

Our Purpose

by Philip Yoder

The sermon emphasizes understanding and living out God's purpose for our lives as Christians, which is to be transformed into the image of Christ through surrender and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 47:48

Scripture: Ephesians 4:22, Ephesians 4:25

Topics: "Purpose"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the idea that our circumstances in life can change our perspective and allow us to bring others to Christ. The speaker emphasizes the importance of portraying the image of Christ in our daily lives and how our actions and responses in difficult situations can reflect our faith. The sermon also highlights the role of believers in showing God to those who may never come to church or read the Bible. The speaker encourages listeners to be an extension of Christ's incarnation and to let others see Jesus in them.

Transcript

It's good to be here with you again tonight. And I do want to greet each one of you in the name of Jesus. The thing that gives me confidence to stand here before you tonight is simply what Brother Dan read this evening, that the Word of God is alive.

And it's powerful. So it doesn't make any difference exactly who's up here speaking. The important thing is that we are sitting under the sound of that living Word that can speak to our hearts and can meet our needs.

As we begin the series of meetings the next few nights, debating on what I should speak on, and I think that one of the things that faces us as Christian people is that we often lose sight of the purpose that God has set before us as His people. I trust that tonight I'm speaking, I think, mainly to a group of people who would say that we have experienced the new birth. We would believe that we have been delivered from the power of darkness and we've been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

But, you know, as we wait for the return of our Lord, and I trust that we are confident that when He does return that we will go with Him into His eternal kingdom. But meanwhile, what are we here for? What is God's purpose in having His people here on earth? Why doesn't He just immediately take us from earth to heaven, which to us would seem more ideal perhaps. But as we think of this, God's purpose for our lives,

I'd just like for you to turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 9. And let's begin reading in verse 29.

Romans chapter 9, excuse me, Romans chapter 8, verse 29. Romans 8, 29. It says like this, For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

I don't know if you brethren here believe in the doctrine of predestination. But I'd like to tell you that I do. Perhaps not in the Calvinistic sense, but the scripture tells us here that God has predestined each one of us to His purpose.

The word predestined simply means that God determined beforehand, before He created each one of us, God determined beforehand the destiny of His children. Now, destiny not in the sense of place perhaps, but of purpose. The goal that He had in mind for your life and for mine.

And He says here that that purpose is that we be conformed. That word conformed means to give the same form, or to make similar or identical to. So it says here that God has predestined each one of us to be made like or be made identical to His Son.

It says here that God has a plan for a large family. And He wants each one of His children to be identical to our older brother, which is Jesus Christ. Now, we could look at a few other scriptures.

In Galatians 4, verse 19, Paul speaking again. He says, My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. Paul says that he as an apostle, God's messenger, struggles, he travails, he puts forth every effort for the purpose that God, that Christ be formed in each one of us.

And we could go to Ephesians chapter 1, verses 4 and 5. It says, According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. And then also in Colossians chapter 3, verse 10.

In verse 9, it says, Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. Verse 10, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Now, if I understand correctly, the Greek would say maybe a little different here.

It would say, we have put on the new man, which is being renewed. Or progressively being conformed to the image of him that created him, which would be Jesus Christ. And so, what I'm simply noticing here is, that scripture seems to bring out that God's purpose for each one of us, is that we be conformed or made like Jesus Christ, our older brother.

And we could ask ourselves tonight who we look like. In the spiritual sense, and I think even to some degree in the physical sense. Now, going back to Genesis in chapter 1, we notice that when God began his creation, after he had created the world and the things that are in it, God said, let us make man in our own image, in our likeness.

And it says, God created man in his own image. God created man in the image of God created he him. I'm not sure what all this includes.

How we, in the physical sense, bear a likeness to God, our creator. Seems like there may be some physical resemblance there. But be that as it may, we do have the likeness of God in the sense that the

faculties of our personhood, I think, make us like God.

We, for example, we have reasoning power. We can look at circumstances, we can look at facts, we can analyze them and we can draw conclusions. That's something very different from an animal acting simply by instinct.

We have the skills of communication where we can transmit our thoughts verbally and another person hears them and understands. We communicate. We have emotional feelings and we can give expression to our emotions.

We have a creative mind where we can imagine something and we can take the things that are at our disposal and we can make our imaginations a reality. Now God could do that in the perfect sense, in the sense that he can make whatever he imagines without any previous material and he can create in that sense. We can't do that but we can use the things that he has made in a creative way.

There are spiritual likenesses that we have that are like God. We have been given an immortal soul. God formed man out of dust and then he bent down and breathed into that form.

He breathed into that form a part of himself. He breathed into it the breath of life and man became a living soul. We are now conscious beings.

We are alive. We are aware of what is going on around us and our soul lives eternally. God gave us a moral conscience to know right from wrong and there is something within us that tells us that we are responsible and we'll need to give an account that we will be judged someday for who we are and what we do.

God has given us the freedom of choice. God limits his involvement in our lives to our will. God doesn't force anyone but he does reveal his truth to us and he does make requirements but he doesn't force us.

He limits himself to our will. And God has given us that faculty which allows us to communicate with himself, with the spirit world and we can do this for good or for evil. So God created man in his own image.

And these faculties that God gave us, this likeness that God gave us, allowed man to live in such a way that we were or that man was to enjoy God and to be a beautiful being that worshipped and served God. Now we know that man fell and when man fell he rebelled against God and the godly center of his being, man chose to change that center of his being and self became the center of his being. Self became the center of his universe.

And man used these godlike faculties now to serve himself. And when that happened we realized that man lost the image of God that he had previously. Sinful, lustful self warped our moral conscience.

Truth was no longer relevant to man. Self took over in place of truth. And our personal qualities were contaminated by sin, by egotism and by pride.

And man used all these faculties now for his own self-interest. And as this happened, as man deviated from the goal that God had for him, man lost progressively, I think, his image, his godly image. And so all of us in a sense are victims and at the same time we have lost our godly image also by choice.

All of us have chosen to go astray, we've chosen to follow our own way and because of this our image has drastically changed. I remember some years ago I was traveling to the United States and I flew through

the airport or landed in the airport at Miami and as I was waiting for my plane I noticed this young man come walking past and he really caught my attention. He had shaved his head, he was pretty well tattooed over most of the visible part of his skin and somehow he had implanted into his head two stainless steel horns.

And as I looked at him as he walked by, you know, here's a man that supposedly was created in the image of God. And yet his physical appearance portrayed something very, very different. You know, you almost look for cloven hooves in a tail.

The image that he portrayed now was something very far from what God had initially planned for his life. Now I realize that none of us have that physical appearance. But the thing that I would like for us to notice tonight is that as we deviate from God in our minds and our hearts we lose that godly image that man had at the beginning.

And tonight we either portray the image of God or we portray ourself. We portray by the way we live. We show who is at the center of our lives.

Who is the center of our universe, whether it's God or whether it's self. And we portray this by our concepts. We portray it by our impulses and our reactions to the circumstances that we face in life.

By our goals, by our dreams, our ambitions, and by our interests. We show who's at the center of our life by our speech, by the way we dress, by our business, our pleasures, our companions, everything we do. In a sense rotates around that center that we worship, that we have given ourselves to.

Now we as Christians who have experienced the new birth, we believe that God has brought us back into a relationship with himself. And that's what the new birth is all about. The sin issue, the rebellion against God, the self-center of our being.

We've repented of, we've died to that. And we've come back through Christ to a relationship with God. And God has again resumed his original place as the center of our lives, as the center of our being.

We've given God now a legal right to come back into our lives and to do his will in us. His Holy Spirit lives in our hearts, we believe. And our conscience has been renewed as we allow the Word of God and his Holy Spirit to teach us and to lead us in life.

But we do need to remember that when we give ourselves to God, we are giving God damaged goods, in a sense. Because we have lost that original God-likeness that he created us with. Now, I think too many times when we look at the new birth, we see the new birth as an end in itself.

And we believe that if we can come back into a right relationship with God, that is the whole purpose of the gospel. And we believe that as we are born into God's kingdom, the thing that dominates our lives today is now waiting for his return. And we believe that we have a place in heaven.

And that we are God's children. And this is all right and good. But what I would like for you to remember tonight is that the new birth is only a door that opens into a new way of living.

And when we give ourselves to God, God who has been waiting because of our own selfish will, as we give our will back to God, we give him now the legal right to step into our lives and to begin to fulfill his purpose in us. Remember in Acts 9, verse 6, when Paul was on his way to Damascus, and when the light

from heaven knocked him to the ground, and Jesus spoke to him, and he said, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Saul says, who are you, Lord? He said, I'm Jesus. And then Paul responded, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I believe that's the place all of us need to come to in our lives.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Self is gone. Self is on the cross. Self has been crucified.

And from now on, God, you are in control. I'm giving you my life. Now what? What wilt thou have me to do? We enter into a voluntary relationship with Christ that we find in John chapter 10, verse 10.

Just beginning in the middle of the verse, it says, I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

And then in verse 27, I think it is, it says, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. As we give our lives to God, we enter into a relationship with him like the sheep with their shepherd. I recognize that here in Ireland, there are lots of sheep.

And I suppose you probably know more about sheep than I do. But I remember when I was a small boy, my father had sheep. And it was interesting to work with them because they become very attached to their owner or to their shepherd.

And they learn to know their voice. And I remember going out and calling the sheep and they would come running to be fed. And someone else could go out and call them and they wouldn't even bother to lift their heads.

But a relationship develops between the sheep and their shepherd. And he can lead them and they have confidence in him. They follow him.

They go where he wants them to go. And I believe that now as children of God, that is the relationship we develop with our father in heaven, with Christ. That we follow him where he calls us.

It's the relationship of a disciple with his tutor. The student with his teacher. The servant with his master.

Our will is given up to him. And this is where the Christian life becomes practical. You know, you ask somebody if they're a Christian.

Yeah, sure, I was born again 20 years ago. But that really doesn't say too much. The question is, what is God doing in my life today? What is my relationship with Christ today? The Christian life becomes practical and it affects my life as I enter into this relationship with Christ.

As the sheep with the shepherd. As the servant with his master. And as we do this, God progressively begins to transform our lives into the image of his son.

We can notice a number of scriptures. Let me just look at a few in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 6. Excuse me, it's 1 Peter 5 verse 6. It says, Do you know what it's like to have God put his hand into your life and begin the transforming work? It's not always easy. Sometimes it's rather painful.

And as God brings circumstances into our lives, our tendency is to resist. Our tendency is to still keep control of what happens. But Peter says, When we feel God's weighty hand in our lives and when he begins to press and form and when it begins to hurt, Peter says, 2 Peter chapter 7 and verse 1. It says, As we reverence him and allow him to do his work in us.

This is where life becomes practical. In Ephesians chapter 4 verses 22 and following. It says, There's a putting off.

You know. All of us to some degree, some more than others. Having lived in this world, we have programmed our minds and our ways of thinking.

According to the values and the ways of this world. And we've learned to think. Like the world thinks.

And so as we come to God and as we give him our lives. He says, first of all, we need to take away. What you have programmed into your life.

So that I can put in again. New values, new thoughts. We need to make God's principles and God's values.

Our own. The transformation. Begins in our way of thinking.

Romans chapter. One that tells us. How the world thinks.

In Romans chapter 12. We find that. He says that we should not be trying to conform to this world.

But we should be transformed or our form should be changed. By the renewing of our minds or by the renewing of our way of thinking. The well values of our culture.

Has warped. The image of God. In our lives and they've taken roots in our root in our hearts.

Those need to be taken out and changed for. God's. God's values.

John chapter 8. Verse 31. And 32. Jesus said if you continue in my words.

Then are you my disciples indeed. And that you shall know the truth and the truth. Shall make you free.

As we allow God's word to enter into our hearts and as it takes root there. And as we obey. We find our lives changing.

First Peter it says that. Our lives are changed and we are perfected by our obedience to the truth. I believe that too many times.

Perhaps in our own lives perhaps in our own churches. People. Want to serve God but they want to think like the world.

And that creates confusion it's a. It's a constant conflict. It's impossible really to do that to really live. The way Christ wants us to live and at the same time.

To think like the world perhaps that's why so many people. Are uncomfortable. They're too righteous to feel comfortable in the world.

And at the same time they're too worldly to feel comfortable in the church. And it creates a lot of dissatisfaction and confusion. In people's lives.

But God brings circumstances into our life. And I think that's where then in Romans 8 verse 28. We find that scripture that we all we all know by memory perhaps.

Can't quote it in English. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. To them that are called according to his purpose.

I think sometimes we misunderstand the scripture. We believe that anything that comes into our life. Into anybody's life is for our good.

But it really says here that. It's to those who are called according to God's purpose. To them.

The things that happen to us are for our good. If we're not striving for God's purpose in our lives. If we haven't united our purpose with that of Christ in our lives.

Then I don't think necessarily we can say that everything good that happens to us is for good. But when we have given our lives to God. And when we have allowed him to enter our hearts.

And to begin that transforming work in us. Then. The things that happen to us are for our good.

And God brings circumstances into our lives that. Give him the opportunity. To transform us.

And give us the opportunity to learn. To be like Christ. As he works in us.

You know sometimes those circumstances are very difficult. I remember. Back in Costa Rica some years ago.

One of the sisters in our church. Went through a very difficult time. Her husband.

Became unfaithful to her. He left off serving God. Went back out into the world.

He would often not come home. Until late at night. She was wondering where he was.

I still remember. The day she called us and asked us to come down. She said I need you right now.

She said I feel. I'm just about ready to pack my bags. And leave.

She said I just don't know if I can take this any longer. And we went down and we were with her for a while. And tried to help her to.

Just humble herself under God's mighty hand. And to look at scripture. And see what God is asking her to do.

And she was able to do that. And she later. I remember the day in church when she.

Gave her testimony. She said although she would not wish. What she's been through on anyone.

She said she wouldn't trade it. The experience for anything in life. Because of the things that she had learned.

Because of the relationship that she experienced with God. And because of the things that God had taught her. And because of the growth that she experienced in her life.

Her testimony was that it was all worth it. I think. Often times when.

Although we do want to become like Christ. We say. But when we find ourselves in circumstances that are difficult.

We still find ourselves resisting. And. Probably not allowing God to do what he wants to do in us.

Some time ago a young man came to me and he said. I just like for you to give me some advice. He said I don't understand.

He said. You know every time. It seems every time.

That I just come to the end of myself. And just give myself to Christ. And I say Lord do with me whatever you want to do.

He said my life just becomes almost unbearable. Why is that? It seems that God is so cruel. But as we discussed it.

We came to the conclusion. That. When we really just give God everything.

God often just says. Well if you are so yielded to me. We can just step up the process.

And we can hurry up the process. Of transformation. And therefore.

The circumstances in our life sometimes become. Just more and more difficult. And yet.

As we yield ourselves to God. We find that his grace and his strength. Are right there.

For whatever we need. As we learn of him. As we just yield ourselves to him.

We are changed. Into his likeness. From glory.

Into glory. Into glory. And that is the beautiful thing of the Christian life.

We can face every day. With just simply opening our lives to him and saying Lord. I am giving you the legal right to come into my life.

And just do whatever you want to do. Because my purpose. Has been united with God's purpose.

My purpose is that God would transform me into the image of Christ. And you know that is a real challenge to me. As I look at the book of Acts.

In chapter 11. In verse 26. It says in Antioch.

It is where the people of the way. Were first called Christians. And I get the impression from the scripture that.

Probably the church at Antioch didn't call a members meeting. And have on the agenda. What are we going to call ourselves? How are we going to identify ourselves here in the city of Antioch? What are we going to say to people when they say who are you? What do you represent? I don't see that.

What I see is a group of people. Who lived in such a way. That the people of the city began to say.

They are. Christians. Because they remind us.

Of Christ. That's the whole idea. That's why we're here.

That's what God has called us to. That's why God doesn't just take us out of earth and transform it. Translate us directly into heaven.

Because Jesus said. As the father sent me. So send I you.

Jesus came from heaven to earth. To show us. God.

Jesus said to. I think it was Philip that day he said. Show us the father.

Jesus said have I been so long time with you. And still you say show us the father. Don't you know that.

He that has seen me has seen the father. Jesus said I am. Such a likeness of God.

That anyone that observes my life. Knows who God is. And then just before he ascended to heaven.

He said as the father sent me. So send I you. In that sense you and I are called to be.

An extension of the incarnation of Christ. That people are to see Jesus. In us.

What do people see. When. Life gets rough.

When people mistreat us. When. Business is successful.

Or when business is a failure. What do people see. How do we respond to our situations.

How do we respond. To our husband or to our wife. When they don't cooperate.

According to us. What do we do. When our children misbehave.

How do we respond. In the daily walk of life. In the circumstances that we so often.

Don't pay much attention to. That's when. People see.

Who we are. And God says I want you to portray Christ. That's the whole point.

Of our being here. It's for God to transform us into Christ's image. And for us to portray Christ to a lost world.

There are so many people. Who never come to church. They never read their Bibles.

They never have a chance. Or let's say it this way. Because of how far they have deviated from God.

They don't even give God a chance. To show himself to them. So perhaps the only way.

That they'll ever find God. Is through you and I. You know we thought of that in Costa Rica so often. We have a lot of problems with people stealing.

Take our things. You know it's not a lot of fun. To come home from church.

And find the door busted down. And your things gone. Your privacy has been violated.

The things you've worked for are no longer there. And what you need is gone. But if we could make contact with those people.

Perhaps God allowed that to happen. So that he can bring us into contact. So that those people can see Christ.

It changes our perspective. In the circumstances of life. As we learn of him.

As we obey. As we follow. His image begins to glow forth.

Out of our being. In Psalm 17. I'd like you to notice.

The Psalmist's prayer. Psalm 17 verse 15. He says as for me.

I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied. When I awake with thy likeness.

I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness. I believe that too often we become satisfied far too quickly. We become satisfied when.

Well I'm about as good as the rest of the brethren in the church. But it says here that our satisfaction should be only. When we portray the image of Christ.

In 1st John. Chapter 3. And verse 3. In verse 2 it says beloved now are we the sons of God. Isn't that great? Now are we the sons of God.

We've been born again. We've been brought into a right relationship with him. But it says and it does not yet appear what we shall be.

But we know. That when he shall appear. We shall be like him.

For we shall see him as he is. I get the picture. Of the clouds rolling back.

And Christ returning to earth. And we. In our unworthiness but by faith.

We go out to meet Christ. And when we see him. He looks like me.

Or rather I look like him. Won't that be wonderful? To meet Christ. And to recognize.

That he is my brother. And his image. And my image.

Prove that fact. We look alike. That's what God wants to do in us.

And I believe that. As we. If we can grasp this.

This purpose. And if we can see. God's.

God's desire. To have a people here on earth. Who collectively.

Portray his image in such a way. That it makes people stop. And it makes people.

Recognize. That God is alive. That God is still doing his work.

In people's lives. You know there is a sick world out there. And there are lots and lots of people.

Who are hungry. They are looking for something. And yet as they look at the churches around them. The picture is so confusing. Because there are words that sound so nice. And yet. As they observe the life. They become disillusioned. I remember some years ago. Back in Costa Rica. There was this lady. That lived in a town where one of. One of our churches is. And. She made this statement one day. She said I was born Catholic. And I will die a Catholic. But she said if somebody comes to town. And asks me. Where do the Christians live? She said I am going to tell them. That the Christians are the ones. That go to that little church. Down over the hill. That is a beautiful testimony. Although she did say that. She was not ready to. Make that change for herself. She was honest enough to realize. That God had done a work. In some people's lives. And it was attractive. It was a testimony for God's glory. And I believe that is what God wants to. Do right here. In Ireland. God wants to raise up people. Who can portray the image of Christ. It takes a lot of humility. It takes a lot of honesty. To let God really do his work. I have discovered that in my own life. Our way of doing things. Our church system. Has a tendency. To make us feel self satisfied. We are part of the right church. We do things the right way. But so often. I recognize in my own life. That my attitudes. My responses. My motives. Are not very Christ like. And therefore. The image I portray to the world. Is religious. But perhaps empty. The power is not there. So only as Christ comes into our hearts. And as he transforms us into his image. In practical everyday living. Is where people see Jesus. And that is my desire. For my life. And it is the challenge I want to leave with you. Here tonight. Shall we bow our heads. Heavenly Father. Tonight as we are here in your presence. We recognize that you have called us. And that you have asked us Lord. To allow you. To enter into our lives. And make us into your image. Father we pray your forgiveness. Where so often we have resisted. And we have trusted in. Perhaps. System. And ways of doing things. Rather than.

Giving ourselves under your control. Father tonight we just want to open our lives to you. And we ask that you would.

Take control. Of our lives. That you would control our circumstances.

You would do whatever needs to be done Lord. To transform us into your image. Bless each one that's here tonight Lord you know our needs.

We just pray. That you could. With your Holy Spirit.

Remind us. And bring us to that point Lord where we're willing. To say like Paul did.

Lord. What will thou have me to do. We give ourselves to you in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

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