

Persevering Towards Revival

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the need to align our understanding of church with God's definition, focusing on genuine worship and service rather than performance. It encourages a deep hunger for God, the importance of obedience, and the power of prayer and fasting in spiritual warfare. The message highlights the sovereignty of God, the purpose in pain, and the faith that pleases God, urging believers to position themselves in humility and seek God fervently.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:1, Mark 9:29, Matthew 6:6, Romans 8:28, Luke 15:11, Matthew 5:6

Topics: "Genuine Worship", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

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Transcript

Get used to different. Because our definition of church, especially in America, is not God's definition of church. We've got our songs and our announcements and our message, and let's get them in, let's get them out.

That's not the heart of God. We're not really coming, the worship leaders aren't coming. I'm not coming.

This is a performance. The lighting has to be just right. We have to be on the stage just right.

The ambiance. That's not why we're here. We're here to just be used of God and to serve God and to let God pour into our hearts.

And then that flows from the stage down into the pew, which flows out into our community. And that's how God has really been working in our lives. How to keep that fire of God going.

And many of you, some of you, don't have that fire. You don't have that passion, that zeal for God. That's okay.

I've been there. And I can drift as well. Remove anything from your calendar that's not a priority or emergency and let God be the priority again.

There is an emergency. 911. I need to hear from God.

So I want to unpack a little bit of what happened during this week. At times, the atmosphere was overwhelming. Baptisms.

The demonic realm was crushed. Countless lives were changed, both in person and through livestream. We hear frequently from Texas and Tennessee and Idaho and Florida and the East Coast, and people just being transformed by what God is doing.

Basically, God heard our cries and showed up. And I want to share that with you, a little bit of each night, just to give you an idea of what happened and encourage you. At a time, the atmosphere was overwhelming.

Obviously, if you've been here, there's a full altar. There's baptisms. The demonic realm is being crushed and lives are being changed, both in person and on livestream.

And as the old-timers used to say, God heard our prayers, He heard our cries, and He showed up. And there's a different environment that takes place in the evening services. There's a different type of atmosphere.

It's hard to really explain. There's an eagerness, a desperation, and it's easy to identify, it's hard to define it, really what is taking place. And so I want to cover a lot of that with you.

I'm hoping it sparks some desire to seek God more fervently. So you're going to get about six sermons in one. Are you ready? And this is so crucial to walking that victorious Christian life.

I talked about the heavens being brass. Have you ever heard that saying? Have you ever felt that? That the heavens are not... God, You're not hearing me. I can't get the prayers through from Deuteronomy 28.

Now, it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord. Diligently obey the voice of the Lord to observe carefully all that He commands to you today. Now, it shall come to pass, if you somewhat obey the voice of the Lord and observe carefully some of what He commands you.

And in case you don't know where I stand on this issue, I'm not talking about perfectionism. I know so many people leave here kind of deflated. Like, who could ever measure up to what Shane is saying? I can't.

I can't. But the Bible never encourages laziness and slothfulness and just kind of get by. The problem isn't that we raise our standard and miss it.

It's that we lower it and we hit it. God is wanting us to dig deep and to pursue. Obedience brings the favor of God.

Like Mercy said, that is so true. Obedience brings the favor of God. And it's not obedience out of I have to do this.

God's got all these rules I have to follow. I have to obey. No, it comes out of a loving relationship with the Father.

Obedience brings power. Obedience brings the closeness of God to our lives. Obedience even brings blessing into our lives.

And I'm not talking about financial blessings. I'm just talking about the blessings of God. You know when you have a lot of drama? And when you have a lot of blessings? There's a big difference there.

Obviously, it doesn't mean you're not going to have drama. We all do. And the younger crowd calls it baby mama drama.

With spouses and different things. But there's always drama, of course, but there's the blessings of God in a life that is obeying His voice and His voice is like guardrails through the canyons of life. And so many even young adults, that's their big problem with the Word of God.

Oh, I can't have fun. No, it has nothing to do with that. God set truth in motion.

And His Word keeps you within the guardrails of life. Don't you want to go into marriage? Marrying the right person? Don't you want to wait until that right day? Don't you want to wait and do things right and feel the peace and presence of God? Why? If you disobey God's Word, He says the heavens over your head shall be bronze. That King James actually says, and I like what they say, and thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass.

Have you ever heard that saying? The heavens are brass? This is where it comes from. And so if disobedience and pride are causing the problem, only obedience and humility can fix the problem. John Rice, famous Baptist pastor, born in 1895, said there is no way you can please God.

No way you can have the sweet communion with Him to get your prayers answered if you are in rebellion against the known will of God. This is the prayer that falls on deaf ears and closed hands. And once we align with His will, let me tell you, your prayer life is a thousand times better when you're cleansed of sin and there's confession, and you repent of besetting sin.

It doesn't mean you don't struggle. I got it. But you confess this besetting sin.

You turn from that. And you begin to obey the voice of God. And now the prayer life is sweet.

The communion with God is powerful. You begin to sense what God's will is. You begin to pray accordingly.

Faith rises up in you because you are now a clean vessel that God can use. That's one vital aspect of looking at God's Word. It convicts us.

And the old Puritan pastors would say, thank God for the anvil. The anvil would be like sharpening iron upon iron, and the fire would remove the impurities. And the hammer, that was the other one.

The hammer would break the rock in pieces. And God even says, My Word is like a fire that devours. My Word is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces.

And there's something about God's Word that goes into the hardest of hearts, and it begins to chip away. It begins to break down pride. It begins to encourage humility.

And it brings conviction. Without conviction, we don't change. However, the heavens are not always brass because of disobedience.

Let me talk to the other group here. You need the encouragement. Many times, heavens are brass, as I mentioned on Monday, because it's God's timing, not ours.

Any type A personalities out there? Getter done? Let's go. Let's move. Let's go.

I've got things to do. Well, you have a real problem with God's timing like I do. And we get frustrated sometimes.

Is that not the voice of God? Did I completely miss it? I told somebody the other day, if I miss this, this is the biggest thing I've ever missed as a Christian. And it's frustrating. Now granted, I don't know the perfect will of God.

But you have to rest on His timing. And I've noticed in His timing, He gets the vessel ready for His use because you're not ready yet. He might show you the picture, but you're not yet ready to fill in the blanks.

You're not ready to go there yet. What's that saying in the charismatic churches? Anointed, but not yet appointed. David, the teenager, come here, guess what? And the oil flowed.

Samuel anointed David. The oil flowed. That's our next king.

Did they go grab a crown? He went back to the sheep. He cleaned up manure. He tended sheep.

He fought these struggles. He was a boy. See, you're called.

Here's your calling, but you're not yet ready. So get ready. Many times God will give you the calling.

He'll give you the vision. He'll say, now prepare for this. I'm showing you the possibilities.

Now get ready. Get your character in order. Get your integrity in order.

Get your life strength up. Strengthen your life in the Lord because the deeper the foundation, the greater the structure. If God is calling you to do something for Him, you've got to get the foundation ready because you will crumble under the weight and pressure of life.

It takes time. The timing of God. So whenever you're called of God and God is going to call you to do something, get ready for the warfare because the enemy doesn't want you doing anything for God.

The enemy wants a closet Christian who remains silent, who does nothing for God, who says nothing about sin, who doesn't call people to repentance. They don't talk about Jesus Christ. They are the silent servant and there's no such thing in the Bible as a silent servant.

I love when politicians, they get asked those hard questions. Fox News, CNN. So what about your faith? Oh, my faith is separate.

My faith is separate from my politics. Do you know that's impossible? Because what you legislate, how you lead is directly related to what you believe. You cannot separate the two.

We've been talking about revival a lot and the verse has been, rend the heavens. Oh God, would You rend the heavens and come down? The problem's not with God. The problem is the soil's not ready.

God says I can open heaven and pour out a blessing You won't be able to have room to receive. I can pour out the revival fires and the water of revival, but the heart's not ready. God says I'll bring the rain, but you have to prepare the soil.

He would always use those illustrations. The soil of your heart. Rend your hearts, not your garments.

And talking about the heart there. He'd say break up the fallow ground. Have you ever seen fallow ground? Fallow, fallow ground? It's hard rock.

Farmers have to go in and they have to get the rock out of there. And it used to be hard work back then. Hard work back then.

They would take their horses and they'd get rocks and it would take a whole day to move an acre. Nowadays, it's quick for us. Sometimes they call it D4.

Caterpillar D4, D5. It goes all the way up. And you can just drop down these big teeth at the back of a bulldozer.

And they go down like three feet deep. And you just put that thing forward and it just tears up the entire acre in a matter of maybe a half hour or so. And you have to tear up that fallow ground.

And God says, look at your heart. Is your heart in a spot to receive deeply from the wells of God's rich blessings? Is the heart ready? Is it receptive? Or do you have to tear up that fallow ground? I don't want to play church. I don't want to go to a social club.

I don't want to just hear a message that tickles my ear but does not challenge my heart. I don't want to hear a few songs and then be dead again for the next few weeks. I've got to find God.

And so when the heavens are brass, it causes us to dig in deep, to mount ourselves on that altar and to pull down heaven, to experience the fire and power of God. When the heavens are brass, also it causes us to remove things that may be hindering us. Did you know that a good thing isn't always a God thing? We've got people wanting to start ministries here and I tell them, okay, let's pray about it because a good thing isn't always a God thing.

If you get involved in a good thing, but not a God thing, it will wear you out. It will exhaust you. Remove every sin that ensnares you.

You remove the things that, actually, the new King James says, remove every weight. Is there something holding you back from pursuing God? Is there something holding you back? You've got to carry this weight. Now spouses, don't blame your spouses.

That term, my old ball and chain. I'm carrying this weight around. I'm not talking about that.

I'm talking about things that take us away from God. Take us away from pursuing Him. Pastor Abram talked about why they couldn't cast out a certain demon out of this boy, and obviously, he said, because of your unbelief.

There was an unbelief that was happening, which was actually quite interesting because they were walking with Jesus. They saw the power of God. Depending on the time of this, they could have cast out demons before, but maybe there was a season of doubt and fear.

Have you ever been there? And what you used to do, spiritually speaking, you couldn't do anymore. You've lost that spiritual power. But it's interesting, at the end he goes on to say, however, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

And I'm not going to go into a lot of detail. I wrote a book on it. You can get on the way out for free, but often, Arthur Wallace said, pressure has to be maintained before there is a breakthrough in heavenly warfare.

Pressure has to be maintained. A demonic influence does not leave easily. If a person is demonized, it's not just going to leave just because we say a quick little prayer on our way to the gym, or on our way to... Sometimes there's a battle, there's a fight, especially if a stronghold, if a door has been opened and now they've got a stronghold in your life, that's what an addiction is, by the way.

It's a stronghold. The enemy has a stronghold on you in a certain area. What fasting does is most strongholds and addictions are tied to the lust of the flesh.

Because the flesh keeps caving in because the flesh is being dominated by this demonic influence. And now there's this lust of the flesh. They're fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

And fasting removes that fulfillment into the flesh and begins to be filled with the Spirit of God. Any time you starve what they call the Adamic nature, the nature of Adam, you starve it, what do you do? It loses its strength. Isn't it funny how alcohol and gluttony are tied together in the Bible? If you have a problem with something in one area, I guarantee you've got a problem with something in other areas.

It's all connected. The flesh is just hell-bent against God. The carnal mind is at war with God.

It's at enmity with God. And so that's what prayer and fasting do. You bring out these spiritual weapons that are powerful.

Fasting basically says I'm serious. I'm so serious. This is actually the hardest spiritual discipline.

You think reading the Word of God's hard? Or praying's hard? All of it can be challenging because our flesh doesn't like it. There's a demonic attack and the influence of the world is strong. But at the root of everything else, the hardest spiritual discipline by far is fasting.

That's absolutely for us today. Jesus began His ministry fasting. He said when you pray, when you give, and if you consider fasting, when you pray, when you give, and when you fast.

And the religious leaders said why don't your disciples fast? He says because the Bridegroom is here. It's a time of rejoicing, but when the Bridegroom leaves, my disciples will fast. I'm assuming we're still waiting for the Bridegroom.

I don't have a degree in theology, but I have a degree in studying and reading the Bible. And I still think we're waiting for the Bridegroom. There are seasons of fasting.

The early church fathers, Tertullian, Justimarty, Ignatius, a season of fasting. And Martin Luther, John Wesley wouldn't ordain a person into the ministry until they fasted Wednesdays and Fridays. Because it brings the body into discipline.

And like Paul said, I discipline my body. I bring my flesh into subjection lest when I preach to others, I myself should become disqualified. It's a spiritual discipline that has amazing fruit.

But let me just warn you up front, sometimes the fruit comes later. You truly experience the pain of discipline, but not the pain of regret. And many times, we don't see what's going on in the spiritual realm.

What about Daniel? When he began to, it's not a Daniel fast, it's a Daniel healthy eating program. But when he began, fasting is to shut the mouth. No nutritional food at all whatsoever.

But when he began to just seek God and remove all these delicacies, all the king's food, and the angel said something interesting, Daniel, Daniel, on day one, I heard your prayer. On day one, I heard your prayer, and I was sent, but guess what? The king of the Prince of Persia, the principalities of the air, I don't quite understand it, but somehow this principality held the angel back from going and delivering, and Daniel pressed in. Can you imagine on day three, if he said, forget this, God's not gonna answer.

I don't see any results, and I'm hungry. No, no, no, perseverance and discipline, they are the keys, they are marks of a mature believer. When they go into spiritual battle, come hell or high water, I don't see the results, but I know that God is still on the throne, and I press in.

Matthew 26, 41, watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. Was the title of the message, I talked about the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak. What happens? You have an exchange take place.

Temptation is pulling you. Anybody relate? But he says here, watch and pray, pursue God, keep that momentum going, and then the temptation cannot pull you away. The spirit is willing, wanting, desiring more of God, but the flesh is weak.

So watch and pray so you don't fall into temptation. There's a struggle there. My high school just contacted me, they want me to write something up about just the story of what God's done in my life, and they asked a question that I had no hesitancy whatsoever to answer.

They said, Shane, what is your greatest challenge? Would you all like to know my greatest challenge? It's very simple. The old Shane Idleman. And you all know because you can put your name in there.

The old person. Right, I'm pursuing God. Loving God, and then, can Shane come out and play? No, no, no, he's dead.

He's, be quiet, stop coming over. But until the day you die, that old Adamic nature is tempting you to go back to that way. Let's say, pray and watch lest you fall back into temptation.

See, you can't remain neutral. So many people think I can just remain neutral. I don't have to pursue God too much.

That's kind of, I don't want to get over the top here. And I don't want to fall back into that. No, you're either growing towards God or you're withering away.

You're either feeding sin and temptation or you're starving it. There's no middle ground, that pursuit. So Jesus was clear here.

Watch, what does that mean, watch? Watch where my steps are. Watch where my actions are. Watch where my heart goes.

As I'm watching, I'm praying, and that begins to offset the pull of temptation. And Jesus said, when you pray, when you pray, enter the prayer chamber. And where you pray in secret, God will reward you openly.

And what happens in the prayer chamber, I like what Robert Murray McShaney said, he said, half of my time spent praying is getting ready to pray. Is preparing to pray. Getting the heart quiet before God.

Getting the emotions removed. Getting my to-do list done. Getting the texting off the phone.

I got so much to do. How am I supposed to pray? Martin Luther said, I'm too busy not to pray. And you get into that inner chamber and you begin to spend time with God.

And what happens is the veil, like in the temple, the veil is ripped and the Shekinah glory of God falls in that place and your heart begins to get a spark of fire, ignite. You begin to see the will of God. You begin to pray for that prodigal or that neighbor.

It's no longer about you, but it's about them. It's no longer about all the finances you want, all the things you want. It's about, Lord, here's what I need.

Our nation needs a risen Savior. Our state needs Jesus Christ. Yes, this is a blue state, but it can be washed in the blood, in the crimson blood of Jesus Christ, if we would get back on our faces again and begin to find the power of the prayer altar.

Where are the men and women weeping for the condition of our state and our nation? Where are they? We complain, but where are we? David McIntyre, again, who wrote that book, said as the electric fluid which is diffused in the atmosphere is concentrated in the lightning flash, so the presence of God becomes vivid and powerful in the prayer chamber. See, some of us, when we talk about the fire of God, we know exactly what we're talking about, and we understood when someone says, God heard my prayers and He came down today. The fire of God was in my heart like never before.

God came down and He answered our prayers. We pressed in and God heard us. There's an anointing, there's a brokenness, and oh God, once you experience God, you never want to go back.

When I lay hold of God, I never, never, never wanna let go, although I might drift, though I might be astray sometimes, I never wanna get away from the heart of the Father. Oh God, when I grab hold of you, never, never let go. I don't wanna ever let go of the presence of God, and when He is there, fear runs, and failure runs, and disappointment gets out of the way, and you're just there with an awesome God.

Our God is an awesome God. He reigns from heaven, and that God, that power, praise God, but let me tell you something that will really help your faith. Many times we get disappointed because we think that our faith is the key that unlocks the door to what we want.

And I love what the three Hebrew boys prayed in the fiery furnace. Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. Remember when the king said, I'm gonna throw you in that fiery furnace.

You're going in the fire. Bow to me right now. And they said, we will not bow to you.

We will not bow to you. Our God will deliver us from the fire. How many of us can say that today? I'm not gonna get that jab.

My God will deliver me, or I'm gonna get it. God will save me. Either way, either way, there's so much fear in our nation.

There's so much fear in the news, and we don't walk with that courage, the boldness that God gave us. And they said, I will not bow to you. Our God will deliver us from that fiery furnace.

But, hold on, they said something that would make the hyper-Pentecostal name-and-claim-it group a little nervous. A little nervous. They don't talk about the next half of what they said.

He will deliver us, but even if He doesn't. Oh, oh, if you can live there, if you can live there, half your problems will disappear. Half your worry will be over.

When you trust in the sovereignty of God, when you trust in the sovereignty of God, I know God is gonna heal me. I know He's gonna heal me. If I have stage four cancer, I know He's gonna heal me.

But even if He doesn't, I will serve Him till the end of my life. Like Job said, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Oh, I know He's gonna bring my prodigal son home, or my daughter home soon.

I know it, I know it. But even if He takes a few years, I'm gonna trust Him with all of my heart. I know He's gonna restore my marriage because I'm broken and humble and seeking Him.

But even if they choose to walk away, I will not bow my knee to this religious system. I will not bow my knee to the world. No matter what, God is still sovereign.

God is still on the throne. Anybody have any mountains you need to speak to this morning or is it just me? Speak to that mountain, it will move. Now, did Jesus ever physically move a mountain? Of course not.

It was something in our lives, something, the obstacle that seems impossible. So you have to exercise the faith. Why don't we stop grumbling and complaining and come to this altar and pray that God would rend the heavens and come down? You don't think He can change the heart of Sacramento? I know He can, but even if He doesn't, I'm not gonna grumble and complain.

I'm gonna still keep seeking Him. Even if they come in and say, Shane, you can't talk about Romans 1, that homosexuality is a sin. Sir, would you please put your hands behind there where we can take you in and book you? Yeah, He might deliver me, but even if He doesn't, like Paul, I will serve Him in prison.

Like John Bunyan, 12 years in prison, wrote Pilgrim's Progress. All the Calvin, Luther, Swingly, Knox, the reformers that were chased by the state, they were chased by Rome and the papacy. John Hus, William Tyndale, those guys who translated the Bible, they were persecuted.

Can you imagine them saying, well, where's my faith? Why am I going through this persecution? God, why aren't you delivering me? John Hus, burned at the stake? Where's God? He will deliver me from this fiery

stake, but even if He doesn't, I will sing hymns until the day I die. You see, finding the sovereignty of God is the only anchor. There was a pursuing.

There was a fervency. There was a deadness at first, but sometimes you have to bring your flesh into submission to the will of God, and eventually it says, okay, okay, I give up, and the throne room of grace opens up, and again, the veil is torn, and there you stand in the holies of holies, and you begin to seek the heart of God like never before. You start praying for all these things you want, and you start praying for all the things that people need, and you begin to experience God at a very deep level.

The faith that pleases God. There's a diligence, and I believe that's the attitude God rewards. He says, look at that person on the altar.

They don't see any results. Actually, things are getting worse than getting better, yet they're still praising me, yet they're still worshiping me, yet they want to touch the hem of my garment. They see no results.

Their life is going backward, not forward. They just found out they might have this disease. They might lose their job if they don't get the job.

Oh, but look, they're still praising me. They're still on their face before me, and they say, Christ, no matter what, I will follow you. That's the prayers I want to hear, God says.

You truly have that relationship with him. Have you repented of your sin and believed in the only name that's safe? That's the only way to open that line of communication. So listening takes place.

A strengthening takes place. When he says, do not let your heart faint, that tells me my heart can faint. So you have to meditate on the Word of God like never before.

You have to be built up in that. How many of us watch YouTube videos and then we're led astray by the propaganda? How much more spending time in God's Word and not being led astray, but embracing the truth? All these weird ideas that are out there, it's propaganda. Propaganda, pushing and pushing.

What about if we saturate our mind in God's Word? Strengthen yourself. Position yourself. Even if you are on the right side of battle, did you know there is a positioning in prayer? The way you hear from God is to get in the right line of direction.

If my wife was still at home and started to talk to me, would I hear her? Of course not. I have to get in that right position. What about if you call someone? I already got people mad at me talking about them moving out of California.

Anyway, it could be conviction. If you don't have the phone I'm calling, it's not going to work. Same thing with God.

There's a positioning. Getting the humble heart right. Getting the heart teachable.

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purposes. So see, there's another foundational point in addition to God's sovereignty is this point that what happens according to God's purposes, I don't understand them. That's why I put there is life and death.

A person might lose someone close to them. A parent might lose a child. They might lose, but if there's something of value out of that, for example, that parent comes to know the Lord, or that spouse comes to know the Lord, and I don't understand what's going on, but all things work together for those who love God.

There is purpose in your pain. There is destiny in your disappointment. There is faith in your failure.

There is clarity in the confusion. There is hope in the hopelessness. There is worship in the waiting.

Though I can't see what's going on, my eyes deceive me, but the Spirit of the living God confirms in me that I'm resting in the faith of Jesus Christ the Son who will set me free. When he was starving, when he was desperate, why am I eating with these pigs? I can't fulfill this hunger anymore, and I can't be satisfied anymore. Why am I eating with the pigs? They satisfied my hunger, but now there's a deeper yearning.

There's a starving. I must run home to the Father. And the Father saw him coming, and he ran out, and he embraced the prodigal son.

He put it on him, the robe and the ring that represented that relationship. And how many of us, is God wanting to call into that deeper life? Get on your face before me. Begin to change your life.

Fully surrender and be hungry and desperate for God. Those who hunger for righteousness will be filled. Is there anything too hard for God? I want to encourage you to bring your dead dreams.

Bring your broken children. Bring your failed marriages. Bring your declining health.

Bring your shattered hopes. Bring your broken life. And come to this altar and drink.

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