

Hope: With God All Things Are Possible

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes that true hope and transformation come from recognizing our need for God and understanding that with Him, all things are possible.

Duration: 48:26

Scripture: Matthew 19:16

Topics: "Surrender to God", "Hope"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the profound hope found in God, asserting that with Him, all things are possible. He discusses the necessity of repentance and the importance of prioritizing our relationship with God over material possessions, as illustrated by the rich young ruler in Matthew 19. Idleman challenges the congregation to evaluate what they are willing to give up for Christ, highlighting that true discipleship often comes with a cost. He encourages believers to pray fervently for those who are lost, reminding them that no one is beyond God's reach. Ultimately, he calls for a surrendering of control to God, which leads to true peace and fulfillment.

Transcript

Matthew 19, I'm doing a quick series over the next four weeks on this word back here. Back there. Hope, does anybody need any? Or is it just me? As the world is crumbling, I mean, sometimes I just want to go on CNN and Fox News and say, Hey, well there's an answer.

There's an answer. Right? It's not a gun problem. It's a sin problem.

Then Savior's the solution. I mean, there's tremendous hope out there. If we would just look to the right source, it just drives me crazy sometimes.

What should we do? What should we do? Well, first we need to repent. And get the fear of the Lord back into our churches again, back into our nation again. Start seeking God with all of our heart, not this much.

And let Him rebuild. Matthew 19, verse 20. I read this a month ago before we started the Ten Commandments series.

And I want to read it again. It's Jesus talking to the rich young ruler. There's a young man that came to Jesus and he said, What must I do to have eternal life, to be saved? And Jesus said, Well, here's what you need to do.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. And he says, Well, I've done all that. And then Jesus said, Well, now you need to go sell everything you have and then come and follow me.

And as we talked about, it's not in selling everything that saved him. What Jesus was doing is showing the man the idolatry he had in his heart. He basically loved the riches.

So I did all these things, and Jesus said, Okay, well, if your heart's really right, go do it. I mean, that's where the rubber meets the road, isn't it? When we find out what we're willing to give up, it will reveal your heart. When Jesus says, Give this up, and we say, No, I don't want to, it reveals a great deal about our hearts.

And I often say, and it's a true statement, that it's not really what you own, it's what owns you. And the more you own, the more owns you. And that's what's happening in our nation, is this wonderful blessing has turned into a curse, and we're rejecting God.

The very God who's blessed us, we're turning our backs on. And that's what we're seeing now manifest itself. Matthew 19-20, the young man said to him, All these things I have kept from my youth, meaning many of the Ten Commandments, what do I still lack? Jesus said to him, If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.

And come, follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had many possessions. And we talked about this already, but a couple quick things that will put the next scripture in context.

I want to just remind you that perfect doesn't mean perfect. Jesus said, You will be perfect. Well, nobody on this side of heaven is going to be perfect.

And if somebody says they are, you might want to remind them of many different scriptures. Number one, John says, He who says they don't have sin, you're lying. We all have sin, we're not perfect.

So this word perfect actually means complete. So Jesus is saying, If you want to be complete, if you want to be fulfilled, go and remove these things that are hindering your relationship with me, and then come and follow me. And the man went away sorrowful.

And I was also reminded that following Jesus has a cost. If you're not willing to live for Him today, you will not die for Him tomorrow. There's a cost there.

And we see what you're seeing in the news, the uprising of terrorism, all these different things. It's not going to get easier for followers of Jesus. I'm not trying to be negative, I'm trying to prepare you.

That following Him will have a cost. There's countries, I've seen videos from the underground church in China. Underground, 4 a.m., in these tunnels, dark, worshiping God.

It's amazing to see the difference. They're on their faces before God. They're cherishing the Bible.

They're weeping. They're holding up their Bible. And it's 4 a.m. to 8 a.m. Four hours? Boy, what's wrong with those people? Nothing.

What's wrong with us? I mean, they're worshiping God. They're persecuted. They'll go to prison.

They'll lose things. They'll lose family members. And following Jesus always has a cost.

And so it begs the question to ask, what is it costing you? If it's not costing you anything, you might want to look at what direction you're walking. Are you following Christ or are you going with the world? Because you'll be made fun of at work, unless you work here, right? You'll be made fun of at work, around friends sometimes who don't agree. I'll open up.

I'll be honest. I'm always honest up here. I'll put my foot in my mouth.

I don't like when people ask me what I do. Because I tell, right? Because they're like, oh. It's like, ah, right there with attorneys.

Or it's like, oh, a pastor? Oh, man, how can you? I mean, that's just gullible. But after I tell them, it opens up good conversation. So once I get past the flesh not wanting to say that, right? God doesn't want me to be embarrassed.

He wants me to be proud of what he's called me to do. But I know what's coming. Oh, and then people treat you differently.

And you're marginalized. In our nation, we don't really see that a lot. It's coming more and more.

But there's a cost of following Jesus. And if it's not hurting something, if people aren't somehow seeing the Christ in you, you might want to look at your lifestyle and evaluate where you're at. Because following Jesus will cost us somewhere, something, somehow.

And then right into verse 23. Then Jesus said to his disciples, Assuredly, I say to you, that it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. It's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And again, I say to you, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. When his disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus looked at them and said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. And that's the message tonight, hope.

With God all things are possible. Now what's happening here is it was in Jesus' time, and it is still today, that people often link the blessings of God to wealth. If you're wealthy, you must be in good standing with God.

And we know that's not true. Now we also know, see this is really a double-edged sword, because disobedience can lead to poverty. And many poor people are close to God.

But it doesn't mean that if you're poor, you're out of the favor with God or disobedient. It doesn't mean that at all. And if you're rich, it doesn't mean you're good with God.

Many times rich people have drifted from God. So it can actually go either way, depending on where the heart's at. Because I've seen people end up poor because of bad choices, of getting outside of God's will.

God's favor is removed. And now everything's breaking. Now the financial chaos.

Now I lose my job. So that can be a result, but it's not always the case. Now this statement, it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

I could preach a whole sermon on this. I'm going to talk more about it next week. But the kingdom of heaven in a rich man.

See, there's a thought out there that man does not have the ability to repent and believe. You cannot repent of your sin unless God has elected you, has chosen you. Many people, R.C. Sproul, John MacArthur, believe this type of theology.

And a lot of great points. I'm not even debating that. Who am I debating? These guys.

But when Jesus says it's hard for a rich man to enter heaven, that tells me that riches can contend for our heart. Because if the heart is able, if God gave man the ability to repent and believe, to accept or reject him, those riches can keep my heart away from seeing my need for him. Have you seen that many rich people come to saving faith? Name any Hollywood actresses or actors lately.

Think Charlie Sheen is going to be repenting anytime soon and joining the church? I pray so too. But we just don't see it. Founder of Apple, before he died.

Bill Gates, did he repent? Why? Because money becomes a god. I'll buy my way out of it. I'll get better doctors.

I'll get better health care coverage. And there's really, when the Bible talks about poverty, often it's talking about poverty of spirit. And if a person doesn't see their need for God because of material possessions, then they're not going to turn to him.

And often, I mean nine times out of ten, God gets a person to a state of desperation and need, and then they finally say, Uncle, time out. I'm done. I need you.

But without that, so often circumstances can be the blessings of God. Many people look back and say, Lord, I thank you for that very difficult season that brought me to know you. And it's very hard for a rich man to enter heaven.

And also this means a person who's doing well financially, it's very hard to witness to them because they don't need God. And you can't serve two masters. Jesus wasn't lying.

Jesus wasn't confused. You cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve the God of this world.

Actually, the word was mammon he used. You cannot use mammon, money, and things of the world and serve God. It's not possible to do that.

And I could break down the whole theology here, but I think that if man was given the ability to repent and believe in the gospel, like the Bible says, repent and believe, if a person's very wealthy, it's going to be very difficult. You don't see CEOs of Fortune 500 companies at the altar. We pray for them.

We hope so, but it's interesting. Everybody wants this wealth, but the wealth draws them away from God. So it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven for that reason.

They don't see their need for a savior. That's why when Jesus walked into the temple, opened the scroll, and he said, the spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach the gospel to who? The rich? The poor. The poor in spirit.

It's always a desperation for God. A sinner will not turn to God unless they see their desperation, their need for a savior. They have to.

And I comment in the first service, that's one of the first steps, if you look at an AA book and different things, is they'll say the first step is to recognize your need for, they'll say a higher power, and I won't tell them who the real power is, but to recognize you're out of control. You can't control your life. You are desperate for somebody higher than you to save you and to set you free.

And you have to get to that point. That's why humbling ourselves is so important. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he will exalt you.

God gives grace to the humble. There's something about humility that pleases God, and his grace flows in. There's something very healthy about saying, I was wrong.

God, I need you. If I could get more men to say, God, I need you, we would see a lot less divorce. What about the women? Yeah, them too, but I'll talk to them next.

Because I believe when a man leads, often the woman follows. I don't have the data, so I'm scared to go there with this, but when a father comes to know God in his house, the statistics are very high that the family will also. When it's the mom, it's not as high.

Because they see the leader not following God. And it's something very refreshing about humility and brokenness. And I just, oh gosh, I don't want to say too much here.

But one of the hardest parts for me when I'm talking to men or whoever it is, and counseling and encouraging, the hardest part for me many times is to see that arrogance. And they don't want to do what you're telling them they need to do. It's arrogance.

The Bible says haughtiness. This yeah, but, yeah, but, yeah, but. And they just, it's just arrogance is dripping off of you.

Can you get a towel? It's just sickening. And I see it in the mirror sometimes, too. It's the arrogant heart.

I mean, you realize you could fix a lot of your problems if you humbled yourself. Two things. Actually, humble yourself and do this.

Remember when you were a little kid? That's going to stop a lot of humbling yourself and throwing away the key to this thing. Because the pride comes as a man, what's in his heart. As a man speaks, what's coming out of his heart.

Out of the abundance of my heart, my mouth is going to speak. And it's very important. Just people who are not in need, not in debt.

And that's why sometimes people are, oh, I lost my job. And inside of me, I'm going, gosh, it's about time. Now, maybe you'll humble yourself under God's hand.

We're going through this challenging, I can't believe. And sometimes, I know people don't always agree with this, and I do get emails on this. But I will counsel some people in a marriage relationship to separate.

I didn't use the word divorce. I used the word separate. And often, that will humble the person.

That separation humbles you because you say, I see what's at risk now. This is time to see God, not go find plan B. You humble yourself. You humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

You separate and you say, this is getting difficult. And sometimes, people need that wake-up call before they'll actually change. And the same principle applies.

Riches, wealth. And this is why our nation is so poor spiritually. I mean, if we look at who our idols are now for the kids, I mean, me, when I was growing up, it was a rifle man.

Right? Or Andy Griffin. Now it's, I can't even say. I mean, the heroes.

All these vampires and the occult and casting spells and porn stars and transgender heroes and all these things that were, the culture's dead spiritually. It's absolutely alarming. It's like the walking dead.

Wake up. You want to just wake up. Whatever news radio and things, they're glorifying evil.

They're glorifying things that God clearly says is an abomination. Spiritually speaking, we are poor. What did Jesus say to the church in Revelation? I know your works.

I know all this stuff, but you're dead. You're dead inside. You say you're alive, but you're dead.

What are they dead? They're dead spiritually. So salvation. All things.

With God, all things are possible. All things. There is no one beyond His reach.

There is nobody beyond God's reach. This should drive all parents, all spouses, all family members to our knees. There's nobody beyond His reach.

No situation. People say, yeah, I know. They'll say, yeah, but to this too.

Yeah, I know, but as if God's hands are tied. See, I've found, and I'm going to continue to find, and it's difficult. I've found that often when you just get out of the way, God moves.

You say, Lord, you're going to have to do something. I can't. And when we stop getting our agenda out of the way, start trying to push this and make this happen and prod this and manipulate this.

When we just get out of the way, God says, and you say, God, you take over. This is impossible. I don't know how this person is going to come to know you.

Lord, my kids are so far away from you, I don't even know how to pray. But nobody is beyond His reach, nobody. And I want to encourage, like I did at the first service, that I'd like to see during worship, at the end, our closing worship, for us to pray for those who need God.

We have family members who aren't going to church. They're not walking with God. I would hate to bury them next week.

We should be praying for them because prayer moves the hand of God. Have you heard of intercessory prayer? Intercessor are people that would go before God on His behalf. Does God really listen? Oh, yes, He listens.

He told Ezekiel that he sought for a man from among the people who would stand in the gap and build a wall between him and God that he might not destroy the land. But he says, but I found no one. Now, either you take that scripture for what it means, or you just, oh, that wasn't really true.

God says, I sought for a man from among my people who would stand in the gap, literally build a wall, a hedge, stand in the gap. I sought, I looked, the eyes of the Lord went to and fro throughout the whole earth, throughout the children of Israel, and He was looking for His people to stand in the gap, but I found no one. I believe the same.

God's just looking for people. I don't know how the sovereignty of God works with our prayers, with our choices, but you know what? I'm not going to be confused over a mystery and have that affect my prayer life because I know God, prayer moves the hand of God. Prayer will change the situation.

And of all the things I've seen in all Christianity, of traveling and speaking in this church and other churches, I don't even know if there's a stronger word, but I am amazed at how many people actually do not pray. I don't know if it's correct, and I was going to look into it, but the average person spends three minutes a day, the average Christian, and we wonder why we're experiencing this and that. Three minutes? I mean, it takes longer for Chick-fil-A.

We'll go wait in that line. Two drive-thrus and this will still take a long time. Three minutes.

And then I almost pulled over and wrote it down on the website. The average pastor spends five minutes. What? No wonder the church, no wonder we're being so politically correct.

Nobody wants to offend anybody. No, we don't want to speak the truth. We're not Spirit-filled.

We're filled with our own ambitions. A.W. Tozer said, this was 56 years ago, in the early church, if the Holy Spirit was removed from the church, 90% of the work would have ceased. Today, if the Holy Spirit is removed, and He is, 90% of the work continues.

Because it's not Spirit-led. It's not God-driven. Because if you're spending five minutes in prayer, you're not leading anybody.

You can't lead a person to where you've never been. So when we say all things are possible with God, we believe it, I truly believe we believe it, but we don't live it out. Because we try to make things happen.

And we say, oh, they're beyond God's reach, I'm not praying. There's no way that would, I mean, if I, I should just do a sermon sometime, like, but God. I mean, me and my wife, oh, this would never happen.

Never happen. It's impossible. There's no way.

And then, happens. It's just unbelievable when you allow Him to do things. I want to give some examples, but I'm not going to.

We could be here for a while. From buying our house, to just things in real estate, to family members, to our own kids, you know, praying to receive the Lord, and repent, and want to get baptized, like, oh, that's, like, I'm being negative, like, oh, they're too, I mean, this, oh, they're gonna probably rebel for 10 years. Oh, that's what I did, oh, no.

You know, and then, like, two weeks later, my daughter comes up and says, can I, I want to, Jesus, I need to pray, and I'm like, whoa. How did, that's not fair. Why did I, you know, but it is fair, I'm glad, but just so many different things that God, just impossible odds, and actually, that's why He'll do it when it's impossible, because then you look back and you say, but God.

I mean, people will still ask you, how did you start West Side with 10 people on a Saturday night, doesn't, and now this church, and radios everywhere, and how, how? God, no, Shane, really, really, God, I'm telling you, I have no, there's not a, there's not a, well, do this, and do this, and I mean, radio picks it up, and internet picks it up, and all these people are, there's tons of listeners, thousands of listeners, I'm like, how does that happen? You can't plan it, you can't orchestrate it, you can't market it, God, He does it all, and He gets all the glory and all the credit, and my mom's here, too, and she knows, and people ask, oh, you guys, you know, she helps me, like, edit a lot of the books, and your books are so good, and how, you must have a schooling degree, and where'd you go to college? And I'm like, dyslexia, barely graduated high school. God, God does it, I still can't read, drives my wife crazy, I'll read something wrong, the number's wrong, get phone numbers wrong, and He gets, that's what I'm saying, He gets all the credit when He does it. Writing books is a, I would have never, I hated reading books, I just hate books altogether, and so He does things, but once my heart changed, and I became clay on the potter's wheel, He said, okay, now I'm gonna do this through you, and as you yield to me, let me show you what I can do, and that's really a lot of what I wanted to get to in a minute, is following Christ means getting out of the way.

That's exactly what it means, when He says, follow me, it means you get out of the way. Follow Him means you're following something, not yourself. If I'm following something, something's in the lead.

Let me read that. Verse 27, offering hope, I don't know how people get through life without following Christ, I just, I mean, it's tough already. Then Peter answered and said to Him, see, we have left all and followed You, therefore what shall we have? Peter wanted to know what he's gonna get for following Jesus.

So Jesus said to him, assuredly I say to you that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel. So whether you're pre-millennial, post-millennial, mid-trib, all these different things, a lot of people believe this is dealing with the millennial kingdom. If you don't know what that means, I'm hoping to speak on that in the future.

During a time where Jesus is going to judge, and He's gonna have the 12 tribes of Israel judging as well, or the 12 disciples judging according to this. If you read it, not figuratively, but this is actually what's gonna happen, which I do. And everyone who has left houses, listen to this, if everyone who's left houses or brothers or sisters or fathers or mothers or wives or children or lands for my namesake shall receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life.

Now, I need to tell you up front, because I've heard people tell me this before, this is not a proof text for divorcing your spouse. It says, I'm leaving you to follow Christ. That's what it says, right? Remember, you can make the Bible say whatever you want, taking things out of context.

Anything you want. You can say, God approves of homosexuality because David was gay. Bible says he loved Jonathan more than that of a woman.

Now, come on. I mean, that just means that's a really good friend that he had a good relationship with. So you can make the Bible say whatever you want if you take it out of the context.

The context is not leaving your spouse, but following Christ is going to cost you. If you go to Jerusalem, or even meet a Messianic Jew here in America who told his family he was a Christian or a Muslim, you think they celebrate and get a birthday cake and 31 flavors? No, they disowned them. The children, 17, 18-year-old kids will have, they'll say, you're no longer my dad.

You're no longer my father for following Christ. So following Christ costs them their family, their wife, their kids. Some speculate that Paul was married and that his wife left him.

Now, of course, there's just speculation. We don't know. And he knows.

But others say he had to be married to be a Sadducee in this high... But then when he became a Christian, well, we don't know what happened there. So this isn't saying divorce your spouse or sorry, kids, I'll see you in 20 years from now and following Jesus. No, we have a responsibility to our family.

But following him will have a cost. If it hasn't cost you anything, you have to look at what direction you're going. I mean, there's people I know that they'll put Christian on Facebook, but they look just like the world.

There's no difference. The world loves them. The world loves their posts.

The world loves the movies they go to. The world loves the way they live their life. There's nothing about Jesus whatsoever.

I mean, they might put a cute little Scripture on Facebook. Everybody likes those, right? As long as it's not too offensive. As long as it's, you know... What's a good one? You know, just, God is love.

You're not gonna get too many enemies. God loves you. You know, there's peace today and all these things.

But if they look just like the world... Now, I don't want you to go out and be a jerk. I'm not saying that. You shouldn't look for a fight, but it'll come on its own.

See, the truth, there's nothing... The truth will offend people, but your attitude shouldn't. How many times have I said that? The attitude... Our attitude should not offend people. We can be able to engage them, but the truth will offend.

The truth will definitely offend. So, let's look at this. Left all to follow.

The definition of leaving all. We all know what it means, but let's... The definition helps. To go away from, to withdraw from, to retire from, to disappear from, to vacate, to say one's farewells and goodbyes.

So, here's what this looks like for the believer. You have to go away from, withdraw from, and disappear from those activities and things that pull you away from God. You must say your farewells and goodbyes to the world to follow Jesus.

Now, this is an interesting topic because you're probably thinking, what does he mean by that? Well, you don't necessarily go find another job and go live in a cave. It has nothing to do with that. But it's how you

live your life.

Do my choices reflect the world or God's standard? In business practices. I got in trouble a lot of times. People didn't like working with me sometimes in real estate.

Just put some paint over that black mold. Like, no, we're not gonna do that. Don't get a termite inspection.

Look at the termite damage. The way you live your life is going to upset people. If you're at work, trying to hold a standard that not everybody's gonna agree with.

I don't know of any secular workplace where a Christian's not gonna feel some type of resistance. Even when I was in construction, worked with the water district. I was their heavy equipment operator 15 years ago.

And those guys did not like me. I don't know why. Oh, there's that guy.

Oh, don't say anything around Shane. Don't cuss around Shane. Oh, oh, oh.

Don't do that. There's Shane's list. Because the lifestyle convicted them.

So there's forms of persecution because nobody likes the light shining in. Now, I didn't go on there and go, I'm not going to do this. And I don't cuss and swear and hang out with them.

I didn't say any of that. They just knew by the lifestyle that there was a difference. There's a distinction.

And following Christ, if you haven't left something for Jesus, I don't think you're following Him. I'm unapologetically going to say that. I went over this a few days ago.

Can I say that? Yeah, you can say that. Because if you don't leave something, we're not following Jesus. Because following, I think somebody said, count the cost.

Jewish carpenter, 2,000 years ago. Count the cost. Before a builder builds a building, he counts the cost.

Before a king goes to war, he counts the cost. In addition to counting the cost, pick up your cross and deny yourself. There's a difference there.

Something's going to be different about the way you become a giver and not a taker. You build people up, not pull them down. You forgive and forget.

You're not bitter. You know what I'm saying, right? I'm trying to paint this. There's a difference.

If there's not a difference, you have to ask, has God really changed my life? That's the first thing I'll tell somebody. Now, there's people are growing. There's different stages.

You backslid. I'm not beating you. But if there's just no difference in a person's life, if they look just like the world and they've been a Christian for 10 years, you've got to wonder what they're following.

What Bible are they reading? Because there's fruit. A Jewish carpenter also said you'll know them by their fruit. Is there an apple on a fig tree? Or grapes on thorn bushes? No.

You'll know. There's always fruit there. Left all.

Believers must disconnect from the world's mindset. See, and that's where a lot of hope is found. A lot of people that are struggling right now with fear, anxiety, depression, all these things, they're often feeding their mind on the wrong things.

I'm not going to go down this rabbit trail because I have many times before. But when it comes to this issue of hope, you're not going to find hope if you're constantly looking outside of Christ and the Bible and what it says. Listen, I don't care if you like Fox News or CNN, but they're not going to draw you closer to God.

Right? What have I said before? You're going to want to go order an AR-15, get a gun safe, load it up. Now I'm ready. Now I'm ready.

Those people do not have any hope. Often it's a loose cannon. There's no hope.

They're in a fear frenzy mode. So hope is found from disconnecting from the world's mindset. And I thought this was amazing.

Reading the Bible, it's amazing how many people received healing and direction throughout the New Testament after they followed Jesus. Now people would come as intercessors and pray for people, or Jesus would go, hey, do you want to be made well? People would come, Jesus, please pray for my servant. But many times you'll read that people would follow Him and then be healed.

Follow Him and then hear His teaching and get direction. Many times it came after following Him. Same thing with us.

Until we give up all to gain all, you will not be following Him the way He's designed it. Again, not perfectly. Nobody follows Him perfectly.

Not even you, Shane? No. Not at all. Because it's a constant struggle against the world.

But then also left all for unbelievers. If a person's an unbeliever, what leaving all means is that they must disconnect from the sin and bondage. They must forsake their old lives.

They must say this is wrong. God, I repent. I'm forsaking this.

And I'm leaving it behind and I'm following You. They're following Him. That's what has to happen to an unbeliever.

I don't know if we passed them out. I forgot to check, but it was in the paper today. I think here locally in Victorville, different things.

But I talked about, actually the title of the article was Will God Really Say Depart From Me? I Don't Know You. Will Jesus Really Say Depart From Me? I Don't Know You. And I talked about my story and I remember it.

It was yesterday. It was about 15, 16 years ago. It was the summer of 2000.

And I was working with 24 Hour Fitness. Many of you know. And I was at a very difficult transition in my life.

And I was, well let me just read what I put. Although I felt a sense of purpose, it often left me feeling empty. I was passionate, but for the wrong things.

I focused on everything society had to offer. But ultimately I found that it offered little of lasting value. I focused on money, status, recognition, but I had starved other important areas of my life, including my relationship with God.

Due to my misguided focus, my life took many turns for the worse. Here's the key. Desperate for direction and fulfillment, I began to search the pages of a Bible that I put on the shelf long ago.

Two scriptures literally jumped from the pages. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul? And you know, maybe some of you know, some of you don't, but when you read something and God's saying something, it's like it's illuminated. It jumps out, smacks you in the face, and you put the Bible down.

That's how I read it. What will profit you to gain the whole world and lose your soul? And then I was reading a little bit more that day, and it said, when you hear His voice, harden not your heart. And actually in the book of Hebrews, I believe if I'm not mistaken, it says it three times.

When you hear His voice, harden not your heart. When you hear His voice, harden not your heart. And that tells me we can harden our hearts.

When you hear something, when you hear God convicting, God drawing, are we receptive, or do we harden our hearts? And there's a lot of different people in the church. Some come, they've been Christians longer than I have. Others come, they're like, they're trying, they're wanting to hear what God has to say, but they're continuing in sin.

They're running from God, and God is saying, if you hear my voice, harden not your heart. And there's a hardening that can take place. And the Puritans who founded our country used to say, the same sun that melts the wax will harden the clay.

The same sun. It melts the wax, but it hardens that clay. Same thing with the human heart, I believe.

You can open your heart and allow God's word to melt you. Not physically, of course, but it's humility. It's a humbling process, and you just melt before God, or you can harden before God.

And some of the most angry people you've ever met are those who've hardened their hearts towards God. The surrendered life, which I talk about often, I want to explain what that means. To find hope, we have to surrender our life.

We have to surrender our rights. Not gun rights, right? But we have to surrender our rights. I'm trying to appease the NRA and the right-wing Republicans at this sermon.

The surrendered life is to cease resistance. To cease resistance. So when you surrender, you stop resisting.

And you obey what God wants us to do. And I saw something interesting on Facebook. I wasn't sure.

It took me a little while to process it. But the post said this, and I know it's hard to believe I got something from Facebook. But it says, Grace did not save Noah.

Obedience did. I better build this ark. Right? Now, the Bible says Noah found favor in the eyes of God, and we know that grace ultimately saved him.

But the message is that grace, God's grace, Noah had to obey. And Noah, being divinely warned in a dream of things not yet to come, moved with fear, moved with reverence to the building of an ark and the saving of his family. So there's an obedience factor there.

So that's the Word of God. God's grace, and we must obey. How does that work? I don't know.

I'm not going to worry about a mystery. I'm going to let God figure that out. I just know both are true.

God's grace is sufficient. But when He asks us to obey, we need to obey. And they work together.

This is why I talk often about the importance of spiritual disciplines. If you come here long enough, you'll probably get sick and tired of me saying this, but we have to have the Word of God because it teaches us. We have to have prayer because it shows us.

We have to have worship because it humbles us. It's very important, in my opinion, to do fasting because it stops the flesh from dominating our lives. That's why spiritual disciplines are so important.

They are a humbling process. The Word of God teaches me. I go into it saying, Lord, I don't know everything.

Will you show me? And then prayer. Prayer opens that door and begins to reveal God's will. And then worship humbles me.

Do you know there's no such thing as a prideful worshiper? Now, they might go through the motions, right? And just, you know, active, you know, shoulders up worship. But a humble worshiper is the true sense of the Word. When God says, let us come together and worship Him, God's Word says, come together and worship Him, the beauty of holiness.

There's a humility there. And we should be, as Christians, we should be the most hopeful people on the planet. But people are in fear factor mode on Facebook, too.

San Bernardino's right over the hill, yeah? Are you ready? Are we prepared? I mean, look what Jesus said. Rivers of living water, if you believe on Me, as the Scriptures say, out of your belly will flow rivers of living water. Cast your cares upon Me.

Come to Me all you are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Listen, folks, either we think that's a lie or we think it's real. If we think it's real, why don't we live like it? If Jesus says, cast all your cares upon Me, carry My yoke, grab My yoke, My yoke is light.

And a yoke, two oxen would be yoked together. It's this large instrument. They put on one neck of another ox and another neck of another ox.

And they would yoke and pull the load together. Jesus says, My yoke is light. Come and take it.

Let Me pull the load. Let Me fall. Follow Me.

All back to this following Me in the surrendered life. What about this time of year? Isaiah 9.6, For unto us a child is born, a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders, and His name will be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. See, there's no peace outside of God.

No peace. I don't care who they are, they're lying. If there's no peace.

There's no true peace outside of God. Because where does real peace come from? What peace is, it's security, isn't it? I'm trusting somebody's in charge. There's peace there now.

Some of you, if you live out and there's helicopters flying around your neighborhood at two in the morning, at the window, there's not a lot of peace. And then the sun comes out, and everything's gone. Where'd that come from? Security.

And there's no peace outside of God, because that's true peace, is knowing who you're secure in. There will come a time when everybody in this room will not be here anymore. We will all face the grave.

And is there true peace? The only true peace comes from knowing Him. That's where true peace comes from. I'm going to just share two quick stories about surrendering their life.

The one is about Frances Jane Crosby. Her name was Fanny Crosby, born 1820. She said this, If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind.

For when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Savior. Blind for nearly all of her life, Fanny Crosby is known as one of the greatest hymn writers in the history of the Christian church. Though blind, she witnessed over 8,000 of her poems set to music.

One of those is Blessed Assurance. Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

So a blind lady wrote Blessed Assurance once she surrendered her life and her giftings to God. Another guy by the name of Jetson Van Deventer, born in 1855. He studied and taught music.

He mastered 13 different instruments and sang and composed music. He was very involved in the music ministry at his church and eventually found himself torn between a successful teaching career and his desire to pursue ministry. That happens a lot.

Why? Because I want a successful teaching career. God says, no, I want to use you. And there's this pole.

And then 1896, he was at a series of meetings and he finally surrendered his desires completely to God. As he submitted completely to the will of his Lord, a song was born in his heart. It's called I Surrender All.

You ever heard that famous hymn? It was put to music by Winfield Whedon who published this and many other hymns in several volumes. Whedon so loved this song that the words I Surrender All were put on his tombstone. But it's interesting.

In both cases, and I can bring books, stack them on the floor this high, of people who finally, finally were used of God after they surrendered all. See, God will still use people. Don't get me wrong.

But it's not until you surrender everything and you become that pliable clay on the potter's will that allows him to... See, most people say, I don't want to be a vase. No, no, no, don't make me a vase. No, no, I don't want to be a vase.

I want to be that strong statue. No, I don't want to be this. And we fight the potter.

And we're surprised when he says, okay, give me a different clump of clay. Let me use somebody else. And that's what surrendering and following... Because once you surrender everything, give up resistance.

That's the definition. Give up your agendas, of your goal, of everything. I mean, we pray for Bran.

He knows my passion for worship, wanting worship. But until a worship leader says, Lord, this is about you and not me, like that's one thing I love about Bran's heart and worship, is once you say, Lord, whatever you want to do, I don't care if there's 60 people here. I'm going to sing to your glory.

Use me however you want. Then he'll give you 600. And same thing, Lord, whatever you want me to do.

You want me to go to hospital homes? You want me to minister out that city out there, that small community? Whatever you want. I'm yours. I'm yours.

I'm surrendering all. Then he can shape and guide. And then from that, that peace comes.

You think the peace that surpasses all understanding comes into a heart that's going to do their own thing in their own way and stand like this? And many times I see people, Shane, I don't have that peace. I don't want it. No wonder.

You're a nervous wreck. Give it all to God. Oh, I can't do that.

I'll have no more money. No social security. Or I can't give up that.

Or you don't know my kids. No, no, give him everything. Like he doesn't know what he's doing.

That's what people, they're worried about. He doesn't know what he's doing. He's got too much to worry about.

And he's not, God does not know my life as well as I do. I mean, it comes down to trust. Let's be honest.

If we truly trusted God, Lord, whatever you want me to do. So I would just encourage you tonight, as the worship team comes back up, that we can sing, I surrender all and still not surrender all. See, it's not going like this.

Because a lot of people are going like this. Yeah, that sounds great. That's the easy part.

The hard part is putting the feet to it and putting our hearts to it. And the hearts, what does that look like? Well, here's what it looks like. All you have to say, and you have to be sincere, is Lord, I'm ready to be fully used by you.

I know there's areas in my life that you're wanting to work on. I know there's bitterness, anger, lust, greed, addiction, whatever it is. And Lord, take these away so I can serve you better.

I know I've been holding onto things, relationships, habits, whatever it is. Lord, I'm giving it all to you tonight. I'm fully surrendering, and I want to follow you.

Now, will you do that perfectly? No. Thank God for the grace of God. Because you're walking off track.

He goes, nope, this way. Nope, this way. But you have to be movable.

We have to. That's part of the clay process, is allowing the potter to do what he wants to do. And that's where hope comes from.

As believers, true hope comes from releasing control. Releasing control. And allowing him to lead.

Amen.

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