

I Remember When the Church Prayed

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the urgent need for persistent prayer and heartfelt worship to combat spiritual warfare and revive the church.

Duration: 49:25

Scripture: Psalm 133:1, Matthew 6:6, Mark 11:24, Luke 15:20, Ephesians 6:18, James 5:16

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Church Revival"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, worship, and the Word of God in the life of believers. It highlights the power of persistent, passionate, and powerful prayer, contrasting it with dead, ritualistic prayers. The speaker urges the congregation to prioritize prayer, worship, and unity, pointing out that a divided church cannot stand. The message stresses the need for personal revival through prayer and surrender to God, inviting both unbelievers and drifting believers to come back to a vibrant prayer life.

Transcript

Do you realize that your foes are many? You have a lot of enemies, I do too. And they go by the name Legion. They enter that man, Jesus said, come out of that man, he said, we are many, we are Legion and this Legion, our enemy goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

He doesn't sleep, he doesn't slumber. And I'm not trying to scare you tonight, I'm trying to motivate you. Because if you could see the demonic realm, you would run to the prayer closet.

So, you know, as soon as we leave here, the enemy's coming after us, he says, I'm coming after your daughter, I'm coming after your son, I'm coming after your husband, I'm coming after you. How do we protect ourselves? Gene, you're making me worry. No, I'm not.

I'm trying to point you to the one who has the answer. That's how important this is. They are looking for prey to devour.

Shane, wait a minute, you're not going to win a popularity contest talking about this stuff, I know, but when I go home, I can say, God, I did what you've called me to do. I edified your people, I built them up, I wanted to draw them closer to you. If you don't believe that the enemy goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, I can point you right to that scripture.

The enemy goes to and fro throughout the whole earth to devour. Well, how does he devour us? We open the door. He goes, oh, who's there? Oh, it's you.

And we allow that to come in. And prayer is the only weapon that keeps him at bay. And scurrying through a quick devotional isn't going to cut it these days.

Do you realize that they're averaging? I have to check it, so don't, you know, hold me to this. But I thought I read somewhere they've been averaging some type of school shooting or something. Was it like every week for the last few years somewhere? It's amazing, the culture, what's happening in the church, denominations crumbling.

Presbyterians, John Calvin would be turning in his grave. Lutherans. Martin Luther would not be happy.

Direction of some Methodists, John Wesley would not be happy. The direction of the church, God needs to bring revival and awaken his people. And the only thing that's going to do that is prayer.

So scurrying through a quick devotional isn't going to cut it. Reading the Bible as if you're a NASCAR driver is of little value. Dead, cold and formal worship only emboldens the enemy.

Did you catch that? Dead, cold and formal worship only emboldens the enemy. He loves cold, callous, rigid hearts. And it's funny, any time we sing songs like this, it hasn't happened a while, but we've had people leave in the past.

I know it's hard to believe, but people do leave Westside Christian Fellowship. And sometimes it's funny, it's like the worship, it's, you know, it's like break every chain, break every chain, break every chain. It's like brainwashing.

And I say, no, sir, it's brain repairing. It's not brainwashing, it's brain repairing, and it's exactly what you need. Your cold, callous heart needs to be broken and feel the fire of the Holy Spirit in your heart again.

The minute you start to critique worship is the minute you better check your heart. Now, do we need worship that's dark and only sound? Absolutely. Do we need worship that glorifies Christ? Absolutely.

But when we begin to pick apart and when the word of God says meditate on me, when the angels cry, holy, holy, holy is our God, holy, holy, holy is our God. So much that the temple shook, the rafters, the pillars in the temple shook. Holy, holy, holy is our God.

So when we sing, if we might have to stumble on a stanza and say it twice, that's not a bad thing. That's a heart being engaged with God. As a matter of fact, it's a praying heart.

When I'm praying and I'm petitioning God, I'm saying break every chain. Lord, break every chain. Worthy is the Lamb.

Worthy is the Lamb. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. God, I need you.

I'm a broken sinner. That's a good thing. That's the heart being engaged.

It's actually the people that want to scurry through a song and move on to the next one that I have concerns with. Because worship should break the heart and penetrate the heart. Dead, cold and formal worship and prayer, they only embolden the enemy.

But true worship and prayer will cause him fleeing. You ever wonder why all hell breaks loose sometimes a couple hours before it's time to go to church? Why we have all kinds of malfunctions, especially on messages like this. This whole day was just unbelievable.

Unbelievable. We almost didn't have sound. We almost didn't have media.

We almost didn't have this. We almost everything was just just falling apart. Why is that? Because when a true church comes in and worships and prays, the devil must flee.

The enemies, the enemy must flee. The demonic realm can't sit here in the worship of powerful presence of God. But he'll go sit in a cold, dead, legalistic church all day long.

He'll say, because you have the letter of the law, but not the spirit of Christ. You preach about the power of the Holy Spirit, the fire of the Holy Spirit, as if you're sitting on an iceberg. He loves dead churches and he loves churches that worship this.

Instead of the one who it's supposed to point us to. So be very careful on this topic of prayer. And I will tell you, this is absolute certainty.

If this sermon is upsetting you, this is exactly what you need to hear. I'm convinced of that tonight. The person that's upset by this is a person that God's wanting to break your heart down and soften it.

I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, but the filling of the Holy Spirit leads to. Love and joy and peace and contentment and long suffering and gentleness and kindness. So why are all these people saying they're filled with the spirit of God, so angry and dogmatic and rigid and arrogant? Modern day Pharisees.

Because they know nothing about the prayer closet and the weapon of prayer finds its strength waiting on the Lord and pressing in. Waiting on God and pressing in. I remember the old folks used to say these types of books, you'll read a lot.

Books 100 years ago, 200 years ago, 300 years, you'll read a lot. And we pressed in and we waited on God. We took a hold of God.

We didn't want to let go until we found God. We weren't in a hurry. We sure didn't have Facebook.

We're not getting text messages. We don't even know what a cell phone is. We're waiting on God.

We're pressing in. The church doesn't know that anymore. So we're a mile wide, but an inch deep because we have no prayer.

Listen, this is the shoot you straight sermon. This is this is going to radically change your life if you embrace it. The songs we sing, we serve an all sufficient Savior who has an all who was an all sufficient sacrifice.

Just think about that. We have an all sufficient Savior. All sufficient for what? You fill in the blank.

Everything. An all sufficient Savior who was an all sufficient sacrifice. It's been done when Jesus said that King James records that he gave up his ghost and he said it is finished.

Do you know what that meant? It's done. Sin has been paid, eradicated. The price has been paid on the cross.

That's why I get so passionate about this, because the sin debt has been paid and I've seen lives deliver from darkness and into the glorious light of Jesus Christ. He's an all sufficient Savior. That's why you can pray, oh, Jesus, help my marriage.

It's collapsing. Oh, Jesus, help my finances. They've dried up.

Oh, Jesus, my health is diminishing. Oh, Jesus, my life is falling apart. Oh, Jesus, my hope is gone.

Now, I know this isn't how tough guys pray. But it is how real men pray. You realize that? That's not how tough guys pray.

If I was a tough pastor, I'd be in a suit and tie. I would move from this pulpit. My monotone would be consistent.

I would take a part of text and I would exegete it. I would bring in some Greek and some Hebrew and some nuances and the verb tenses. And this is a past present tense, which means this in the active form.

And I would be so polished. But there's no spiritual life in it if he's not a man of prayer. If he's not a man filled with the spirit of God, preaching the truth of God's word into the hearts of his people.

Oh, Jesus, I need you. This isn't weakness. It's realizing where our strength comes from.

I like to see men and women saying, oh, Jesus, oh, God, if you don't move. God says, that's a prayer I can answer. See, now that you get out of the way, that's the prayer I can answer.

You're too busy jockeying for position or trying to pay it, trying to put on a charge card, trying to get your way, trying to say bitter and angry. But if you just get out of the way and say, oh, Jesus, I don't have answers. I can't get out of this.

Now he says, good. I created the planets. I created the universe.

I created the breath of life into Adam. And he became a living soul, a living nephesh. There's some Hebrew for you, scholars.

That God, that God's who we're calling on, that God, not the God of this book or that book, the God, the true one and living God. Oh, Jesus, that's a very healthy prayer. It's realizing where our strength comes from.

Think about that, by the grace of God, the United States right now has the most powerful military that has ever existed, ever existed. But guess what? Even Navy SEALs call for support when they're backed up against the corner. Big destroyer out there 50 miles off the coast.

Could you come visit us in about 10 minutes? Guys, some of the toughest guys on the planet call, call for help, support from fighter jets, yet we neglect the one who created the fire jets and the people to build them. He's an ever present help in a time of need. My Bible tells me that he's an ever present help in a time of need.

My Bible tells me where does my help come from? The government, the 401k, the gold, the stock market. Oh, God, help me. My help comes from God, the maker of heaven and earth, who holds Israel in his hands.

The nation of Israel, he with a voice, with the sound of his voice, he brings one kingdom down and brings another kingdom up. That God, that is the God I serve. And it's healthy to say, God, I'm backing in a corner.

God, I'm backed in a corner. And guess what? Now he says, good. Now I'll come in front of you and your foes will go away.

Oh, you might have to go through a little. There might be some challenges. There might be some difficulties.

I never said I would take you around the storm, did I? I said I would take you through the storm. Why do you do that? Because now you know me as your as your captain. Now you know me as your healer.

Now you know me as the one who's delivered you instead of you delivering yourself. The power of prayer. If we could just get God's people to pray as much as they're on Facebook, you would see revival.

Somebody should post that on Facebook tomorrow. Oh, man, I just get passionate when I don't eat for a while. Actually, when you pray and fast, God's word becomes alive.

It becomes active. It becomes it becomes the brass ceilings of my prayers not being heard. Now the heavens are open.

Worship. Worship doesn't sound like it used to. Now worship is ministering to my heart because deep repentance took place.

Now I got my heart in a position to hear God. That's what we need. The very thing the church needs is the very thing they're running from.

Brokenness, humility, prayer and worship. That's where the power is. I don't want the power.

I want to go to that bookstore and buy seven steps to this and 10 steps to that. I just want to quit. Can you give me a quick sermon excerpt? Can I just get a daily devotional email to me? Trust me, God preached to me before I'm preaching to you.

I remember a time when Elisha, he's one of the Old Testament prophets. He could see this army, this great army was coming against the city. And his helper was saying, oh, my master, Elisha, we're done.

He was scared. He was depressed. He was anxious.

He said, we're done. And you know what Elisha said? He said, God, open his eyes that he may be able to see. And it camped around the entire mountain range was chariots of fire and the Lord's army.

Listen, one soldier in the Lord's army is going to wipe out one hundred and eighty five thousand Assyrians. So Elijah just said, just open his eyes, just open his eyes to see. And that's what prayer does, that if you could see the spiritual battle you're in, you would run for cover.

You would throw the television out in the garage. You would disconnect Facebook, let alone Netflix. And you would get in there and you would seek the heart of a father.

If you could see the spiritual realm, as soon as you leave this building, you get in the vehicle. The voices are going to come. Doesn't that hit sound good? Doesn't that pill sound good? Doesn't that liquor store

sound good? Doesn't that joint sound good? Doesn't that hit sound good? Doesn't it? And it just draws you in.

The enemy goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. This enemy never sleeps in slumbers. He's not off on vacation.

If God could open your mind to the deception, to the spiritual realm, you saw the host of wickedness, the host of wickedness. Yes, in the Bible, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers, against demonic powers, against spiritual hosts in the heavenly places. It's not a tea party.

It's a wrestling match. And if you could see that, you could see the demonic realm that wants to crush. You would see the demonic realm that wants to destroy.

You would see the demons. You think, oh, just a little devil in a pitchfork. They would make the exorcist look like a choir boy.

All these movies out now. They say, oh, my God, it's so evil. You haven't seen nothing yet because that's fake.

This is straight Bible. And when Paul talks about avoiding the wiles of the devil, the trickery of the devil, the deceit of the devil, and then he goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Call me stupid, but this is serious.

This is serious. And there were 20 minute sermons just meant to encourage, aren't going to cut it sometimes these days, we need to penetrate the heart. God wants our heart.

Because the enemy says, I'm coming after you. And I don't like that, again, I don't want to scare you. I know some people, oh, God, this guy, Shane, he's too hardcore.

He's a Godzilla preacher. But my point isn't to scare, it's to motivate, because here's the truth. Either what I'm saying is true, and we better run to the prayer closet, or what I'm saying is false, then you have a problem with the inerrancy of scripture.

That's what the Bible says. From Genesis to Revelation, the enemy is coming in to deceive, to draw us away from God. And if you don't think he's coming after your children, and your children, and your spouse, and you, you've got another thing coming.

That's what he does, that's his MO. Modus operandus, that's how he operates. Do I like it? Absolutely not.

I don't like having a spiritual 30-06 aimed right at my heart, walking around town. He's just looking for an opportunity. People say, Shane, don't you live in fear? Absolutely not.

Because when you live in the shelter of God's safety of protection through prayer and worship, they can't touch you. They're going to come into a worshiping, praying heart, they're going to try, but they can't touch that. As a matter of fact, worship makes them flee.

Preaching makes them flee. They don't want to be here. Three points, and I'll be out of your hair for those who want to get out of here.

Three points to hearing God's voice through prayer. Number one, we need persistent prayer. We need persistent prayer.

This is not going to sell a lot of books. If you talked about persistency, they want quick things, they want quick, quick, quick, quick things. I told you guys, gosh, it might have been four or five months ago now that last summer, a big one of the big publishing houses that I approached me about writing a book.

And when I sent them some examples, they're like, oh, whoa, we want to address the reader's felt need. OK, well, I'm trying to point them to God. There's this big, you know, it's a little negative.

You just got to be positive. Oh, tell them what they want to hear. Oh, that's easy.

That's called motivational speaking. That's not called preaching, but persistent. It's one of those things.

People aren't hungry for persistence, Shane. People aren't hungry for discipline. People aren't hungry for the truth.

No kidding. That's why we need it. We're pointing people in that direction.

Again, the old saints used to say, I'm not letting go. I'm not letting go until God answers my prayer. This doesn't mean they just laid in their bed all day and didn't go to work.

Those types of people are actually the best employees. But they get up in the morning with God on their heart. They're praying to God on their way to work.

They're praying to God on their breaks. They're coming home and they're praying to God. They're going out in the garage and reading their Bible.

They're worshiping. They're letting they're holding on to God. They won't let go until he answers their prayer.

That's persistent prayer. If you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me. See, we forget these, right? If you seek me with all of your heart, he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

And we might say, Shane, when are you going to start quoting those verses? As soon as we start obeying them. Is that a good deal? I won't mention those two scriptures again once we start obeying that. But see, we don't read the Bible as a book of persistence and discipline.

Sometimes we just read it to get, oh, God is love and God is graceful. And God, oh, that's wonderful. Let me go about my day.

But that's only one part of the story. We need both parts, the good news and the bad news. How can you appreciate the good news without the bad news is the backdrop.

We have to understand the whole nature of God. We wrestle. We don't have a tea party.

We are wrestling with the demonic realm. That's interesting if you think about it. You are wrestling with the demonic realm.

Or you've lost and he's pinned you and now he's taking control. There's no middle ground. Either you're wrestling and you're prevailing or he's taking you down and pinning you.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood. We'll train boxers to go 15 rounds, NASCAR drivers to go three hours, and Olympic athletes to train years for a medal that perishes. But we won't spend time seeking God.

See, persistence, the amount of time, the amount of time we spend with God reflects the commitment level or the amount of time we spend with anything affects the commitment level, right? Olympic athletes committed NASCAR drivers committed, committed, committed. All that does, the amount of time we spend reflects our commitment. Great commitment, great amount of time, poor commitment, poor amount of time.

Commitment matters. Perseverance matters. Persevering in prayer.

When did God ever say, pray today, I'll answer tomorrow. But that's how some of us act. I prayed.

I prayed that yesterday and two days ago and last week. It hasn't happened. Oh, who's God? You are God.

Ian Bound said patience. Patience has its perfect word in the school of delay. Delay just means that there's work to be done.

So when God is delaying his answers, delay does not mean deny. Sometimes God answers yes, sometimes no, and sometimes wait. But it's in persistence, because here's the beautiful thing about persistence.

As you're pursuing him, what happens? A deeper relationship. And actually, I've noticed it. Oh, now my prayer changes a little bit.

Now that I've been spending time in the presence of God, what I thought was a big mountain is now a little molehill. Because he changes the heart. But I hear many people on this point, but Shane, I'm still bound.

I'm still bound. I'm still addicted. I'm still it's been 10 years.

It's been five years, been my whole life. Shane, I want to believe that, but I can't. Well, two things.

The bondage, the temptation, I should say, rather, should drive us to our knees. See, we forget that the temptation can be used to show me my weakness. So I go towards Christ.

If he removed temptation, life was a bowl of cherries, I doubt we would pray very much. Seriously, it's when difficulty comes, it drives us to the prayer closet. So a lot of times that temptation will stay there to teach us to go to God and not, basically addiction is idol worship, idolatry.

I know it's a hard thing to grasp, but addiction is idolatry. We're worshiping something other than God. And when we worship God prevails, that's where we're drawn to God.

But it's in that persistent prayer and being persistent. And also strongholds are not easily broken. Are they? It's hard.

Break every chain. You know how hard it is to break a chain? You get a big binder on that chain, just crank it down. Sometimes you've got to get a cheater bar out.

It's a big old bar and you get in, cheat, and then finally, what happened? The strength pulling was greater than the strength of the chain. Did you catch that? Because that could change some of your prayer lives tonight. The strength pulling on that chain was greater than the strength of the chain itself.

That's what persistence does. Persistence. Take a little hacksaw on a chain.

Just go over it three times. What's going to happen? Go buy 20 Blaze at Home Depot and just sit there for a few hours. Now you can break that chain.

Persistence, discipline, diligently seeking Him. I'm trying to make prayer warriors and soldiers. That's what God's word says, that we're soldiers and we're prayer warriors.

So to be, actually, to hear God's voice in prayer, you've got to be persistent in prayer. That means falling forward. That means probably everybody in this room is convicted right now, including myself.

Because any time you can say, oh, I pray enough, I'm good, then you're not good. You're just, you're lying to yourself. That's the good thing about conviction.

Lord, I want, if I'm, even right now, I'm preaching, Lord, I want to pray more. Good. Get up in the morning when it's dark out, when you wake up to go to the restroom, get up and go pray.

Oh, I want to go back to bed. No, see, that conviction draws me to the prayer closet. No conviction, no drawing.

So that's the thing. People want to get rid of conviction, but conviction is a wonderful gift of God. And the next thing that we can't overlook is passionate prayer, passionate prayer.

And what I mean by passionate prayer is dead, formal prayer. It doesn't cut it. You know, the quick little prayers, it's almost like as if we're doing God a service or it's just, you know, checklist.

I did my prayers, passionate prayer. Think about this. The God of the universe, not just America, the God of the universe holds everything in place.

He creates life and sustains it. He is not a co-equal to the devil, right? You know that the devil and God are not equal. We've talked about this many times before.

God sits on high and lifted up on his throne. And the enemy was just a created being. He created him by words, he conquered kings and kingdoms.

God says, I will listen and I will listen for hours. Not only will I listen, I will lead you. I will direct you.

I will conquer your enemies. I will devour your foes. God doesn't look at the time.

He's not texting while we're talking. He's not too busy. You don't have to schedule God in next week.

He's right here. He's right now, right tonight. You call on the only name that says he will hear you from the desert deserts of Africa to the Mojave Desert, to in your house, to wherever you are.

It's a God who's here, who will hear. That's what's called an ever present help in a time of need. He's not too busy ever.

Maybe it's me, but that amazes me right now. Right now, you could call upon his name. Lord, help me, help me.

That's right, you're off on Saturday. Boy, I know you're busy on Sundays. I mean, just the God who created the universe.

You know, the initial big bang. That's a bang in the universe. Billions, this whole universe, he says, would you come and spend time with me? Let me minister to you.

Let me build you up. Let me restore you. Let me speak into your life.

I'll listen. I'll listen for hours. I'll direct you.

I'll encourage you. Just come to me. If that doesn't excite you, then we need to go back to Christianity basics one on one and talk about who the God of the Bible is.

Now, granted, this isn't easy. It's difficult, is it not? We fight this because there's something in us called the flesh. And the Bible says that the carnal mind is at enmity with God.

Enmity is a strong word. It's not like an enemy because enemies can be reconciled and enmity cannot be reconciled. It directly opposes God.

So I have something in me that hates God. Think about that. Paul said the carnal to be carnal minded is death, but to be spiritual minded is life.

The flesh is an enmity with God. The carnal mind is at war with God. So I've got something within me that's at war with God, and I've got something within me that's leaping for joy and wanting to spend time with my father.

So I've got these two opposing forces. And Paul said the Holy Spirit's not a force. He's a person.

Don't get me wrong. You know, theologians in the room will tear me up on that one. You've got to watch those guys.

I'm telling you. So you've got two opposing, you've got the flesh and you've got the Holy Spirit pulling. Paul says your choices are never free from this conflict.

Therefore, be spiritual minded. Focus on the things that are of the spirit. Finally, brethren, whatever things are pure and honest and noble and upright, meditate on these things.

Be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Flee sexual immorality. Make no provision for the flesh that you might fulfill its lusts thereof.

That's how you fill up the spirit of God. So the reason we don't want to pray is because the flesh is dominating. Let's just cut right to the point.

What inhibits a powerful prayer life is the flesh. It doesn't want to be dragged out of bed. It doesn't want to just sit there.

You've got to press through. It's called pressing through. The old folks used to also call it travail of the soul.

Not travail, travail. Watch a woman give birth. That's travail.

Sometimes there's travel of the soul. What's everything in me wants to get up, but Lord, I'm not getting up. I'm pressing in.

I'm seeking you with all my heart. And I believe it's time to recover our passion for prayer. I believe it's time to recover our passion for prayer.

Well, and you say, well, how do you cultivate desire very easily? You think about it. How did you cultivate desire for your spouse when you first liked them? Now they say, I love you, but I sure don't like you. Let's go back.

Let's go way back. Let's go away. Let's just get real in the church tonight.

Let's go way back when there was something called desire. And you actually desired your spouse. You want the good news? That can be, that can be relit again.

How? Right here. Where do your thoughts go? How do you cultivate desire? You think about it. You think about it.

I think about it all day long. Who is looking forward to their wedding night? Oh, call them the desire. What, where, who's thinking about, you know, things, what they're going to eat or watch.

They're thinking about it. They're thinking about it. You see people want ballistic kicking a little ball in the soccer field in Brazil.

I hope it's Brazil. I don't know where it was played at. I think so.

But think about that. That's how you cultivate a desire. If you want a desire to pray a desire for more of God, your mind's got to go there.

And how does it go there with what we feed our mind? Why do you think I preach on this point so often for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he? I'm going to cultivate a deep devotional prayer life by focusing on God. When I get up in the morning, I'm focusing on God and reading his word. I'm not looking to the L.A. Times or this or old ax murder or this or rapist out Lake Los Angeles or this.

You know, I'm just feeding my mind and feeding my mind. The world falling apart. I have no desire for God.

Exactly. Because you're not cultivating a desire for God. You're cultivating a desire for fear and mayhem and chaos.

That's why your life resembles those things. This is why worship. Let me just shoot you straight as if I haven't already.

This is why worship is too emotional for some people. Their heart is disengaged. Their heart has grown cold and callous, they don't worship and they don't pray.

Worship is too emotional. God help us. You get a raise of work, you're emotional.

You get very angry. Is anger not an emotion? You win the lottery, you will be very emotional. I still don't have the words when I held my four little kids.

Yet we're going to come into the house of God and mock emotion. Granted, emotions don't lead us, but they are the caboose. They're not the engine of the train, they're the emotion, they're the caboose of the train.

I mean, if I come in here and we're singing. This, I believe, it was the Apostles' Creed put into a worship song. I believe in the Father, I believe in the Son, I believe in the Holy Spirit.

I believe in the communion of the saints. I believe in his holy church, the only church that will prevail the gates of hell. Isn't it interesting that Jesus said, you might prevail? He said, my church will prevail.

The true blood by church of Jesus Christ that is praying and worshiping will prevail. They won't shrink in attendance, they'll grow in attendance. The power of the Holy Spirit will be there to change lives.

So you better get off your this is too emotional kick and better start getting emotional to God. If he's changed your heart, if he's changed your heart, why should you not be emotional? There are tears in Brazil. I remember when the church prayed in an upper room for days, then fire fell.

Remember that in Acts? And they were gathered in the upper room for 10 minutes. And after 10 minutes, the Holy Spirit fell. Is that what it says? Days, travail, perseverance.

It cracks me up. Sometimes I think some some Christians are look at these early Christians, all those poor, pathetic Christians, all night prayer meetings. Gifts of the Holy Spirit flowing, power of God in their lives, those poor guys.

We got it down today, though. We got it down. No, we don't.

We need God now more than ever before. I remember when the church prayed in an upper room for days, then fire fell. The manifest power presence of God falls on an empty altar.

An empty heart that's looking to be filled with the spirit of God. That's not a bad thing. I remember when we weren't in a hurry.

Think about this. I remember when we weren't in a hurry. That's what I love sometimes about going to African-American churches.

Sometimes I preach at those sometimes. Man, three, four-hour service. They can worship God.

The choir's going, there's worship. Well, that was an hour and a half of worship. Now it's a minute.

Why? They're not in a hurry. We came to worship God. That's what we do on Sundays.

Now I know if church is getting their services down to one hour, just one hour. Why? I say, why do you do that? Because the culture, Shane, we got to reach the culture. No, you got to reach God in prayer.

And then as that fire of God comes from the pulpit, that's when the pew is changed. That's when the pew is changed. Not conforming to the culture, conforming to what God wants and allowing him to build this church.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit. But I remember when we weren't in a hurry and sitting in the presence of God was biblical. Now it's called fanatical in churches that worship the word.

Did you catch that? I remember when we weren't in a hurry and sitting in the presence of God was biblical. Now it's fanatical. I'll never forget.

This just struck me. About three months ago, I don't know, four months ago, some of you were here, but I couldn't even preach during the second service. We just worshiped the whole second service.

Say, Lord, you take over. And I mean, I'm still hearing from people how they're touched that night. When I got out of the way and just let God do the worship.

And a guy leaves and gets upset and said, I came to hear preaching. He left, never to come back. I said, the very thing you need is the very thing you're running from.

We don't worship the word of God. The word of God points to Christ and then we worship Christ. But I remember, don't you remember when prayer drove the church? Prayer drove the church.

Now we'll barely squeeze it in. We'll fit in a few songs and then we'll highlight the message. I remember when you'd come early to pray and stay late to lay hold of God.

It's amazing if I said, hey, after the service, we're just going to stay for 45 minutes and just worship. You know, people leave and go, man, this guy's a little fanatical. That's whoa.

Golly, don't they get hungry? I don't know. I don't know how you do that. Let me shoot you as straight as I can.

With what's happening, you are not filled mightily with the Holy Spirit of God, because when you're filled with the spirit of God. When you empty yourself and you're filled with the spirit of God, you have to worship him. You think I'm looking forward to getting home? Absolutely not.

How can I talk to children's ministry and staying an extra hour? How can I let people lay hold of God? People on the altar turn around their chairs. Well, that's really that's a bad thing. That's when lives are being changed.

Actually, in churches where lives are not being changed, it's dead, formal and cold. They come in. Thank you, pastor.

They leave. Nothing changes. The heart is not engaged.

I remember when prayer was an asset. Entertainment was a liability. I remember when people got excited about prayer and worship.

I remember when prayer changed lives. And guess what? It still does. It still does.

Jesus said my house will be called a house of preaching. Oh, no, I didn't. Oh, we got the theology students shaking their heads.

No, my house will be called a house of VBS and men's studies. No, my house will be called the house of prayer. And from that focal point of prayer, although we don't get maybe a lot of corporate prayer.

And now during the service, we try to. We want to get a lot of corporate individual prayer. That is really what is the the the cylinders that fire our engine is individual prayer as well as corporate prayer coming together.

You can't have one without the other. If you're praying at home and petitioning God, you come here. Your heart says, I must pray with fellow believers.

And if you want to pray here corporately and you're praying, you'll go home and you'll want to pray privately. They're married. You can't separate the two.

Many churches say let's preach for an hour, but scurry through worship. Let's exegete the text, but not exegete my heart. Polish sermons, but there's no worn out knees.

Listen, the the pew and the pulpit are both responsible for the spiritual condition of the church. On another note, I often ask critical people to tell me about their worship and their prayer life. You can spot them, right, can you? Critical people, they've been given the gift of criticism.

They're very critical about everything. As a matter of fact, they probably picked apart the service pretty good already. Critical, critical people, critical heart.

Paul says rebuke a divisive person for their unteachable. Any time I ask them, tell me about your worship and your prayer life. You know what they do? They go to this.

No, no, no, no. We're not there yet. Tell me about your worship and your prayer life.

Oh, you don't have one. That's why you're critical. They're married.

Worship, prayer and the word of God is the threefold strand that's not easily broken. We need all three of those. And then obviously, powerful prayer, powerful prayer, the day of passive, dead, ritualistic prayer is over.

You realize this, the Pharisees prayed, the Pharisees prayed. The Pharisees on the road to hell. Prayed.

Jesus called them. Oh, you whitewashed tombs, you sons of Satan. They prayed.

Cults, cults, pray. Cults. And Jesus said.

And heathens pray with vain repetition. Heathens pray with vain repetition. Going through the motion.

Going through the motion. There's no spiritual life there. But Jesus said, but when you pray, go and lock yourself up in the prayer closet and pray to the father who hears in secret, will answer in public.

That's how you pray. Go and pray. There is a distinction, there is a difference, there is a power.

There is power in the name of Christ. And I want to encourage you tonight to pray as if God is listening. Pray as if eternal destinies depend upon it.

Pray as if your marriage depends upon it. Pray as if your spiritual life depends upon it. Because it does.

It does everything, everything hinges on prayer. You have to realize that your whole spiritual life is built on prayer and the word of God and worship, the three strands there. But you got to pray.

When faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live. This is why the enemy seeks to destroy it. A kingdom divided cannot stand.

If a kingdom divided cannot stand, do you think that a church divided can stand? Or a home divided? Here's what happens. Prayer and worship breaks disunity. Prayer and worship breaks disunity.

And we're actually, in two more days, on Monday, we're having a worship night here. On Monday at 6 p.m. For those who can make it, it's about an hour and a half of just worship this Monday. At 6 p.m. I'm not really throwing that, but I am.

But it's funny because all the little, you know, bickering and disputes and, you know, things like that that happen in any church because there are sinners here, that all falls away on worship night, prayer night. Little issues, no big deal. Disunity, gone.

When you're worshipping together, it breaks that. With worship and prayer, arrogant Pharisees become humble servants. Prideful Bible thumpers fall on their face and worship God.

Prodigals run to the altar. Lukewarm believers are fully, they fully surrender their lives because of the power of prayer. That's how important this is.

If you're dying spiritually, and I know that's many in this room, I'm not stupid. Pastoring reveals a lot, and I can tell, and I know, talking to people. If you're dying spiritually, if God seems distant and depression is setting in, this is the only tool, the only medication known to mankind to set you free.

Isn't that interesting? We're running to everything but the prayer closet. We've tried everything but the prayer closet. This is the only medication that God has given mankind to truly set us free.

Read the Word of God in prayer and worship. That's how you'll be set free as a believer. But if you don't know Christ, then prayers will fall on deaf ears because He's the bridge.

He's what fills that gap so you can cry out to the Father and He can hear your prayers. You can't call Him Father until you call His Son Savior. Did you catch that? You cannot call Him Father, God, until you call His Son Savior, Jesus Christ.

You can't pray to the Father unless you go through the Son. And you won't hear, He won't hear you until you first hear Him. Think about that.

He won't hear you until you first hear Him. The conviction, the drawing of the Holy Spirit, drawing us to Christ, the conviction you're feeling right now, drawing you to Christ. You're saying, I know I need it, but I don't want it.

He's drawing you through that conviction. For Him to hear your prayers, you must hear that voice of conviction and repentance and turn to Him. And if you're a believer who's been drifting, guess what? The wonderful, gracious love of God says, come home, come back.

My prayer life stinks, Shane. It's been bad for weeks, months, and years. Guess what I love about God? You can start again today and position yourself again in the center of God's will.

Really? Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. God doesn't say, well, too bad.

I mean, there's consequences. Don't get me wrong. But He doesn't say, well, you're going to have to wait six months now and really show me you're serious.

It's a loving saying, come home. Would you tell your kids that? Daddy, Mommy, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Can I come home? No. No. No.

They'll stay out in the grass for 10 weeks. If they're truly repentant, right? If they're truly coming home. So some people just need to come home.

God says, would you come home and begin to pray again, begin to worship again? If this sermon has irritated you, that's a good thing. Let the heart break and cry out to God and come home. Come home.

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