

Crisis-01 Crisis of Identity

by Stephen Olford

God has a purpose for every life, and we can know and trust that purpose through our relationship with Him and our responsiveness to His call.

Duration: 52:26

Scripture: Matthew 5:16, Romans 8:28-31, 2 Corinthians 3:17, James 1:25

Topics: "Christian Identity", "Gods Purpose"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher recounts the story of Paul's conversion on the Damascus road. He emphasizes the significance of Paul's encounter with Jesus and his subsequent choice to follow Him. The preacher then poses the question to the audience if they have answered the call to follow Jesus. He addresses the issue of feeling worthless and lacking identity, asserting that God has a purpose for every life. The preacher highlights the importance of understanding God's plan and purpose for each individual, drawing from the book of Romans and emphasizing the certainty of our relationship with God and His calling in our lives.

Transcript

Turn with me to the book of Romans, Paul's letter to the Romans. And we're going to one of the greatest chapters of that wonderful epistle, Romans chapter 8. Romans chapter 8. You ought to read the whole epistle before you go to bed tonight, but we'll break in if we may at verse 28. And in the spirit as well as the significance of what we've been hearing in music here tonight, let's start at verse 28 and see how this all kind of melds in, all comes together.

We know, we know that all things work together for good. To those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose, for whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called.

Whom He called, He also justified. And whom He justified, these He also glorified. What shall we say then to these things? If God before us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Who is He that condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for your sake we are killed all day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature or created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen and Amen.

Have you ever felt that you were worthless? That you didn't matter? That somehow or other you had lost your identity? That you are like a piece of dust or straw being carried down the streets of time by a relentless wind? Did you feel like a dead fish carried with a stream because you couldn't swim against it? How many of us here tonight really have a crisis of identity? A crisis of identity. I believe in the sequence of teaching that we adhere to here at Keswick. We need to start right there and discover that God has a purpose for every life in this auditorium tonight.

God has a purpose for every life. Now there's a difference between the word plan and purpose. God's plan for your life may be different from His plan for my life, just as your faith is different from my faith.

Because God never makes duplicates, He only makes originals. God has a plan for your life and the thrilling thing is that you can find that plan, you can follow that plan and one day finish that plan, as did the Apostle Paul when he said, I have finished my course. You say, where's the scripture for that? Ephesians 2 and 10.

We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, ordained, that we should walk in them. We are His workmanship. That word means something of beauty, poem.

The word from which we get poema, poem. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But His purpose for our lives is identical, is identical.

We've heard about it in music already tonight. Do you know what it is? Being conformed to the image of God's Son. God's purpose for all of us is that we all might be like Jesus.

That's why we sang, stamp thine own image deep on my heart. God wants the people earth now with men and women like Himself and one day in glory when we are made just like Him, without any impediment or anything to mar. And I don't know anywhere in the Bible where that is so beautifully brought out as in the verses we have read together and particularly that 28th verse.

Now, of course, I'm biased about Romans. I think it's one of the greatest epistles in all the word of God. Not that we need to compare one against the other because all the word of God is inspired, inerrant and authoritative.

But I love the book of Romans and I'll never, never forget doing 52 expositions of Romans at Calvary Baptist Church when I was pastor there many years ago now. And I got my people to memorize Romans. And many won prizes for it and especially an opera singer who repeated from verse 1 to chapter 16 in the last verse without a single flaw in the King James Version.

So every morning when I opened the book, I didn't even have to read the passage. People knew where we were. And we preached our way clean through the book of Romans.

It's been called the cathedral of the Christian faith. And if that is true, then one of the highest spires is in Romans chapter 8. It's known as the spirit-filled chapter. There's more said on the Holy Spirit in Romans chapter 8 than any other one chapter in all of the Bible.

But my focus tonight is almost in the center of that book, chapter 8 and almost the center of the chapter, verse 28. I want you to read it with me again. And notice what it says.

All things work together for good to them who are called according to the purpose of God. All things work together for good to them who are called according to His purpose. Notice the little word His there is understood.

It is God's purpose. But it's not actually in the text. It's just put there for the sense of meaning.

Who are called according to purpose. God is a God of purpose. And God has a purpose for your life.

Listen, sir, you matter. Listen, madam, you matter. Young person here, you matter.

God has a purpose for your life. I want you to grab that tonight. Because you may be passing through what I passed through at a certain stage in my life.

A crisis of identity. Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Is life meaningful or meaningless? The existentialist of today says life is nothing but a bubble. It births and it's gone.

Life is a dark tunnel without any outlet. Without any light at the end. Life is a farce.

No, my friends. Life has a purpose. And tonight I want you to grab that.

And I want to work my way through this passage with you with your Bible open there at chapter 8 of Romans. And notice first of all the certainty of God's purpose for your life. The certainty of God's purpose for your life.

The text says, and we know. Stop there for a moment. And we, K-N-O-W, we know.

That all things work together for good. It's a certainty. It's not to be disputed or debated.

We may touch on some things that are so deep I can't even plumb them. And never will until I get to glory. But one thing I know is that God has a purpose for my life and for your life.

And Paul uses this word here not in some sort of intellectual apprehension sense, but experimental comprehension sense. He means that personally we can know experientially that God has a purpose for our life. And that's for two reasons.

Notice the text. Two reasons. One, it's a certainty of our relationship to God.

It's based on our relationship to God. We know that all things work together for good to those who are called. Underscore that word called.

Called according to his purpose. This is what is known for you who are scholars of the word of God, students of the word of God. This is known as the prophetic present.

Present. The prophetic present. It is a call of God.

Though it's projected into the future, it happens now to us. Paul is looking back upon his experience when he as a brilliant young student decided that he was going to fight with zeal for the law and completely destroy this Jesus movement that had emerged. And so he went out to hail men and women to prison and to cause them to blast thieves.

And he raised the church of Jesus Christ to the ground. But then something happened. Something tremendous happened.

On that Damascus road, suddenly above the brightness of the noonday sun, God broke into his life and he saw the very face of Jesus. He saw a face. He heard a voice.

He made a choice. Law! Law! I name you law. What will you have me to do? He was called.

He was called. We're going to come back to that in just a moment in a very significant way. But let me ask you.

Have you answered that call? I heard the call come follow. That was all. As joys grew dim, my soul went after him.

I heard the call come follow. That was all. Will you not follow? Did you hear his call tonight? That's when that relationship took place.

It's a relationship of certainty. But notice, it's a responsiveness of certainty. It's a certainty of our responsiveness to God.

All things work together for good to them who are called yet, but to them that love God. That love God. You know, before you were ever converted, there was enmity in your heart toward God.

You know that. You know that. And the Bible teaches that.

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them. Why? Because they're spiritually deserved.

I remember when I was a young student in London going to an open-air meeting right there where they argue it out in the very heart of London just by that great park week after week, day after day. And being very, very disturbed that I couldn't convince some of those professional hecklers. One night, rather distressed, I was on my way back riding in a bus with a bunch of other students.

And I got back and dropped on my knees and I said, Lord, why couldn't, why couldn't, why couldn't I convince that man? The Spirit of God brought this text to my mind. The natural mind, the man who is not prepared to accept the terms of salvation, which are repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the man or woman who is not prepared to say, I quit fighting you, Lord, I just bow at your cross and say in simple words, just as I am, I come. The man who is not prepared to do that, that natural man, receives not the things of the Spirit of God.

For except the man be born again, he cannot see. Except the man be born again, he cannot know. And there's a hostility.

The carnal mind is enmity against God and is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. Nor indeed can be. But you know, when that call is effectual and when we respond, do you know that Holy Spirit of whom we've been singing fills our hearts and in the language of Alexander McLaren, flushes out like a flood the love of God in our hearts.

And we discover that we love God and we want to love God. With all our soul, with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength. John puts it perfectly.

We love Him. Why? Because He first loved us. Now why am I certain that God has a purpose for my life? Why? Because of this relationship with God I have been called.

Secondly, because of my responsiveness to God. I love Him. I love Him.

We're no longer at a standoff. I love my God. Do you love God? Do you love Jesus? Do you? I know there are times when you may feel a bit cold.

That's because you've not been having your quiet times and engaging in prayer and witnessing to Jesus Christ. But if you're filled with the Holy Spirit, the love of God is sure to broaden our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And the fruit of the Spirit is what? Love.

Love. All right. Are we clear on the certainty? The certainty of God's purpose for our lives.

The certainty of God's purpose for your life and your life. But now let's go a little deeper. And notice in this wonderful picture here, this theological picture here, what I call the alchemy.

The alchemy of God's purpose for our lives. He's the great alchemist, the pharmacist, the chemist. Because there's a wonderful word here that I want to talk about tonight, because we've heard it in music.

As Patricia was singing. And then as Ron was singing. And in the music.

Look at the text. We know that all things work together. Will you underscore that? Work together.

Do you know what that means in the language of the layman? Do you know what that means? All things intermingle. All things intermingle for those who love God. And that word intermingle is a word from the world of chemistry.

It's the pharmaceutical word. This is why I call it the alchemy of God's purpose for our lives. Do you know what alchemy is? What chemistry is? Chemistry is that process which transforms something inferior to something really valuable.

Chemistry is God's way of transforming our lives that we might be conformed to the image of God's Son. And there are two things I want to say about this alchemy. Two things I want to say about this chemistry.

God is working with you. God is working with you right now. God's been working for a long, long time, it may be.

But He's working right here in this service right now. There is a chemistry going on. But two things characterize this wonderful work of chemistry.

There is a divine chemistry in the measure of God's dealings with us. He knows each one of us, and He never takes us beyond the measure He has already limited, prescribed, bounded for each one of our lives. All things intermingle for good.

Do you know nothing ever happens to you that God does not overrule or decree? Nothing can ever happen to you, believer, that doesn't go through Him first of all. Isn't that wonderful? I wonder if there's a broken heart here tonight. I wonder if there's a broken marriage here tonight.

I wonder if there's a broken life here tonight. And you say, Oh, well, I have trusted Jesus, I've handed my life over to Him, and I agree with what Stephen Oldford is saying, that there is a purpose for my life, but it's all falling apart. I don't understand it.

Don't get panicky. Don't get panicky. Lift up your eyes and say, Lord, all things intermingle for good.

I know there's some purpose that you're working out. The billows, the billows are absolutely engulfing me at the moment. I'm feeling the heat of a furnace.

Those blows are hurting, Lord, but I'm going to trust you. You have a good purpose. Good is going to come out of it.

I love that verse. In 1 Corinthians 10, 11, it reads like this, No temptation has overtaken us except such as is common to man, but God is faithful. God is faithful, who will not allow us to be tempted beyond that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way, literally it's the way, the way, the way of escape, that we may be able to bear it.

I don't know how you're going through it, but you may be having tests and trials right now, in recent weeks, this very night, but I want to tell you, the next time the world seems to collapse around you, and when you're facing perhaps illness, it may be even terminal illness, look up and say, Lord, I trust your purpose. You are the alchemist, the chemist. You're doing something for my good, and there is nothing that can happen to my life that doesn't first go through you.

Will you take hold of that tonight? Will you take hold of that tonight? It'll answer your identity crisis. But I want you to notice, not only the measure of his dealings with us as the great chemist, pharmacist, but the mixture of his dealings with us, the mixture of his dealings with us, go back to that word again, all things intermingle, intermingle for good to those that love God. Watch the pharmacist at work.

Have you ever been in a chemist shop, in a pharmacist shop, and watched the chemist fill the prescription? Watch him, watch him. He looks around. If you go into his lab, and he takes this bottle, and he takes that bottle, this is bland, this is bitter, this looks a horrid color, this looks a little bit like water, there's a little bit of that, a little bit of that, some powder here, some powder there, and he mixes it all together, and you'll think to myself, you'll think to yourself, my, what on earth is he doing? That bottle is not arsenic.

And he puts a little bit of that into it, and he mixes away there. And do you know what he's doing? He's doing something for your good. He's doing something for your good.

The divine pharmacist, the great physician, the heavenly chemist, mixes all manner of things, sometimes painful, sometimes pleasurable, but always profitable. Always profitable. Now I'll illustrate that just quickly in three ways.

Have you ever heard of a man called Job? If you haven't, split open the Bible a little bit around Psalms there, and you'll find Job. And read the story of Job. He was a righteous and godly man.

And the devil came to Yahweh, Jehovah, and said, listen, I know what you think of this man Job, but let me have a go at him, and see if he won't curse you. And you remember how the story unfolds in a tremendous drama, and how calamity and crisis came upon Job all at once. He lost his entire family.

He lost his fortune. He lost his health. He lost everything.

And everybody accepted the fact that God was judging him. But you know what Job did? He said, though he will slay me, yet I will trust him. And guess what? All those things that happened to him intermingled for good.

At the end of the story, he was far better than he was at the beginning. Amen? Isn't that wonderful? God has a purpose for your life. Have you ever heard the story of Joseph? He was that favorite son.

Fathers and mothers shouldn't have favorites, but he seemed to be a favorite. Do you remember how he went to visit his brothers on one occasion with that beautiful, beautiful coat? It was many colors. And there in Dothan, his brothers fell upon him, stripped him of that lovely coat, threw him into a pit, then took that coat and drenched it with blood and took it back to the father and said, An animal's got hold of your son.

He mourned right through until almost the end of his life until he discovered that Joseph was not dead. Indeed, he was alive. But in the meantime, Joseph was sold to traders who took him down into Egypt, into Potiphar's house.

And because he stood for God and wouldn't sin, he was put into prison. And then in a wonderful way, God took him out of prison in a miraculous way, made him the second-in-command of that country at a time when there was famine everywhere else, and he became the provider for a dying world around. And who should come? Who should come to visit Joseph and get provision for the family but his very brothers who betrayed him? Do you remember how he revealed himself to his brothers and they wept and they feared, lest they all be slain? But Joseph looked at them and at the last book of that wonderful first book of the Bible, Genesis, he says this, he says this, You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

God meant it for good. Imagine where Joseph went, in the pit, then in part of his house, into prison, but eventually it was for good. The apostle Paul, God saves him in that miraculous way on that Damascus road, and then reveals mighty things to him.

And Paul exalts in the wonder of the revelations that God allows something to come into his life that he might not be too exalted. What that was, scholars have argued about and will do until we see Paul face to face and get the real answer. I know the answer, but nobody else does.

But you know how he besought the Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, please deliver me. Deliver me from this messenger of Satan sent to buffet me. It's a Hebraism.

We would say in our language today he prayed dozens of times. But God looked down and said, Paul, my grace is sufficient for you. In weakness, you're going to be made strong.

And Paul came to the place where he actually rejoiced in his affliction, that the power of God might rest upon him. God knows the measure. God knows the mixture.

For his dealings with us, that good might come into our lives. Isn't that fabulous? Isn't that mind-boggling? Is that solving your identity crisis? God has a purpose for your life. But I want you to notice not only the certainty of God's purpose for our lives, not only the alchemy of God's purpose for our lives, but the sovereignty of God's purpose for our lives.

And I love this, I love this. Here's a passage that most people just absolutely skid away from. For some reason or other, but to me, it's one of the glorious pieces of Biblical poetry that tell us God's great purpose for our lives.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. And then he goes on, Moreover, whom He did predestinate them, He also called.

Whom He called, He also justified. Whom He justified, He also glorified. And notice all in the past tense.

Isn't that wonderful? You say, what do you mean? Wonderful. That's what that means. This is not an affirmation of theology, though it's that.

It's rather an acclamation of doxology. Paul is rejoicing in a foreign God who works everything for good to them that love God. And I want you to notice the eternal aspect of it, and I want you to notice briefly, the effectual aspect of it.

What is eternal? What rooted in eternity? And what actually happens down here and could happen in your life here tonight? Look at the eternal purpose of God. God's sovereign purpose. Paul is given an insight by inspiration of the Holy Spirit into the councils of heaven.

And do you know what he sees? He sees three things I want you to notice here. Way back there before you were ever conceived in your mother's womb. Way back there before planet Earth was ever put into orbit amidst the millions of universes.

Way back there before time ever was, God saw us in Christ. Get that? Chosen in Christ. When? Before the foundation of the earth.

God saw us in Christ, whom He foreknew long before you ever trusted Christ. Indeed, before you were ever born. I repeat, before time was.

God saw you in Christ. What is more, God sought you in Christ, whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate. Having seen us and having set His love upon us, He waited until the fullness of time to send His Son to seek and to save that which was lost.

And then, thirdly, God saved us in Christ. Why, you say, before the world was? Yes. God saved us in Christ because He called us according to His purpose.

All this happened before you and I ever came into the world. The sovereignty of God. That is the eternal aspect of it.

Now look at the effectual aspect of it. Now see heaven touch earth. And the effectual aspect of this purpose is beautiful because three things are said here.

Number one, God satisfied His purpose. God satisfied His own purpose. Whom He predestinated, He also called.

And we come back to that word again, called. And Paul could remember when that happened in his life. I can remember when it happened in my life.

I was telling the folks here last night in our welcome meeting for those of you who have just joined us that I was saved at a very young age. A very, very young age indeed. I'm a kind of peculiar individual in that sense.

My father was a Devonian, an Englishman from Plymouth, Devon, born just a few yards away from where the Mayflower pushed off. He was saved under the ministry of Dr. Torrey, the great American evangelist who followed Moody. And he was called to the mission field by Fred Arnett who was used as the instrument to stir his heart for the lost in Africa.

Mother came from Blaisdell, New York. Blaisdell, New York. And worked in Buffalo with Sister Abigail.

And that little book called Little Is Much When God Is In It has the name Bessie in it. Bessie is my mother. And two people, one way out in England, the other way out in Buffalo, New York found themselves a way out in Angola.

In Angola. God works in mysterious way His wonders to perform. My mother was a little frail lady.

One day a big dog jumped on her and she went down with a bang and put her knee out of joint. And there was only one person on the field, a young man called Frederick Ernest Samuel Olford who had a clue what to do because he'd been trained at Livingstone College in England and performed operations and all manner of things without an M.D. You couldn't do anything else. And he was called and he came and he did the right manipulations and sure enough the kneecap went smack right into place again.

But he looked into that young lady's face and he saw more than a kneecap. And he reported to the senior missionaries that this knee had to be bound and massaged every day. Now in that culture you didn't court, you didn't date.

You weren't allowed to do that on the mission field. But he had to come and massage that knee every day. And that led to a wonderful marriage in three languages English, Portuguese and Achokwe.

When the first son was coming along the father was knowledgeable enough to be apprehensive about the first pregnancy and decided that a doctor, a true doctor was needed. And he planned a trip that took him a couple of months and he planned it all for my birth. And my mother was carried 1,000 miles in a hammock and my father walked 1,000 miles on foot.

They thought it was worth it. And up there at Sakeji Northern Rhodesia as it was known then a little bundle of life arrived. And they named it Stephen.

If it hadn't been Stephen it would have been Ruth. And I was carried in a little carry cart all the way back 1,000 miles. But now the rain had washed away the bridges.

The father had to go ahead in many of those rivers and fire shots into the water to frighten away the crocodiles in case this big African who carried me dropped me out as a little hors d'oeuvre before they started on the stage. And one night, one night in my little carry cart there a lion sniffed me out and with one

tremendous paw tore the whole panel of the tent out and missed me by inches before father with a yell frightened this lion away. God was intermingling all things for good before I ever knew about it.

And then came that moment I told you about last night at seven years of age when I was called and answered yes. And God's purpose in salvation in my life was satisfied. God satisfied His purpose in me.

But notice not only does He satisfy the purpose but He ratifies His purpose. He satisfied His purpose He ratified His purpose. Whom He called He also justified.

That's the ratification of the call justified. The day I said yes to Jesus Christ I was declared to be righteous in His holy presence. The day you said Jesus is my Lord and the moment you're saying it right now God from Heaven will declare you righteous and thank God once He justifies He never never never changes that.

But not only did He satisfy His purpose not only did He ratify His purpose but He finalized His purpose. God finalized His purpose. Whom He justified then He also glorified.

Will you notice it's in the past tense. God sees us already in glory. And although there is a glorification going on now we'll talk about it in just a moment He sees me already glorified.

He sees me already in Heaven. Like the old chief who listened to my father's faith he was dying. He was dying.

There was no hope. No more medication could save him. My father asked him where are you going? He said to Heaven.

He said how do you know? He said because because I've been justified. And because I've been justified I'll be glorified. How do you know that? He said I'm sure of that as if I were in Heaven already.

How do you know? How do you know that you're going to see Jesus? He said I'll recognize Him right away by the print of the nails in His hand. That's from the jungles of Africa. You can know that tonight.

His purpose satisfied. His purpose ratified. His purpose finalized.

It can be a settled issue. But my concern tonight as I close this message is to talk about the destiny of God's purpose for your life. I've led to it by the certainty of that purpose.

The alchemy of that purpose. The sovereignty of that purpose. Now the destiny of that purpose.

For whom He did foreknow them He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. And God's ultimate purpose and destiny for your life is that you might be like Jesus. You might be like Jesus.

This is what Christianity is all about. Heaven is going to be people with people that are just like Jesus. But He wants that to happen right down here and now.

And had we time to read it I would have read it before but I'm going to quote it now. This wonderful verse we're talking about tonight is linked beautifully with 2 Corinthians chapter 3 16 following. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

We all with open faith beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being changed into the same image from one degree of glory unto another by the Spirit of the Lord. By the Spirit of the Lord. And God's

destiny a purpose is that you might be conformed to the image of His Son.

The identity crisis goes when I discover that God's purpose is to make me like Jesus and to make me like Jesus is to make me worthwhile infinitely. And no longer are you going to look down on yourself and say I'm not as good as so and so I feel worthless. My life is meaningless.

It's a bubble. Nobody cares. God cares.

For Jesus died for you that He might make you just like Jesus. And the wonderful thing about it is He makes us like Jesus and yet we have our own personalities our own characteristics conformed to His image but utterly utterly different in the sense in which God never makes duplicates He only makes originals. And you are an original.

Isn't that wonderful? You say what have I got to do about that now? What's your challenge to me as you close tonight? Three things. Notice from that text in 2 Corinthians 3.18 Number one, first of all there must be attention to the Scripture. If you're going to be like Jesus if you're going to come into conformity to His image if you're going to be listen listen satisfying the purpose of God now, not only in heaven now, first of all there must be attention to the Scriptures.

We are beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. Scholars have argued for centuries as to what that mirror is. I believe that mirror is both objective and subjective.

We won't go into that now but ultimately that perfect law of liberty is the mirror of God. It's the mirror in which we see the glory of the Lord Jesus and that mirror is the Holy Bible the Holy Scripture that book you hold in your hand right now. And I want to make the first challenge of this convention on an evening that you are going to start having your daily quiet time throughout this vacation week and you are going to continue that for the rest of your life.

And tomorrow night when the book shop is open, I want you to get a copy of my little booklet, Manor in the Morning. I don't believe anybody can be like Jesus without looking into that mirror every day discovering what's wrong with your face that needs cleaning and making those adjustments and not forgetting the manner of man you were but rather, rather adjusting yourself to the will of God so that you are a doer of the word and not a hearer only. And whether you feel like it or you don't feel like it, your task is to give attention to the word of God.

Most of you believe that or you wouldn't be here tonight. You wouldn't be here tonight. Not only openness unveiled faces that pride torn away, doubt torn away, fear torn away looking right into the Scriptures and saying, I'm not going to dodge the challenge that will come from the pulpit on the church each morning and on the Christian each night I'm going to look right into that mirror and see that glory and where I see things amiss in my life I'm going to make those adjustments by not only openness but obedience.

Obedience. He who looks steadfastly into that mirror and continues therein that man being an obedient hearer will be blessed in his doing. But there's something more and we heard about it in the music.

There must be attention to the Scriptures but secondly there must be submission to the Spirit. Submission to the Spirit. For the text says, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

It could almost be paraphrased, where the Spirit is Lord. Where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty. I wonder how many of you here are bound.

Bound. You know the context of 2 Corinthians 3 is two things. Bondage and blindness.

Through legalism. Bondage and blindness. The Jews were bound and they were blind like a veil over their faces.

And this is where the gospel of the new covenant comes in through the Spirit. And when we submit to the Holy Spirit as God and sovereign, for there He's accorded both deity and sovereignty. And we allow the Holy Spirit, listen carefully, to take control.

To be the Lord, the Spirit in our lives. We are set free. We're set free.

Changed my life. That just changed my life. I wonder if some of you are bound to racism, denominationalism, legalism, traditionalism or any-ism or wasn't, whatever it is.

You are bound and you're blind. Do you know you can be set free tonight? You can be set free tonight. Paul's version in Ephesians is exactly the same thing.

Be not drunk with wine whereas it is excess. That's outward stimulation that leads to debauchery and wastefulness of life and never satisfied. Not devil intoxication but divine intoxication.

And just as you yield to a false spirit, you yield to the true spirit, the Holy Spirit. And the whole idea there is to be filled, to be controlled with the Spirit. And when you're controlled with the Spirit, and mind you it's an imperative, be filled with the Spirit.

We'll be dealing with that one of these nights. When we yield to the Holy Spirit, do you know what He does? He sets you free. For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

There is liberty. There is liberty. But notice finally there must be attention to the Scriptures.

There must be submission to the Spirit. But thirdly there must be devotion to the Saviour. We are transformed.

We are transformed from one degree of glory unto another to what? His image. Damn thine own image deep on my heart. That word transformed translated sometimes changed, translated sometimes transfigured is the word from which we get metamorphosis.

Metamorphosis. That process that goes on from the worm and the cocoon to the butterfly. That metamorphosis.

We are transformed. We are transfigured. We are changed from one degree of glory unto another.

So that glorification starts right down here. That's what we call progressive sanctification. Yesterday's glory is exceeded by today's.

And tomorrow's glory is exceeded by tonight's. And on and on it goes. And that's one of the thrills of being a pastor.

To see the faces of the congregation change Sunday after Sunday from one degree of glory unto another. Has that solved your identity crisis? Do you know who you are now? You're a precious person. Your personhood so important that Jesus died and shed His precious blood to redeem you.

And then by His Spirit to indwell you with resurrection life. And then by that same Holy Spirit and the Word of God to change you and change you and change you because you're chosen. Chosen to serve His name.

And that's going to go on and on and on and on until one day we shall be like Him. For we shall see Him as He is. I want to challenge you as I close tonight.

I want to challenge you. Have you got a purpose in your life? Will you look up into His face, Lord, thank you for the certainty of that purpose? Are you going through a very tough time right now? Do you feel everything is falling apart? Will you look up and say, Lord, you're the pharmacist, you're the chemist, you're the alchemist. I want you to take and intermingle all that's happening in my life for my good.

I believe it. I believe it. I can't see how all this is working out, but you can.

You can. Lord, I want to sense the purpose of my identity. I believe in your sovereignty.

Way above and beyond this little me. You saw me, you sought me, you saved me in an eternity past, and now it's all happening. It's all happening.

Lord, make it real to me. I lay hold of your sovereignty. I make that the very pillow for my head, the rock on which I stand.

Lord, I look up into your face tonight, and I thank you for the destiny. But you're not going to stop. You won't halt this process until I'm just like your son.

For having this confidence that you who have begun a good work will finish it until the day of Christ. Lord, I want to yield my life to you tonight, and thank you that you have a purpose for my life. And I want you to go on working.

Go on working. Take those bottles, whatever the labels. Do the mixture.

Go on working, because I'm trusting you. I'm trusting you. I'm trusting your certainty.

I'm trusting your alchemy. I'm trusting your sovereignty. I'm trusting your destiny.

And by your Spirit, do it in my life, and begin right here tonight. Amen? Let's bow together in prayer. Anything that follows in these evening sessions won't make any sense unless what I've said tonight is truly apprehended and applied.

There may be some folk who responded this morning who haven't yet publicly confessed the Lord Jesus. It may be that God has met you at a special point in this message tonight. It may be an aside I made.

It may be a direct reference of Scripture. It may be some slant of truth that you hadn't seen before. However, the Holy Spirit has applied it.

If tonight you're committing yourself to God's eternal purpose to answer this identity crisis, this identity crisis, to bring you into a certainty, into the chemistry, into the sovereignty and the destiny of God's purpose for your life, and you want to declare it gladly without any shame or sham or shrinking, we stand to sing in a moment. Each night we're going to keep the altar open for folk to come just forward and quietly stand here for the closing prayer of commitment and dedication. I want you just to come quietly and stand

here prayerfully in worship saying, Lord, I'm handing my life over to your eternal purpose.

Thank you for showing me this truth tonight. I want to lay hold of it. I want you to work it out in my life in a daily transformation.

Lord, hover over this closing moment. Have your way. Have your way in all our lives.

And like the clay in the potter's hand, Lord, we want to be still while you mold us and make us like Jesus. Make this a night of victory as we open these evening sessions. We ask it for Jesus' sake.

Amen. 328. Will you turn and...

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