

Do You Have Any Last Words?

by Shane Idleman

The sermon challenges listeners to consider the significance of their last words and the urgency of living a life of faith today.

Duration: 51:00

Scripture: Luke 23:34, Luke 23:43, John 19:26

Topics: "Urgency of Salvation", "Last Words"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the significance of last words, drawing from the final statements of Jesus on the cross and contrasting them with the last words of various individuals. He highlights themes of love, remorse, and the urgency of responding to God's call today, warning against procrastination in faith. Idleman encourages listeners to reflect on their own lives and the legacy of their final words, urging them to seek a genuine relationship with Christ and to live with purpose. He stresses the importance of repentance and the transformative power of God's grace, reminding believers that their lives should reflect a commitment to righteousness and compassion.

Transcript

The title is, do you have any last words? Do you have any last words? And what I'm going to do, I heard Greg Laurie actually did it this week as well, John Stone Street, if you listen to him, look at Jesus' final words on the cross. What did he say? Because you can glean a lot from the last words, at least when a person is able to give the last words before they die, because it can reveal a lot, can't it? What's really in the heart is going to come out, and as I was preparing this sermon, it was really interesting to find that love, the word love, the theme of love was the most common word in the final statements of 140 people executed in Texas in the last 10 years. That was the common theme, and I read some of those, the remorse to the families, I'm sorry, I love my family, I miss them, and they're being led to be executed.

It's not in those moments you see a lot of cursing, a lot of anger, you see a lot of remorse. So I think it's good sometimes that we look, what are our last words going to be? Because the message of the gospel, this is why I preach sometimes with some passion, if you've been coming here a little while with some urgency, because the message of the Bible is always today. Today, today, when you hear his voice today, harden not your heart.

When you hear the call of salvation, today is that call. Today is the day of reckoning. Today is the day of salvation.

Today, not tomorrow, because procrastination is one of the tools of the enemy. And let me just be honest with you, my reason for procrastinating was I want to enjoy life. I want to do what I want, when I want, how I want, to who I want, drink whatever I want, party however I want, and then, and then when all the fun is over, that's when I'll finally, I guess, submit.

Like we try to wait until all day, and most of us realize, I'm sure you do, is that that life is not a fulfilling life. We wake up depressed, we come home depressed, and then we go back to the thing that we thought would bring enjoyment, and then we get depressed again, go back to the thing we thought would bring enjoyment, go depressed, it's this endless cycle. That's why Paul describes the enemy, the devil, as an angel of light.

Many people don't know that, especially Christians. He comes up to you sometimes as an angel of light, not dressed in red with his pitchfork and, oh, look at that, some horror movie. But he comes as subtleties, and he shows you the temptation.

When Eve saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eye, good for food, desirable to make one wise, she took of it and ate that fruit. Just a reminder, the devil loves subtle temptations. That's how he walks people down one step at a time, one compromise at a time, it's through the subtlety.

So remember that, do not procrastinate. God's not going to send you to some foreign mission field, and you're going to live there in a tent unless he puts that desire in your heart. Those people who leave or go the mission field have a desire for that.

Those people who do what God wants them to do have a desire for that. If you would ask me in my 20s, when I was running like hell, running with the devil, who sang that song? Motley Crue? Running with the devil, and I would have that song blasting, doing what I'm doing now, oh, I can't, that is, oh, I'm going to throw up. But once you come back to the Lord, now that desire is an all-consuming passion.

Now I look back and hate what I used to be. So God gives us godly desires that line up with his will. And there's so much peace in that.

And that's why I encourage people because there's real peace and real joy. Yes, there's a battle. There's there's a fight there.

Anything worth having takes fighting. Try to keep your family together and your marriage together without fighting. In a good way, spiritual battles, contending, and watching over your kids.

And I think that's why the enemy has gotten a lot of men lazy recently in the last couple decades. Lazy, lulled to sleep, instead of being, they should be leading their family in prayer. They should be up before them or going to bed late and leading in prayer and being that watchman on the wall, not the lazy person with the six pack watching Netflix.

That's how he's sidetracked. I told you it wasn't gonna be a comfortable sermon. I didn't say that to you.

I told a few other people. A few last words. I'm going to quote the last words from Thomas Paine.

He was one of the leading atheists when America was first, probably the 13 colonies back in those times, 1700s, late 1700s. Now it's interesting. I like to find, try to find quotes, you know, and source them, try snoops, snopes, whatever you pronounce it, and make sure and there's so many sites that verified this.

But then there's atheist sites that said he never said that. Yeah, it's taken Ada never said that. We can't find that.

Well, it's attributed to Thomas Paine, an atheist who was on his deathbed. He was talking to his nurse. He said, stay with me.

For God's sake, I cannot bear to be left alone. Oh, Lord, help me what will become of me. I would give the world's if I had them that the age of reason had never been published.

Oh, Lord, help me. Christ, help me. Don't leave me here.

Send even a child to stay with me for I am on the edge of hell here alone. If ever the devil had an agent, I had been that one. What are our last words going to be? Because the changes we make now do affect that later on.

Compare that to John Wesley on his deathbed. His last words were the best of all God is with us. The best of all God is with us.

It was actually said of the Methodists that they died. Well, John Wesley, they said his men died. Well, what does that mean? died? Well, cheerful.

This fear comes in, it's part of our fallen nature, but joy filled and excited to be with the Lord in the midst of fear, there's great excitement and trusting. Thank you, God, I've, I've made it. I finished my race.

Don't you want to finish your race strong. Many times we think it's how you start. That's important, but it's how you finish.

Listen, I've seen so many people I could give you story after story that started well, high hopes, family doing great, and then they fell. And they brought the family down. They brought many other people down with them.

They live in disgrace. Sir Thomas Scott, he was a chancellor of England. He said until this moment, on his deathbed, I thought there was neither a God nor hell.

Now I know and feel that there are both and I am doomed to perdition by the just and judgment of the Almighty. Big lie out there is it can happen, but you don't see it as much as you would think that a person can turn to God on their deathbed. They can we've we've seen it you've you've you've prayed with people.

But there is so much pride in the human heart that many people on their deathbed are so pride filled that they don't want to admit that they could have been wrong and they would deny God all the way until they face him. Now contrast this with Polycarp. One of the early church fathers who was said to have been a disciple of John, they're going to throw him to the wild animals.

But they decided to burn him at the stake. You've heard of that before they would tie people to this wooden stake and put timber brush around it and light it on fire and watch the person burn to death in front of them. And they asked him to recant many times before this and they gave him a final chance and his exact words were for many years I've served my master and he has done me no wrong.

How can I blast me my king and my Savior? You see the contrast? What are Jesus's last words on the cross? They're very interesting. Number one, he said, and most of you know this, of course, but he said, at

the beginning of that painful time of the crucifixion and on Friday, we think of it's called Good Friday. It was a dark Friday for many, but it was called Good Friday because we celebrate the cross and what happened on the cross.

And then on Resurrection Day Easter, we celebrate the empty tomb and those actually work together. But on that cross, he's dying, he's beaten for our sins. And he said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

And this is always just choked me up. Sometimes it's thinking about Jesus crying out to Father saying, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.

That wouldn't be my thoughts. Father, get them. Where's that angel that destroyed 185,000 Assyrians when they tried to battle against you? God, where's that angel? Send that angel loose on these people.

But he stood there, arms stretched out and said, forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do. And I instantly thought of Romans 5.8. But God demonstrated his love for us in this while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That's amazing.

And I've talked about this before. I won't go off on a rabbit trail. But I always remember this scripture because I can think of the weeks and months and years I would blaspheme God, I would mock him.

I would live that lifestyle in total rebellion to God. And I thought I was a good person. The irony is amazing.

Now I'm like, I can see I'm not that good of a person back then. I'm a good person. When I stand before God, look at all these good stuff I do.

But even while I was not living right, rebelling against God, even in that before that Christ died for me. While we were still sinning, while we were sinners, Christ died for us. And that aspect of forgiveness is something maybe some of you need to embrace this morning.

Because sometimes people don't come to church because they say I could never set my foot into church, a lightning bolt is going to come down. It's going to hit me. And this image of God is a is a just a mean tyrant trying to just just get you every time you do something.

If that were the case, nobody would would live past three years old. Sin is in that child from a very young age. But that forgiveness of God, we forget about that.

The Bible talks about God's love for you is long suffering. What does that mean? To suffer long, patient, not willing that any should perish. He's long suffering.

He's gentle. But there does come a time when that grace is mocked and rebelled against and pushed away. There comes a time where that period is over.

That forgiveness, we don't know where that is. Don't live your life with a question mark here. Don't try to push this envelope.

That's why again, back to the day. Today's the day. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

And then number two, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. One of the final words on the cross, he told the thief. One of the gospel accounts says this thief could have possibly mocked him

earlier in the day, despised him and then maybe came to repentance.

We don't actually know. We just know that Jesus's words are true, that this person was in paradise with him. Heaven is real.

Heaven is real. Let's get that across this morning. Heaven is real.

Jesus said you will be with me in paradise. God desires that none perish but that all come to repentance. There's so many rabbit trails I have in my mind.

So I'm trying to stick to the notes. But one I think that is important is, and I heard it recently, why does God send people to hell? He doesn't send them to hell. They choose to reject him.

He doesn't desire that any should perish. How do you reconcile that with sovereignty and free will? Well, I'll leave that to the theologians. I just preached the Bible.

And it says that God does not desire that any should perish, but that all come to repentance. So what happens when a person is rejecting God and rejecting God and rejecting God, and they end up separated from him, that was a choice they made. There has to be a responsibility for our choices.

And then third, when he saw, this is such a great role model for us, when he saw his mother and the disciple whom he left standing nearby, he said this to his mother. And could you imagine his mom just raising him as a little boy, and then seeing now on the cross, knowing he's innocent, knowing there's nothing in there worthy of death, that she knew there was nothing. The turmoil that must have been going through, I can't even imagine.

He said to his mother, woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother. And we obviously know that it looks like Jesus's father was passed away.

And Jesus is gone. Now he's just leaving his mother. And he tells the disciple, behold your mother.

And the disciple, behold your mother to her, woman, behold your son. Again, providing for her is what many people think. Jesus was providing, behold, this is your mother, this is your responsibility.

And I immediately thought of James 1.27, pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this. You want to know if you have real religion. I actually don't like the word religion.

You want to know if you have a real relationship with Jesus Christ is their fruit. It says this, true religion is this, to visit orphans and widows in their distress. It means you have a concern for other people.

There's a love, there's a compassion. If you don't have this this morning, pray for it. God, I need a baptism of your love this morning.

I need to fill that love and compassion in my heart for others. I don't feel it. But then it goes on to say, and to keep oneself unstained, what? By the world.

So it's not just having a concern and care for others and loving them. This you can't force. This doesn't come naturally, it comes supernaturally.

But as you submit to the work of God, you love others and care for those who cannot be cared for, for themselves. This is why there's such a, I promised myself I wouldn't talk about Easter, but there's such a

movement right now to support life with abortion. And that falls under here, to care for those who cannot care for themselves.

That should be the heart cry of every believer. So it's interesting why you're going to see a big divide in our country. It's a moral divide.

It's a moral divide. A side of our country, their conscience has been seared. They are walking in darkness.

That's why they could care less. And you know what comes next? Infanticide. You reach a certain age, you're putting too much strain on our universal health care system, you're next.

It's a slippery slope. And that's what's going to happen. You're going to, it's a culture of death.

And that's why these things are so important. But he said, also to keep oneself unstained. Another translation says, unspotted, untarnished from the world.

Here's the biggie. A true believer in Jesus Christ, filled with God's Spirit, comes out of the world's mindset. This is why a person looks different.

They speak different. Their Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram looks different. The movies they watch are different.

The influence, see they're not, they're There's a guard up, there's a restraint, they're remaining untarnished and unspotted from the influence of the world. Well, how do I know? Who do you look like, Christ? Or Kardashian? We laugh, but isn't it true? Do we resemble the world, the things of the world, the passions of the world, the lusts of the world? Do we look like the world? Because there's many people that they'll say they're Christian on a on a, on a sheet, they'll check it off. But there's no fruit.

So you have to wonder, have you truly been changed by a relationship with Jesus Christ? Because that changes you. What I used to swim in and enjoy, Vegas, Laughlin, the party scene, now it's filthy. It just feels like, what is this? But those who are not unspotted, or those who are tainted by the world, and those who love the things of the world, for he who loves the world does not have the love of the Father in him.

You cannot serve two masters. See, that's why I make this such a point in a lot of the sermons is, is because in America, we have something called the American Gospel. If you're a good person, whatever that means, we can do whatever we want.

Just a good person. It's all about God's grace and God's mercy. God loves me.

And then we continue in the very thing that is destroying us. So we have to be careful in this area. The fourth, fourth thing he said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Now, this has confused a lot of people, I could spend the whole sermon here.

But we do know that Jesus had a point in his humanity, fully God, fully man, but in his humanity, there was a point where God, there's a separation, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why? Maybe at this point in history, this is where the sin of humanity falls upon the cross and falls upon Christ. And there's a separation between the Father and the Son and, and Jesus fills out. So he says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Can any of you relate to that dark hour of the soul? Any of you relate to that that dark that that that hard season? Where you feel like, God, where are you? You've you've left me.

And I was reminded of Second Corinthians 12, seven, where Paul said, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me lest I be exalted above measure. Now, I'm not trying to tie in Second Corinthians with what Jesus did on the cross, with with God being forsaken by God. But I am telling you this, that there will sometimes be messengers of Satan, God will use what Satan is intending for evil, God is would will use it for good.

The Bible says that had they known what they were doing to Christ on the cross, they would have never crucified him. All hell was shouting, there was a party getting ready to start. You can tell that the D the devil just gloating.

Can you believe it? We're going to close down this week and let's have a party. This guy is gone. But then Oh, hold on.

Hold on. Then the ground begins to shake. And and even the Roman soldiers say, clearly, this was the Son of God, the veil in the temple being ripped saying no more blockage here.

No more. It's not just the high priest, you can come boldly to the throne room of grace. All hell is still celebrating.

But then on the third day, that's why we celebrate. And that's why we sing my resurrected King is resurrecting me. It's it's a time of of being built up again by God.

But then there comes the dark seasons of life. And that's where many people lose it. That's where when the enemy is coming against you coming against possibly your family, and you say all hell's breaking loose, and you can cry out like Jesus, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? It's interesting this word, a thorn in the flesh was given to me a messenger Satan to buffet me.

It's something sharp. It's an excruciating pain. It's something painful.

And, and Paul was saying, God, take this away. Take Have you ever prayed that? Oh, come on 9am. Hopefully 11am.

Lord, this I guarantee this is a prayer for many of you God take this away. God take this away. God take this away.

But God says I'm going to see you through it. Why? Because my grace is sufficient in your weakness, in your weakness, that's where you become strong. So you can say, Oh, like Paul, God, I'm weak in this area.

I need your help. But by the grace of God, I'm going to succeed, I'm going to carry forward and in that weakness saying I'm not all that in a bag of chips. I'm not this prideful arrogant person.

I think I have it all down in that humility and broken as God will begin to exalt and prop you up and get you back on the right path. Because in that weakness, you are made strong. But be careful in your strength.

You'll be humbled. So that thing you're praying for God, please take this away doesn't mean you give into it. But you start to rely on on God during the battle.

Because this is why many people cave in. Well, God's not taking it away. I was born this way.

I can't do this. I can't and we use it as an excuse to continue. That's why I love that song when all hope is gone and your word is all I've got.

I still believe that you're the God who brings water from the rock. You have to remind yourself of that often. I hear repeat.

You ever hear repeat? YouTube has a repeat button. You can put a song in there on repeat. When all hope is gone and you're all I've got.

Have you ever been there? I'm preaching to the group who's been there. You know exactly what I'm talking about. Man has let you down.

The government has let you down. The court system has let you down. Family has let you down.

Everybody has let you down but God. And you can look when all hope is gone. And you're all I've got.

I still believe. I believe you're the God that brings water from the rock. You bring provision when I am dry.

When I'm thirsty and thirsting for you God, you will fill me with your spirit. When all hope is gone. And I think he gets us to that point often.

That we rely totally on him. And then another final word from the cross. After this, Jesus knowing that all was now finished, he said to fulfill scripture, he said this, I thirst.

I thirst. It was mainly, I believe, to fulfill scripture but also to show his humanity. But then I thought of the scripture.

Many of you know this. He who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be what? Filled. He who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be filled.

Are you empty this morning? Are you thirsty? Are you empty? Are you hollow? You have no purpose. You have no plan. Do you know that's what they're attributing to the highest suicide rate in our nation now? It keeps climbing.

Like when is this going to stop? When you stop rejecting God, nation. When you stop running from God. When you stop looking for answers in everything, from the opiates to the therapy to whatever, the hope is only in Christ and Christ alone.

There are no new tricks. There are no new truths. You have to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

What is righteousness? Right standing before God. If you don't know God, you have to hunger and thirst and say, God, I'm a sinner in need of a savior. I hunger and thirst for that.

I repent of my sin and I believe. But if you're a Christian and you're dry and you're dead, same thing applies. It's just different righteousness.

An unbeliever is asking for the righteousness of Christ. It's called, big theological term, imputed righteousness. You take on what Christ did for you on the cross.

You actually put that on. That's how you can stand before God. But then in the life of the believer, there has to be a hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

Are you empty? Are you thirsty? Are you hungry for more of God? Let me tell you a secret. Most of the time, you will not feel like it. Most of the time, you will not feel like getting up and worshiping and praying and reading the Bible because there's something inside of you called the flesh.

It's an enmity with God. It's a war with God. So stop waiting for your feelings to come around.

They're the caboose, not the engine of the train. See, he who sows in tears will reap in joy. Many times, let me tell you, many times, I've got to fight for that time with God.

I've got to fight for that and say, God, I'm hungry. I'm thirsting for righteousness. The flesh isn't, but I am.

God, I'm hungering and thirsting. Look what's going on in our nation. Look what's going on in the churches.

God, I don't want to feel dead and deprived and absent of you. My flesh is pulling me in the other direction. Become hell or high water.

I'm going to seek you with all of my heart, with all of my strength. And once you submit to the work of the Holy Spirit and the flesh begins to submit, it finally says, okay, you win. And the tears of joy begin to fill your heart.

You begin to be filled with the Spirit of God again. You want to do great exploits for God. You want to just be so involved in what he is doing.

But your flesh is going to fight you every step of the way. That's why I cringe when people say, but I just don't feel like it. Well, welcome to the club.

Feelings are often a byproduct of the flesh. Now, they are good and God-given. I believe God gave us feelings.

What about when I held my new baby? This is great. Here you go. No feelings.

Can you imagine worshiping God without feelings? Just a dead mechanical robot. That's most religions. Well, let me just say it.

That's all religions outside of relationship with God. That's why it's dead. That's why it's mere formality.

You might have New Age philosophy and existentialism and when they fast, they feel something weird and they're connected with the trees that they spend all day outside naked and all this weird stuff. It's just weird. But isn't that true? Here's the mistake we make.

He who hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be filled. Well, I don't have that so that must not apply to me. No.

He who hungers, it's that deep down inside of you saying, God, I want this. I want more of you. I want to hunger for righteousness and right standing and your truth to be exalted.

Again, I want your word back in the schools again. I want the school districts to fall on their face and repent because of the curriculum they're allowing into our kids. It should not be in there.

I'm hungering for righteousness. I'm hungering for the things that upset you. God, I want righteousness, the right standing to govern us again.

That's why I stay off the news a lot. It's just downright depressing. You would not believe in what they're trying to push in California schools.

And I always go, where are the parents? Where are the parents? Oh, that's right. They're busy gossiping, shopping and eating and drinking and could care less. Never forget, today's generation is tomorrow's government.

It's tomorrow's leaders. And then six, the sixth thing Jesus said, when Jesus had received this, the sour wine, he said, it is finished and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. This is a remarkable word.

Think about this. Jesus on the cross, he calls the shots, not the devil. He gives up his spirit.

He commends it to God. He commits it to God. He says, it's finished.

What does that mean? Well, in Greek, in the Greek language, this word to tell us I meant that a bill has been paid in full. I might get a little excited on this. The bill, the debt has been paid in full.

That should be very encouraging. This is why you don't have to have people lay hands on you. You don't have to get baptized.

You don't have to tithe. You don't have to belong to a certain church. Because many religions, especially false cults out there will tell you, yeah, okay, yes, we believe in Jesus, but you got to do this and got to do this and got to do this.

It's almost like saying, thank you, Jesus, for partial salvation. I got it from here. And he said to tell us, it's been paid.

It's been zero. Why are you trying to work for a balance that is zero? It's been completed. It's been done.

And every time I talk about this subject, I get emails from Roman Catholics. But let me say this. This is the heresy of purgatory.

There's no purgatory to go and be purged of your sin after what Christ did. That's blasphemy. That's heretical.

That's not right. That's adding stuff to Christ's finished work on the cross. He didn't say, it's partially done.

Now go be purged for a season. He said, I bore the wrath of God. I bore the indignation and the shame and the guilt.

Everything's been settled. The account has been drawn to nothing. There's nothing.

Oh, just accept, embrace the free grace of God through faith and belief in Jesus Christ. That's it. I just think it's offensive and it gives people the wrong impression.

And then finally, he said, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. Basically saying, I trust, I lay it down to you, I give it to you, Father, I entrust, I commit my life, my spirit into your hands. I like what Marshall Siegel wrote.

He said, talking about Jesus, he had been born to climb this vile tree, walking hand in hand with hostility his whole life. I gave a message many years ago entitled Born to Die. He had been born to climb this vile tree.

Murder stalked him before he could even walk. He fought the war of wars when he lined up against evil himself in the wilderness and defeated it. While he healed the sick and cast out demons, the religious leaders accused him of being a devil.

The word became flesh and dwelt among his own people and they brutally assaulted him, restlessly plotting, beating, and mocking until his flesh gave away. He said, it is finished. Father, I give my spirit back to you.

I've come for this purpose. For this purpose, I was sent and I died. And these final words of Jesus echo throughout history.

They echo. Resurrection Sunday, we celebrate the fact that Jesus cannot be stopped. Have you thought about this? If death can't conquer you, nothing can.

That's why the Bible says that he came and he conquered hell, death, and the grave. All those things that people are worried about, the final end, this is final conquering where all men have to submit to the anvil and the hammer of death. Jesus said, I've conquered it.

And really, death for a believer is just the beginning. And then why we're here this morning, I'm going to read from one of the gospels. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices that they had prepared.

And maybe this will be important. When Jesus died, that's what the Bible talks about. He went to Hades and preached to the captives there.

And people say, well, he went to hell. That's not true. Maybe I shouldn't have opened up this can of words because it might take a minute to unpack it.

But his body was there in the tomb. And his spirit went and ministered to those. Maybe a final call.

We don't know exactly. But that's what it talks about. He went to Hades.

That's why the psalmist, I believe, said, your soul will not come to corruption. David was writing about it. And that happened.

Your body will not come to corruption. He went. He preached to those souls.

Whatever that means. There was Abraham's bosom, where you had this great chasm between those. And Jesus gives that analogy of Abram in Abram's bosom, this Lazarus that was tormented back on earth.

But now he's in Abram's bosom. And you have this other person who would just, if you just touch my lips with some of that water. And he's in great distress being with the hell.

So Jesus went to this area temporarily and preached to those there. What that means, I'll let you debate that. But then on that third day, and that third day, that's the resurrection.

The body comes back to life. His spirit is put into that body again. And very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared.

They had found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. Now, this might be a side note, because people say, well, people could have just made this up.

He was killed in Jerusalem. He was raised from the dead in Jerusalem. You cannot get away with a lie when the body's right there, if he didn't rise from the dead.

You have hundreds and hundreds of witnesses. You have people actually dying for this story. If we had time, we could go over what the early disciples went through.

They didn't live in a big mansion. They didn't own a car. They didn't have all this money and recognition.

They died very painful deaths, from being hung upside down, from being pierced through with spears, to being beheaded, different things. Why? Because they saw the risen Savior. Same thing today.

Although people don't see Jesus necessarily, they have the Spirit of God in their hearts, and they die for Jesus, because that type of faith is deeper than the flesh we even have, when you have that relationship with God. And they didn't know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them, in gleaming bright clothing.

These two men, these angels, also scared away the Roman soldiers, and the Roman soldiers became like dead men when they saw these men. The women were frightened and bowed their faces toward the ground. This is interesting, but the men said, why do you look for the living among the dead? Why do you look for the living among the dead? I was going to turn that into a whole sermon someday, and maybe I'll just give you a quick little sentence or two.

Why are some of you looking for the living among the dead? Where you're looking is what you're finding. Having a passion for the things of God and seeking God requires not looking for that among the dead. The wrong places, the wrong location, hooking up with the wrong people.

He isn't here, but he's been raised. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee? That the human one must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day, he would rise again. And that's where that song comes from that we sing sometimes.

Oh death, where is your stain? Oh death, where is your stain? So think about this. What would your last words be if you're here this morning and you have time to consider it? What would your last words be? Because it falls into two categories, regret or redeemed. I want you to think of this for a moment.

One of the hardest things that I do, there's a couple things, but obviously it's talking to people that are close to death. I have to prepare myself out in the car, outside, whether it's hospital homes or the hospital. And what are you going to say? Unless God does a miracle and heals them.

Breathing shallow, hallucination, going in and out. But sometimes they can talk. I leave there sometimes so broken because of the regret.

Can you imagine getting to the end of your life, on your deathbed, having a hard time breathing, lungs are filling up, and you regret the life that God gave you. You didn't do anything for him. And I just, I hold their

hands and you can't say it's alright.

It's alright. Your former years are going to be better than your latter years. And of course you can encourage them.

But a lot of times, what do you say to that? That's when the finish line is coming to an end. And to hear the regret is painful. I could have been a better father.

I could have been a better husband. I'm sorry guys, I didn't know this would happen. But I also hear that they say, Shane, God called me at a young age.

And I ran from it. I knew what he wanted me to do, but I never did it. I spent my whole life chasing all these things.

And now they're laying there. Hours left. What do you do in the final hours? Now you contrast that with those who've been redeemed.

I've told this before. Sam, I see Sam here and went to see his wife before, pretty, pretty, pretty soon before she passed away. And me and Morgan left there encouraged.

And like, she's just the joy. Oh, don't worry, I'm going to see him. The joy.

Guys, this isn't a game. This isn't a game. We can't just always talk about God's love as if he's a gloating grandfather, or a cosmic ball of love.

And let's go hide a bunch of Easter eggs. And let's just celebrate the day. Jesus died, so they would be redeemed and set free.

And then we can die someday. And say, I didn't do it perfectly. I would have changed some things.

But oh, God, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for redeeming me.

Thank you for setting me free. Thank you, God. And this is a call to some of you.

You are believers, but if you've not surrendered your life to God, you're still playing church. Have you witnessed anybody? Do you want to get involved and do anything for God? Are you just going through day by day? What are you going to say on your deathbed to your children? Listen, it's not pretty. I've seen grown men and women, daughters and sons, crying, telling their dad, it's okay.

It's okay. No matter what your situation, Psalm 51 can be a great encouragement. David said, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness.

He just killed somebody, committed adultery, and the prophet called him on it a year later. He said, God, have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Are you trapped this morning? Cry out.

Cry out. I've held on to that promise before. O God, have mercy on me, according to your lovingkindness.

See, that's repentance. And God says, O broken and humble, contrite heart, I will not cast that away. That's what I'm looking for.

Get rid of the defense attorney within. Fire that clown. You know who he is.

Oh, come on, that doesn't apply to you. He's defending us and making excuses. David said, For I acknowledge my transgressions.

Isn't that good to do? That's good to do. That's what America needs to do. That's what politicians need to do.

I acknowledge my transgressions before. I have sinned against a holy, righteous, loving, pure God. I confess my transgressions.

I cry out, O God, have mercy on me. Not only do I acknowledge them, I repent. Against you only have I sinned.

I've done this evil in your sight. And then I immediately went to Psalm 126. Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.

Those who go out weeping carry seed to sow. They return with songs of joy. That's why people crack me up and they say all the time, Shane, you're too hard.

No, you're too hard. No, what I'm doing is I'm planting some seeds. I'm getting out this ledge hammer to break up the concrete so we can put something new in there.

Yes, it hurts. That's the point. The gospel offends.

It hurts. You sow tears of sorrow, O God, of regret, O God, and then out of that tears of sorrow grow this wonderful plant called life that God begins to bless and He begins to use you. And then David said, O that the bones you have broken may rejoice.

When God does a breaking in you, you begin to rejoice in that. Hide your face from my sins, O God, and blot out all my iniquities. Create a clean heart within me, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence. Do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Here's the last sentence.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. Many of you, are you missing that joy? Have you ever experienced that powerful joy of God and then it leaves, maybe years later? You might not know this, but what I love about this verse is at the end, because what the enemy's intending for good, David's caught in a pit of sorrow and depression.

He doesn't even know if God's listening. He's transgressed. He's acknowledging.

And he says, God, renew me, restore me, create me a clean heart, renew a steadfast spirit. What is that? It's a concrete, committed spirit. He says, then, then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners shall be converted to you.

He said, okay, when all this is said and done, when the enemy thought he would kill me and you pick me up and you clean me up and I confess before you and there's joy overflowing, then I'm going to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ because I've been there, I've been so close to hell that I know my clothes still smell like smoke. And you begin to lead people back to the cross, back to Calvary, woe be to this silly, lukewarm Christianity and preaching that leads nobody back to the cross. You don't see anybody change

because of that.

People say, Shane, you're not going to build an enormous church saying those things. I don't care because the enemy tried to kill me. Then, then I will lead transgressors to you.

I will point sinners to the cross. That's what a testimony is, is it not? To testify what God has done in our heart. So think about that.

What are your last words going to be? Two groups primarily. If you don't know who Jesus is, you need to change that this morning. And I'm not talking about intellectual.

We've done a great job in America of teaching people who he is, but not having a relationship with him. The Bible says, repent of your sin and believe and you will be saved. Repent and believe and you will be saved.

And also the other group, maybe Christians, where I was, I was trapped in my 20s and teenage years, I believe I came to the Lord, drifted away, wasn't founded in his word. And you need to come home. Some of you need to say enough is enough.

I'm tired of living like the prodigal. I'm tired of not trusting God, following God. And I need to change that this morning.

I want my final words to be, thank God. Thank God he called me back. .

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