

Is the Bible an 'Iffy' Book?

by Shane Idleman

The Bible is a book of 'ifs' that require a response, and it is a reliable guide for living a life of obedience to God.

Duration: 49:03

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:29, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 25:14, Proverbs 3:7, Isaiah 48:18, Jeremiah 29:13, Ezekiel 33:11, John 15:14, Acts 19:15, Philippians 2:9-11

Topics: "Conditional Promises", "Repentance and Obedience"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the question of whether the Bible is an 'iffy' book, emphasizing that it contains conditional promises from God, where our choices have consequences. He highlights God's sovereignty while also acknowledging human responsibility, illustrating this with examples from scripture, such as the call to repentance and the importance of seeking God. Idleman stresses the significance of true belief and repentance, which leads to transformation and a desire to follow Christ wholeheartedly. He encourages the congregation to examine their hearts and to take communion with a sincere understanding of Christ's sacrifice, reminding them that true faith is demonstrated through obedience to God's commands.

Transcript

Acts 19 verse 15, the title of the message is, is the Bible an iffy book? They're just going, no, I can't believe that Shane, why are you even bringing up this message? Is the Bible an iffy book? Well, it's not an iffy book if you think of iffy as, you know, questionable. And you can't really bank on it, then that is not a good title for a message, obviously. But I'm talking about a different kind of iffy.

I'm talking about the if that means it could go this way or this way. It's iffy. It could go this way or it could go this way.

And the Bible in that regard is actually a very iffy book in relation to God saying, if you do this, I will do this. If you do this, I will do this. If you do this, this will happen.

So there's a lot of conditions in the Bible. Now, here's a challenge. I believe 100% in God's sovereignty, that God is in control, right? Not Obama, not Trump, not North Korea going to do something, not China, not Russia.

God is sovereign. He governs the affairs. Yeah, you can clap for that one.

That's a good one to clap for. The Bible says that God governs the affairs of men. He is the ultimate say.

He has the ultimate authority. Nothing will fall outside of His sovereignty. You're not catching God by surprise.

He's not saying, oh, I never thought that would happen. What am I going to do now? But we also know that our choices have consequences. Now, how that all works together, I'll let the theologians argue that.

I just know that they are both true. That when the Bible says, if my people, our sign says it, if my people will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will heal their land. I will restore and I will rebuild, if.

So in that regard, it is an iffy book. Last week, we were at Acts 19.15, when the evil spirit, there's an evil spirit that came inside a person. And this group of people tried to cast out the evil spirit.

And the evil spirit actually said to them, Jesus, I know, and Paul, I know, but who are you? Then the evil spirit, working through the man, jumped on to this group of people, beat them up, and they left naked and wounded. And that's actually what happens to us when the enemy wins. When the enemy comes in and something happens, we leave there ashamed and wounded because of the enemy.

The last week's message was, don't arm the enemy. We can arm the enemy. You can actually put an AK-47 in his hand.

You can put a box of ammunition in his hand, 12-gauge slug, I don't care what you call it. You can give him ammunition. You can arm the enemy.

Or you can take away that ammunition. That was last week, and I want you to go online and listen to that if you get a chance. So that brings us right into verse 17.

So when this whole event became known to all the Jews and the Greeks dwelling in Ephesus, the whole city of Ephesus was in an uproar because of this. So fear fell on them, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. So the fear of the Lord fell on a group of people, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

That's what we try to do at this church as well. We try to push that name. We try to magnify that name.

We worship that name. We are here because of that name. And it's interesting.

You can talk to people about God. I do it quite often, and you will not ruffle too many feathers from time to time. Now if you talk with somebody who doesn't believe there's a God, you will.

But a lot of people, with different countries especially, or different backgrounds, they'll say, there's a God. He's within all of us. The man upstairs, or the inner dwelling of God is in me.

You know this New Age type of talk, and there's a God for this, there's a God for that. I believe there's in a cosmic something. But when you name the name of Jesus Christ, that's when the conversation gets a little divided.

That's when it gets a little heated. You can talk about a concept of God, but when you narrow it down to the Lord Jesus Christ, that's when even demons tremble at that name. The reason is simple.

God, in Philippians, says that God has highly exalted Him. He has given Him a name above every name. Therefore, at the name of Jesus Christ, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord.

So it's not open for negotiation. You're not going to win this fight if you're not on that side. So when you mention the name Jesus, it brings to mind submission and surrender.

And wait a minute, I'm not the Lord of my own life? I'm not the master of my own destiny? I'm not the captain of this ship? No sir, you are not. There will come a day when you will bow your name and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ, you are Lord. So when you mention that, that's why they say you can't mention Him in the schools.

You can't pray in Jesus' name at city council meetings. I mean, you can pray in the name of the oak tree out front, and it doesn't offend anybody. But that's why, because there is a spiritual realm.

And the spiritual realm is okay until that name is brought up. They have to submit to that name. They are defeated because of that name.

So same thing happened here. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

So when a person believes, really believes in Jesus Christ, I'm not talking about a concept or yeah, I think He really existed, but they believe, they've been born again, they've been transformed, they will confess. They will repent. And actually, a sure sign of somebody who has truly been born again is this fruit of repentance.

Have you ever found an orange on an apple tree? Thorns on a grape bush, and the Bible talks about that. Why? Because there's fruit of repentance. See, a lot of people cry, but it's because they've been caught.

Not because they've truly repented. Because when a person truly sees their need for a Savior, they turn to Christ, Jesus changes them, they're born again. I have to confess.

I have to repent. I have to fix what I have broken. And I've talked to enough men and enough women who have caused harm in their marriage, and they say they are repentant, but they're not.

They're too busy shifting the blame, and making excuses, and trying to jockey for position to prove they're not wrong. So many times the tears are tears that I've got caught. Tears that my reputation is going to be tarnished.

Tears that I'm going to lose half my income. See, that's not repentance. Repentance is always about restoration.

So if you believe that you've repented, and you believe the gospel, have you really? Is there fruit? Is there the fruit of repentance? It doesn't mean you go around crying and confessing, right? That's what I'm saying. But you try to, gosh, I've ruined a lot of lives. I've hurt people.

I want to fix that. How can I fix that? How can I make that better? I now have the heart of Christ pumping inside of me, and I have to reconcile with those I've injured. I have to fix things that I've broken.

That's just a sign of repentance. Also, many of those who have practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. I would just encourage you.

I don't know why I didn't think of this first service, but I would encourage you to do that as well. I would encourage you to do that as well. You might say, well, Shane, nobody has magic books.

Really? Do we have things that are not of God's? They're not godly? Are we involved in things? I took a picture on 50th Street. I posted that tarot card reading and getting our fortune told and horoscopes and opening that door for the enemy. I just saw.

I mean, it broke my heart. I don't know what it's like, A.V.'s Craigslist or something, where they're selling this big wooden Ouija board. Oh, how cool.

How much is it? I'm like, are you serious? But, see, we don't know sometimes. That is playing with the wrong side of the coin. That's the dark side.

That's the element that's opening the door to satanic activity. And so I would encourage you, throw out those things in your home that are not glorifying God, that are actually false gods and false systems of belief. Because many times we want to hang on to it, don't we? We want to hang on to that.

I don't want to get rid of everything. Can I keep this little god? And these people, like us today, we need to throw out. We need to get rid of.

How many of us should go through our movie collection? Oh, let's bring this home a little bit. CDs. What we listen to.

We want to hold on to these things. And we shouldn't want to hold on to darkness. But there's something in us sometimes that wants to hold on to things that are not good for us.

So they did this in the sight of all. They were not embarrassed. Another sign of true confession.

That's why we have baptisms. We're having eight baptisms after this service. So if you want to get baptized, clap.

That's a good one, too. But if you want to get baptized, then let us know. It's a step of obedience.

It's not something, oh, I'm not sure. And people say, I'm not ready for that yet. Well, what does that mean? There's not stages.

Really, here's what they're saying. I like the idea of Jesus, but I'm going to continue to live how I want, and I love my sin, and I'm not ready for baptism yet. Because they know that's the next step.

That's okay. Now that means I'm serious. I'm making a public profession of my faith.

But throughout the Bible, you'll see belief and public profession of their faith. They go hand in hand. You're not going to find where they say, I'm not ready for that.

I don't want to do that. Now, I understand people are nervous. And sometimes children, they're not.

There's a time for they're not ready. As parents, I think we need to look at our kids. You're not quite ready.

You don't understand it yet. It's not just jumping in a swimming pool like your friends did. You have to understand baptism.

And that's what I just want to throw that out there. Think about that. I'll just wear this.

If you wear your clothes, I'll wear this. And we'll baptize you. And we don't want to wait.

Here's what most people say. I've had people say, I'll wait until next month. And then they're not here next month, and then next month.

And you'll wait six months to a year. And sometimes it doesn't happen. So think about that.

Make a public profession in front of people that I want to get baptized. I did it as a kid. Or I did it in maybe a church that says you have to be baptized as an infant, as a child.

I've never really done it as an adult. And I didn't really know what it meant. And really what it means, it's a representation of my old life, death, burial, and the resurrection.

It's like Christ, my old life. I'm coming up into the newness. It's a baptism.

It reflects a repentance, a change of heart. It's mainly just a sign to show people we are publicly declaring who Jesus is. So when they threw all their magic into the fire, they counted up the value of them.

And it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily. Basically, they gave up millions of dollars of magic, of whatever it was, the witchcraft, the sorcery.

They threw all that into the fire. There was full commitment. And you know it, right? When you make that decision to follow Christ, it's all or nothing many times.

But sometimes we don't get there. We're like, I like it, Shane, but I'm not quite ready. And I don't want to beat you up too bad this morning.

I also want to encourage you. I don't think anybody follows Christ perfectly. I haven't found that way yet.

Now if you think that is you, talk to me after the service. Because we're going to look at some scriptures. We struggle in this thing we call life.

It's not about perfection. It's about direction, the direction of our heart. But there should be something in us that wants to give up all and follow him.

And I don't mean, sometimes people start thinking, oh, sell my house, sell everything. Not necessarily. Get rid of that desire to hold on to everything.

And to give it up and let God have everything in your life. That's why I preach on full surrender and fully surrendering our lives. It's not about giving and selling everything.

It's about him having everything. Does he have our finances? Does he have our marriage? Does he have our everything? Have we fully surrendered? But then there's an interesting topic. Fear fell.

Fear fell on them. Now, I know what you're thinking. Fear is a bad thing.

And we don't like fear, but it's actually a good thing. Right? You fear your kids running in the street, so you'll tell them, don't go in the street. Right? We fear sharks, so we don't go way out in the water.

Sometimes that can be a good thing. Or my son, I've caught him playing on that big metal box by the sidewalk that says 12,000 volts on it. And it's humming, making a noise.

You don't play with that. Give me back that screwdriver. We're not playing with that big box.

Or if you fear your spouse may leave if you don't change your attitude, the way you live, that might be a good thing. Right? If you fear your kids are going to grow up resenting you because you've become a mean dictator, you might change the way you parent. See, fear can be a wonderful motivator.

God has given it to us. And it's not this fear of an abusive father, right, throwing down the lightning bolts and going to hit us on top of the head. It's a reverence for who God is.

A reverence for God who created everything. A reverence for a God who created you. And he wants a relationship with you in this respect and these guardrails that he set through the canyons of life.

We have a respect and a reverence for that. But any time we overemphasize one area of biblical truth to the exclusion of other, we become unstable and we can sink. You can sink in your walk with God if you become unstable.

Have you ever seen a boat with all of the load at the back end? Thousands and thousands of pounds at the back end. You probably haven't because the boat would what? Sink. So they usually put the load down at the bottom and they even it out.

Same thing with God's Word. You can't just have on this fear God side, right? And I'm just going to preach and I'm going to spit a little bit and I'm going to be loud and I'm going to talk about hell and fire and damnation. And the judgment of God, the fear of God.

And we leave here and just beat up with the Word of God. Now there are churches like that. It's just fear and condemnation and damnation, hell's fire.

Do you know how hot it is? How hot is the sun? And you know, you're just... But then what's this side, right? The cheap grace. The loving God is just love and graceful and he is. But if we just focus on this and that fear stuff for the... That's for other people.

We don't like that. We just concentrate on God's love and grace and we continue just to sin. We don't care.

We're not scared of God. He wants us to sin. He winks at us when we sin.

He doesn't really care. It's all about the love. And then you become very unstable and unbalanced and you will sink.

So the balance is always in the middle with God's Word. The fear of God but the love of God. The wrath of God but the grace of God.

The holiness of God but the mercy of God. We see both clearly taught by Jesus himself. So I'm going to talk about a few iffies, a few ifs.

And I'm only going to present the entree so you go out and have the whole meal later. You study this topic and look at the promises of God. C.H. Spurgeon said this, In the same way the sun never grows weary of

shining nor a stream of flowing, it is God's nature to keep his promises.

Therefore, go immediately to his throne and say, Do as you have promised. See, as Christians, as a Christian, you can go to God and say, Lord, do as you promised. Your Word says this.

And I'll be honest with you, I tell him this just about every Sunday. God, you've got to move in this place. You've called me.

You put this church together. You promised you'd see it through. You promised that the gates of hell would not prevail.

I'm holding you to this. Because if I get up there without you, I'm going to be a blubbing idiot not making any sense. God, I'm holding you to it.

You did this. You created this mess. Not a mess, right? You created this.

The flesh goes there sometimes. But Lord, you created this. What do women say now? Something about a mess.

Hot mess. Yeah, hot mess. You created this wonderful thing.

God, you've called all these people. You've done this. So you are going to honor your promise.

And I'm not belittling. I'm actually just walking in that strength. There's a lot of strength in that.

Trust me. You try coming up with something new every Sunday. It's just not going to happen.

And I let people go, oh man, that was great. I can't wait until next week. I'm like, I have no idea what I'm talking about next week.

Then next week, I can't wait. I'm bringing back friends next week. I'm like, oh my God.

It's just a never-ending thing. But God promised. God will pull out of the wells of our hearts and begin to minister to people in a powerful way.

So you can hold them to those promises. What promises for me, Shane? That's great for you, pastoring. But there's plenty in there.

If my people, applies to you too. If my people, if you'll humble yourself and seek his face, not his hand. Seek his face and pray and humble yourself and turn from that sin.

God says, I'll hear from heaven. I'll heal your marriage. I'll heal your life.

If you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me. So take God to the bank on those. On hard days, God, your word says right here, if I seek you, I will find you.

God, I'm gonna sit here all morning, if that's what it takes. I'm gonna seek you with all of my heart. But God, in my fallen depravity, in my human nature, I need help.

God, your word says this. And he will never, never let you down. It might not happen overnight.

It might take five minutes. Sometimes it's travailing and persevering. And that word, I've explained it before, but maybe it's important again.

If you seek me, it's bakash, I believe, in the Hebrew, in the Old Testament. It's like finding something that has been lost. You have to find it.

I lost my son at the fair many years ago. Still have bad dreams or bad thoughts about the fair. I know exactly where it's at.

Over by the kids' area, by the restroom. He's gone. And there's thousands of people.

And everything changed. I was hungry. I'm not anymore.

I had to find him. I had to seek him. That's the same word.

Because see, sometimes we forget. I read a five-minute daily devotional. I put on air one.

I sought him today. That's not seeking. That's wonderful.

But seeking God is a heart like a deer that pants. Has to find that brook. Has to find that water.

That's the seeking. God, I have to find you. That might mean giving up a meal or two that day.

Fasting. Seeking him. Some of you know.

I told a few of you. I went on a seven-day water fast two weeks ago. And you will not die.

I found out. You will not die. The first two days are hell.

But after that, you're not as hungry anymore. And you begin to desire the things of God. The flesh isn't put into submission.

You begin to just cry during worship. And God begins to come alive. The Bible is seeking God.

God, I need to hear from you. I've got some big prayer requests out there. God, I need to hear from you.

And God will answer those. Because I hold him to his word. This isn't God says, if you seek, you might find.

If you pray and put me first, I might add these things to you. Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven. And if you're lucky, I'll add these things.

You take him to the bank. And that actually is great faith. God loves, Jesus loves great faith.

When you say, I'm trusting you and your word, I'm walking in faith. God loves that. That honors him and his word.

But if you say, I'm not really sure. I don't know. I'm doubting.

I'm complaining. I'm bickering. You ever get caught in that complaining, bickering mode? Don't leave me hanging up here.

Right? Remember the children of Israel were not able to go into the promised land because of that. It's that bad. Complaining and bickering.

Now, we all have seasons of that. I'll probably have a season this week. But you take it to the cross.

You repent of it. So here's a few iffies. Before I get too long winded here.

Wisdom and guidance. Does anybody in this room need wisdom and guidance? Yes. Amen.

Most of the prayer requests back there are for wisdom and guidance. Psalm 25 14 The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him. If you fear him.

Proverbs 3 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and turn from evil. Wise in our own eyes.

It's what we think, what we want, what we desire. And that can puff us up, can't it? The more we learn, the more prouder we become. And the more we begin to think that these are our ideas.

What about peace and prosperity? Deuteronomy 5 29 Oh that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always that it may be well with them and with their sons forever. Oh that they had a heart within them. Isaiah 48 18 If only, if only you had paid attention to my commands your peace would have been like a river your well-being like the waves of the sea Do you lack peace this morning? Do you lack peace? Think about this.

Have you committed your ways to him? If only you had paid attention to my commandments. See here's the interesting about God's word. Society makes it out to be an old archaic book of do's and don'ts.

But what I see it as and what I said before, it's the guard rail on that hill. It's the guard rail through the canyons of life. See it doesn't prevent me from enjoying life it actually protects me from falling.

If you follow my commands. See it's for our well-being. But the enemy comes in and plants thoughts and says now you're not going to have fun.

And I'll talk to people all the time. They're caught in alcohol, they're caught in drugs, they're caught in a bad lifestyle. And I tell them about it and they go I don't want to do that, I can't have fun anymore.

You're suicidal, you're on Xanax and Oxy and you're hungover, you don't know who you slept with and you're depressed and suicidal. You're going to lose all the fun? How does that play out? But see when we're trapped in sin when we're trapped in that lifestyle we always run back to the thing we think brings the deliverance but it doesn't. It leads us further into bondage.

And then we go back to that temporary relief and go back into bondage. Back into that temporary relief and back into bondage. But God's commandments, see it's not, it's so interesting.

You look at, the big one for young adults is purity before marriage. Oh, that's so archaic. No, that's a wonderful thing because you trust your spouse.

Not going you ran around on everybody else and me, you're going to be running around too. You can't sleep at night, you don't wonder if they're coming home. You live, and I know people they live in constant fear of the spouse cheating or leaving on them because they weren't honoring God's word initially.

So now they've got a life messed up because they didn't honor God in that area. Or giving. Giving, the area of tithing, money.

Churches don't want to talk about that, right? But it's a wonderful way for God to begin to bless and prosper us as we give back to God. But we don't pressure people in these areas. Oh, careful.

Peace and prosperity. Peace is found in safety, comfort, and assurance, right? Safety, comfort, and assurance. There's peace.

It's not peace looking at the news saying North Korea can reach us. That's not peace, right? Look what's going on. Civil unrest.

There's no peace in the things of this world. The Bible says, I will keep him in perfect peace whose heart, whose mind is steadfast on me. God says, if you keep your mind steadfast on me, I will keep you in perfect peace.

Now we make a mistake with that word perfect. We think we should never, ever, ever, ever suffer from depression, anxiety, or fear. That's not what it says.

Perfect peace is complete peace. Peace that comes back around. Peace that you will fight the flesh and you will win.

When I get fearful sometimes, right, you can bring your mind back to peace. Keeping your mind, I mean, I don't even want to get off on this, but that's one thing I just hate about the media right now, and Facebook and the news. And the reason I keep preaching is because nobody's doing it.

On Facebook, everybody's preaching all the horror, all the this, all the this, all this, and we're inundated, we're inundated, and we love it, the news that makes us fearful like a horror movie, and we wonder why we're struggling spiritually. Because our mind is not kept steadfast on him. That's what it says here.

If you keep your mind on me, and what I just said earlier, Jeremiah 29, 13, if you seek me, you will find me. If you seek me, you will find me. This is a promise.

I don't, see, I don't know where anybody, most of you I know, but a lot of you I don't know. And I don't know where, especially the balcony, I can't even really see you up there. But if you seek God, you will find him.

It applies to all areas. If you're a believer, if you're a believer, and you're struggling, or you just need some, you know, God, I need to know, if you're there, I've got some questions, if you seek him, you will find him. Or if you've drifted from him, say you're the prodigal son, you've drifted from God, if you seek him, you will find him in a new way.

He'll bring you back home. He'll bring you back to a loving relationship with him. If you don't know him, if you don't know, if you've never known God before, he says, if you seek me, you will find me.

Either way, you're covered. See, the problem is never on God's side. The problem is never on God's side.

Yeah, let's clap for that one too. That's three. But people get mad.

They're mad at God. They're blaming God. How could God? And they stay in this, they stay in the state of not seeking him.

The problem is never on God's side. When it comes to worshiping, he desires a relationship. And even the person who's drifted from God, or you don't know who God is.

You've never repented and believed in Christ. You've heard of him. You know who he is.

But God just says, if you do this, if you do this. And here's the thing we can't understand. I've gotten debates before on this topic.

If God is so good, right? How could he allow? If God is this, why doesn't he just do this? Why does I have to repent? Why doesn't God? Here's why. God, and my son asked me a question at dinner. Is there something God can't do? Well, what do you mean by can't? Well, he can't lie.

Well, that means God can't do something. Well, no, he can't lie because it goes against his nature. It goes against his character.

So God technically couldn't lie because it would go against who he is. Now, technically, could he? I don't know. We'll talk about this another time.

My point is, when he set truth into motion, when he set, here's if, all these ifs, right? When that became truth, the word, he spoke and the word became truth and dwelt among us in Christ. He can't undo that. So when he says, man must call on me and must repent and believe.

Well, that's not true. Let me make you repent and believe. Truth has already been set in motion.

So we are product of actually our own environment with the Adamic nature. When Adam fell and it caused the world to go in chaos, God's truth has been set in motion. So we must repent and believe.

If you do this, if you do this, so God can't supersede the will that he already put in motion. So how can a loving God allow this? He can allow this because he gave man free choice. The big one in 9-11 when that happened, people were like, how could God do this? How could God cause this? And many of these things we don't understand, but we know that evil man, given full reign, he can make choices that will affect others.

That's what free will is. If not, we're all puppets and that's not a loving relationship. If you put a gun to your spouse's head and you say, you love me, okay, okay, okay, does that love? Or if we're puppets, you know, you design your kid has a little Barbie, say, okay, this Barbie's going to love me all the days of this Barbie's life and you put it, you know, and this Barbie, that's what people want.

They want the puppet. They really don't want it, but that's what they're mad at God about because how can a loving God do this? What about knowing God's will? Does anybody want to know God's will? Paul said in Romans 12, I beseech you. Oh, this is a clapping congregation this morning, I'll tell you what.

If anybody, do you want to know God's will? Paul said, I beseech you. He basically said, Paul said, I beg you. So be like me doing this.

Guys, I beg you. I beg you. Present your bodies.

I kind of do this already, I think, huh? I beg you present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy to God. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God. If you do not conform yourself to the world, but conform yourself, transform your mind to God's thoughts, you'll know his will.

So if, what's God's will? If you do this, what's God's will? If you do this, we don't want to do the ifs, we just want to know the will. Now I bring this example up a lot, but I think it's perfect, because it fits. A lot of times people who are getting married want to know, is this God's will? Right? Is this God's will? I usually say, well first, first, don't keep sleeping together.

Well, Shane, that doesn't matter. We want to know his will. We know this will right here.

We move out, get back on track. Well this is God's will. That's not, we just want to know, but are we supposed to be married? Well start with what you do know.

See how we get it mixed up? We want God to show us his will. He says, start back, go back to where I told you. We say, no, I don't want to go back here.

I want to know your will in this area. Go back. Go back.

Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And you may prove, that word prove means to test, to examine, to scrutinize, to see whether a thing is genuine or not. Is it just me? Or are there thoughts planted, and you're like, I don't know, is that God? Or is that just me? That's why I often say, a good thing isn't always a God thing.

God, is that really you? And that's the best way, if you get your mind back on him, if you focus on him again, he will begin to show you what his will is. And many times his will doesn't come right away. Right, we want to know today, Lord, what's your will? And sometimes it's waiting, and there's a couple things I've been praying about that I don't even know if it's God's will.

And even good things. One was a radio station we were on locally, 91.9 like Ridgecrest and Victorville and this whole valley sent me an email, and they said oh, we're selling our station to a Hispanic station. I'm like, oh okay, how much does it cost to buy a radio station? You know, curious, and he's like well, this, you know, and I'm like, oh, that's interesting.

Is that my thought? Or God's thought? I mean, can you imagine just putting out Christian, good Christian music, messages to locally, and just getting the airways back a little bit from the Prince of the Airways and begin, you know, so I'm thinking about this, and come to find out you know, I think the transaction is almost going through. I'm like, okay, was that God or not? You know, I don't know what to do so I'm kind of waiting. Another one is as many of you know, if the church keeps growing, people are, you know, they're like well, are you going to start a third service? And I'm like we just started a second service in January I mean, what, God what are you doing? I mean, can we make this an overflow in there and fit 60 people? And if you want in here, you have to come early and, you know, like, Lord, what do you want to do? You know, I have no idea.

So the point is don't do anything until God makes it more clear, if you don't know. Just wait on Him. You approve what is that acceptable will of God.

If you do what? If you not conform yourself to the things of the world, but let your mind be transformed by the renewing of your mind, through God's Word. What about five? Following Jesus. If you are, no, you are my friends.

Can you imagine Jesus coming here and saying, you are my friends. We're like, amen, amen, but then He goes if you are my friends. Look at John 15 14, you are my friends.

You can do it later. If you do what I command. If you do what I command.

If you abide in me. If you follow me. If you turn to me.

One of the most eye-opening scriptures when I came back to the Lord was, I didn't look it up earlier, but I think it was John. He said that we are liars and the truth is not in us. If we say we know Christ, but we don't do His commandments.

John, couldn't you be a little softer? If you say you know Christ, but do not do the commandments, you are a liar and the truth is not in you. So, if, if, it's very powerful. He also talks about if, if you turn from false gods, you will find the true God.

If you turn from false gods, you will find the true God. Maybe that's a message for the second service. Somebody in here, I don't know, but you've got to turn from the false God to see the true God.

That's what repentance is. Repentance actually is turning and changing the way I think. For example, if I said to everybody in here, we do not have a baptismal.

We do not have a baptismal. I don't know what you're talking about. I can't see a baptismal where we baptize people.

We don't have one in this church, and I can be adamant about it, right? I can preach about it, I can keep day after day, just preaching, preaching, preaching, until I what? Oh, we do have one. See, I turned around, and many of you need to turn around to see the cross. See, you have to put the false gods behind and turn to the true and living God.

God said, I am not willing that any should perish, but that all come to the knowledge of salvation. Ezekiel 33. Ezekiel 33, 11.

Say to them, so God's telling Ezekiel, say to them, as surely as I live, declares the sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. And the Bible here explicitly says, turn, turn, turn, and live. Turn from your evil ways.

See, that's a lot of times where the passion and preaching comes from. I can't get up, and I can't slap you. I can't hit you in the arm and say, come on, all I can do is preach and say, turn, turn to God, repent, and turn to Him.

That's turn from the false gods, and that's what we're going to see here right now. Verse 23, and about that time there arose a great commotion about the way. So the way is the Christian religion, and it always stirs a commotion.

When God is moving, no commotion, no conviction. So whenever God's church is moving, as people are moving, there is conviction. You will cause a commotion.

You will cause a, people don't like, a lot of times, what we stand for. Now, don't go look for that, right? Don't go out and pick a fight, and say, Shane said, pick a fight. No, the fight usually comes to you, just simply as you're serving God, and serving others.

For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together, and he told the workers basically this, Paul and all these people are causing our city to be in an uproar, saying that our gods, which we made, are not gods. So they would make these little statues of Diana, and that's what they would worship.

They would worship these little statues. And we say, how foolish. Right? How foolish, but now we don't have those statues, we park them in the garage.

Or we're mesmerized by the 50-inch entertainment center. They're in your house. And we have these other things that we put before God.

False gods in our homes and in our hearts. Isaiah, I won't read the whole thing, but in Isaiah 44, he talks about a man who chops down a tree, he uses the wood to burn, to make a fire, he uses the wood to cook his dinner, and he uses the wood that's left over to build an idol. I mean, is it just me, or is that the most ridiculous thing you've ever seen? You cut down a tree, then you fashion this little thing, you bow down to this idol, that's what he said here.

Even in Isaiah, he falls down before it and he worships it, he prays to it, and he says, deliver me, for you are my God. Well, what's happening here? Well, it's pretty easy. We invent, like they did here, we do this here, we invent gods that don't offend us.

This God doesn't offend me. I made him into what I wanted. In essence, I'm worshiping myself.

Now, here's the thing on worship. That we are given DNA, I believe, that in our DNA, whether you know God or not, there's the DNA to worship something. So as believers, we worship God.

Others have to worship something. Their job, their career, even people that don't believe in God, worship their money, worship their status, worship their recognition, worship the works of their hands. That's what he was doing here.

He's worshiping the works of his own hands. So truly following God will cost you something. You have to leave something to find God.

You have to return from the false gods to the true God. The greatest conditional promise ever made, I'm getting to the end here. The greatest conditional promise ever made, and words can't describe it, and theology can't explain it, is the verse many of us know, for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes will have eternal life, and not perish.

See, if, if, if, if, if you believe, if you repent, if, so we have God's sovereignty, but we also have man's responsibility. God calls us to repent. There's a story I heard last week of a little boy, and I didn't write it down exactly, who was lost in the city.

And he ran into a policeman, he was crying a little bit, and he said, I can't find my house, I don't know how to get home. So do you remember this bakery, do you remember this bank, do you remember, he goes, no, I don't remember, I don't know where I'm at, I don't know my phone number, I don't remember my

address, I didn't never learn my address, and I don't know what to do. So the policeman took him up this, this building to the top, all the way to the top, and the policeman said, do you see that church and that cross? And the boy said this, he said yes, take me to the cross, I can find my way home from there.

Take me to the cross, I can find my way home from there. See, here, there's where many of you need to go. You need to go back to the cross, that wonderful song, we sing, take me to the cross, take me to the cross, then I can find my way home.

See, there's no peace without the king of peace. There's no deliverance without the great Redeemer, there's no being set free unless you turn to the one who will set you free. They shall know the truth, and the truth shall set them free.

You have to take me back to the cross. I'm going to talk about communion. We're going to do that right now, and what we're going to do is we're going to hand out the elements, the ushers are going to hand out the elements, but just stay put for a minute, I want to ask a few questions.

The elements represented what happened on the cross, right? The elements represented, worship team, you guys can just hold tight for a minute. I want to think about a couple different things. Will you take them, as they're passed out, think about this, as they're singing, as the elements are being passed out, will you take them, now I've been guilty here, will you take them in a cold, callous manner that represents mere formality? They're doing communion, whatever.

Right? That mere formality, we've all been guilty of it, I think. Or will you take them without examining your heart? Will you take them without examining your heart? For if you eat the bread, now this is strong, but necessary. If, if, right, here we go, if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself.

I don't know how else to word that. Let it speak for itself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep, have died.

This is strong language. He's saying, if you take communion in a worthy manner, in other words, perfect examples, if people come into church, they're moving in together, they're sleeping together, they're hooked to porn, they're hooked to this, they don't care, they're going to continue in that that Christ died for. They're just going to continue.

And they're going to take communion? That is so wrong that God actually says, because of that, you may become sick. You may become weak. There might be a point where God takes your life.

There's no other way to read this. We drink judgment upon us if we take it in a worthy manner. Now, this is the person who is blatantly ignoring God's call to repentance.

I'm not talking about the person who struggles with sin because then none of you would be able to take communion. If somebody gets upset and wants to talk to me about the service after that, I'll challenge you on that. Because nobody's without sin.

But this is a person who week in, week out, or month in takes communion. They don't care what happened on the cross. They're going to continue in their sin.

That's why he says, examine yourself. Examine yourself. Please do not take this in a worthy manner.

I mean, it borderlines on blasphemy. It is. If I say, thank you, Jesus, I'm going to take of the body and the blood, metaphorically speaking, I'm going to take communion and I'm going to continue in my sin.

It's mocking and spinning on the face of Christ. Strong language here. Now, the person who struggles, Lord, please help me in this area.

I want to repent. I want to get back on track. God, I have been dropped the ball in this area.

I'm examining myself and I'm getting my heart right before communion. The heart's right. See, it's all about where the heart is, but ready to receive communion.

Examining ourselves. Or, number three, will you make the biggest mistake of all and take communion without knowing the person who shed his blood and gave his life for you? This is a mistake and I saw it a lot in churches and I vowed I would never do this. Hopefully.

But they just pass communion out as if everybody is a believer. They don't challenge. They don't ask the hard questions.

They just, oh, everybody just take communion. And you're actually giving it to somebody who's, well, okay, whatever. I'll do this.

I don't know. But you have to be clear on this. Communion is for those who have repented and believe in Christ.

God's changed their heart. We remember what Jesus did for us so we partake. And then the last thing.

Or will we take it, and this is what I want you to do, will we take it with a joy-filled heart, focused on the greatest gift ever given to man, that God shed his blood for us? That's how we're supposed to take communion. There was a man with the job of raising and lowering a drawbridge so passengers on a train could cross a deep canyon. This man had one child, a son whom he loved very much.

One day the little boy wandered towards the bridge without the father noticing. Soon the father heard a train whistle. As he started to pull the lever to lower the bridge, he looked out the window and saw that his son had crawled down into the heavy gears.

If he pulled the lever, his son would be crushed to death. There were only seconds to decide. Hundreds of people would die if he didn't lower the bridge.

All sons and daughters loved by someone. He took a deep breath, and with his heart screaming with pain, he pulled the lever. The brave father stood helplessly at the window, beating on it with both of his fists, and screaming out in anguish as the train zipped quickly over the bridge.

The passengers thought he was waving, so they waved back, smiling and content without realizing the price that the father had just paid for them. Now I think we all know the parallel of Christ and what God did for us in sending Him. That's how we take communion.

That's how we get our heart right and take communion.

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