

Perfect
Planning
Prevents
Poor
Performance

*God's Perfect plan
Is
The Church*

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Perfect planning prevents poor performance. If we don't plan to succeed we plan to fail. Success in any endeavour requires a good plan and diligent application. Perfect planning produces results, and God doesn't plan to fail. We fail when we don't do as God has planned what is best for our benefit.

In the decades after the resurrection of our Lord, the New Testament was written mainly in the common Greek language of that day, and what we call "the Church" is a translation from the Greek word "*ekklesia*" which means "*the called-out ones*."

Starting in the 4th century the expression "Visible Church" was used to refer to the self invited members on the rolls of a local church; and part of the Visible Church. At the same time the "Invisible Church" referred to those persons who have actually been called out by God and regenerated or quickened by the Holy Spirit; these are God's elect believers in the true Church. The emphasis on '*the called out ones*' came from when Jesus calls someone to

discipleship, He called them out of the world to follow Him, to learn from Him so that they could live as children of God and walk as He walked. This *calling out* is done in the context of the Church. The Invisible Church is God's perfect plan for His called out people to carry out His purpose in the world lost in darkness. The “called-out assembly,” is a congregation of believers God has called out of the world and “*into His wonderful light.*” 1 Peter 2:9

The church is God's perfect plan for believers to be transformed into the image of Christ, (Rom 8:29) while they sacrificially serve Him, each other and the world. (Rom 12:1-2) In this, the first thing must be the willing sacrifice of self, and then the transformation of the mind will take place by the absorption of sound doctrine. This godly service can only be done successfully when the body of believers is of one mind in Christ; this Church is to be conformed to the mind of Christ. 1 Cor 2:16

Having the mind of Christ only comes when we are living by His teaching. (John 8:31-31) This teaching is the doctrine of God so His people can grow into Christ. (Eph 4:15) The

body of Christ has to think the way Christ thinks in regard to its doctrine, if it is to fulfil His purpose to conform many brethren into His image.

Rom 8:29

Since the Apostles, it has become the norm that the Invisible Church is seen to be hidden in the Visible Church in the world; just as the sheep are hidden amongst the goats and the wheat is mixed with the weeds. The humble and obedient teachable servants of God are mixed with proud, disobedient unteachable argumentative self servers of the Visible Church, who resist the will of God and openly disrupt the working of the Invisible Church.

A good example of this is given to us by Paul. *'Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.'*

Rom 16:17-18

The goats are not always vocal; the majority of nominal believers are passive spectators who sap the Church of its potential because they refuse to contribute their life to the body of Christ so the whole body can grow by what each member supplies of their spiritual gifting. Passive spectators in the Visible Church do little apart from clogging up the system, and provide a false impression of the actual potential of the Church while giving the Church a bad reputation.

The real issue could be that they haven't really repented in the first place in order to be born of the Spirit, which is needed to receive spiritual gifts that can be used by the Spirit for the common good. Or it could be that the passive spectators may be just lazy immature irresponsible babies in Christ. This attitude of laziness introduces another problem; laziness makes the person vulnerable to the deceptions of Satan. Laziness is no excuse for not walking in obedience and truth. *'He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.'*

John 3:36

While the true Church has been called Invisible, the lives of those who belong to it demonstrate true humility, they are obedient to the word of God, and demonstrate sacrificial service to the people of God, including those who live in darkness that they may receive the light of Christ. Jesus indicated we can tell the difference by their fruit. In order to serve Christ effectively, the Invisible Church is separated from the dictates of the world and attached to Christ so they may be in the world, but they are not of the world. (John 17:16) The Visible Church reflects the values and character of the world.

Unfortunately many people think all they need to go to heaven, is to decide to turn over a new leaf and become a Christian in the Visible Church. This plan comes from the mind of man who is under the influence of the devil, and is not going to make any difference; this is the plan of our own imagination and keeps us under God's righteous judgement. When Jesus comes back to take His Church home, He will declare that many aren't going with Him. *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will*

enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' Matt 7:21-23

To gain the benefits of Christ's sacrifice we have to accept the whole plan of God; and God's ultimate plan is that we are transformed into the image of Christ's life. (2 Cor 3:18) It is a lie to assume that because God loves the world He will overlook the need for absolute surrender and obedience to His will for us to be saved and share in the glory of Christ.

2 Thess 2:14

If we are to have a perfect plan to carry out, we must be sure of what we want to achieve. We must know how and where to begin, and be aware of the possible obstacles and weaknesses we will have to overcome if we are to succeed. Our greatest weakness comes from within the walls we call Church, so we have to understand that not all who claim membership of the

Church have given their lives over to Christ to be their Lord and Master.

The real Church according to the Bible is to be exclusively made up of the saints who are called by God, and having repented from self determination, they are determined to live exclusively under the authority of the Holy Spirit to carry out God's plan. This Church will delight to do God's will as revealed in the word of God by the light given by the Holy Spirit.

God's perfect plan is for maturity in Christ

God has established the Church in Christ to fulfil His plan to see all His children made complete in Christ. (Col 1:28) God's perfect plan for our lives in the Church prevents poor performance, but the whole plan must be implemented without the slightest deviation or modifications if the perfect result is to be achieved, so we work out our salvation in fear and trembling. (Phil 2:13) To end in the right place we must begin in the right place and stay with the plan without compromise. Many want to end right but never begin right. Their end is not the perfect result Christ died for, the end

they wish to avoid is going to be their final destination.

To think we can claim Christ's gift of life by deciding to be a Christian according to our own plan, is like taking out fire insurance to avoid the fire of hell. It's like buying a ticket and waiting for the bus to take you home to heaven, not realising there aren't any busses going to heaven for ticket holders. Insurance and tickets are a lie from the devil. To claim to belong to Jesus Christ because of family ties to the Church, or because we have been baptised as children and confirmed into the Church as teenagers, is to presume on God on the basis of the teaching of men who have charted a course of action that contravenes the clear teaching of Jesus Christ.

Jesus indicated there would be a mixture of the unworthy and the worthy until the time of judgment. The Lord shows us the wheat, which is valued, can be seen as different from the chaff or the weeds to be burnt, and the valued sheep can be identified as different from the goats. God's word indicates it is possible to make a correct assessment simple by the fact

that those who are led by the Spirit are the true children of God. Those who are willingly led by the Spirit have taken on a life of humility, for humility is the fruit of repentance, and humility makes the soul teachable and obedient for the purpose of righteousness.

The true Church is made up of all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation. (1 Cor12:13) We are not included in the Church by association with a family member or wishful thinking. The only family connection that God accepts is by faith as children of Abraham. The family of God is known by the love they have for one another.

John 13:35

The starting point is a new life

Jesus set a new standard for a relationship with God that requires faith and repentance through self denial, in order to follow His sacrificial example in absolute obedience to God. True repentance that lives to please God means complete separation from the world which promotes the way of men so that everyone can do what they desire.

Jesus said "*repent for the kingdom of God is at hand*" This tells us that we must turn from self determination and self reliance to submit absolutely to the Majestic rule of God according to the standards of His kingdom. We cannot earn our way into the Church. *'For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.'*

Eph 2:8-9

Spiritual conversion must occur to be able to have the intimacy with God that is the heart of His plan for all who would believe and obey Jesus Christ. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'*

John 3:6-7

In order for God's will to be done we have to offer ourselves as a sacred sacrifice to join Christ on His cross. God's will can only be done in those who live for Christ's likeness; effectively surrendering to God's perfect plan so we can live in heaven requires our willing self denial by taking up our cross to follow Christ's sacrificial example.

Repentance can be seen in another command by Jesus Christ when He indicates we are to deny ourselves and claim the cross of our death to self will. *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."*

Luke 9:23-24

As a result of faulty teaching and being in too much of a hurry to "get people saved" we have many people in the world's churches that have never entered into eternal life through the door of repentance. Instead of getting people into the kingdom of God, we have virtually insured they will realise when it is too late that they have nothing but a promise made by men that God will not agree with. The only way to heaven is by obedience to Christ.

Our surrender to Christ means we join into the obedience of Christ by faith. *'Through the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous.'* (Rom 5:19) This obedience means God will grant us a new spiritual life when we die to self. To have a new life we must be born

again. *'Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

John 3:6

There can be no rebirth without a death to the life once lived. *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."* (2 Cor 5:17) Being born again is the start of a new life lived to please God powerfully enabled by the Holy Spirit. Living this new life is possible when the life once lived to please self is willingly put to death to live the life that comes from the Spirit of God.

When we receive this new life, we accept we are not our own to please ourselves. *'Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.'* (1 Cor 6:19-20) This new life means we belong to Christ because He has bought us by the shedding of His blood. *'In Him we have*

redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.' Eph 1:7

The Spirit now leads us into all the truth. *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you."* (John 16:13-14) The leading of the Spirit is so that we can grow into the life of Christ. Rom 8:29

The Christ life is the life for all believers to live for God. *'For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.'* Col 3:3-4

The believer has died with Christ. The believer has been raised up with Christ. The believer has been made alive with Christ. The believer is now hidden with Christ in God. And the believer will appear with Christ when He returns to take us home. Any failure to take hold of this plan as the place we begin our

Christian life is a failure to implement God's plan for us, so we fail to reach the heavenly goal He has planned for all who will believe and obey.

Obedying God's word means we live for the will of God. *'Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.'* (Col 3:23) The way of Christ is our way. We have taken up our cross to follow the example of Christ. We no longer live for ourselves but Christ now lives in us. Gal 2:20

Only those living in Christ are the Church

Jesus said: *"I will build My church."* (Matt 16:18) *"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."*

Eph 1:22-23

To be a member of the Invisible Church means we have repented from all self determination by dying to self. (Matt 3:2; 4:17) Jesus said repentance is for the forgiveness of sin. (Luke 24:47) Having been forgiven we have died

to sin always showing “*fruits in keeping with repentance.*”

Luke 3:8

To be in Christ's Church means we live in the congregation of those who have been made alive in Christ with one Father. (Eph 2:4) To be in Christ's Church means we are under His authority. *'For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.'*

Col 2:9-10

We enter His Church by claiming our death to sin, in the death of Christ by faith in the redeeming death of Christ alone. We show we are included in the Church as we imitate the obedience of Christ in doing the will of God.

All this is made possible by the grace of God in Christ, who took the death we deserved and gave us His life so that we may know and share in His glory. *'Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.'*

2 Cor 3:17-18

The Church is under the authority of the Spirit

To be in Christ's Church means we are under the authority of the Spirit and accountable to each other, because the truth of the scriptures becomes the only rule for all God's people to live for God. All this is made possible by the grace of God in Christ who gave us the Spirit so that we can indeed fulfil the law of God. *'So that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.'*

Rom 8:4-5

The first evidence of the life of Christ in the believer is the humility to live under the authority of the Spirit of God as He leads us into all truth. The second indication of a redeemed life by the powerful work of the Spirit is absolute obedience to the revealed will of God. This is because the Spirit of God is only given to those who obey Him. Acts 5:32

Further evidence of being under the authority of the Spirit means we deliberately work at putting off the life of the flesh once lived, because we are led by the Spirit to be genuine children of God. *'For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.'*

Rom 8:13-14

To be in Christ's Church means we are all using our spiritual gifts, which are provided by the Spirit for the building up of one another according to the life of Christ. *'To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.'* (1 Cor 12:7) *'But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.'*

1 Cor 12:11

To be in Christ's Church means we do the work of God in bringing people out of the darkness and into the kingdom of God. *'For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.'* (Col 1:13) Now the command Jesus gave

Paul is our command since we live to do His will. *'I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'* Acts 26:17-18

In the true church we are joined together in one body by the same Spirit of God. (Eph 4:4) Every person is divinely connected by the Father to be part of the family of God. To claim independence from the working of the Church and its authority under Christ as its head is to deny the saving work of God. To refuse to use the gift of the Spirit for the good of the Church and its mission in the world is to refuse to do the will of God.

Training in godliness is needed

We don't start off our Christian life by being complete and mature in Christ. We begin our new life in Christ as spiritual babies who need to be taught how to live in the presence of God.

Therefore sound teaching of God's way must be absorbed into our hearts and lives by

continual exposure to the word of God. This good teaching is called doctrine which is first believed, and then it is practised. If the knowledge of the Bible only fills the head and doesn't make its way to the heart, the person needs a heart transplant, because the Spirit of God is not having the required effect, because the spirit of the person is not in submission to the will of God's Spirit.

Sound doctrine is intended to change our mind as we submit our will to the will of God. It heals our emotions as we accept God's comfort, it inspires our motivation to put on Christ, and it renews our attitudes to obedience and truth. Good doctrine changes our intentions to those of God.

True knowledge in the form of sound doctrine comes by the work of the Spirit so that we can know the will of God. True knowledge must result in holiness. (2Peter 1:3-4) True knowledge provides us all that we require for life and godliness; and this godliness can only come by having wholehearted commitment for the application of God's instructions for our life, so we can be transformed into the image of Christ.

This is the purpose and meaning of sound doctrine. If we want to look for maturity in a Christian, we look for the character of Christ as it produces the fruit of His life as His passions take hold of the life of the believer.

If the doctrine to be learnt doesn't result in a changed life where sacrificial love, patience, kindness and long-suffering and godly forgiveness isn't growing, we are worse than unbelievers, because they are still walking in the darkness, and we are supposed to have the light of God so we are without excuse.

Ignorance of sound doctrine means we are open to taking on false teaching so that immature behaviour becomes habitual, and the work of God lays undone in our hearts and in the world. Therefore the Church is to avoid false teaching and correct its errors without delay.

God gives teachers to promote sound doctrine

The Church needs good Biblical teachers who have been trained by critical study to discern the difference between truth and error; self

training is often inadequate for this purpose.
Eph 4:11-16

Since training is required we need competent teachers who show by the quality of their lives that they live by the reality of His word. This doesn't mean they will be without fault, but it does mean in the majority of their lives they will be conforming to the truth of God. Believers will be able to affirm the word of God by the way they live because they are informed by sound Christian doctrine.

From Eph 4:11-16 we can understand the work of the apostles and prophets though finished, laid the foundation for the Church, and the corner stone that sets the pattern for the building is Christ. (Eph 2:20) But the work of pastors, teachers, and evangelist continues in building up the body of Christ to His fullness.

The Lord gives teachers who are to obey Him and teach all disciples to obey all He has commanded. (Matt 28:19-20) Both the teacher and the members of Christ's Church are under the Lord to do His will. To refuse to be taught, or have selective hearing is to refuse the Lord.

No one can take time out in the work of being transformed, because maturity in the fullness of Christ is a lifelong goal. This spiritual maturity isn't perfection, but it does demonstrate mature obedience in godly service and effective use of spiritual gifts in the building up of the body of Christ, the Church. Obedience to the word of God must be steadily improved and developed if we are going to grow in holiness.

Furthermore, the faithful teaching of God's word is necessary to protect the saints from false teaching, which is designed to prevent spiritual growth and the maturity needed for fruitful service in the Church in taking God's word into the darkness of the world where God is not known. *'If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.'*

1 Tim 4:6

Those spiritually gifted and trained to lead the people of God to implement sound doctrine must be themselves infected with its power. *'He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give*

instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.' Titus 1:9

Without effective training we are no better than the blind leading the blind and all sorts of controversy will confuse the Church. We are unable to grow on the basis of our own reasoning and according to the understanding we have as individual members of the Church, so God gives leaders to promote our growth in holiness and sound doctrine so we need to submit to their authority in Christ. *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."* Heb 13:17

Because the "Visible Church" is what it is, there are some who claim leadership roles in this worldly visible Church who still live for self because they have never truly repented. In these cases what they often teach will have a good amount of human interest and worldly attraction; simply because the unrepentant soul lives for this physical world and not the kingdom of God in the new world to come.

It is therefore important that every believer know the word of God, and how to prove whether what is being taught is true or false. If it is true, obey it and encourage the teacher, if it is false, say so, giving an explanation of the correct teaching. If error continues, find a place where the truth is not compromised.

Good teachers are to discipline the Church by training them in righteousness. *'We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.'* (Col 1:28) And only the true saint will accept this admonishment and teaching, because only the saints have the desire to be made complete in following the example of Christ. Only the saints will accept the call to suffer with Christ in order to be glorified with Him. Rom 8:17

Will the Lord greet us with "well done"?

The Lord has made it clear that all who claim to be Christian are not necessarily what they present themselves to be. *"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt 7:21-23) Those who will be

rejected have another opinion which is different to the Lord's. Having an opinion which differs from the clear teaching of the scriptures as a whole is to make oneself an enemy in opposition to the truth of God, and therefore it is the same as deny God Himself.

'If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.'

1 Tim 6:3-4

Because of the contamination of the Visible Church by the world we hear mixed messages where Christians are sometimes referred to as sinners, but this name is only true for the unregenerate of the Visible Church, in the Invisible Church we have those who are called saints. It is also said our righteousness is as dirty rags, this is also true of the Visible Church and not the Invisible Church who have been washed clean in the blood of Christ.

The Lord is coming. *“Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all*

the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.’ Jude 1:14-16

Are you part of God's perfect plan, or are you numbered with the ungodly living for themselves and the pleasures of the world with their fire insurance and a ticket to nowhere? Do you belong to the "Visible Church" and have never really repented and taken up your cross to follow Christ by living His life?

Or do you belong to the "Invisible Church" of the redeemed who no longer live for self but for Jesus Christ? Obedience in following God's perfect plan will guarantee success in the kingdom to come.

Failure to follow God's perfect plan results in His perfect judgment. Choose wisely the narrow gate of the Invisible Church and avoid the wide road of the worldly church that leads to destruction.

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

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