

Being Set Free of Voluntary Slavery

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the struggle with addiction in the modern economy, highlighting the norm of overconsumption and dependence. It delves into the concept of addiction as voluntary slavery, where individuals feel guilty yet unable to stop. The sermon discusses the need for accountability, avoiding triggers, and falling forward in faith. It also explores the power of prayer and fasting in breaking free from bondage and seeking a deeper relationship with God.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:18, Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 3:11, Romans 13:14, Joel 2:12, Matthew 17:21, Philippians 3:13, John 7:38

Topics: "Breaking Free from Addiction", "The Power of Prayer and Fasting"

Description

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Transcript

Here's an article from The Spectator. It's a secular media outlet. I don't recommend looking on there very often.

But they had an interesting title, and I just wanted to read more. It said, The Modern Economy is Built on Addiction. And it said this, The mechanism of addiction, the craving, the overconsumption, the dependence, the chasing of imaginary highs and the diminishing return of the old reward loop are not just weird deviations from the norm, they are the norm today.

They are what the modern economy is built on. The biggest tech companies in the world are built on the psychology of addiction. Did you know if you're on Facebook and you get a like, that does something to the chemicals in your brain? You want more likes.

More likes, more followers, more this. And for those of you not on social media, this still applies because we are addicted to what the news is telling us and so many things on social media. And I don't know about you, but every time now Amazon comes to the door, I forget that I even ordered something on Amazon.

There's this addiction that has really taken over our culture, but I'm going to talk more about different types of addictions. Let me define it real quick. Biblical Counseling Coalition, the Biblical Counseling Coalition said this, the Bible can sympathize with this feeling of bondage.

Anyone been there? The bondage of addiction. Yet, it never avoids holding us morally responsible for our actions. So on one hand, we're bound.

The Bible is sympathetic, but on the other hand, it recognizes that we are responsible for our actions. A person who is addicted to certain things feels both guilty and yet unable to stop. Both responsible for their actions, but out of control.

And God holds us morally responsible for our actions, but He also recognizes the ways in which sinful choices can enslave us. In other words, Paul said, whoever you choose to obey becomes your master. And there's a choice there.

Addictions are best described as voluntary slavery. And that's where that phrase for this comes from. Voluntary slavery.

It seems like an oxymoron, doesn't it? Because if you're in slavery, it's usually not something you volunteer for. But that's what addiction is. And the deeper you get in, the stronger the stronghold becomes.

You've heard the word stronghold in the Bible. That's what it means. It means something has a stronghold on you.

And that's why Paul talks about taking thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ and demolishing strongholds and principalities and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. If you open the door to something, now it has entrance.

And if you keep that door open and don't close it, it becomes a stronghold. That's why those, it's actually pretty common. You'd be amazed at how common it is that those who open the door to like new age philosophy or horoscopes.

Talk to somebody, not talk to them, but I heard them at the store like, oh, I wonder what my sign is saying about me today. You know, whatever they are. I don't even know how that works.

And they're opening the door to these things and demonic and darkness and even some of the things we watch are just full of darkness. And so you begin to open that door and the stronghold gets stronger and stronger. Same with addiction.

We've seen it here many times. Somebody gets prescribed something for a pain. Pain meds, pain medicine.

And then what happens after you're on that for a little while? Becomes now a stronghold. And now my back still hurts. Can I get some more? Now my knee's out.

Can I get some more? And we open that door, it becomes a stronghold in our life. And I believe God can help us break free of these things. And so that's really what addiction is, biblically speaking.

It's a stronghold. I believe Webster defines addiction as giving yourself over to a habit and then becoming dependent upon that habit. And this kind of word, stronghold addiction, is not a friend of believers.

In other words, as a believer in Jesus Christ, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you. We all know that. Most of us know that.

But there's also something the Bible refers to as the old nature. The old man. Don't say that about your spouse.

My old man. We can all say that. It's that something inside of me that's dead in some sense, but it's also alive if I feed it.

It begins to grow and it begins to dominate if it grows more than we are filled with the Spirit of God. So you have these Paul talks about in Galatians. I'll be in there at some point.

And how you have this war inside of you. Anybody ever? Can you relate or is it just me? Every head in this building should be shaking, yes. Oh, Shane, I want to fast, but In-N-Out is calling my name.

That Panda Express sure looks good. That Vente Starbucks Frappuccino, Mochaccino, Double Frap, Krispy Kreme, whatever. Something wants that.

The carnal mind is at war with God. It's at enmity with God. The flesh says, feed me so I can destroy you.

The flesh is not something to be trusted. You cannot negotiate with the flesh. It wants to negotiate, but you being filled with the Spirit of God, the more we give into the flesh, the more we quench and grieve the Spirit.

So that's why a lot of people, they don't feel the fire of the Spirit. They don't have that fire of the Spirit. They're quenching and grieving the Spirit.

And their flesh has been given full reign, full control. And so that's the battle we see here. And that's basically what addiction is, is when the flesh is in control.

And the flesh wants you to do... I don't know about you, but the flesh likes to lead me just about every waking hour. I get up in the morning. Do I crave a very healthy smoothie? Or a venti and a chocolate pop thing from Starbucks? A couple hours later, pizza? Or do I crave something? See, the flesh... Shane, don't go into church today.

Colin's sick. Go lay down. Go snooze.

Go take three naps. The flesh is always against productivity. It draws us away from God.

So that's the battle within. And addiction is often when that is winning. And that's pulling you in the wrong direction.

And what's interesting about this kind of message is there's a very broad audience here. From food addiction to nicotine, from caffeine to cannabis, from alcohol to oxy, and from gaming to gambling. All different types of things that were bound by many of us.

Most people are addicted or fighting one of these things I mentioned. The reason is, it usually responds to something in the brain. You've heard of neurotransmitters or serotonin, like the likes you see on

Facebook.

But that's why some people with food, and I've shared before, that's one of my struggles is eating too much. My body likes to eat a lot of food when it can. And so, that would be my struggle for sure.

And it makes me feel better. I don't know about you, but if I get something, I feel better. If I'm moody, I get something, I feel better.

If I'm having a hard day, I'll eat something. And so that can turn into, you start to rely on that. So the audience is broad, all of you, but the cure is very narrow.

The cure is, the biblical course will fit all types of addictions, or you can break free of any type of addiction. Just like the audience is very broad when it comes to health-related illnesses. That's in the news right now.

Big time in the news. Our health care system, the hospitals, all this. But you can look at diabetes, heart disease, actually, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure, obesity, and all these, you go down the list, all these different things, a lot of them are really related to dietary and lifestyle choices.

So one solution can fix all of these different things. Not everything, of course, but we see the audience is broad, but the narrow path will lead us in the right direction. Now, of course, pornography comes into play here, which is a huge issue.

Now that we have the internet and all of that, and all of these things are gonna help you in whatever area you're addicted with. But when I was researching this, I was stumbling, I was looking for addiction, and I came across an interesting article. The article was on thegamer.com. Anybody heard what thegamer.com is? Have you heard that? If you've got kids, you might know what it is.

And I get emails a lot from parents, like, you need to talk about gaming addiction. My 24-year-old is in the living room for 12 hours a day. I can't get him to go get a job and work.

And so that's an addiction. So is gambling. Have you ever seen somebody ruin their life by gambling? It's terrible.

I mean, they'll go to Vegas with 5,000. Oh, if I can just get on red, spin that roulette, spin that roulette, and it's black. And then they get paid again, but next time, next time I'm gonna hit it big.

By then, their wife's gone. They're losing their house. And so all these addictions take over.

So I found this ironic because it has to do with gaming addiction, but it applies to other addictions as well. Because see, they all fit into the same camp. So here's how to know if you're addicted to gaming, or how are you addicted to alcohol, or you fill in the blank.

You use it as an emotional crutch. You use it as an emotional crutch. That's why most people emotionally run to their favorite addiction.

Those who have a problem with alcohol will run to that. You know, they wanna feel better, they wanna relax. There's an emotional, I need to get that high, or that hit of marijuana.

I'm smelling it all the time now. I go walking, it's like, it's legal. So now it's everywhere.

It's not leading to a lot of productivity. Now, medicinal uses I'm not talking about, but those who have just chosen to become addicted to it, it's an emotional, they need that high. Your body begins to start to rely on it.

And that's why we go to certain things every morning. Anybody, you wanna test this sometime? Just try not having your coffee tomorrow morning. You tell me.

Right, we get used to things. We have to have these things. So it's used as an emotional crutch.

The next thing, you find yourself unable to quit. Hello? That's a no-brainer. And you're suffering physically because of the, fill in the blank.

In this case, it's gaming. But you can put anything in there. Physically suffering, what happens is, your body physically, when you give over, let's say to gaming, they're on it eight hours a day, they're not eating good, their life's falling apart.

Same thing with other types of addictions. That addiction becomes the main focus, and then you are depleted. If you look at those coming off of crystal meth, or we have that crack cocaine or even alcohol, there is a nutritional depletion.

The nutrients are being depleted. And so that's why, even though some of these people, they look slender, they're not healthy. Because they are depleted physically.

So any time you're giving over, pornography will really harm you physically. If we had time, we could break down what that does mentally in the body and things like that. Also, here's a sign that you might be addicted to gaming.

Lying to others about how much you play. Or any other addiction. Lying to others about how much you use.

Constantly thinking about the addiction. Decreased performance in work or school. There's a decrease in performance.

Aggression towards others who limit your gaming. Or aggression towards others who limit or stop your addiction. What happens when you tell somebody no more of something they like? I tried that on my two and a half year old and it is not fun.

I've never seen a tensor tantrum so bad. But that's what happens because it's that stronghold. And when that stronghold is denied, anger comes out.

It's actually a lot of times a stronghold. Now be careful here, but often a stronghold can have demonic roots. There's a demonic root to a lot of strongholds.

That's how the enemy works. He holds on strongly to certain areas he doesn't want to let you go. Why is this such a big deal? Well, let me tell you.

Addiction ruins productivity. Addiction ruins productivity. If a person wants to be a productive Christian, they want to do things for God.

I'm assuming most of you would like to know what God's will is for your life. You'd want to do things for God. You want to serve.

You want to pray for people in Vons or Trader Joe's or Costco. You want to be out in your community and you're seeing the captives set free and you're having the power of God work mightily through your life. But most people, vast majority of Christians do not experience that.

A lot of times we're quenching and grieving the Spirit of God. We're quenching and grieving. If you've been coming here a while, you know I often say that if you don't like what I'm saying, it's because you need to hear what I'm saying.

I'm not trying to build a big audience. I know a lot of people don't return, but my job is just to speak the truth in love and let the chips fall where they may and help people. If pastors are trying to be popular, we're not going to help anybody.

Because if I want to be popular, I'm going to worry about nickels and noses and not offending and not upsetting people. But the Word of God leaves no grounds for that. He actually told Timothy to speak the Word, all of the Word, everything, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but they will look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear, not what they need to hear.

In order to wake up from our spiritual slumber, sometimes we need that wake up call. Have you ever had wake up calls? The hotel phone just rings very loud. When I was in construction, I was 16, 17, my dad would come in and just turn on the light.

Get up, let's go to work. I'm dead asleep. Didn't matter.

Pull off the blanket. Get up. Lights on.

Let's go. We've got to be out in the car in 20 minutes. Wake up call.

He said, wake me up. Why? To change my direction. To get me out of my sleep, out of my slumber.

He didn't come in and leave the lights off and turn on Beethoven real slow, real quiet. See, what's happening in many churches is we are luring them back to sleep. Back to sleep.

Go back to sleep. Don't do anything great for the kingdom of God. Don't ruffle feathers.

Just stay the way you are. I mean, let's truly think about it. If we look at the New Testament church and the church today, where's the spiritual power? Church is not coming to church once a week and leaving and saying, oh, I heard something.

I'm good. It's actually being changed from the inside out and bringing that change into your community. So let's look at a few biblical points and I'll be out of your way.

Sound good? Number one, freedom by removing excuses. You can find freedom by removing excuses. This is by far one of the top points of the sermon.

Own it, repent, and don't repeat. What I mean by that, I mean, it sounds so easy, but do you know how many people stay bound in their addiction with excuses? Just a couple weeks ago, I talked to people at this church. Oh, yeah, but you don't know my spouse.

You don't know how hard it is at home. You know, these kids drive me crazy. I need my 12-pack of Coors banquet.

I need this relief. You don't know. Oh, I have to take this because of my pain or my back.

And I'm not being incensive to any of that, but just make sure it's a legitimate excuse and not an excuse to continue in the addiction. We make excuses. Don't lay a guilt trip on me.

It's not my fault. Don't lay a guilt trip on me. They say, it's not my fault.

Have you heard that? I knew this was happening and I told you. I've already got people mad at me from my sermon last Sunday and the Sunday before when I said that alcoholism is not a disease because you just exposed the enemy. You removed the excuses.

And when you remove those excuses, I wonder if I still have that. I want to read it to you because I think it's so important. I didn't read the first two services.

But if you go back and listen to those messages, oh well, you're off the hook. Basically, it goes down the list of it's the only disease you can buy in a store. It's the only disease that will make you harm your family.

It's the only disease you can say no to. It's not a disease. And what happens is we can make excuses.

If I have this disease, there's nothing I can do about it. And the Bible doesn't say it's a disease. And so we remove excuses.

So many people were trying to help throw it off on others or make excuses. Proverbs 28, verse 13, whoever conceals their sin does not prosper. Whoever hides their sin does not prosper, but he who confesses it and renounces it, they find mercy.

And of course, there's another Scripture there saying if you claim to be without sin, which I believe is dealing more with salvation, but it's a wonderful principle there. Basically admitting that we are not without sin, that we need Christ. And so that has to be the first step.

Admit your dependence on God and surrender to Him. Remove excuses. Remove excuses.

I remember when I was in the health and fitness industry, a lot of people, if it's hard losing weight, they'd say, my thyroid. I can't because of my thyroid. Now, there's some genuine concerns because the thyroid really affects your metabolic rate and basal metabolic rate and how much calories you're burning.

But there's always, and I have my own excuses too, there's always some excuses, or with alcohol, but it's my go-to. It's how I relax. Marijuana's legal now.

It's okay. Making excuses. Or we just talked about gambling.

Or gaming. But it's my outlet. It's how I take a break.

It's how I relax. So you have to deal with excuses from the get-go. Then the second point, freedom by repairing the damage.

Freedom by repairing the damage. In other words, addiction hurts somebody. Often yourself or those in your family.

Repentance, true repentance fixes that issue. You go and you fix what you hurt. Luke 19, then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore for full.

Why is this so important? Because somebody can say they're sorry, but they're not showing it by their actions. True repentance, whether it's in the Old Testament or New Testament, not only changes the mind and repents internally, but there's actions that are backed by it. They fix or they repair the damage that they caused.

So if you're a young adult and you've caused harm and you repent, then you want to fix the damage you did in your family. Or families, if it's a spouse or a husband or wife, they want to fix the damage they did. It goes with this area of application.

Because it's hard to sin when you're serving. It's hard to sin when you're serving. It's hard to fall when you're already on your knees because of prayer.

And it's hard to repeat sin when you've repented of it. And then the next point, freedom by resisting temptation. The impossible is possible.

Does anyone remember Philip Wilson? What was he famous for saying? The devil made me do it. The devil made me do it. But this area of temptation is interesting because there's a peak at temptation.

Once it hits that peak, it declines. And we forget that. We cave in around the peak, but it has a peak and it declines.

And also, God promises there in 1 Corinthians that no temptation has overtaken you. In other words, everything that you're being overtaken with or challenged with, it's not new. It's not just for you.

Millions have had to deal with these types of temptations, but God, not you, God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear. With that temptation, He makes a way of escape.

So in other words, you can exit out the door or you can enter out the door of temptation. God allows you to make that choice. Here's where it gets challenging.

We're called to flee. For example, sexual immorality. Flee, get out of there.

But instead, we want to fight it or we want to negotiate or we want to contemplate or we want to know more. And you can't because then you're being drawn into the temptation. You have to flee.

For example, the person craving that addiction. Their mind starts to take them places their body doesn't want to go. Correct? Maybe one when I get home.

Maybe I'll relax. And you start to compromise in the mind. And the more you begin to do that, your temptation grows and grows and grows.

We have with the men's ministry and helping people with pornography and different issues, we let them know if that temptation comes in your computer, get off the computer. Go take a drive. Go play basketball.

Go do something. But if you sit there and you start to fight and fight, you will eventually lose. Because you're called to flee, not fight.

And part of fighting is fleeing. And so He says here, no temptation has overtaken you. It's common to all men.

God will make the way of escape. But here's what's interesting. That last word there.

The last two words. That you may be able to glide right through. You may be able to bear it.

There's something on my shoulders. So the temptation is weighing you down. You're bearing it.

It is difficult. It is challenging. There's a cost.

There's a weight. It's heavy. It's hard.

It's difficult. But God who is faithful will open the door and you can walk out the exit bearing the load of temptation. That's how it works.

You can say no as a believer. The devil doesn't make you do it. You're not a robot, an autopilot as a believer.

Now some people say, and when I talked to Mark earlier, and I've helped some people in the men's ministry recently who were doing great and then they caved back in and they got hooked on alcohol again. And they're like, Shane, it's so hard right now. What is going on? It's because they opened that door.

And they kept the door wide open and kept caving into it, entertaining it, and then now it's got a strong hold. So yeah, now it's a dinosaur. It's a T-Rex.

You should have dealt with it when it was a little baby egg. A little dinosaur egg. That's why James talks about sin.

When sin fully grown brings forth death. And talking about aborting it at the beginning, at the process. So that's why temptation gets more difficult.

It's the person who keeps opening that door and temptation gets stronger and stronger and stronger. We've also talked to guys about getting a different phone for a season. Get a flip phone.

If you keep falling because of your flip phone, you know what nine times out of ten they tell me? Are you crazy? Flip phone. Well, how bad do you want it? How bad do you want it? Don't come up here and cry about it. Go home and live it out.

Where's the desire to remove every stumbling block? Remove the temptation? You've got to fight. Listen, we're in warfare. The enemy goes about not as a bunny rabbit.

He goes about as a rolling lion seeking whom he may devour. You've got to put on the whole armor of God, not one little cloth. You've got to fight the good fight of faith.

You've got to stand strong for your families and for your marriages. You are called to be a warrior and a fighter, not a complacent bystander. The battle for temptation, all the old saints 100 years ago used to battle against temptation.

They were called holiness and seeking God with all of their heart, with all of their strength, filled with the Spirit of God. They didn't play around with God's Word. They were serious about sin.

And we've compromised in this area. That's why temptation is so strong is because we give it strength. You have to remember that sometimes there is a release.

Other times, it's a battle. And this has always baffled me. It probably will until the day I die.

Talk to one person, and God completely took it away when they became a Christian. Talk to another Christian, and they're struggling with it and wondering why didn't He do that to me? Why does that big beer still look good? What's wrong with me? And just realize that sometimes things are broken that easily. Or you can't break them off that easily.

Sometimes it takes one brick at a time with the sledgehammer. God took a wrecking ball and knocked down the stronghold in their life, but in your life, it might be one brick at a time. One choice at a time.

And fighting through that struggle. And at this point, many people say, forget it. I can't do this.

Forget it. I can't do this. They fall back.

I can't do this. Forget it. I'm just going to give in.

I can't do this. God, You don't love me. But use that brokenness and dependence to your advantage.

Not to your disadvantage. Because that brokenness can lead you into a deeper relationship with God. Saying, God, I'm lost without You.

I love that song, I Was Blind, But Now I See I Was Lost, But Now I'm Found. Oh, You saved a wretch like me. And you're drawing to the foot of the cross.

And you hold on to the Savior. And now that desperation, now I have a deeper, stronger relationship with God that I wouldn't give up for the entire world. Those who have been forgiven much, love much.

I've been forgiven. My past is scarred. But I hold on to the feet of the Savior.

And I've been set free by the blood of Christ. And I have this deep abiding relationship. And see, so that brokenness can draw you to the cross.

That sorrow can be a wonderful thing. There's a poem, a brief poem. It says this, I walked a mile with pleasure.

And she chatted all the way. She left me none the wiser for all she had to say. But I walked a mile with sorrow.

And not a word said she. But oh, the lessons I learned when sorrow walked with me. God bless the broken road that led me straight to the cross.

Don't let that brokenness be permission to continue in addiction. Allow that brokenness to draw you to Jesus Christ in a deeper, more meaningful way. Jesus said this lady sat behind Jesus on her knees, weeping, wiping His feet with her tears.

And the arrogant Pharisee said, if he knew what kind of woman this would be, he would not let her do this. And Jesus said, oh, actually I would. All who are weak and heavy laden, come to Me.

You see, you see this lady's sins that are many. They have been forgiven. They have been forgiven.

Who do you think had a better relationship with Jesus? Her or the religious leaders? Those Pharisees weren't even saved. They're whitewashed tombs. They're brood of vipers.

They're stiff-necked, arrogant hypocrites. They thought they knew God, but this lady knew God. This lady knew God.

I like to tell this story at funerals sometimes. I didn't mention this at the first or second service, so here you go. But there was a, at church, and this will tie in perfectly.

At this church, they're having a contest who could quote the 23rd Psalm better. Some of you have been coming here a while. You've heard me say this before, and what's great about having a lot of new people is I can talk about all my old material again.

But they're having a contest who could quote the 23rd Psalm better. They probably shouldn't have that contest, but they were. And so this young man, suit and tie.

Suit and tie. King James only Bible. And just polished speaker.

And he's just wooing the audience. You know, the Lord is my shepherd. He shall not want.

Oh man, this sounds really good. And then the other person never showed up. And so the organizer went and grabbed the janitor cleaning the men's bathroom.

He said, hurry, hurry, hurry, get up there. Get up there. Say, do something.

Say the 23rd Psalm. And so he came up and he was, you know, just not even looking at the Bible, just off of memory, you know, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

And his voice began to crack. And tears began to hit the pulpit. And began to walk, you know, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for God is with me.

And he was done. And he received a standing ovation. And the young man was all upset and arrogant.

And I was much better. I was much, what's wrong with you guys? I was much better. And he went to storm out of there.

One of the old deacons grabbed him. And he said, you know what the problem was? No, tell me. You knew the 23rd Psalm, but he knew the shepherd.

Let that sink in. He knew the shepherd. That's the key.

How many pastors truly know the shepherd? How many Christians truly know the shepherd? They can quote the Word. They know the Word. They've been in church all their life.

But they miss that deep abiding relationship with the Savior. They don't know the shepherd. Because when you read the Word of God, it should come alive.

It should saturate your heart. It should soothe your spiritual sores, of course, and soothe your emotions and build you up at the same time, convict and draw you closer to God. So you can resist temptation.

1 Peter, as obedient children, basically, let me paraphrase, as you obey God's Word, do not go back to your former less. The word here I use conforming. It's the same type of meaning as in Romans.

Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed. So basically, you are like a lump of clay. Sorry to break the bad news.

And you're being conformed. What is this going to be? By the world's mindset? Or by God's Word? It's conforming you one way or the other. You're being shaped.

So he says be not conformed by the world's mindset, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind through God's Word. So same thing here. Peter says, as you obey God, do not go back to your former less.

Because as a Christian, your former less are still inside. Remember we talked about that earlier. You're trying to go this way, what's your former less doing? Who's there? Who's there? Oh, it's the old chain.

Oh, I don't want to talk to the old chain. Remember the old chain in the 1990's? Wasn't that fun? Well, yeah, it kind of was. I remember those days.

Come on. Come on back. That's right.

And you go back to the former less. He says turn from those things. Don't go back.

Go forward. And you're going to have a battle until the day you die. The bad news of the day.

The good news is the day someone can guide you through that journey. And you can hold on to the anchor of the cross in Jesus Christ and have a deep abiding relationship. But that battle within will never die on the side of heaven.

You want the things of God. You know how many people in the three services today, how many people in their mind, they've even told me, they're excited, they want to be at the services this week. Inside, they desire it, but guess what's going to happen come Monday afternoon? You know who's playing? You're busy.

You've got work to do. Let's do this instead. And we're in that constant struggle of that battle for more of God.

Do you ever get up and like, oh, I just want to read the Word, but the old man says, hit the snooze. See, your flesh is not your friend. The flesh cannot be trusted.

The flesh says, feed me so I can destroy you. More of me and less of God. But you can resist temptation.

And then the other screen here, freedom. You can have freedom by avoiding the triggers. What do I mean by that? Well, Romans 13.

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ. So basically, I have to take off something. Take off the old man, the old natures, the old desires.

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision. That means no forethought, nor planning. Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.

How many people have I prayed for in the prayer room? And they're crying. I go, what's wrong? I've got to break this addiction, but my mind's already planning to go to the liquor store on the way home. Make no provision for the flesh.

I've been given oxy pills over there. Not for me, but just people giving them up or alcohol in their purse. And they're already planning on what to do after church.

Or they're already planning later in the day. They say, make no provision for the flesh, Romans, right into the church in Rome. Do not plan ahead to satisfy the flesh.

Because if you plan ahead, what's going to happen? You're going to go for it. Make no provision. Take thoughts captive.

When that desire comes, change the environment. Turn to prayer and worship in the Word rather than social media, YouTube and television. You can't fill your mind with wrong thoughts all week and expect to overcome strongholds.

It's a clear biblical teaching that we have to remove those triggers. Freedom by not entertaining compromise. The best definition of compromise is not fully engaging in something, but close to the edge.

You ever been there? Yes. Often. There's the sin.

I'm not going to go all the way down there. Jason, I'm going to stay up here. Well, you know what? That wasn't too bad.

You know what? That didn't hurt at all. I guess God doesn't care. See, I can't have a drink now and then.

I can't have something after New Year's Eve. See, it's small compromises. One step at a time.

I'm driving the cameraman crazy. I should start running. But how did I get down here? I didn't jump.

One step at a time. One compromise at a time. Even young couples find themselves at the bottom.

How'd they get down there? One step at a time. One wrong choice at a time. One compromise at a time.

Nobody grows up and says I'm going to be an addict and ruin my life. Nobody does. Compromise it.

Colossians 3, so put to death. In other words, don't contemplate. You can't play with sin.

You're not strong enough to overcome sin and play with it. It says put to death what is earthly in you, mainly what is sensual, of the flesh. So put to death sexual immorality, impurity, impure passions, evil desire, and covetousness, which is wanting what others want.

This is idolatry. So if it says put to death, it must mean that I can also bring these things to life. All these things just mentioned, I can bring them to life.

Put to death these areas. J.C. Ryle said holiness will cost a man his sins. He must be willing to give up every habit and practice that is wrong in God's sight.

There must be no separate truths with any special sin which he loves. Isn't that true? Compromise. God's Word doesn't allow for compromise.

God doesn't say do this. No, I'm going to do this. God says, okay, you know what? You got it.

Let's negotiate. Hey, the price is right. It might work here on earth, but it doesn't work in heaven.

God doesn't say let's make a deal. He says this is the deal. Again, I'm encouraging you.

I'm not talking about perfection or I wouldn't be up here. Nobody would be here. But dealing with certain sins, you can't compromise.

And then freedom through accountability. I won't stay too long here. But freedom through accountability.

Here's two problems with accountability. Number one is this group that thinks accountability is the answer. It's all about accountability.

No one should ever hold you accountable. Some people come to me and say, Pastor, can you hold me accountable? I say no, that's not my job. God's job.

The Holy Spirit will hold you accountable. We can help you. People can pray for you.

We can call you. We can check in. We can be there for you.

We can help in the process, but we can't hold you accountable because what happens? They go back in their sin. You're at fault. You didn't hold me accountable.

Man, if I had a dollar for every time that happened. You didn't hold me accountable. I'll never forget this.

I don't know why I share it. It was a couple of years into the church. We just started.

We're in Lancaster. And I was teaching like I did a week and a half ago, two weeks ago now on alcohol. And the biblical, you know, I mean, obviously, biblically speaking, there's a little bit of gray area as far as enjoying one now and then if you can.

You know who you are. Come on. Most people can't.

And it's in abundance. So don't let me get in that. If you're interested, go listen to that message.

But anyway, I just shared how the Bible allows for this now and then. And he took that and went back and fell off the wagon and blamed me. You said in your sermon, I can have one.

No, no, sir. That's not what I said. I said the Bible allows for moderation if you can be moderate.

Most people can't be moderate. There's an abundance there. I mean, I've been in Bible studies.

Was wine tasting in Bible studies? Give me a break. Craft beer making at men's... What? You guys... That's what I said. Wow.

I mean, I've been at Christian events where you go there, and they have wine. What's up to them? But there's 17 bottles of wine. This person has a goblet that holds the bottle.

And that's their one glass. Okay, you're not filling that? You're not filling a 12% and a goblet that size? Give me a break. You think I was born yesterday? But see, we like to justify our addictions.

We like to flaunt our liberties. I can stay here a while. Don't get me started.

Freedom by not compromising. Freedom through accountability. The other side of accountability.

This side says it doesn't matter. It's no big deal. I got this.

I'm on my own. I can handle this. Leave me alone.

I don't want you in my business. That's not good either because that means you're hiding. You don't want to be transparent.

So the middle ground is both. Healthy, biblical accountability means people come alongside of you, but ultimately, you've got to deal with your heart with God. Proverbs 27 Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Isn't it interesting the terms they use? Have you ever rubbed a knife against a knife? I mean, it's not enjoyable. Iron sharpens iron. It's that ssss.

Do you have the hands on the fingernail chalkboard? Want me to do that? No, no, no. That's the same thing often. It hurts.

So remember that. If iron is sharpening your iron, it does hurt. It's not meant to feel good.

It hurts. That's why we change. If it felt good, we don't change.

The spouse that says, honey, you can get drunk every night. I don't care. I'll always be here for you.

You think he's going to change? But if he comes home and says, what's that? Why are your suitcases packed? I'm going to my mom's and tell you get over this. I'm done with you. It hurts.

You change. Sermons hurt, so you change. You know something? They hurt me before they hurt you.

Before I prepare the message, God has to prepare the messenger. And I'm not preaching at you. I'm preaching to all of us.

It hurts sometimes. And I say, Lord, I don't want to say these things. More people are going to not like me.

I've already got enough haters. Isn't that funny? The cry of our culture is, tell me what we want to hear. They want to kill the prophets.

The people that say, kill Jeremiah, kill Isaiah, kill these guys. They're not telling us what we want to hear. They're telling us God is going to judge us.

Get rid of these guys. We want to hear peace, peace. We want to hear soothing words.

We want to hear the Babylonians aren't going to overcome us. The Assyrians aren't going to destroy us. We don't want to hear these things.

We're looking for soothed sayings. Therefore, go grab the false prophets who tell us what we want to hear, not what we need to hear. God says, I have not sent them, yet they ran.

I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But had they truly stood in the whole counsel of God, they would have turned the nation back to God, speaking His truth with boldness. Let the iron sharpen iron.

Let it cut. The word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any double-edged sword. It pierces, it divides, it cuts.

It separates from joy and sorrow and discerns the thoughts and the intents of the heart. Is not My word like a fire? Is not My word like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? The word of God, it cuts and it divides, it upsets and it antagonizes the works of darkness. If you come in here with a demonic stronghold, it is going to be so agitated that you want to leave here.

I see it all the time. People come in and they're like this, and worship starts and they're like, what is going on? I'm not going to go to the bathroom three times. Or they'll come in, they'll hear a few worship songs, they'll get in their car and they'll go home.

What's going on? You want to entertain darkness? You're going to hate the light. They'll either fall down on their face and worship God or they'll run for cover. And then getting to the end here, freedom by falling forward.

What do I mean by that is don't keep beating yourself up. Even Paul said, I don't look at what is behind me. Anybody, do you ever keep looking back at your past? I've made these mistakes.

What is going on? You stay in your past and God wants to do a new thing in the future. Paul persecuted Christians. He held the coats of the people who stoned Stephen, the first martyr of the church.

Paul went and persecuted the church. And he's writing the Bible. Can you imagine the shame and guilt of that man? And he said, I forget everything is behind me.

What do I do? I reach forward. I reach forward to those things which are ahead. And not living in that shame and guilt.

Because that's how you don't break free of addiction. You stay bound in the shame and the guilt and the depravity of your sin. And you feel guilty, filled with shame.

What's the point? I'm just going to sit here in my misery. And then how do you get out of that misery? You go back to what brought you into the misery. You go back to the bondage.

Then you feel the shame and the guilt and you get back into the bondage again. And that keeps the cycle of defeat, shame, guilt going in the same direction. So fall forward.

I'm not encouraging sin. I'm encouraging you to get back up and fight again. Renew your focus today.

Even if the enemy knocks you down, get back up and fight again. We're called to be warriors and soldiers. It doesn't mean we do things perfectly.

And then finally, the last screen. Freedom through prayer and fasting. People are shocked to hear this, but I don't like fasting.

I really don't like fasting. I wish the Bible didn't teach it. But Jesus said when you pray, when you give, and when you fast.

We have fasting throughout the whole Old Testament. It meant the shutting, the closing of the mouth to give up the fleshly appetites for a desire for more of God. Matthew 17, 21, Jesus said that certain, now this is amazing.

Certain evil spirits do not go out of a person except by prayer and fasting. And we've talked before, I did a series on demonology. Obviously don't believe Christians can be possessed by a demon, but they can be demonized.

They can be harassed. They can open the door to demonic things in their life. And there can be a harassment, demonic harassment in their life.

And it keeps what is going on, this is keep active in my life. This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. Now the theologian in here will say, wait, wait, wait a minute, Shane.

Some Bibles don't have that in there. You're right. You're right, I'm not going to talk a lot about it, but there's two different types of manuscripts.

One manuscript where we get the NIV and the English Standard Version. And those translations come from what they call the early text. The early manuscripts.

And they're a little bit different than this side which is the majority text. You'll see that in your Bible, majority text. This is the King James, the New King James, the New American Standard.

And they're just small points of variance, differences. Nothing huge, nothing that's pivotal, nothing that's essential. They're just copied over hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years.

And there's variances. Well, this manuscript says that and fasting, this kind does not come out except by prayer, and fasting is not in there. This one says it is.

So my thoughts are this. God is not in heaven going, ugh, how did that get in there? Darn it, now they're going to fast and pray. How did that, what copyist slipped that in there? He allows what He allows in His Word.

And that's why we also don't believe in the Apocrypha, the books in the Roman Catholic Church, those middle books, because they're good for historical context, but not authoritative canonization of Scripture. And I'll talk about that more as we get into the Bible. But what is authoritative? What does God allow? It's not some convention in the early 300 or so, we'll talk about the Council of Nicaea and different things as we go on.

It's not some council saying, oh, here's what is authoritative. It's what the early church recognized as authoritative and who the authors were and who taught on that. So that's number one, that I believe God allowed it and it's there for a reason.

I believe number two, it's biblical. It's absolutely biblical. Ezra fasted for protection.

Esther fasted for deliverance. Nehemiah fasted for direction. David fasted when he was humbled and broken.

Joel said call a fast, call a sacred assembly and cry out to God. And they fasted, Nehemiah fasted, Nineveh fasted, Moses fasted, Elijah fasted, somebody named Jesus Christ fasted. And so it's consistent throughout Scripture.

Why would Jesus, this is, I mean, it's hard to really comprehend. You don't even know about Jesus. Nothing in His ministry.

30 years. Nothing. Except when He was 12 years old, had some dialogue with the teachers.

Nothing. John the Baptist baptizes Him. He's still not ready.

The Holy Spirit leads Him into the wilderness to fast 40 days and 40 nights. Then the Bible says He comes out in the fullness of the Spirit. And Jesus being filled with the Spirit, now begins His ministry.

I'll let you do what you want with that, but I don't think it's a coincidence. I don't think, oh, by the way, He just spent 40 days. No big deal.

There's something there to that submitting of the flesh and being filled with the Spirit of God. So, it's biblical. God allowed it.

The final reason is, if you read like Polycarp, John the Beloved, the disciple of John. Polycarp was a disciple of his. You read Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Ignatius, the early church fathers, and they have commentaries on this Scripture.

So, they obviously thought it was in the Bible if they're commenting on this Scripture. So, is it possible, is it possible, no matter how hard we fight, no matter how hard we pray, that is it possible that this kind, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting? Could there be something in the lives of some of us that will not be released, will not be broken? Something's gotta break. We sing it, something's gotta break, but could it be that we have to look in and bring out the secret weapon of prayer and fasting as we starve the flesh and be filled with the Spirit of God? How many more problems do you wanna have at home or at your work? How many more prodigal sons do you want to stay away from God or daughters? How much more do you want your health rapidly deteriorating or growing distant from God without incorporating a season of prayer and fasting? So, I hate to keep belittling this point, but that's exactly what we're doing next week, beginning tomorrow, is we're asking that people come hungry.

Come hungry for God. Maybe eat afterwards. Just come hungry for God tomorrow, six o'clock every night.

Just start, and it's not a works-based, I gotta crucify the flesh, I gotta do this work. No, it's exchanging one hunger for a greater hunger. I'm exchanging this desire for a greater desire.

And it's without a shadow of a doubt, I could take you there and we could stay there a while, where when you consume, especially a lot of food, how 50% of it is used in digestion and metabolic processes, you're just worn out, you can't think mentally, you don't wanna pray as hard, you don't wanna worship as much. I never preach on a full stomach. I learned my lesson, I did men's breakfasts many years ago.

And I would, man, bacon and eggs and tortillas, whatever, oh, and they'd go, Shane, now you're supposed to speak. I'm like, speak? I don't even wanna get up. Oh, man, this stinks.

So ever since that time, I don't even eat with the breakfasts, I just come hungry and I can feel sometimes the growling of the stomach or you can feel the hunger and I can't explain it, but there's a hunger, a

greater hunger for God and it's the greatest step of humility a Christian can take. Why is it so hard? Why is it the hardest spiritual discipline? Because it has the most fruit. We starve the flesh to be filled with the Spirit of God.

It's a hunger strike against hell. And again, I don't like this topic. I've written books about it, I preach about it, but it's the hardest one of all.

I can pray, I can worship in the morning, I can be, you take my coffee away? Now we got a problem. I can't have dinner? Now we got a problem. Because it takes the flesh.

It takes from the flesh. So I'll close with this point. You can be alive on the outside, but dead on the inside.

You can be sober, but not saved. You can be delivered, but still in bondage. You can be set free from addictions, but still enslaved to the sin nature.

And there's a guy, I like to listen to him sometimes, I don't recommend it because it's secular, but his name is Rich Roll. Rich Roll, he was an alcoholic around 40 years old, and now he is the fittest man, one of the fittest men on earth. They call it, have you heard of ultramarathon? I mean, you'd think a marathoner's crazy.

These guys, he'll swim two and a half miles. Have you ever swam two and a half miles in the ocean? I won't because of sharks, and then I saw on the news a shark just killed a person up the coast there a couple weeks ago. But anyway, two and a half miles swimming.

Then they get out, and they decide to ride their bike for 115 miles. And then, just for fun, they drop their bike, and they'll go on a 26-mile run, marathon. All in the same day.

It's called ultramarathons, the fittest people on earth. I mean, their diet is just incredible. Very clean, very plant-based, lots of oxygen, lots of antioxidants.

They know how to manipulate their body chemistry to get more input out of the food and stuff, but that's a whole other topic. But these guys, and there's a whole group, and he's got the largest podcast out there, and I'm listening to these guys that have been set free and delivered of alcoholism, different things. Sober, but not saved.

It breaks my heart. Excited about life. Look at what has happened.

Look at what I've overcome. Look at this. But you're still on your way to the broad road of destruction.

Sober, but not saved. How many believers in the churches today are sober, but not saved? They're alive on the outside, but dead on the inside. So I just want to throw that out there.

If you've been in church before, if you've heard about God, and you know about what I'm talking about, but you've never repented, the Bible is crystal clear without repentance. No one will see the face of God. Repentance means I acknowledge that I see sin the same way that God sees sin.

It's not just a bad habit. It's not an inconvenience. I have sinned against God Almighty, and I repent of my sin, and I ask that Jesus Christ, because of that death on the cross, and His burial and His resurrection, that has given me new life.

I repent of my sin, and I believe that Christ has saved me and set me free. That is the greatest act of salvation. Those, number one, you're a Christian, but the things of God have been quenched, have been grieved.

There's no passion for the things of God. Did you know that Jesus said, if you believe on Me, as the Scriptures say, out of your belly will flow dead, stagnant water, dry, boring water, complacent, apathetic. Out of your belly should flow rivers of living water.

John the Baptist said, He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and with fire. I don't know your definition of fire, but when the Bible says a believer will receive the fire of God, see, there's an anointing. There's an unction.

There's a hunger. There's a desire. There's a craving.

The most in the church does not have. And you see the parallels. If you take the underground church in China with the church today, 95% of them are on fire for God.

In America, 95% are cold to the things of God. What's the difference? Persecution. In our case, our blessings have become our curse.

Apathy. Abundance leads to drifting from God. You've got to fight to get that relationship back.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/WmVd35mgcXA.mp4>

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