

Experiencing God: Don't Ring the Bell Part 2

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of perseverance in faith, focusing on God's support during trials, and the need for the church to be a place of healing and truth.

Duration: 47:55

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Romans 8:38, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:12

Topics: "Faith in Trials", "Perseverance"

Description

Shane Idleman encourages believers to persevere through life's storms, emphasizing that hope and peace are found in Christ, who is our anchor and foundation. He reminds us that our relationship with God is not based on our actions but on His unwavering grip on us, urging us to focus on blessings rather than burdens. Idleman warns against the dangers of a critical spirit and the temptation to give up in the face of trials, reminding us that true faith is demonstrated through perseverance and desperation for God. He illustrates this through the story of a woman healed by touching Jesus' garment, highlighting the importance of determination and faith in seeking God. Ultimately, he calls for a public declaration of faith and a commitment to prayer as essential to spiritual vitality.

Transcript

Hope is yours to take. Peace is found in grace. And so the title of the message this morning is Don't Ring the Bell.

Don't Ring the Bell. I believe my mission this morning is to encourage you to persevere, to get back up and fight again, that there is always the calm after the storm, there is always the light at the end of the tunnel when you're focusing on Christ, no matter what you're going through. He will be that sure foundation.

He will be that rock. He will be that anchor that will never let go. One thing that has helped me over the years is sometimes, Lord, I never want to let go of you.

I never want to let go of you. But even if I do, I know you're holding on to me. And thank God our relationship with Him does not rely upon what you do.

Even though it's incredible, we have spiritual disciplines we should do. We have to abide in Christ. We have to seek Him.

We have to persevere. But at the end of the day, it's not as much about me holding on to Him as Him holding on to me. The enemy will never snatch you out of my hand.

Paul said, where can I go? Actually, David said, where can I go to escape your presence? Nowhere. You were always there. Paul said, nothing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, nor height, nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any created thing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

When you're a son, you're a son indeed. When you're a daughter, you're a daughter indeed. And you rest in that.

You anchor in that. Some of you, if your faith is wavering and you're not sure, I can guarantee it's probably because you're filling your mind with fear and doubt and anxiety. You're listening more to social media than Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

And as a result, your mind is going towards those things and not towards the things of God. So I want to talk to those this morning who might be at a breaking point. And I'll just shoot you straight.

If you're not at one now, get ready. If you're not going through a storm, you're either going through a storm, you've went through a storm, or a storm is coming. I wish I could be the bearer of good news.

Say, some of you will never encounter a storm. You hear some of those guys on TV, you would think that, wouldn't you? But how do I know if I'm at a breaking point? Well, there's a couple indicators. Obviously, there's scriptural proof for this, but are you focusing more on your burdens than your blessings? That will sidetrack you every, the devil will sidetrack you every opportunity he gets by focusing on your burdens and not your blessings.

On what you're going through, not who God is. And if we just think for a minute, how blessed are we? Does anyone hear that air conditioning? There's billions of people who don't even know what that is. One of the missionaries we supported a while back came over from Africa, and he never put ice in his water when we had lunch.

And he said, we don't have ice in Africa. What do you mean you don't have ice? No, we don't have ice machines and refrigerators and electricity. Really? I don't like it so cold.

I'm used to lukewarm water. And so, ice? Running water? You can't just go put hot on your thermostat in your shower? I mean, look, we are so blessed. And see, those blessings should produce thankfulness.

But often, they produce attitudes and pride and entitlement. We want more. We deserve this.

Instead of being thankful. And then also, are you becoming critical and defensive? Listen, the enemy loves a critical heart. He loves a critical, judgmental heart that loves to critique and criticize.

And I know, it's prevalent in the church. It's obvious, but the person who, in this whole congregation, who receives the most criticism is, guess who? Yep. Yep.

Oh yeah, pastor, for sure. I hear it weekly. I hear it weekly.

Some of it's valid, some of it you learn from. But nine times out of ten, it's coming from a critical heart. And I will tell people lovingly, I can't receive criticism from a critical heart.

If somebody who truly loves me, loves the church, we know them, and they're offering constructive criticism, that's gold. But if it's just coming from a critical heart, you have to just throw that away, because that's not of God. That's a critical spirit.

And the enemy plants seeds, doesn't he? I can become critical of other pastors, so I'm sure you can too. That worship is too emotional. Why are they singing those songs? Whatever happened to the old hymns? Where's the organ? Why is Shane not wearing a suit and tie? That better be the King James version up there.

Why are they standing? Why are they sitting? Why aren't they standing? Why are they raising their hands? Why are they at the altar? Why do you pray like that? Why do you say baptism doesn't save you? Why don't you do this? Why do you do this? Where's the discipline classes? Where's the home groups? Why aren't you doing this? Why do you spend that much money on this? Why is this never-ending? It's a critical factory. But hurt people hurt people. And often that's coming from a person who is at a breaking point.

Their faith is being challenged. They're going through difficulties. Doubt and fear and anxiety begin to rise up in our lives.

And we begin to think, if I just give in, if I just ring that bell, it will take the pain away. If I just ring that bell, it will take the pain away. And actually many people go back into addiction for that very reason.

They fall back into addiction because if I could just take that pain away, and the enemy shows you how you feel the first few hours of that hit or that pill or that drink, but he doesn't show you the misery that follows. He presents the bait, but not the hook that's in the bait. And we get caught up in those things.

James 5, 10 through 11. James says, my brethren, speaking to fellow Christians, my brethren, take the prophets. Take the prophets as an example who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Look at them as the example of suffering and patience. Indeed, we count them blessed who endure. This word endurance is throughout all of scripture.

Those who endure to the end will be saved. Now, this isn't a works-based scripture. Not this one, the other one I just quoted.

It's not about you, you know, enduring and works-based. It shows genuine followers of Jesus Christ will get up and fight again. They will endure until the end.

Calvinism calls it perseverance of the saints. The true saints of God will persevere. They will finish strong.

They will endure to the end. But then there's a lot of scriptures on warnings that we have to abide in Christ. We have to get back up.

We have to fight again. But it's interesting. He said, take the prophets as an example.

Did you know prophets were normally hated? What happened to John the Baptist? Manasseh, king, wicked king Manasseh, said that he killed Isaiah with a wooden saw. The priest of Bethel tortured Amos, the prophet, and killed him. Micah, the prophet, was slain by Joram, the son of Ahab.

The Jews stoned Habakkuk in Jerusalem. Why would he mention the prophets? Because the prophets would come with a prophetic voice. Their words were meant to cut.

They were meant to slice. They were meant to convict. I don't know if you were there last night or if you heard me say this before, but the same sun outside that melts the wax also hardens the clay.

So the same word of God. It's amazing for me. One of the most amazing things about pastoring is I can say something.

It will encourage a whole group of people. A single mom, somebody in recovery, a spouse. Ah, but then it upsets others.

I just said the same thing. What's the difference? The heart. And that prophetic voice would come in.

The prophets would call the people, you're in sin. You've drifted from God. Turn back to God.

And when we're in sin, we don't like to be confronted. And they would run these prophetic voices out of town. They would try to get rid of the conviction of God's spirit.

Why do you think they want to remove the 10 commandment monuments out of courthouses and schools and get rid of Jesus Christ and pervert everything that is true and noble and honest and right and bring in perversion and darkness? Get rid of the light because it's convicting. I love my darkness. I love my sin.

Don't shine the light of the gospel and of purity in my eyes. I hate it. And I will kill you because of it.

The same thing happened then. It can happen today. The prophets were ridiculed and mocked.

I remember King Ahab. He ran into Elisha out in the field. And he said, oh, Elisha, you troubler.

Is that you, you troubler of Israel? And actually, it was the king who was the troubler of Israel. A wicked king getting the people to reject God. But he said, you're troubling Israel.

And that's what they say to pastors like me. Oh, Shane, you troubler of America. Would you shut your mouth and stop pointing out sin? Stop calling out things that are perversion.

Let us live in our sin. Can't you tickle our ears? Don't challenge our heart. Can't you tell us what we want to hear? Not what we need to hear.

And when you begin to convict us, we will drive you out. We hate that voice of truth. Think about it.

Planned Parenthood has pastors on their board. Did you know that? There are denominations ordaining gay clergy and transgender pastors. Oprah will have pastors on her show.

I don't think I'll ever get that call, though. Why is that? And if you go on, if you put Shane Idleman on Fox News and YouTube, I used to go on there regularly. And they sent me a private email and said, our headquarters is shifting gears.

She was concerned. You can't go on there anymore and say that this is wrong and this is wrong and that's wrong. They don't want to hear that anymore.

It upsets too many people. I bet it does. When you stir the pot, people get upset.

But I know as a living witness, preaching enough over the years, that it's the truth of God's word preached, not from arrogance, not from hatred, not from a mean spirit, but from the love of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, the truth of God's word in all of its fullness, the good things and the bad things, that hearts are changed. That's how hearts are changed. And it happens often.

People email me, sometimes men, or they'll run into me, and they'll be like, why are you always so hard on the men? What about the women? Ah, see, that tells you everything right there, doesn't it? No, let's be honest. That joker needs to repent. He's abusive.

He's mean. He's nasty. He's the leader of his house, not fulfilling his role.

Yet he doesn't want to hear it, so I'm the target. I'll never forget that. Talking to his wife, this man was addicted to pornography.

Even when she was in the same room, he would look at it. He was mean, he was arrogant, he was nasty, and he didn't like me calling out the men. Why don't you call out the women? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.

You can learn a lot about the heart by listening to the words people say. They don't like the conviction. We get letters.

Maybe I should say that in case you're listening. If you don't put a return address, your phone number, your name, something, we are throwing it in the trash. I don't even look at it.

But why don't you just die and go to hell, you homophobe? Somebody's upset about something. I have a feeling I know what it's about. But see, they don't understand.

It's not me, it's the truth they don't like. It's the truth because it hits the heart. The word of God is living and powerful.

It's sharper than any double-edged sword. It pierces your heart and it discerns the thoughts and the intents of the heart. And prideful men and women do not like to be confronted with the truth.

And that's why he said, look at the prophets who spoke boldly. But you know the most interesting part about that? It's the love of God that compels us to share the truth of God. Right before the fall of Jerusalem, it was terrible.

You can read about it in Josephus' works. He's an early historian, a Jewish historian. A million Jews slaughtered.

Women and what they did to children. And Titus came in and conquered the city around 70 A.D. But before that, hundreds and hundreds of years before that. I think it was around, I don't know, 500 B.C. God said, I sent my messengers.

I sent my prophets to warn my people. Because I love them. I was concerned about my dwelling place, my house.

But they mocked my messengers. They despised my word and they scoffed at the prophets. Until the anger of the Lord arose against his own people.

And there was no remedy. So you can push God to where he says, listen, there's no remedy. The judgment hand must fall on a disobedient nation.

But that's why I contend for revival. That's why I contend for a spiritual awakening. Because I believe that God will give us a measure of revival in our bondage.

His word is crystal clear that if you seek me, you will find me. If you turn to me, if you hunger for me, I will visit you. So after that long rabbit trail, let me get to Luke 8. I don't think any of that was in the first service.

So hopefully that was for someone. You might want to go listen to the first service. Luke 8, this is an important story.

This will encourage some of you. As Jesus walked, Luke 8, 43, beginning of verse 43. It's good to bring your Bibles.

It's great, even better to read your Bibles. Highlight your Bibles. I know a lot of you like when I pass out the notes.

But it's just sometimes just the time factor. My notes sometimes change on Sunday morning. As Jesus walked, the multitudes of people thronged him.

In other words, they came all about him, touching. And this big stir, and he was healing people. And they were all around him.

And now a woman having a flow of blood for 12 years, who had spent all of her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed. She came from behind him and touched the hem of his garment. What a wonderful story.

She's sick for 12 years. This issue of blood, no physician could help her. And she comes and she pushes the people away.

And she just touched the hem of his garment. And Jesus said, who touched me? When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, Master, everyone's touching you. Why do you say who touched me? And he said, well, I could feel power going out of me.

Miraculous healing power coming from me by this woman's act of desperation. I perceive power going from me. Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling and falling down before him.

She declared to him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched him and how she was healed immediately. And he said to her daughter, be of good cheer. Your faith has made you well.

Now I'm going to pull out some truths here that I know will encourage you this morning. First, she was disappointed. Anyone here disappointed with God? It's okay to say you have been, I have been.

I can't believe that. You're a pastor? Oh, please. Actually what pastoral leadership is, it's servant leadership and transparency and struggling with what other people struggle with.

There's no difference. It's just a calling. God's called some to be the hands, some to be the feet, some to be the loud mouth, some to be the ears, some to be, it's all the body of Christ.

And so she was disappointed. A flow of blood for 12 years. She spent everything on the doctors.

Has anyone ever been there? You've been disappointed. You've tried everything. Have you heard that before? But Shane, I've tried everything.

It's not working. I'm disappointed. God is not coming through.

This person, if anyone can relate. But James 1.12 says, blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial. Let me tell you, this might help someone today.

It's not the trial that really matters. It's how you go through it. To me, I'm looking now at trials as stepping stones, not stumbling blocks.

It's getting through this trial. My faith is being tested. The trial is creating endurance in me and in you.

And he said, blessed is that person. Now, we think because of prosperity preachers or whatever, we think blessed financially. Not necessarily.

Blessed is the man, the woman who remains steadfast, meaning they hold the line. No matter what comes, Jesus Christ, I am following you. I'm building my life on your foundation.

I'm not moving. My eyes are set on Christ and Christ alone. I will not bow my knee to any other God.

I will hold the line just like Moses, having done all stand. I will stand there with my loins girt about with truth, the belt plate of righteousness. Though the storms come, though the wind beats upon my house, I will not fall because it is founded on the rock of Jesus Christ.

And having done all stand there and fight the good fight of faith. Christ is fighting for me. If I just hold the ground, as long as I don't walk back in fear, as long as I don't run in doubt, as long as I don't waver and reject him, if I just hold the line and all hell is breaking loose, but as long as you keep your eyes on Christ, he will see you through.

So remain steadfast. She was disappointed and then she was damaged. Anybody ever been damaged? If not, just keep attending church for a while.

Hurt people hurt people. And in this case, the church would not let her fellowship with them. She was considered unclean in the Old Testament.

You couldn't be part of the congregation, the temple worship. She was unclean, like a leper, unclean. Stay out of the temple.

Get away from us. You are unclean. She's damaged.

Can you imagine carrying that guilt and shame? Many of you have been through divorce. Was there a season where you felt like you had a big D right here on your forehead? Big red D, especially in the church? The 9 a.m. was a lot more honest. Balcony, can I get a couple of amens? All right.

But I want to, well, first let you know, this church, even though we hold to the truth, we preach the truth, everyone is welcome here. Everyone is welcome here. Those struggling with same-sex attraction, those who are divorced, those who are going through a marriage difficulty, those who said, we are not here to cast stones.

This is a hospital for the hurting. However, we will not back down and not talk about sin. For example, those caught, those caught, this big movement, you need to understand this big movement with switching identity and transgenderism and he, she, and gender fluidity, it's from the pit of hell.

But what those people need is encouragement. You are created in God's image. Don't let the culture lie to you.

For young adults now, it's the in thing to do. Can you believe that? It's actually cool to be transgender or bisexual at 12, 13, 14, because it's everywhere. TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, celebrities.

Now we have celebrities coming out. I don't know if my baby, when they get older, if it's going to be a boy or a girl. I don't know yet.

I'll let them choose. That is, that's child abuse. And you see this demonic attack.

So we can say, we love you. We're going to encourage you. We all struggle with something, but we will not back down from what God's word says.

Oh, Shane, that's easy for you to say. You're not going to prison for saying that. You never know where this is going.

I have to think about that daily or weekly maybe. I don't worry about too much. But I believe in God's word.

I believe in his truth. I believe he's going to bring revival. We've got people.

I've been meeting people running for high office in California. And let me tell you, there's some godly people, some very godly people disappointed she was damaged. She was damaged.

She was cast out. Maybe, you know, in your case, divorce. This happens to people caught in addiction a lot too.

They've let down their family. They've let down people. And they're damaged.

They're hurt. And the scripture I want to share with you this morning is Psalm 34:18. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. And he saves those who are crushed in spirit. So here's the good thing about brokenness.

Let it draw you to the cross of Jesus Christ. Let brokenness put you down here and find you on the ground. Find you worshiping Christ.

And then you'll come out of there stronger than the person who is arrogant who has never bowed their knee to Jesus Christ. You'll come out of there. That brokenness will turn into an incredible blessing.

Disappointed, damaged, and then she was defeated. She could not be healed by any other means. Boy, that's difficult to get out of.

You're disappointed. You're damaged. You're defeated.

Did you know that most people, even Christians, stay in that cycle? I'm disappointed. I've fallen. I'm struggling with this.

I'm caught in this sin. I'm defeated. I'm disappointed.

I'm damaged. I'm hurt. There's shame.

There's guilt. And you just stay right there. And you fall back into the bondage that you want so desperately to be out of.

But don't give up. Look up. There is hope.

There is tremendous hope. The reason I have this topic, I'm so passionate about this topic, is because I've seen God change lives from the inside out. I've seen when there's no light at the end of the tunnel when he shows us.

I've seen in the darkest of hours that he brings the light of the gospel. The greater the storm, the greater the blessing. I don't like this biblical truth, but I believe that the greater the pain, often the greater the relationship with the Lord.

The more you've went through, the more deeper you appreciate who God is. It's those arrogant, stiff-necked Pharisees in the church who lived like leave it to beaver. They've never done anything wrong.

They've never damaged anything. They've just had this perfect life. You don't know leave it to beaver.

You can Google it. I'm not saying they don't know the Lord, but they don't know the Lord. I haven't thought of this story in a while, but it fits.

Maybe some of you have heard it. But it was about a church in the Midwest. They were having a contest.

Probably not a good thing to do, but they decided to do it. They're having a contest to see who could quote the 23rd Psalm better. And so this young man, fresh out of seminary, well-educated in biblical truth, he had a big stack of books on theology and pneumatology and eschatology and soteriology and all the ologies.

I memorized that at seven years old. I've got it down. Okay, you ready for this? He comes up and he's, the Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. It's beautiful.

Beautiful. Then the other person didn't show up. And the event organizer said, go get Dan, the janitor.

I think he knows the 23rd Psalm. And they grabbed this old man. And he comes up, you know, 70 years old.

And his voice kind of was cracking. And he began to weep. He said, the Lord is my shepherd.

Man, I might too. But you think about it. I shall not want.

He makes me lie down between green pastures. He just couldn't get through it. He was broken.

And he had to sit down. Just in God's grace. And he fell apart in God's arms of forgiveness and restoration.

And what happened? That man received a standing ovation. And this young kid, he was all upset. What? Are you kidding me? This thing is rigged.

I did better. I did better. I know it better.

And as he was leaving, one of the old ushers, older deacons, grabbed him. And he said, young man, you know what the problem was? Why? You didn't get a standing ovation? He said, you knew the 23rd Psalm. But that old man knew the shepherd.

That's the difference. Maybe some of you will get that when you drive home. But isn't that the truth? So many people know scripture.

But in the church all their life. And I'm happy for them. But they don't truly know the shepherd.

He hasn't carried them wounded and broken. He hasn't grabbed them out. When they were so close to hell, their clothes still smell like smoke.

When they were walking that edge and Christ saved them, pulled them back. When they were going through tremendous difficulties, Christ healed them. He saved them.

He set them free. He opened financial doors. He repaired marriages.

He brought prodigal sons home. See, they know the shepherd. That's the problem.

There has to be a desperation there. And that's what the next point. She was desperate.

She was desperate. See, that's where many people miss it. They get stuck in defeat, failure, disappointment.

Defeat, failure, disappointment. But you've got to get to, at some point, like David. I strengthened myself in the Lord.

I was so desperate for him. I have to find him. No matter what it costs me.

No matter if I have to pray. If I have to fast. I've got to get to church.

I've got to seek God with all my heart. I might throw out my computer. I might change my iPhone in for an old flip phone.

If it will get me off of pornography and addiction and social media. I'm going to make some radical changes. Because I've got to seek God with all of my heart and all of my strength.

And Matthew records. Hold on. Matthew records this.

Matthew said. She said to herself. If only.

If only I may touch the hem of his garment. I might be healed. Some of you have got to say.

If only I can get back to that altar. If I can find my way to that altar again. If I can get back to my first love.

If Christ can become real to me again. If I can have that passionate relationship. I am desperate.

And desperate people do desperate things. And I cry out to God. I call out to God.

And I seek him with all of my heart and all of my strength. Desperate people do desperate things. I want to encourage you guys to get to 6 a.m. worship.

We're here at 6 in the morning on Sundays. This altar is full. God is changing hearts.

Breaking hearts. Prayers are being answered. And most people say.

That doesn't sound too fun. Right. Because you're not desperate.

You're not desperate. You go home and you get that call. And you no longer are employed.

And your doctor says. And the results don't look good. You will be at this altar.

So you're desperate. Desperate people do desperate things. And then she was determined.

Determined. She wasn't this nice polite lady. I picture her.

I've got to get to Jesus. You're in my way. And she would.

I've got to touch Jesus. And you don't care what people think. You're not going to let the crowd stop you.

I've got to get to Jesus. And if I just touch the hem of his garment. I will be made well.

And it reminds me of that blind man crying out. Son of David have mercy on me. Son of David have mercy on me.

And they went over and said. Be quiet. Be quiet.

Jesus is walking by. Would you please be quiet. And he cried out even more.

Son of David have mercy on me. Son of David have mercy on me. Jesus said.

Who is that man crying out to me? Because I hear the cries of my children. I hear the brokenness. And I hear the dependence on me.

I cannot. That cry I cannot turn away. Parents you know that one cry.

You know that one cry. Most cry. Whatever.

But when you hear that cry. You get up. Whatever you're doing.

You get up. I've ran so hard out the door once. I didn't know the screen door was closed.

And I knocked that screen door. It goes flying. My daughter's caught in something.

Her leg's stuck. And she's. Daddy.

Daddy. What am I going to say? Let me go eat first. Let me use the restroom.

Hold on. I'll get there in a little bit. No.

The cries of my children. How much more God when his children. Find themselves on the altar.

And they cry out. Say Lord. I need you to save me.

And set me free. If you do not restore my marriage. It will not.

It will not work out. If you do not take away this addiction. Or this stronghold.

Or this bondage. I am lost. And I cry out to you.

The Bible is clear. If you seek me. You will find me.

And then praise God. She was delivered. She was delivered.

He said to her daughter. Your faith has made you well. And we believe in faith.

We try to avoid the extremes. Of name it. And claim it.

Have you heard those guys before? If you just have enough faith. You can have that Mercedes. And we believe in faith.

Did you know that, Elgin? What, that Mercedes, that house up on the hill? You just have enough faith, you need to have enough faith. And you, you're not healed yet, you're still sick, you don't have enough faith. You just haven't had enough faith.

And they really harm the gospel, they harm believers. But then we have this other side, you guys wanna be on this side. I mean, you don't wanna be on this side either, I should say.

It's faith is no big deal. I mean, whatever, God's sovereignty. We don't want it, we put down the faith side so much that we actually have no faith.

Faith doesn't really play a role, but then where's the middle ground? Jesus said, I cannot do many great works there because of their unbelief, their lack of faith. If you have faith as a mustard seed, because of your faith, you have been healed. So you better believe faith plays a huge role in who we are as Christians, but it's not a get me out of jail free card.

It's not Jesus is a genie in a bottle, can I have my three wishes? It's not God is my butler in heaven. We recognize his faith is unwavering, standing, commitment on the sovereignty of God. No matter what happens, I'm gonna stand on who God and God is alone.

I'm gonna step out on what I can't see to trust who I can see, that being the Lord Jesus Christ. And you trust in who God is, no matter what comes, there's unyielding faith. Hebrews 11, six, and without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Because whoever draws near to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Some of you need to diligently seek him. Stop playing church.

Stop coming to church when it's convenient. You're putting sports before church, you're putting every other thing before church. Sometimes we think it's like a checklist.

If you don't come to church, at least do it at your home. At least open the word of God and get into prayer and worship and it's the diligence. Did you know if a drop of water could hit my pulpit for the next year? Just keep dropping, eventually there'd be a big divot.

What happened? It's that diligence. But Shane, I'm praying, I don't see anything. Welcome to the club.

Welcome to the school of hard knocks. Welcome to perseverance. Welcome to spiritual battle.

It's that perseverance. It's that even when I don't see it, I believe it. The definition of faith.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. It's the evidence of things hoped for. And it's that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

At the first service, I was reminded, and I'll tell you this again, about that there's a particular bamboo. I don't know if you've heard of this bamboo, but you can water it for months, a few years and nothing happens. Would you keep watering something if three years later, there's nothing, what's going on here? I'm not watering this dirt.

I got some bad seeds. But five years later, it begins to come up. And you can, don't take my word for it, Google it.

Maybe don't take that word for it either nowadays. But it can grow like 30 feet in that next year. You go from nothing, seeing nothing, and in a short amount of time, it just shoots up.

And that's the same with this. Lord, I'm watering. I don't see my children serving you yet, or grandchildren, amen.

I don't see my marriage being restored. I don't see this happening. I don't see anything, but I don't care.

What I'm going to do is trust your word. I live by faith and not by sight, a faith in the son of God. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

I'm gonna focus on him and him alone. Though I don't see anything, I know that the story's not over. God, as I water and water and water, he's saying, son, daughter, keep building up that strength, being strengthened and fortified in my word.

And as that root begins to take shape when you're ready, then I will begin to exalt you. I will build you up. I will open that door.

But don't give up because as God is moving, so is the enemy. The most powerful prayer life you can ever have is to pray in the midst of not seeing anything. I'm praying for the prodigal son and I see them home worshipping God, even though they're caught in sin, even though they're caught in addiction, even though they're caught in misery, I see them following you and I'm gonna continue to pray for that.

I see my spouse here worshipping with me. I see it in the spirit. I see that I have the faith in the son of God.

And I'm gonna keep contending. I really, truly believe in spiritual battle. And I believe we don't see what's going on.

Any of you heard of Jim Cimbala in New York, the Brooklyn Tabernacle? Incredible night, Tuesday night prayer meetings. Me and my wife actually got a chance to meet him a couple of years ago when we went

to that, that Tuesday night meeting. And he's a pastor, mega church pastor.

And his daughter is on the streets of New York. Heroin, crystal meth, alcohol. And he had to go and preach every Sunday.

That's faith. And he went to a prayer meeting and they said, Jim, we're gonna pray for your daughter tonight. If you've ever been, I'm talking about, if you've ever been in a real prayer meeting, it's not real conservative.

Oh Lord, bless your people. Help sister Sarah get her car fixed. Real prayer is travail.

You're birthing something like a pregnancy. When Zion travails, sons and daughters are born. There's a pulling down heaven.

There's a, you know, God, unless you move, there's no hope. Have you ever, I've prayed like that. Lord, unless you do this, there is no hope.

I'm resting in you, it changes your prayer life. It changes how you look at things because you don't care. This isn't about being conservative and quiet and nice, which is great.

You don't want to manufacture anything, but there comes a time when you've got to pull down heaven. And this church went to praying and for an hour for her. And when he got home, he told his wife these words.

If God does not answer this prayer, there is not a God in heaven. You should have heard that place pulling down heaven and praying as if God is hearing because he is and listening. And with a short amount of time, she was home.

At the front door, she fell down in the kitchen. She fell down in the kitchen and began weeping and apologizing. She said, what happened? She said, she said, last night, were you praying for me dad? Yeah.

Last night I had the most vivid dream that I was on the verge of hell. And if I don't turn back, I will be lost. You don't think God planted that thought, gave her that dream? See, that's what praying does.

And you begin to think, what about if I don't pray? If you don't ask, you don't receive. I think we need to be more specific in our prayers too, for our kids, for others. Tell the Lord exactly, exactly what you feel he's put on your heart.

And she was delivered. She was healed. But wait a minute, this delay, Jesus delaying his journey cost a 12 year old her life.

A little 12 year old died. Right before this, they came to Jesus, running to Jesus said, hurry, hurry, hurry. My master's daughter is sick unto death and you need to come.

Good teacher, come, please. But Jesus stopped. He healed this woman.

Maybe he taught, we don't know. He took some time there in the city. And then the word came to the man whose daughter was sick.

They said, your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the teacher anymore. So you see this tremendous victory and also this tremendous defeat.

And the father was I'm sure just heartbroken and wailing and his wife and this tremendous brokenness. Delay, delayed if you were only here. If you were only here, Jesus, why did you delay? But remember with Jesus, delay is not deny.

You can tweet that. You can highlight that. With God, delay is not deny.

In other words, delaying something is not denying it. And Jesus said, just remove everybody, remove the doubters. Let me have the father, the mother, Peter, James and John.

Let me, no, Peter, James and John, I believe it was. But he said, let me just pray with this. And he prayed, he said, child, get up and rise again.

And this family went from grief to tremendous joy because Jesus was brought into the picture. So I came here to tell you this morning, don't ring the bell, don't ring the bell. Don't give up, it's not worth it.

I'm gonna find out soon if I have to do a memorial service for a man who took his life that we prayed for in the prayer room a month ago. Oh God, if I wish he was here, don't ring the bell. No matter what you're going through, nothing is greater than Christ's power to see you through.

The problem is we dwell too much on the here and now. Too many of you are listening to CNN, Fox News, all these different reports and news outlets and you're letting fear control you and it's hurting your family. Did you know fear and faith can't coexist? I can't be very fearful and anxious and then also have tremendous faith and love and full of the Spirit.

One or the other will prevail. It's like that old story Billy Graham told years ago about a young man who came to a pastor and he said, pastor, I keep making bad decisions. I keep fear, anxiety and I keep making all these evil choices, what's wrong with me? It's like I have two dogs fighting inside of me.

One is evil and one is good. And he said, the evil dog keeps winning. And the pastor looked at him and said, that's the one you need to starve to death.

You keep feeding him, that's why he's winning. Same thing mentally. We keep feeding on fear and doubt and anxiety and the things that cause us to lose our faith.

Don't ring the bell. And I'll close with this. Jesus said, who touched me? Who touched me? Some of you are gonna need to make a public declaration of your faith at some point.

Get baptized and stop kind of walking on the fence. Especially men, we like to go on church on Sunday to please our spouse and then live like hell on Monday. I want the guys to think I'm cool.

So I won't post anything about God on Facebook. I'll post sports and race cars and beer and all these things. You can't live on the fence.

You cannot serve two masters. You'll either love the one and hate the other or despise the one and be loyal to the other. You can't serve both God and mammon.

A public declaration. It doesn't have to be here. It doesn't have to be, but there has to be something that says, I am making Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior.

And if you don't know him this morning, the Bible is crystal clear. Like this lady went from unclean to clean in a moment. And a person is unclean when they don't know Jesus Christ.

They cannot stand before an almighty God in their sin and trespasses. But when they repent and they believe, they go from unclean to clean. So I want to encourage you this morning.

If you need to make that decision during worship, just pray, God, I've been playing church. I don't truly know you. I don't have a relationship with you.

I've been going through the motions. God, would you save me? And there's a promise you never, ever forget. God said, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord might be saved if I'm having a good day.

Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord, you might get saved if I'm not on vacation. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord, if you follow this checklist and you start coming to church for a month, come on, we all know, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And either you believe God's word or you don't.

I believe it. I believe whoever calls on the name of the Lord with the right heart will be saved. Whoever comes to me all who are weak and heavy laden, I will no way cast them out.

Jesus said, if you believe on me as the scriptures say, out of your belly will flow rivers of living water. You will be made new again. The darkness will be pushed out and the light of the gospel will shine through.

But you have to make that confession and say, I repent of my sin and I believe in Christ as my Lord and Savior. Don't ring the bell. Amen? Amen.

Listen, there's no new things. There's nothing new under the sun. God's word, the inerrancy of scripture, the application of God's word, the worship of his son and the prayer of his people.

That's a three core strand that you cannot easily break. Prayer has to be, prayer has to be your heartbeat. Did you know that? We can come and listen to worship, hear a message, but if we're not praying, when faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live.

E.M. Bowne said that 50 years ago. When your faith ceases to pray, you will cease to live spiritually. Faith, prayer is your heartbeat spiritually.

It keeps you living and vibrant. It is like spiritual resuscitation to get your prayer life back.

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