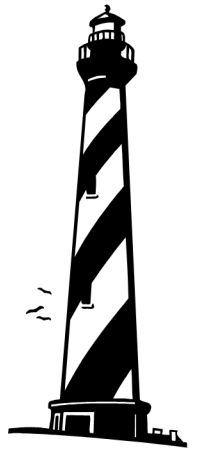




THE BEACON BEAM

June 2026

THINK ON THESE THINGS



What Is God’s Purpose for Your Life?

by Alistair Begg

At one time or another, every Christian confronts the question “What is God’s will for my life?” When it comes to the specifics, the answer will differ for each of us according to context and calling, and we must exercise wisdom as we prayerfully study God’s Word and apply it in our lives. Most Christians will never know with certainty what their next step will be—only that it must be in faith as we obey the Lord’s commands.

One thing is certain, however: whatever our unique paths through life may be, God’s purpose is to shape us into the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, there are three passages that especially point us to this reality. As we come to grips with them, we will begin to understand the purpose of our salvation and God’s plan for our lives, now and in eternity.

God’s Eternal Purpose

We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:28–29).

This well-loved passage from the apostle Paul reveals God’s eternal purpose. God has predestined His children “to be con-

formed to the likeness of his Son”—to be fashioned, shaped, molded in the way in which a potter molds clay. In the economy of God from all of eternity, He has made it His business to transform “those whom he foreknew.”

If we understand this reality in verse 29, we can then make sense of the oft-abused verse that precedes it: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” What is the “good” that He works for and guarantees? To conform us to the image and likeness of His Son! When we understand that, we will realize that even bad times may be for our good, for the ultimate good God is seeking is to ensure that we will become like His Son, Jesus.

Anyone who has been a maturing disciple for some time will have discovered that we make more spiritual progress along the pathway of failure and tears than along the pathway of success and laughter. Nevertheless, even maturing disciples are tempted to flee from trials that are clearly making them more like Jesus (James 1:2)—and in fleeing them, they miss their blessings. It is in the warp and woof of life, in the difficulties and in the disasters, that all of our rough parts are chipped away and we are fashioned into the image of Jesus.

When we read the Bible and look at the stories of those who have been saved, we

can marvel at what God has done in their lives. Why should so great a witness as Stephen have been snuffed out so early on? Why should so faithful a man as Paul have endured all of those beatings and illnesses and shipwrecks? “Why, O Lord?” God’s answer is as profound as it is challenging: “I was making them like Jesus.”

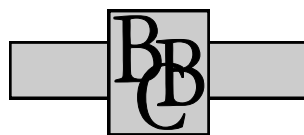
God’s Ongoing Process

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:16–18).

This second passage from the apostle Paul reveals something about how our transformation takes place. If we know the Lord and therefore have God’s Spirit at work in us, then we “are being transformed into the same image”—a present-tense experience. In other words, the eternal purpose of God is the ongoing process of God in each of our lives.

In 2 Corinthians 3 broadly, Paul draws a contrast between the old covenant and the new—between the reflected, fading glory of Moses that had to be veiled and the glory that we may now gaze upon

(Continued on page 2)



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Gregory N. Barkman, *Senior Pastor*
Michael R. Karns, *Minister of Christian Education*
Robert F. LaTour, *Minister of Pastoral Care*
Gregory L. Phillips, *Minister of Music*
N. Hunter Strength, *Minister of Youth*

Sunday

Morning Worship...9:30 AM
Sunday School.....11:10 AM
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

(Continued from page 1)

freely in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His work on the cross, Christ has won us the privilege of gazing upon God's glory as He Himself has revealed it to us. And as a result of that, we may begin to reflect His likeness.

**Even bad times may be for our good,
for the ultimate good God is seeking
is to ensure that we will become
like His Son.**

"The Lord is the Spirit," Paul writes—and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is always to turn our gaze away from ourselves and to Christ. So much about ourselves is discouraging. An honest assessment is likely to find a prayer life that is lacking, opportunities to share the Gospel missed, selfishness cherished, and sacrificial love avoided. In the face of such realities, what are we to do?

We're to do what the Holy Spirit prompts us to do: to look away from ourselves and to look to Jesus, to "consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted" (Heb. 12:3). We begin to reflect the image of Jesus when we gaze upon His glory revealed to us in the Gospel. The work of the Spirit in our lives is to continue that process of looking more and more like our Savior.

But this passage reveals something else about how our transformation takes place: we "*are being* transformed into the same image"—a *passive* experience. We're not transforming ourselves. The Spirit is transforming us.

This is no excuse to sit down and do nothing. God doesn't put us in a passive position in order to neutralize us; He puts us there so that He might use the resources He has provided for us to accomplish His purposes. So He gives to us the means of grace such as His Word, the fellowship of God's people, and the sacraments. You will never become like Jesus without taking hold of the means by which God intends to transform you.

In other words, it's not a case of being wheeled into heaven as a result of passivity, nor is it a case of forcing our way in by sheer determination. It is as Paul says elsewhere: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God

who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12–13). In other words, we work *out* what He works *in* us. The grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness and to live upright and godly lives (Titus 2:11–12). That's all the process. And in it all, the Holy Spirit is at work to make us like the Son.

God's Completed Project

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 3:2–3).

There are many details about our eternal destiny that we simply do not know. But we do know this: "When he appears we shall be like him." Why? Because from all of eternity, that's what God decided would happen. Furthermore, in the midst of our lives, He is already transforming us. Therefore, when we finally stand before Him, all that He has purposed and all that He has brought us through will come to its grand completion when are just as He intends.

John was agnostic with respect to precise details about our ultimate end, but he nevertheless reminds us of these truths: we do know that Christ will appear, that we will see Him exactly as He is, and that we will be like Him. The apostle Paul might have added, "We know that we will be *with* Him." (See 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:17).

The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is always to turn our gaze away from ourselves and to Christ.

What incredible promises! Yet we're so often tempted to focus on what is unsaid and untaught, fussing over and arguing about details we're not even meant to know. In so doing, we lose track of the fact that God's purpose is to make us like Jesus—and that is the very work that will be completed when we see Him! We can wait confidently and contentedly for the rest.

The fact is that these promises are all the knowledge of our future that we need to live a pure life. We will be with Him, and we will be like Him. What else could we

need to make us zealous for the needs of the world and opportunities for evangelism! Our sure confidence in this destiny allows us to walk in obedience to Him as the Spirit empowers us, knowing that every step we take in Christ is one step closer to eternity.

The test of our love for Jesus is not whether we raise our hands when we're singing songs, not whether we get that woozy feeling in the pit of our stomach, nor any of the other various quantifiers we're tempted to latch onto. No, Jesus tells us how we know whether we love Him: "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

"Be Like Jesus, This My Song"

As Christians, our outlook is simple: we *will* be like Jesus. That is our priority. It's easy to be concerned about what we're going to do tomorrow, where we're going to be, who we'll be with, and so on. All of these questions about our future are uncertain. But we may know this: that God's eternal purpose is to conform us to the image of Jesus. And that ought to transform how we view all of life's moments and decisions—from the mundane to the extraordinary.

God's process in the experience of time is to edge us nearer and nearer toward that end. And one day, when we are with Him, then we will certainly be like Him. And so today we may sing,

Be like Jesus, this my song
In the home and in the throng;
Be like Jesus, all day long!
I would be like Jesus.

This article was adapted from the sermon "Be Like Jesus" by Alistair Begg.

ASHES TO ASHES

by Hunter Strength

As of 2025, the National Funeral Director's Association reported that the U.S. cremation rate is 63.4% and is expected to exceed 82% by 2045.

Cremation, which is rapidly regaining popularity, has been met with relative silence by much of the Church. Perhaps this is due to the fact that there are few conversations more tender than those surrounding death. However, as I hope to make clear in my ministry, theology is not a science, but the science. It is, as the Medievals put it, "The Queen of all sciences." So, we can't detach this subject from theology.

What the Church Has Thought

For most of church history, burial was the near-universal Christian practice. This was not accidental, and it was certainly not cultural conformity. As a matter of fact, the early Christians buried their dead at a time when cremation was the dominant Roman practice, and they did so deliberately, as a statement of faith.

Their reason wasn't to be different for the fun of it. Instead, their reasoning was theological. As Christians, they confessed the resurrection of the body. They looked at Jesus, who was really raised, bodily raised, and concluded that what happens to the body is not something we can dismiss. We are not our body. You are not a soul sheathed in a meatsuit. Your body is not a shell, and it is not disposable. Knowing this, they buried, and they often buried facing east, awaiting the dawn.

It is with this in mind that we must note that this doctrine was so noted

by the Pagans, that when our forefather's were martyred, their persecutors would deny them burial, burned their bodies, and cast their ashes into rivers to "prevent their hope of resurrection."¹

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This practice of Christian burial was almost universally held through the Reformation. Luther was buried, Calvin was buried. The Westminster Standards assume burial. Obviously we need to recognize that the Reformers were not superstitious about it. Knowing that God is capable of all things, they certainly understood that God can raise a body consumed by fire, drowned at sea, or scattered by war. But they still preferred burial as the fitting Christian witness that we expect to get these back.

It was not until the late 19th century that cremation began to gain ac-

ceptance in the West. It seems to me that this has been driven largely by secular hygienic and environmentalist arguments. The church's gradual accommodation of cremation has followed culture more than it has led it.

Okay, we've taken a glance at our history, but what does the word of God say?

What Scripture Says About This

The Bible nowhere explicitly prohibits cremation, so I do not want to bind consciences where God has not bound them.

What Scripture does give us, clearly and consistently, is a theology of the body that ought to shape how we think about death and burial.

The body matters to God. This is the testimony of Genesis, where God forms man from the dust and breathes life into him. It is the testimony of the incarnation, where the eternal Son of God took on flesh and declared it good enough to wear forever. And it is the testimony of 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul insists that the resurrection is bodily. Furthermore, Paul insists that what is sown is what is raised.

The seed image is worth sitting with. It was this argument that Pastor Greg Barkman used when responding to a congregant questioning this some time back. It changed my position on this matter. Paul does not say the body is discarded and replaced. He says it is planted. Given the historical context provided above, that's worth noting.

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As a Baptist, I must point on the consistency in holding to believer's baptism by immersion and Christian burial. Both symbolize something that cremation does not. There is something in putting a body into the ground, Paul says, that speaks the gospel without words.

This is why many theologians, while affirming the permissibility of cremation, still express a preference for burial. It is not that God cannot raise a cremated body. He can and He will. It is that burial says something, however. It says something about the body, about hope, about the kind of resurrection we believe in. I don't know about you, but I'm a talker. If I can say something even in my death, let it be that, as they lay my body down, "He is planted with a firm expectation that Christ will soon reunite his glorified soul with an incorruptible body."

A Word for the Living

If you are reading this because you have already chosen cremation for someone you loved, or because you are planning to choose it for yourself, I want to be careful here.

The gospel does not rest on burial method. The resurrection work of Jesus is not threatened by your grandmother's ashes on a mantelpiece. Both of my mother's parents were cremated and, to my knowledge, my father's parents are planning the same method. This is not a practice that I'm emotionally distanced from.

The question of cremation is a question about witness and wisdom, not about salvation. So, I believe it belongs to the category of things the Church should discuss openly, charitably, and without shame.

My own conviction, for what it is worth, is that burial is the better wit-

ness. I believe it is the strongest position both historically and biblically. But I hold that conviction with open hands. So, if you have already made a different choice, or are about to, I am not here to add weight to what you are already carrying. The God who spoke creation into existence out of nothing will not be stumped by your cremated ashes.

For I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day — 2 Timothy 1:12.



The Puritan Richard Baxter

The focus of his preaching was an urgent invitation to receive Christ. Baxter preached for a verdict. He sought to 'drive sinners to a stand and make them see...that they must unavoidably be either converted or condemned.' His words at the close of *Making Light of Christ and Salvation* are pointed and powerful:

When God hath shaken those careless souls out of their bodies, and you must answer for all your sins in your own name; Oh, then what would you give for a Saviour!...When you see the world hath left you, and your companions in sin have deceived themselves and you, and all your merry days are gone; then what would you give for that Christ and salvation that now you account not worth your labour!...You that cannot make light of a little sickness, or of want, or of natural death, no, not of a toothache, but groan as if you were undone; how will you then make light of the fury of the Lord, which will burn against the condemners of His grace? I come now to know your resolution for the time to come. What say you? Do you mean to sat as light by Christ and salvation as hitherto you have done and to be the same men after all this? I hope not.

On the Feminine Side

by Marti Barkman

Now several months into retirement from the interior design business, I'm surprised to find I haven't missed it for a moment! When contemplating retirement, I thought it would be hard to step away from what was an enjoyable career, but when Covid forced a significant slowdown, the thought of going back to that schedule was more disturbing than considering leaving it. Now, when driving past one of my old shopping haunts, I find it quite liberating to drive on by! Gone are the days of driving from Raleigh to High Point and beyond, and I'm free from the worst part of the job...paperwork! And it's kind of nice getting those Social Security checks in my account every month. And like all my retiree friends have expressed, I don't know how I found time to work before retirement. It is still the rare morning when I wake up to all options open for the day.

Is there anything I miss about working? It's trite, but I find it hard to keep track of the day of the week and dates of the month. When I was tied to my work calendar and schedule, I had no trouble remembering the date. Not now. But it's a small inconvenience, easily fixed if I can find my phone. How important is it to know what day it is? Quite so if we are to be where and when we are supposed to be. That's what makes clock and calendar so vital to the smooth running of our schedules. Think back to those days of Covid lockdown, when we were robbed of our normal schedules. One day melted into another with little distinction

between the two. With our ability to meet for worship shortened dramatically, our Sundays, that day of the new beginning, became less defined and dangerously less important. If we weren't purposeful in treating it as the Lord's Day, it was easily lost in the other six days of the week. Aren't we grateful to have that behind us!

But think of a prisoner, not one in the prisons we see in our modern-day prisons, but one from times past, held in a dungeon and cut off from any contact with the outside world. No clock or calendar to keep track of their days, and for some, even deprived of the time-keeping properties of the sun. Maybe you've read the account of some such prisoner who kept track of time by scratching with a stone a tally of his days on the rock walls of the dungeon. Such was the experience of the Apostle John who was imprisoned for his faith on the Isle of Patmos, now a lovely tourist destination, but in John's day, a desolate, windswept island where prisoners had to do for themselves whatever they could to stay alive. Scrounging for any scrap of food, taking shelter in caves, this island was where people were sent to die. One thing we know about John was that he kept track of the days. We know, because during his days on Patmos, John wrote of the vision that God gave him, the book called *'The Revelation of Jesus Christ'* and he begins with "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day." Here in this place of utter desolation John kept track of the

days. And on this first day of the week, the Lord's Day, John was worshipping the God who never forsakes His children and who never changes. We might find it strange for someone for whom every day was wretchedly the same as the days before, to be worshipping. But knowing this first day of a new week was the day belonging to his God and who invited John into his presence brought John to his knees in worship.

When we talk about the first day of the week, what comes to your mind? Think about the Lord's Day purposefully. Don't let the day slip away with no thought of the significance of what it is called: THE LORD'S DAY. He owns it. Give it to Him by rejoicing in His beauty with song, and in particular, turning your mind away from the thoughts that would crowd out the Word.

And one suggestion I would make: When you've listened to a sermon, ask this question: What would God have me do with what I've just heard? You might not know the answer to that question and if so, I suggest going to the text from the sermon and reading it in the context. If you come to the word 'Therefore...' you might find the answer.

**When we talk about the first day of the week, what comes to your mind?
Think about the Lord's Day purposefully. Don't let the day slip away with no
thought of the significance of what it is called: THE LORD'S DAY. He owns it.**

“WHAT IS YOUR ONLY COMFORT IN LIFE AND IN DEATH?”

by Greg Phillips

“That I am not my own, but belong— body and soul, in life and in death— to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has delivered me from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, also assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

This is the first question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563 by a group of ministers and theologians in Heidelberg, Germany. The Heidelberg Catechism is a series of doctrinal questions and answers intended for teaching and instruction. It followed closely on the heels of the Belgic Confession of 1561, though the circumstances in the two countries were quite different. In the Netherlands (now the Netherlands and Belgium), the church faced severe persecution under the Roman Catholic government. In Germany, by contrast, Frederick III, ruler of the Palatinate, initiated and personally oversaw the catechism’s composition “with the advice and cooperation of our entire theological faculty in this place, and of all superintendents and distinguished servants of the church.” Later, the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) formally endorsed the Three Forms of Unity as official statements of church doctrine: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

Divided into fifty-two sections, or Lord’s Days, the Heidelberg Catechism was designed as both a teaching and preaching tool for each Sunday of the year and a means of promoting doctrinal unity among the churches of the province. Each answer is accompanied by scriptural references that show the biblical basis for its teaching. After two introductory questions and answers, the catechism unfolds in three parts: (1) human misery; (2) divine deliverance, including an exposition of the Apostles’ Creed, along with justification, good works, and the means of grace; and (3) Christian gratitude, which expounds the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer as central elements of the Christian life. In all, it contains one hundred twenty-nine questions and answers.

My Only Comfort

The musical score for 'My Only Comfort' is presented in a four-staff format. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef, and the bottom staff is the bass line in bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). Chord symbols are placed above the vocal line. The lyrics are written below the vocal line, with line numbers 1, 2, and 3 indicating different verses. The score is divided into four systems, each with a key signature change indicated by a sharp sign above the staff.

1 My on - ly com - fort, now, al - ways, in both my life and death,
2 He ful - ly paid for all my sins with his own pre - cious blood
3 Since I be - long to him a - lone, Christ, through the Spir - it gives

is know - ing I am not my own; I be - long to Je - sus Christ.
and through his death has set me free from Sa - tan's ty - ran - ny.
as - sur - ance of e - ter - nal life, and so I live for him.

My bo - dy and soul be - long to him in life, in death, al - ways.
With - out my hea - ven - ly Fa - ther's will, not a sin - gle hair can fall.
My on - ly com - fort, now, al - ways, in both my life and death,

He is my faith - ful Sav - ior, Friend; Je - sus Christ, my Lord and King.
In fact, all things must work for good, for my sal - va - tion.
is know - ing I am not my own; I be - long to Je - sus Christ.

Chord symbols represent a simplified harmony.

Words: Zacharius Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, 1563; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 1; vers. Marlene Veenstra, 2003, alt. © 2004 Faith Alive Christian Resources
Music (RESIGNATION 8.6.8.6 D): W. Walker's *Southern Harmony*, 1835; harm. Dale Grotenhuis (1931-2012)
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If you would like to explore the doctrinal richness of the Heidelberg Catechism more deeply, join the 2026 Sunday School Summer Elective Class taught by Matt Noonan in the study of this remarkable expression of biblical truth.

Class of 2026

High School

Jonah Oakley
Alamance Christian School



College

Zachary Beck
Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration and Data Analysis:
Project Management
Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

Jonathan Freeman
Bachelor of Music Education
Certificate in Church Music Ministry
Bob Jones University at Greenville, SC

Caleb LaTour
Bachelor of Finance
University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NC

Post Graduate

Logan LaTour
Master's Degree in History
American College of Education

THE BEACON BROADCAST

Monday thru Friday

WNAH 1360 AM (Nashville, TN) 2:00 p.m.
WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN) 9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC) 12:15 p.m.
WBAG 105.9 FM (Burlington, NC) 12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC) 2:00 p.m.
WDZY 1290 AM (Richmond, VA) 6:15 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA) 6:15 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
WSKY 1230 AM (Asheville, NC) 7:15 a.m.
WYYC 1250 AM (York, PA) 5:00 p.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA) 5:00 p.m.

Monday thru Sunday

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM (Richwood, WV) 10:05 a.m.
10:05 p.m.

Sunday

WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC) 9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC) 10:30 a.m.
WLES 590 AM (Richmond, VA) 10:30 a.m.

WGNQ mixlr.com/wgng-radio (M-F)
8:45-9 a.m. & 4:45-5:00 p.m.
(Internet station based in Greenville/Washington, NC)

Saturday

WNAH 1360 AM (Nashville, TN) 2:00 p.m.

BEACON HIGHLIGHTS FOR JUNE

CALENDAR

07 Sunday School Promotion
14 Summer Elective Adult
 Sunday School begins
16 Elders/Deacons Meeting
18 Silver Saints
21 Father's Day
 Baby Day
 Members Meeting

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

03 Ron Massey
 Melanie Moody
05 Cheryl Ingold
07 Jeff Barnt
14 Matthew Noonan
15 Linda Spencer
17 Suzann Lynch
 Christen Verroi
20 Nellie Hunter
22 Robin Allred
24 Gail Ellis
25 Gary Allred
26 Ryan Brigman
30 Sue Elliott

MISSIONARY BIRTHDAYS

01 Isaiah Jensen*
05 Micaiah Bixby*
14 Paul Snider
19 Joshua Vahala*

*Children of Missionaries

Welcome New Members

Michael Beck
 2815 Durham St
 Burlington, NC 27217

Maddie Butcher
 3028 Rock Hill Road
 Burlington, NC 27215

Jack and Janice Davis
 7248 US Hwy 158
 Stokesdale, NC 27357

We express our heartfelt sympathy to the families of:

Lois Byram
 Virgil Coleman
 Betty Duncan
 Tony Enoch
 Matthew Page
 Claudette Pouliot

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 After this is done, you will receive a link where you may enter the rest
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