

All According To Plan

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Date: 14 December 2025

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[0 : 00] Peter writes, if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds,! Conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the feudal ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Amen.

Robert Burns was a famous 18th century poet, widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland. And even if you don't know his name, or even if you can't think of any of his works off the top of your head, there is no doubt that you will be familiar with some of his work.

If you've ever gathered with friends and family, or just turned on the TV to see Times Square on New Year's Eve, and the clock strikes midnight and you begin to sing that familiar tune, old, laying, sing, sign, however you say it, then you have interacted with Burns' probably most famous work.

But there's another one that perhaps you would be familiar with, at least a statement within it that is quite helpful. In 1785, Robert Burns was running his plow in Scotland, and he accidentally ran over a nest of a mouse who was preparing its place for the winter months as they were approaching.

[1 : 54] And immediately understanding the tragedy of what this meant for that mouse, Burns was inspired to write another famous poem, which is creatively called To a Mouse.

And of course, what the poem does, it wrestles and explores with the struggle of planning and building and working towards something that can all be destroyed in a moment by things that are totally outside of our control.

The most famous stanza goes this way. Now, if that doesn't lift you up in the Christmas season, I don't know what will.

But you know what he's saying. He's looking at this mouse that he has just destroyed potentially its entire life. And he thinks, you know what, my life is a lot like that.

Working and planning and building towards something, and then something that is completely out of my control comes in, and it ruins everything that I've been planning. Ruins everything that I've been preparing for.

[3 : 04] And all it leaves me with is grief and pain for what was promised joy. In my plan, there was going to be great celebration at the completion of this thing.

But because of forces outside of my control, I'm left with just grief and pain. Now, we're in the heart of the busiest season of the year for many of us, and with enormous amounts of parties to go to and family gatherings, gift shopping, gift wrapping, special concerts, church plays, outreach events, all kinds of things that are happening right now, this particular season can be more overwhelming than it can be jolly.

And can we just take a moment and just reflect on how great all our mothers are who do so much to actually make these seasons work, right? But even the best and most organized of us know that as we're working hard this time of year, the most well-planned goal is still going to have something go wrong, right?

One of your kids is going to get sick at the worst possible time for them to get sick. That one gift that you've been watching, the tracking, Amazon said it was going to be here in 24 hours, and that's turned into seven days, and you're not sure if it's actually going to make it on time, and now you're not sure exactly what to do.

That's probably going to happen at some point. Cousin Eddie is going to show up unannounced to your Christmas celebration. Your brother is going to bring something up at Christmas, at the Christmas family gathering that you know is just going to cause a fight with everybody else.

[4 : 47] You're going to have all these plans, all these things you're trying to work out. Something's going to go wrong. The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. At the end of this second section of Peter's letter, the apostle is drawing our attention to an infinitely glorious plan that actually cannot be thwarted by anything.

It's neither the plan of a mouse nor the plan of a man. It's the eternal plan of God through Christ to save us from sin and death.

And these two verses, 20 and 21, they're tied directly to the command for Christians in verse 17 to conduct their lives in the fear of God throughout the time of exile.

So that recognizing that we have been ransomed from the futile ways of the world with the precious, sinless blood of Jesus Christ, we are to fear living in such a way as to treat that sacrifice as if it were garbage to demean it in any way.

And these verses continue Peter's discussion of the atonement of Christ that has now rescued us. And in them, he insists that our redemption through Christ's blood was no afterthought.

[6 : 14] All of it, to the smallest detail, has come according to the definite plan of God. And it's all exactly according to plan.

I want you to notice first with me the scope of God's plan in Christ. The scope of God's plan in Christ. Verse 20, He, Christ, was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times.

Peter here gives us the scope with these first two phrases. He's contrasting for us the design and the execution of God's redemption plan through Jesus Christ.

Our redemption was designed by God the Father in eternity past, before the foundation of the world, Peter says, and it was executed by God the Son in history.

That is, in the last times. And again, the emphasis is on the fact that our eternal salvation, this redemption through the blood of Christ, is God's plan.

[7 : 27] And that He has set His love on us before He even created the world. And of course, the agent of this plan is His own Son, the promised Christ, foreknown in eternity past and revealed in time and space through Jesus of Nazareth.

Now, we dealt with this concept of God's foreknowledge all the way back in verse 2, where Peter affirms that believers are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

Just set your eyes on it again. Maybe it will stir your memory. At the end of verse 1, we see that Peter's writing to those who are elect exiles, verse 2, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

And here again, we see that it isn't information that God foreknows. It is individuals that God foreknows. He, Jesus Christ, was foreknown before the foundation of the world.

Peter doesn't mean that God the Father looked into the future down the portals of time and decided that Jesus of Nazareth would be a suitable Messiah for His plan.

[8 : 43] That's not how this works. It's not how it has happened. That's not what Peter means to say. He means that God chose and foreordained to send His Son to be our Savior and has so orchestrated all the events of the world in time and space so that His plan would be accomplished and executed to perfection.

That's what Peter means. That Jesus came and shed His precious blood as a satisfying, propitiatory atonement for our sins was always God's plan.

Always. And it is God who saw it through from beginning to end. He designed it in eternity past. Christ was foreknown to be this Messiah in eternity past.

And God has orchestrated the events of time and space in history so that His plan would be accomplished to absolute perfection. We might understand this then, His plan, as a divine mission.

Before He even creates us, He has His mission laid out and He will execute it absolutely and definitively for His purposes. Now it was planned before the foundation of the world but it was executed in history, Peter tells us.

[10 : 02] He says that Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times. This manifestation of the Christ, it refers to His incarnation through the saving work of Jesus through the cross and His resurrection.

Last times here is not a reference to the day of the Lord. It's not a reference to, as Peter has said earlier in the chapter, at the day of the Lord or at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That's pointing toward an end times event. That's not what He's referring to here. When He says the last times here, He's referring to the fulfillment of salvation history. Meaning, the coming of Jesus fulfills everything that was promised and pictured and foretold in the law and prophets.

That's what He means. Now imagine you're a Jew in the first century. You're aware of all of those things in the Old Testament, all of the pictures and the prophecies. This Messiah is coming.

And now Peter comes and he says, He has come. This is now the last times. Everything that was promised has been fulfilled. It has been fulfilled in Jesus.

[11 : 14] I want you to track with me here. God set a plan in eternity past. And in His kindness, He progressively revealed that plan through His word.

Sometimes it's pictures. A lamb sacrificed at the tabernacle. Sometimes it's prophecy. Isaiah.

For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. Sometimes it's through types like King David in his struggle. Or King David in his role as champion of Israel and king.

But God has revealed His plan progressively in His word. And then at the appointed time, the appointed time that He set according to His eternal plan in eternity past, He fulfilled that plan in Jesus, which inaugurated for us the last times.

We're there. We're in them. And salvation history is fulfilled in Him. And this one, loved ones, this is what Advent and Christmas is actually about.

[12 : 32] All of those things fulfilled in God the Son. Remember Galatians 4, 4 through 7. When the fullness of time had come.

Just another way of Paul saying, at the exact time that God had planned it. When the fullness of time had come. God sent forth His Son. Born of woman.

Born under the law. To redeem those who were under the law. So that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.

Crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if you are a son, then you are an heir through God. Now we need to think about that with everything we've been covering in chapter 1 of 1 Peter.

What have we been seeing here? We've been seeing the plan of God. We've been seeing the agent of that plan. Jesus Christ the Son preexistent, but brought into time and space to give His life as a ransom for us.

[13 : 36] Why? So that we, God's enemies, might become God's children. By His grace. And what comes along with us being His children?

Well, exactly what Peter told us earlier in the chapter. An inheritance that's imperishable. And undefiled. And unfading. It's all about this.

It's all according to plan. And the scope of that plan is eternal. God designed it in eternity past, and He's executed it in time and space, in real history.

But then we must ask the next question, which is to what end? What is the benefit of this plan? So I want you to see the beneficiaries of God's plan in Christ.

We've seen the scope. I want you to see the beneficiaries. Let's think about Christmas again. Some of you are working hard to keep just a few things in order for these next two weeks, right?

[14 : 32] If you can just keep a handful of things in order over the next couple of weeks, Christmas will go smoothly. And even that we understand to be something of an exercise in futility because something is inevitably going to go wrong.

And that's just with a few things. What did it take for God to fulfill this eternal plan? The magnitude of His power.

The magnitude of His sovereignty. To work everything out so that everything fell right into place exactly as He intended so that we could be redeemed.

It's amazing. But who exactly benefits? Peter says, It is for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory.

Christ was foreknown before the foundation of the world. He was made manifest in these last times for the sake of you, he says. This is gloriously profound.

[15 : 44] God has designed and executed a plan of redemption through Jesus Christ for your sake. According to His great mercy, as we have read, and overflowing from His eternal love for us, God made a way to rescue sinners, enemies, through the precious blood of His own Son.

We are the beneficiaries of God's plan. Thou who art God beyond all praising, all for love's sake, became as men, stooping so low, but sinners raising heavenward by Thine eternal plan.

Thou who art God beyond all praising, all for love's sake, became as men. Who are the beneficiaries? Sinners are the beneficiaries. What could possibly explain that other than divine love?

It's the only way to explain it. But then Peter includes here an essential exclusivity clause, and we can't miss it.

Mustn't miss it. Contrary to so many cultural assumptions around Christmas in our society, not everyone is a beneficiary of God's plan.

[17 : 13] Peace on earth doesn't mean that we are all finally at peace with God because Jesus has come. That's not what it means. It means that the one through whom peace is accomplished has finally come.

And Jesus accomplished that peace by making an atonement for our sin on the cross. And we receive this peace only through faith in his work.

It's not for everyone. Peter says it's for those who believe. Just look at it. He says it plainly. It was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God.

We become believers in God through Christ only when we trust in his atoning sacrifice on the cross. His resurrection from the dead.

His glorification as Lord. God's plan is glorious and the benefits of it are forgiveness of sin and eternal life as his children.

[18 : 25] But you will not receive those benefits apart from exclusive faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. this is the call of the gospel and it is open to you today.

Jesus himself says come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly and you will find rest for your soul.

What does he mean? What does he mean by labor and work? Jesus speaking in the context of a group that were literally laboring hoping to gain favor with God so that they could eventually find rest.

Jesus says if that's you you're laboring trying to do your best and working your hardest you need to leave that behind and just come to me because it's only in me that you will find rest for your soul.

The ex-exclusivity of faith in Jesus is what Peter is calling us to here. You may believe in God but unless it's through the Son unless your belief in God comes by virtue of trusting in the atonement of Christ and trusting in the resurrection of Christ and bowing before him as Lord as we read in Philippians 2 you are not a Christian and these benefits do not belong to you.

[19 : 58] the beneficiaries are only those who come to faith in God through Christ. And what an amazing assurance this is for those of us who are believers in God through Christ.

God's plan of redemption is definite. It's not potential. God didn't set this plan in motion in eternity past just hoping that someone would come to follow it.

No, it's not a potential plan. It's a definite plan. It doesn't make our salvation possible.

It makes our salvation certain. it isn't for all people. It is for those who believe who will trust in Christ.

And this definite nature of God's plan is exactly what we need to understand in this time of exile, isn't it? Isn't that the larger context of why Peter is even writing this letter?

[21 : 16] If you're trusting in Christ you are God's plan. Do you see that? Can you just let that marinate for a second on your heart?

This whole grand scheme, this plan that God has set in motion, you are at the heart of it if you believe. Not only was Christ foreknown before the foundation of the world, as we read in verse 2 of chapter 1, so were you.

Do you understand what that means? That before you were ever even created, before God created this world, he set his saving, undying love on you.

And he worked a definite plan that cannot be thwarted so that you might be saved, so that your sins might be forgiven, so that you can receive eternal life, so that you might have this future inheritance that is undefiled, that's unfading, that's imperishable, that he is keeping in heaven for you as he guards you through faith.

Now, do you see the wonder of this in chapter 1? This is all God's plan, and he's working it all out according to plan, and he's executing it to perfection, and at the heart of it is you, the ones that he loves, the ones that he has done all of this in order that he might save them.

[22 : 50] Exile is a struggle. Take courage. Take courage. You are his. If you're in Christ, you belong to him, and his plan for you will not be thwarted.

It cannot be. So we see the scope of God's plan in Christ. We see the beneficiaries of God's plan in Christ. Finally, I want you to see the intent of God's plan in Christ.

The intent. What is the Father's ultimate intent in all of this? He designed and executed this plan.

Look at the end of verse 21. So that indicates a purpose statement, doesn't it? What's the goal? So that your faith and hope are in God.

As with all things, the ultimate end is God's glory. The ultimate end is God's glory.

[24 : 01] And as beneficiaries of his divine plan, his glory glory is our good. It's not just good.

It is our ultimate good. God's good. In a broad sense, we need to understand this faith and hope in verse 21 thematically.

Peter has repeated these words over and over in chapter 1. We need to understand how they're functioning here in his letter. Think about it. The people to whom Peter wrote, they were struggling. They were struggling in what Peter called an exile.

They were strangers here and they were suffering here because of that. They needed constant reminders that they actually do have true hope and that true hope is found in the gospel that they have believed.

God awakened them by faith to a living hope in verse 3 through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[25 : 09] And here again he tells us, God raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your hope would be in him. This hope is set on a future inheritance or salvation as those God has called to be born again as his children.

And that's the reality they needed to remember in exile. So Peter's first imperative when we got to verse 13 was what? Set your hope fully on this grace. There it is again, hope.

Set your mind fully on it. And here at the end we read that true hope through faith is central to God's eternal plan in Christ.

Why did he do all of this? So that you would know hope through faith. But there's a more narrow sense in which we need to understand these words here.

We need to understand them in light of the futile ways from which the precious blood of Christ has ransomed us. Look again at verse 17.

[26 : 12] Remember in 21 they're not disconnected from that they're tied into it. We've just broken it up in our own study. Verse 17 if you call on him as father who judges impartially According to each one's deeds!

Conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile! Knowing that you were ransomed from what? The futile ways inherited by your forefathers!

We need to understand this final goal, this intent in light of what Peter has just said there. The goal of this plan is so that you would stop following futile ways and instead trust in the true way.

Trust in him. Trust in God through Christ. Before Christ all our hope of life and salvation is empty.

It's vain. And we're blind to that reality until someone preaches the gospel and the spirit of God comes in and awakens us through that preaching of the gospel. But it's empty.

[27 : 12] That's the futile ways that Peter's talking about. Every philosophy, every religion, every tradition we followed was ineffective and it was taking us nowhere but to eternal hell.

We see and we come to Christ that true hope can only be found in the true God. So God designed and executed a perfect plan of redemption through Jesus Christ so that we might have and know hope.

Through the preaching of the crucifixion and resurrection and lordship of Jesus Christ, God the spirit awakens our hearts to this living hope so that our faith and hope are in God and it's all for his glory which is our good.

As someone may look at this and perhaps you've had conversations as I have with skeptics and agnostics that would say this is just another example that God is just full of ego.

This is a divine ego that everything that he does even supposedly for us is ultimately for his own glory. Of course we say this is not ego, this is truth.

[28 : 40] He leads us to himself because he is our ultimate good. You wouldn't let your kids continue in a lie just to give them space.

You wouldn't let your kids walk themselves toward destruction just because pointing them to what is their best which you know and they don't see would be an invasion of their own freedoms.

No. God leads us to himself because anything less than him is futile. Anything less than him is vain.

Anything less than him is destruction. No, his glory is our great good. And the culture wars about whether or not you're going to say Merry Christmas at the register or happy holidays.

Let's be honest, they don't matter. Who cares? Who cares? But the exclusivity of faith in God through the crucifixion, resurrection, and lordship of Jesus Christ is the difference between heaven and hell.

[30 : 09] That's what ultimately matters in this. That's the end goal. Not that we would influence our culture to acquiesce to the terminology that we prefer to use and all the things, but that they would actually know that apart from God, they're lost, that apart from him and his glory, through the sacrifice of Christ, they're going to hell.

That's the difference here. What is God's intent? That we might understand the futile ways of this world are actually futile, and that we might put all of our faith and hope in him because he is our great good.

That's the intent. Our ransom from futile ways was not an afterthought. It wasn't a happy accident. It was God's mission, planned by the Father in eternity past, executed by the Son in time and space, and recognizing this glorious plan, what does it do?

It assures our hearts of our future inheritance that his plan will not be thwarted. And what else is it doing here? Peter says it ought to be motivating your perseverance of faith.

It ought to be motivating your holiness of life in this time of exile. Because look at what he has done to make you his own. If you're a believer in God through Christ, you were the object of God's undying love before the world began.

[31 : 46] He's rescued you from sin with the sinless blood of Jesus Christ. And he has awakened you to this living hope through the spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel.

And all of this was exactly according to his divine plan. And what's Peter saying about this? Therefore, set your hope fully on grace.

Therefore, pursue holiness in this life. He has set you apart, so live up to your family name. Therefore, conduct yourself in the fear of God.

In other words, practically, in the way you live in this exile, embrace your identity as a child of God. Someone who's going to stick out.

Someone who will inevitably be misunderstood. Someone who may suffer, not because you deserve it, but simply because you don't belong here.

[32 : 55] Peter says embrace that because look at what God has done. You belong to him. So take courage. Your inheritance isn't here.

Your fulfillment, you're not going to find it in this life. So stop trying. Live for him. Worship him. Live in holiness. Conduct yourselves in fear.

Be afraid of ever demeaning his name or tarnishing the significance of the sacrifice of Christ because he has done so much to save you. So rest and live in fear.

God will be to He be to him.!