

Save Me From Myself

by Shane Idleman

The sermon explores the tension between free will and predestination, and encourages listeners to believe in both and to pray for the salvation of others.

Duration: 46:26

Scripture: Luke 16:19

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Personal Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the internal struggle of pride and the battle against the old sinful nature within oneself. It discusses the importance of prayer, fasting, and intercession for the salvation of loved ones. The message highlights the urgency of turning to God, the reality of hell, and the need to clothe oneself with Christ's righteousness to avoid eternal separation from God.

Transcript

Save Me From Myself. And I've learned, I don't know about you, but the devil is after me. The world influences me, but I'm more worried about what's in here.

This can take me down quicker than anything else. And it's what Christians refer to as our old man. Not your husband.

The old man. The old sinful nature that should be dead. We should be dead to this old man, but he comes knocking at the door every chance he gets.

And he wants back in the house. So you're fighting this old man that wants to eat too much, and drink too much, and say the wrong things, and the wrong attitudes, and just live off the flesh in this. Paul talks about it as this war inside, and that our choices are never free from this conflict.

So that's what this whole topic is about. Save Me From Myself. And I think our prayer should be for unbelievers and believers too.

If we're an unbeliever, what's happening inside is pride is there, and you don't want to turn to God, and you will destroy yourself if God doesn't save you. And Matthew 22 really sheds a lot of light on this, and I wanted to just start with verse 1. In Matthew chapter 22 verse 1, and Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables. Now this is amazing.

Jesus is going through parable, after parable, after parable, and he's saying again, I'm speaking to you by parables, saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding, and they were not willing to come. Now this actually was kind of sad, I thought about this week, because here's this man who's inviting all these people to come to this wedding for his son, and they're not willing. And Jesus is actually paralleling this with the kingdom of God.

That God is saying, listen, go out and invite, but they are not willing to come. So you have this empty wedding banquet, and they're not willing to come. Now I want to stop and talk about this for a minute.

Not willing to come. Now that really involves the will. There's something there that they're not willing to do something.

So anytime the Bible says they're not willing to do something, it tells me that they can do something, but they're not willing to do it. Now here's where it gets a little tricky, and I want to talk about this. There are two sides of the equation, or I should say two sides of the debate, on this area of the free will, and man not doing what God calls them to do.

The first side of the coin is called prevenient grace, and it's more from someone like John Wesley. And it says that God's grace is given to everyone. That a person has the ability to accept or reject the gospel, and since everyone receives this ability, those who believe are not called, I'm sorry, those who believe are not especially favored by God in comparison with those who don't believe.

So in other words, this side says that God's call to enter this banquet, God's call to enter into heaven goes out to everybody, and that man is responsible to accept or reject that invitation. Now the other side is what's known as irresistible grace, and it teaches, like this would be John Calvin and Calvinism, teaches that God's saving grace is applied to those whom God has predestined to save, and God overcomes their resistance to repent. So in other words, if you're, when the Bible says that they're not willing to come, this side would say they cannot come unless they are elect, unless they're predestined by God, and God actually, a person is resistant to repenting, so God would actually regenerate them and then give them the faith and the ability to repent and believe the gospel.

In other words, this could keep, make it real simple, nobody's coming to heaven, nobody's going to heaven at all, except this side and those who God calls and He elects certain people throughout time in history. It's called predestination election. So God predestined certain people for heaven, the rest are out of luck.

So that's the two schools of thought. The reason there's two schools of thought is because scripture teaches both, and let's, here's a few scriptures that they teach. John 6 44, no one can come to Christ unless the Father who sent Christ draws them.

Nobody can come to God unless God draws them. Acts 13 48, and when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And you see this election, and you see that it's clearly taught, but also you see that this other side is clearly taught.

And what I did to this evening is I brought my Bible from home. I usually don't bring this, I just leave it in my office, and I started listing scriptures that talked about God commanding us to do something, and we are held responsible. And the scripture list doesn't seem to end.

It just keeps going until the back of my Bible is taken up. And it's interesting because when I would read in, let's say, Romans, that eternal life is given to those who do good, who obey the gospel, but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, wrath comes upon them. Also in Romans, the free gift of salvation came to all men.

Jeremiah, the Lord is saying this, perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way that I may relent concerning the calamity which I have proposed to bring on them. So either God is schizophrenia, if I pronounce that right, or right, I don't know if I did. Close? Schizophrenia? I'll just kind of at the end and nobody will know.

Schizophrenia. Okay. There we go.

Schizophrenic. So either God is that, or he's saying here, perhaps everyone will listen and they'll turn to me. So he's asking the question, if these people would turn to me and listen, I would cause my wrath to not lay upon them if they turn back to me.

Ezekiel, yet if you warn the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness, he shall die. That tells me that he can perform what's being asked. Numbers, remember the commands of the Lord and do them and do not follow the harlotry that you are inclined to follow.

So that would tell me that people can follow the Lord. Jeremiah 26, the Lord says, amend your ways and your doings and obey the voice of the Lord. Then he will relent concerning the doom he has pronounced.

So either man can do this or he cannot. God's not saying, do this. Oh, that's right.

You can't do it. I'm just joking with y'all from Texas tonight. So he's, I mean, so that's my confusion.

I see that, yeah, God is sovereign and yeah, salvation is his work and yeah, nobody can come to the Son. But I see all these, what about John 5, but you are not willing to come to me. So it's not like Jesus is saying, listen, you're not coming to me unless you're elect.

He's saying, you're not willing to come to me. You're not, there's something inside of you that's preventing. John 12, he who rejects me has that which judges him already.

So it tells me that a person can reject. Ezekiel, you shall speak my word whether they hear it or they refuse. I can keep going the whole night if you want.

But you get the point, right? There's so many scriptures in here. They would not obey me. Ezekiel 20, not they could not obey me, but they would not obey me.

First Timothy, God desires all men everywhere to be saved. Now this can upset some people, not anybody here, but those online. Either that's true or it's not.

If God desires that all people be saved, then the call goes out to everybody so that opportunity is given. You can't say only certain people are going to be saved, but I desire that everybody be saved. That's a contradiction of a God who cannot lie because he's saying something that's not true.

Now here's where people get, here's where it gets heated. When I say things like that, people are saying that's a good work in somebody. I'm not saying it's a good work.

I'm saying that God gets all the glory, all the credit for salvation. He draws, He convicts, He gets the reward, He gets everything. It's His work, but He gives man the opportunity to accept or reject what's being offered.

If not, they can't be punished for something they are not able to perform. But it's been debated, and we're not stopping it here tonight, and I see a healthy tension between both sides. Actually, it would be the 5th century in the 400s, 400, I don't want to say when, but 480, there was a man called St. Augustine.

Many of you have heard of him. He actually debated a man called Pelagian, and from that, there's a heresy comes out of that called Pelagianism that believes that little babies are not sinners. That they're really good, they're good people, they're good, and because of their environment, they become wicked.

So that's not true either. So you'd have Augustine debating God's election, and you would have Pelagian debating free will. But I would rather hang on Augustine's side of the camp, not Pelagian, because out of that came a lot of interesting things that weren't real healthy.

And to be honest, the whole thing's honest, right? But let me emphasize a point here, is with Augustine, actually early on in his beliefs, he would embrace free will. And then he wrote something later in his life called The Retractions, where he retracted from his earlier writings and began to understand the sovereignty of God. And then Martin Luther and the Great Reformation, and John Calvin were God's men for sovereignty, and God's sovereignty, and God gets all the glory for salvation.

And Luther debated a man called Erasmus. So Erasmus would be on the free will side, Luther on the Calvinistic side. Or in his book, it's called The Bondage of the Will, and he talked about how our will is in bondage.

So what happened though, is out of Roman Catholicism, it was all about good works, right? You work your way to God, the penance, and things that works, and works, and works, and works, and works. So they wanted to get away from the works and say that salvation has nothing to do with works. It's justification through faith alone, by grace alone, through Christ alone.

And out of that came the five solas of the Reformation. Grace alone, Christ alone, truth alone, all these things that I'm getting way sidetracked here. But that's where, that's why this debate has sparked.

Because it's one side saying, no man can do this. The other side saying, no man can't do that. That's a good work.

And really, there's a healthy tension. I believe in both. I believe that God is sovereign.

When I pray for the salvation of my kids, I'm not hoping that they all come to know faith on their own, but that God would draw them, God would convict them. And scripture is crystal clear, that election is taught, and God predestines, but also that man is held responsible for his actions. That's, if you look at, I mean, unless I have to go and throw out 552 verses that talk about man choosing to obey God and the benefits of that choice, or rejecting to obey God and then following that course.

And out of that comes, this whole debate, comes something that's important maybe to mention, it's called the order of salvation. Order of salvation. So those who believe in free will would say that the order of salvation is this.

The call of God comes, they embrace the call, the message of the gospel through faith, they repent and they're regenerated. That's the message of the order of salvation. But the other side that would say that, actually I confused you because it should have been this side, but the side that's election and Calvinism and predestination would say this.

The order of salvation is a person is elect, so say I'm chosen by God, none of you are, I'm sorry, and that's just the way it is on this analogy. I'm elect, and because I'm elect, God's going to regenerate me, save me, fill me with the Holy Spirit, I'm regenerated. So now because I'm regenerated, I can exhibit faith and repent.

But in my opinion, we see the opposite of that in the gospel. A person believes, has faith, repents, and is regenerated. So I don't agree with that order of salvation either, but it has to be that to fit that type of theology.

So people always ask, what side of the fence are you on? I'm not on either side of the fence, I'm on the fence, in a good way. I believe God's sovereignty, I believe in election, clearly taught in Ephesians 1, I believe that God called John the Baptist, he called Paul, that God called me to the ministry, that God saved me. But I also believe that I will be held responsible, as were everybody on the planet, for the choices they make.

And then it gets more confusing when Matthew Henry, who is a Calvinist, I love his commentary, I would recommend it highly, four or five hundred years ago, actually George Whitefield, when he preached, would only bring the Bible and Matthew Henry's commentary with him. That tells you how powerful it is. Matthew Henry, Calvinist who believes in election, said this, the reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him is not because they cannot, but because they will not.

But that doesn't fit the Calvinistic theology. I just, that, I don't see how that fits, because they will not means that they have the opportunity to do something, or they don't have to do something. And also I remember somebody who believed in election Calvinism, had a big audience at a big football field, and he told everybody, after his message, he said, you all have a decision to make today.

And I wanted to reach to the television and say, no they don't. If you believe what you believe, that God's only going to choose a few dozen of those people, you just told all of them a lie. He just said, you all have a choice today, to make today.

You can accept Christ, that's not true. That's, if you truly believe election, you can't tell people have a choice today, because they don't have a choice. They are, those who are not elected, the only choice is hell and damnation for the rest of their eternity.

That's their choice. So we can't, it's very hard to try to take one side or the other. If you take it, this side of it, and you say, no, it's all man's choice, God doesn't know how man's going to choose, oh Lord, that would be scary.

And how that all fits together, I don't know. I'll read John MacArthur, I'll read Jack Kafer, I'll read John Piper, I'll read Norman Geisler, I'll read Wayne Grudem, and then I'll read D.A. Carson, I'll read, and just, it just, you know, you've got Charles Hodge on systematic theology of Calvinism, then you have current, somebody like Norman Geisler, who would believe in chosen but free, and you have this this huge debate. And that's mainly why, in my opinion, is that both are true.

Nobody looking at the Bible is going to say that man saves himself. But I can't read this, and I can't read a chapter without getting away from the fact that choose life that you may live. Choose death and you will die.

God gives us a choice. So how, you know, so the bottom line is, believe both. It's very healthy to believe both, because, and it'll make sense in eternity.

I think a lot of reason why it doesn't make a lot of sense, maybe, is because, you know, if we thought, if we knew, okay, man doesn't have to, man's not responsible for anything, it's just God, we would just, it would be chaotic. But then if we thought that it was all up to man, oh, it would be, it would be a mess. No, because whether we all admit it or not, we all pray like Calvinists.

God, please save my children. I don't say, God, I know you can't do anything about this, but why am I even praying? They'll either come to know you or they won't. I mean, why even pray about that? No, you pray, Lord, save my children.

Lord, convert my husband. Well, what kind of prayer is that? God, convert your husband. Well, because both are true.

God, I believe that the more we petition and we get the heart of God and God looks for intercessory prayer warriors. There's nothing wrong with that. We need more people to stand in the gap.

That word stand in the gap comes from Ezekiel. When God told Ezekiel, look, I look throughout the whole land. I look for a man who would stand before me on behalf of the land and build a wall before me that I might not destroy the land, but I found no one.

He said, I'm just looking for a few good men and women who would stand in the gap and intercede so that prayer moves the hand of God. The prophets would pray and Hezekiah, King Hezekiah's illness would be cured. The prophets would pray and God would relent.

The Bible says that God would repent. Not the way we're thinking of repent, but that he would change his mind. He would change a course of action by the prayers of his people.

Wonderful example. You ever heard of a guy named Jonah? Don't watch Veggie Tales. Read this version instead because they weren't slapped by fish.

It's hard being a preacher and watching stuff like that. A lot of people like the Bible, you know, the Bible movie, right? I'm sitting there going, well that didn't happen. Well, that's not correct.

I mean, it was a good attempt. I would encourage people to watch it, but just sitting there I could find so many things that just, why don't they just get a theologian to sit on the set? But back to my whole point. I don't like these rabbit trails.

God called Jonah to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Wicked. I mean, they would pile skulls of the nations they conquered as pyramids.

And Jonah just walks in and says, in 40 days God is going to judge Nineveh. Repent. I'm out of here.

And the king calls a fast. The people repent. Even the cattle fasted.

And it says God relented, relented from the harm that he was going to do to Nineveh because of the prayer. So don't tell me prayers and repentance and fasting don't help before God. That's actually what we need.

That's what our nation needs. We keep putting up that banner, but how often do we do it? If my people are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face. This isn't seven steps to success.

This is God's ordained plan to save humanity. And Nineveh was spared 150 years later until Naaman comes on the scene, I believe it was him, the minor prophet, and pronounced judgment. And judgment fell because they fell to repent.

Hezekiah and the kings of Manasseh and all these different things you see in the Bible that God is asking his people to come back to him. Come back and repent. We're still on page one of the notes.

So page two, Matthew 22. I'm going to read this again because it's probably everybody forgot about it. And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said, The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son and sent out his servants to call those who were not, who were invited to the wedding.

And they were not willing to come. Did I get that point across? 20 minutes into this sermon, I got that point across. All right.

They were not willing to come. And again, verse four, again, he sent out other servants. This is amazing.

God's sending out servants and they're rejecting him. And then he sends out servants again. And he says, Tell those who are invited, see, I've prepared a dinner.

My oxen and fatted cattle are killed and all things are ready. Come to the wedding. He's asking again and again.

It reminded me that a person going, when they end up in hell, going to hell is not easy. They reject God all of their life. God's saying, Again, I'm asking.

I'm sending messengers. I'm sending conviction. I'm sending circumstances.

I'm sending everything. And again, and again, and again. So by the time they end up in eternal darkness, separated from God, it was hard getting there because they had to fight God their entire life.

I don't think people realize that. Oh, there's this mean God's just going to throw you in hell. No, you continue to reject and reject and reject and reject and reject until one day the hammer falls.

Servants in this parable are messengers. When God says I sent servants to invite them, God's servants are messengers, and that's God's chosen means to invite people to the gospel. I don't, if I, like I told the first service, if I were God, I would just put a big hand the size of Mount Whitney up in the sky.

Repent now and believe, or whatever, or do lightning bolts, or just, but God sends messengers. He invites people to the gospel invitation. And again, that excerpt I read a few weeks ago, I want to read again from Spirit Empowered Preaching.

He said this, it must be understood that the preacher does not share, he declares. Preaching is not a little talk. It's not a fireside chat.

It's preaching the gospel because you're inviting people to partake. You're inviting people to come to know God in a powerful way. So it's an invitation.

These messengers are basically, these servants going out are messengers. But what happened? Well, verse 5, but they made light of it, and they went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. Now if you knew a little bit of Jewish history, which these people did, he's saying here that people made light of it, they went their way, but they seized his servants, and they treated them spitefully, and they killed them.

Here's a sad reality about Jewish history, is that the majority of the people that God sent to warn his people and to draw them back, they were killed. They were killed by the people they're supposed to be helping. What happened? The Bible says they stopped up their ears.

Get out of here. We don't want to hear these messages. And a lot of people are asking me now, too, I'm hearing more and more online and different things about the great falling away, right? The great falling away.

The great falling away, I'm going to tell you in a sentence or two, is when you see the church falling away from truth. When the glorious gospel of sin, repentance, judgment, the blood of Christ, all the foundational doctrines of the rich heritage of the faith that lead people to the cross, when those are minimized and you begin to discard those away, there's a great falling away, because it's no longer an invitation to a wedding. It's mockery, and that's what the falling away is.

It's a falling away from truth. The God of the Bible, and that's where you'll see a lot of people, well, what about this, and what about this, and we don't want to talk about this anymore, and that's what the falling away is. They'll begin to see people.

Paul told Timothy that, well, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. What is sound doctrine? When you say, well, that's sound. What do you mean? It's weighty.

It's heavy. It's complete. It has everything.

So sound doctrine, what I often say is, it's God's mercy and grace, but it's his judgment and holiness. It's God's love, but it's also his wrath. It's God's peace, but it's also his anger.

It's his joy. It's a totality. Sound doctrine.

They will not want to endure sound doctrine anymore, because it's the hard things that hurt. The soft things don't hurt. Think about it.

If I left after the service, I got down to Sunset Boulevard by 9 o'clock, and I walked down and said, God loves you. Oh, thanks, man. Cool.

But if I said, you need to repent of your sin, change your lifestyle, I might not make it back. Is that the truth, though? You can say one thing, and it's fine, but you add the emphasis on the other, and it's not fine. And they made light of it.

Do you know what to make light of something is? It's to treat it as if it's unimportant or humorous. God forbid when we treat the gospel or God like it's humorous. I mean, can you imagine? It just drives me crazy.

Every Saturday Night Live skit that mocks Christians, every Hollywood TV shows that puts God in a bad light, every atheist that mocks the resurrection, that disdains Jesus, and you've got plays where now Jesus is a bisexual, and all these things, they're mocking, they're making light of the gospel. Where there's jeers, at some point there's gonna be tears. They're laughing at it, but there's some point they're gonna be faced before Almighty God.

And I thought, we feel fear, but when we feel fear, ISIS, or you hear of a robbery, or this, we feel fear, we turn to God. But who are you gonna turn to when you're standing before Almighty God, and you've denied Him all of your life? That's tremendous. I don't even know if I could face that fear, because you're not gonna call out to God.

You've just been denying Him. So there's this, you see that they're mocking it, mocking. I mean, you just look, the TV, the Christian is like the dumbest idiot on the planet.

I mean, you can say that we came from tadpoles, and you're fine. Or we came on the back of crystals being planted by aliens. Richard Dawkins or Hawkins, one of those top minds, said that.

I mean, it's just ridiculous. This little ooze just forms a little cell, and it hops out on the ground. And now it can't use fins anymore, so it's got to develop feet, and it's got to walk, and then it develops a little heart, little lungs, and little hands, and, but these scientific minds in our community, even NASA, all these top minds are like, oh, yes, and evolution, and look at this.

But when you say creation, creator, look, people get visibly upset. They make fun of it. They poke, and they poke, and they poke.

And they try to make humor out of something that's not humorous. But I remind people, God has been drawing you since you were a child. His existence is clearly seen throughout creation, from the rising sun to the complex molecular structure of the universe.

This is why true preaching of the true gospel upsets many. They are making light of eternal consequences. And that's why people make light of it, because it's something serious we don't want to embrace.

Anytime it's something serious we don't want to embrace, you just make light of it. You see those people joke around about something serious? I mean, I've even seen people on their deathbed start joking around, because they're worried about what's coming. And then verse 7, but when the king heard about it, he was furious, and he sent out his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

Then he said to his servants, the wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore, go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite them to the wedding. That's another parallel here, proving the fact that God invites whosoever.

Oh, I think that says that in the Bible somewhere. Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Not just certain people, not certain groups, whosoever.

The call is everywhere. So these servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have a wedding garment.

So he said to him, friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called, but few are chosen.

Now that verse would go along with election. Many are called, but few are chosen. I believe it's where, if you look up in the Greek, it's where they get that word, election, from that word.

So many are called, but few are chosen. And you know, it also reminded me that there is outer darkness, and there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and if hell is a reality, it needs to be discussed. I mean, of all the places, the church should be telling people, hey guys, you don't want to go to this place.

I mean, eternal darkness. I can't, and what happens is, people are speculating, is it really fire? Is it, well, who cares? I just, I mean, really? Well, it's bad. You don't want to be there.

And what happens is, when a person, God says, I cannot dwell. I am a holy, righteous God. I cannot dwell with sinful man.

So it's called imputed righteousness. God gives us the righteousness of Christ, and because of that, we can stand before God in His presence. So those who deny that, deny that provision, have, are cast into outer darkness, where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Can you imagine the regret that a person's feeling? I mean, I get, I get upset over a regret of a few days. I can't imagine sitting there, and weeping, and regretting, oh God, oh God, if I could just go back. And it's, it's outer darkness.

And this man refused to accept and put on the garment. Basically, he crashed the party. If you want today's vernacular, he crashed the party.

He went in without the correct attire. Garments often refer to our character. Clothe yourself with humility, the Bible would say, or Jesus in Revelation.

I have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. So, defiled their garments. The garments, putting on righteous, Christ's righteousness.

That's the only way we can stand before God. And this reminds me of the man who's standing before God, and Jesus reminds him, many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we did all these things in your name. But Jesus will say, depart from me.

I don't know you. You don't have on the correct attire. You're not clothed in Christ's righteousness.

I mean, I don't know, people just don't know why people don't get more passionate. I mean, this is, this is life and death. This is heaven and hell.

This is reality. And sometimes I think, which is like, we sometimes think, well, it's just, you know, when I get to God, you know, up in heaven, I'll give God a sales pitch. I can convince him.

I'm pretty good convincer. He'll see my good works. Actually, you'll be, you'll be speechless.

This man was speechless. Luke 16, 19. If you want to read it at your leisure when you get home.

But it goes like this. Jesus said that there was a rich man who always dressed in the finest clothes and lived in luxury every day. And a very poor man named Lazarus, whose body was covered with sores and laid at the rich man's gate.

Later, Lazarus died and the angels carried him to the arms of Abraham. And from this comes a thought of theology of Abraham's bosom, where the Old Testament saints would actually be waiting for the Messiah before they could enter in into God's presence into Abraham's bosom. The rich man died too.

And he was buried in the place of the dead. And he was in much pain. The rich man saw Abraham far away with Lazarus at his side.

And he called, Father Abraham, have mercy on me. Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue because I'm suffering in this fire. So we see this picture of torment and suffering.

There's a fire there. He can feel the pain. And because there's another thought of annihilation.

I don't know if you've heard of that. Some people have embraced annihilation over the years. That means God will just annihilate people.

And they will no longer exist. But that doesn't seem to really hold a lot of biblical weight either. It's a nice concept, but it doesn't hold biblical to the fire, biblically, if you put the scripture course to that.

But Abraham's a child. Remember when you were alive, you had the good things in life, but bad things happened to Lazarus. Lazarus, now he was comforted here and you are suffering.

Beside there is a great big pit between you and us that no one can cross over. And no one can leave there and come here. The rich man said, Father, then please send Lazarus to my father's house.

And I have five brothers. And he can warn them so that they will not come to this place of pain. But Abraham said, they have the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets.

Let them learn from them. The rich man said, no, Father Abraham, if someone goes to them from the dead, they would believe and change their hearts and lives. But Abraham said to him, if they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not listen to someone who has come back from the dead.

And isn't that true? Because Jesus comes back from the dead, proclaims who he is, and they still don't believe him. So we see, and I don't think it's an analogy necessarily, Jesus is using real words here of what's happening. They see there's tremendous pain, there's fire, there's this torment, there's please go back and warn those.

And I even thought this week, can you imagine the Father being there in this place of outer darkness saying, let me go back. I misled my family. I allowed garbage into my home.

I chased everything but God. Let me go back and warn my children. You see this, I can picture this father here in this place of Hades of hell and saying, let me go back.

Oh, my God, what have I done? There's a whole family. There's a genealogy there following after my footsteps. And you can't, it's too late.

And the mother saying, oh, but I misled my family through New Age philosophy. And I misled and I drove my family away from the cross. Let me go back.

And I have three daughters that are still there. Let me go back. And the answer is the same.

You can't go back. They have the Bible, they have the Word of God, they have the law, they have the prophets, they have Jesus coming back from the dead. If they don't listen to them, you going back in some seance is not going to change anything.

That's not even biblical. But can you think of that? Even the young adult that wants to go back and warn people. I mean, do we honestly believe that anyone who is spending eternity separated from God would encourage us to stay on the same path? I mean, if people just think about that, everybody, well, I shouldn't say that, but I will speculate that I believe everybody in hell would change that course if they could in a heartbeat.

And if anybody's on that path, they would come back and they would warn that person. They would plead with that person to turn back to God. And I know encouragement is a great motivator, but so is reality.

And I don't want to scare people, but I do want to prepare you. Because at some point, we have to talk about saving me from myself, the greatest enemy is within. See, this is where it gets interesting, too.

We know we're fighting the flesh inside, the enemy, the devil, and the world. Those three things we're pretty clear on. But the enemy and the world will not put a person in hell.

They can only influence. It's what's going on in the inside of a person. And what stops a person from receiving this message is a five-letter word that's very ugly called pride.

I like being God of my own life. And that's what I'm talking about tomorrow when I talk about my testimony. That nearly killed me.

I look back and I have to praise God. I have to thank God. What he got me out of in my teen years and my young adult years, nothing but his sheer grace.

And it was pride keeping me from turning to God. I thought, Christians don't have any fun. All the fun is in the world and this lifestyle because that's how the devil keeps tricking you.

You go through a two-day hangover, and then by the fifth day, you're like, oh, that wasn't too bad. Let me go through that again. And after a year, after a year of doing this, and after meeting, getting hooked up with wrong relationships, and they promised the world but only bring despair, and destitution, and you're back again, and misery.

Why is there so much anxiety? And why is there so much depression in our culture? Why is it? Because people continually are believing the lie. The prodigal son doesn't want to come home. Oh, there's really no hell, and there's really God's going to... He's a good God, and I'm a good person.

And what did it say earlier? They make light of it. That's why I love the time afterwards of prayer and worship because this is when you can actually intercede on behalf of those that you know are not walking

with the Lord. Remember Ezekiel.

In Ezekiel's day, God said, I look for a man from among the people who would build a wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land that I might not destroy it, but I found no one. There's power in intercession. God's looking for people to intercede for your spouse, for your family, for your kids, for your dad, for your mother.

Go and intercede for them during prayer and say, God, I'm holding on to you until you answer, and I'm holding on until this person is safe. I'm not letting loose. How do we know that God doesn't answer those prayers? We know that He does answer those prayers.

And I believe that there are a lot of people snatched from almost ending up in hell and ending up in heaven because God heard the prayers of moms and dads on their knees before God every morning crying out to God to save their family, save their children. And I don't know how it works, but somehow God hears the prayers of His people. And in the Bible, I can take you to King Hezekiah.

I can take you to the Old Testament. In many different cases where God was going to do something, but He reversed. The Bible actually says God repented.

And it's not repentance that we think of. It's the same word there. He changed His mind or changed the course on what He was going to do because the prayers of His people.

There was a wicked city called Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. And He sent Jonah to go to these people. And he just went in there and he said, 40 days, and Nineveh is going to be destroyed.

And what did the Ninevites do? They got on their face before God. They called the fast. And the Bible says that God relented from the disaster that He proclaimed upon that city because people prayed and fasted and sought God.

I mean, I can take you to kings and kingdoms and plans that were thwarted and all these things because people prayed and people sought God like never before. That's one of my concerns is we're so much in a hurry these days. We don't have time for prayer.

It's just quickly glanced over. And then we wonder why we're in certain situations. We wonder why our kids are not walking with the Lord.

We wonder why we're not getting answers because prayer is not an afterthought. It should be a priority. And you've got to fight the flesh.

The flesh is hungry. The flesh is bored. But you tell the flesh, no, we're going to pray and we're going to worship you tonight, God, and I want you to answer the prayers of your people.

And I truly believe it was from the prayers of my mom who would just pray and she would put the Bible on my ACDC records. Am I dating myself? Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Motley Crue, Metallica. As I got a little older and she would put the Bible and she would say, you have no power in this house.

You have no power over my son. And there's cars. I rolled cars without seatbelts on.

I did things that I don't even know why I'm here. And God would hear the prayers of that mother late at night saying, save my son. Put your angels in charge of him.

And I'm just so concerned that we minimize prayer. I see so many parents where kids are not walking with the Lord and they're spending no time in prayer. They've got tons of time for Oprah, tons of time for Facebook, but they have no time to pray and fast to bring the prodigal son home or to bring the daughter back home.

They have no time to pray and fast. Fasting? Well, there we go. Yeah, fasting is like prayer on steroids because you're destroying the flesh.

You're coming, fasting basically says, God, I want it so bad that I'm not eating today. That's how bad I want it. I'm gonna pray and I'm gonna fast.

I'm gonna tell the flesh to shut your mouth because you're gonna answer the prayers of this dying and crying heart. That's how bad I want it. That's passionate prayer.

That's what it looks like. It's travail. It hurts.

It's called warfare. It's warfare. We understand warfare and football.

Battle. I mean, Vince Lombardi, right? He can say that any man's greatest hour, his finest sense of achievement is when he lies exhausted on the field of battle victorious. But we can't say that about Christians.

Any Christian's finest hour is when he lays on his floor with tears stained on his carpet victorious because he's held on to God and God answered. And I love reading old books on old saints that used to pray and it's something I would see consistently that I don't hear about anymore. How long did they pray? They would say they prayed until God answered.

We don't know nothing about them. I would record, I can take you to the Whitfield, the journals of George Whitfield, of David Brainerd, of John Wesley, of Amy Carmichael to their journals. They would say, I had a wonderful time of prayer from 11 at night till 4 in the morning and then God answered.

What was that again? But it just, we don't, we don't know that anymore. I think that's where we're, you don't, see it's not about rules. It's about people crying out to God.

They would hold on to God. The old Methodists were circuit writers. They would record in their journals too that they spent the night in prayer until God answered.

How did they know that God answered? Because there's an assurance that wells up inside of you. And some of you know what I'm talking about. Most of you have no clue what I'm talking about.

But you can get to a point in prayer where you, it's higher than any drug you've ever taken because, oh God, I feel it deep in my spirit. My spirit is crying, Abba Father. And it's the Holy Spirit in me praying.

Who's the Holy Spirit praying to? God the Father. There's a union there. And you know all my prayers have been answered.

But we don't spend, we Burger King mentality. Let me put my order. Let me get through.

Let me eat it within five minutes. And that's got to change folks. That's, that's how you grab the heart of God as you spend time seeking Him.

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