

# I Was Not Disobedient to God's Purposes by James Jennings

by James Malachi Jennings

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being obedient to God's purposes and encourages listeners to re-evaluate their purposes and burdens.*

**Duration:** 1:04:20

**Scripture:** 2 Timothy 4:7

**Topics:** "Obedience To God", "Faithful Service"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being obedient to God's specific purposes for our lives, drawing insights from the examples of Paul recounting his conversion before King Agrippa, along with the lives of historical figures like Henry Martin, George Mueller, and Bak Singh. The message highlights the need to have a steadfast commitment to fulfilling God's purposes, even in the face of challenges, distractions, and the temptation to compare or seek visible results. It encourages believers to seek God's guidance, be patient, and remain faithful to the course set before them, ultimately focusing on advancing the Gospel and glorifying God.

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## Transcript

Let's go to Acts 26. If you look at v. 1, you see the context. The king Agrippa says to the apostle Paul that he has permission to speak for himself.

And he is speaking throughout this chapter. And then in v. 15, as he's recounting his conversion, let's start in v. 15. And he said to the Lord, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus Whom you are persecuting.

This is Paul recounting his conversion. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose. There's a purpose behind Paul's conversion just like there's a purpose behind all of our conversions.

Just like there's a purpose behind this church existing in every true church. I have appeared to you for this purpose. To appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen Me and to those in which I will appear to you.

Delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you. What's the mission? To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. The power of God.

That they may receive forgiveness of sin. Well, what's better than that? To have your sins forgiven. And that they may receive a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

That's the Lord speaking to Paul. And here Paul is speaking before Agrippa in v. 19 as our text this morning. And Paul says to King Agrippa, he says, therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

I was not disobedient to the Lord who saved me, who gave me a purpose. My whole life changed. The purpose, the course of my life, everything was altered.

And I've not been disobedient to that. V. 20, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, throughout all the regions of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. And Paul goes on, but we'll stop right there.

Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Paul was not disobedient to the Lord Jesus' purposes for his life. Let's pray.

Lord, that is our heart's desire as a church, as individual Christians. Lord, we are grieved when we are disobedient to You. Lord, we hate grieving the Spirit.

We hate having anything between our souls and You. Lord, we hate being distracted. Lord, we regret the hours that we've wasted on our lives for vain purposes.

Lord, we don't like it. Like the song we just sang says, we need You every hour. And Lord, You gave Paul strength to this very day before a king as he speaks right now.

And Lord, we trust You're the same and You'll keep providing us with strength that we would be obedient to Your purposes for our lives. And Lord, I just pray, would You please help right now? Help me as I deliver this message to the saints here. Lord, You make it real and alive to them.

Lord, meet with us. Be with Eric Delanoy in the prison as he's speaking to the inmates there. Be with Tim and Mac and Monterey.

Lord, we just need Your help. In Christ's name, Amen. Before King Agrippa, Paul declares he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

In other words, Paul was not disobedient to Jesus' purpose for his life and the reason for his existence. We have a reason for existing. The Lord saves Paul and tells Paul, I appeared to you for this purpose.

God is purposeful. God has vision, direction for our lives. We could be disobedient to that.

It says the Pharisees were disobedient to the purposes of God. But Paul, he was obedient to the course the Lord had him on. And one question to ask through this message, a personal application for you and I, can I say that I've not been disobedient to God's purposes? Can I say that? As a church, we've recently asked ourselves this question.

What is the purpose and cause that I should be burdened for this year? I know Jonathan mentioned that as a prayer request on Wednesday night. I know Tim brought that up two weeks ago on Wednesday night. Re-evaluating burdens, purposes for this coming year.

What we don't want to do is get to the end of next year, or even worse, get to the end of our lives and find out that we're disobedient to God's purposes. Well, that'd be bad. Or, get to the end of this next year and find out that our burdens were inconsistent with Scripture.

Or, come to see that the emphasis and focus as we put on certain purposes was wrong. And we wasted our time. Or, what we don't want to do is have no direction and we sit idle.

Spinning our wheels, as they say. As a church body, as married couples, for those of us who are married, and as individual believers, am I being faithful to the purposes of God? Am I being faithful? Am I being obedient to those purposes? Paul's life was a purpose-driven life. For many in the world, this is the case of their present lives.

They're purpose-driven, but they have the wrong purposes. It's their best life now. It's money.

It's this earth. Their main focus is not the cause of Christ. It's the things in this world that are all going to burn up in the end.

They're going down the wrong road. Maybe some of you young people here this morning, you might feel like I don't have a purpose. We're in a world where many think about suicide ending their life.

They feel like they have no reason for their existence. The Bible does not agree with that. It does not agree with that.

Colossians 1.16 says, by Christ, all things were created. That means you in heaven, on earth, visible, invisible, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities, all things were created through Christ and for Him. So you were created for Christ.

Proverbs 16 says this, the Lord has made everything for its purpose. And some people don't read the next part of that verse. God has created everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

Even the wicked have a purpose. You think about Pharaoh. Romans 9 says God had a purpose for Pharaoh that Christ's name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

A lost man. And yet, God had a purpose that His name would be proclaimed for this vessel. If you don't repent and come to Christ, if you don't believe the claims of Jesus Christ, if you don't turn from darkness to light as a lost vessel of wrath, you will serve to proclaim God's greatness, the greatness of His justice and holiness through your condemnation in hell.

I don't want that for anyone. I want you to live out an existence by which you proclaim the mercies of the Lord. Think of it.

Paul, just like that. Saved. His purpose, his direction entirely changed.

That can be the same for you here if you don't know the Lord. You can turn to Him today. Now what was this heavenly vision in Paul's purpose? We read the way Paul describes it here in verses 15 and 16.

We just read that. To be a servant, a witness, to open the eyes of the blind. He had a purpose that people might receive forgiveness of sins.

Yes, actually have all your sins forgiven. We hear that too often. It doesn't hit us with this magnitude of how incredible that is.

But in Acts 9, flip over there briefly. Right before, or as the Lord has saved Paul, the Lord tells Ananias in v. 15, He tells him, go to Paul. Why? Paul is a chosen instrument of Mine to carry My name before the Gentiles and Kings and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My name. And as you go through Acts, you know what you find? Paul, he went before the Jews. Jews were converted.

And many Jews hated his guts and wanted him killed. You find Paul, he turned to the Gentiles. And you know what happened? Gentiles got converted.

Even some Greek women in high standing were saved. They believed the claims of Christ that Paul was proclaiming. And it's said there, he'd go before who? Gentiles, Jews, and what was the third thing mentioned in Acts 9? Kings.

And here he is before King Agrippa. The Lord said you'd end up before Kings and Paul is there right now. And he is declaring before King Agrippa boldly that he has not been disobedient to God's purposes and call on his life.

It's glorious. And Paul is not a superhuman. Paul is empowered by the same Holy Spirit that we have strengthening us in our own lives.

Now, Paul had a command from Christ. A command from the highest authority. The Lord Jesus Christ.

The One who created Him. Paul had a command from Him. The One who showed Him infinite mercy.

And the Lord gave Him the most important mission. A mission that in some way we are all a part of. A mission of taking forth the good news of the death, burial, resurrection, ascension of Jesus Christ that men can have their sins forgiven.

Look at what he says at the end of verse 18. Verse 18 and chapter 26. That the Gentiles, the lost world, may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

You know what the world fights for? They fight for a place in this world's systems. They fight for equality. They fight for all sorts of things in this world.

You know what Paul did? He wasn't fighting for that in this world. Paul was fighting for those who did not have a place of those who are set apart in Christ for them to have that and to have the forgiveness of their sins. There's no greater good news that I can bring to anyone in the world than that message of the Gospel that their sins can be forgiven.

They can be saved from hell. The world, they fight for places in society. The Christian, we fight.

Ultimately, in the ultimate sense, the ultimate mission, we're fighting for people to have a place among those who have faith in Christ. Now, believer, every one of us is chosen. We've seen that clearly as Tim

has gone through Ephesians.

And every one of us is an instrument of God's. Not the same exact instrument as Paul, but we have our purposes too. Every one of us.

We've got a purpose. If you're a Christian, you've got a purpose. God did not randomly save you and then think, well, what am I going to do? Ephesians 2.10, we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works that God came up with at the moment He saved us? No.

Which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. You have good works that you were created to accomplish. Are you accomplishing those good works? Is your 2018 going to be about accomplishing those good works and those purposes that God has given? Paul said in Titus 2.14 that Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are what? Zealous for good works.

The whole people group of Christians the Lord Jesus gave Himself to make all of us zealously focused for good works. We're all instruments in God's hands. Different purposes, no doubt, but not different purposes in the broader purpose of advancing the Gospel, of glorifying the Lord.

We all have different spiritual gifts and abilities that lead us to have specific callings and good works to do. Paul said in Romans 12, for as in one body, we have many members. And many members do not all have the same function.

All of us are not going to function in the same way. But, our works and purpose will center around the same broad purpose. Defending, advancing the Gospel to the glory of God.

I just went through the letter of Philippians these last couple of years. And you know what kept coming up? This church was about one thing. One main thing.

That didn't mean there weren't side things, but there was a one main thing. Advancing the Gospel. Defending the Gospel.

Maintaining unity in the church in order to keep going side by side together for the faith of the Gospel. And Paul said to the Philippians, only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel. Paul said strive side by side for the faith of the Gospel.

That's why we're here. That's why we're side by side together. We've got a purpose.

To advance this good news that men and women can have their sins forgiven and have a place in Christ. Paul was all about pleasing Christ. Romans 15-20, he said, I make it my ambition to preach the Gospel.

2 Corinthians 5-9 Whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. And in Philippians 3-17, Paul, he calls us to imitate Him. To look out among ourselves and see those who have the example we find in Him and imitate the faith.

So Paul had an aim. Paul had a life's ambition that centered around Christ and was about the Gospel's advance. That is our central burden as a church, is it not? Isn't that our burden? To keep advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul said in Acts 20-24, he said, but I don't account my life of any value. It is not precious to myself except one thing. I complete the ministry I receive from the Lord Jesus Christ that is to testify of the Gospel of the grace of God.

And if our purpose as a church in any way, we come up with any type of burden that is not ultimately centrally focused and based upon advancing the Gospel, we're going to get to a point where our own lives and our own church will be of no value if we lose focus. The message has not changed over all of these years. The means will change.

We went from newspaper ads to Facebook ads trying to get the Gospel out. You might change the night you go evangelize. You might change the country that you're in from India to Nepal.

We might change as a church the ministries we have like a crisis pregnancy center that give us an open door for the Gospel. Who knows? Maybe more ministries will come out. But the goal is we want to give the Gospel.

The region may change. Who we support may change at this next financial meeting. But it's not going to change that we're supporting people who have a burden to live and lay down their lives for Christ in advancing His Gospel.

Whether it's through teaching a child one-on-one or taking women into the Grace House from prison, there's a goal behind all of it. And it's to advance the Gospel of Christ. It's to see people have their sins forgiven.

I look at all the people we took into the men's Grace House. How many were ultimately saved? Maybe a few. That's the main goal.

It's not housing them, though that's part of it. In Acts 13, Paul says this. He says John was finishing his course.

Are we on course? Are you on course? Or are you sitting down? Or are you on the wrong course? Jesus said in regards to the hour of His turn in Mark 13, He said it's like a man going on a journey. When he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work. Each one of us has his work and the things and the purposes of God that we should be doing that are all behind this main central focus of advancing the Gospel, glorifying God.

People fall asleep. They're not each doing their work. Jesus said in John 9, we must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day.

Night is coming when no one can work. You realize, there's going to get to a point you can't work anymore. We've got to be working now.

Acts 13. It's said of David, after he had served the purposes of God in his own generation, he fell asleep and was laid with his fathers. There's going to be a day where every one of us, we're going to fulfill the purposes of God in our generation, or we're going to be disobedient like the Pharisees to the purposes of God.

And you could say, well, wait, but now wasn't their ultimate purpose to glorify God through His wrath? You don't want to have a fatalistic mindset like that. David served the purpose of God in his own generation,

and then he fell asleep. So, my desire this morning as kind of an introduction is that we would not be disobedient to the purposes of God for our generation.

Our whole lives, obviously, but this next year. Because as we think about what burdens we have, and I was thinking about that these last couple of days. It's not so much, yes, what burdens I have, but are my burdens in accordance with the main burden of the Bible? I have to check everything by that.

And, where am I maybe being disobedient to God? I want to know that. I want to see that. And turn from that and be obedient to the Lord.

So I have ten brief points on ways that you or Paul could have been disobedient. In every one of these, we could reverse, and it would be a way that you could be obedient. So this is one way that you could fall into disobedience to God's purpose.

But at the same time, it's positive you want to be doing that. Let's pray again for the Lord's help. Father, we need Your help.

Lord, I need Your help. Lord, strengthen us right now. Lord, help me.

Help this to be real. Lord, free me up. I just ask this humbly.

Lord, I'm nothing. You're everything. Give strength in Christ's name, Amen.

So, the first way, let's think about Paul for a moment in this text. What ways could Paul have been disobedient? First point is this, Paul could have been disobedient by declaring the wrong message. He could have toned down the truth.

That's the first thing he could have done. But he doesn't. Look at v. 20.

Paul says he proclaimed that they should repent and turn to God. And look at the next phrase. Performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

A lot of churches leave that out. If your message of the Gospel is that someone is converted and they're not going to perform deeds in keeping with their repentance, they're going to be the same they always were, you've got the wrong message, you're disobedient to the purposes of God. True conversion is not just the legal aspect of being justified, it's the internal aspect of being regenerated.

Made into a new creature. Where deeds will now be natural to me as a new creature in Christ. Paul, he added that on.

He didn't care if people were going to accuse him of teaching a work salvation. He wanted to preach the truth that God does a work at salvation and that's the work of regeneration. It totally changes the course of our life.

It took Paul, someone trying to kill Christians, to someone loving the Christians and preaching Christ. That's the radical power of conversion. Paul could have been disobedient by declaring the wrong message.

He could have done this. He could have not preached to both Jews and Gentiles, but just went to the Jews. The heavenly vision was to King.

He could have been a coward and not done that, right? Forget going before Agrippa. I might lose my head. The Jews, well, that might kind of be easy.

They're my own people. But to the Gentile dogs? As the Bible calls them? I've got to take the truth to the Gentiles? I'll go to Kings and I'll go to Jews. I'm not going to go to the Gentiles.

No, Paul didn't do that. He easily could have been disobedient due to ethnic preference. But he wasn't.

It's amazing. Paul, prior to conversion, was all about being a Jew. And now he's taking the very message to the Gentiles and telling them about the hope of Christ.

And you know what? One of the things that made Paul be the most hated was the fact that it was to the Gentiles. Look at our text, verse 23 of Acts. He's right here before Agrippa saying Christ must suffer, and that by being the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light to both our people and to the Gentiles, and then he gets cut off.

Verse 24, and he was saying these things in his defense. Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you're out of your mind. Just one thing for God's chosen people, the Jews, to have His hope of salvation.

But Paul, you're saying the Gentiles. Constantly, things were going well in his sermons, and he mentions Gentiles being saved and all the Jews wanted to kill them. Paul could have been disobedient to the heavenly vision.

He could have had ethnic preference and just focused on the Jews. He didn't do that. He was obedient to the heavenly vision.

Another way he could have been disobedient in proclaiming the wrong message, he could have focused on non-essential issues. That could have been the big thing he was talking about. Look at v. 3 of this chapter 26 as you turn the page.

One of the reasons he was glad he was before Agrippa is he says that because of all these accusations of the Jews, v. 3, especially because you're familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. So there were all sorts of controversies of the Jews. And isn't it interesting? That was not Paul's focus.

He saw there's something bigger here. Yes, I'm going to have to deal with certain things in certain places, but that's not going to be the goal, the course of my ministry. This is the Paul who said in Titus 3.9 to avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Wait, no talk about genealogies? They were so important in the Old Testament. Why? Guess what? It doesn't matter now what genealogy you're with. What matters is are you in Christ? That's what matters.

Who cares what genealogy? Are you positionally in Jesus Christ? And is He your legal representative before God's courtroom? Because if not, you're going to be condemned to hell for all of eternity. But if He is, you will have everlasting pleasure at the right hand of the throne of God in Christ as a co-heir. Paul, he could have been disobedient with the wrong message by not using the Bible because it's offensive.

Look at v. 22. To this day, I have help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and to great, saying nothing but what? But what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass. Paul went out there using what Scriptures he had and that was where he had the authority.

Many people, they're disobedient to God because they put down this, they bring up their own opinions, their own thoughts, and they leave the standard. So, we too must proclaim the right message. If we miss it in the message, we're going to be disobedient to God's purposes.

If we lower what your conversion is, if we focus on the non-essentials, if we don't use our Bible, if we show ethnic preference, all of those things, we're going to miss it. We're going to miss it. So, second way that we could be disobedient to the heavenly purposes of God in our lives is this.

Paul could have been disobedient by giving in to fear and being a coward. Shortly after conversion, he's just saved. And you know what happens? The Jews plotted to kill him.

I mean, you just get saved. People are already plotting to kill you. If you had any temptation to turn back, there it is.

And even here, again, v. 21, this reason the Jews seized me in the temple? They tried to kill me. Jews have tried to kill him. Acts 15 describes Paul and Barnabas as men who risked their lives.

They risked their lives for what? For the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He's carrying the truth of the name of Christ, the Messiah. He's told here he deserves death or imprisonment.

We just read earlier what Festus said to him. V. 24, Paul, you're out of your mind. You're crazy.

You're crazy. You've lost your mind. You're too obsessed with Christ.

You're too obsessed that Gentiles can be saved. And Paul could have shrunk back in fear. I can't handle people telling me I'm out of my mind.

I better change things. I better not be as offensive. Paul didn't do that.

Who else did people say was out of his mind? And who said Jesus was out of his mind? His own family. And Mark 3, his own mother went to seize him because she thought he was out of his mind. So they thought Jesus was out of his mind.

They thought Paul was out of his mind. They'll probably do the same for us. Paul wasn't disobedient.

He didn't give in to fear. He didn't become a coward. They insulted him in Acts 17 and called him a babbler.

But Paul boldly declared Christ. You know, you too could let fear cause you to not go forward. I was reading a biography of Hal Harris and he wrote this.

It says, this time, Harris was violently opposed. And he felt deep remorse later at what he considered to be his cowardice in the course of his heavenly duty. I mean, look, you think of soldiers who do mutiny or they retreat in fear and their comrades die.

They feel ashamed. As a Christian, we should feel shame for retreating in fear like Peter did and denying Christ. Yet, we must not despair.

We must rise again. Is there anything that you have a continual burden and impression that's according to the Word of God to go and do something and you're not doing it? Because of fear. Because of being a coward.

You have that burden. It crosses your mind. It crosses your conscience.

You've tested it with the Word and you're not doing it. You're being disobedient to God's purpose. So, those are two things from Paul right here.

Now, I want to think broader. What from Scripture as a whole, while trying to advance the Gospel, that's the main thing. As I'm doing that, what are some specific things that might cause me to be disobedient? So we just look at we get the message wrong or we could be in fear.

That's one and two. Third thing that could make us be disobedient to God's purpose. We could be disobedient by thinking a subjective supernatural experience like Paul's is what we need in order to know what to do with our lives.

The Bible does not give Paul's experience as something normative that we should feel like I've got to have that to know what to do. I love Mason Vann years ago. He did a sermon on God's will for young people.

You know, young people are asking, Lord, what's Your will for my life? And he went to 1 Thessalonians 4.3. For this is the will of God. You ready for it? Abstain from sexual morality. Be pure.

Their God's will is for young people. Their God's will is for every Christian. Be holy.

Be a vessel fit for the Master's use. Jesus runs into this man. He's running around the graveyard naked cutting himself with rocks.

This man gets converted. And what does Jesus do? Coddle him and hold him near? And say, you better not leave us because you were so demonically possessed before. No, Jesus says to that man, go home.

Tell your friends. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you. You don't need a heavenly vision to know that if you've been cured and forgiven of your sins, go tell others about it.

Namely, your family. I'm assuming if you're a Christian, your family knows you're a Christian. If they don't, then is Christ really worth it if you're unwilling to talk of Him? Jim Elliott said, I may no longer depend on pleasant impulses to bring me before the Lord.

I must rather respond to principles I know to be right, whether I feel them to be enjoyable or not. Don't wait for an impulse. There are enough clear commands in the Bible for you to go obey.

A fourth way that we could be disobedient to God's purposes is by listening to a bad counselor or a false teacher. Some have a clear direction from the Lord. They're going on that path.

And then, they get non-clear words coming from them. From false prophets, bad immature counselors, people who are going to show them a bias. Fill in the blank.

I thought about 1 Kings 13. The old prophet. He said to the other prophet who just went and did God's purpose that he had from the Lord.

And he goes to him and he says, I'm also a prophet as you are. And an angel spoke to me by the Word of the Lord. He said an angel spoke to him.

But 1 Kings 13 verse 18 goes on and it says that prophet lied to him. That old prophet lied. The other prophet is reproved.

You've not kept the command that the Lord your God had commanded you. And what happened? To that prophet, and sorry if you didn't follow that, basically, the one prophet had a purpose. He went and fulfilled it.

And as he's leaving, he's told not to eat, not to drink, not to stop. This old prophet gets word of him being there. He goes to him and he says, hey, come to my house and eat.

And he says, no, no, I can't do that. The Lord told me to go in this direction. But you know what happened? The old prophet then said, well, an angel of the Lord spoke to me.

And then he let that override the clear purpose of God. And he went there, ate at the person's house. And if you think disobedience is a light thing, this will change your mind about it.

As he went on the road, a lion met him and killed him. Wait, but I thought he said an angel spoke. We've got responsibility to test these things out.

Make sure they're proven. Make sure God's really guiding us. It's not enough to say an angel spoke because the devil disguises himself as an angel of light.

You might be being deceived by the devil. So, we could miss God's purposes through bad counsel, false teachers, even old people, old prophets, who maybe used to be good prophets. We might miss it if we're running in a direction that is opposed to the abundance of wise counselors.

Or all those wise counselors might be wrong. Which one is it? Point five. The fifth way we could be disobedient to God's purposes.

We could wrongly expect God's purposes to be more grand for our life. More grand. And then we're discontent, disfocused, wrongly focused on the wrong things.

Because we've got this idea, the Lord's going to make me the next Paul Washer. Or the Lord's going to do this and the Lord's going to do that. I thought about Dorcas.

You guys know who Dorcas is in Acts 9? Now, there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which translated means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. What good works did the Lord create her to walk in? We don't have to figure that out.

What did the people think about her? When she died and they stood around her, what did the saints say? They said all the widows stood besides weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made while she was alive with them. Isn't that interesting? This lady, they're around here. They're remembering the good works she's done.

And what was it? Tunics and garments? That can be a big deal in God's kingdom where people actually appreciate the fact I made them a garment? You better believe it. Even Paul, he knew this. 2 Timothy 4.13, he said, when you come, bring what? The cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas and the books.

God's purpose may be to be a printer. And above all, the parchments. See, one preaches to the kings and Nero like Paul, and the other makes a garment to clothe Paul so in the prison, he doesn't freeze and he's

able to study and be alive and go before the king.

So Dorcas was not disobedient to God's purposes. She was full of good works. And obviously, when she's making garments, and she did it in charity and love, she was doing this out of love with an ultimate purpose of advancing the Gospel.

We don't go out there and just make clothes for no reason. When we had this clothes thing here a couple of years ago during the winter, were we just coming in and everyone get clothes? And then go out the door? What were we doing? We wanted to advance the Gospel. Give them clothes.

Meet a need. But the biggest need is their sins being forgiven. Turning from darkness to light.

That's the goal. So Dorcas, wow, that wasn't too grand. Maybe me not being disobedient to the heavenly purpose is making garments and having open doors through that way.

Like the girls in India were doing, making garments. Different conversations happen. It's not small in God's eyes.

Another thing under this point, I was thinking about wives and their grand purpose. Titus 2 says that by the wife being self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, what happens as she does that? Every woman has this memorized, right? Yeah, the Word of God is not blasphemed. The ESV says reviled.

It's the same word as blaspheme. Wait a minute, you mean for my wife to be submissive, self-controlled in how she uses Facebook? To not go house-to-house running her mouth on the Internet? To be pure in the pictures she puts up of herself? Be pure in heart? Pure all over? To be working at home? You mean there's a purpose behind that? If she does those things, it makes there not be an opportunity for God's Word to be blasphemed? That means if she doesn't do those things, there's an opportunity for God's Word to be reviled, to be blasphemed. Now, you may say, what's the big deal there? Look at Acts 26.11. What did Paul do when he was lost? I punish them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme.

Same word. Paul wanted people to blaspheme. One way that you and I can blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ, it's not in our words.

It's by our life being contrary to what is written in the Scriptures. And people look at us and say, look at that hypocrite. I knew Jesus Christ wasn't real.

Look at that behavior. So my wife, by her behavior, can not negatively give opportunity for God's Word to be reviled, but can positively give reason for God's Word to be affirmed, believed, and seen as true. That's not a small thing.

You women have a big purpose. Your life can lead to the blaspheming of the Lord's Word, to the doubting of His truth, to all of us looking like a bunch of hypocrites. May it not be so.

Even the disabled. You're thinking of grand purposes. Dorcas had a grand purpose because she fulfilled God's purpose.

The wives have a grand purpose as they fulfill God's clear purposes. Even the disabled. John 9, His disciples asked Him, who sinned? This man or his parents? Jesus said it was not that this man sinned or

his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Whether you're blind, crippled, deaf, mute, cerebral, palsy, God has a purpose. I was reading about Tyson Sneedeker. Him and his twin brother were born at around three years of age.

They started to wobble. Took him to a neurologist. They ended up having this totally just a disease.

They couldn't figure out what it was. They just became paralyzed and crippled and in wheelchairs. At 15, his one brother died.

And Tyson looked at his twin brother in his casket, the same arm as him, the same body as him, and there he was dead. And the Lord saved this guy Tyson. And I ran into him on some Bible training site on the Internet.

He's studying the Bible online. Wanting to be a missionary. A missionary.

That might be God's purpose. Probably is. Seems pretty consistent with the Word in advancing the Gospel.

Lastly, on this point, the prophetess Anna. After seven years of marriage, she was a widow. It's got to be hard.

And then she lived to be 84. Luke 2 says, she did not depart from the temple worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. Maybe God's heavenly purpose for you is to give yourself to prayer and fasting and holding the rope for those who are on the missions field.

So my sixth way that we could be disobedient to God's purposes is this. We could disobey God's purpose by being distracted with others' purposes and jealous that it is not our own. John 21, when Peter saw John, he said to Jesus, Lord, what about this man? Jesus said to him, if it's my will, you see, it's all about God's will, not yours.

If it's my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? What does that matter to you, Peter? You follow me. You could totally miss God's purposes by looking at everyone and feeling jealous. God forbid.

You will miss God's purposes if you're motivated by selfish ambition and pride and vain glory. Even the Lord said, Paul, I'm making you a servant. We're all here to serve each other.

You might be doing something, but not the something that the Lord intended. The seventh way that we could disobey is by believing we always must see visible results. And because we're not seeing visible results, we say, well, this must not be the Lord's doing.

I better go find something else to pour my energy into. Brethren, as one said of Prophet Jeremiah, he preached for 40 years, and not once did he see any real success in changing or softening the hearts and minds of his stubborn, idolatrous people. He was speaking to a brick wall.

Look, the Lord's purpose may be for you to go speak to a brick wall and proclaim the Lord's purpose, but that glorifies Him even in the midst of their rejection and hardness of heart. And I know I've mentioned this before, but I'll never forget Dan, who's now over there in the Middle East. He had bought a bus, an old mini-school bus, and they were going to put verses on it and drive it around Corpus and pick people up and give them rides and have an opportunity for the Gospel.

And I made this comment to Dan. I said, Dan, boy, that is worth it. Even if one person gets saved.

And Dan said, wrong. It's worth it whether anyone gets saved because God told me to do it. It doesn't matter if one person gets saved ultimately.

If God told you to do it, do it in faith. You might not see visible results. You might see nothing in your lifetime like that YouTube video about the man in Sydney, Australia who handed out all of these tracts.

And then at his funeral, all these people who ended up getting saved from tracts. He didn't know about most of that. God wants our obedience far more than some little results we think we can put before Him.

Because who knows what, those results on judgment day, when they get put before Him, they might go poof and be burned up. So we better be slow to think we've got something special. An eighth way we could be disobedient is by having a lack of love for the people we're called to serve, and therefore, we try to run from serving them.

And who did that? Jonah. Jonah despised the mercy of God that God was going to show to Nineveh. And he ran.

Took getting eaten by a fish. Being down there for a period. Being spit out.

And finally, he went and preached to them and even there, he still wasn't happy afterwards. I could be disobedient to God's purpose because I don't want to do that purpose because I have a lack of love for those people. Paul did not do that.

He didn't go, well, but they're Gentiles. Let me really just focus on the Jews. He went before the Gentile dogs and preached the riches of Jesus Christ.

That is incredible. That was so offensive the Jews wanted to kill them. A ninth way we could be disobedient.

Some disobey by having a lack of patience on waiting for God's purposes to come about. So they forced something. Think about Joseph.

For years, it could be discouraging while he's in prison, while he was in the pit. But eventually, the Lord rose him up to power and had a purpose that many people should be kept alive. Joseph could have got so discouraged there, but God had a purpose.

Abraham, in a negative way, he went into Hagar rather than waiting for Sarah to bear a son in her 90's. There was disobedience there. There are consequences for disobedience.

We can't just chalk it all up to the sovereignty of God. Some are presently having little visible fruit due to being pruned. Be patient.

God prunes you that you might bear more fruit. You know what? You've got to be patient. And you've got to be patiently waiting on the Lord.

You can know you're disobedient to God's purposes if you're not living a life of prayer, submitting every day to the Lord, saying, Lord, Your kingdom come. Your will be done. It's not my will.

What do You want me to do? And tently, some disobey by not being steadfast in finishing the course God has given us to run. They make it halfway and quit. That better not be us.

Acts 11, when he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, he exhorted them all, remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose. Colossians 4.17, say to Archippus, see that you fulfill the ministry that you have received from the Lord. Fulfill it.

See it through. Get to the end. 2 Chronicles 29.11 My sons, do not be negligent.

For the Lord has chosen you to stand in His presence to minister to Him. They had a purpose to minister. He said don't be negligent.

Don't be negligent. Don't be distracted. Don't be spinning your wheels.

Don't waste your energy. You get one life to live. Joshua 11, just as the Lord had commanded Moses, His servants of Moses commanded Joshua.

And so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses. I don't want to leave anything undone of the works that I was created, saved and created to go and do with my life that God prepared beforehand.

I don't want to leave anything undone. I'll tell my kids sometimes to do something and I go in the room and something's undone. I remind them, finish that.

Maybe the Lord does that with us in a way. He comes in and it's like, well, you've got one more thing to do. You should have done that.

And He lets you do it. And then you finish your purpose for this generation and He takes you. I don't understand all the sovereignty of God, but I don't want to leave everything undone.

I don't want to be negligent. It's a grief to a parent when your kids are negligent. They put it off.

Wash the dishes. They didn't do it. Two hours later, the dishes are undone.

Negligence. Imagine, if that hurts me as a parent and I feel disrespected, what about God? Don't be disobedient. Well, those were the ten ways as I thought about the Scriptures.

Ten ways that you and I could be disobedient. And those are ten ways we need to be obedient. We need to be steadfast.

We need to not be distracted looking around at all others. We need to not be jealous. We need to be patient.

We need to be prayerful. We need to have the right message. You know what will happen as you obey God's purposes? Look at v. 22.

This is incredible. We were singing that song. Every hour I need you.

Look what this says. Paul said, to this day, I have had the help that comes from God. And so I stand here testifying.

You know why he stood there testifying? Because he got there in his own strength wrong. Because he had help from God to this day. I and you will have help every day.

If you submit yourself to the Lord, He's going to give you the power. You'll always have strength through Christ Who strengthens you. To this day, I've had help.

And it's like, yes! I'm seeking to live for the heavenly kingdom. There's help. God helps me.

He doesn't abandon the righteous. You know, one thing we have to remember is this. Paul says, I was not disobedient.

Who had to go out and obey? Paul. Paul didn't just chalk it up to the sovereignty of God and say Lord's a thing. He says, I was not disobedient.

Did he obey in the power of God? You better believe it. You know one thing this text testifies to? The text testifies to the fact that I don't have to sin and be disobedient to God's purposes. You know why it testifies to that? Because here is Paul saying he was not disobedient to God's purposes.

And that's the Paul who had help from the same God that is willing and able to help you every single day as you seek to live for His purposes and advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This verse testifies of God's sustaining power for the believer's life. That I should be able to say I was not disobedient.

If you have any idea that well, maybe it's just not going to happen. Maybe I'm going to end up being all sorts of disobedient. No.

Believe God. He will help. His grace is sufficient.

You should even have enough personal assurance that you're in God's will that in a non-arrogant way like Paul, you can say I was not disobedient to God's purposes. There's some assurance there. Paul knew he was on the right track.

My fear is we can get off the right track. The wrong focus is. I know in my own life that's happened at times.

Well, in conclusion, I want to go through three quick people. First, Henry Martin. These are men outside of the Bible.

Henry Martin was raised up of God for the purpose to translate the New Testament into Persian. As one said of him, I know no parallel to these achievements of Henry Martin, the born translator. He masters grammar, observes idioms, accumulates vocabulary, reads and listens, corrects and even reconstructs.

Above all, he prays. He lives in the Spirit, rises from his knees full of the mind of the Spirit. And he was obedient no matter the cost.

Martin was deeply in love with a woman he hoped to marry. Her name was Lydia. And he wrote this to a letter to her.

He said this, Never will you cease to be dear to me. Still, the glory of God and the salvation of immortal souls is an object for which I can part with you. He was willing to part for one reason.

There's a greater purpose. And he served God's purposes in his generation. After he completed the New Testament into Persian, while on a journey back to Britain all alone in Turkey at 31 years of age, he died of tuberculosis.

Shortly before his death, he said, My soul rests in Him who is an anchor of the soul. Sure and steadfast, which though not seen, keeps me fast. He was obedient to God's purposes.

A few years later, George Mueller was saved. So we have a Bible translator and now we have an orphanage person. Again, translate the Bible to advance the Gospel.

Have orphans? Why? Why did George Mueller take care of kids? Because he's able to give them the Gospel as he's doing that. Yes, meet these other needs, but the main need, forgiveness of sins. Before his death at 92 years of age, he cared for over 10,000 orphans.

And he said this, My business is with all my might to serve my own generation. And so I shall best serve the next generation should the Lord Jesus tarry. The longer I live, the more I am enabled to realize that I have but one life to live on earth.

And this one life is but a brief life for sowing in comparison with eternity for reaping. And George Mueller, 92 years old, wasn't disobedient to God's purposes for his life. Five years after Mueller's death, an Indian boy named Bak Singh was born.

As he grew up, he tore up a Bible. And like Paul, he was strongly opposed to Christianity. But God saved him in 1929.

As a Christian, after a time of prayer and fasting early on, seeking God's guidance, deep in his heart, it is said, he knew what the Lord wanted him to do. And he went to prayer knowing he must settle it once and for all. He told the Lord that he was ready to do whatever was required of him.

Are you willing to do whatever's required of you? Even if it should cause all my friends to become enemies and all these open doors of opportunity to close. He was speaking to large congregations. And I am no longer invited anywhere for meetings and I am misunderstood and reviled on every side.

I am ready at any price to do Thy will. Only give me the assurance Thou art leading me. And he was a church planter.

He saw all the problems at the Indian church and he raised up churches that he believed were modeled after the Bible. That was the purpose. And it cost him.

But he was ready at any price to do Thy will. This is a brother Charles Leiter met and Waeler Zupke I know went over there and preached at one of their conferences back in the day. He did this for over 50 years.

He died in the year 2000 at 97 years of age. Over 250,000 people attended his funeral, it is estimated. And I was reading his biography by Daniel Smith, and I googled him.

And as I googled him, I saw his casket. I saw the crowds, all the people, and there was Boxing's casket on the ground. This wood casket.

It had a verse on one side, a verse on the other side, and it had stuff on the top. I couldn't read it. But you know what was on that one side of that box? Acts 26, 19.

I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. And you know what was on the other side? I finished my course. And I'll tell you, I saw that picture and that verse hit me to the heart.

I wanted to get to the end and be able to have that plastered on my casket. That I was not disobedient to God's specific purposes for my life that are going to be in the broad purpose of advancing the Gospel, whether it is through clothing ministry like Dorcas, whether it's through women at home who are not given an opportunity for the Word of God to be reviled, whether it's being on the missions field, whatever it might be. Boxing.

Ninety-seven years of age. Died. I fought the good fight.

I finished my course. I've kept the faith. Look, we're seeing people fall away.

We've seen it. It's going to keep happening. The wheat and the tares grow together.

But I'll tell you, we need to keep our eyes fixed on Christ. We need to keep our eyes fixed on the purposes and the burdens that we find in that ultimate purpose and burden as you find through Philippians. It's to advance, defend, preach Christ and Him crucified.

What matters more than the souls of men being saved and God getting glory as He saves the people from His own possession? That's why we're a mission-minded church because the Lord has given us a mission. And we're seeking to accomplish that mission and see people saved. And how are they going to hear unless someone goes? And how are we going to support people to go unless people are here supporting? And how are they going to stay warm unless we have people making sweaters? And Anna who's single, and a widow praying night and day and fasting.

You see all these pieces together. They're different functions. And it's the same God giving strength to each of us day by day to fulfill His purposes.

If anything in this next year, I hope we'll all the more be zealous for the purposes of God. Talk to different churches. How's your evangelism going? Well, not much evangelism.

Do we get married? Do we have kids? Is there a different place and time and different purposes and different places we should put our energy? But we should all go before God like Bach's scene said and say, Lord, I'm ready at any price to do Thy will. If that means cutting off this right hand, if that means this, if that means that, getting rid of anything that gets in the way of me fulfilling Your purpose for my life. And that's not the prosperity Gospel.

You know, the purpose-driven life. You better have a purpose. You better be driven with the love for Christ and for His glory and souls being saved.

You better recognize God saved you. He gave you works that you should walk in. And He's going to give you the strength.

And so if you submit yourself to Him with a willing heart, He'll give you direction. Whether it's through the abundance of counselors, through a clear Scripture verse, whether it is maybe some subjective thing, though you better test that thing heavily. If you say, Lord, I'll do Your will at whatever the cost, He will.

He will guide you. So brethren, we've got to finish the course. We've got to not be disobedient to God's specific purposes for our life even if we're going to suffer severely as Paul did.

He did not turn back. Let's pray. Father, Lord, I don't account my life of any value.

Lord, I say that. What if I do? Lord, Paul said, except that I finish the course and the ministry. So Lord, our lives are of value.

There is a purpose. And it's to do one thing. To go on that course.

To advance your Gospel. To proclaim the love of Jesus Christ for lost sinners. Lord, help us to not value anything else with the significance that that one thing has.

Lord, I pray You would all the more put a fire in our hearts and a zeal in this coming year to be zealous for good works. Oh Lord, there's so much we could do by Your power. I pray You'd guide us.

Lord, help us to be unified as we are that we might be side by side together for the faith of the Gospel. Lord, it is our eager expectation and hope this morning that we will not all be ashamed, but with full courage now as always, You will be honored in our bodies whether by life or by death for us to live for You and to die as gain. And Lord, we have determined to know nothing among anything except for Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

That's our goal. That's our purpose. Lord, glorify Yourself through our lives.

We're ready at any price. Whatever it is required of us, Lord, we want to do Thy will and we trust You'll give us help to this day and the next day for us to fulfill the purposes that You've given. We commit all of this to You and ask for Christ's help in Christ's name, Amen.

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