

God's Scandalous Love

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the transformative power of God's unconditional love and the importance of embracing it through humility and repentance.

Duration: 17:34

Scripture: Romans 5:8

Topics: "Unconditional Love", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the essence of real Christianity, rooted in unconditional love as demonstrated by God's love for us. The speaker shares personal struggles with addiction, low self-esteem, and brokenness, highlighting the transformative power of God's unconditional love and forgiveness. The message delves into the importance of embracing God's love, recognizing our identity as made in the image of God, and the necessity of truth in love. It concludes with a call to repentance, inviting listeners to experience God's refreshing presence through humility and surrender.

Transcript

I think it's important to define real Christianity, because you're like, well, you're a pastor, this is a church, how did you know John? And real Christianity loves unconditionally. If you go back to, obviously, the teachings of Jesus, and when we talk about Christianity, it's just followers of Christ, and authentic biblical Christianity has unconditional love. We love people unconditionally.

And do you want to know why? Because God loved me. God loved me unconditionally. And there's a perception out there of pastors that often is not correct.

I was actually voted least likely to succeed in high school, I was. And I was an alcoholic, I would say, by the age of 18. So I can relate to addiction.

I cheated my way through high school, probably graduated, I think, I've said this before, 1.8. Barely got by, still leaving high school, not able to read very well, and learning disability challenges. Came from a very angry home, my father was very angry, and wasn't a good environment, walking on eggshells, have you ever heard that term? I know exactly what that means. You don't know what kind of mood he was in.

As a result, too, eating, addiction, alcohol, became overweight, poor self-image of myself, and later in the teens. So of course, what does that lead to? It leads to a wrecked life, it leads to steroid use and abuse, a

crystal myth, a lot of party scenes. And so when I look back now and see what God has done in my own life, it's all I can do to not want to share it with people.

And that's why we can love unconditionally, because He first loved me. He loved me through all of that, unconditionally. So who am I to not love others unconditionally? And offer the same forgiveness that has been offered to me.

And there's actually something through, many of you talked about addiction, and there's a lot of pain here this morning, it comes with memorials. I just found out, at midnight, I saw at the Texas Forward this morning, a family friend of 35 years passed away last night. And we're hosting that memorial next Saturday as well, and there's so much pain and brokenness.

But the good thing about pain and brokenness is it can draw you right to the cross. It can draw you right to that relationship with God. And we have a choice.

What I did in my late 20s ruined my life, and was, some would say successful, but I was failing inside, I was dying inside. And that brokenness can be a wonderful gift if you allow it to push you towards that relationship with God. Jesus said, I tell you, her sins, and they are many, have been forgiven.

Those who have been forgiven much, love much. And I don't quite understand the dynamic, but the greater the pain, often the greater the relationship. I know Christ as my Savior, as my Lord.

I should be on my fourth marriage, or hungover today, or buried in a cemetery. I should be dead. I should be laying in the curb.

But it was the grace of God that reached down, and because of that pain, because of that brokenness, that relationship is close to me. I love Christ. I'm not afraid to talk about what He means to me.

And you can, same thing with you, that pain, that brokenness can draw you to God. But often, you know what it does, is the opposite. We become bitter, become angry, we become upset at God.

The very person we should be running to, we run from. That's why I love the song that Heather sung, and I was just sitting there remembering my own life. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I was blind, but now I see. I was lost, but now I've been found. It was grace that taught my heart to fear, and fear my heart relieved.

How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed. That's powerful. That's powerful truth.

And before I get into the four points, they're brief, I don't want to keep you here. I've got to preach a lot tomorrow as well, and I'm looking forward to that. It's what God's called me to do.

He took the least likely, and gave me a position of speaking to people, and I was scared to death to speak in front of people. It would never happen, ever happen. I'd rather have a leg amputated, to be honest with you, or a couple root canals.

And what God did is, because of that, of giving my life, fully surrendering my life, and being filled with God's presence, and God's spirit, and wanting to preach, it is what He's called me to do. But before I get into that, all of you, of course, are welcome tomorrow. I don't want you to ever think you're not welcome in

a church.

We'd love to see you if you need hope and encouragement. But I was talking with John, I was thinking of the prodigal son story. Many of you know the prodigal son story, right? If you don't, this man was given his inheritance early, and what did he do? Save it? No, he spend it.

The Bible says, I believe it's the King James, on riotous living, which reminds me of my Las Vegas days, 25 years ago, and going there, and not remembering how I got home. And the prodigal son, and that's what it would parallel today, he lost everything, he's actually eating with the pigs. The Bible says he's feeding the swine, and he says, I don't have food, and he's eating the pig's food.

And he finally, the Bible says, he came to himself, when the son had come to himself, he came to himself, he said, I've got to go home, at least my father might forgive me, he might put me as a servant. And the Bible talks about when the man was coming home, the father actually ran to meet the son. The father ran to meet the son, so that's the imagery we have of God.

Sometimes we think of God as this mean, cosmic killjoy. And there actually are two different views. We have this view of a cosmic ball of love, right? Or this angry, abusive father, that just wants to harm and do, but that's not the clear representation of God.

That's why one of the attributes is love. So we see this father running to the son. So the problem's not on God's side, it's often on the son's side, not wanting to run back to the father.

So the four points I told you on this, God's heart is not to condemn. Wait a minute, wait a minute, I've heard some things on TV. God's heart is not to condemn.

John 3, 17, for God did not send his son into the world to condemn, he did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. That's the heart of God. Well, wait a minute, I thought God condemns, well, see, biblical Christianity also believes in truth, absolute truth, truth of God's word.

The heart of God is salvation. The heart of God is to send his son to die for the world. And then when people reject that gift, that's a rejection that takes place, then the condemnation comes later because they reject God's love.

So the first thing I want you to realize is God's heart is not to condemn. Romans 3, 10, there is none that are righteous, no, not one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks after God.

We all fall short, we all sin, no one is innocent. Not even you, Shane? No, we're all in the same boat. We're all in the same boat.

And here's the difference, if we're all in the same boat, when we talk about Christianity, we talk about those who believe in Jesus. The reason is this, we're all in the same boat, I see a hole in the boat, this boat is sinking, but those who embrace God's gracious gift of salvation say, God, I need you. We hop out of the boat that's sinking and we want to help others come out of that boat, come out of that way of life that's destroying them.

So that's the heart of God, is to help people, not hurt. And many times the church gives people the wrong impression, condemning, judgmental, arrogant, bigoted, narrow-minded, right? But you have to love, but

you also have to share the truth. And the truth is we're all in the same boat and our goal is to help people come out of that and find a relationship with God.

Romans 5, 8 declares, but God demonstrated His own love toward us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. I'm going to need to read that again. God demonstrated His love toward us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And this always, I get a little teary-eyed sometimes at this verse because I often think, wait a minute, wait a minute. During my drunken binges in Palm Springs or my crystal myth weekends in Las Vegas, Christ died for me? Yes, He did. 2,000 years ago on Calvary, the old rugged cross, we love to see that song.

But there's truth in that. Even before I was even conceived, Christ died for that. That's the love of God.

That's the love of God that sent, who in the world is going to send their own son? If somebody said, Shane, send your son, I'd say, no, sorry, pick another option. That's not happening. And God sent His Son and died for us.

Even while we were sinning. Even while I'm rejecting Him and bitter and angry. Even while I'm caught in this destructive party lifestyle, Christ is still there beckoning.

Come home, prodigal son. Come home. I died for that.

Come home. Stop living in that. So there's freedom there.

There's a story I heard this week, and I'm sharing it tomorrow morning for sure, and I wanted to share it with you. On this point, if God's heart is not to condemn, it's of a mother whose son comes home at two in the morning. He's intoxicated.

He falls down on his bed high, and the father hears the mother come up out of the bed, walks over to his room, and he says, finally, she's going to let him have it. Right? Finally, she's going to let him have it. So what we've been waiting for.

We're tired of this kid's messing around. And five minutes later, he didn't hear anything. So he went in there and he saw the mom next to the son in bed with him, caressing his hair, just loving him.

And the dad said, what are you doing? And she said, he would not let me love him while he's awake. So I will love him while he's asleep. That's the love of God.

That's the love of God. Number two, you are made in the image of God. You are made in the image of God.

Wait a minute, Shane. I've heard all these other things. No, you did not come from premortal ooze of things just happening.

You were created in the image of God. You were. If you want more information on that, I'm actually debating an atheist in March on this topic because I love this topic of creating you, God creating us in his image.

That's why there's shame and guilt. Have you ever felt shame and guilt or is it just me? Don't leave me up here by myself. Shame and guilt.

Why is this shame, this guilt, this depression I can never measure up? I feel depressed and instead of running to Christ, we run to Xanax. Why is there shame and guilt? Because that image has been damaged. It's been marred.

It's been broken. That image that God created us, let us make man in our image according to our likeness. So when we're out of that relationship with God and we break that fellowship, our image is marred.

God's image in us is disfigured. It's spoiled. It's marred.

So I'm scarred with this and I have this shame and this guilt because like Romans said, there's none who do right, no not one. And many people think if I could just do good enough or if I could just be better, you can't. You can't.

Trust me. Number three, true love tells the truth. And I went down there and John listened and I just told him the truth.

Doesn't true love tell the truth? Where do we ever get this notion that truth doesn't offend? Truth doesn't, well let's not say, how would parents be measured today? My mom told me I couldn't do that. She must not love me. No, the reason parents admonish and exhort and rebuke sometimes is because they love.

So true love loves the truth and they love others enough to tell them the truth. And I've heard it many times, the church is always against something, right? What's wrong with you guys? You're always against something. Well, if I'm for lower taxes, I'm against higher taxes.

If I'm for equal rights, I'm against oppression. If I'm for children, I'm against abuse. If I'm for a man being set free, then I'm against the sin that enslaves him.

Would that not make sense? Jesus says, I tell you the truth. See the truth is a wonderful thing. It's the thing we've forgotten in our culture today.

We want the love of God, but not the truth of God. And they go together, loving somebody to tell them the truth. Now, here's the problem though.

We don't like the truth, do we? Many times. I don't want to hear the truth. Just tell me what I want to hear.

But true love will tell you the truth. Here's why. When I realized the truth that I am a sinner and without God, without Christ, I am lost.

When somebody finally told me the truth and it convicted me, I wasn't upset. I was upset for a while. My mom would pray for me.

Thank God for praying grandparents and praying mothers. I remember I've shared this before at our church, but my mom used to put the Bible on my ACDC and Judas Priest albums and Iron Maiden and Metallica and all that. You used to, yeah, oh yeah, don't let this fool you.

Don't let this fool you. And I would get so mad. But she would share it.

Son, that's not a good way to go. Son, you don't belong here. Son, you don't belong here.

Come home. Can't you hear the heart of God? Come home. Come home.

And loving in someone enough to tell them the truth. And the final thing. You must embrace the love of God to experience it.

That's the thing we miss. You have to embrace. You have to embrace the love of God to experience it.

And I talk to a lot of people and it's always this. How could a loving God, you fill in the blank, right? And I don't have all the answers. If we had all the answers, there would not be a God.

We would be God. How could a loving God, and I want to ask the follow up question, how could man reject his offer of salvation and love? How can we reject it? Not talking about you. Let me talk about me.

I'll tell you why I reject it. Because prideful, sinful man loved his lifestyle. I was prideful.

I was arrogant. Still got to work on it. It's still a struggle.

Pride and arrogance kept me, prevented me from having a relationship with God. So remember that. God's heart is not to condemn.

You are made in the image of God. But I can prove that to anybody. And we are seeing an epidemic, at least in the church up here.

You know, we run to, and I wasn't joking about Xanax or Oxy or Vacodin. I'm sure people use that a lot to get through the pain, but Jesus says, come to me. The Bible says, come to me all your weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

So the pain we're feeling, the shame we're feeling, the guilt we're feeling, the confusion we're feeling. We just say, God, change it. Come to me.

I need you. See, it's a step of humility, isn't it? To say, I need God is a step of humility. The humble he teaches his way.

Verse that Heather shared is Psalm 34:18. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and he saves. He saves such as have a contrite spirit.

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart. So you might be asking, alright Shane, what do I do? Well, Acts 3:19 says, repent, repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. That's it.

Once that sin is dealt with, and it's not a popular topic right now, is it? This is not a popular topic whatsoever, but I've told God when he called me to preach, I'll preach the truth. I want to preach the truth because I love people enough to tell them the truth. So the Bible says repent, any of us, all of us, who are not in right relationship with God, repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out so times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

The words times of refreshing is like a revival happening within your heart. That's what happens when that issue is dealt with and we take it all to the cross.

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