

Eight Words That Change Everything

by Carter Conlon

This sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's Word, highlighting the transformative power of surrendering to God's will and purpose. It uses the example of the Apostle Paul's conversion to illustrate how a simple prayer of surrender can lead to a life-changing journey of faith and obedience. The message encourages listeners to trust God's plan, even when it seems difficult, and to take the first step in faith, knowing that God's purpose for their lives is far greater than they can imagine.

Scripture: Psalms 119:100, Acts 9:6, Matthew 26:39, Luke 6:46, Acts 9:15, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Isaiah 55:8, Zechariah 4:10, Revelation 3:8

Topics: "Obedience to God's Word", "Trusting God's Plan"

Description

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Transcript

Thing to be here in the sanctuary at Summit International School of Ministry with young people from all over the country and those that were able to get visas and come in from other parts of the world. We thank God for those open doors to study, to prepare, to be a generation that's going to make a difference in the days ahead. And if you knew some of the young people that I'm meeting here at this school at this time, you know that we have some chain breakers here in our midst that are going to go into their hometowns, their home countries, their neighborhoods, they're going to make a huge difference for the kingdom of God.

And for that, I am personally, eternally grateful. Pastor Tim Delina on Sunday morning preached a powerful, powerful message that really just began with a thought that stirred something in me. And the thought was from Psalm 119 verse 100, where the psalmist says, I understand more than the ancients because I keep your precepts.

In other words, I have made the choice to obey the Word of God. And the obedience in my heart has given me more understanding than those who actually know more than I do. As a matter of fact, they might know more Scripture than I do.

They may have studied longer than I have. But the obedience that you have placed in my heart has opened an understanding to me that gives me a greater wisdom than those who have selectively, may I put it that way, decided to obey God. So I want to talk to you today.

I want to speak specifically to people who have come to the end. You're at home and you just don't see a way forward. You thought one point in your life you had a pathway like Pastor Ryan spoke about earlier, but suddenly your pathway came to a blinding halt, may I call it that.

And you just don't see a way forward for yourself. You don't see it for your marriage, your mind, your children, your community. You don't think that God can use you.

You just don't see a way forward. I am reading the prayer requests on the tablets that we have that you're sending in from all over the world. And I don't think I've ever seen such a hopelessness as today.

Like so many people, the prayer requests are so deep, it's just I've lost the will to live. I don't see a future for my family. My marriage is, there's no way out of the situation.

And many, many people are asking for prayer because they're losing their minds under the tension and the pressures of this present time. Now I'm going to share with you today a thought that I've entitled, Eight Words That Change Everything. Can I have somebody bring me my glasses over there, please? I forgot them.

When you get to be my age, you're fortunate to wind up anywhere with everything that you brought with you. That's just the way things are right now. Thank you so much.

I can't see a thing here without them. Eight Words That Change Everything. Father, thank you, God, for the touch of heaven that has been on this meeting this evening.

Thank you, Lord, for the hope that is rising in so many hearts around the world. That God, this is a desperate hour. And quite often in a desperate hour, you choose to use desperate people in a way that we never anticipated that you would.

So help me, God, to go into the inner prisons, the living rooms, the darkened places of hearts and minds tonight, and to shine a light in these darkened places like Paul and Silas once did in the inner prison. Break these doors that the devil would try to place in people's minds off of their hinges tonight. Let people come out and begin to be a living testimony of the power and the reality of God.

Thank you for what you're about to do in this generation. And help me to explain tonight these eight words that if we will pray them with a sincere heart, it can change everything. Now in your Bible, in the book of Acts chapter 9, we see the story of the apostle Paul.

Now in Acts chapter 9, he started out as a man called Saul, a man who had a very definitive objective in life, a man who thought that he knew the way forward. He thought he understood what truth was, only to come to literally a blinding finish. He was on the road to Damascus.

You know the story. He was persecuting the church of Jesus Christ. And suddenly a blinding light from heaven, he encountered the living Christ.

It caused him to be thrown to the ground and actually blinded him. The scripture tells us for three days he was blind, physically blind. He couldn't see.

His journey had come to an end. Everything he thought he was, all that he was attempting to do, every purpose he thought he had in life came to an end, just like many that I'm speaking to tonight. You're 20 years old, you're 30, you're 40, you're 50, whatever your situation is, and you thought you knew what your life was going to be.

And just whether it was gradually or suddenly like the apostle Paul, suddenly you've just come to an end. You hit a wall. It's over.

You can't see a way forward. Neither could the apostle Paul in this particular passage of scripture. Now Paul was about to pray a prayer.

And actually it's an amazing prayer because it's the very first prayer he prayed as a converted man. Now he had had repetitious prayers. He had had prayers that no doubt he had learned from some of the Old Testament practices, but he'd never really prayed a New Testament prayer, a prayer of faith and obedience.

It's the first thing out of his heart. And I do believe in many regards, it ought to be the first prayer out of the heart of every man, woman, or child who comes to Christ and has an actual conversion experience. Conversion means change.

Conversion means new life source. Conversion means new relationship with God. Conversion means new direction, new hope, new future.

It means everything has become new because the old things have passed away. Now Paul, who is now praying, he started out as Saul, but now he's become Paul. And it's interesting because when you do have a living encounter with God, you do get a new nature.

You and I get a new heart. We get a new direction. We get a new way of seeing things.

We get a new future. And so now it says in chapter 9 of the book of Acts in verse 6, so he, that's Saul or Paul now, trembling and astonished. He had an encounter now with the living God, said, Lord, what do you want me to do? That was the first prayer out of his mouth.

It is a prayer that changed everything. Now who can debate but that Saul, who was a religious fanatic, really lacking in any wisdom, who can debate with me legitimately today or tonight that he did not become one of the wisest men in the history of the kingdom of God. You just have to read his epistles, his letters.

He was given a wisdom that could only be given to man by God himself. And it all started, as Pastor Tim shared on Sunday morning, with this heart that gave up, in a sense, its own agenda immediately. Having encountered the living God, Saul knew that Saul was over and Paul had begun.

It was a new birth. He was born again by the presence of God in his life. And he prayed this prayer and he said, it was the first prayer, as I call it, of a converted man.

It's the prayer that I believe that everyone who wants a living relationship with God, at some point in our lives we have to pray this prayer. And it began, it's eight words, and it changed everything, not just for him. It changed everything for millions of people around the world.

Can you imagine if you and I could pray a prayer like that tonight that would change the lives of millions of people? You see, Jesus Christ is still the same yesterday, today, and forever. I don't know if it'll change

millions if you pray it, but it'll change you. And it will probably change your marriage and most likely change your children, most likely change your grandchildren, most likely change the trajectory of your whole family, most likely will have an impact in your workplace, most likely will lead you to a pathway of surrender and usability in the kingdom of God that you never personally believed was ever possible in your life.

And it started with the word, Lord. I love that. The first word of the eight words was just simply, Lord.

In Luke chapter six in verse 46, Jesus said to the religious leaders of the day, he said, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? But you see, Paul meant it. When he called him Lord, it was an admission that there's a new boss in my life. I'm no longer in charge of my life.

You know, it's amazing because when I came to Christ, I personally came to Christ by reading the gospel of John. And nobody ever told me this, but when I read the gospel of John, I realized that I wasn't just coming to be healed of this condition called sin in my life, which was very obvious, and I knew I was a sinner. I wasn't coming just to have an assurance that when I die, I'm going to go to heaven, but just reading with an honest heart, the gospel of John with a desire to actually obey it, if it was true, I saw that to come to Christ meant that I would have to yield the rights to the rest of my life to him.

In other words, I'm not the boss anymore of my life. I'm not in charge of bringing my plan to God and saying, would you bless my plan? I'm called to lay down my plans. I'm called to lay down my thoughts about myself, the good ones and the bad ones, all of the things that I thought my life was going to be.

And my prayer is to start with the words, Lord, you are now the Lord of my life. You are my new boss. Your word is supreme.

Your thoughts are above my thoughts. Your ways are above my ways. If your word says it's wrong, even though I might think it's right, it becomes wrong.

I yield to the word of God. Pastor Tim spoke at length about that. Part of the reason that a lot of this generation are so powerless in their testimony is they've never come to that place of saying, Lord, you are Lord now, not just a word in my mouth.

I'm not going to be among those who call you Lord, Lord, and don't do the things which you say, but I'm going to yield the rights to my life. The second word that Paul said in his very first prayer is what? Implying that God had a will for his life, which now had priority. Now, the will of God is not always pleasant.

We want to craft some pleasant thing in our heart, and we want to bring this pleasant thing to God and say, okay, here's your will for my life. Obviously, you're going to agree with this. You know, Jesus himself in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 39 said, oh, my father, if it is possible, take this cup from me.

Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. So, the first two words were Lord, what? And then the next two were do you. In other words, Jesus, you now have the right to my life.

What do you? Want me. Now, that implies that there's a divine purpose for my life. Everyone who's here today, everyone who's listening to me online tonight, there's a divine purpose that God has for your life.

Doesn't want your plans, doesn't need your strength. You don't need to be any part of this. It's just a matter, you can just imagine this formerly enraged man called Saul who's hauling people out of their

homes.

He's torturing people. He's, by his own admission, he's torturing them to the point where they're blaspheming God just to get out of the pain. He's an enraged man.

When Stephen, the precious young servant of God was martyred, Paul was there holding their coats, consenting to his death. He considered it one of his great sins of his life. And now he is realizing that there's a divine purpose for my life.

God doesn't want my strength. He doesn't need my ideas. And no doubt, Saul was a man full of ideas.

His whole life was governed by his own ideas, his own will, his own agenda. But now he said, Lord, what do you want me? What do you want me? You have a divine purpose for my life. Let me just suggest something to you.

The divine purpose of God for your life is so far out of your thinking, you've never thought about it. He says, I'm thinking thoughts about you that you have not even considered yet. I'm able to do more for your life and through your life than you can even ask or think.

In other words, you are confined in your mind by experience. You're confined by the heights of your thinking and the depths of your struggle. You're confined by the parameters of what other people have said about your life and what you even feel about yourself.

But the Christ who comes to live inside of your life when you finally yield to him is not confined by these things. He's the God of the universe. He can do things that you can't even imagine that he can do.

There's a day coming, the Bible says, when we stand in his presence, we will know things even as we are known. Till then we just see, the scripture says, through a glass darkly. And maybe just even under my voice tonight, you're getting maybe just a feeling in your heart.

It's very dim that God has something way more for you than you've ever imagined for your life. And the last two words he says of the words is to do. Now let me complete the sentence, Lord, what do you want me to do? In other words, he's the Lord of my life.

He now has priority. He has the right to my future. He has a divine purpose for my life.

And now his plan requires my active cooperation. In other words, God starts to open the doors and we're just required simply to walk through. Remember to the church of Philadelphia, I said it here a few weeks ago, that he said, behold, I set before you an open door.

You have a little strength. You have not denied my word in my name and you've kept my word as best as you can. He said, now behold, I set before you an open door.

Now the open door is set there by God. All that he requires now is our cooperation. The willingness to walk through, the willingness to go where we've never gone, the willingness to do what we know we can't do without God, the willingness to speak when we don't know what's going to come out of our mouth, the willingness to be put in places where we are so physically uncomfortable.

Imagine Saul from enraged persecution of the church and torturing people to suddenly finding himself in the midst of followers of Jesus Christ just looking for acceptance and trying to convince them that I'm not

on your side, I'm not against you, I'm not for you and having to go through that door. It must have been so initially uncomfortable for him. Put yourself in his place.

You can imagine how hard that must have been. And you and I know that from that initial prayer where Saul prayed those words or Paul prayed those words, God did things through his life that you and I are talking about right now, 2000 years later. He took him to places, established churches through his life, used his hand even in prison to write much of the text of what we know as the governing principles and ideologies of the church of Jesus Christ today.

And when he prayed that prayer, Lord, what do you want me to do? So I know some of you are going to pray it tonight. Some of you are going to pray it in this sanctuary who are here with me as students at Summit International School of Ministry. And we expect, you know, we expect that God would say to Paul, well, Paul, get up and start writing the Bible in established churches.

And we want the whole package. We want the whole answer. But the first answer to that prayer that Paul prayed was just go into the city.

That's all God told him, just go into the city. You know, sometimes we want the whole pathway laid out before us. And God says, no, just take the first step.

Just do the first thing. He doesn't lay it all before us because we wouldn't be able to handle it. None of us in this room could handle it.

I think if I would have been told by Jesus Christ in those first few weeks of my salvation what the plan He had for me, I think I would have collapsed into the sidewalk. I wasn't free from fear yet. I had a lot of struggles in my life.

I couldn't speak publicly. I mean, everything that He would laid out before me would have seemed like an absolute impossibility. And so in His mercy and in His gentleness, He just tells us to do the first thing first.

I'll set the doors before you. You just go through them. Just do the first thing.

And so the first thing that God says in response to this prayer that's going to change the world, I mean, realistically, it's going to change the world. And so the first thing that God says in response to this prayer is go into the city. So the point is, don't despise the day of small beginnings.

Don't think that that initial answer to your prayer is nothing. For you who are listening at home tonight, you might just say, get up. And as you heard Pastor Ryan speak about tonight, get a word and speak it into the heart of your wayward son or daughter, whether they scoff or scorn or curse you out, whatever they do, just by faith, go through that first door and start speaking.

Maybe God will say, just get up and open your Bible. You haven't read it for three months. Maybe He'll just tell you, go to the cupboard and pour that bottle of liquor down the sink or flush those drugs down the toilet.

That would be your first step. When you say, Lord, what do you want me to do? It all starts with small beginnings. In Paul's case, he was told to go into the city.

The second answer that came to him is in chapter 9 verse 15, when God sent a man called Ananias to go to him and lay his hands on him, that he might receive the spirit of God and receive his sight, because he

was still blind at this point. And the Lord said to Ananias, he said, go, for he's a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. So Ananias would have come in, would have come in to Saul or Paul at this time and saying, I'm here.

God sent me here. And this is what God told me about you. Your ministry is going to be far reaching.

It's going to go bigger. It's going to be farther than anything you could ever imagine it is going to be. It's not big to God.

It's just big to you. God's going to use you because you've chosen to. You are an obedient man.

That's one thing Paul was. He was an obedient man. And remember, we started with that scripture.

I understand more than the ancients because I've obeyed your precepts. Your ministry, Paul, will be far reaching, but there's a caveat that comes with it. In verse 16 of chapter 9, he said, for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.

The last part of that response to his prayer was, yes, your ministry is going to be far reaching, but it's not going to be easy. It's going to be hard, but it's going to be worth it. You know, in this generation that we're living in, I would be a liar if I told you tonight that there's not going to be hardship ahead for many who are going to stand for Christ.

This is an out of season for the gospel generation. It will cost some of us to stand for Christ in the coming days. It will not be easy, but it will still be far reaching.

It will still reach people that could not be reached any other way, but through the prayer of a man, a woman, a young person that just said this prayer tonight, Lord, what do you want me to do? I love that prayer because he didn't start by saying, I have a hundred ideas about how to advance your kingdom, God. I have a strategy. I'm going to pass out surveys.

We're going to ask people, what would it take for you to come to our church? No, he didn't start with his own ideas. He just said, Lord, what do you want me to do? And I want to suggest to you that God's plan for your life is so much bigger than even your best one that you can think about. Think about the best plan you could think about for your life, the best plan.

His is bigger than that. Its borders are so much farther to the north and the southeast and the west than you could even imagine it is. And it starts with the desire to get up, go into the city and wait until I speak to you.

And if you will follow the leading of my voice, it won't be easy. But in Paul's case, it will reach the whole of the known world. Can you imagine being given a promise like that? Well, my encouragement to you tonight is that you can be.

It will reach the whole of your known world of the scope of your influence, starting in your home, your marriage, your children, your family, your community, and who knows where? Who knows where? Who knows what God will do through your life? I'll tell you who knows. God knows. And if he can find an obedient heart, it's amazing what he can do.

We're going to go to the communion table tonight, so I'd like you to prepare at home and get some juice and get some bread. And we're going to go to the communion table with this thought in our heart. Lord,

So God, let it begin. Let the voices of glory be raised, Lord, in every home, every life, every place. And Father, we thank you and we praise you for it with all our heart tonight in Jesus' name.

Amen and amen. We're gonna go with a song of victory and a shout of victory, and we'll see you. TSC will be with us online on Sunday.

A lot of different connect groups and things you can get involved in, and we'll be back again next Tuesday night from our Bible school in Granville, Pennsylvania. God bless you, we love you. Stand strong, get up, let's all walk with God.

He needs a church now, in Jesus' name.

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