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GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

A STUDY OF 1 JOHN
1 JOHN 3:23
NUMBER 25

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1 JOHN 3:23 "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

This verse will lead us into a detailed study of the doctrine of divine decrees. Because of the perfect character of God, God has a perfect plan for every life. God provided for your every need in eternity past.

Let Me Correct A Misunderstanding

Before we study this verse I want to correct something that is misunderstood by so many. I hear many people talk about "a head and a heart belief." There is no such thing as a head and a heart belief. In Scripture the head and the heart are exactly the same. The heart is in the head and the head is in the heart. The heart that is in your rib cage and pumps the blood through your body has nothing to do with thinking or how you make your decisions. In Scripture the heart is the thinking part of the mind. When the Scripture says "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" it means his thinking process. I also hear people use the idiotic term "blind faith." There is no such thing as blind faith. Faith is never blind. Faith is the basic system of thinking, and most of the thinking you do in life, you do by faith. You do faith-thinking all the time. So, please get this straight once for all. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS BLIND FAITH AND THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS HEAD AND HEART BELIEF.

Please Grow Up

Since you have been listening to me teach for many years, please don't let anyone know you are from Immanuel if you ever say, "Blind faith" or if you ever say, "Head and heart belief." Tell them you come from Podunk or from somewhere other than Immanuel. Today in this study we are going back to the source where faith has its origin.

1 JOHN 3:23 "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." "This is" is the present, active, indicative of eimi and refers to absolute truth. This is an absolute he is about to state. The next word "commandment" is from entole and means "decree." The difference between a commandment and a decree is this. A decree is the divine plan as it was designed by God in eternity past, and out of this perfect decree of God, certain commandments have emerged. The believer must first enter the plan of God and this is done by having faith in Jesus Christ. That's why I began this paper with an explanation of head and heart belief. The whole plan of God centers around faith, and it is not a blind thing neither is it a split thing like head and heart. Faith is one of the most fantastic things in the world and it is based in the thinking of your mind.

Therefore, this verse begins by saying, "This is the decree of God from eternity past, and it keeps on being his decree." It is never blind and it is never split. "That" from hina introduces a purpose clause. "We should believe" is the aorist, active, subjunctive of pisteuo. Pisteuo is a transitive verb and must have a subject and an object.

You are the subject and Christ is the object. Faith is a system of non-meritorious thinking. You have from nine to thirteen billion micro-circuits in your brain and you will never use them all. This is the story of grace and God has provided that brain for you so you could believe and be saved. It is imperative that we remember that almost everything we ever learn we learn by faith-thinking. The subject of faith is the unbeliever who puts his faith in Christ and becomes saved, or it is the believer who learns more about Christ and grows in doctrine and faith. So the subject of faith is any member of the human race, and the object is Jesus Christ. In between the subject and the object is this non-meritorious thing we call faith. Just one little ounce of non-meritorious faith is enough to save you when it is beamed toward Christ. Once you believe, you are immediately in the entole, the divine decrees of God.

God's Plan Begins

God's plan for you, which is a part of the entole of God, begins at the moment you put your faith in Christ. The greatest virtue of the Christian life is knowledge of doctrine and the reason we have such weak Christians in the Southern Baptist Convention today is that they know so little doctrine.

The reason you can't understand grace is this--it takes knowledge of doctrine for you to understand grace. But we have been prodded so long on the idea that you have got to work, you have got to do something in order to make it in this life, in order to get ahead in this life. Then we carry that idea over into our Christianity and we think we have to do something to be a Christian. We can't do anything because he has already done it all. One of the hardest things for the unbelievers to accept is the fact that salvation is a free gift from God and that you can't work for it to achieve it. You must realize that millions of years ago God designed a plan so perfect, and it is called entole, and the only way you enter it is by faith. You beam just one little bit of positive faith toward Jesus Christ and you are in the entole to stay. This aorist tense of pisteuo refers to the point of time when you believe. And remember, you didn't invite Jesus into your heart. Instead you exhaled faith toward Christ, you believed in what he did for you at the cross, and in that point of time, you were saved forever. The active voice means that you had to do this for yourself. The subjunctive mood means that it is potential, and maybe you will believe and maybe you won't.

The One Name

The word for name is onoma. Name here refers to the person who is the unique figure of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not just any name, it is the one and only name.

ACTS 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He is called the Son of God because as a son he agreed to be perfectly obedient to his Father and to his Father's plan. He is called Jesus because this is the name of his humanity. He is called Christ because this means his commission, his appointment. It means the anointed-appointed one. He was commissioned to go to the cross and that is what the name Christ means.

A Relaxed Mental Attitude

When you enter the plan of God, you must have a relaxed mental attitude and that is why the next words here are "And love one another." This is agapao and it too is an aorist, active, subjunctive just exactly like the word "believe" in the first part of this verse. You love people who are in the plan of God because this is the will of God for you. The subjunctive mood is used so you will know that loving other believers is optional, and God isn't going to make you do it. If you come to understand the will of God for you, then you will love other believers. "As he gave" is the aorist, active, indicative of didomi. The reason it is not the subjunctive is that it is not potential, it is a fact, God did this for us. "He gave us commandment" and this means he provided a plan for your life in eternity past and that plan is clearly revealed in Scripture.

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE DECREES

(Or "Who was there when the switch was pulled?")

1. Definition.
Divine decrees is the sum total of the Father's plan designed in eternity past. "To them that have been loved by God the Father." This is what Jude speaks about here in verse 1 of his book.
2. The plan which God designed in eternity past centers in the person of Jesus Christ. 1 John 3:23
Christ has always been the focal point of God's plan.
3. Entrance into this plan is based on the principle of grace.
This means the sovereignty of God and the free will of man meet at the cross. The marriage of grace and faith. God does the work and man enjoys the benefit of God's work, apart from man's own work and ability. This is illustrated here in Jude's approach to his book.
4. God's plan all inclusive.
God's plan was so designed in eternity past, so as to include all events and actions, related to their causes and conditions as a part of the integrity of the whole. This plan began for you the moment you believed in Jesus Christ. This is Romans 8:28 working in and through you. There is no insignificant event in your life.
5. Without interfering with human volition in any way, God has designed a plan so perfect that it includes cause and effect, directive, provision, preservation, and function for all believers. Illustration--The life of Balaam. Balaam had free will and he went against God's will and he was preserved under the most unusual conditions. But Balaam was finally wiped out under the sin unto death just like King Saul. Both died with their human volition in tact.
6. Under his plan, God has designed to do some things directly, and some things he has designed to do indirectly. Sometimes he uses agencies like Israel or the church. Sometimes he chooses individuals through which to accomplish certain things. Today God is using an agency called the church.

7. Therefore, under the plan of God, there are primary, secondary and tertiary things in the plan of God, but they all add up to one perfect plan of God, eternal and unchangeable without loss of integrity.
8. The plan of God is consistent with human freedom. God does not limit or coherse human freedom. But we need to make a distinction between that which God causes (like the cross) and that which God permits, like sin. God created man with a free will and God allows that free will to function. That's the way Adam sinned in the garden, by his free will. God is not the author of temptation nor the author of sin. Man is the author of his own sin.
JAMES 1:13-14 "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Man's volition will run its course as a result of the angelic conflict.
9. This principle demonstrates that man has free will and God never interferences with free will. To do so would violate the essence of the character of God. In the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden, God warned man of the coming danger, but he didn't lift a finger to stop man in the exercise of his free will. The fact that man has free will is taught by every subjunctive mood and by every third class condition in Scripture. The fact that men die as unbelievers testifies to free will. Nations fall just like Adam fell and this indicates free will. This does not negate the sovereignty will of God. We have two schools of theology with which some of you are familiar. The hyper-Calvinists see only the sovereign will of God that determines everything and they give no place for the free will of man. Then we have the Armenian view and they recognize free will almost at the expense of the sovereignty of God. The trouble with both systems is that the real truth lies in between both of these views. The sovereignty of God and the free will of man both exist and never conflict. We have the sovereign will of God, the will of man, and the will of angels (and there is some evidence of a limited amount of will in animals).
10. The plan of God is consistent with human freedom and does not coherse or limit human freedom.
11. This demonstrates that man has free will. The existence of sin in the world loudly testifies to the fact that man has free will. Christ knew it was the Father's will for him to go to the cross, but he prayed, "If it be thy will let this cup pass from me." Jesus Christ in his human volition desired to bypass the cross, but he set that aside and did the Father's will.
12. Distinction should be made between the divine decrees which are related to the plan of God, in both design and action, and divine laws which regulate human conduct and human function in the universe. The divine decrees constitute the will of God for us.

13. From this comes a principle of logic. The foreknowledge of God perceives things that are certain. Millions of years ago God knew everything that was going to happen. The foreknowledge of God doesn't make things happen, it is the plan of God and the foreknowledge and foreordination of God that makes everything certain.
14. Note the difference between foreknowledge and foreordination or predestination. It is the decree of God that makes things certain. He foreknew these things but then he had to determine them. Nothing can be known until it is a decree and this is taught in Scripture.
ACTS 2:23 "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:"

ROMANS 8:29 "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

1 PETER 1:2 "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."
15. Therefore the elect are the foreknown and the foreknown are the elect. Verse 1 in Jude refers to the preserved and called. Knowing how everything would go, God had a plan. But this does not circumvent free will.
1 John 3:23
When Jesus became your Saviour you entered into a plan which had existed in the mind of God form eternity past. God provided for your every need as that plan was carried out. God knew and God provided. Don't become a fatalist. Trust God and know that he knows what he is doing. If God provided the big thing for you when you were his enemy (the cross), now that you are his friend, what will he do for you? More than the most. God knows your free will but never violates it. God put your every decision in his perfect IBM computer and he came out with the right answer every time. There never was a time when the omniscience of God didn't exist.
16. Since God cannot contradict his own essence, he plans the best for the believer. Behind his plan is his perfect love. This is translated "sanctify" in the first verse of Jude but it is the word love. He had a perfect love for us even though we were sinners and self-righteous. The way God did this is the way of the cross. The cross allows God to remain God. It is wonderful to realize that someone can love you in spite of what you are. We love and get all mixed up, but God keeps everything straight and in their proper place and loves us in spite of what we are. God has never lost one iota of his perfection and that's grace. The title of God's plan is "OPERATION GRACE" and he keeps his perfect will in tact.

17. The cross was decreed in eternity past, but the human volition of Christ decided for the cross once and for all and finally in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Matthew 26:39

God has provided salvation at the cross but it must be your free will to accept it.