

# God Makes A Wrong Turn Right (Video)

by Shane Idleman

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*This sermon emphasizes the power of God to make wrong turns right, highlighting the impact of pain in producing passion for God, the importance of forgetting past mistakes while learning from them, and the need to surrender completely to Jesus Christ. It encourages embracing grace, understanding that failure is not final with God, and focusing on the cross for redemption and strength in times of struggle.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 1:27, Psalm 34:18, Philippians 3:13, Ephesians 2:8, Romans 5:8

**Topics:** "Redemption", "Embracing Grace"

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## Description

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## Transcript

The sermons in regard to not wanting to preach something that I just don't want to. I wish I could tell you the opposite. But after last night, it was encouraging.

I've never heard from more people that with tears in their eyes of how there's hope and there's encouragement. And God will often use our brokenness to help others. And he will make a wrong turn right.

No matter where you're at this morning, no matter where you're at, even listening to this later. This now, we just picked up stations in San Francisco, up by Sacramento, San Jose, and San Diego, and other about 18 different states that are airing these sermons. And it's amazing how they're being transformed by the power of God's word and making a wrong turn right.

See, the key is when you're on the wrong turn, you gotta get off. God can make it right, but you gotta get off the wrong way. You gotta, uh-oh, the word repent.

Do you know what that means? Turn, I'm going a wrong way. I need to go a right way. I believe it's metaneo in the Greek.

It's a turning back to the right path. And God can turn the wrong way into the right way very quickly. And so, I'll just begin at the beginning and work through it.

And then I want to really close with some takeaways, things that you need to know. I would give this CD to those who don't want to hear it, possibly just leave it out, right, on the coffee table. I don't, are we doing CDs anymore? I should guess I should even ask that.

Now everything is sent out there on email, and Facebook, and YouTube, and Twitter, and Instagram, and TikTok, and all these different things. But get it out there to them. But the short version of me being where I was born was actually, any guesses? Yeah, I haven't went very far.

I haven't went very far. Right there, Antelope Valley Hospital. And it's, to me, it's so funny.

Because people say, oh, how did you stand it there? I mean, I hate Lanca, I hate Palmdale. But if when you're in the center of God's will, I love it. I love it.

I traveled. We went to, you're not gonna believe this. We went to the clear streams, and open fields, and meadows, everything of Idaho for a week, five years ago.

And I was ready to come home. After six days, I was ready to come home. Because I'm miserable outside of God's will.

I can run from my calling, and I'll be miserable. You have to find out, Lord, where do you want me? Where do you want me? And it's funny, I was talking to Pastor Abram. I don't know if he's in the service, or he might be in the second one.

But would you ever, if God ever opened the door, would you ever wanna plant a church again in LA? Compton? Inglewood? Absolutely. That's the last thing most people would wanna do. Get me outta here.

But God says, I'm gonna put you in there to make a difference. Now, I'm all for protecting our kids, and I'm all for, I wanna live somewhere, my flesh does, that is not here necessarily. But it's not where God has us at this particular junction.

And I'm careful, because he always, every time I make plans, he changes them. But I was born here in Lancaster. Not gonna tell you the year, so I don't date myself.

And as irony, or as sovereignty would have it, I've been talking to the person in the home that I was born at, and me and my wife are actually gonna go look at it again after the second service. It's been about 40-some years. And to see where I was born, and just revisiting some of this.

My mom was from Southern California. Picture the beaches of Santa Monica, Burbank, the L.A. scene, and my dad was from the farms of Oklahoma. And so, that was a very interesting dynamic there.

And so, but from that, then we were obviously, we were raised in Quartz Hill, California, right over the hill in Quartz Hill. My grandpa built the Little League Field on M4. We had our construction yard on M2.

I was born on M12. We eventually moved to M14. So, almond orchards, it was almond orchards.

I just stayed there. I know that area pretty well. We actually were able to dove hunt in Rancho Vista, where the Vons is in Rancho Vista.

That all just used to be desert. And we used to watch the blackbird fly over, leaving, I think it was Lockheed. And that was quite a sight to see.

I thought I was a witch on a broomstick when I was little. And so, the early years, with my mom's side, my dad's side, that's where, fortunately, I learned what hard work is. He was in construction.

And when you're from a farm and you're in construction, you learn how to work hard. There was a lot of babying and pampering. And my dad said, grab a shovel, dig a hole, find that gas line.

It's about four feet, two and a half feet deep, and I'll be back at lunch. And just things, and you would just, used to that type of hard work, back when you wouldn't back talk, or you would get a switch off the tree. And it's sad because I think we've so dumbed down the need for discipline because of a few bad apples.

And we so cater to our children and sheltered them that it's gonna be an interesting generation ahead of us, comparing the World War II generation and those who fought in Normandy at 18 years old to now that they need special houses to, special places to go and cry when Trump was elected. I mean, this is just ridiculous. We've created a generation of, well, I'm gonna leave it there.

So, growing up in that environment, school was very, very challenging. So, I know some of you parents, if school is really challenging for your kids, always remember, you don't have to force them in a certain system. You train a child in the way they should go.

That verse is actually talking about the way they are bent. And so, I'm not gonna cram math down a child's throat if they're gifted for something else, necessarily. But we have such standards, and I'm all for education.

Please educate yourself, the more the better. But I felt in the school system, looking back now, it was because of dyslexia and having a hard time reading. Even the lyrics now, I can't, thank God I'm not leaving worship.

Because I say the wrong word, the wrong thought, the wrong sentence. And even reading, I hate to read in public. Math is a nightmare.

And other things that go along with that, I didn't know what it was. My mom said it's a learning disability at a young age. I had a speech teacher teaching me Silly Sally Sucked Seven Suckers.

You know, and the S's, and the speech, and Shane, you gotta, and I remember working with her in Lancaster, and this, what happens is, and I was a little overweight, so my dad would call me chubby, or lead britches, and my grandparents would make fun of me, and you know, so, just this, wow, I felt stupid, basically. Because I can't excel in these things, I can't excel in those things. I, you know, basically, I wasn't that, doing that well in anything, except I really started to excel in baseball.

At Court Sill Little League, we had all stars, and I was pitching very fast in the 60s, in Little League. You know, that's pretty, that ball's moving. And I remember my dad would just put me in all-star games, playoff games, and everything was going good, until this happened.

I had to have surgery at 12 years old in Los Angeles. I still can't straighten this arm. And he told me I'm gonna have arthritis, probably in my 30s, and they removed bone chips, and that was it.

So everything I was looking forward to, kind of fell apart. And I did get, you know, I tried baseball again, but after you miss a year, I mean, your friends are well above you. I remember trying out for baseball in high school, and missing it the first two years, getting cut in baseball.

So here you go, this top athlete, around town, and then now, can't even make the school baseball team. So it was just a series of defeat and discouragement. I remember that.

And then around 12 years of age is when I was introduced to something called alcohol. Anyone know what that is? Come on, let's not play church. So anyway, my dad, he thought, I'm sure this would be reverse psychology, you know, how you have your kid try a beer.

Like, oh, I'm never having that again. Well, it didn't work on me. I still remember we were on M4.

It was a contractor, a concrete contractor, and they gave me a Coors Banquet. And I liked it. At 12 years old, I liked how I felt.

I liked it. It relaxed me, I could talk more, and that kind of set the stage for further use and abuse as I grew up, because that was the go. That was the relaxing.

That was, you could be the talking and the clown, and now I came alive. And that would be a crutch for many years. But also at this time, I repented and believed in Jesus Christ, age 12, up in the mountains, I think by Wrightwood.

And it was a hard, 17 years after that, I was a prodigal son for 17 years. And that scripture leaped out when I first read it. Hard is the way of the transgressor.

Hard is the way of the transgressor. It is hard to be distant from God and rejecting God. And then as I got older, in my teen years, I started to play baseball again, and I went to the San Diego School of Baseball, and I also was put on a team here in California.

They got some guys from different colleges just out of high school. We went and played baseball in Taiwan, and we got killed every game. We were going to bed around one in the morning, because you could drink in Taiwan at 18, and it was a nightmare.

We would just get killed. And I think I have a picture of when I was in Taiwan, there we go, looks like my son, huh? That is 18 years old with a hangover, and we got just annihilated. And then there's a two-day layover in Hawaii, which is not good.

And then after that, because of this broken life, failure, feeling this way, and what I love is God takes the most broken, when He rebuilds it, He gets all the glory. He gets all the credit. He gets you to a low point.

There is so much pride in the church. There is so much pride. It makes me sick.

And if you would look at your brokenness and take it to the cross, God can rebuild it in such a mighty way. Brokenness, you'll become unbreakable, because when God rebuilds, what can man do to you? But then I said, okay, well, I'm working out, and guys want to be big, right? So somebody came up to me and said, why don't you take these pills, this blue pill and this white pill, called anivarin and, I think it was dianabol, and these are anabolic steroids. And I started to get bigger and stronger, 19, 20.

Then I started giving myself my own injections. I would go to a doctor, and they would actually give me Winstrol V, which is a veterinary drug for horses, Ecolpoise, Sustanon 250, which is a combination of three different types of Sustanon, or testosterone, ethanate, propionate, and sipoate, and growth hormone, and just began to just be this, you know, I'll show you tough guy kind of thing. And I think I have a picture of that, believe it or not.

We've never showed this. So, yeah, kind of dated clothing, right? So, that's just funny looking. Josh, I might be bigger than you in that one.

I hit was over 270 pounds, and that's enough of that one. But I remember cocky as ever, prideful, and just fighting, angry. I didn't mention this last night, but me and my friend, Steve, who actually goes to Grace Chapel, we were heavy into steroids, and we took on the five bouncers at Black Angus when it was there, and we got kicked out for life because somebody got injured.

The bouncers ended up, one broke their nose and their arm, and it was just a mess. Police were called, and I was kicked out for life. I finally went back about 20 years ago.

They forgot me, so that was good. And, but that was a tough guy, right? That was a tough guy, and that's why I would learn how to read my own blood work, my LDL levels, and HDL, high-density lipoids, and low-density, and triglycerides, and make sure my white blood cell count, fighting infection, and looking at these, and trying to read my own blood work so I could manage these steroids, and then get into something called growth hormone, which is just not good. Something, I believe, like Arnold Schwarzenegger took, and a lot of these guys that you see out there that look like, wow, that's incredible.

It's probably because it's performance-enhancing drugs, and it can be addictive. It's a very, it's probably the most idolatrous thing out there is that self, if I don't have my abs just right, this calf's a little smaller, and it's just, it's a very self-focused, self-absorbed type of industry. And because of that, then I was working out, and I met a girl at that time, 1991, I believe it was, and that's when I conceded to an abortion, and I drove her to the abortion clinic down off Mission Drive, down by El Presidente Restaurant, off the 405, I still know where it's at.

I looked it up online, actually, this week. I wanted to go down there and just pray. And it wasn't a big deal then, but it's a big deal when I came back to the Lord.

It's been, you know, 30 years. And those are seeds of brokenness that God began to plant. And then a year after that, I ended up in the hospital for four days.

And what steroids can do is they can, they produce a tremendous amount of testosterone. So you get very angry, it's called roid rage, and you'll hear a lot on the news, road rage. Road rage, which I think is due to high levels of caffeine, but I'm gonna save that for my fitness talk.

But roid rage is real, because you just get so angry with all the extra testosterone. And that, the stress of that, the immune system is working over time. I end up in the hospital with strep throat, and it went to my heart as a secondary viral infection.

They call it myopericarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle. And so I was sitting in the emergency room, having a hard time breathing. And as you know, they're not real fast over there.

Nothing's changed in the emergency room. And so about an hour into it, they finally hooked up an EKG. And I remember all things.

And she goes, I need a cardiologist here, stat. Sir, we gotta, and they got me on a gurney, and they started to wheel me away. They thought I was having a mild heart attack at 20, I think it was about 23, 1991ish or so, 1992.

And spent four days in the hospital. That didn't wake me up. Still got back out, and causing trouble, and all kinds of things.

And I remember when it went to the heart, they said I'm very susceptible now to upper respiratory viral infections. So when people say I'm not concerned about COVID, trust me, if I get something like that, and every time I get strep throat, I have to jump right on it. Usually I don't take amoxicillin or antibiotics.

I try to take colloidal silver and supplement natural remedies that work really well if you jump on it, high vitamin C, high vitamins, and you really just kill the disease. Because antibiotics, I'm not against it, but the word means anti, against life. It kills all, even the good bacteria.

And sometimes you need to do that. They need to give me that in the hospital. But sometimes you need to allow the body, because too much of that is gonna create a lot of problems, too, as you get older.

So that was just a side note. So at that age, got out of the hospital. They told me I'm susceptible.

If I ever get strep throat again, I gotta jump right on it. You don't want any type of upper respiratory things, because you're now susceptible to that area, and that's exactly what COVID is. So now in this downtime, my dad had to let me go.

Construction was plummeting. And I was running heavy equipment. By now, my dad put me on a backhoe.

You know what that is? John Deere backhoe, four controls, and running. And he just set, he put me out in the desert. Right now, there's a storage there, a Quartz Hill mini storage.

I don't know if you've seen it. Right behind the laundry mat on 50th Street West. That just used to be all desert.

And he would put me on that and say, okay, dig some holes, and I'll be back later. And I'm like, what is this? So figuring it out, hands on, and then crossing gas lines, water lines, water mains. And you just get, after you break some things, you get a little bit better.

I've broken gas lines and water lines, smaller ones. But anyway, so that, he had to let me go because there wasn't enough work. I remember that was a very difficult time for them.

And I started working at a place called Family Fitness Centers. Anybody remember that name? How about 24-hour fitness? What happened is Family Fitness Centers, I was a managing partner, we merged with 24-hour Nautilus in the Bay Area and became 24-hour fitness. I have a clip from there too.

Do you want to see that one? I'll make this real quick. First off, I want to thank Wayne for being a great district manager. Our coordinator, Christine, for not letting anything slip by.

And the whole staff out there in Lancaster. I appreciate everything. Just keep everything positive.

I want to also thank Ray Wilson for making this possible. Thanks. It is kind of funny looking back now.

But, so at 24-hour fitness, I did what I know to do best, and that's work out and people want to look like you. And so you sell memberships. But I truly believed in the product.

You know, \$100 down, 15 a month, give me a break. Look at this place. And so I was very good salesman.

I worked my way up to manager of the facility in Lancaster, the old location in Lancaster. And then they put me over multiple locations. At one time I had Santa Clarita off of Via Princesa Road.

And Victorville, East, I opened up East Palmdale when it was formerly a different gym. And then the one by the mall. And I remember we signed 20-year leases.

So I guess the 20-year leases are up now. And so I was managing, district manager of these 24-hour fitness centers. And I had a lot of employees now.

And here's this guy, right? Barely graduated high school, by the way, from 1.8. Anybody here? It's good? Okay. But it's funny, once I came back to God, now I can't stop reading. Now I can't stop learning and growing because now it's the things I want to do.

It really, really opened up my eyes to a lot of things. But so now you got this 25-year-old, 24-year-old kid. And I'm over 150 employees.

So you have to learn very quickly how to relate to people. I had to learn profit and loss statements. Do you know what those are if you're in business? I had board allocated budgets where a board of directors would give me, let's say, a \$300,000 goal every month that I had to hit.

I had to answer to them. I had EEO, equal opportunity, things I had to deal with, sexual harassment. We had 300 kids in our childcare services over the course of a month.

And so God, now I can see how He used a lot of that now to help lead a church. And in one sense, it's 10 times easier than leading a business because you're not focused on financials and beating yourself every month. And all these things, you're just focused on serving God and God brings in all the other things.

So working seven days a week, I was a workaholic, right? If you've been there, you know that it's hard to break that. You want to work, you work, you work, you work, you work. That's how you measure success.

But God doesn't measure success by work. He measures it by faithfulness. So on one hand, you have lazy people.

On the other hand, you have workaholics and I was on this side. And so all of that paid off financially. I think I was making around 15 to \$20,000 a month as a district manager and built a custom house in Quartz Hill, California at 25 years old.

Everything was going great, but you take a broken child from a broken home and it leads to a broken marriage. So I was married in 1994 for a few years and anger, addiction, and arrogance took its toll. And I want to be careful at this part because people from my past watch these sermons and they let me know it.

And so I want to portray a correct picture here that I often, and I always have, take responsibility, I believe, as the man. I was concerned about myself, my focus. I loved to get drunk on the weekends and work Monday through Friday.

That was my life. Nobody would interrupt it. Nobody would tell me what to do.

And pride is deadly because you don't think you have it when in reality you do. And just being that type of strong-willed, it ended in the deterioration of a marriage. And then something happened while we were still married where she actually met someone else and it turned into a pattern of different men.

And here I am doing my own thing, drinking, and just not chasing God, chasing everything but God, the world, and it ended in divorce. So looking back, I had a biblical, what they would call a biblical reason for divorce. Because sometimes when you divorce, we take divorce pretty seriously at this church.

If it's unbiblical, the Bible's clear, you've got to stay separated. You can't remarry. But if there are biblical areas where you're released, biblically speaking, then I believe God opens that door for future relationships.

But what people don't understand is that 1998, that was a year of decadence. It ended in divorce, but it also ended on me going just crazy, trying to run even further from God. I remember, as I shared last night, I was at kind of a wake-up call.

I was at the old Schooners location. If you don't know where that's at, that's good. If you do, I hope you, you know, well, we'll leave it there.

One of the bouncers from Schooners is now one of our ushers, so it's kind of funny. Anyway, I was leaving there. I took my friend's Mustang keys.

He didn't know it, and I was heading down Avenue J at about 90 miles an hour and decided to hit the nitrous oxide switch. And when I hit that switch, I'll never forget, whoa, and that thing took off. It was at least 120, and I was still going, and it started shaking.

And I thought, if this goes off the road, those poles are coming by very quick. I'm done here. And I made it home, and I remember, I began to think that night, man, Lord, this, and began to, because you would pray now and then.

You know, oh, Lord, just help me, and you know, God on my terms, and God on your terms will never work. It's his way or no way. He doesn't say, let's make a deal.

He says, this is the deal, and we line up with that. And so this year, 1998, God finally, after just, you know, you get sick of being sick and tired. Have you ever been there? You're sick of addiction taking over.

You're sick of being sick and tired, and in 1999, I remember it was January, January, I was hung over. I turned on the TV, and there's this preacher on there, and I don't know how I knew it, but I knew that's what I wanna do. He was speaking at a large men's conference.

He was talking about, are you on a detour to your destiny? And he was talking about Samson, how the enemy took out his eyes, and he started to talk about, is your vision gone? Your vision for your life, your calling, is it gone? And I began to weep. I mean, have you ever wept? I mean, like, where there's snot coming out, not to be too graphic, and I'm just on the floor, and I'm weeping, oh God, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry, just weeping, and weeping, and weeping, and that was a changed moment.

That was a changed moment. Something happened to where now, I just want more of the Bible. I would read the Bible, just read the Bible.

I would turn off Faith Hill and Tim McGraw, and I would put on, is that, are they still around? Okay, how about Luke Bryan? Okay, I would turn that off, and I would put on Hill Song, the old stuff with Darlene Check, and all these Hill Song, and all these old hymns, and I would just begin to worship. I'm like, why, the word of God is coming alive, and I love this worship, and you see this big change is taking place in my life. Bye-bye George Strait, bye-bye Coors Banquet.

Now I'm getting focused on God and His word, and things are changing, and now I'm feeling this desire to maybe teach, or maybe write, and everything just shifted, and just gave it up. Gave it up, but I remember, here's where you gotta be careful and not beat yourself up, and never forget, I'm about, when does the fair normally start, August? So I'm six, seven months into this, I'm just loving the Lord, and here's my knock on my door. My old friend Jim with the Mustang, he's got two 40-ounce Mickey's Big Mouths, and we're going to the fair, and instead of me being the shot caller, he was, and I fell again, and anybody who's been there, you know it's a struggle.

Sometimes God doesn't just set you free. Praise God when He does, but sometimes it's a battle. It's a struggle.

Addiction, things don't always just leave, because the enemy has that root there, that anchor to you sometimes, and if you open that door again to bond, I mean, I've been just talking to people, I don't know why, but God has given me a heart for those struggling in this area, in different areas of addiction, and it's amazing how they don't understand if you open that door again, it's gonna come back in harder, it's gonna be harder. You're gonna go into deeper bondage, and they say, well, I'm fine now, I'm okay now. That was a while ago.

No, it's not. I don't know how much to share. I mean, there's so much, but I remember another time, I think it's okay to share, I guess it will.

My wife, and I hadn't had a drink in 2000, I met her until 2008, seven years. Six, eight years, six years, seven years. 2002 to, 2001 to 2008, and a friend of mine wanted to go fishing, and he said, hey, you can probably have a beer now, right? I'm like, oh, absolutely.

Seven years? Oh, bad mistake, because once you take the one, you lose control, and that one turned into 12. And see, once he has you, you can't go back out of bondage he delivered you from seven, eight years later, 10 years later. Maybe some of you can, good for you, but most people can't.

What the enemy used to take you down once, he will use again to take you down again. And again, some people struggle for their whole life, but be encouraged, God will hold you up. Get back on track, keep fighting, keep moving forward.

And so this year of 1999, I began to turn back to God. I began to love the things of God. I began to go to church.

I actually began to contend for my marriage. I contended for my marriage all throughout the rest of 98, 1999, 2000, praying, contending, that's what we do, correct? So for three years, I remained single. I was willing to forgive all that, and she was gonna hopefully forgive me of all my past sins, and that never happened.

God never allowed that door to open. Looking back, I thank God for unanswered prayers. Remember that country song? Thank God for unanswered prayers.

God bless the broken road that led me straight to you. And so three years of being single, and then I met Morgan at this time. By now, I was just now leaving the gym, and God was making a wrong turn right, and I left the gym industry, met Morgan.

I actually saw her at the gym. 24-hour fitness by the mall, and you're dating one of my employees. And I would go around going, how did he get her? How did this guy get her? That just blows my mind, unbelievable.

Hey, I'm a new believer back, right? I'm just coming back home. Don't judge me too hard. But long story short, eventually, about a year later or so, saw her at church, and we went out, and then, as they say, the rest is history, the five kids, and a lot of different things that God has done in our lives.

And again, we're gonna talk about that, hopefully, at some point, because it's an interesting story that I think a lot of people will benefit from, with highs and lows, and ups and downs, and maintaining that commitment. But I left the gym industry, and my first book, *What Works When Diets Don't*, came out. And I wanted to challenge the weight loss industry, and show people, this is what really works.

You can't take a pill and lose 30 pounds in 30 days. You can't wear a belt, and hopefully, it works. You can't do 1,000 sit-ups, and all these things.

Here's what really works. One thing is, eat really good, and move more, and eat less. Just a key out there.

But people say, oh, that's a form of dieting. Well, kinda, but you gotta watch the intake. You start to put too much gas in your truck, it's gonna, or your vehicle, it's gonna come out.

So anyway, I wrote that first book, and you might be saying, how did you write books with a one-point grade average? You couldn't write very well, and I still can't spell certain words very well. Grammar is not in my wheelhouse. But I'll tell you how, a mom, who is very persistent on editing, and I would give her the first manuscript, and it would just look like a bomb hit it.

I'm like, what is all of this? You know, have you heard of redlining? The paper, if you're in college, they would just, she would just, she would just cross out the whole page. At the top, she'd say, Shane, people don't wanna hear about this. Get right to the point.

And so, just this humiliating, and humiliating, and humiliating, and you get it down, you get it down. She goes right like a newspaper columnist, clean, crisp, right to the point. And she would just edit it, clean it up, add her thought, and just, oh, it was a painful process.

But I could tell it was getting better. I'm like, oh, that's a good point. That sounds better.

And so, the first book came out, and then the rest, she would help me edit. And I wouldn't edit as much. I wouldn't need her as much as I got a little bit better at editing my own books, and would need her now and then.

Then she got busier. She was a marriage and family therapist. And so, that opened up speaking engagements.

And from those speaking engagements, we eventually decided to plant this church in September of 2010 in Lancaster, California. And again, all that's on the 30-minute video about the 10-year history of that. I don't wanna talk a lot about that, but I do wanna just leave you with some key takeaways from this.

Number one, be encouraged in this area. God looks at your heart. God looks at your heart, not where you're at, not your circumstances, not your appearance.

So many people think, oh, God must love me because of my appearance. No, he's no respecter of persons. He's a respecter of principles.

And God will look at your heart. First Corinthians 126, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. So, basically, it's saying God chooses the foolish things.

So, you don't think you're qualified. You don't think you're gifted. Oh, I could never do that.

I don't look the part. I could never be a pastor. If anybody should not be up here, it's me.

And God takes the least likely. He chooses those who people say, how is that possible? How is that possible? Do you know how many churches in this valley are jealous because we're growing and they're not? And because I don't have a degree? And they say, well, how is that possible? I don't know. He gets all the glory.

Look at the end of the sentence here. That no flesh should glory in his presence. That no man stand up and say, look at what I have done.

Look at what I have built. Look at what I have accomplished. All of it, if it wasn't for the grace of God, I would be buried in Lancaster right now.

And God lifts you up and God encourages you. And you point people to the cross and you give him all the glory and all the credit. He chooses the foolish things to confound the wise.

Look, what do you got? Probably the most incredible evangelist of our time, clearly, Billy Graham from a dairy farm in North Carolina. I think it was, or South Carolina. A dairy.

Golly gee whiz. I can do that pretty good if you want me to do it. God has chosen the weak things, the weak things of the world to put to shame the mighty.

So God will choose someone, the weak things. What you think is, God can never use me. Be careful, God looks at your heart.

God can use whoever he wants. A lump of clay he will form. He will form that lump of clay into a beautiful, beautiful piece of pottery there.

It's always God looks at the heart and he will actually use those. If you think getting a degree, which is good if you need to, but if you think getting a degree and putting your title on a business card and look what I've done, look at how I've arrived. I've got this.

God doesn't look at anything. He looks at the heart. Actually, he might say, there's your reward.

You have your own reward, the applause of men. But if you let me build your life, if you let me shape you, if you let me fill you with your spirit, that's why I love that song. Oh, I come empty to be filled.

I hope you come here this morning empty to be filled. That is the only hope for our nation is for Christians to get on their face again before Almighty God and humble themselves and empty themselves of pride and arrogance and self-determination and let God fill them with his spirit. A hundred years ago, when they

would call a pastor to a church, I love reading books on old books, and they would rarely ask, was Spurgeon, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, D.L. Moody, it doesn't matter who it is.

They wouldn't ask, where did he get his degree? Where did he go to school? Now, please don't misunderstand. If you can go to school, by all means, education with the fire of the spirit is powerful. We have to educate ourselves.

But they wouldn't say, where did you go to school? What type of degree do you have? They would ask one question. One question. Has he received his baptism of fire? In other words, has he received that unction of the Holy Spirit? Has the word of God become alive in his heart? Does he have the fire of God when he preaches? Does the word of God come alive, penetrates in the heart, digs deep, roots out sin, encourages? Is he led and guided by the Holy Spirit, the baptism of fire? That's what they would ask.

And believe it or not, that usually comes from foolish, weak things. Because when you realize I am nothing, you are nothing without the grace of God. Sometimes when mainly men, when they brag about what they do, I wanna kind of just shake and say, do you know that you don't have that next breath that you're going to take is a gift from God? And you just accomplished all this.

You keep your blood going, you keep the lungs pumping, you keep all the heartbeat. You know how many billions of times the heart beats in a lifetime? What keeps that electrical pulse going? You. Another key takeaway that is so important for me is there is another in the fire.

There is another in the fire with you. From Daniel 3, chapter three there. King Nebuchadnezzar said this, and you remember the three Hebrew boys, or maybe you don't know, the three Hebrew boys would not bow down to the king.

They would say, we trust God, Yahweh, He is our provider. They would not bow down to the king. The king got furious and threw them into the fiery furnace.

And the king said, look, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt. And the fourth person has the form of the son of God. And these people, these three boys, Meshach, Abednego, and whatever the other one's name was, they were still standing.

Those are hard names. You try it sometime. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

There we go. And so, these boys are in this fiery furnace. And the king says, but they're still walking.

They're still in the midst of the fire. Who is the fourth? He looks like the son of God. And you have to remember, I'm still standing, as are many of you, because there's another in the fire.

I trust the word of God when it says that the waves will not overcome you. Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you will fear no evil, for I will hold you with my hand. When the waves come upon you, it will not overshadow you, it will not overtake you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, because the Lord, thy God, upholds you. He watches you. He who holds Israel in his hands does not sleep.

He does not slumber. There is another in the fire. Always remember that.

You are not walking alone. God is with you. And that will strengthen you.

That will encourage you. I asked the audience last night, I ask you too, how do you get through life without Christ? How do you get through life with everything that's going on without him as your all-sufficient Savior, with him as your all-focus? How do you not fully surrender your life to a God who can take you through the fire? Because it could get challenging. It could get difficult.

And if you won't live for him today, how will you die for him tomorrow? There is another in the fire. And then the third point, forget the past. Forget the past, but don't forget the lessons learned because of them.

Philippians 3.13, brethren, Paul said, I do not count myself to have apprehended. In other words, Paul's saying I haven't arrived. I haven't arrived.

Humble humility. He said, but one thing I do, I forget those things which are behind me and I reach forward to those things which are ahead. Some of you maybe are living in defeat right now.

You came here discouraged. You came here because you keep failing. You keep falling.

You can't surrender the certain area. You feel like a failure even here this morning. God's encouragement to us is do not dwell on the past.

Learn from it. Don't go back. Learn from it, but press forward to the mark of the high calling which is in Christ Jesus.

You look forward. It's always fix your gaze, fix your mind, fix your thoughts, and you focus on the cross. Come hell or high water, this is the direction I'm going.

Satan, you tried to destroy me years ago. You tried to take me out. You're still wanting to take me out.

He goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but your God goes about also looking throughout the whole to and fro for those hearts who are loyal to him. And there is a battle for your soul. Never forget the lessons, but forget your past mistakes and move forward.

And as God is my witness, what the enemy will do is use your failures to keep you down. The biggest thing against Christians, I believe that the enemy uses is discouragement and failure. When I'm discouraged and I failed, I don't want to keep fighting.

I'm a Christian, great, but nobody's gonna know it. I don't want a witness for Jesus. How can I? I just blew it yesterday.

I don't want to come to worship morning. I don't want to come to church. I'm a failure.

I just blew it. And if you don't break out of that cycle of defeat, you will live there. You will live there the rest of your life.

Sometimes you got to do like David did. He strengthened himself in the Lord. You think I come up here every Sunday, just walking on clouds.

Oh, there's hell I have to fight sometimes. It's a difficult battle, but you go, Lord, you strengthen me. You encourage me.

You lift me up. The devil's trying to take me out, but Lord, you lift me up. You encourage me.

You build and strengthen me. And he will do that. Two more points.

The next one is pain produces passion. You might be wondering what do I mean by that? Well, if you lack a passion for God, let me tell you that pain can be a very good thing. The problem is most people, instead of becoming, it's a trite saying, but just bear with me here.

They become bitter, but not better. But it's very true. Pain from your past, you become bitter.

And there's many people caught in addiction, excusing their addiction because of their past pain. And you might look at your past. Anybody in a room this size, the shame, the guilt of possibly conceding to an abortion, there's more people here than you know, than you realize.

Those who've been through a divorce, there's a season where you think you got a big red D right here. Think about this. There's not a month that goes by since I started preaching in the last decade that I don't get emails from people telling me, I'm in sin because of my divorce.

I should never be pastoring. I'm leading you astray. Not a month that goes by.

At first, it bothered me. Now, I just know they're not well-educated on Scripture. Because what they're saying to one side of that is correct.

If you have an unbiblical divorce and you say, I don't like you anymore. We're divorced. You better stay separated.

But if there is something that occurs, biblically speaking, and that union of marriage has been broken by adultery, Jesus said, except for fornication, except for porneia, except for adultery, that marriage bond cannot be broken. And Paul talks about, we can talk about later in 1 Corinthians, I believe it is, that if an unbeliever departs and they're not wanting to remain with you, a believer should not be in bondage in such cases. And there's debate on that, what theologian you read.

But the bottom line is carrying around that shame and guilt. I remember, I did tell my oldest daughter a few years ago, she'll remember. My wife said, you gotta tell her before she hears it on YouTube.

See, many people are fortunate, your kids don't need to know about your past, but because mine is transparent and out there, I'll never forget the look on her face. And the shame and the guilt comes all over again. But back to the powerful point, that pain can produce a tremendous amount of passion towards God that most don't understand.

So on the one hand, I hate my past, but on one hand, thank God for the broken road that led me straight to you. So be careful when you mock the style of worship that people have, because you haven't been through what they've been through. You worship like you're in a cemetery.

They worship like they've been meet their risen savior. That's the difference, is that pain. That pain produces.

Wouldn't you love to love Jesus more? Luke 7, 47, therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. Now I'm not encouraging anyone to get a testimony.

As I said last night, young adults don't have one. You don't want to, you want to come up here and say, I gave my life to the Lord at 12 and I've been on fire for God all the days of my life. That's the biggest regret I have in my life.

You don't want a testimony. But if you happen to have one, those who've been forgiven much, love much. And I can, I've seen it nine times out of 10.

The prideful, arrogant person in church, hasn't went through a lot. They know God intellectually. Oh, I know scripture.

I'm a theologian. I can quote this. I've done my inductive, deductive and media approaches to my sermon preparations.

And I've got well-schooled in pneumatology and eschatology and hermeneutics and homiletics. But the broken man up here at the altar knows God more than they do. Because he's, this one knows the Psalms.

This one knows the shepherd. And so be encouraged. The greater the pain, often, often the deeper the relationship with God.

I don't think it has to be that way. I just think the greater the pain, the more humble you become. And God honors humility, a teachable spirit.

He will not cast away. I resist the proud, but I give grace to the humble. He leads those who are humble.

And so that brokenness can turn into an unbreakable force and this tremendous passion for God. So I've seen throughout my years of ministry, those with a tremendous, I mean, you just know that just, they're on fire for God. Man, I guarantee there's a past there.

I guarantee there's a past of pain. So the point is, let that pain draw you to the cross, not further away. And I hear so many people say, but you don't know what happened to me.

How could God do this or allow this? I don't know. We live in a fallen world, but if I were you, I would run to that cross. I would run to the Savior.

I would not live another minute living in defeat and despair and depression and anxiety and hooked to everything from Xanax to alcohol to you name it. And you have to have your marijuana every single night because you're so depressed. Run to the cross, run to the Savior and be broken again before Him.

Amazing grace is amazing. Amazing grace is amazing. Ephesians 2.8, for by grace, you have been saved through faith and that not of yourself, it is a gift of God.

So if any of you are sitting here this morning and you don't truly know God, it's not His fault. It's not His fault. I give grace freely.

I give my Son freely. He laid down His life for you. You have to embrace that through faith in Jesus Christ.

Not good works. You don't do anything. You don't become a good person.

He right here, by grace, you have been saved through faith. Faith is the mechanism. Romans 5.8, but God demonstrate, listen to this scripture.

God demonstrated His own love toward us in that while we are still sinners, Christ died for us. So wait a minute here. 2,000 years ago, on a cross, what they call Calvary, what they call Golgotha, what they call the place of the skull, my Savior hung on a cross beaten for the sins that I would commit 2,000 years ago when I would mock Him, when I would ridicule Him, when I would blaspheme Him.

He was still on that cross dying for me. You better change the way you worship. You better wake up this morning and run to the cross, run to the Savior.

It's because of grace has set you free. Oh my goodness. How can you not cry when you sing that song? I come broken to be mended.

I come wounded to be healed. I come desperate to be rescued. I come empty to be filled.

I come guilty to be pardoned by the blood of Christ the Lamb. Church, you need to wake up and we need to get back to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Save sinners to repent and turn back from the wrath that is to come.

We're not playing church. It's a serious business. He chose the cross.

You must choose surrender. There is no other option. Remember, with God, failure is not final.

With God, failure is not final. Well, how do you know that shame? Because God makes a wrong turn right. And I truly believe this.

You can ask my wife if you don't believe me. Of all the people that should not be up here, of all the people that should not be up here, I believe it's me. But that's back to what I said earlier.

God takes the least likely. Chooses the foolish things of the world. All he asks for is humility.

That's why I thank God for that day in 1999 when I cried and I wept and I pleaded to God, fill me with your spirit. God, I need you. I love you.

I've drifted from you. I've become callous and cold. I don't even know if I know you.

What happened at 12 years old? I've been living like hell for 17 years. I don't know if I would have died during that time. Where would I be? Oh God, and you begin to cry out.

He said, I hear the cries of my children. I hear the cries of my children. I've never left.

You've left me. You've turned your back on me. But son, get up and fight again.

Come home and I will strengthen you and I will see you through. And that's the encouragement this morning. God makes a wrong turn right.

I come broken to be mended. I come wounded to be healed. I come desperate to be rescued.

I come empty to be filled. I come guilty to be pardoned by the blood of Christ the lamb. It is Christ alone.

We look to the cross. We look to redemption. We humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

How are you going to get through life without surrendering your life completely to Jesus Christ? You can't live on the fence. There is no fence biblically. It's either right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error.

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 cannot serve both God and this world.

Choose today who you will serve.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/HXeF8FOp6N4.mp4>

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