

How God Uses Your Past

by Shane Idleman

God can use your past, no matter how broken or imperfect it may be, to shape and mold you into the person He wants you to be.

Duration: 54:31

Scripture: Psalm 25:9, Isaiah 53:4-5, Acts 26:18, Romans 8:28, Philippians 3:8, Philippians 3:13-14

Topics: "Redemption", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes how God can use your past, highlighting the importance of surrendering past mistakes and regrets to Him. It discusses the need to focus on God's redirection through difficult times, the power of repentance, and the significance of knowing and applying biblical truths in our lives. The message encourages casting our cares upon God, seeking His help, and pressing forward towards the goal of knowing Christ more deeply.

Transcript

How God Uses Your Past How God uses your past. How God uses your past. I don't care if you're a young adult, or if you think your years are over, or if you're caught in the middle, God can use you in a mighty way.

But I want you to find two spots in your Bible. And there's actually Bibles in front of you, in the pews, if you can, if you need one. Acts 26, New Testament.

Acts 26 in the New Testament. And Isaiah 53 in the Old Testament. Acts 26 and Isaiah 53.

And if you're ever curious, I probably haven't done a very good job on doing this and mentioning this, but everything I'm reading here, a lot of the notes and the Scripture references, everything is actually, the person who does our website posts it underneath the sermon video on our website. So you have all the references, all the notes that I'm going through. We won't need those just yet, now it's going to be a while before I get to those, but in your Bibles you can turn to Acts 26 and Isaiah 53.

But let's start with Acts 25. You don't have to turn there, because it's covered a few weeks ago. And I'm just going to recap.

Paul appeals to Caesar, so Paul gets in trouble. What we would not consider trouble is that he stirred the crowd, focused on Jesus Christ. They arrested him, and he said, Why do I appeal to Caesar? I want to talk

to King Caesar.

Then he stands before King Agrippa, and he was in jail for at least two years. If you can believe that. I heard an interesting sermon this week, I wish I wrote down who said it.

It was on the radio, and I said, that's a very good point. And he said, do you know your Bible was written mainly by murderers and adulterers? No. Well, the first five books, Moses, might as well chop those out.

David, Psalm, Paul's books. I was like, that's interesting. God can use your past.

God can redeem. What was that lyric? He takes my chaos, and brings it back into order. That's what God does with our past.

But just for Max 25, the first point is this. God can use what we call wasted time. So Paul sitting in prison.

Can you imagine, if you're sitting in prison, I write to prisoners sometimes. Man, my life's over. I'm just sitting here, wasting away.

Actually, that can be a very glorious time. I don't encourage you to go to prison. But when you're in there, and I told my friend of mine that I visit a few times down, he's in RJD Correctional Facility by the Tijuana border, is that you have something that nobody else has.

You have undivided time with God. Boy, if I could go back 17 years, when you could just sit with God for the whole day, and read, and meditate, and worship. So there are times like that, and don't be discouraged.

Whatever we call wasted time, and I look back on my life and go, so many wasted years, 17, 18, 19, 20. But looking back, I see how He was working in that chaos, and even what He called me to do, what He's called you to do, how He works in that area. So God can use what we call wasted time.

That's the first point, how God uses your past. Time on the backside of the desert is not wasted time. I hear people all the time, I'm just stuck in this desert.

Young adults, right? I'm just stuck in this desert. Get time with God. See, all this is not wasted, we can redirect it.

Somebody named Moses was stuck on the backside of the desert for 40 years. But God used that to shape and to mold. So that is the first point.

There's not wasted time when God, and of course Romans 8.28 comes to mind all the time on this, that God will turn those things that the enemy intended for evil, He will turn that for good. Read Romans 8.28 tonight, in that whole passage. Those things that we think are bad, that God, if you're called according to His purpose, if you know Him, He can actually turn that for His purposes.

This is also where education, or a lack thereof, plays a role. Or affluence, or no influence. Right? Sometimes you think, well I have no education.

Well good, D.L. Moody, let me use you. I have a tremendous education. Jonathan Edwards, Princeton, Yale, Harvard, He can use you.

And He uses you how you're gifting and where you're at. I don't know how many of you heard about the man who lost his life on Highway 138 recently, his motorcycle crashed. And the family contacted me Wednesday of last week and asked if I could do it on Friday, two days notice, and do the whole thing.

And it doesn't get more redneck than that. It was that, but I can relate to construction background. I can show up in my cap boots and a flannel shirt and give the message and relate to the people.

And to have unbelievers thank me for how I represented their son and was able to talk about Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. Do you know Him? How He changed? But see, you couldn't just go in there in a suit and tie. They told me, do not wear a suit and tie.

Don't look like a preacher, don't look like a pastor. They gave me the heads up, right? But see, God would use that where you think, well I'm just stupid. I'm uneducated, but He'll use them.

And then you get a person, you ever follow Robbie Zacharias? When I get an intellectual person, suit and tie, businessman, Harvard education, I'll say, listen to this guy. Might not listen to me, but they'll listen to this guy. And see how God will use all that.

So, I never got an education. I'm not influential. That's good.

Because God will use that. God will use whatever and however He created you. Because see, you're the clay.

He's the potter. Oh, it's a good time to read Isaiah 64. Isaiah 64.

But now, oh Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We are just simply the work of your hands.

See, if you know Him, most of us, I'm assuming this morning, are all believers, that we sit on a potter's wheel. Metaphorically speaking. Have you ever seen them make something? You just have this lump of just wet, disgusting clay.

And within an hour, it's beautiful, and He took all these things, and that's what God does. It's just the clay on the wheel being formed and fashioned. And there are people... It's just a hard week for me.

I've got so many things. The young boy that was shot in Mojave, too. He's a friend of Morgan's side of the family.

He was killed in Mojave recently. We've been talking with them. And just seeing young adults, too, wanting to end their life.

Or depressed because I'm a child now, and I'm only this age, and I've got this going on, and God can't use me now. But yes, He can. See, that's a beautiful thing.

He takes that mess, and we say, do you know people, if you've never experienced this, you don't know, but if you've been through divorce, you wear a big fat D on your forehead. You wear a D on your forehead. That's like a scarlet letter.

Remember that old book? I think it was something like that. But you walk around, you're like, I'm a failure in this, and churches will tell you, you can't be an elder. They'll tell you, you can never do this.

You can never do this. I mean, they'll allow murderers and adulterers and everything else to do things, but if you have that D on you many years ago, and so you walk with that guilt and shame, not realizing that that could be the greatest strength that you've ever had because it broke you. And God uses that mess and those problems in the marriage and thinks to focus back on Him.

That's my goal this morning, is to show you. I'm just running into so many people who are just God can't use me now. I've ruined it.

And I don't know how He does it. It's the most amazing thing to me, is He takes this enormous disappointment. Life is over.

My career has ended. And then within a year, oh my goodness, He gave me an incredible ministry. I have peace that surpasses all.

Where did that come from? Because you trusted in the potter to readjust the clay. You know that clay can be readjusted, right? Oh, I like this vase. Oh, now I'm going to make you a pot.

And it's the same clay, same lump of clay. Here's the lies we are fed. Younger people say, but I don't have a past.

I don't have a testament. I don't have anything. You don't need a testimony.

God is shaping and molding right now. Make sure you make the right choice. Make sure you guys should be reading everything but what the secular media promotes.

Get good books. Get good information. Get good things because you are the next generation.

And what you put in now will develop who you are in the future. And of course, the middle group I just talked about. My group.

God can't use me now. I saw that, especially at the memorial service. So many people broken and just around town and running into people and you know, I'm caught in this bad situation.

I've messed up. I'm back on... I must have heard of two or three people go back into alcohol and drugs and one person we know is six months sober and guess how he decides to celebrate? Yeah. Let's celebrate.

Six months. No, because now you're back hooked again. And seeing that devastation but understanding that you're not... God can't use you.

Actually, God will use... Sometimes He uses those broken areas to finally get our attention. To finally wake us up. And then the older crowd says, my whole life is behind me.

But let me challenge you. That is not the case. We need intercessors.

You can still influence people to a very at a very deep level. And the church, probably the biggest need we need in the church right now is mentors. I can tell you just take one marriage.

Just take one person and mentor and God will use that. So it's actually not over. Well, I'm 70.

It's over. I'm 80. No, God can until you breathe your last breath, God uses... I just wonder how many of us are here because of praying parents or grandparents.

There's people that tell me I can't make church but I'll be praying that whole hour. There's more power in that than attending here. That's intercession.

God said, I look for a man from among them who would build a wall and stand in the gap before me to intercede for the people. But I found no one. God hears the intercession.

He hears that grandma that's weeping. He hears... Have you ever seen the war room? He hears those prayers. Because we don't know how it works but that's the most powerful weapon.

As much as I love worship, as much as I love preaching, if we leave here and we fail to grasp the power of prayer we have failed. Because that's where the heart is engaged. And then Acts 26, what I told you to turn to.

Paul is actually recounting his conversion. And I thought of this as well. I've done this many times.

I'm sure you have as well. If you don't know... And I get stuck. People have a hard time believing this.

Sometimes there are people I don't know what to share. I'm stuck. That's what you do Shane.

I know. But I encounter people that I'm lost here Lord. But if you can re-encounter or re-emphasize or emphasize how God changed your life, that's often enough.

God's not looking for a theological discourse on the book of Acts when you minister. He's not looking for you to break down the Pauline epistles and bring in some hermeneutics and homiletics while you're at it. He's just share what God has done.

And that's one of the reasons I wanted to do this at the college. I want to share why there is a Creator. I don't know if you're catching a lot of what's going on but Trump is not the Savior.

That everybody thought. He just stirred the pot. Obama wasn't the Savior.

Nobody is the Savior. And the pot is being stirred. Our nation is being divided.

The racial tension is being divided. We need to stand for the truth. And one of my concerns is for the churches, especially in America, and they can hold the ground, is they are not contending.

It's just like, well, ok, whatever. It would blow your mind if you could see some of the things that the state of California and different things are trying to do. Punish people in nursing homes that work in nursing homes if you don't use the right gender.

I thought it was a guy. She wants to be called a woman? And if I call her a guy, I'm in trouble? It's coming. The church, though, needs to say, no, that's not right.

Here's what God's Word says, in the boldness and power of the Holy Spirit. That's the light. When we come in, we shine the darkness, not with arrogance, not with anger.

But we say, no, that's not right. And that's one of the reasons I want to go to the college and say, that's not right. For evolution to be taught as fact is not right.

That's wrong. There is a creator. There's evidence everywhere.

Cause and effect. Morally. All these things we have.

There is evidence. So Acts 26, verse 12. As I journey to Damascus, Paul's talking there.

He's saying, he's recounting his conversion. He's before the king Agrippa. He's before one of the governors.

His name will come up in a minute. He's before these men. He's saying, as I journey to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priest.

So Paul's not a believer. Paul's actually a Pharisee. He persecuted the church.

So he was commissioned to go, by the religious leaders, to go and throw Christians into jail. And to possibly kill them. But he said, O king, at the midday along the road, the Damascus road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me.

And those who journeyed with me, they saw this wonderful light. And when we had fallen to the ground. See, that's what happens when you truly experience God.

You will fall to the ground. You won't say, oh, I wonder where that is. Sit and ponder.

When that glorious holiness hits and you know you're in the presence of God, there's nothing you can do except fall down. Verse 14, Acts 26. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying, in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It's hard for you to kick against the goads.

Today, we say, what is he talking about? Back then, they knew exactly what he was talking about. Let's talk about that for a minute. Kicking against the goads is painful.

I was looking for one, but I couldn't find one. But a goad is pretty high. Maybe six, seven, eight foot tall.

It's a staff. It's got maybe some bone on the end or some metal or something. And you hit the oxen with it.

You direct it. Little prodding. Little prodding never hurts, right? Oh, I better move.

Little prodding never hurts. He's prodding, but Paul, just like an oxen, would actually kick against those goads and fight against the goads. So a prodding became a painful, intense hurt where that prodding, the little spikes on the prod will go into the skin a little bit.

You're kicking against the goad. You're kicking against my will. And I thought today, how long will many of us continue to kick against God's will? God's prompting.

He's leading. And we kick against it. And that's painful.

It's painful. It's much better just to go along with the prodding. Okay, that hurt a little bit.

That hurt a little bit. And we just, God guides us along. But when we fight, and Scripture came to mind all week, hard is the way of the transgressor.

I didn't have to take time to look it up. But all week, hard is the way of the transgressor. That person caught in that transgression.

Their way is hard. It's difficult. When we kick against God's prodding, it hurts.

So this leads me to the next point. God can use our kicking, our rebellion if we learn from it. Don't stay stuck in the rebellion.

God says, learn from your rebellion, acknowledge it, and come back to Me. So if something's painful right now, here's the problem that happens. Something's painful.

God has done this to me, or whatever's happening. In my rebellion, instead of saying, God, I'm sorry, I repent, what do we do? We kick even harder. We fight even more.

We get upset. And God says, no, I want to use this kicking, this rebellion, turn it. Because sometimes the hardest kickers are the best for God.

Those who are the most rebellious who have been forgiven much, end up loving much. You see people, you go, I can't believe their testimony. I can't even believe it's the same person.

Because that heart of rebellion was finally changed to a heart of God. Romans 8.28 here it is, and we know that all things work together for good. To those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Then verse 15, so Paul said when he saw this light, and the light said, why are you kicking against the goad? He said, who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. Now I just want to stop there with number three. God will answer if you ask.

God will answer. This is how God uses your past. God will answer if you ask.

Lord, what do you want me to do? God, what do you want me to do? Show me who you are. Show me who I am. Show me what you created me to do.

And I don't think people grasp this about God, but this is not the lottery. This is not God will get to it if he thinks about it. You might have a good chance.

This is God saying, ask and you will receive. Knock and all open. But what we do is, door didn't open, forget it.

But it's an attitude of continual knocking and seeking. I mean, there's prayer things I'm still praying for. A year or two later, God, what are you doing here? What do you want to do here? Knocking, asking, seeking, and I know a lot of it has to do with timing.

Yes, no, or maybe. So when it comes to your past, when it comes to God using you, ask. And we hear it a lot here.

I don't know what my gift is. I don't know what God's calling me to do. Have you asked? Have you asked? Yeah, but he just, all that comes to mind is he wants me to clean the church.

Maybe that's what he wants you to do for a season. It's in that humility and doing whatever, and here's the funny thing. We want to be the Billy Graham, but we don't want to be the guy who's cleaning the toilets.

I know you've called me to do that, but I don't want to start here. But see, it's starting here that eventually opens that door to where God, because he's in that cleaning the toilet, in that picking up trash, in that diapers, and in that, in all of that, that's when God's breaking and breaking and shaping so you can be that. So don't try to rush the process or you'll fall flat on your face.

And I'm assuming Paul experienced a tremendous amount of pain and shame. Can you imagine? Can you imagine that you meet the Lord and Savior who you thought you knew and who you thought you were doing His work? And that's the next point. God uses our pain and brokenness to humble us.

Psalms 25:9, He teaches sinners in the way He humbles. The humble He guides in justice and the humble He teaches His way. Now I talk about this often, of course, but I want to just tell you why for a minute this is so important.

Without humility, you won't know the heart of God. You won't have compassion. You won't be gentle.

You won't be understanding. You won't have that tender heart towards He can't use a rigid person very well. He can't use an argumentative person or somebody who can't relate.

And that's one of the things I'm concerned really too about our nation is the conscience of our nation has been seared with a hot iron. You can murder. You can kill.

You can take. You can do whatever you want. You can rape.

You can pillage. You can plunder. And it doesn't even affect me.

Our conscience has been seared. Now parallel that to us, and there's not a heart of compassion. We don't weep for those who are lost.

We don't care too much. They lost a loved one. I don't care.

It doesn't affect me. So many people think they have humility but they don't. That's why God isn't using you.

A.W. Tozer said it's doubtful whether God can use a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply. This is how you can sit with a mom who's lost her child and weep with her because you've been humbled. You've been broken.

Or a marriage that's falling apart. Most of us could care less. If you knew the devastation that was happening just within this church and marriages, it would break your heart.

It should. But see it doesn't. Why is that? Why do we have hurricanes that Have you seen photos from Texas? You know what's actually hitting Florida right now? And there's four people at the prayer meeting.

And I pray, Lord please don't let me get frustrated. But I'm just trying to show you. It's not to beat up.

It's just like where's the heart? Are we even praying for Florida? Oh well. But see that's what we're missing. The heart of humility and brokenness and compassion.

Because from that God will work in your life. So if you're saying God, give me this position. I want to do this.

I want to do this. If you're not broken and humble, I can't use you. Because you'll be too arrogant.

Too proud. So humility is everything. I have to work on that daily.

It's going to be a struggle until the day we leave here, isn't it? But there's a difference between a struggle and a lifestyle. One thing I've noticed in the church across America, at least when I've spoken and obviously in my own life, is we think we are humble. Because we measure humility by our own definition.

I serve. Really humility, all humility, it's an issue of the heart. And I'll talk to people who are in the underground church in China or Middle East and it's like Christian.

New Testament Christian. And then we look at a lot of us and it's like we have no heart of compassion. No humility.

I mean, I'm just embarrassed when they're four hour prayer meetings they're at in China praying for America. That God would break us and mold us. Too much arrogance.

Too much wealth. It's your curse. I don't know about you, but that hurts.

But as you draw closer to God, as you open your heart, as you worship God, because it just doesn't come. I can't go, oh give me that broken heart. It's going to come pretty soon.

It's the heart rending and breaking and being afflicted. And God, show me who you are. Show me your glory.

Show me your compassion. You have to pray, give me a heart like yours. And then you go and you do things.

You serve and you see the brokenness. And sometimes we like to live in our bubble because it's comfortable, isn't it? I don't like to get outside that bubble because it's uncomfortable. And then verse 16.

I could stay there a while, but I won't. Verse 16, Acts 26, 16. But rise and stand on your feet.

So Jesus is saying, Paul, rise and stand on your feet for I have appeared to you for this purpose. Here's why I'm here. To make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will reveal to you.

Now this is an interesting scripture because Paul didn't really have a choice in this. Jesus showed up, said, Paul, I've called you to go preach. Get up, go and preach.

I will deliver you from the Jewish people. I will deliver you from the Gentiles to whom I now send you to open their eyes in order to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me. So God is saying, I'm sending you to fight the powers of darkness to open the eyes of these people.

So the fourth point, your path is about helping others. Get this straight. If you're going to determine what does God want you to do, Lord, it's always others focused.

Now the reason I say this is because we do this. This is a big issue for Christians. We ask, how can I get ahead? How can I get my name on this? Or how can I make some money on this? How can I pay the bills? When God calls us to do something, it's all about others.

Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven. These other things will be added later. But when we make those the focal point, when we make those the focal point, then it becomes what I just said here.

It's not about helping others. It's about I'm doing it for ulterior motives. And God has to challenge people in this area.

We know if we're doing this with the wrong heart. Would you do something if nobody knew? Would you go to the hospital homes if nobody knew? Would you sing on the worship team if nobody could hear you? What about the worship team singing in that room? Behind that closed window? Who is that? I don't know who it is. Would you do it without the notoriety being recognized? See, these are heart issues.

We have to check our heart. Do we do things for the wrong reasons? And the reason this is important also is because this will remove, if you're dealing with anxiety and fear and confusion, oftentimes it's because we're self-focused. And when I'm self-focused, things aren't going my way.

It's not working out. The money, the finances. But when your other's focused and trusting in God, a lot of those things don't work.

Lord, it's You. It's all Yours. And you begin to remove those things, those struggles.

Verse 19, therefore King Agrippa, he's telling the king, standing in front of a king, it'd be like standing in front of our president, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. So it tells me he could have been disobedient. So maybe Paul did have a choice.

Something to think about. He goes, I heard what Jesus said and I was not disobedient to it. I obeyed it.

But declared first to those in Damascus and Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea and then to the Gentiles that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. So Paul said I was not disobedient. Jesus called me.

I went everywhere and I preached that people need to repent and turn to God. See, that's a very healthy concept. This word that everybody's afraid of now, except here, right? And many other churches.

We talk about repentance. And that's why, because it's so important. That's how the eyes are opened.

You have to go, listen, you're living wrong. You're a sinner. You're outside of God's grace and mercy and forgiveness.

You need to repent. Turn the way you think about sin and turn towards God. Now within that, of course, is the whole debate of can a man do that or does God have to do it? Let's just say what the Scripture says.

They should repent. Now I don't believe without the working of the Holy Spirit anybody can repent. It's not going to happen.

That's why we're so hard. God has to be working in the heart and drawing and convicting just like he did here with Paul. Paul preached repentance, turning to God and doing works, befitting repentance.

Now it's interesting, point five, God directs us based on obedience rather than good intentions. Now I talked about this a few weeks ago so I won't again, but it is important here because Paul says I was not disobedient. I obeyed and God called me.

So God is looking at your obedience. Will you obey? And then from obedience we find out what God wants us to do. Now this applies to unbelievers in this context.

You should repent, turn to God and do works befitting repentance. That word befitting is interesting. Have you ever said this doesn't fit? Take a round thing, like you see your kids do this.

Take a round thing and put it in a square hole and it's not fitting. So our works, if you look at somebody and go your works, your lifestyle is not befitting. It doesn't fit with repentance.

And that's why this is sometimes a controversial subject because, well let me just read a popular survey that came out from the Pew, it's a Pew survey is what they call it. Half of Protestants agree with Catholics that good deeds and faith are needed for salvation. So this is something that's important I guess and we need to talk about and the reason it's confusing is maybe it's how the question was framed, I'm not really sure, but if a person doesn't have works befitting repentance, if their lifestyle there's just no fruit, there's nothing, well I said a prayer 10 years ago, okay but there's no apples growing on the apple tree.

Actually it's not even an apple tree, it's a prune, is there prunes on a tree? Let's see, it's a lemon tree. There's lemons, I've seen those. Palm Springs, they're big.

And there's just no fruit. So you have to, is your faith really saving faith? Because it's probably not because saving faith changes you. It's changing faith.

So if there's no fruit befitting repentance you have to look, have I really been converted? Do I really know God? So I think that's why people get confused. They say, well they're not, they don't look like a Christian, so I guess good works and faith have to go together. Well, it's actually, it's circular reasoning because when a person is truly saved, though they struggle, though they fall sometimes, though they might not look like it all the time, there is fruit trying to grow and trying to flourish and trying to be, to grow on the vine.

The fruit is there. So salvation, once a person's saved, the fruit is a byproduct. But you can't put the cart before the horse and say, okay, I did a good thing.

I went and gave money to a missionary organization. Now I'm saved. Now see, that will come from being saved.

It doesn't save you. It comes from being saved. So, and people, I get bad emails on this one from when I talk about the differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestants.

They say, well, it's just greasy grace then, Shane. You're just letting people do whatever they want. You're not saying that works matter.

I'm saying, no, works actually, I believe it was James, that show me your faith by your works. That your works will reflect. But we can't say that Jesus Christ on the cross, okay, did some of it.

Thank you, Jesus. But now I need to go and give to the poor. Or now I need to go and do something good.

I need to add my works to your finished work on the cross. Now I have salvation. To me, that's blasphemy.

That is just, that is, that's bad theology. That's a better word. How's that? It's not true.

But that's why people get caught in it. Because, well, there's no works here. And they say they're saved, so don't you have to have both? Well, you'll know them by their fruit.

I actually have that scripture written down. Matthew 3.8. Let's paraphrase it. Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sin and turned to God.

So people tell me, you can't judge me. No, I cannot judge you. But I'm a fruit inspector.

You're passing in from the Mexican to the American border. You're passing in from darkness to light. I'm inspecting.

I see no fruit. There's zero fruit. You look just like the world.

There's not a difference at all. Well, I go to church. Okay, that's going to church.

There's no fruit. Now, I don't go around being a fruit inspector. Don't worry about that.

But we can see from somebody, and don't give up on people too early too, right? I know there's people who've been a Christian a year and they're like, yeah, but Shane, they're drinking last night. Okay, are they sorry this morning and pleading to God to please help them and wanting to get back on track? See, that's not a lifestyle. That's a struggle.

And often we rate people on the struggle. It's often how they handle the sin. I mean, I run into people, I don't care.

I'm going to do this until the day I die. See, there's no conviction. But the person who stumbles and fumbles and then, I get emails on this too because I'm encouraging sin.

No, but I am encouraging falling forward. And any of you that can walk the perfect path, talk to me afterwards. I'd love to see that.

Because I'll do something like, oh, I shouldn't have got upset in traffic. See, there's this, but what do you do with the sin you're involved in? Do you enjoy it? And is it no big deal? Or is it truly hurting and convicting you and you want to change? That's the difference. Then verse 21, Paul says, for this reason, I just preached repentance.

That's all I did. I said, you need to turn from the darkness to the light. And for this reason, the Jew seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand before you, O King, witnessing both to the small and the great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come. That is great advice. Paul said, I'm saying, all I'm saying is what the Bible already says.

And that's actually one of my goals when preaching. I'm saying what the Bible already says. So when you say, you just talked about that a month ago, yep, it's going to keep coming back.

It's going to keep coming back. I remember a lady talked to Spurgeon after Charles Spurgeon, 1800s, after one of his sermons, Mr. Spurgeon, when are you going to stop preaching on repentance? And he said, when you do. Isn't that true? It's a constant theme of throughout the Bible.

I can show you repentance in Genesis. Cain killed his brother. God said, why are you looking like that? If you do well, will I not forgive you? But if you do evil, be careful because just like a lion waiting at the door, it's waiting to devour you.

Repent. You can go to Revelation. Men crying out to God, just come back, turn back to me, repent.

It's everywhere throughout the Bible and that's what Paul got in trouble for because he changed it. He said, not God, it's now Jesus, your Messiah is here and you've rejected him. Oh, those are fighting words.

Those are killing words. So they seized Paul. That's why he's in jail and he's telling the king, I'm just talking about what the prophets said that Christ would suffer, that he would be the first to rise from the dead and that he would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.

Paul is only saying what they already read 700 years ago in Isaiah. Jeremiah. It finally came to fruition.

It's finally here. But when he comes, they say, no, this is just a carpenter, son. This isn't Jesus.

We're expecting the night of Jesus shining on a white horse. Just what women are waiting for too, right? This night on this white horse to conquer Rome, our soon coming conquering king. And it's funny, 2,000 years ago, the Jews were looking for a lion.

They got a lamb. Today, everybody's looking for a lamb. And they're going to get a lion.

That's a good amen spot right there. And the congregation said amen. Also, six point, ask for God's help.

Ask for God's help. That's what Paul did. Ask for God's help.

But what do we do? I got this. I got this. That's why we don't pray as much as we should.

Because I got this. I tell my wife that sometimes. I got this.

Remember, it just happened this week. You want me to go to the funeral with you and support you? No, I got this. And our little two-year-old, Aubrey, when she was two, was like, Aubrey, do.

Aubrey, do. Aubrey, do. Like, I'll do it.

Aubrey, do. I'll do it. Aubrey, do.

Okay, Aubrey, do. But we take that as we grow up. I'll do.

I'll do. I'll handle this, God. And that's a bad spot to be.

That's a bad spot to be. And then, of course, what we can glean from this, point seven, know your Bible. The more you know, the more He can use you.

And this is where people get tongue-tied. I don't know. I don't want to go on a long rabbit trail, but I meet a lot of Spirit-filled believers.

You know what that is? It's a good term. They're filled with the Spirit, not of the world. They're worshipers.

They're praying. They're Spirit-filled, but they have no grounding. They have no foundation.

So they're tossed away by, is that the Spirit? Is that the Spirit? It's just, they don't know the Bible. It's hard to minister to others, and people come with good questions. You know, well, if a loving God is this, and they'll say, well, I don't know.

What's the old song? Jesus said it's, you know, the Bible says it's so, so I believe it. I mean, that's okay, but apologetics is when you get, the Bible talks about being ready to give every man an answer for the hope that is within you. So you have to know what it says.

I mean, I've stopped hundreds of arguments, hundreds, by just knowing that somebody said something and said, it's not in the Bible. I had lunch with an atheist at Sharkey's six months ago. I said, that's nowhere in the Bible.

Oh yeah, well, show me. Get on your phone, show me where it's in the Bible. It's not in your Bible.

Oh yeah, well, God promoted slavery. Where? Show me. Okay, let's talk about these passages in context.

Do you know the difference between a slave and an indentured servant? And how the monetary system works? Let's talk about these things and you'll be able to diffuse a lot of things and make people think. But it's interesting, Paul was saying no other thing than what was written. So let's put that Isaiah 53 up on the screen now if we have it.

Because I want you to see this. This is all Paul is saying. So Isaiah, now, Isaiah was written 700 years ago.

It was a prophet that God called to call the nation back to God. That's what many of the prophets would do. They would call the nation, thus saith the Lord.

So Isaiah, 700 years ago, the Jews had been following Isaiah this whole time. Actually, when Jesus went to the temple to preach, he opened up the scroll of Isaiah and read from it, the spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach the gospel.

So see, they got this stuff. This isn't new. I bet people in there could memorize it.

They knew exactly where to find this scripture. Actually, they didn't have the chapter and verse back then. It was added about 500 years ago.

Part of the Reformation idea there to get people back into the Word. But Paul was just saying this. Who has believed our report? So this is Isaiah, God speaking through Isaiah 700 years before Paul and Jesus.

I better double check that because I'm just going off memory from a few years ago studying the historical timeline of that. But I believe it was about 700 years when Judah and Israel were divided in southern and northern kingdoms. Isaiah is calling the people out of their riches and their wealth.

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he shall grow up, Jesus, before him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness. Meaning Jesus looked average.

It wasn't the knight coming on a white horse. He just looked like the average person. And when we see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid as it were our faces from him.

And he was despised and we did not esteem him. So Paul is just saying, see, here he is. You rejected him.

Right here Isaiah is coming to fulfillment. Even now though, many do not believe. Jesus came as a humble servant, just like Isaiah said he would.

And that's why Paul said, we'll read in 27, King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe. I know that you believe the prophets. I'm just saying what the prophets said.

This is not some wind of doctrine. This is not some new theology. This isn't Greek mythology.

This is historical biblical Christianity. What we grew up in. And then Isaiah 53.4 Surely he has borne our griefs.

This should bring tears to your eyes. Jesus coming in the likeness of man. Can you imagine stepping down from heaven? And I've heard this analogy many years ago.

It's like you stepping into a septic tank. Coming out with everything on you and saying, now I'm ready to minister. He stepped down from that.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who being in the form of God did not consider robbery to be equal with God. But he made himself of no reputation, taking on the form of a man. And he humbled himself.

He's borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. Meaning we didn't esteem him.

We didn't care. We had that calloused, hard heart. And this really penetrated my heart this week because that's how many of us come into worship.

I've thought many times, I'd just love to put on the screen a scene from the Passion of the Christ when the King is on the cross and that's who you're worshiping. That's why we're here. Would that change worship? I think so because that should be me.

That should be me. But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement for our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed. Now theologians are debating on why he was beaten, bruised, but it does fulfill prophecy. The beating, the wrath, and the bruising, his creation killing him.

And then by his stripes we are healed. Obviously this is spiritually speaking. We are healed spiritually.

But it does have over arching physical ramifications for us because I do believe by his stripes we are healed. I believe that the blood of Christ is so strong that we can get healing in that prayer room. We can get healing when we pray for people.

That's biblical. By his stripes we are healed. Disease is not God's design.

It's the work of the enemy. The chastisement for our peace. That's an interesting phrase.

The chastisement for our peace. Somebody was chastised in order for me to have peace. Doesn't make a lot of sense, does it? Somebody was beaten up and killed and slaughtered in order for me to have peace.

Think about what has to happen. So see that's why there's some passion and some pulpits. Because we see that your peace and my peace had a price.

How dare we walk into a church flippantly. How dare we worship as if it doesn't matter and we're doing God a favor. That chastisement that he went through was because of the peace I experience.

And by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

I'm only halfway through. Alright, well I probably should have told you that. I should have just acted like I was done.

But let me just hit some strong points and we'll pick up maybe next week too. This is a hard concept. He's born, he's carried.

Born our grieves, he's carried our grieves. He's carried our sorrows. He's carried and somebody made a good point recently.

I shared that and they said, yeah, but I still feel it. So it doesn't make sense. I still feel it.

But then I thought, yeah, but now you have somebody to take it to. That's the difference. People without God are lost.

They have to carry that burden. They have to carry that sorrow to their grave on their own. Dealing with depression unlike anything most of us have ever known.

Dealing with anxiety. I have nothing to take this to. But now God says, just take it to me.

See, he bore it. He says, my yoke's easy. My burden's light.

Cast all your cares upon me. See, it's a constant casting. I didn't just do this 17 years ago and now I'm good.

God, my children. One of my children is sick. Hypothetically now, they're not.

So don't worry. I don't know. I've just been diagnosed with something.

I remember even recently, my wife will tell you, my foot was falling asleep, my toe, my eyesight's going. I'm like, oh, I've got multiple sclerosis. I'm in my 40s and come to find out my shoe was too tight.

And that comes with age, you know. But it's like every day, the Lord just you know, casting my cares upon you. Lord, difficulty.

Have you ever had one child, you know the child, and they just, they're hell-bent on just making your life difficult. And it's just hard. And you feel like giving up.

I'm a Christian. I should be able to father better than this or parent better than this. I'm casting it on you.

See, I have it, I feel it, but then I cast it and I feel better. Have you ever been in a financial bind? I told this story a while back, but when I was way back in construction, the market went like this. We had like literally a month left of income.

And I was just, every morning, that'll make you pray. If you need help praying, well, don't pray, but God will use sometimes these hard things. And every morning I was just casting my cares.

An hour later I was fine. A couple days come again, casting the cares. Lord, my mind, I'm losing my mind mentally, my memory.

Or I'm getting older and I can't cast those cares upon the Good Shepherd. That's what it is. It's this constant attitude of casting our cares upon Him.

I'll just get to the closing point. Some of you might say, I know this isn't for everybody, it definitely was for me. I just cried tears for days when I came back to the Lord.

Saying, God, my life is shipwrecked. I'm done. I've shipwrecked my life.

And then I stumbled into Paul, Acts 28, where he was shipwrecked on the island of Malta. And through that shipwreck, God used it as ministry. And I was encouraged, because God can take a shipwreck.

That would have been a good title. Shipwreck ministry. He'll take that shipwreck.

And if you once again focus on Him, that's why many of you cry during the sermon. Because you know, I can see that you know He wants to take that shipwrecked life back to Him. Just, come on.

Yep, you're floating on wood out there in the ocean. Bring it to me, let me rebuild. And often, He redirects through the shipwreck.

He redirects through the bad choices. Now I have no income. Now I've ruined my life.

Now Lord, I'll listen. Now I'll listen. Direct me.

And so it's through that pain, through all those things that God will redirect. Philippians 3.8 Memorize this. If you can.

Indeed, I count all things for loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. So if you lose something because of Jesus, count it as wonderful. For whom I've suffered the loss of all things.

This is Paul speaking later on. And I count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him. I've talked to people who've lost millions of dollars.

They've lost family. They've lost friends. It's hard for me to read even biographies of missionaries on the field back in the 1800's or 1900's.

They would bury their children on the mission field. I count it all for Christ's sake. Nothing is rubbish.

Nothing is wasted. I count it all because of what Christ has done in me and I've found in Him. So here's the advice.

Philippians 3.13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. I haven't caught it. I don't got it.

I don't know everything. But one thing I do. One thing I do.

Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward towards those things which are ahead. I press towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. I can't change my past but I can propel my future.

I can't change where I've been but I can change where I'm going. I'm sounding like a motivational speaker now. Get on Sunday morning TV.

But it's true. He can use those things. But it's a constant I've messed up.

What are you going to do now? And get back on track forgetting what lies behind and looking forward to what lies ahead. So here's how God uses your past. He takes the pain, the disappointments, the shame, the regret, the hurt and reshapes your life on the potter's wheel.

See all of that stuff is part of the clay. We forget. We want to remove it but then you remove the clay.

You remove who you are. And I want to be careful here but I guarantee I don't want to use the word guarantee but I thank God for the most difficult seasons in my life because I wouldn't be here today had he not allowed that. Those years of regret that I was just year after year regretting, because of that I'm here today.

Though the road ahead may be uncertain at times the solid, though the road ahead may be uncertain at times, the solid ground beneath will never shift. It's all about who you know. And before we go into a time of prayer, I'm going to leave you with a quote from Leonard Ravenhill.

God doesn't answer prayer he answers desperate prayer. People might not agree with that but basically what he's saying is the three minute prayer of okay Lord get me safe to work, let me make a lot of money and keep us healthy. God's looking for desperate prayer when the heart cries out.

When the heart cries out, Lord help me, save me deliver my children. God answers the desperate prayer.

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