Jesus Himself said, He came 'not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.'

This was foreordained by God, and we see it revealed in His Word through the prophet Isaiah.

COMMENTARY (Believer's Bible Comm.)

Interestingly, the meaning of Isaiah's name reflects the main theme of the book: 'Salvation is from the Lord.'

The word 'salvation' occurs twenty-six times in this prophecy—more than in all the other prophets combined.

This theme also illustrates the unity of the book: Chapters 1–39 depict man's tremendous need for salvation

and chapters 40–66 give God's gracious provision of it.

Isaiah warned Israel that her wickedness would be punished, and yet God in His grace would one day provide a Savior for both the Jews and the Gentiles as one commentator states.

TEXT

Isaiah 53:1-10 NLT -

Who has believed our message?

To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?

2 My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground.

There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

3 He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down.

And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!

5 But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

7 He was oppressed and treated harshly,
yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

8 Unjustly condemned, he was led away.
No one cared that he died without descendants,

that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.

9 He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

10 But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants.

He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's good plan will prosper in his hands.

CONTENT

(Conduct - God's plan for Jesus)

What I want to highlight from these verses is that this was the LORD's good plan: to take Jesus, who knew no sin,

and carry our sins to the cross, so that we—through faith and by His grace—would not have to suffer the punishment we deserve.

There are other verses, prophecies that also reveal the LORD's good plan.

While we can understand God's plan for Jesus, what about His plan for Peter?

What course was Peter to take? I can't help but consider what happened when Jesus first met Peter...

TEXT

Matthew 4:18-22 NKJV -

18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

CONTENT

(God’s plan - Peter’s plan/course)

Peter’s course was to follow Jesus. Later in this study, we will see the extent to which Peter followed Him.

But for now, Peter’s calling was clear: to follow Jesus as His disciple and become a fisher of men.

Peter was called to be a student, a disciple, in sharing the good news.

Instead of catching fish, he would be catching people’s attention with the gospel—he was becoming a servant of God’s plan.

As we enter our study of Mark 8:31, we see Peter’s discipleship entering a new stage—learning from Jesus who is now teaching about His suffering.

CONTENT

(God’s plan - our course)

The question then arises: Has God’s Word given us the right course?

Has His Word spoken to us, calling us to follow Him? He may not speak audibly, but His Word—the Scriptures...

we read as believers, hopefully daily—can speak to our hearts, just as He spoke to His disciples, including Peter: ‘Follow Me’.

Is He telling us; ‘Follow Me to share my gospel with that stranger’, ‘Follow Me as we serve with love,’ ...

‘Follow Me as we lead the ministry I’ve entrusted to you,’ or ‘Follow Me as you give your time, your treasure, and your talent for My Kingdom.

Are we following Him, or are we folding? Are we taking a step of faith, or stepping back for lack of faith?

I have to confess—I’ve had previous opportunities to step up, to be in this very place, teaching, and I hesitated.

I can hear Jesus saying, 'Follow Me to teach My Word.' And I have to admit—I folded, I stepped back, I lacked faith.

Sometimes we want Jesus to follow our personal plans—our relationships, our jobs, our ventures.

And there's nothing wrong with asking Him for guidance in these areas—I encourage it.

But often, our prayers focus on what we want on our time table and overshadow His calling, His purpose, and His good plan for our lives.

Our course should be about being a servant—to serve with love, not out of obligation, pressure, or expectation.

It may mean serving as a leader, a teacher, or wherever the Lord is asking us to follow Him.

God's Word gives us direction, and our prayers should be heartfelt petitions for His help to follow that course.

I love what Jesus shares with His disciples in the Gospel of John about those who hear him...

TEXT

John 10:27-30 NKJV -

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

30 I and My Father are one.

CONENT (Transition)

We may not know what tomorrow holds, but, if we follow Jesus, regardless of our circumstances,

Be it with relationships, jobs, health, death of loved ones, finances, He provides us with direction, with a course...

follow Me, follow My Word, follow My voice - are we hearing and receive it?
Jesus, the Son of Man, is teaching His disciples that He is following God's perfect plan—the right course.

This meant He would suffer many things. But how did the disciples respond? Which brings us to our second point.

CENTRAL POINT (2)

(Transition to course to conduct)

God's plan provides us with the right course to follow and
God's plan guides our conduct in life.

TEXT

Mark 8:31-33 NKJV -

31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things,
and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

33 But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples,

He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

CONTENT

(Conduct - Peter's response)

Peter's response to Jesus' teaching—that He would suffer, be rejected, die, and rise—was rebuke.

The word 'rebuke' means to admonish, to reprimand, or to express strong disapproval.

Clearly, the Lord's good plan did not align with Peter's personal plans.

I would even say Peter's conduct—his behavior—was called into question. Peter clearly thought Jesus had a skewed view of the Kingdom of God.

There seems to be a disconnect between Peter's walk with the Lord and what Jesus was teaching.

Did Peter truly grasp what it meant for Jesus to be the Christ?

Did he understand why Jesus, the God-Man, the Son of Man came into His own creation?

Apparently not—because Jesus' rebuke of Peter in front of the disciples.

Peter may have had good intentions—he may have been trying to protect His Lord from harm.

But regardless of his intentions, Peter's conduct was in question and was received by rebuke.

And it didn't end there. Soon after, Peter struck a man and cut off his ear before Jesus was taken away—just before being persecuted and eventually His crucifixion.

TEXT

John 18:10-11 NKJV -

10 Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear.

The servant's name was Malchus.

11 So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?"

CONTENT

(Conduct - Peter)

We continue to see Peter's conduct remain consistent with his earlier behavior.

His response was violent—again, possibly with good intentions, acting as a protector.

Yet Jesus rebuked Peter a second time, and sadly, Peter's conduct worsened, he denied Jesus three times.

He went from protecting to forsaking Jesus. It's in...

TEXT

Mark 14:66-72 NKJV -

66 Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came.

67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.”

68 But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are saying.”

And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

69 And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, “This is one of them.”

70 But he denied it again.

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again,

“Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.”

71 Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this Man of whom you speak!”

72 A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him,

“Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And when he thought about it, he wept.

CONTENT

(conduct - Jesus)

We see Peter’s conduct reach its peak—cursing and swearing—so much so that he remembered Jesus’ ...

warning that he would deny Him three times.

In contrast, we see our Savior’s conduct remain steadfast and faithful, even moments before being taken away.

I want to point out that in our study verses, Jesus had not yet been crucified. Yet even then, He was exemplifying godly conduct.

We don't see a single moment where Jesus rebuked God the Father; rather, we see our Savior submitting fully to the LORD's good plan.

How do we know this...

TEXT

Mark 14:32-36 NKJV - The Prayer in the Garden

32 Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane (gěth-sěm'ə-nē); and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

33 And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.

34 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch."

35 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.

36 And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

CONTENT

(conduct - Jesus)

We see Jesus' response, even knowing the pain He would endure,

as He humbly came before God the Father—seeking, praying that the cup might pass from Him,

yet submitting not to His own will, but to God's will.

There was no rebuke, no reprimand, no disapproval—standing in stark contrast to Peter, who didn't even pray, but simply reacted.

COMMENTARY (Believer's Bible comm)

While praying, Jesus was aware of what doing the Father's will would cost him.

He understood the suffering he was about to encounter, and he did not want to have to endure the horrible experience.

But Jesus prayed, Yet I want your will to be done, not mine. Anything worth having costs something.

Jesus was willing to pay any price to gain what is priceless—eternal life for his people.

CONTENT

(conduct - us)

Sometimes like Peter our conduct can change towards the LORD'S good plan for our life?

We may have to ask ourselves if our mind is set on earthly things, like Jesus told Peter in Mark 8 verse 33...

TEXT

Mark 8:33

33 But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples,

He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

CONTENT

(conduct - us)

Next time God's plan life doesn't align with our personal plans, pause and ponder:

consider our direction, examine our response, and we should ask ourselves whether it is drawing us closer to the Lord or pulling us away from Him.

According to Jesus, Peter was not mindful from the things of God, he was self centered rather than God centered.

Peter could not see how this act of redemption by Jesus would be beneficial for mankind and for himself.

Sometimes the Lord's plan, though a may be hard to hear can include suffering, rejection or tribulation for our lives....

Which may be beneficial...

TEXT

Romans 5:1-5 NKJV -

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

CONTENT (Transition)

We see that tribulation can benefit the believers with hope, because the Holy Spirit resides in us.

Are we considering our conduct in the midst of tribulation, in the midst of our crisis?

Is our behavior aligning with God's Word? Is God's word what guides how we live?

We can be hearers of His Word—but we are called to take steps of faith and obedience, becoming doers of His Word.

Which leads us to our third and final point.

CENTRAL POINT (3)

God's plan provides us with the right course to follow.
God's plan guides our conduct in life.
God's plan helps us correct our choices.

TEXT

33 But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples,

He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them

, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

CONTENT

(Choice - Satan)

Sometimes the right choice comes only after the right correction—after we deny our flesh and its desires.

There is no doubt that Satan had already infiltrated Jesus' inner circle, working through Judas Iscariot.

I wouldn't be surprised if James and John, the sons of Zebedee, in seeking positions next to Jesus, were also being stirred by him.

This was a significant moment—an opportunity for Satan to try to derail the LORD's good plan...
to cause Jesus and His followers to deviate, be deceived, be distracted, or even be destroyed.

Yet we know that Jesus had already warned Peter that Satan desired to sift him like wheat.

It is also in these moments that Jesus revealed to Peter that he would deny Him.

TEXT

Luke 22:31-34 NKJV

31 And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.

32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”

33 But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.”

34 Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

CONTENT

(Choice - Satan)

We can see that this was spiritual warfare, and Jesus was fully aware of Satan’s tactics—hence His response to Peter.

COMMENTARY (Believer’s Bible Comm.)

Not that Jesus was accusing Peter of being Satan, or of being indwelt by Satan. He meant, “You are talking like Satan would.

He always tries to discourage us from wholly obeying God. He tempts us to take an easy path to the Throne.”

CONTENT

(Choice - deceived)

Though Peter’s rebuke by Jesus may seem heavy-handed, I’m grateful that our Lord corrects His children.

There are times when we don’t even realize we’re heading in the wrong direction,

and it may take correction after correction to guide us toward the right choice.

Or we can come to the right choice as we read God’s Word, meditate on it, and pray for His guidance.

I can’t help but consider what Jesus says to Peter, to His disciples, and even to those gathered around Him.

TEXT

Mark 8:34

34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them

, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

CONTENT

(Context of the passage)

Verse 34 marks the beginning of Jesus’ teaching us that true faith begins with self-sacrifice.

I appreciate how Guzik’s commentary explains Jesus’ words when He says we must deny ourselves and take up our cross:

COMMENTARY

Everybody knew what Jesus meant when He said this. Everyone knew that the cross was an unrelenting instrument of death.

The **cross** had no other purpose.....

How would we receive it if Jesus said, “Walk down death row daily and follow Me”?

Taking up your cross wasn’t a journey; it was a one-way trip.

And in regards to....Denying self is not the same as self-denial. We practice self-denial when,....

for a good purpose, we occasionally give up things or activities.

But we deny self when we surrender ourselves to Christ and determine to obey His will.”

CONTENT

(Choice -deny)

These are powerful and significant words from Jesus, our Lord and Savior. We are not only called to follow Him, but to deny ourselves—surrendering to His will.

And when we do, it helps guide and correct our choices. How does that happen?

First, it shifts our focus from self to God. When we deny ourselves, we stop asking, ‘What do I want?’ and begin asking, ‘What does God want?’ That shift alone places us in a position to choose according to His Word, rather than our feelings.

Life can be difficult to navigate—especially in relationships, which can be particularly challenging at times.

Yet the LORD’s good plan, revealed through His Word, provides the course and direction for how a husband and wife are to live for Him.

He has given clear guidance on how they are to conduct themselves—with love, respect, and a willingness to yield to one another.

Through His Word, God helps us correct our choices when we become centered on ourselves.

It is through true faith, and by the help of the Holy Spirit, that we are able to deny ourselves and obey the Lord’s commands.

And when we do, we begin to experience relationships filled with God’s love—and it is through that love that we are able to love others and glorify Him.

This truth extends beyond relationships into every area of our lives, where we can experience both God’s love and the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us.

CONCLUSION

I want to conclude by leaving Peter in a positive light, because of Jesus’ intervention in his life.

Turn to 1 Peter 2:18-25...

Jesus had to restore Peter, and when He did, Peter was used in a mighty way.

Yes, Peter still fell short at times—Paul even had to rebuke him—but like all of us, he was a work in progress.

As I close this study, I want to share a verses that shows Peter’s growth.

In his first epistle, Peter wrote to encourage Christians, who were being persecuted and had been dispersed...

in what is now modern-day Turkey, helping them find their security in the Lord.

His message called them to surrender, submit, sacrifice, and serve to the Lord. And I love what he shared,

because it shows the transformation of a man who once struggled to fully follow the Lord's good plan,

but who learned to walk faithfully in it and in this case teach it...

To understand my point turn to...

TEXT

1 Peter 2:18-25 NKJV -

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.

19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?

But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 "Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth";

23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;

24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

CONTENT

(Choice - Peter's change)

What a change—what a transformation Peter must have experienced when he saw Jesus resurrected and later ascend into heaven.

I truly believe that through his experiences—his rebuke, his denial, and his restoration—Peter

came to understand why Jesus had to be rejected, suffer, die, and rise again on the third day.

Peter's words to his readers are just as relevant for us today.

They challenge us to consider our calling and our course—to be willing to suffer for doing good,

just as Christ did, leaving us an example. I pray this resonates with you.

I know it does with me. In recent years, my faith has been tested through life-changing circumstances—opportunities for distraction,

for doubt, even for deception while following the Lord. But through it all, one desire has become clear:

I want my life to align with the LORD's good plan.”

He provides us with the right course to follow.

He guides our conduct in life.

He helps us to correct our choices.

Let's pray