

A Divided Allegiance

by Shane Idleman

We need to make a choice between serving God and serving the world, and we need to surrender to Jesus in order to experience the joy and happiness that comes from being filled with the Spirit of God.

Duration: 49:40

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:19, Matthew 6:24, Luke 9:23, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 10:14, Galatians 5:17, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 1:8, 1 Peter 2:11, 1 John 2:15-17

Topics: "Idolatry", "Divided Allegiance"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the critical nature of allegiance in the Christian life, illustrating that one cannot serve both God and the world. He warns against divided loyalties, using examples from scripture and personal anecdotes to highlight the dangers of idolatry and the necessity of full surrender to Christ. Idleman calls for a return to extreme Christianity, where believers actively flee from anything that draws them away from God, and he challenges the congregation to examine their priorities and commitments. He stresses that true joy and fulfillment come from a complete allegiance to Jesus, urging listeners to choose their side in the ongoing spiritual battle.

Transcript

The title this morning is, A Divided Allegiance. A Divided Allegiance. You might be wondering what exactly, does that mean, where am I going with this? Well, let me give you an illustration.

What about if I said, I pledge allegiance to the United States of America and to North Korea? No? Not good? I pledge allegiance to the United States of America and China, or Russia. You see, it doesn't work. When there's allegiance, there's choosing a side.

There's picking a side. And there's a poem that's fairly long, I'm just going to read the opening. It says this, the church and the world walked far apart on the changing shores of time.

The world was singing a giddy song, and the church a hymn sublime. Come give me your hand, said the merry world, and walk with me this way. But the faithful church hid her gentle hands and solemnly answered nay.

I will not give you my hand at all, and I will not walk with you. Your way is the way that leads to death. Your words are all untrue.

However, towards the end of this poem, the church begins to reach out their hand and come together with the things of the world. And it begins to pull the church away. And there's another famous poem that says all the water in the world, no matter how hard it tries, will never sink a ship unless it gets inside.

No matter, I'm sorry, all the sin in the world, no matter how hard it tries, will never sink a Christian soul unless it gets inside. What you need to understand this morning is there is a war going on. There is a war for our soul.

Unless you haven't been paying attention, there is a war for the soul of our nation. Amen. Or our state.

There's a war going on. And there is not, in God's kingdom, there's not partial allegiance. With God's kingdom, there is allegiance.

You cannot serve two masters. Jesus said if you try to serve two masters, you'll love the one and hate the other, or be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and this world.

And that's a big challenge for us today. That's why I often say our blessings have become our curse. Because we are so blessed.

And if we're not careful, we'll begin to kind of teeter back and forth. And we've sworn allegiance to God, but the pull of the world is driving me back. So let's recap.

Last week was 1 Corinthians chapter 10. If you have your Bibles, 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 14. Therefore my beloved, therefore my beloved, Paul was telling the church in Corinth, flee from what? Idolatry.

Flee from idolatry. What does idolatry mean? It can mean double-minded. Double-minded or wavering.

Or going back and forth or being backslidden. So it's this idea of a Christian putting something where God should be. Has that ever happened to you? And Paul says flee idolatry.

Run from idolatry. Well, Shane, can you be a little bit more clear? Okay, you're ready to bring this home? Anything you put in your life that begins to draw you away from God and draw you to whatever this is, is idolatry. Go from serving God to serving idolatry.

So let's bring it home. Sports. Uh-oh.

In and of itself, not a big deal. Watch World Series, watch a game. But if that begins to draw you away from God and that becomes your God, your idol, you spend more time with that.

Your heart is there. Your passions are on that. For example, I'm going to be real curious to see if a World Series game is played on a Wednesday night and what attendance looks like.

Now, kind of joking but kind of not, right? Because it shows us what's the priority. Record it and watch it later. So we have these things that we put, what about work or career? And we put these things out there and it begins to, we begin to put more emphasis on this than on God.

So that's all idolatry is. It's anything that takes you away from God. I'm sure you each have your own areas of maybe negative influence, as we all do, that can be that, become that idol.

So Paul was telling the church, flee idolatry. In other words, don't contemplate it. Don't consider it.

Don't play with it. Flee. Get out of the way.

And people would say, that's pretty extreme. And I want to just remind you that you are living in extremely critical times. We need to bring back extreme Christianity.

Extreme Christianity where they would actually read the Bible and practice it. Where they might be in a two-hour worship service. Where they might get on their face before God and not eat breakfast and instead worship God.

People will say that's extreme. But that's biblical Christianity. We've dumbed it down so much to where we can make God comfortable according to the flesh.

The flesh wants things that are comfortable. Verse 18 is where we're picking up. Paul says, observe Israel after the flesh.

In other words, watch Israel. Watch how Israel is conducting herself. And after the flesh means not in a spiritual state.

It's the nation of Israel. It's a Jewish people. So watch, observe Israel after the flesh.

Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything? Or what is offered to an idol is anything? In other words, no. There's no such thing as false. There's no other God.

There's no other God but Yahweh, Elohim, Jesus, Lord, Savior. There's only one God. However, we can put up idols, as I said earlier, in our hearts and in our lives.

So the sacrifice here he's talking about in the Old Testament was divided. Some of it was on the altar. Okay, they would put some of the sacrifice on the altar.

And what happened to the other portion? Barbecue, hamburger, patties, probably tasted pretty good too. Fresh. But that's what they would do.

They would sacrifice some of the altar, some of the sacrifice and then partake or consume, have feasts with the leftover, the remains there. So they were basically partaking in what they were sacrificing. So what he's going to get to here is the Christians were also partaking in sacrifices to demons, to dead men that the Greeks would elevate.

Zeus or Apollos and these different gods, the Greeks would elevate them and they would sacrifice to the demons. And Paul was saying, don't go to those functions and sacrifice with the demons and eat of their food and then come and take communion. You can't join together God and the devil.

You can't join together Christ and demons. You can't have Baal and also looking at Christ as your rock of salvation. There has to be a allegiance to God.

So that's where he's going with this. But you might want to ask, you might wonder the point, Shane, why would they kill animals in the Old Testament? Well, something you have to know is that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. There's no removal of sin.

Don't ask me, I'm not the creator. But Leviticus gives us a little glimpse into this by saying that the life of the flesh, the life of the body is in the blood. Therefore, it requires the shedding of blood to remove the sin and guilt of sin.

So once a year, the high priest would go into the holies of holies and make atonement for the sins of the people. That blood covered the sins of the people temporarily. Remember what we talked about last week? The Old Testament looked ahead to Christ.

We look back to the point of redemption. Same Savior. So the covering of the bulls and the goats was a temporary covering for the sins of the people.

So that's why they sacrifice in the Old Testament. And so what he's saying here is when you consume it, you partake in it. You're connected to the sacrifice.

There's a representation there. The Jews ate meat sacrificed to God and therefore said they are owned by God. Does that make sense? They're partaking in the sacrifice to God.

They're eating of the meat that was sacrificed to God. Therefore, I'm partaking. I'm a part of this fellowship of believers, or in this case, the Jewish nation, and God is our God.

But then, now in the early church, they get rid of the sacrificial system and it's part of communion after Jesus died. They do communion in remembrance of me. So they would partake in communion and then go do things they shouldn't be doing.

Sound familiar? I need some honesty here at the 11 a.m. Okay, that's better. That's what really this is because we don't sacrifice. We don't go to, I hope you don't go to where they're sacrificing to demons.

There is a holiday coming up where they do that. And on that note, let's just get practical. It's hard for me to understand how a true spirit-filled Bible-believing Christian can have tons of gory stuff all over their house.

Skeletons and witches and witchcrafts and cauldrons and spells and all this. There's a divided alliance. There's a divided allegiance there.

But Shane, what about if my daughter wants to dress up as Mary and eat a Snickers bar? Okay, that's up to you. I'm not talking about that kind of stuff. I'm talking about where we are definitely crossing that line.

Do you know there are people who come to church and worship just like you did and listen and then go watch that new movie The Joker and be entertained by it and enjoy it? They'll listen to worship and then they'll put on godly stuff. What's going on here? A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Could that be a reason that God seems distant to you? Could that be why God appears to be distant and the Bible is boring? In church you just don't want the things of God? Could it be? I would submit to you that it could be.

Anytime there's a divided alliance or an allegiance, same word really, when it's divided a Christian is miserable. They're not joy-filled. They're not serving God.

They're not filled with the Spirit. The flesh is taken over. And so what happens is you have, I know you all know this, I don't need to point it out, but it fits the service, the sermon perfectly.

You have two competing allegiances inside of you. The Spirit of God says, I want to do this, right? Give example. The Spirit of God in you will say, I want to come to 6 a.m. morning worship.

But what would the flesh say? Oh, it's cold outside. I'm sleepy. I'm tired.

This pillow feels so good. No way. See? Competing.

The Spirit of God says, I want you to fast. Uh-oh. I want you to go without breakfast and lunch.

I just want you to seek me. And you're like, oh, I'm so excited to do that. Your flesh says, no, you're not.

No, you're not. Come back. Come back.

And so you have this divided. The Spirit says, go and apologize and be humble. Be broken before them.

And the flesh says, no, oh, no, no, sir. You get the last word in. You tell them who's right.

You show them. And there's a divided allegiance here. And God will not have a divided allegiance.

That's actually not even possible. Now, as a word of encouragement, on this side of Calvary, on this side of heaven, we cannot, I don't believe, walk in a perfect state. The church has taught that before.

It's called perfectionism, that you can eventually get to a point where you are sin-free. I'd like to meet that person. Come, come up.

Shane, that's me. I am sin-free. No, you're prideful and arrogant and you're a liar.

But we strive toward that. See, that's the difference. The problem in the church is not that we raise our standard and we miss it.

It's that we lower it and we hit it. But we are to strive for that. The Spirit in us groans, Abba, Father.

The Spirit in us wants to please God, wants to do the things of God. So, yes, when I fall, I get back up and I seek God. And He pulls me back.

I see you're pulling me back. I'm coming back to God. And it's this constant struggle of getting back in the will of God.

That's how you, would you ever hear the phrase, a joy-filled Christian, but you've never experienced it? That could be why. Listen, the most miserable times of my life, when I was right here and I knew I need to be there. I knew I need to be serving God more and surrendering to God more, but I was caught here and I was miserable.

Could it be that that's why anger rises up more easily? Yes. Bitterness and all the ugliness, all the ugliness. When the flesh, when you're leaning on this side and you're listening to the voice of the flesh, all the ugliness of the flesh comes out more easily.

When you're filled with the Spirit, what comes out? Love, joy, peace, contentment, gentleness, kindness, because you're submitting to the work of the Holy Spirit. See, it's not about, Shane, you want people to do all these good things and obedience. You have to submit to the work of the Spirit.

You have to, Holy Spirit, handcuff me. I'm yours. I'm Lord of your life.

In the New Testament, they use the word *doulos*, a slave to God. God, whatever you want me to do. And when you're filled with the Spirit, tremendous joy and happiness.

And then what happens when you switch allegiance and listen to this guy? It just drains you of spiritual life. And I believe that's why many Christians are miserable. The irony is this.

I know people through different organizations who have contact with, let's say, the underground church in China, or the underground church in Syria, or what's going on with the Kurds and different things. And those people, how are they joy filled? And they don't have one-tenth of what we have. They're filled with joy.

They'll meet at 4 a.m. and might leave by lunch. What? What's wrong with these people? They're filled with the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God doesn't wear this.

Good illustration for you. There's not a timetable or time clock trying to put God in a box. It's somebody who has committed their life to Christ.

And so he goes on to say, verse 20. You know, but let me on this point. I heard a quote this week.

I wanted to just share it with you. It said this, we repent, we repent enough to be forgiven, but we do not surrender enough to be changed. Well, that might be a prophetic word for someone in here.

That might be a prophetic word for someone in here. Shane, do you believe in that? Well, yeah, unless you want to cut out 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 out of your Bible. I believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit still are operational today, of course, within the context of Scripture.

But many people repent enough to be forgiven, but do we surrender enough to be changed? Here's what this means. God, I cry out. They come to the altar and cry about it, but they don't go home and live it out.

A.W. Tozer said that. Don't come up here and cry about it. Go home and live it out.

So many people, oh, God, forgive me. Thank you. I'm forgiven.

Now I'm just going to keep living the way I want to live. Now, theologically, there's a problem there because when somebody is truly converted, there is genuine fruit. A true Christian will have a little bit of fruit growing somewhere.

I don't think it's possible to be a believer in Jesus Christ and have zero fruit. And there was a big debate probably in the 1980s, 90s. Some of you might remember this.

John MacArthur fought for it, or he actually taught on it, which is lordship, salvation, which I would tend to agree with his position on it because some people would say, you can be saved, but Jesus doesn't have to be your Lord. Really? I have to turn my Bible in. I've got the wrong edition here.

Because Jesus says, when you follow me, you count the cost. He said, actually, don't follow me until you first count the cost. What king goes into battle without first counting the cost? And here's the cost, church.

You will have to deny yourself, pick up your cross, which is dying to self, and follow me wholeheartedly with your heart. I become your master. You are my slave.

That sounds to me like there is a cost. That is the lordship of Jesus Christ. Every knee, every tongue confesses that Christ is almost your Lord.

Jesus saved me, but he's not Lord of my life. Then I question your salvation. I truly do.

Because somebody who is genuinely converted, the Holy, see, here's what you've missed, the Holy Spirit in you, Christ, Abba, Father, you can't shut that up any more than you can go stop Niagara Falls. How? Because Christ is Lord. We repent enough to be forgiven, but do we surrender enough to be changed? Don't raise your hand.

Don't answer this. Don't go to like this to your spouse. But do you truly need to be changed in an area? Do you truly need to be changed in an area that you've been fighting a long time? Think about that.

Have you surrendered that area to Jesus? And the answer most people say is no, I don't want to. Because sin feels good for a season. Remember this side? Anytime you want to give up something, the Holy Spirit wants you to give up, does the flesh want you to give it up? No, it reminds you of all the good old days.

Oh, remember the good old days. I tell often people that say they're coming out of alcoholism. The devil's going to show you the party, not the hangover where you slept in your throw up.

It's always the party. Oh, remember the good old, remember. Oh, that's right.

No, no, he doesn't show you the end resolved. He shows you the immediate gratification. That's the hook of the flesh.

It's always the immediate gratification of the flesh. That's how it operates. So once you get through those pressure filled moments of the flesh pulling on you, and as you deny the flesh, you're filled with the Spirit of God.

That's how it works. But we want the opposite. Fill me with the Spirit, then I'll say no.

No, it's a pain of discipline and the reward of following Christ. So verse 20, rather that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. And I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

That just doesn't sound good. Or is that just me? Just does not sound good. Fellowship.

What is fellowship? It's a friendly association with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.

Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? So again, these demons were wicked men, heathen gods who were dead men. So to me, the question goes out, Church, why play with fire? Why play with fire? Remember when Elisha called down fire on Mount Carmel? And he told the people, the children of Israel, he said, how long will you waver between two opinions? How long will you falter? Basically, how long will you jump back and forth to two different opinions? He said, when the God who answers by fire, when He answers by fire, and He says, I am the true and living God, how long will you waver between two opinions? If God be God, follow Him. But if Baal is God, follow Him.

Make up your mind you cannot serve two masters. Full surrender is not an option in the Bible. It is the only recourse for a soldier in battle who says, I will serve you and you only.

What soldier is going to serve the enemy and the victor? Back to North Korea, United States, I'm going to serve you, United States, but I'm going to serve you, North Korea. That would not work. By actually doing that, you don't serve the United States.

You are a detriment to that office. Why play with fire? Why entertain wickedness? So the application is crystal clear. God will not have a divided allegiance.

God will not have a divided allegiance. I don't preach like this to make you angry. I preach like this to make you convicted.

So the change takes place. Charles Spurgeon said, discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong. Rather, it's telling the difference between right and almost right.

See, that's how the enemy works in the life of a believer. You're not going to go from here and go to a satanic temple, right? I hope. If you are, come see me afterwards.

We need some serious times of prayer afterwards. Clear-cut lines of demarcation. It's a no-brainer.

But sometimes the good things or things that don't seem a big deal, those are the things that can pull the Christian away. Remember what I said? All the water in the world, no matter how hard it tries, will never sink the ship unless it gets inside. No matter how much sin or evil influences in the world will ever sink your soul, no matter how hard it tries, unless it gets inside.

So it's that the world coming inside of us. And this is why I talk a lot about entertainment. Just to be honest with you, what we watch and listen to plays a huge role in our spiritual health.

Did you know that? Where does that word entertainment come from? Entertain me, meaning I'm going to open myself up to it. I'm going to enjoy it. And as a result, I'm going to be influenced by it.

So if something is not good, not God, not God honoring, and you begin to be entertained by it, where will your heart start to drift? Towards those things. For example, I just did this yesterday. There's a famous singer who came to know the Lord recently.

At least they said he did. It sounds legitimate. And I forgot how to pronounce his name again.

Thank you. Kanye West, right? So who's this guy? I mean, I kind of know him out, Kardashian or whatever. By going YouTube and hear one song, I'm like, oh boy, that's not good for me.

Delete. Boy, he's going to have to go through YouTube, makes a lot of delete, but he's gonna have to delete a lot of videos if when God gets, you know, keeps working his heart. But had I sat there and said, oh, this is, let's put this sermon prep aside.

And let's listen and watch these things, entertained. See, the door of temptation swings both ways. You can enter or exit.

And that's our competing voices right now are in this area of entertainment or staying busy with the wrong things. Did you know that even a good thing, if it pulls you away from God, is not a good thing? And there's, and so there's a fight here for this divided allegiance. I think Paul, I believe Paul knew, obviously, Deuteronomy 32, 15.

And he was thinking of this when he wrote this from Deuteronomy, when the children of Israel were just coming out of Egypt, God delivered them. God said, you have grown fat and thick and sleek, but then you forsook God who made you and you scorn the rock of your salvation. They made him jealous with strange gods.

With abominations, they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons who were not gods, to gods whom they have not known, new gods who came later. When your fathers did not dread, you neglected the rock who begot you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.

So he saw the same thing in the New Testament happening to the church. Is that interesting? This kind of wakes me up sometimes. The New Testament is not written to unbelievers.

There are passages, there are warnings, there are some things, but the vast majority of the gospels, it says, O Theopolis, Luke talks about, I write to you so that you would believe. So they are writing somewhat to the believers, but the Pauline epistles, what they would call are church related. This is a message to the church.

Paul is talking to us. Can you imagine Paul talking to the church, the same things? So the application here, there is a battle for your allegiance. Like I said, you're getting up every day going to battle.

Okay, I'm gonna wake you up this morning. I'm not gonna have you get up and do jumping jacks, but I'm gonna remind you that you are going to battle every day you get up. Every day you get up, you are going to battle.

Are you married? You're going to battle for your marriage. Do you have kids? Guess what? In this culture, they're being bombarded by information. Are you single? Guess what? You're going to battle.

Are you dealing with something? You are getting up in the morning and you are going to battle. That's why it's so important to submit our lives to Christ and to obey the word of God. But anytime I say that, you get the person out there, you know, the armchair quarterback at home, the blogger that's all negative.

Oh, it's all about obedience. Obedience, obedience, come on Shane. Haven't you heard about grace? Yeah, but actually when I live under grace, I live under a higher standard.

You want to obey God. So I'm going to put a few scriptures up on the screen. I didn't find the references because it was a quick thing, but it says this, submit yourself to God and resist the devil.

He must flee. Hmm, that sounds like I need to do something. Endure temptation as a good soldier.

Deny the flesh and be filled with the spirit. Do not yield to temptation or make provision for it. Crucify it, flee it, flee from sexual immorality.

Don't be brought under the power of temptation. Peter is so bold to say this, beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles, meaning you're living in a kingdom that is not yours. You do not live in this kingdom.

You need to abstain from passions of the flesh, which war against your soul. So call me off, call me legalistic, call me extreme, but the Bible paints a picture of obedience. And there's something in the church known as hyper grace.

Have you heard that term? Hyper grace, you could call it sloppy agape. You could call it sloppy grace. Basically what it is, is that okay? Did I say something wrong? Okay.

It's just, just do whatever you want. Leave us, Shane, leave us alone with that convicting. It's basically, I believe everything in the Bible except what convicts me.

Everything. Jesus's words in red are cool, except the ones that convict me. Leave people alone.

Let God deal with them. It's hyper grace, because the grace of God is taught. But so is obedience.

So is holiness before God. So is humility before God. And you understand, would you truly understand God's grace? Once you really understand God's, who's going to want to abuse that grace? To me, the only ones that want to abuse God's grace, either they're not converted, or they don't want to live for him.

They want to enjoy their sin. And it's hard for me to see how a genuine believer can want to enjoy their sin. They don't actually.

Somebody who's genuinely has the whole, because remember, a genuine believer has the Holy Spirit in them. And you grieve and you quench the Spirit of God that you, it's a place of misery for most people. Did you know that the point of spiritual warfare is to get you to deny your allegiance to God or wound you in battle? Isn't this about sides? It really is.

And you're going to see in our nation, wait, you think this year is hard. Wait till next year. Wait till right around November.

What's going to happen? All hell is going to keep breaking loose, because things are being magnified. I don't care what side of the aisle you're on, you have to understand that this is a fight for the soul of our nation. And it's going to get worse.

And Christians need to be that voice of truth, that voice of humility. But lest I go on too much and forget about this, I want to remind you that the ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ. Ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ.

We don't, we don't align with a certain party, and that's our full allegiance. We don't align with a certain group, a certain denomination. Ultimately, my allegiance is with Jesus Christ.

And we need to stop asking and wondering, is God on our side? But am I on his side? Is Jesus Christ Lord of my life? And I gave you some scriptures as a handout because it comes up sometimes. Is Jesus truly God? Of course he is. John 20, 28, Thomas answered and said to him, my Lord and my God.

Colossians 2, 9, for in him all the fullness of the deity dwells in bodily form. So the fullness of God was seen in Jesus Christ. John 10, I and the Father are one.

And the religious leaders accused him. They said, you being a man, make yourself out to be God. And in the beginning, John 1, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.

Is not, it was a God, it is God. The Word was God. Let me just read it for you.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And you have more scriptures. They're showing that Jesus is Lord.

Why is this a big deal? Because there's people knocking on your front door telling you he's not. Did you know that? Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus is not God. He is Michael the Archangel.

Can you show me that in scripture? No. Mormons believe the same thing, that Jesus is not really God. And there's so many different beliefs.

Well Shane, shouldn't we be, shouldn't you not say that? Shouldn't we all just be getting along, saying kumbaya? No. Not when, you have to separate who is truly, Jesus is Lord. This is interesting.

These groups rarely talk about Jesus. They'll talk about Joseph Smith, or they'll talk about Jehovah. They're not Jesus, because he, worshiping angels is not allowed in the Bible.

They worshiped him. A creature cannot die for his creation. Jesus was before the foundation of the earth.

Many avoid his name, and that's going to increase in our culture, is it not? Many avoid his name. That's why you have to proclaim his name. That's why you have, the Bible doesn't say back away, back off.

It says bring the light into the workplace. Bring the light into the school districts. Bring the light of the gospel every area of life.

Now use wisdom, of course. Be selective. Use wisdom.

Pray. But the ultimate, the ultimate, when the day is over, we have our allegiances to Christ. So to end with this point, it's this.

Kingdoms are colliding. Draw your line in the sand. And I want to offer four things here.

If you're trapped by the enemy, if you're trapped by the enemy, you've been on this side. Come back home. Come back to the other side.

Come back home. If you're a POW, cry out to the rock of your salvation. What is a POW if you don't know? It's a prisoner of war.

You cry out to the rock of your salvation. That's one thing I've loved that I've been seeing through the first six chapters, first six books in the big, big book of Psalms, the first six chapters, is this crying out to God. You have this attitude of, oh God.

You know what they used to say this? Oh God, would you rend the heavens? God, would you come down? That's a little scary, isn't it? I'm not scared of that. I'm more scared if he doesn't do that. I'm more scared if the heavens stay brass and God doesn't do anything and church is comfortable and nobody changes.

That scares me. But I love to pray the prayer, oh God, would you rend the heavens? Would you break them open and would you come down to send upon your people, convict and uplift and build and relinquish the enemy's grip on the homes of many people? Oh God, rend the heavens. Make that your prayer this week and mean it.

And if you came to church bored today, I want to wake you up. God will not have a divided allegiance. What side of the fence are you on? Why are you bored in church when the living God is here? When his word is living and active, it comes alive.

His word, his word is like a sword that divides. What's it divide? The intents and the thoughts of the heart. This is a living word, a vibrant word.

And then number three, if you're MIA, what is that? Missing in action. Get back up and fight again. Can I just, can I just encourage you this morning? I've been missing, I've been missing in action many times.

I've been, I've been wanting to give up over the last 20 years. What we call the funk. You ever said that? I get, I'm in a funk.

I don't know where that came from or what. I mean, hopefully it's not something real bad, but it, you know, you're in this spiritual decline and you're missing in action. And I might feel like it may be sometimes differently than you because of what I do.

But that's why I love like Jeremiah, when he said that the people, God, he said, the people are not listening to me. The people don't want to cherish your word. The people are mocking me.

The people want to kill me. I'm tired of it. Have you ever, have you preached? Have you ever talked to people about God and done things for God and nobody's listening? Family members, friends, it's like, forget it.

I can relate to Jeremiah. You know what Jeremiah said? I'm not going to speak your word anymore. Jeremiah, read it.

I'm not going to tell you a chapter, so you read the whole thing. I believe it's later chapters 30, 30 right in there. But he told God, he goes, I'm not going to speak your word anymore.

I'm done. And then you all know the famous verse after that, but, but his word was in my heart like a burning fire. It's shut up in my bones.

I'm weary of holding it back. And I will not. Amen.

Praise God. And then he goes on to say, he goes on to say why he goes on to say why he said, but the Lord, but the Lord, awesome God, the Lord, the creator of heaven, earth, the gray, the Lord who holds the armies in the palm of his hands, who holds nations in the palm of his hands. That Lord is on my side.

He said, my enemies will trip and they will stumble and they will not prevail. My enemies will become confused and I will mock them and taunt them. Their embarrassment will never be forgotten.

So see, Jeremiah strengthened himself in the Lord. Again, he remembered all that's right. God's on my side.

So I don't care society. If you're against me, school districts, if you're against me, Hollywood, the government, Washington, Sacramento, if you're against me, guess what? Me plus God is majority. Try that one out for size.

And you remember who is God. You strengthen yourself in God and who he is with shade. I don't know who he is and live in his word, live in his word.

Let that word deposit into your soul. Read the Psalm, read the Proverbs, read the New Testament and get filled with the spirit of God. You're filled with everything else.

I just talked to so many people and they say the same thing. I don't have time for that. We just had time for four episodes of Breaking Bad on Netflix.

See, it's not you don't have the time. You don't want to make the time for God. It's an issue of the heart.

Nobody in America should say I don't have the time. You make time for things that are important. The average family in America, check studies, check the research, has the media on, the television, mean seven hours a day.

But nobody has any time for God. One word leaps out to me, idolatry. Idolatry, putting something else in place of God.

And we call it a 60 inch entertainment center. Joking, but not really. I have a TV.

I'm not saying that. But you have to be very, very careful of where you give your time and your energy. You will never be disappointed when you make God a priority.

When has God ever let you down? When has God ever failed you? Never. And then finally, I have to close out with this group. If you're on the wrong side, if you're on the wrong side, maybe you have religion, but not relationship.

You've been serving the God of this world. You come to church. I mean, good people do that, right? But you've been on the wrong side of this battle.

It's time to switch allegiance. And the Bible is clear. It says you have to repent of your sin.

What does that mean? I'm on the wrong side. I need to be on the right side. I repent of my sin.

I say, Christ, you save me. I have a form of godliness, but I deny the power thereof. I have a form of Christianity.

I have religion, but not a relationship. I know you in name, but if I were to die, I don't know if I would be with you. I don't know if I would be with you.

Be very clear on this issue. This is so important. Souls are at stake.

Eternity is at stake. Do you truly know him? Do you truly know him? See, when the Holy Spirit comes in you and resides in you, it cries, Abba, Father, for you. My flesh says, get away from me, Father.

The Holy Spirit cries, Abba, Father. The Holy Spirit gives you groanings that can't be uttered, and you cry out to God. Jesus said something very interesting this week.

I just chewed on it. He said, whoever, you can't enter, basically you can't enter the kingdom of heaven unless you embrace it as a little child. Who does not enter as a child can by no means enter it.

What is he talking about? Well, how does a child, how does a little child act when you tell them something? I can give my six-month-old a Snickers bar and a broccoli. She'll grab the same thing. She's not smart enough yet to know the difference.

I can give her a pencil. I can give her whatever I give her, she will grab. Whatever I give her, she will eat.

Complete trust in the loving parents. They enter like a child. You enter heaven like a child.

How dare we question God? If you have questions, bring them to God, please. I have some. But the attitude behind it, questioning God, bitter at God, resentful at God, with a clay, tell the potter, why have you made me such? So you come as a child saying, God, thank you for your grace.

Thank you for your, I'll take whatever you give me. That should be our position. God, whatever my lot is, I will, if whatever you give me, I will take it.

God, whatever you give me, I prayed many times. I prayed, God, why? You want to know my number one prayer? You're not going to believe this. Me and Morgan prayed, I think sometimes, why? Why me? Why did you choose me to do this? I don't feel adequate.

I don't feel gifted. I'm just a nobody, trying to tell everybody about somebody. Why? Why me? Why would, and I'll never get an answer, I don't think.

But see, you just reach out and take whatever he gives you. In my brokenness and my failings, still having a hard time reading and writing and getting through an hour sermon without messing up is exhausting, you know, and just, Lord, why I'm so broken before you. He said, that's what I want.

That's what I need. Because see, now, now my power can be magnified because you're nothing. You're nothing.

Do you realize that? I do. I realize I am nothing, nothing. If the Spirit of God were to vanish, can you imagine? I would hit the next liquor store and you would never see me again.

Let's be honest, if the Spirit of God vanished from my life, and I was left with myself, I would be dead this week. Because all kinds of hell would break loose on a soul that's given over to destruction. So you must enter the heaven, you must enter the kingdom as a little child.

Take what God is giving you. Maybe that's a good word for a believer here. Take what God is giving you.

Fully surrender your life. Oh, but he's going to send me to Africa if I do that, Shane. Well, then you'll be, you'll have tremendous joy because that's the calling of your heart.

Oh no, he's gonna, he's gonna have me do what you do. Oh no, I'm not so, that, it'll be the calling of your heart. 20 years ago, I could not speak in front of anybody.

That was when they list like, that's the worst fear of many people. That was my worst fear when I was a kid in high school. I did not want to stand up.

Don't take me to the chalkboard. I dreaded, dreaded going before anybody. I never did anything before anybody.

I cheated my way through high school. I was quiet. Don't, don't put me in front of people.

And guess what God does? But once I believed and was filled with the Holy Spirit, his word was in my heart like a burning fire. I was shut up. I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.

See that burning fire. God will give you a lineup with your gifting, what he's called you to do. There's nothing to fear with surrendering to God.

The fear comes from the enemy planting those seeds. All in one month. I've talked to people that tell me, well Shane, then I'll have to give up my marijuana.

Oh well, well then I'll have to give up my alcohol. I really enjoy it. Then I'll have to give up my pornography.

See, there's always, the enemy always thinks, oh like that's better. That's better. See they'll plant the thoughts that the full surrender life is not what you want.

It's actually, it's the life. When you hear about the victorious Christian life, the spirit-filled life, it always has to do with full surrender. If you can show me some other lifestyle in the Bible that God blesses, I'm all ears.

But I'm reading the New Testament twice a year for 20 years. I'm reading books and all I get is the same thing. Count the cost.

Follow me. Fully surrender. My burden is light.

My yoke is light. Cast your cares upon me and I will guide you. I will direct you.

I will be the captain of your ship and I will steer you in the right direction. The Holy Spirit leads and guides and intercedes and directs. Abba Father says, God the Father says, I want to be your father.

I want to build you up. I want to strengthen you. When you get down, I will build you up.

When you go through the storm, I'm going to be right there with you when the storm comes upon your house. As long as you built your house on the rock, when the winds come, when the waves beat against that rock, it will not fall. The house will not fall.

Why? Because it's built on the solid rock of Jesus Christ. See, the storm keeps coming. The same storms that come to you, guess where they come? To me.

To all people. We're not out, we're not storm free. No, I'm going to keep going so I better stop.

Here's what we're going to do though. We had three at the first service. Three spur-of-the-moment baptisms.

And we have clothes for you. We have towels. I want to challenge you.

If you want to be baptized this morning, let's do it. Make that profession of faith, I'm choosing my alliance or my allegiance to Jesus Christ. I'm professing it in front of others.

I'm a little nervous. That's okay. It's okay to be nervous.

Maybe you did it when you were five or six. It didn't mean anything to you, do it again. Be baptized.

Make that confession of faith. Do you know when I was baptized? 2000. The year 2000.

Coming back to the Lord, I was baptized 19 years ago, Christmas time. Even though I did it as a child. So we just want to have that available.

So if you want to get baptized, we have towels, we have everything you need. If God is wanting you to do that in that He's convicting you. Don't keep ignoring that.

Well, Shane, what's the big deal? I don't know. Jesus commands it. That's a pretty big deal.

Anytime I ignore what Jesus commands, I'm quenching and grieving the Spirit of God. Anytime Jesus tells me to do something and I don't do it, I'm in open rebellion. Now, of course, there are different consequences for things.

And I've even met people, Shane, I don't want to get, I'm not ready for that yet. I don't want to get baptized yet. What does that mean? You want to sow your wild oats for a while and you just want to have fun for a while and then you'll get baptized.

See, that's the wrong attitude. The attitude should be, I'm a follower of Jesus Christ and I'm identifying with Him. I'm choosing my allegiance and I'm getting baptized.

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