

Releasing the Shackles of Oppression

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and overcoming demonic oppression through the authority of Christ and personal faith.

Duration: 57:20

Scripture: Psalm 1:2-3, Psalm 119:11, John 8:32, Romans 12:2, Romans 13:14, Ephesians 6:12, Philippians 4:8, James 4:7

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Surrender To God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of fully surrendering to God to overcome oppression and demonic influence. It highlights the need to close the door to darkness by opening the door to God's light through worship, prayer, and meditating on His Word. The message stresses the power of Christ to bring peace, joy, and transformation when we surrender our lives completely to Him.

Transcript

What I want to talk to you tonight about is releasing the shackles of oppression and demonic influence and those types of things. But before I get to that, let me read an email I got some time ago. A man recently wrote, I had become someone I never thought I would become.

I was in complete darkness. I would sleep in my clothes for as long as I could. I was beginning to wish that I would die.

The emotional pain was unbearable. And the more I pastor, the more I realize that this is commonplace. This happens a lot more than we think.

And people are oppressed by demonic influence. And I know it's a topic sometimes where we don't want to talk about that. Let me just stand way back here and not mention that.

But often it's the things we don't want to mention are the things we need to talk about. Now let me state up front on this issue of the demonic and different things that I don't believe a Christian can be possessed with a demon or demonic. We can't be possessed, but we can definitely be oppressed.

We can open the door to His influence. Hey Holy Spirit, go sit in the garage. But allow this influence into our homes and into our lives.

And that's where a lot of the oppression comes from. And we've been actually in Matthew 8, verse 23. And if you don't have your Bibles, you can look up to the screen.

But if you do have your Bibles, Matthew 8, verse 23. And this really isn't part of the message. But I didn't want to skip this because this is where we're at in Matthew.

And I didn't want to just jump ahead. And we read that Jesus got into a boat. His disciples followed Him.

And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea. So that the boat was covered with waves. But He was asleep.

Then His disciples came to Him. Awoke Him saying, Lord save us, we are perishing. But He said to them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea.

And there was a great calm. So the men marveled saying, Who can this be that even the winds and the sea obey Him? And it's interesting as I was reading over this this week. Is it dawned on me that the storm often reveals what's inside of us.

You remember that familiar phrase, When a vessel is struck, what's inside spills out. So when we're struck with adversity, When we're struck with things, That's who we really are. I've come to realize that who we think we are when we come here, It's not who we really are.

Who we really are, Put a camcorder on at home, Around family, When storms come, That's who we really are. What's inside spills out. And a lot of times the storm is sent to show us what's inside.

Is anger and jealousy and wrath and all these things that are in the flesh, Is that what comes out? Or is it the filling of the Spirit, Love, joy, peace, contentment, longsuffering. When we're hit with adversity, What comes out? You remember seeing those massive oil tankers, right? When they would spring a leak? I wouldn't call it a leak, I'd call it gushing, Whatever it is. It's a million gallons of oil all over the ocean.

It's an environmental disaster. Why did that spill out? Because that's what's inside. As we talk about this area of demonic influence, Remember that what's inside is going to spill out.

And something else I gleaned from this, As we read in this last Scripture there, So the men marveled saying, Who can this be that even the winds and the sea obey Him? Now this is interesting about Christ. Do you realize the authority of Christ And the power of Christ? Sometimes we think of Jesus, right? As this guy, turn the other cheek, passive, Love everybody, don't upset anybody, But that's not the Jesus of the Bible. Jesus, it's interesting, He did not argue with people, He didn't debate with people, He didn't throw fits, He didn't compromise, He didn't negotiate things.

He just came on the scene and said, Here, here it is, I lay it out for you, Here's truth, and here's death, Here's air, and here's life, choose. They said that no man ever spoke like this man. He had great authority.

Wherever he went he had authority To cast out demons, To raise the dead, To cure the sick, He had this authority, this power. So let's not forget about Jesus. This person we serve is not just a good teacher Who said, turn the other cheek.

The Bible also says that He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, And that every knee will bow, And every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord. So when we talk about this area of demonic oppression, Don't be scared, Because your God is still on the throne. The demonic influence sits underneath His authority.

They are butlers. They are created. And just this last week, Somebody said to me, I've heard it many times before, That they believe that witches Are hexing this church, And cursing this church, And doing all these things in the desert, Cursing this church.

You think I'm sitting at home going like this? No! They have no power over this church. The demonic elements work. They sit underneath God's sovereign authority.

You cannot curse what God has blessed. So the witch, the warlock, They need to hear the message of the Gospel. If it doesn't offend, There's something wrong with what I'm saying.

Do you think what I'm saying, That witches in the demonic realm Are going to enjoy it? Of course not. That's why Philipians says, When it comes to Christ, God has highly exalted Christ. Be crystal clear who you worship.

They have highly exalted Christ. That the name of Jesus Christ, Every knee will bow, And every tongue will confess, That Christ is Lord. Period.

There's no co-equal. There's no this. He sits on the throne.

The demonic influence has to run for cover. And the chapter we're going to read, It's interesting that when Jesus Stepped out into the boat, The demonic man backed up. The demon said, Whoa, mouse, What are you going to do with us? Don't throw us into the abyss.

Our time has not come. Jesus, even the demons Have to tremble at His presence. So why do Christians walk around Like He's a genie in a bottle? I'll just keep Him in my back pocket.

I don't want to mention Jesus too much. The Bible says, We sing about the Lamb. Right? The Lamb that was slain Before the foundation of the world.

You say, Lamb, what does that mean? Well, it's very significant, Because in the Old Testament, Without the shedding of blood, There is no remission of sin. A little, spotless, blameless Lamb would come. That knife would have to go, And the blood would be drained For the sacrifice of the people.

So not only is He the Lamb That was slain from the foundation of the earth, For our sin and our iniquity, He's also the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Every knee will bow, And every tongue will confess. He will come back, actually John says, That He will tread the winepress And the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

He will have a name written King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Remember who you serve tonight. We should not leave here in fear and trembling.

Oh, the world's falling apart. Putin and Russia sits under God's control. Don't forget that.

We have to remember that. So when we talk about this topic, The demonic realm gets upset. Shane, you believe in it? Well, the Bible teaches it.

The Bible teaches that I believe in it. And I see it, I've experienced it. Many of you have as well.

So with that said, Let's look to Luke 8. Matthew, Mark, Luke 8. I'm in Matthew, But there's not a lot there On this incident. And Luke records it beautifully. So I want to turn to there.

Luke 8, verse 26. It's rather long, But it's worth reading. Actually, the whole Bible is worth reading If you get a chance.

That sounded kind of funny as I was saying it. It's worth reading as if we're reading the newspaper. Verse 26, Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, Which is opposite of Galilee.

And when he stepped out into the land, There met him a certain man from the city Who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, Nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, Fell down before him with a loud voice, And said, What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.

It's not a co-equal there. The demons aren't saying, Hey, let's do battle. Let's go old school.

You know, you kind of weigh your opponent And you go at it. They have to bow. They have to drop at the foot of Christ and say, Lord, don't torment us.

Don't throw us into the abyss. It's not our time. And the abyss is, You have to remember that hell was created For the devil and his minions.

That's what it's for. Not for people. It's for people that once they reject God, They say, I don't want God.

It's like, okay, Go spend time with your other father. And once the age is over, God's going to throw them into the abyss. Outer darkness chains, And that's for eternity.

And they know this. They're saying, listen, Don't throw us into the abyss. We know who you are, Son of the Most High God.

I beg you, do not torment me. For He had commanded even the unclean spirit To come out of the man. For it had often seized him.

And he was kept under guard, Bound with chains and shackles. And he broke the bonds, And he was driven by the demons Into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, What is your name? And the man said, He said, we are Legion, Because we are many.

There are many demons that enter the man. And they begged him That he would not command them To go into the abyss. Now a herd of swine Was feeding there on the mountain.

So they begged him That he would permit them to enter them. And he permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man And entered into the swine.

And the herd ran violently Down the steep place into the lake And drowned. When those who fed the swine Saw what happened, They fled and they told it in the city And in the country. Then they went out to see what happened.

And they came to Jesus And found the man From whom the demons had departed Sitting at the feet of Christ Clothed and in His right mind. And they were afraid. Listen guys, this is powerful.

Just a few minutes ago, This man is possessed by a legion. Anytime they say, We are a legion, That gives you shivers. We are a legion because we are many.

We are in this man. We have controlled this man. He has to live among the tombs.

He is naked. He can't be bound. No man can hold him.

But after encountering Jesus, Now he's sitting at the feet of Christ Clothed and in His right mind. Oh, if you would just look to Christ. Look to the cross.

This isn't a little symbol up there. This is all about life. And godliness.

And seeking God with all of our heart. Look to Him and be saved. Look to Him and be redeemed.

Look to Him and be restored. Then the whole multitude surrounding the region Asked Him to depart from them. It's amazing.

They just saw what He did. He cured this man. And now the people of the city say, Get out of here.

Get out of here. Oh Jesus, would you leave? It hasn't changed today, has it? Jesus, get out of here. You're affecting my life.

You're ruining my lifestyle. Get out of here. Don't fix things.

I like the chaos and the confusion. Get out of here. And the world says, Christ, get out of here.

Our nation says, Christ, get out of here. We don't want Jesus. You ever wonder why you can pray in the name of anything else? Hare Krishna at the city council meetings.

Buddha. Gandhi. You fill in the blank.

No big deal. Who cares? But can I pray in the name of Jesus? No. No.

No. I remember two years ago, I went to pray at Mike Antonovich's office down in L.A. City. And they told me before I went in there, I said, Now remember, don't pray in Jesus' name at the end.

I go, Do you know? You invited me. Do you know who I am? I'm a pastor of a church. They said, Well, we just can't have that here.

Once I talked about the direction of our nation and moral decline, and prayed, I said, I'm going to pray this in the name of Jesus. The only name that saves. And then just walked out.

And I've never heard from him again. But what's wrong with this guy? There's power in the name of Jesus Christ. The demons.

We know who you are, Son of God. Jesus spoke. He said, We are legion.

Leave the man. Another woman bound by the devil. Remember Jesus said, Should not this daughter of Abraham, who's been bound by the devil these last 17 years, should she not be free? Woman, thou art loose from your infirmities.

And the woman set up straight and began to walk normal. He didn't debate. This is the same Christ.

The same Christ that we supposedly believe in. The same Christ that we're worshiping. We're singing lyrics that really have no significance.

We're going to church as if we're doing God a favor. But we know nothing about the power of Christ in our lives. This message is for you.

You better be careful who's influencing you because one or the other. You can't serve two masters. The Bible says you'll serve Christ with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength.

And if you're not, you're serving the God of this world. But we think we can stay right here in the middle. Yeah, I want to go to church.

That's what good people do. And sure don't want to go to hell, so I'll stay over here. And that's about it.

And what happens? That's not biblical Christianity. You can't serve two of those. Because what happens, if Christ doesn't have all of my heart, the world has some.

And as we know, if the world has some, it begins to pull. You know the old saying that all the water in the world, no matter how hard it tries, can never sink a vessel unless it gets inside. All the evil in the world, no matter how hard it tries, can never sink a Christian's soul unless it gets inside.

The greatest battle you will ever face is what we're talking about tonight. This is where the rubber meets the road. So let's talk about this.

Can a Christian be possessed? Interestingly, the word possessed isn't in the Bible. If you take out a Greek, what's called a Greek interlinear study Bible, and you compare it with the Greek, and how we translate it, there's no possession. It's all had a demon, or was influenced by a demon.

So throughout the Bible, he either has a demon, or he's influenced a demon. So it's all in that word, it's all in that, how we use that word possessed. Because it is interesting, in the Christian community, there's been people who have taught that a Christian can be possessed by the devil.

But a lot of times, it's their understanding of what that word possessed means. And one case comes to mind is Derek Prince. You guys have heard him on the radio.

I just read his autobiography last week. I told the first service, don't worry, I read John MacArthur's too. So getting some balance in there.

But anyway, he would be speaking a lot for healing and deliverance. And Christians, they would have something come out and be freed of something. So that's why he concluded that a person can be possessed or have a demon inside of them.

And so of course, I'm trying to think this through. You can't have the light of the Gospel in the darkness. But what I think was happening, it's almost like we carry the oppression and any satanic influence, we don't carry it on us physically, right? Where do we carry it? Mentally.

Inside of us. So when there's a release there, when Christ redeems, and I've seen Him set people free from drug addiction as Christians. And there's a release and there's something that feels free now.

Something has gone out of me. So it might not be the possession, but it might be that influence. That demonic hold that is on somebody.

Once that is lifted, they feel freed and at ease. So I don't want to get off on doctrinal issues where they're questionable, because I don't think, obviously a Christian can't be, when we use the word possessed, influenced. I can't be influenced by the Holy Spirit of God and then influenced by Satan.

In residing, possessing, and controlling. One or the other is dominating. A Christian cannot be possessed in my opinion.

But I believe they can be pestered. So just change the P around. It means the same thing.

Not possessed, but pestered. Or oppressed. Oppression.

You don't believe me? Then let's read the definition of oppression. The exercise of power in a cruel or unjust manner. The feeling of being heavily burdened mentally or physically by troubles, adverse conditions, and anxiety.

Ever felt that? That's oppression. Now this is interesting. I'm not going to say much on this.

But when Paul, remember when Paul was given a thorn? He said he was given a thorn in his flesh. He had this vision of heaven and God said, to keep me humble, He gave me a thorn in my flesh. And people always speculate.

His eyesight, his health. Nobody really knows. We know it's a thorn in the flesh.

But it's interesting how he words this thorn in the flesh. A messenger of Satan came to torment me. Could Paul have been demonically oppressed? Something to think about.

Again, don't take this out of context. I'm not saying this is what happened. Think about this.

He's using the term a messenger of Satan to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said, My grace is sufficient for you.

My power is made perfect in your weakness. You know what? There's a lot of practical application in that verse. His power is made perfect in our weakness.

The more you empty yourself in your weakness and admit that you need God. There's where that strength comes from to serve Him. It's in that brokenness and humility.

And I can't quite explain it. But it's like God almost has to take us and break us and crush everything. And say, Oh, now I can rebuild you.

Now I can put it all back together the way I designed it. And from that weakness, now you'll be stronger because in your weakness, now you're depending on Me. The strength.

Your strength is going to be in Me and not in you anymore. See, the easiest way up is down. Right? We've talked about that.

Humility. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. In due time, He'll exalt you.

You exalt yourself and He will abate you. And there's great strength in admitting, Lord, I've been wrong. It's very healthy.

Lord, I'm weak in this area. Would You help me? So when we think of this demonic oppression or influence, whatever you want to call it, you have to wonder, how much influence does He have? Do you ever wonder that? How much influence does the demonic realm have? Well, so the question back at you, how much influence does sin have? How much we allow, right? Now, I can't take too many credits for these points. I got them from Wayne Grudem's book on systematic theology, on his chapter on demonology and things.

But he made a great point. How much influence do they have? Well, how much influence does sin have? See, it's interesting because the Bible never blames anything. Oh, sorry.

The devil made you do it. Does it? It always says, tells us not to sin. So you can't cast out a spirit of gluttony.

You can't cast out a spirit of discord. You can't cast out a spirit of anger. You can't cast out a spirit of lust.

Oh, that spirit of lust is coming back. No, it's inside of you. We are drawn away by our own desires and enticed.

So you can't go say, the devil made me do it. The devil's coming after my marriage. No, you're a jerk to your spouse.

He's coming after my finances. No, you spent like a drunk sailor on furlough in Hawaii. We've got to stop blaming the devil for our choices.

He influences us and he'll oppress us, but ultimately, we're called to resist the enemy and he will flee. See, here's the thing. Here's the interesting thing about the Bible.

I realize this. Doctors say, try this and see if it works. Right? I don't know what you've got.

Try this amoxicillin. Try this penicillin. I don't know.

God says, this is what works. Resist the devil and he will flee. Yeah, but Shane, you don't know my history.

Well, the Bible says, resist the enemy and he will flee. And you have to remember that. The Bible doesn't give a lot of gray areas.

Here, do this. This is how you find your way out. And we go, how much power does the demonic realm have? And there's a lot of debates on this.

Can demons read your mind? I don't know. They know the past because you see that in seances and different things. They call it the past because the past has already happened.

They can see the past. But can they read your mind? I don't know. I don't have a tendency to.

I don't think they can. But they can. But then you remember the scripture where Satan planted it in the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Christ.

So did he plant that thought into his mind? Now at this point, everybody's going, oh man, I'm worried. Well, you don't have to be because I'm going to give you the solution. You have to be very worried if you're opening up to these things.

There's not a lot of stuff. This isn't rocket science. You're not going, oh boy, that's a new theory I've never heard.

This is all common sense. Flee the devil and resist him. Finally, brethren, whatever things are pure and honest and noble and upright, meditate on these things.

And he goes on to say, the weapons of your warfare are not carnal, but they're through God for the pulling down of strongholds. So there's a solution here where you just have to follow it. So let's look at that scriptural support real quick.

But before I do this, you have to remember something. The demonic oppression, influence, whatever you want to call it, the innocent to kill, to steal, and to destroy. Do you realize you walk in here, your enemy wants you.

He wants your soul. He wants your kids. He wants your family.

Listen, I didn't come to play church. We've got to hear these things. Most churches are silent on this issue.

The very thing that put Christ on the cross, they don't want to talk about. They want to paint sin as this, well, it's a bad choice. No, sin.

The course of sin. James even says, when your desire has conceived, it birthed forth sin. And sin, fully grown, brings forth death.

Not, well, difficult here. This is serious stuff. And I think as Christians, we need to look at the power of sin.

It destroys. It misleads. It quenches.

It grieves. It depresses. It isolates.

It confuses. Right? Once you're bound in sin, the end of that sin is death. It's not a matter if it causes damage, but when.

So you've got to do heart surgery very quickly. Because God is not mocked. Whatever man sows in his heart, he's going to reap later.

And I hear people say, nothing's happened to me yet. Well, sin has a course. A life cycle.

It either grows, or it withers, depending on whether you feed or starve it. So all the issues in our lives that we know that the enemy has a stronghold, we have to watch those areas. Because that's where he's going to come in every time.

For somebody, it's lust. For somebody else, it's these pills. For somebody else, it's a bottle of tequila.

For somebody else, it's pornography. He knows where everybody's weakness is, and he comes in at those times. That's where the influence.

And think about this. Remember in the book of Job? He said, God said, Satan, this is an interesting discourse. He asked Satan, where have you been? He said, I've been to and fro throughout the earth.

And God says, have you ever considered my servant Job? I don't want him to say, have you ever considered my servant Shane? Do not say that. Fill in your blank. Put your name in the blank.

Hey, devil, have you ever considered this person? No. And the devil says, you've built a hedge of protection around him. He only serves you because of that.

Take all that from him, and he'll curse you. Wow. And so what happened? God said, he's yours.

That should make you tremble. I don't know about you. He said, he's yours, but do not touch his person, which means do not kill him.

And then what happened? A band of raiders came in, took the servants. And as the servant was still saying something, fire fell from heaven, it consumed his livestock. And the servant came, Job, as he was still saying something, more raiders came in and took everything.

And as that servant was still saying that, they came, and the worst thing imaginable happened. Job, there was a great wind. The four corners of the house fell, and all of your children are dead.

Folks, this is serious business. The enemy is sent to kill, steal, and destroy. It's hard.

Life is hard. I prayed with a man right there. Two weeks ago, I couldn't even pray with him.

I was too busy weeping. What do you do when you cut your son down from the garage? Suicide. Can you imagine cutting your own son down with a rope and a knife? I couldn't even pray.

I just had to weep. This is serious stuff. The enemy goes about his roaring life, seeking whom he may devour, and that's how he does it.

So when I preach passionately against these things, it's not because I have the axe to grind. I have lives we try to protect. It's like playing with a viper, and you don't even know what it is.

And I saw something this week. Ramey, think of this. I want you to have this image in your mind.

That's what sin is. I'm just going to play with that little viper. That's what sin is, folks.

And it's too late. Once you take that bait, it's too late. So the enemy goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

This man's son, he's coming after mine. He's coming after yours. But thank God, greater is he that's in me than he that's in the world.

So see, we don't come up from a position of fear, but we come from a position of being forearmed. Because to be forewarned is to be forearmed. I'm warning you what the schemes of the devil are.

They haven't changed. The Bible says, having done all, stand. Because your enemy that goes about, he comes in with the wiles of the devil, the trickery, the deceit.

And it's all consistent. It's nothing new. That's how important this is.

Well, let's look at scriptural support. Enough of my opinion. The Bible says, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against

spiritual wickedness in the high places.

Listen, especially young adults, your battle's not physical. You think life's going great? You can't see the problems. You can't see the demonic realm, what's trying to happen in your lives.

We wrestle not. You're not going to come up here and beat up the devil or fight him in any way. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but we wrestle against principalities, which are evil spirits, powers of darkness.

That's where our battle is. And the battlefield is the mind. You understand that? If I could get this point across, this whole sermon could be encapsulated into this.

The battlefield is the mind. Before a man cheats on his wife, or vice versa, guess where it starts? Before somebody clicks on that website, guess where it starts? Before churches split, guess where it starts? Before contentions, jealousies, envy, all these issues. Where does it start at? Right here.

Your mind is like a sponge. Our mind is like a sponge. And I want to give an analogy.

I gave it the first service. My kids actually came into this service because they wanted to see this. But I used the sponge already at the first service.

But this is what happens. This is the purity of God's Word, right? You're living in the Word of God. You're worshiping.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are pure and noble and honest and upright, meditate on these things. So that's what's coming out. The purity of God's Word.

You worship everything. But then what is this? This is the cesspool of the world. This is all the junk, all the garbage.

You're sitting here. You're feeding your mind on a daily basis. And you wonder why this is coming out.

Why am I losing the warfare? Why am I feeling this oppression, this demonic attack? I don't know. You're putting darkness in. You might be getting darkness out.

That's all we are. God created us. He said, let your mind be like the mind of Christ.

Meditate on things that are pure and honest and noble and upright. Finally, brethren, when it's all said and done, whatever is noble and honest, meditate on these things. Flee sexual immorality.

Read the Word of God. Live in the Word of God. Why? Because we're a sponge.

Whatever we live in, we absorb. So the kids that I'm counseling a lot of times or talk to, they're wanting to commit suicide. Where do you think they're living in? All this shows about vampires and the occult and witchcraft and zombies and fear and gothic and death and all this stuff.

They're living in this. But Shane, I'm a Christian. Would you help me? I need help.

I'm in darkness. Yes, a sponge. You need to take this and get into the Word of God, the living, vibrant Word of God to clear the mind, to wash all that junk away.

That's where the enemy concentrates his attack, does he not? Right here. I just found out I probably can't touch my clothes, can I? Oh, I'm putting the clean water. Oh, the washing of the work.

The Bible even says I'm supposed to wash my wife with the Word of God. Sanctify her. See, my home should be a holy sanctuary, not a breeding ground for Satan.

When you allow all this junk into your mind and you're watching all this garbage, no wonder you feel like that. Start living in this. Listen, there's not a lot of Scriptures that say this and try this and do this checklist.

You might want to consider this. It just says, Finally, brethren, whatever things are pure and noble and honest and upright, meditate on these things. Don't meditate on the dark, depressing things that will pull you down.

And this isn't making up stuff. We see this all the time. I just got back from Hume Lake yesterday.

I'm speaking at a fireman's conference next year and I want to go and meet all the firemen up there. Hundreds of firemen. It was a great conference.

I can't touch myself either. But the alarming rates of suicide calls they're going on. I'm just baffled.

I want to get to that in a minute. But a common denominator is they see, they walk in these houses and they say, You can feel. You can feel the oppression.

Because they open themselves up. See, we're not neutral. You're either that sponge or you're that sponge.

Aubrey Gracie, you got that? You're either that sponge or that sponge. There's no sponge in the middle. That's what we want to do though, don't we? Oh, here's what we want to do.

I want to enjoy this, but I'll go here. Hold on. I want to enjoy this, but I'll go here.

You can't have one or the other. I mean, there can't be a middle ground. Christ is stronger, but the influence is whatever you open yourself up to.

Love not the world nor the things that are in the world. For all that's in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not even in you.

Why are these such serious warnings? So we wake up. The church needs a wake-up call, not a bedtime story. Remember? I said that.

Churches need a wake-up call, not a bedtime story. When you leave the door, the enemy's coming after your marriage. He's coming after your purity.

You think he likes me up here? I've got sight set right here, right? Right here and here. And he can't touch me unless I open the door. The Bible says that the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Have you ever thought about that? It's written to Christians. Right into the early church in Asia Minor, probably 50 years old, if I remember correctly. That your adversary, the devil, goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

How does he devour? How does he get in? How does he get in? You open the door. Come on in. He's going to your house, and your house, and your house, and my house.

He's looking for the open door. I remember up in Lake Arrowhead, 20 years ago, we left a... Oh, thank you, John. Thank you, sir.

See, sin doesn't go away easily, does it? There's a price to pay. There's a cost. I knew there would be a story here somehow.

I can make it work. Look, it doesn't come off that easy. You don't play with the enemy and just suddenly walk away.

There's consequences. But anyway, up at Lake Arrowhead, the door was open a little bit, and a squirrel got in. Wow! Have you ever tried to get a squirrel out of a cabin? It was ping-pong.

Ping-pong, ping-pong. He's hitting the glass, and then he'd knock over things, and the blender in the kitchen. He was like a ping-pong ball, and we just ran for cover.

Open that door all the way and get that squirrel out of here. How'd the squirrel get in there? Open the door. That's all the enemy does.

He wants to open the door. He's just looking for you to open the door. If you don't open the door, he doesn't come in.

Are you creating an environment for the Holy Spirit to reign or an environment for Satan to influence? James 4.7 Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. John 8.32 You guys all know this, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

Interestingly enough, this isn't just knowledge. This is the application of the knowledge. So once you begin to apply God's Word to your life, that's the truth that sets you free.

Romans 13.14 Clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh. At this point, many people are like, yeah, blah, blah, blah. In one ear and out the next.

I've heard that. Right? Another translation says, make no provision for the flesh. Make no provision for the flesh.

In the Greek, it's an interesting word. It's pronoia. And it means don't plan ahead to satisfy the flesh.

Do you realize people come here at 5.30, they're already planning on getting drunk at 8? I've had spouses tell me, they come in with their spouse, there's already a party lined up, they're heading out there at 8 o'clock and they're going to get wasted. Like how can you come and sit and worship God and plan how you're going to go sin? There's people in this room right now, you've got a problem with pornography and you're not taking the necessary steps to get it eradicated from your life. In essence, you're planning ahead because there's no safeguards.

There's nothing. Make no provision for the flesh. Don't plan ahead to sin.

So that's one of the ways we put on the Lord Jesus Christ to do not plan ahead to sin to gratify the desires of the flesh. And I wish I had time, but we're running short on time. I'm going to go through this next week.

But how does the enemy influence us? This is important. If this message is upsetting you, what do I often say? If you don't like what I'm saying, it's because you need to hear what I'm saying. This is how the enemy gets in.

Here's the areas of influence. Number one, toxic substances. The Bible uses the word pharmakeia.

And it always deals with witchcraft, sorcery, all these things. Pharmakeia, taking substances that alter who we are. You know the big debate now, right? Legalizing marijuana and all that.

But I'm just saying, those things open the window. Open the door you allow the demonic influence. That's why the Bible says, be filled with the Spirit, not drunk with wine, because that's when we consume these things, we are not who we used to be.

We are not who we can be. We are led by these things. The influence is pulling us in that direction.

It's interesting on that fireman's retreat too, I wasn't aware that they said many of the suicides they go on, this is ironic to me, they said the people are on medication for fear and anxiety. On their labels. Warning.

This could cause suicidal thoughts. So you're taking something. Now please don't misunderstand me, right? You guys know I'm a fan of medicine, if we need that, of course.

I'm not stupid. But sometimes, these things can be an influence to where the enemy can gain a foothold. And the fireman I talked to said, a lot of times, they are already on medication for the very thing they're running from.

And an adverse reaction to that makes them do things they wouldn't normally do. Hanging themselves in closets, all these things, it's so sad. So we have to be careful of toxic substances that can influence us.

Can they not? Remember the little things I've even told you about? One reason why I don't like to have a lot of coffee? Because it makes me irritable, and anxious, and upset, and leave me alone, and it's not good to be a pastor and feel that way. Why? It's a substance that alters my state. Because the central nervous stimulates in the same category as opium, and cocaine, and all those things, as far as how it affects the brain.

So these things that we're taking, and we're jumping off the handle, we're going into road rage, and all these things, could it be that we're consuming these things? Look at all the craze with energy drinks. Now everybody's wanting to pull each other over and shoot them on the freeway, and everybody's high strung, and they're getting all these energy drinks. You're allowing something to influence you where you lose control a little bit, because these things are not neutral.

So be careful. You can have things influence you by what you consume, what you take in. What about toxic environment? Is your environment at home toxic, or is it pleasing God? Again, I feel a little embarrassed to say these things, because it's nothing new.

But we need to hear it. And I remember a story K.P. Yohanan gave in one of his books, on where he was staying at a house of a missionary. And as he was staying at this house, he felt this dark demonic oppression in the room, and he just was having nightmares, even trying to sleep, and he could not believe it.

And in the morning, he got up, he heard this rock music, and all these things in the room next door, and he went and he opened up the door. I'm sorry, he saw the door was already open, this young adult, and they had all kinds of Marilyn Manson, and all this garbage all over the room. And the guy's like, oh, now I know what's happening.

See, we don't realize, the environment we create either welcomes satanic influence, or it drives it away. Put on these four songs we just sang, on at your house all night, and you see how bad you're going to feel in the home. If you walk into your home, it's going to feel all this oppression.

No, it's not going to feel all this oppression. You turn that on, turn Desperate Housewives on, yeah, it will. You turn that off, and put on American Horror Story, yeah, it's going to.

See, you create the environment. Allow worship to praise through your doors and your windows. Allow worship to penetrate your heart.

This influence, and the environment that we create. I remember on this note, it's funny, I remember my mom's probably here tonight. We're baptizing my nephew a little bit later.

But she used to come in and put this, right on my ACDC albums, and Judas Priest, and Ronnie James Dio, and Ozzy Osbourne, Crazy Train, all that stuff. I'm dating myself, I know. So if you're too young, it's okay.

If you're young, you know who I'm talking about. Marilyn Manson, and all these guys that are dark, and gothic, and nothing but satanic. You say, oh, satanic, come on Shane.

Listen, either something is Christ honoring, or it's satanic. There's not a middle ground. You can't live right here in the middle.

There's no middle ground. There's no, the enemy, God, and then something in the middle. The prince of the air, he's called, he goes through to deceive.

Or God, in His glory, in worship, and having a heart of worship set towards Him. You can't have your heart set towards Sodom, and towards God. Towards Hollywood, and the Holy Spirit.

There's not a middle ground. You can't balance those. Light and darkness, right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error, are incompatible.

When you compromise them, it's the light, the right, the good, and the truth that are damaged. You don't realize that. But something interesting is when we compromise them, we actually damage what is good and true.

The Bible doesn't say to play with these things. What about toxic emotions? We'll have to get into this next week. Toxic thoughts.

The mind, oh this is good in Romans, the mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. What I love about the Bible, it doesn't say, you might want to try this. Just see if this works.

If not, get on some probiotics and echinaceans, some holistic form of health. Just try these. It says, listen, the mind that is governed by the flesh is death.

The mind that is governed by the Spirit is life and peace. Either it is or it isn't. Does it mean there's no challenges? Nope.

Does it mean I'm always walking on a peace cloud every day and so happy? No. Not at all. Putin keeps moving his destroyers down to Cuba.

It makes me a little worried. Anyway, what's happening is most are swimming in a mental cesspool of dark and gothic and depressing things and murder and fear and sex. They're swimming in it.

So what do you think you're covered in? You know what a cesspool is? If not, ask somebody when we leave. But when you jump into that, you come out, that's what you're covered in. Many Christians are covered in a toxic, filthy, disgusting.

Just look at the top movies. Look at the top things. Miley Cyrus is praised and I'm rebuked.

Oh, that's just art. And the kids just watch it. Christian families were fascinated by the occult and vampires and witches and zombies.

We love these things. They're everywhere. You wonder why God might seem distant? You wonder why the Bible is boring? You wonder why you have no peace and joy? It's because you're filling your things that the Bible calls an abomination.

You're filling your mind with things the Bible says these things will draw you away from God. Closing the door. I'll get to the end here shortly.

Closing the door. So if we've opened the door to the enemy, how do you close the door? My kids leave the door open all the time in the back. Slide open.

Well, if it's open one way, it closes the other way. So that's why we worship for 45 minutes. Not to just entertain people.

Not to waste some time. I don't come and go, Chelsea, Ronnie, we've got 40 minutes to kill before my sermon. Can you think of something? If it was up to me, we'd just keep worshiping.

Then I'd get out of preaching the message. Much better for me. That happened a few weeks ago and lives were radically changed.

And we want to do that more often. But that's the Word of God. When the Word of God is preached and worship is praised, demonic influence must leave.

Depression, fear, anxiety, all those things flee at the foot of the cross. Whatever you use to open the door, you have to use the reverse to close it. Wash in the water of God's Word and worship being transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Flee whatever things are evil and unjust and unrighteous and turn to the one true and living God and what is pure and right. I don't know about you, but what do you do with those scriptures when Paul says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you'll know what the perfect will of God is.

Flee sexual immorality. Abstain from these things. Finally, brethren... Paul wrote to the church in Philippi.

He left them with these final words. Finally, brethren, whatever is honest and pure and noble and upright, meditate on these things. This is a meditation.

If you look up the Greek word meditation, it's like a person would look at a math problem and they would try to solve it. They're meditating on the Word of God. They're allowing it to come in and penetrate the hardness of their heart.

It's not a quick Scripture reading. Oh, I read that verse. Now let me go do this.

It's meditating on the Word of God. Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in it he doth meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by living waters who will bear its fruit in season and whose leaves will not wither.

It's meditating on the Word of God. It's worshipping. We shouldn't worry about what time it is, how quick can we get out of here.

We should be turned around in our seats, worshipping God, saying, Lord, if You don't break me, if You don't deliver me, I cannot look to anybody but You and You alone. That's the power in the name of Christ. But what happens? Many people say, like these guys, Jesus, get out of here.

Get out of here. You're ruining my schedule. We just lost all our pigs over a cliff.

It's funny, my daughter heard my sermon on the radio Friday. She said, mommy, daddy gets too passionate, too upset. So you'll understand someday why.

Especially as men, let me just put that call out to you. You are called to lead and guard and defend your family. Wake up.

You're not to be some lazy, passive guy who allows everything to happen. It's not easy. But you're called to defend your family.

Your kids should find you in the morning praying for them. I love when my daughter walks into my office, I'm on my knees praying, God, the Bible's in front of me. Lord, I need You to move today.

I need You as much today as I did yesterday. Your kids should see you in that position of prayer and worship and treating your spouse right. You're raising a generation that will at some point defend the faith that was once and all entrusted to the saints.

Men, you're called to lead your homes. You're not a passive observer. For the love of God, put that thing out in the garage for a month and start reading the Word of God.

Yeah, it's boring and it's hard because the flesh has to come under submission. The reason you have no passion for the Word of God is because you're living like hell. How can we live like hell and expect the glorious gospel to reign and rule in our heart? How can we feed our mind with darkness all week and expect the light of the gospel to penetrate on Saturdays? You think I come up here and just do this because of today? This is a byproduct of what my week was as I search Him and seek Him and worship Him.

Then I can come up here out of that relationship because what goes in here comes out here. Same with you. There's no difference.

Now, you remember that story I read or that email I received of that man at the beginning of the sermon who was sleeping in his clothes? I had become someone I never thought I would become. I was in complete darkness. I would sleep in my clothes for as long as I could.

I began wishing that I would die. The emotional pain was unbearable. Now, read a correspondence that he gave after he fully surrendered his life to Christ.

And I quote him. I only wish that everyone could feel the peace, the joy and love that I now experience. I'm able to forgive others and genuinely love them.

I feel like I've been reborn. Elusive peace has now been found. But see, that's the power of Christ.

That's the power of a person sitting clothed and in the right mind at the foot of Christ. But it's not until you fully surrender your life. Why do you think I promote that so much? I've tried Jesus out.

I don't know. See how it goes. No.

Somebody always says, Shane, it's just a crutch. No, it's a whole hospital. I need Him.

I need Him every day, every waking hour. I need Him. That fully surrendered life.

The enemy cannot take hold when a person fully surrenders their life to Christ. It might be difficult. I shared with you I almost quit the first two months we planted this church.

I told my wife, I'm ready to quit. Who can we give this over to? Because we got hit with pneumonia and strep throat and foot and mouth disease. My kid almost broke his arm within a couple months.

More sickness in two months than I've ever felt in all of our last 12, 15 years. In two months. Holding my son as he's crying because he can't eat anything at night.

And then waking up three or four times a night to them screaming bad dreams. What the heck is going on? So I finally went in my office and I shed some tears. I said, God, I'm not quitting.

You've called me to do this. I'm not quitting. Greater is He that's in me than He that's in the world.

Devil, you should have killed me 20 years ago because now you upset me. So there will be oppression. There will be difficult times.

You can ask her, I was gonna quit. Say, how do we get out of this one? Turn it over to this church? Remember? Call Chris over at Grace Chapel. See if he can take these people.

Because I'm not gonna do this. But he knew where to get me. Because all my kids, watching my kids cry.

From everything and being oppressed and waking up. Remember Aubrey, we carried her. She was having seizures or something.

I didn't know what to do. All of this. All in two months.

60 days. Bombardment. I was just existing.

So please don't misunderstand my saying, oh, just think positive thoughts and move on. You can't just tell a depressed person, get over it, read some scripture, come on. I know, I got it.

But I do want to remind you that the Bible and God makes provision for all of our needs. Turn to Him, look to Him. Of all the people, when I counsel people, I've been to houses before.

I remember a lady in Courtsill, fear, anxiety, all these things. I said, tell me about your devotional life. I don't have one.

Nine times out of ten, the people who are struggling with the things, we have no time for God. We're not feeding on His Word. We're not feeding on the things that bring healing, spiritual healing and wholeness.

So don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. Get up in the morning, read His Word, put on worship, even when you don't feel like it. As a matter of fact, your will is going to have to come into submission to what you know to be right.

It takes a while to bring that flesh into submission. How do you live without God at the center of your life? I want to just ask some of you that as a closing question when you leave here. You don't have to answer.

But how in the world do you live without God at the center of your life? If anything, I came to give the message just for this point. Stop living with God on the fringes. Make Him everything.

Everything. Everything. Submit to His rule and His reign.

And it's not oppression. It's freedom. When God truly has control, there's tremendous freedom.

What happens? Opening the door to darkness shuts off the light of the Spirit. Let's see what that looks like, right? Did you hear what I said? Opening the door to darkness shuts off the light of the Spirit. Think about this.

Shane, I'm a Christian. Why am I living in darkness? I'm a Christian, Shane. Why am I living in darkness? I see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I see those emergency lights. But I'm living in this darkness. I don't know how to get out of it.

Let me read these lyrics real quick. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I was lost, but now I'm found.

Was blind, but now I see. T'was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.

Can you relate to this? Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come. T'was grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. When we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first began.

The only way to turn this darkness out, to get this darkness out of your life, is to worship God. Praise God. In the midst of the storm, praise God.

In the midst of the oppression, praise Him.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/2svIWzhge5s.mp4>

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