

# Plan of God

by Alan Redpath

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*The plan of God for the Christian is to make each one of us a light by recognizing we're saved by grace for submission to government, and to walk with God, witness to men, and fulfill the priority task of the Christian church, which is evangelism.*

**Duration:** 50:40

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Mark 3:14-15

**Topics:** "Plan Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, Dr. Alan Redpaths discusses the plan of God for Christians, as outlined in Mark chapter 3. He emphasizes that Christians are called to be a light and to submit to the government of God. He also highlights the indifference and neutrality towards the gospel that many people have today. Dr. Redpaths emphasizes the importance of recognizing that it is not what we do for God, but what He does through us that brings about miracles.

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## Transcript

The following message of Dr. Alan Redpaths is entitled, The Plan of God for the Christian and his Bible reading is Mark chapter 3 verses 13 to 21. The plan of God for the Christian and I think it is wonderfully outlined for us and detailed for us in Mark chapter 3 and especially in two verses. We saw last night the purpose of God is to make each one of us a light and that we can only be a light as we recognize we're saved by grace for submission to government.

I hope we've got that rammed home into our hearts as an integral part of the gospel. Let me repeat it, we are saved by the grace of God for submission to the government of God and you only experience the sufficiency of the grace of God if you submit to the totalitarian government of God. Where do you find sufficiency in the world today? Nowhere but in the heart of God and he is always sufficient if we're submitted to his government.

So we talked about how the Lord makes us a light by submission to his government and because we're submitted to his government, inevitably through our lives there is precipitated a movement. Everybody jumps off a fence. It gets tremendously exciting really in life when you know the government of Jesus because nobody is neutral about your Christianity anymore.

Very interesting how many people came up to me after service last night and said, you know I'm so much afraid that my witness, everybody's neutral. Nobody cares. But then when you're under his government and experiencing the flow of his grace, nobody's neutral, everybody's off the fence, some on the wrong side, some on the right side, some are going to be angry, some are going to be glad and happy, but nobody's neutral anymore.

Thrilling experience. For the worst thing about the situation today is the neutrality, the sheer indifference to the vast majority of people, to the gospel that we have to proclaim. And then we saw finally last evening that when this begins to happen, we are making room for a miracle.

When we get out of the way, God begins to get into business. And then Christianity really becomes a thrill in daily life as we recognize that it's not what we do for him but what he does through us that's going to count. Now the plan of God for our lives, how is this fulfilled in personal experience? How does it work out? Let me read to you Mark chapter 3 and verses 14 and 15 in the revised version.

I wouldn't like to embarrass you by asking how many people have got their swords with them this evening, or even a dagger, or how many of you got your New Testament? We won't get on very well. You'll need it, bless your heart, tomorrow afternoon, because I don't just come to talk a lot about texts which are taken out of the context, but I believe in preaching the word and letting the word do its work. So now come on now, fetch your Bibles with you tomorrow afternoon.

By the way, how many of you live more than 50 miles from here? I would like to know, just stick up your hand. How many of you really more than 50 miles from here? Very good. How many of you live more than 5,000 miles from here? Anybody? Nobody, except me.

Oh, but you know, it's going to be so exciting because it wouldn't surprise me one little bit if some of you were living more than 5,000 miles from here one day, when you get into the plan of God. Here it is, Mark 3, 14, revised version. He chose twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and that they might have power to cast out demons.

Now these two verses thrill me so much because, you see, they go right back to the very beginning of something about which we all ought to be concerned today. That is the priority task of the Christian church. We're not here to get into a little happy holiness huddle, and enjoy ourselves, and take our spiritual temperatures every now and again, and think we're getting on well, and growing up, and being good.

We're here for a battle, for a warfare, for a fight. And here it is. He chose these men.

This is going back to the very beginning of something that has become a mighty torrent throughout the whole world, and has resulted in multitudes, millions, being won for Christ. The task of evangelism. No greater task in all the earth than that.

Someone has defined evangelism as the preaching of a whole Christ by the whole church to the whole man in the whole world. That's evangelism. Anything less than that falls terribly and tragically short of the real thing.

Preaching a whole Christ. His pre-incarnation. His eternal existence.

His virgin birth. His sinless life. His atoning death.

His mighty resurrection and ascension into heaven. The outpouring of his Holy Spirit, his life, his resurrection life, to indwell the hearts of every one of us who love him and trust him, and his future personal return. A whole Christ by the whole church.

Not just a minister and a few people who are interested, but everybody, every redeemed, born again, child of God, in the job, with his sleeves rolled up, in the battle. A whole church to the whole man. To his will, and his emotion, and his intellect.

And you never get a convert till you get all of those three convinced. A will, emotion, intellect. A whole man has to be one for Jesus.

In all the world. Isn't it thrilling, thrilling that you and I are called upon to be part of that wonderful task. Well, here it is.

Here's how Jesus began it. Now I'm not so silly as to suggest to you that the 20th century is anything like the first century. Certainly it isn't.

Everything is rather by contrast. But I am saying to you most definitely that here in these verses there are principles which we ignore at our peril. And because the church has either ignored them, or forgotten them, we're in the mess that we are today.

Listen. He chose twelve that they might be with him. What do you call somebody who's with Jesus? A disciple.

That means a disciplined person. And that he might send them forth to preach. What do you call somebody who's sent forth? An apostle.

And that they might have power to cast out demons. I'm not very good at sermons which have three points, and all begin with the same letter. But I've tumbled right into it here, because you can't help yourself.

He's chosen every one of us here tonight that we might walk with God. Then that we might witness to our fellow men. Then that we might war with the devil.

So I want to say a word to you tonight about your walk, about your witness, and about your warfare. And I wonder how we're all getting on. He chose twelve that they might be with him, and then that he might send them forth to preach.

Now get this. I meet a lot of Christian people, when you ask them about their experience, they say, oh it's a bit up and down. Sunday night after a lovely service at church, I feel grand, but Monday morning I'm not fit to live with.

Up and down, up and down. Always like that. But you see, the plan of God for each of us is not that we should be up and down, but that we should be in and out.

Get it? He chose them that they might be with him, and that they might go out for him. In for orders, out for obedience. In for surrender, out for service.

In for worship, out for witness. And Jesus said, I am the door. By me, if any man shall enter in, he shall go in, and out, and find pasture.

So the Christian life you see, my friend, is an in and out life. And may I confess to you something straight away? The biggest problem in my life as a creature of the gospel has been always to maintain the right priorities. For if I'm always in and never out, and there's not much danger of us suffering from that, but if we are, we'll get spiritual indigestion.

But if we're always out and never in, and there's a great danger of us suffering from that, we'll be spiritually ineffective. Saying the same things, perfectly sound, perfectly orthodox, correct statements of doctrine, everything absolutely sounds in apple pie order, but it's bereft and bankrupt of spiritual power. Because the only thing that can make a man effective in his out life, is his in life.

And he chose twelve that they might be with him. The strange idea that's going around today, I don't know about Australia, because I don't comment on it, I don't know, but certainly in Britain, that the thing to do, you see, is to get converted and to get busy. You receive Christ, and then get active in his service.

And that's the average offer that evangelicalism has to make in Britain today. All you do is to sign on the dotted line, that I have received Christ as my saviour, date, church I belong to, now, get to work. That's an absolute tragedy.

For nobody is expected to do anything for Christ, until first of all, we've learned to be with him. He chose twelve that they might be with him. Say, have you ever cast your eyes down the list of these twelve fellows, whom Jesus chose as disciples? What a coup.

What a crowd they were. Forgive me, but there isn't an evangelical society, missionary society, in the world today, which would have accepted one of them. There isn't, you know.

They haven't got BAs and BDs. Furthermore, if there was a pulpit committee looking for someone to come and fill the pulpit, there wouldn't stand a chance. It would have been written off.

Dr. Graham Scroggie of Edinburgh used to say, the church is looking for men with degrees, and by degrees, they're emptying the church. He's probably pretty right. But look at this crowd here.

I mean to say, now just look at it. Here's Peter, Simon Peter, and here's John. Simon Peter, the man with the dross and the axe, must get the thing done.

Always pulsating with vigor, impetuous, hot-headed, unstable, unreliable, but I'll get the job done. And here's John, the dreamer, the visionary. The one who leant on Jesus' breath.

You put those two on the same mission station for three months, and one of them would have to resign. And he would resign because he would report to headquarters that he found the other person impossible to live with. Incompatibility of temperament.

And did you notice, did you notice that in this crowd there were two people who were called sons of thunder? Oh boy. Have you ever met anybody like that? The sort of person who says, the next time my church session meet, or my board of deacons meet, I'm going to give them a piece of my mind. Lord spare us from them.

The kind of Christian who never seems to have learned that a mark of spirituality is not his ability to speak his mind, but his ability to control his tongue. What a futile thing it would have been for Jesus just to send them up. Oh, but first of all they had to learn to walk with him.

They went to college with Christ, and they were trained by the Lord. And they weren't fit to testify till one day a risen and ascended Lord filled them with the Holy Ghost, and they were made new men. Now to make this, to transfer it from the first to the twentieth century, let's be very practical.

What do you think it means to walk with God? I'm not going to be theological tonight, I'm not going to tax your intellectual powers, but I want to be very practical. What do you think it means to walk with God? I'll suggest to you, it means an awful lot, but I'll suggest to you just three things. It means, first, going God's way, second, keeping God's pace, and third, obeying God's command.

Going God's way? What do I mean by that? I mean going the way of the cross. Except a man take up his cross and follow me, said Jesus. He cannot be my disciple.

And what do you think it means to take up the cross? A fellow came to see me at Charlotte Chapel, and he said to me, Pastor, I've got a very bad temper. I'm very distressed about it. I suppose that it's my cross.

There's no answer to it. I looked at him in amazement, and I said, My dear friend, your cross? It's your wife's cross. She has to live with it seven days a week.

It's your sin. How extraordinary you can rationalize something like that, isn't it? What does it mean to go the way of the cross? Except a man take up his cross and follow me. He cannot be a disciple.

And the Lord Jesus has called us to make us disciples, first of all, but he says, except you take up your cross. You can't be one. Well, what does he mean by that? I'll put it in a sentence this way, that a disciple is someone who has forsaken all his rights to anything except to do the will of God.

Have you done that? Just glance with me and see how the Apostle Paul did that in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, just a minute. There's a striking, striking testimony of how he had forsaken his rights for Christ's sake. His object in this letter is simply to defend his apostleship, because everybody challenged his authority.

And he said, My answer to those of you who examine me concerning my apostleship is this. Verse 4, Have we not power to eat or drink? Haven't I got a right to normal rations? Verse 5, Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife? Haven't I got a right to normal romance? Verse 6, Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Haven't I got a right to normal recreation? Verse 7, Who goeth to warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth the vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Haven't I got a right to normal remuneration? Verse 15, But I have used none of these things. Every Christian has a right, a perfect right, to normal recreation, to normal remuneration, to normal rations, to normal romance.

But my dear friend, in the cause of becoming a disciple for Jesus and forsaking all rights except that of doing the will of God, he will test you on at least one of those in your life. Are you ready to forsake your right to a big pay packet every week for my sake? Are you ready to forsake your right to normal romance for my sake and the gospels? Are you ready to forsake your right even to normal food and to normal recreation? Except a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple. And so Jesus calls us to walk with him.

And the moment we say, yes Lord, right, I'm ready, then he'll test you on one or other of those things, just you see. Because you'll probably find that your boyfriend isn't prepared to go quite that far. He thinks you're becoming fanatical and he'll say to you, well, if you're going that far, you'll have to leave me up.

And you'll find your right to normal romance is absolutely shattered at that point. And that doesn't mean you go through life an old maid, but it means that God has his right to choose for you in everything. Have you really honestly, honestly, fellow Christian, honestly, have you really on your knee, looked up in your heart and said to the Lord, I have no right except to do your will? That's when you become a disciple.

Going God's way. Quickly, keeping God's pace. Now that usually means slowing down.

Doesn't mean hurrying up. Doesn't mean going faster. It means slowing down.

There's a rogue slogan in all the streets in Chicago a few years ago, which said, slow down and live. That's a very good safety slogan. It's a good slogan for Christians.

We're all in too much of a hurry to get the job done. We go round and round and round and rush. We think we're all so efficient.

I had to add to my vocabulary when I went to the States, one or two words that they use over there that I hadn't heard before. And one of them was, let's go. Another was, rush.

Everybody's in a rush. How strange that the Bible says, be still and wait upon God. The disciple has to learn to slow his pace.

Doesn't mean he becomes lazy, but it does mean he walks in step with Jesus and he doesn't get ahead of him. And he knows when he is getting ahead of him because, listen, he's out of speaking range and his prayer life has gone to pieces. And his Bible study doesn't matter anymore.

And he's rushing around like mad, absolutely like mad, thinking he's no end of a Christian. And he hasn't heard a word from heaven for weeks, perhaps longer than that. Slow down.

And the other thing is obeying God's command. To walk with God means going God's way, keeping God's pace, obeying God's command. Not, not the command that you choose to select, but all of them.

For you see, a Christian, while he is saved from the condemnation of the law by his new birth, he is not saved from the full obligation to fulfill the law by his new birth. Please don't think that grace puts away law. It doesn't.

The Christian finds himself in a place, as he's born again now, in a new era, a new dimension of life, in which he is faced with the obligation to do and to obey God. But bless God's name, he has all the power at his disposal to obey. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled, not by us, but in us, in us, by the Spirit.

Has God spoken to you about something and said, don't you do that anymore? And what did you do about it? Has he said, that's not my will for you, I want you this way? Have you obeyed? Whenever God has got his children willing for absolute obedience, he's got a church moving in revival. So he chose these men that they might walk with him. And I have a shrewd idea.

The amount of blessing that you will have in April at this crusade will very largely depend upon the number of Christian people who have learned to walk with God. Because as I said last night, if we don't do that, we simply attract unconverted people to carnality in the church and spread it further. Whereas what we desperately need is not more of what we've got, but something entirely different in depth of Christian experience.

Walk with God. Now, he chose these men that having learned to walk with God, they should witness to men, that he should send them forth to preach. That doesn't mean preach sermons.

It means herald, the word is herald. And it simply means the act of life and lip whereby we make known individually the Lord Jesus. Now I'm going to ask a very pertinent question, one which can embarrass a congregation tremendously, but I make no apologies for doing it.

We've arrived at Saturday evening in the first Saturday of February. We've come through six days, and tomorrow we'll find ourselves in church. Have you opened your lips to speak about Christ to anybody this week? How long is it since you really tried to win somebody for Jesus? I lived for 10 years in Chicago, and America is a great country for statistics.

They're mad on statistics. I'm not quite sure about the authority of them, and I quote these with a certain amount of deference, because I'm not sure that they can be substantiated. But at least they were near enough the mark to make me feel mighty uncomfortable about my own church and my ministry in it, in Edinburgh.

The average--this is a statement from Christianity Today--the average evangelical church role consists of 5% who don't exist, 10% who can't be found, 25% who never contribute a penny, 50% who have no missionary interest, 75% who never attend a midweek service and prayer meeting, 90% who have no family altar, and 95% who never win anybody for Christ. Now I just don't know how such statistics can be found out. But I say, do they make you feel uncomfortable? They do me.

The tragic breakdown in the New Testament principle of church growth is the thing which has got us all completely beaten today. We just don't function, we don't reproduce. And he sends them forth to preach.

Oh, but I can't witness for Christ. Every time I try, I stammer and stutter, I'm afraid I put my foot in it. And every time I start, it's such an effort to get a word out, and everybody would laugh at me.

Oh, it's such an effort. Wiser than ever. Listen, if you forget everything I say tonight, remember there's one thing.

The character of your witness depends on the depth of your walk. Got that? Not got it in here, in here? Have you? If there's no walk with God, there's no witness. That's why it's such a sweat, if I might use such a vulgar term from the pulpit, such a sweat and effort and toil and drudge to try and speak to anybody about Jesus, because it's your effort.

But oh, when you're in love with someone, it's no effort then. I had a wonderful time a week or two ago at a CE convention in Adelaide. I shall never forget that week.

Thrilling week. And I was telling them that I just had a letter from my younger daughter at home. She's 70 and a half, the postscript of the family.

And she wrote to me and said to me that she wanted me to know that she'd got a boyfriend. And then she began to describe him. In words that only Scottish people use, as far as I know, she said he was absolutely fat and super.

And she piled on the adjective. Well, I know the fellow pretty well. I mean, no, it's not funny.

I mean, he leads our young people's work at the church where I am. He's an awfully nice fellow. But when I read all that she said about him, I thought, well, is this the man? And I really, I'm dying to get home to find out what on earth happened to him.

Because he's so different from what I thought he was. Oh, he's a nice fellow. I'm very happy.

But oh dear. You see, she had no effort to tell me about him. No, it was a natural, spontaneous outburst of love.

And because she's in love for the first time in her life, why she couldn't keep quiet. Now, let's just cut out all, all nonsense about difficulty to give testimony. If you're in love with Jesus, you won't be able to help it.

We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard, said the disciples. And friend, if you love him, you talk about him. And what's the sign of being in love? Oh, I can tell you.

Because I still am in love. I'll tell you what's a sign of being in love. It's something that's been denied to me for three months.

It's the joy of being in the company of someone you love, more than anybody else on earth. That's what being in love is. Intimacy is the hallmark of love.

Have you been in Jesus' company today at your quiet time? Had you five minutes with him? Ten minutes? Have you been in his company? Have you told him that you love him more than anybody else in all the world? And that you want about everything to do with him? Have you? Have you a little love feast in your home before you leave for business every day, where mommy and daddy and children kneel down and just tell the Savior that the home is his, and that you want him to be first in it? Is your home like that? Do you love him? Don't you tell me it's difficult and hard to speak about Christ, when your heart's aflame. He sent them forth to preach. Well, of course, you see, he called them to be with him.

And having taught them to be disciples and live with him, then they just went out like a flame, because, well, they loved him. Now, just one other thing. We're nearly through.

The time is three minutes past nine, and I haven't seen anybody asleep yet. And we're just finishing. But the last thing is the most wonderful thing of all.

He chose these 12 men, you just think of who they were, that they might have power to cast out demons, to war with the devil. And when Christ sends somebody out to war, he sends them out to win. I've always had an intense interest--I hope you won't accuse the preacher of being very worldly.

In the game of cricket, Brian Booth, I've admired tremendously. A fellow who sacrificed his cricketing career for the sake of the gospel. David Sheppard is another one.

If you go back into the pages of history, C.T. Studd is another. But I always have loved cricket. And when I went to Chicago, the year after I went there, there was a series of test matches being played in England, between England and Australia.

Naturally, I was very anxious to know how we were getting on. And I bought one morning every Chicago newspaper. You know, when you buy Chicago newspapers, it's like buying a library.

And I had a wad of papers about this thick, and I looked through every page, and there wasn't a reference to the test match in England. They were only talking about the White Sox, or the Cubs, or some silly baseball game, like rounders grown up, you know. Pardon me, my American friends, if you're here, but that's just a silly Englishman speaking.

One of my friends in England, however, knowing of my interest, immediately sent a London Daily Telegraph, and it arrived one morning. And I hastily opened it, and I turned, where of course you would always turn when you want to look for news in London about a test match, to the front page. I mean, what's happening in the government doesn't really matter, it's the front test match that's happening there.

So right across the front page, I looked, and there, there, what do you think I saw? Words that sank, made my heart sink. England facing defeat. Oh dear, that was a sad day.

Nobody in the church office would sympathize with me. They thought I was very foolish, they didn't understand it. And I couldn't get home to do anything about it, not that I could have done anything had I been able to get home, but at least I could have wept with those who wept.

And two days later, another Daily Telegraph arrived by airmail, and I opened it with a sense of trepidation. And what do you think I found? Right across the front page, England in sight of victory. The whole situation had completely been transformed in a couple of days.

I am glad that you smiled at my story, but as if nothing had ever been said to you from a platform before, listen. And may it be the Spirit of God who talks to your heart. Are you facing defeat, or are you in sight of victory? As a Christian, for I repeat, when Jesus sends us out to war, he sends us out to win.

You winning, or are you losing? Frankly, isn't this touching? A very tender spot that you can't witness to Christ, because you have nothing to witness about, because your life is one of tragic defeat. Why? Why? I'll tell you exactly why. Your defeat in the warfare, and your silence in your testimony, is all traced back to the shallowness of your walk.

And what I would pray, God, that people in this church today, tonight, will do, because you see the blessing that comes from heaven is not expressed so much in public, but someone whose heart is nearly broken, whose will is about finished, and whose life is in despair, and who feels that this Christian business is just absolutely a failure. Even perhaps today, your sin has brought tears to your eyes. What I want you to do in Jesus' name, is to leave this church tonight, and when you got back home, kneel down by your bed, and thank the Lord that he loves sinners.

And therefore, he loves you, and you have only got one life to offer, and it's never too late to start again. And it begins again when you tell Jesus you love him. Let us pray.

Oh Lord, forgive our sin, our failure, our defeat. Draw us with the cords of love. Grant that out from this church may go many people to whom God has spoken, and who are going to readjust their priorities, and are going to seek first the kingdom of God, to seek first their walk with the Lord in the light of his word.

And out of that walk, a triumphant witness, and a mighty warfare of victory, and an experience of the power of the risen Christ. Lord, save us, help us from all our miserable failures. Take us into thine own heart, in a sense of brokenness, and feebleness, and weakness.

And Lord Jesus, make us strong in thee. We ask it for thy name's sake.

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