



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 9:20-31

"The Emergence of the Life Purpose"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege again of studying the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. We thank Thee for this great man, made great by the power of God the Holy Spirit. And we thank Thee for the influence that he has had in the spread of the gospel even to the United States of America. And we are grateful, Lord, for the blessing that is ours by virtue of that which Thou hast done in him. We remember, too, that he said, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." And we recognize that that is the source of whatever blessing we may enjoy. And we give Thee thanks. We express our gratitude to Thee for Jesus Christ. May, Lord, our understanding of what Thou hast done for us increase. And may, as a result, our appreciation of that grace grow.

We pray, too, that Thou will fit us for more effective ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that this hour may contribute to that end. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are continuing our study of the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. And our subject is "The Emergence of the Life Purpose." We have been following Paul both in his pre-conversion experiences, his pre-conversion life. And then we looked at his conversion. And last week we looked at some of the things that

happened after his conversion, and particularly his encounter with Ananias. And then the references in the word of God to his journey into Arabia, and the time that he spent there, evidently in coming into a deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He left, as someone as aid, the city of Jerusalem with Moses, the Psalms and the prophets in his knapsack, but returned with Romans, 1 Corinthians and the rest of the truth of the New Testament in his heart.

In Arabia, the Bible says he did not confer with flesh and blood. And commentators have often said that undoubtedly the reason that the apostle went into Arabia was that he might have time for communion with the Lord. And it certainly makes sense. On the other hand, it's not impossible that the apostle went into Arabia in order to give testimony to the gospel of the grace of God. Men used to make fun of that, because it used to be thought that that part of the country had very few people. And so the idea of the apostle rushing off into a foreign missionary field where there were no people seemed to be a rather senseless kind of thing. But we do know that people were there, and it's entirely possible that the apostle went there for that purpose.

But at any rate, no doubt, one of the things that transpired in the apostle's mind after his conversion and after his baptism, was the endeavor to harmonize the things that he had been taught at the feet of Gamaliel all through his adult experience as Jewish leader with the things that he was beginning to understand by virtue of the encounter with the Lord on the Damascus Road. And I think last week we made reference to the fact that what he, no doubt, was trying to do, was trying to harmonize the Old Testament Scriptures with the New Testament truth, the historical truth concerning Jesus of Nazareth. What he was doing was really trying to find Christ in the Old Testament, and justify finding Christ in the Old Testament.

Now, we finished at verse 19 of chapter 9 where Luke's writes, "And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus." Now, later on in the Book of Acts, Paul before Agrippa says that he

was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. And one finds an illustration of it here, because we read, "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God." Now, that's a very interesting thing, because this is, I think, the only reference to the term Son of God in the Book of Acts. And what is so interesting about it is the question, what did Paul mean when he said that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? He preached in the synagogues that he is the Son of God.

Now, we know from the New Testament that the contemporaries of the Apostle Paul identified the term Son of God with the Messiah. We know that because of the trial of the Lord Jesus. For example, in Mark chapter 14, in the account that Mark gives of the trial of our Lord, when the Lord is before Caiaphas we read, "But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." But notice the reply of our Lord. "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And he says, "I am."

Now, it is evident from this, not only that he confessed that he was the Son of God, but it was evident that the high priest made an identification between the Messiah and the Son of the Blessed. So in the theology of the Jewish leaders at the time of our Lord, was this conviction, this opinion, call it whatever you will, this view point, that the Messiah promised in the Old Testament really was the Son of God. So when the apostle here affirms in his preaching in Damascus that Jesus is the Son of God, that is to be understood as the Son of God who is the Messiah. And that is confirmed by verse 22, where we read, "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." Or very Messiah, truly the Messiah.

So the apostle then engaged right at the beginning in giving testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt the apostle's preaching was a preaching in which he sought simply to tell the story of his conversion and relate this to the Old Testament hope of a coming Messiah. I would imagine, although of course I was not there, and have no way

of knowing for certain, that the apostle's theology at this stage was not the deeply thought out theology that appears in his later epistles. But at least he knew that something unusual had happened to him on the Damascus Road, and it must be the Messiah. And so he preached that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Now, Luke continues, "But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving." Now, this word "proving" is a word that means to put together. So again, the idea lying back of it seems to be that he was putting together the Scriptures with the events of our Lord's life as he understood them. That's really what the New Testament is all about in the gospels. What it does, in effect, is to take the prophecies of the Old Testament, and look at them in the light of the historical ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's putting together the things of the Old Testament in order to prove the facts concerning the ministry of the Lord. So he used the Old Testament to support the New Testament facts.

Now, I want you to turn over to chapter 18, verse 4 of the Book of Acts, because there is another description of Paul's preaching there, that I think bears on this. Now, he is Corinth. And while you are finding chapter 18, I'm going to read from verse 2, "And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." Now, of course, all that means from the text that we have here in our version is that he preached every Saturday and there he reasoned and sought to persuade from the Scriptures the Jews and the Greeks. No doubt of the New Testament truth as he understood it.

But now, in the text of the Book of Acts, of course the Book of Acts has been carried down through the centuries in textual tradition, and so there are different manuscripts in the Book of Acts, many manuscripts of the Book of Acts. Some of them are obviously later. Some are obviously deficient in various points. But there is one class of manuscript that is very early, that is in the tradition of the handing down of the manuscripts, this family of manuscripts belongs back in the beginning of the history of the Christian church. Now, unfortunately you might think, then that would give us a good clue to what was the exact wording of the New Testament. But unfortunately, while it is very early, it also has this type of text, this family of manuscripts called the western family, has many other strange things about it. So mixed in with the earliness of the family is also some aberration that makes the textual critics think that it's not as reliable as another family or two.

But in the western text of Acts chapter 18 and verse 4 there is a very interesting addition. And I'm going to try to read it like the Greek text of the Western family has it. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and inserting the Lord Jesus he sought to persuade the Jews and the Greeks." Inserting the Lord Jesus, now it's clear from that particular reading that what is intended to be said by it is that the apostle preached by referring to the Scriptures and at the appropriate places where they referred to the Lord Jesus he would make the substitution. In other words, he was preaching Christ from the Old Testament.

Now, I have often said that it would be nice for Christians, if they would put aside their New Testaments for a year and just study the Old Testament. In fact, in my younger days, when I wasn't careful about what anybody would think I would say what you should do is just tear out your New Testament for a year out of your Bible. I don't know that anybody ever followed my advice, but at any rate, tear out your New Testament and just confine yourself to your Old Testament and seek to do all of your Christian witnessing from the Old Testament. That will give you an idea of the status in which the

apostles and others labored in the early days. They did not have a New Testament. And so, they witnessed to the Lord Jesus Christ from the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the Scriptures of the Old Testament illuminated by the historical events that people knew about from the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. So the apostle here is preaching in Damascus and what he is doing is proving that Jesus is the Son of God, the Son of the Blessed, the Messiah, and perhaps he is doing it by expounding the Old Testament Scriptures and at the appropriate places saying, "This has to do with the Lord Jesus." Putting it together and in this way proving that Jesus is the Christ.

Now we go on and read in verse 23, "And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him. But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then," now the Greek text has "his disciples." Isn't that interesting? The apostle already has disciples. "Then his disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket." So the apostle now is let down from the wall in a basket. He had come to Damascus with hate for the enemies of Judaism. He had come like a royal personage with a group of men traveling with him as a representative of the high priest in Jerusalem to the authorities in Damascus. Now he leaves with his disciples and a fish basket. That's a rather strange voltafas [ph 14:56] for him to undergo. But nevertheless that's what happened.

Now we come to verse 26 through verse 30. And this is why I suggested for a subject tonight we would use the subject, "The Emergence of the Life Purpose." Because here, in Jerusalem, the apostle will be given some indication of his life purpose. Now, we don't know, of course, the precise time in which he went into Arabia. I said last time it might be between verse 19 and verse 20. Some put it between verses 22 and 23. That's unimportant, because ultimately he did come back to Damascus and then he had to leave under threat of loss of life and go down to Jerusalem. Now, let me read verse 26 through verse 30.

"And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus."

This is three years later from his conversion now. The apostle is in Jerusalem. He assayed to join himself to the apostles, but is having difficulty. They were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple. You can understand. Why just suppose that some outstanding unbeliever who has done tremendous physical harm to the church of Jesus Christ were to suddenly be parading as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why, it would be just as startling as if Yuri Andropov should come into a meeting of Hungarians with a band of men about him. And I can imagine that they would be kind of upset and disturbed wondering what in the world is going to happen.

Dr. Ironside in one of his books, I think in his book on the Book of Acts, has a story which I remember reading a long time ago. He said that he remembered reading in a missionary record that a young man in New Guinea who had been away to school and had gotten a very good education after his conversion, returned to his country and was sitting down at the Lord's Table to observe the Lord's Supper, and he was sitting down with a group of missionaries and they were getting ready to observe the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine. And as this young man sat by one of the elder missionaries, the missionary recognized that a sudden tremor passed through the young boy's body. And he looked over and he could tell this man was under tremendous nervous strain. And then in a moment everything was quiet again. And the missionary

leaned over to him and said, "What was it that disturbed you there?" And he said, "Well, it's all right now, but the man who just came in is the one who killed and ate the body of my father." Now, you know of course, on the islands of New Guinea there were the head hunters and others. And so this was actually the man who had killed his father and had eaten his body. And he's going to sit down at the Lord's Table. And he said at first he was "so shocked to see the murderer of his father sit down with us at the table that I didn't know whether I could endure it." But he said, "It's all right now. I realize we've been washed by the same precious blood."

Well, when we read here that the apostle assayed to join himself to the disciples, you can see, I think, how they felt. But Barnabas took him. Incidentally, there is tradition to the effect that Barnabas and Paul were fellow classmates studying at the feet of Gamaliel. It of course, is only tradition, and we have no way of knowing whether it is true or not. But Barnabas at least knew the apostle. "But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." And evidently the introduction of Barnabas to the apostles, gained the Apostle Paul their confidence.

Now, in Galatians Paul will be more specific. He will say, when I went up to Jerusalem, I didn't see anybody but Peter and James. All Luke says is that he brought him to the apostles. Well, of course the reason that Paul is more careful in Galatians is that he's trying to show in Galatians that he was not influenced by the apostles so far as his gospel was concerned. And he went to Jerusalem; he only talked to Peter and to James. Well, Barnabas commends him, and he is able to go in and out among them. And we read here that "he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians." Now, I find that interesting, too. Because that means that he went into the Hellenistic synagogues.

Now how was Paul first acquainted with this kind of Christianity to which he has become attached? Well, it's likely that he had his first likely real first hand contact by going into those Hellenistic synagogues there in Jerusalem where Stephen had been preaching. And remember, back in Acts chapter 6, it is stated that in Jerusalem Stephen had gone into the Hellenistic synagogues and he had disputed with the Jews there. Now, it is striking that the only other occurrence of that word disputing is found right here in connection with the Hellenistic synagogues. And it's the Apostle Paul now. So, influenced by Stephen evidently, he goes back into the same synagogue at which Stephen probably had bested him in scriptural argumentation, and now he disputes against the Grecians, that is the Hellenistic Jews, but they went about to slay him.

Well, now I'm going to ask you to turn with over to the 22nd chapter, because there is something in the 22nd chapter that is really the subject of what I want to talk to you about for a little while tonight. In Acts chapter 22 the apostle tells us some things that we don't have in Acts chapter 9. And beginning at verse 17, now he is giving his testimony of his conversion, and in verse 17 we read, "And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem," now that's the context here. When we came to Jerusalem, he was trying to meet with the disciples, and Barnabas had to introduce him to them and stand for him. So he's talking about the same thing. He says,

"When I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Now, how did Paul's life purpose emerge in his own experience? Have you ever wondered about that? Just think for a moment. Here is the Apostle Paul; he has been trained in Jerusalem. He's a Hebrew. In fact, he's a Hebrew of the Hebrews. A Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. He also has advanced in Judaism beyond any of his contemporaries. He was evidently a very high official. He was a person who had the natural aptitudes, evidently the natural faculties, the natural talents, that suited his particular status, and he was also a person who had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, did I mention that? He was a man who had every kind of training that you would expect would mark him out as a Jew of the Jews.

Now, where would you send the apostle to minister? Come on now, where would you? I know every one of you, if you just had to answer you would say, "He would go to the Jews. He would be sent to the Jews." Of all of the people who was probably prepared to minister to Jewish people, it was the Apostle Paul. He had the education, the experience, the family, everything else, just mark it down. Here's the question, shall Paul go to the Jews or to the Gentiles? Probe, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, on and on. Con, well it's really hard to think of one good reason why he ought to go to the Gentiles. One reason, perhaps, well he did grow up in Tarsus in Cilicia, but he was a son of the Pharisee even then. His father was a Pharisee. He was an orthodox Jew.

If you ever notice mothers looking at their children and fathers, too. They see a little infant and they watch that little infant. Mother's have absorbing interests in their children. In fact, they are able to see a whole lot more than we father's are able to see. Well, if it's a boy, then we of course, absorbingly watch our children to see how they are going to develop. IS this going to be a half back for the Cowboys, or is this going to be a tycoon on Wall Street, or what? Or is he going to be a dullard like me or something like that. But people are really interested absorbingly in their child's development. And here it is just a shapeless little mass of flesh, seven, eight, ten pounds, but as life goes on you

see the definite individuality, and things become more interesting and you can just trace the life as it finally reaches its maturity. Then as it becomes something with a purpose, that is it has a purpose. I know some of you are saying, "My child never did have any purpose." Well, it probably had more purpose than you had." But anyway, ordinarily a life purpose will develop, and it's very interesting to see how those things develop.

Now, when the Apostle Paul was on the Damascus Road he asked two questions. He said, "Who art thou?" And "what will Thou have me to do?" The answer to the first question, the apostle took all of his earthly life to begin to get an answer, and he's still learning. You know why? Because when we say "Why are thou?" to the infinite God we are talking about someone whom we will be studying for the rest of eternity. Like we've said so often, "To know God is like knowing the back side of the moon." It's an infinite task. And that's one of the great things to which we look forward in heaven. We're just beginning to get to know God here, and this study will continue on through all of eternity. And when we have passed through ages upon ages upon ages, we'll say as we meet each other, "My, we've learned so many wonderful things about our God, but we're just beginning to come to know him, for the knowledge of him is infinite."

So who are thou? What will thou have me to do? Actually, that's an infinite question, too. What will thou have me to do? Well, yes what will thou have me to do down here while I'm here in the flesh, but that's just the beginning, too. We read in the Bible his servants shall serve him. So even in the eternity to come, we shall be serving him. We shall be dependent upon him. We shall be learning of him. But we often reason that we have certain tastes, naturally we have certain aptitudes, we have certain faculties, we have certain talents, and we have certain circumstances in which we are born. And therefore we ought to do the Lord's work in this way. The apostle had to learn that lesson, too.

You see, what happened in Jerusalem was this. He was in the temple, and he was praying. He was in a trance. Word came to him from the Lord. "Make haste. Get

quickly out of Jerusalem for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." And Paul protests. Listen to his protest. "And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee." That's a protest. That's saying, "I ought to be here." That's saying, "My ministry ought to be here." They know me. They know the tremendous change that Jesus Christ has made in my life. I ought to be preaching here. Further, And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." They know this tremendous change that has taken place in me. I ought to be here. Oh the protests that we make about what the Lord ought to do with us.

I've seen this happen at theological seminary, of course, greatly because I have spent so much of my time around theological students. Many theological students come to theological seminary, they want with all their heart to be a preacher of the word of God. It's a high calling for them. They appreciate it. They love the Bible, many of them. They want to preach, but when they get up to speak everybody goes to sleep. Now, somebody goes to sleep under everybody's preaching, no matter who it is. [Laughter] Now, the proof of that is they went to sleep under Paul's preaching. We ought to put a medal on Eutychus' breast. He's the patron saint of sermon sleepers. [Laughter] And all of them, we've got a lot in this congregation that could have that medal pinned on them. But some people just put everybody to sleep, and when they try to talk they just cannot talk. If they talk to you naturally, they are very clear and forthright, they make sense. But when they get up, they just don't have it. They want to serve the Lord, and you know it's a great thing to want to serve the Lord. I really admire many of those young men that come to theological seminary without any spiritual gifts really, but who try with all their might and mien to be a preacher of the word. But you know, the Lord may have something different, and sometimes it's much more important to be a worker in the church who is not the preacher.

We have this constantly, people who want to be this; the Lord wants them to be this. You can find that in your business. Some of you want to be engineers, but you really ought to be a merchant. Some of you want to be a merchant, but you really ought to be an engineer and so on. You see, the Lord has some particular thing marked out for all of his saints, and he we often arrive at it through protests. The apostle is protesting here. He's saying, "I want to be in Jerusalem. This ought to be my bailiwick. But you see, we read from the word of God that it was Peter who was sent to the Jews, and it was Paul who was sent to the Gentiles. And so finally the Lord has to say, "Shut up Paul. Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Well, I think that's very encouraging in so many ways, because it's so often just like this that we really learn what God's life purpose for us is. Paul had spent a great deal of time, no doubt, with Peter. He was about two weeks in Jerusalem. I can just imagine Paul and Peter sitting on a house top in the city of Jerusalem looking out over the scenery in the afternoon. And can you not imagine what Paul would be saying to Peter. He would be saying, "Now, Peter tell me everything that you possibly can about the Lord from the time that you knew him to the time that he was crucified." And I can see Paul sitting on Peter's every word listening. "Tell me about the crucifixion. Tell me about his preaching. Tell me about his ministry. Tell me about his prayer life. Tell me about the many events in his life. What was the most remarkable one of those signs that he performed."

And then there was James, too. And I can imagine James there, too. And then he would turn to James and say, "What was he like in the house?" Because James was his brother. He knew him that way. He knew him in that special way. "What was he like then?" The apostle's learning all this and he's in the midst of it, however, God is ministering to him. I can just imagine the heart of the apostle, like those two disciples on the Ammaeus Road. It was bring within him as they were unfolding to him the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. But then in the quietness of the temple, as he was praying, God let him know what his true life' purpose was. That's often the way it comes

to us. It's not in the hurly burly of the life we ordinarily live. And it's not in the counsel that we seek from others. And it's not in the things that others say to us, but it is often, and I think generally, when we are by ourselves, when we get down by the side of our bed or wherever we do pray and we ask the Lord to give us direction in our life.

And often times he forces it upon us, too, by circumstances. And so the Apostle protests, but of course it is God decision in the final analysis to determine where the apostle is going to minister. And I think, you know, I think this is an illustration of a particular proverb that has always meant a great deal to me. It's Proverbs chapter 16 and verse 9, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." "A man's heart deviseth his way: but it is the LORD that directs our steps." That is an important principle. You can sit down and you can argue and you can reason and you can think through all of the things that the Lord ought to do in your life, but in the final analysis it is God who devises our lives, who devises the ministry that we shall have, devises the place of our ministry, who determines the things that are going to take place in our lives. "My soul, wait thou only upon the Lord," the Psalmist says, "for my expectation is from him." And woe to the man who strives with his maker.

And one of the great things about Paul, of course, is that as his life's purpose begins to emerge, and he is going to be sent to the Gentiles, not to the Jews. The apostle accepts this, and later takes pride in the fact that he is the apostle of the Gentiles. Now there was some indication of that already, of course. In Acts chapter 9, the Lord had said to Ananias, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." And so the apostle has some indications of what God was going to do with him, but in the final analysis, he had to protest and then finally God had to tell him and really force him, make the decision for him to go the Gentiles.

Let me ask you a question. We have just a couple of minutes. How many times have you knocked and banged on closed doors? Now, you can do that constantly in your

life, not to be an apostle, but in almost all of the decisions of life. How many times have you banged on closed doors? Because that is really what Paul was doing here, saying, "I am perfectly suited to minister to the Gentiles." But I am so thankful that God loved Paul too well to yield to his banging. And he required that he go to the Gentiles. I can just imagine now, you see it says where that he was forced to leave Jerusalem. That might have been a problem to him, because we read here in verse 30, "Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus." Now, the Lord has told him in the temple area that he is going to be sent to the Gentiles, but what happens is that people are ready to kill him and so in order to save his life, they sent him down to Caesarea to the coast, and then he goes back to Tarsus in Cilicia.

And you know, we don't read anything about Paul for five years, approximately. So for about five years or so he was in Tarsus and Cilicia, and we don't have much of an account of anything that he did. Only some indications. There are certain things when he details all of the things that he has suffered. He says, for example, three times he suffered shipwreck. Well, we have only one instance in the Book of Acts, only one instance in the New Testament. So evidently while he was in Tarsus he suffered shipwreck a couple of times, or he may have, put it that way. Go through that list, there are many things on that list that are not found in the New Testament. You see, the New Testament does not give us all of the experiences of the men. The apostle had many experiences in the preaching out from Tarsus in Cilicia. You might have thought that well, the apostle just went back there and spent five years twiddling his thumbs. No, he was busy. But his great ministry had not yet come until finally, about five years later, you know he must have said, "Lord, in the temple area there you said I was supposed to be sent to the Gentiles, but I'm not sent anywhere. I'm here in Tarsus in Cilicia, and the whole wide world out there is beckoning for the gospel, it seems to me, but I'm not sent anywhere."

Until final the Christian movement was building up very strongly. Great things were happening in Antioch. Many Gentiles were coming to the faith. And there was a man by the name of Barnabas, his old school mate perhaps. He said, "We need a teacher. We need someone to teach these people here. Let's go get Paul." And so finally, Barnabas goes back to Tarsus and Cilicia and asks about Paul. No doubt doesn't even know where he lives. I can see him coming up to Paul's door where he may be doing some work with his tent making or whatever, and calling in when he sees someone else and saying, "Does a man named Saul live here?" And it's not long before he's back in Antioch, and for one year they preached the gospel to these new converts. The gospel has now come to Antioch. That has become the headquarters of the Christian movement. Jerusalem has receded into the background. Now, the Gentile mission is ready for its launching, and the Apostle Paul is called by the Lord there.

The emergence of a life's purpose and it come through acquaintance with the Lord, through communion with the Lord. Often even against our own desires, but sovereignly and blessedly for the apostle and for us. Isn't it a great thing the way God works, because it only illustrates so clearly, it seems to me, that the praise and the glory of the work of God belongs to the divine power, and we give him thanks for the sovereign grace that he manifests. Not because he was wise in doing things that we thought were wise, but he does that which most wonderfully glorifies his name.

So, I think that's something for us to think about. What is our life's purpose? Some of us have lived a number of years. We may not have many years left, but that's always a question we can ask. What is the Lord's purpose for me for the rest of my life? And what a wonderful thing it would be if we would all go into our little prayer closet and into our little temple and let God indicate to us what he would wish for us to do in the years or days or months the he gives us. May God help us to respond to that? Let's bow in a word of prayer.

“The Emergence of the Life Purpose” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast directed the affairs of men. It is so often true that we seek to devise the way in which Thou wouldst work in our lives, but the Scriptures tell us that it is the working of our great God that directs our steps. Lord, deliver us from...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]