

Believing in Destiny and Favor

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Would you stand with me? We're going to say the creed together. Hold your hands out like this as a sign of receiving. Let's say this together: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me. I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with the world.

Thanks, you can be seated. I'm so convinced that anyone who believes in that creed and lives it out and believes in the consequences of that statement will have the most awesome, joy-filled, fruit-bearing life ever. Life is hard, and when it cuts us down, it's easy to think that God's abandoned us, or God doesn't care. He is for us and it doesn't mean life isn't hard, or that we don't go through loss and tragedy, but that unlike so many people who don't believe in God or don't have a faith in Him, we don't lose hope because we know that He is good, He is able, and He will work it through. Amen?

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Believing in Destiny and Favor"

We are in a series on thoughts. I just believe that the way you think changes everything about your life. I want to say this – it is easy to have good thoughts when things are good, isn't it. When you've got the job of your dreams, and your marriage is going well, and your kids are healthy, and you're making lots of money, and you're hanging out with your friends, it's easy to think good thoughts. Life is good. The hard thing to do is when life gets bad. When you lose someone you love, when you lose your job, when things don't go the way you thought they would, when you're not as far along in life as you thought you would be, or when you're so far along in life that you thought it would be better than it was, that's the time when the enemy will attack you in your thought life.

It is so important that we are rooted in the word of God, and that we conform our minds to the mind of Christ; that when things get hard, we decide to do what is super difficult and that is to think the right kinds of thoughts. It's easy to have good thoughts when things are good, it's hard to have good thoughts when things are bad. And let me tell you something, and I've said this every single week – your thoughts become your reality. Look, nobody can control what thoughts sort of pop in and out of our mind, but Dallas Willard and others have taught us that what we dwell on can make all the difference. You can decide whether or not to let that bird flying around your head make a nest in your hair, right? You can decide what thoughts you will dwell on, nurture and feed. If the mind is like a garden, we have to tend to it and we have to tend to it daily. We have to think the right kinds of thoughts that bear good fruit, and when weeds grow up, the kind that will bear thistles and thorns, we must pull those up, amen? You must be diligent to train your mind and your thinking, especially in hard times, towards the things of God because life is hard. And very often, as we go through difficult things, we're tempted to fall into things like self pity and depression, and hopelessness and despair. But not you. That's not you. You are full of hope and life and you will endure.

Better thoughts lead to a better life. I believe that if you change one thought in your life, one habit of thinking, just a little bit, your life will change a lot. I've also used this example a lot, but it's like a sailboat. You change the direction of a sailboat one degree, nobody on that boat will feel it, even if you're glaring at the horizon, you won't even see it move, but I promise you hours later you will be miles away from where you would have been had you not changed that one little thing. You change one thought, one negative thought, one pattern of thinking into one pattern of good thinking, you'll be miles away from where you would have been.

Bitter thoughts lead to a bitter life. And very often, when you've been betrayed, if you've been sued, if you've been fired, if you've lost your business, if people have hurt you, intentionally gone after the ones you loved, it's easy to allow bitterness to get into your heart. But that's exactly what the enemy wants. He wants you to be a bitter person because he knows that hurt people hurt people. Wounded people wound people.

And so when we foster bitter thoughts towards others, we are developing for our future a bitter life. But if you foster thoughts of grace, forgiveness, life, good thoughts, beautiful thoughts, noble thoughts, despite whatever it is you're going through, you will pave a path to a beautiful future. A beautiful life. And so the choice is laid before you. The path of life or the path of death. To choose to think thoughts that give life, or choose to think thoughts that harm and hurt yourself and others.

If you think beautiful thoughts, you will build for yourself a beautiful life in Jesus' name. Amen? And that's why the scriptures talk so much about our thinking. That's what the scripture says – as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. As a woman thinketh in her heart, so is she. Literally you become what you think upon, what you dwell on. So change your thoughts, and you'll change your world.

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Faith makes things real. When you proclaim something that isn't as though it were, it becomes so. That's the authority from heaven that was given to you by God. That's why Paul in Romans 4 describes that as he that call things that be not as though they were. He is the God who says over a sinner he is righteous, and that man becomes so. He says over his dead son he is alive and it becomes so. That's what Jesus said. Remember when Jesus went to the girl who had died and they said that she was dead, and what did He say? No she's not dead, she's sleeping. Let me tell you friends, she was dead. Dead as a doornail. Her heart had stopped. She had been long gone. And what did Jesus say? She's not dead but she is sleeping. And what happened? It became so. Jesus' faith in the Father was true, and so His words were true, and His authority was real, and He had the ability to make what He believed to be so become so.

So faith makes things real, even if you have faith in bad things. And this is important. If you proclaim about your life that it stinks, that it's the worst, that it's horrible, it will become so. If you proclaim over your life that you have a hope, that you have a future that you forgive, that you grow, that you move in the direction of heaven, it will become so. If you see the best in your future, you'll get the best. If you see the best in your situation, you'll get the best. If you see the best in others, you'll get the best. If you see the worst, you'll get the worst. People in my childhood, many saw the worst in me. Lots of people saw the worst in me. That was hard as a kid.

There was a member of my extended family, she didn't like me very much. And this woman used to call me stupid and clumsy. And so anytime I got around this lady, I wasn't a stupid or clumsy kid, but when I was around her, I sort of thought I was. And so anytime I would get around her, I would say stupid things; things I thought were stupid. I would get clumsy with things. I would drop plates and I would knock things over, and of course she would reinforce by faith that I'm a clumsy person. So she would say over me, oh isn't he so clumsy, and she would laugh. Of course it was terribly hurtful, and it also made it sort of real in my life. She saw the worst in me, and I couldn't help but give her the very worst.

You see the worst in others, you see their worst attributes, that's exactly what you'll get, and you'll make it so, even if they don't want to, it'll be hard for people when they're around you, if they know you see the worst in them, it'll be difficult for them to not give you their very worst. But if you see the best in people, despite their imperfections, if you believe in others, and you proclaim the good things over people, you will draw the best out of them. Can I get an amen? Anybody been a parent and seen that that's true? Or a coach? Or a leader? You believe in your team, you're going to get the best from your team. If you crack down and judge your team, you're going to get the worst.

And so this is true. Like I remember when I was a kid, we had this kid we played basketball with, and his dad bought him five shares of Nike stock. It has to be like, I don't know, maybe a hundred bucks back then. It was in the late 80's, early 90's, something like that. And this kid, he got this nickname because of that because like it was Nike.. we used to joke and say he owned Nike, which was technically true. So we gave him this nickname – Wall Street. I don't even remember his real name. All I know is its Wall Street. I know what he looks like, I know what he acted like. I have no idea what his first and last name are. I did at the time, I can't remember anymore because in our minds, he was Wall Street. We played basketball after school almost every day for like two years, and it was Wall Street, and everybody had a nickname. And guess what Wall Street grew up to be? Yeah! He became an investment banker. Did very well and is doing very well. Lives in New York.

And I just can't help but believe that the fact that all through high school he had the nickname Wall Street, when he thought about what am I going to do with my life? Well Wall Street was one of those things. We didn't know it, but we were proclaiming by faith that he would go work in Wall Street and it became so.

What you say, what you think about, it becomes real. Faith makes things real for believers. You've been given authority and that authority can be abused, or that authority can be used rightly, but be wary – when you speak things over your world, it can very often become so. So guard your thoughts because your thoughts lead to words, words lead to action, and words release the power and the authority that has been given to you in life. If you see the best in people, you'll get the best.

If you see the best in your situation, you'll get the best, and if you see the best in your future, you will get the best. If you see the worst, you get the worst.

I say this because I love you, not because I don't empathize with you or say that your life has been easy. I know it's been hard. Every person's life is hard, but do your best to train your thoughts to the hope of the gospel. Amen?

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I remember I grew up in LA, and I remember once walking along this road, and it was on a hill that overlooked the city, and it must have been an art class or something, there were all these people painting a landscape. And one of the first guys I saw, he had this painting of LA and it was so dreary. It was like smoggy, and graffiti, and chain link fences with barbed wire, and you look at it, you go that looks like the most dangerous, ugly city I've ever seen. And you look behind it and that's exactly what was there.

And then the next painting I saw was like LA was the most beautiful, golden city ever. I mean it was gorgeous, and palm trees, and sun, and beautiful cars, and you see both. Which was real? Both, right? Both landscapes were real, but both landscapes were experienced differently. It's not that the guy with the ugly painting didn't see the beautiful parts, or that the guy with the beautiful painting didn't see the ugly parts, it's that the people who made those paintings made a decision on what they would put on their canvas. They chose to focus on one thing over the other, and by faith they made it real.

You shouldn't ignore what's bad in your life. You absolutely shouldn't. In some ways, you can't have real light without a little darkness. But don't focus on the darkness, focus on the light. Keep hope alive. All that to simply say believe in what the scripture says, that you are destined, and that you are favored. Amen? You are destined, you are favored, you are chosen, you are loved, you are blessed, and it will be so.

The world doesn't know what to do with things like favor and destiny. The world uses words like luck or un-luck. Let me ask you a question – is there such a thing as luck or un-luck? So that's an interesting question. Science has actually proved that there is a such thing as luck or un-luck. But luck or un-luck one hundred percent is psychological.

So this is interesting. The guy named Karl Halvor Teigen, who was a professor of, I think, economics at the University of Oslo to ask himself what psychologically happens when people believe themselves to be lucky or unlucky. And so he actually launched a whole discipline of science, which is studying the psychology of luck. And what they have found is that people who believe themselves to be lucky unintentionally think the right thoughts about life and by being successful in life, reinforce thoughts of luckiness. And people who think of themselves as unlucky, limit themselves in their thinking, and accidentally build for themselves a life that reinforces the idea that they are unlucky.

One of the professors of psychology that studies discipline says, "It turns out believing that you are lucky is a kind of magical thinking." He says, "People that think themselves that are lucky overall tend to have much more of a sense of control of life, they're more optimistic, and they have much lower anxiety than the rest of us." And then there are practical things, too. He said that somebody who considers themselves lucky when they go on a date, they are more confident, conversations come to them easier, they smile more and they have a more relaxed feeling.

And somebody who thinks of themselves as lucky when they're applying for a job, they go in there believing that they are going to get the job – maybe they will, maybe they won't, but overall, they have this sense that they're going to get it. They're going to go in with confidence. They're going to go in with a plan. They're going to go in with a smile on the face and it's gonna be natural. It's not going to be forced because they really feel lucky.

So people who believe that they're lucky tend to have the right kind of thinking because they think they're lucky. This is so huge in the world of science. In fact one of these doctors, he actually.. the first study that was kind of a breakthrough is he had two groups of people, one group that considered themselves unlucky, and the other considered themselves lucky. And he gave them all the same newspaper, and in that newspaper he said try and find how many pictures there are in this newspaper. It was a difficult task, there were quite a few. But on the second page, he actually wrote the amount of pictures in this newspaper are 36 or whatever it was. The people who considered themselves lucky, by and large, almost all of them saw that: that cheat sheet. And the group that by and large saw themselves as unlucky didn't see it. So what is the difference about the lucky and the unlucky person? Obviously these economists and psychologists, they assert.. it's probably a conjecture in part, but they believe that when you think you're lucky, you are able to see more in your life that others can't. Your vision isn't limited.

On the unlucky side, the studies show that people who believe in bad luck, or believe that they're unlucky, don't engage in many of the processes needed to bring about positive outcomes in their life. Therefore, it reinforces this idea, oh I'm unlucky. One study that showed this was a study on parking – that there are lucky parkers and unlucky parkers. Anybody here think you're a lucky parker? Raise your hand. Yeah. If you saw a hands of all the people who think they're lucky.

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And look, the study showed that people who think themselves lucky usually get good spots, and people who think themselves unlucky usually get bad parking spots. And so the question was naturally asked, are they actually lucky? I mean they're doing it, look at that.

And what they found was that people who thought themselves lucky would always go to the front first, expecting good spots, and they would wait and they would look and they would see like a guy, if he's getting in his car, and if they saw a competitor coming, they blinker saved. You guys know blinker save, right? We all know that rule. You get there at the same time, first guy to get his blinker on gets the spot. It's the rule. Everybody knows that. I blinkered it. And the unlucky guy who forgot to blinker goes on.. I'm so unlucky. I didn't blinker it. And that's exactly what would happen. The lucky people would look for that good spot and unlucky people would.. maybe they'd go by the front, but they'd go kind of quickly and they'd sort of assume they're going to get a bad spot, so they wouldn't go with expectation and they would settle for the parking spot in the distance.

Listen the only reason I'm saying this is to show thinking changes your life. Luck and un-luck don't exist. Thoughts do. You know what does exist for you? Can I just say we as believers have something way better than luck or un-luck – we have a thing called favor and destiny. Can I get an amen? That is something to put your faith in. We serve a big God who knew us before we were born, who had a plan for us before we entered in this world. He knew you, He knew the color of your eyes, He knew the numbers of hair on your head, He knew what you would suffer but knew you would suffer unto victory, and I can put my faith in that. How about you? I can believe that no matter how bad my life is going today, I can believe I serve a good loving God who will get me to my destiny tomorrow. And He will. He's going to get you there, friend. The Lord wants you to know today that yes life is weird, and life is hard, but in the end, you will have the victory. You will be more than a conqueror.

As Hannah read today, look at this scripture: Romans chapter 8. We think so often that we made a mistake and so God is upset at us, or God is punishing us, or maybe something has happened and so God's mad at us or angry at us. And this is one of my favorite chapters in the whole bible, but Romans chapter 8 begins with "there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." None! "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death." I almost forgot a bible verse. That was close. And it goes on. Romans 8:28 it says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Sometimes it's a hard verse to read when you're going through a hard time. You're like how is God going to use this? I just don't understand.

And he says, "For those God foreknew, He also predestined." So when we read the word predestined in the bible, we oftentimes frame it in terms of heaven and hell, and in a way, in our tradition we do and we should, but we shouldn't limit it to that. The word predestined, just view it as destiny. God gave you a destiny before you were born and it is good. Can you believe that today? You know what destiny means? Destiny means that despite my imperfections, God's going to get me there anyway. That as long as I decide to move in the direction of the Lord, despite how old I am, how much I've failed, how many setbacks I've had, God can get me to my miracle. God can get me to my destiny.

And he says, "For those He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the first more among many brothers and sisters." God's going to turn you into a Jesus kind of person full of life and power. "And those He predestined, He also called and those He called, He also justified, and those He justified, He also glorified." Your sins are taken care of, your mistakes, past, present, future, don't worry about them. God's going to sort that out for you. He's going to get you there. He says, "We're more than conquerors," right? Such a famous passage.

"What then shall we say in response to these things?" Look can I just take a break here. Paul went through a lot in life. Paul was short. His name means little one. He was considered a bad preacher. He was a good writer but like one time he was giving a sermon that was so boring, a guy in the top balcony fell asleep and fell off the balcony and died. That's how boring his sermons were. And then Paul goes down and like raises him from the dead, and then goes back to preaching his boring sermon, right? And people would tell him he's boring. They'd be like he's not as good of a speaker as Apollo's, and as all these other guys, and Paul had.. his best friends were eaten by lions and burned at the stake. One time Paul was stoned to death, and then there he is, he wasn't completely dead, he's bleeding and like they walk away and it was like a few hours later, he kind of like gets up, and he goes back in a corner and he starts preaching a boring sermon again to everybody.

He was shipwrecked. I mean the guy went through a lot. And this is why he cites this passage from the bible that every day we're like lambs to be slaughtered.

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And he says no, we're more than conquerors. Look, conquerors go through a lot, don't they. Conquerors go through a lot. But the difference between conquerors and everybody else is that conquerors win and that is you.

He says, "What shall we.." so this Paul talking, and he has a lot of experience to say this with authority. "What then shall we say in response to these things. If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also along with Him graciously give us" what "all things." Yeah. "What will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen. It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died more than that, who is raised to life is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." What a beautiful image. Jesus is interceding to the Father on your behalf.

'Help him, Lord,' he's saying. 'Help her.' He's saying that about you. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or the sword?" These are all things that Paul and his listeners are facing. "For your sake" and this is that scripture I said, "we face death all day long, we're considered sheep to be slaughtered." He says, "No! in all these things we are more.." in all these things, nakedness, sword, death, famine, "in all these things we're more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels or demons, neither present nor the future, nor the powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Can I get an amen to the word of God? It's true.

You change your thoughts and believe in this, that it's true, despite the fact that it doesn't look true in your life. You are loved, you are favored, you are chosen, and you are destined for victory. You're destined. And it's not by merit. You know that word grace that's in the bible a lot, charis, theologically it doesn't just mean.. we often think of it as mercy. It's not. Its beauty, its linked to the word thanksgiving, and it especially means unmerited favor. It's like divine nepotism. Like you're God's favorite. It's totally unfair. Like you didn't do anything to earn it. And because of that, He's going to work in your favor.

I think sometimes we think, well then why does God talk a lot about sin and about fashioning us up into the image of Christ and doing what is good. Look, I think when we are caught up particularly in iniquity, which I think of as like a sin that we haven't wrestled with, that sometimes we lose spiritual authority in life. And that's not because God is mad at us or angry at us, it's because the blessing and the authority that we have in life, whether its raising the dead or inspiring people, like that power comes from heaven. And so heaven and iniquity can't co-mingle. It's like a chemistry issue. I talked about this a couple weeks ago.

And so it's almost like this. It's like imagine you're a millionaire, and you got a million bucks in your checking account, and you got a debit card. And that debit card you can go to Chipotle every single day and order everything you want without.. you can get extra guacamole, double steak, no problem. You don't care. You got a million bucks, right? So we think very often that when we mess up, God like wipes out that money. Its heaven! Heaven is available to you, but it's more like you lost your debit card. It's all available, it's all accessible, but you're stuck. You can't access it. And so when we don't submit to the authority of heaven, we lose our own authority. Our authority comes from heaven, therefore if we don't submit to the authority of heaven and do our best, we at times can lose our debit card. So get your debit card back! It's that easy. You just repent of your sin, and you turn your heart to God and you get back on the path, it's that simple.

I walk Back Bay when I do my sermons, often, to get some of my original thoughts. And this last week, it's weird, I park my car at the YMCA, and I bring my phone with me and I leave my wallet. And so I use my phone to buy Starbucks with the Starbucks APP and then I Uber back to my car. So it's about a four mile walk, and on the way my phone dies. I'm almost there, I'm sweating like a pig, and so I can't order stuff from Starbucks, and even worse, I can't Uber back. So I decide to do like the full walk, which is ten miles. I'm thirsty, like some lady goes by on a bike, I'm like staring at her water. At her bottle of water on the bike because I was thirsty. The thing is, I'm walking around Back Bay and I'm dying. I've got my Starbucks APP. I'm like it's so much, I could throw like a Starbucks party, but I can't access it, right? I can't get my Uber. And that's what happens, a lot of times.

So it's so easy. God made a way that if there's something dragging you down or taking away power, it's so easy. Just receive the free gift of forgiveness and fix your thoughts on destiny and on favor. Don't beat yourself up over your sin. Just ask for forgiveness and move on.

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And guess how many times God will forgive you? Seventy times seven, right? I mean He's just going to continue to forgive you and walk with you. He's never going to abandon you. You're His kid. He's on your side a hundred percent.

So if you've made mistakes either professionally or morally, or if you have imperfections, let those things go. Don't let it change your thinking. Your future is bright. You are loved, you are destined, you are called. Don't let the enemy put thoughts in your head that could destroy your future.

I stole this great quote from Hilary's Instagram page. And it hit me hard, it's a great thought. It says, "It will not be the fires that destroy our lives and our faith, it will be obsessing over not getting burned again that will." And that's what happens, right? That's in the thought life. We obsess, we focus on all that went wrong. We focus that we've always had this addiction, or we've never been good in our relationships, or whatever, or we've never been good at parenting and so our kids will never take us back or love us, or whatever. And we go ahead and we ruin our future in our thought life. Not you. That's not you. Change your thoughts, you'll change your world. Tend to your thinking, and you'll be tending to your future.

Corrie ten Boom said this: "If you have the faith, God has the power." Look, God always has the power whether or not we have the faith, but faith pleases God. And so when you decide to choose to have thoughts of faith rather than thoughts of despair, despite how you feel emotionally, which is really hard to do, that honors God. It opens up heaven with so much blessing and I just believe.. I just want you to know, and this is from the Holy Spirit – your future is good and bright. Don't throw it away by dwelling on bitter thoughts, by dwelling on un-forgiveness, by dwelling in despair, but foster new thoughts that will form the right future. Amen? Amen.

Lord, we thank you. We trust you and we believe in you. Give us the kind of thoughts that we ought to have. Help us to put our hope and what the scripture says and to believe it's true, despite the things that we face. And Lord, we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.