

# The Character of God (Video)

by Shane Idleman

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*This sermon delves into the character of God, emphasizing the importance of understanding His nature, which includes justice, holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, love, and mercy. It highlights the need for believers to align themselves with God's standards, seek His mercy and grace, and experience His faithfulness and love in their lives.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Peter 1:16, Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 10:13, John 3:16, Psalm 51:1

**Topics:** "Understanding God's Character", "Aligning with Divine Standards"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I'm going to talk this morning about a very important topic. It's the character of God. And we are on a series through systematic theology.

Many of you know what that is, some of you don't. We're going through theology, which is the study of God, His nature, His character, the fall of man, redemption, the structure of the church, the elements of communion, the depravity of man, the work of the Holy Spirit. You're going through theology systematically.

So I'm teaching on that each week, but it's called Theology on Fire for a very important reason. Because you can have the Bible and it be very dead. You know that.

Many of you might feel that way now. Is this a very dead book? Is it boring? Have you rarely looked at it? Or, you can have fire, right? All the emotions, all this stuff, but no theology, no sound doctrine, no concrete on the foundation. So what I want to do is marry theology with fire.

Practical application. I believe that preaching is theology coming through a person who's on fire for God. It brings practical application into our lives.

So you can't have one without the other. You can't just, well, if it's odd, it's God. If it feels right, it's right.

Let's just do whatever we want. Because then we get in trouble, right? There's groups called cults that have done that. And getting weird.

And you can't just, if you just have sound doctrine, without the power of the Holy Spirit, you'll become a cemetery. Church will be dead. And it's not life-giving.

So that's the whole point of this series. It's going to be quite a long series, and we're going to go through different things in regard to theology. My goal is to spark a hunger in you for the things of God.

That's my goal. Is to get you hungry for the things of God. And we're talking about the character of God this morning.

It's who He is. Now don't confuse it with the attributes of God. Like omnipresent.

He's everywhere. Omni-powerful. He's all-powerful.

Omniknowing and omniscient, right? And those kind of words. And all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere. That's a whole different thing, and I'm planning on hopefully getting to that as well.

But what I'm talking about this morning is the character of God. Who is God? Wouldn't you like to know that? Come on, 11 o'clock. You should be more awake than the 9 o'clock.

Alright, that's good. See, even if you didn't set your clocks ahead, we don't know coming to the 11. But the 9 a.m., we could tell.

So the character of God. Who He is. Because really, reputation is who you are around others.

Character is who you are when no one's around. It's really who we are. The character of God.

And with this whole study, I'm in awe sometimes that I'm able to come up and talk about God. Can you believe that? And we want to be very careful in this area. We want to make sure we stick to Scripture and not misrepresent who He is.

A quote that is commonly attributed to Abraham Lincoln. I'm going to read it really quick for you. It says, nearly all men can stand adversity.

But if you want to test a man's character, give him power. Did you catch that? All men can stand adversity. Nearly all men.

But if you truly want to test a man's character, give him power. Because power can corrupt. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

And the founders of our nation, when they began to write the Declaration of Independence and different things, they put this into that. And they divided the branches of government. Executive legislation.

Judicial forms of government. That's why they did it. To spread out that power.

Because they understood that absolute power corrupts absolutely. But it is interesting when it comes to God. Ultimate power.

Ultimate authority. And perfect character. Doesn't abuse the power.

Actually uses the power for our good, for our benefit. And we're looking then at the character of God. Two weeks ago I talked about the Bible.

Truth or tolerance. Is it true or do we just tolerate it? And obviously it's true. We have CDs of that if you need that.

But I talked about the different translations. If you remember on this side was formal equivalence. Formal equivalence means that it's a word for word translation of the Bible.

And then you have dynamic equivalence. That is the thought for thought translation of the Bible. Like the New Living Translation, NLT.

Or the Message Bible or different things. I don't use these Bibles very often. I try to stick with a word for word.

They take the Greek manuscript and they translate it word for word with our understanding. King James used a lot of language that we don't understand. So the new King James tries to bring it up to what we understand better.

But I said all that to say this. I'm actually going to do something different this morning. I'm going to use a thought for thought translation.

I looked up all these, compared them with the word for word. And there's nothing where it doesn't go off anywhere. But trying to explain the character of God.

I wanted to look also at a commentary in addition to Scripture. What is the character of God? So the first character of God that we see is found in 2 Corinthians 5.10. If we want to put that up on the screen. God is just.

Okay, now we might know that. Yeah, that sounds good. But we have to remember something.

God is just, but He's not fair. Did you get that? Because often, here's where we make a mistake. We think that God is fair.

God, you did that to them, why not me? You blessed them, why not me? You healed them, what's wrong with me? But God is not fair, He's just. Now it's hard for us because we want to be fair, don't we? I have four kids and if they all want a cookie, guess what? If one gets two, what does this one get? Two. What does this one get? Two.

What does this one get? Two. That's fair. But Jess would say, you didn't do your chores, give me those back.

Right? You've got two cavities and you're not getting any more cookies, give me those back. Right? Sugar makes you hyper, give me those back. So one kid's left with the cookie because they can handle it.

See, I'm just knowing the children and being able to make a decision that's best for them. So God is not fair. Because fair is across the board.

Just is giving the person the correct, in some cases punishment, or the correct discipline, or the correct amount of grace or blessing. He's based on justice. It's actually based on His perfect will.

Have you ever heard a big word called sovereignty? Sovereignty. It just means God's in control. God is sovereign.

Not North Korea. Not the stock market. Not the White House.

All of those things. God holds the very breath that they breathe in the palm of His hands. He raises one kingdom up and He puts another kingdom down.

He raises one nation up for His purpose. This is interesting. He would raise up nations to go and judge Israel.

Assyrian, Babylonians, go and judge Israel. And then He'd say, guess what? Now I'm judging you. And He would judge Assyria.

He would judge the Babylonians. Based on His justice. So God is not fair.

He is just. Let's read that Scripture. For we must all stand before Christ to be judged.

We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or the evil we have done in our bodies. So there is a justice coming up. There's a judgment coming up.

That's why A.W. Tozer said, I love Jesus Christ because He's my Savior. But I fear Him because He's my judge. There's a judgment coming up.

And that's where many pulpits are silent. Right? This is not popular. I'm not preaching Joelstein today.

Okay? This is not going to. Judgment. You'll get that later on your way home maybe.

But there's judgment. The Bible talks about judgment. God talks about judgment.

Jesus talks about judgment. Paul talked about judgment. Jude talks about judgment.

James talked about judgment. So why in the church do we get silent on this issue? The reason is we want to please men and not God. And unfortunately many churches are ruled by a board or a board of directors that tells them what to do from the pulpit.

Fortunately we thank God for this as He's founded this church. God started it with ten people. A little over seven years ago.

And Brad you were at the first service, right? Weren't you a thing? Thank you. I remember that when you walked in. For some reason it stuck in my mind.

So my whole point was because He built it and we can do what He's called us to do. We can talk about love and mercy and grace. But we don't forget about justice and holiness and the judgment that is to come.

It was Jesus Himself who said to preach holiness. Preach judgment. Because see when you give people the right information then they can make the right decision.

Who are we to hide all the hard stuff? Right? Don't tell people. What kind of doctor would not tell you the hard stuff? Well you know what? Just go home. Here's a lollipop.

And the person leaves. The nurse. Why didn't you tell them they have cancer forming? I'm not going there.

They don't want to hear that. They would lose their license. Do you understand that? An attorney who would be disbarred? So when it comes to the pulpit, how many people are disqualifying themselves because they hide what God says to proclaim? Proclaim this.

There is a judgment coming. And I guess what I'm passionate about is it's not a mean, you know, ha ha ha, hellfire and brimstone. It's a judgment coming.

So turn to the One who has the answer. Turn to the One who can redeem and set free. That's the good news of the Gospel.

If it was just all bad news, we'd all be in trouble. But the bad news just highlights the good news. So God, His quality, His character is just.

Just is what's morally right. That's what it is. Without justice as a standard, we have nothing to gauge action.

Can you imagine if, well actually that's what society teaches now, is what's good for you, might be good for me, and what's relative for you might not be relative for me. It's called relativism. There's no standard of truth.

Can you imagine that? There's just, what do you base it on? How I feel. Oh, wow, that's going to be interesting. But God's character, His nature is justice.

And it's interesting, people say, well, why doesn't God just make me love Him? But see, that wouldn't be love. Would it? I know it's a terrible analogy, but it works. If you take, well, maybe I won't, I did the first service, I felt a little bad.

Let's just say you force, you force somebody into marrying you, right? Say with a gun to their head, you take them to Las Vegas, you say, you marry me. See, you made me marry him. See, my spouse loves me.

No, they don't. You coerce them. You made them do that.

They don't love you. So if God said, okay, everybody's saved, everybody's this, I won't judge anybody. Not only did He just null and void His word, and lied, because He said, my word will not return void, I've set this truth in motion.

He actually, to exercise real genuine love, the person has to be able to exercise it, accept it, or reject it. That's the only way you can have genuine love. So God said, I created you.

That creation chose to disobey. That creation fell into sin. There's a judgment coming because they fell, but I'm going to send a Redeemer to take the place on the judgment that you would have to take.

It's called propitiation, that Christ absorbed the wrath of God, the judgment of God. I've provided the way, you just have to accept or reject it. So how could He make somebody do that? I don't really follow that thinking.

Because that's a puppet master, right? There's no love. There's no justice. There's no harmony of the Gospels.

Number two, God is holy. God is holy. The verse is 1 Peter.

You must be holy in everything you do, just as God, who chose you to be His children, is holy. For He Himself said, you must be holy because I am holy. Now isn't this an interesting word? What do you think of when I mention this word? Do you think of a big flowing robe? And a hat? Right? And a big gold necklace? And a big Bible? And holy? Actually, holy according to the Bible, is coming out from among the world.

Coming out from among them and being separate. There's a distinction in how you live. Come out from among them and live separately.

The New King James says, as obedient children, not conforming yourself to former lusts. There's another word we don't like. Obedience? But see, these are the Scriptures that help get us out of trouble.

Aren't they? When we start believing God's Word, and believe what it says, holy means this, that which resembles the character and the nature of God. So, be holy because your Lord is holy. So our choices, our decisions, our thought life, where we go, what we do, is either building our relationship, building our character up towards Christ or towards the world.

Is it not? That's why I talk about media often. You know, the media, because what we're watching, what we're allowing, are we allowing holiness to penetrate our hearts? Or are we walking away from the things that God calls us to? Holiness is a high standard. The Bible says, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. See, there's something about holiness. There's something about His holy standard.

There's something that says come out from among them and be separate. When I turn from the things of the world, and turn toward the things of God, worship is sweet. The Bible comes alive.

You're filled with the Spirit of God. How are you going to walk around all day watching The Walking Dead and you expect to be filled with the Spirit of God? It's impossible. How are you going to fill your mind with all this garbage and all this junk and be filled with the Spirit of God? You're not.

You're only fooling yourself. That's why the Bible says, come out from among them and be separate. Be holy.

Of all the attributes in the Bible about God, guess which one stands up above them all? Love? Holiness. Holiness. Come out from among them.

Be holy. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The angels cry, holy, holy, holy is our God.

Can you imagine the angels? They're crying. That's when Isaiah saw the train of His robe fill the entire temple. And he said, I'm a man.

I'm an unworthy man. I can't stand before You. Even the angels as they cried.

The poles, the big beams in the temple shook. Holy, holy, holy is our God. And the angels cried that.

Why should we not live it out? Why is it called fanatical? Why is it called legalistic when it should be part of biblical Christianity? So God's nature is holy. Now let me encourage you. It's not perfection.

Right? How many of us beat ourselves up? Oh, there goes Shane again. He's beating me up this morning. Oh, I'll never measure up.

I'll never live up to these rules and regulations. I'll never be a good Christian. Welcome to the club.

It's not about that. But in your defeat, you don't turn back to your old ways. You strengthen yourself in the Lord.

And you say, God, help me in this area. You make decisions that begin to honor the Lord. Here's what happens.

I think I read it. Again, obedient children, not conforming yourself to former lusts. That's a new King James.

So as obedient children, not conforming ourselves to the former lusts. What are the former lusts? Well, I better break it down real quick. This is different if a person isn't a believer yet.

But a person who is a believer, they come to know the Lord. They repent of their sin. I believe in Jesus.

I believe that He did that for me so I don't have a judgment coming. I believe in the cross. I believe in the resurrection.

And I repent of my sin and I believe. As a result, the Holy Spirit, the Bible says the Holy Spirit now indwells the believer. That's why you have a passion for the things of God.

That's why you're different. That's why you're changed. But guess what that old man is doing? Or what the Bible says, the carnal nature, the old nature.

What's it trying to do? Draw me back. Do you remember the good old days? You be quiet. I don't want to hear about the good.

Remember me? Come on back. Who's at the door? Your old nature. Open it up.

The devil will always show you the pleasure, but not the pain. He'll always remind you, didn't that feel good? Didn't that feel good? Why don't you show me all the weekends I wasted being hungover? Why don't you show me that? Or crashing vehicles? Or ruining relationships? Why don't you show me that? Don't just show me the supposed enjoyment of the sin. Show me the consequences.

But the devil never will. Right? We see the same thing when we go fishing. Right? Throw out a nice big worm.

Oh, look at how good that looks. As soon as he bites that worm, where did that come from? There's a hook in my mouth. Right, that's the enticement of sin.

So Paul here says, or actually Peter, as obedient children, if we could just do that, it would end a lot of counseling. It would end a lot of problems. As obedient children, do not conform, do not go back to the former lusts.

It says take off those things and put on the garment of Christ. And that jacket wants to put itself on often. Right? First leave of sin.

No, no, get off, get off. And it wants to clothe you in the old man. So that's why the church actually gets a bad name many times.

And people say, oh, there's a lot of hypocrites at church. There's actually a lot of people struggling. They're not hypocrites necessarily.

Because being a believer doesn't mean you're perfect. Actually, often increases the warfare. Because now there's a target on your head.

Now the devil's going to go after you. Oh, see, I knew he's not a Christian. He fell back into whatever.

Well, that doesn't mean he's not a Christian. That means he's struggling in his walk and he slipped back and he fell. We need to encourage and pick him back up.

A hypocrite is where somebody comes in and intentionally deceives you. The Greek word comes like an actor putting on a mask. Right? I'm Shane one day, I'm pastor one day, and now I'm partying, heading to Vegas the next.

Right? I'm here to trick you this day, and now this day I'm going to go grab a big margarita and slots and we'll leave it there, right? So, but that's a hypocrite. That's a hypocrite. The genuine believer says, I've been doing well for years, Shane, I had a hard week and I fell back into whatever it is.

I need help. And then people see that and say, you're a hypocrite. That's not a hypocrite.

Don't you dare call that person ever a hypocrite. That person's struggling. Who can walk that perfect walk when you've got the old nature just knocking on the door every day, doesn't it? As soon as I decide to fast, Krispy Kreme comes alive in my mind every morning, every morning, every morning, and it doesn't help.

They're open 24 hours. It never helps. And then you think you're doing good and there's Panda Express and you can smell it.

You can smell it. Come on, Shane, come back. Hard day.

Doesn't an ice cold beer sound good? Oh, it sure does, but that's going to lead to 12. So shut your mouth, Flash. See, it just keeps knocking.

Come on, you all know. Don't play Christian in here. You know the struggles.

You know. But that's why he says, be obedient, children. Don't put on the former less.

When that door knocks, you don't open it. You don't go back to those old things. And isn't it interesting, when life gets challenging, we find comfort in the old things? We go back to what we used to know.

So that's one of the areas that God is crystal clear on. God is holy. The third point about the character of God.

You know, I should maybe explain this. I explained it at the first service. Holiness affects everything we do.

If you're a believer, it affects everything you do. It will affect how you raise your children. It will affect how you live your life for Christ.

It will affect your influence, your testimony. It will affect your worship time, your prayer life, your Bible study. It affects everything.

Because the more you gravitate towards the nature of Christ, the more you're filled with His Spirit. The more you live the victorious Christian life and you do the things for God. The more you're filled with the old nature, what does this lead to? This leads to depression and discouragement and feeling like a failure and I don't even want to go to church.

Anyone been there? This whole room better say amen, because I know that's true. Right? I feel that way, but I have to show up. I'm not getting out of this one, right? I'm calling sick.

Who's going to fill in? Just keep going in worship, I guess. But no, we get discouraged. We get disappointed in things.

We feel beat up. But the more we get filled with the Spirit of God, the more we live a victorious Christian life and it affects everything. But people do ask this question.

I'm going to throw it out there. Why should Christians repent then, Shane? Well, that's a good question. There's a couple different things we have to remember.

Repentance. The reason it's a beautiful word. It's in the first book of the Bible.

It's in the last book of the Bible. Repentance is actually the first word in the Gospel. John the Baptist came preaching love or grace or mercy.

No, the Bible says a voice crying in the wilderness saying repent, prepare you the way of the Lord. Jesus said go and preach repentance. What is repentance? If a person doesn't know God, they acknowledge that they are a sinner.

They say, you know what? I need God. I'm acknowledging it. This is not right.

I'm repenting in my mind and it leads to a change in action. Genuine repentance leads to change. It's not just a mental thing.

It's a physical thing. So they repent. They believe in Christ.

Many people repent later on because they've had church all their life. They're a good person. They're raised in a good home.

They knew about God. Boy, I knew all about Him. Boy, did you know Him? I have a relationship with Him via repentance.

So repentance basically just means I'm lining up my will with God's. I need Christ. I need a Savior.

I can't do this on my own. I repent of my sin. I confess Christ as Lord and Savior.

I repent. And that person then is born again. The Holy Spirit comes in and resides in them.

They have a love for God. They love the Word. They love worship.

They have their burdens been lifted. They feel set free. They're so excited.

But then the old man keeps... Hey, remember me? Oh, be quiet. I'm not going back there. You remember how fun this was? Remember everything we just talked about? But if a believer then turns and gets caught up again in sin, they repent.

Not for salvation, but for realignment. They get their life and their heart right back with God again. Do you ever realign your car? Realignment? Do you know what happens? You're tired and... My car just swings to the left or swings to the right.

Whatever it is. So we go and we get it realigned. Same thing with our hearts.

Believers need to realign themselves with Christ again. Repent and say, Lord, pride has been coming in. I've been critical.

I've been negative. I've been gossiping. I've been backbiting.

I've been lusting and doing these things that aren't right. God, I need to realign myself with You. I repent.

It's a wonderful, beautiful word. And then that leads us to the third characteristic of God. God is righteous.

God is righteous. Now what's the difference between holiness and righteousness? Righteousness is that somebody is made right. They're not guilty anymore.

Righteousness, I'm made right. You're made right. We're not guilty anymore.

So in a nutshell, a person that doesn't know God is not righteous. Theologians call this imputed righteousness. So when a person believes in Jesus, they take on the righteousness of Christ.

God says, okay, because of what Christ did, you believe in Him. We take on the righteousness of Christ. The imputed righteousness.

So now, we go from guilty to not guilty. We go from unsaved to saved because we are now righteous before God. But then holiness is living out the righteousness you walk in or the righteousness you live in.

So because I'm righteous and right standing with God, now I'm going to live a holy life because it adds to the filling of the Holy Spirit. I like what D.L. Moody said, that we are leaky vessels. Did you know that? You fill with the Holy Spirit of God, but you are leaky.

You've got little cuts all over you. It's just leaving. Just go walk in the world for a week, and you will become a leaky vessel.

And you have to stand underneath the fountain of life all the time, that being the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. That verb tense there is an active.

I think they call it active present participle or something like that. I wasn't good in English, obviously. Or grammar, I should say.

But it's an active tense of that verb, meaning be being filled. It's a continual filling. Continual filling.

I'm doing good, but I'm empty, but now I've got to be filled again. And it's funny he ties it in with do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. See, one or the other spirit is controlling you.

Why is it called spirits? Have you ever seen that spirit sold here? Well, that's not a good spirit. So he's contrasting what is controlling you. A six-pack where you're, hey, slurring and what have you.

Why did I do that? I would have never done it. Wake up in the morning regretting the day. The different spirit is controlling.

But this spirit, be filled, allow the Holy Spirit to control and govern your life. It's a continual effort on the part of the believer in that they have to constantly submit and surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit. So the verse is this.

Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life. Well, that's not very popular either. We've got to find a popular scripture here shortly, right? So throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life.

So it's like this coat. Picture a jacket. It's starting to cover you again.

Here it comes. No, you throw off. You throw off that evil nature and your former way of life.

So in other words, if you came out of the world and you were a gossiping, backbiting, critical person, guess what's going to start to sneak up again? And you start to put one sleeve on. Boy, I'm getting really critical. I'm getting really negative.

I'm backbiting. I'm slandering. I'm even lying.

And I've got to put off. I've got to put off this clothing that's trying to get back on me. I've been free from Christ.

But see, that's the big question. Shane, if I'm dead to sin, if I'm dead to sin, the Bible says it, why is it still alive in me? It's still alive because whatever you choose to obey becomes your master. Even Paul said, oh, wretched man that I am.

Wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of sin and death? The good I want to do, I don't do. Been there? The good I want to do, I don't do.

And those things I don't want to do, I do. Oh, wretched man, who will deliver me from this body of sin and death? For with the mind, I serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin. See, what do we choose to obey? Do we put on our old... Some people say, you know what, forget it.

I'll put on my old coat. I'm going back to those habits. Back to that destructive pattern.

And they get trapped again. So part of righteousness, he says, throw off that evil nature. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and your attitude.

You have to renew... It's interesting. Have you ever studied the recent information that's coming out on the brain? And it's just messing up old thinking in science and different things where the brain, they thought was pre-pattern, predisposition, predestined to certain things. Now they learn, I believe it's called neuroplasticity, where the brain can actually reprogram, change itself.

It can be renewed and restored and begin the addictions that were always taking you down can be renewed and restored and taken out of the mind as it's renewed. Do we read that somewhere? Right? Romans, be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may

prove what is that acceptable and perfect will of God. But let's not forget the first part where Paul said, finally brethren, finally brethren, present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and righteous.

Here we go. Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and righteous before God, which is your reasonable service. Therefore, therefore, because of that, do not be conformed by this world, by this world's mindset.

Where do we get our information from? I hate to keep beating this up, but a lot of you guys just need to get off media for a while. Get off of that junk, get off of that YouTube clips and the media and the secular this and that. Clap for that one if you want to.

But it's changing our thinking. Conspiracy theories abound. All these things.

Have you heard? All I know is I know who still sits on the throne and the Bible tells me not to get caught up in those foolish things. To renew my thinking. How? And the Word of God.

How else? How else? Fifty shades of gray? That's going to renew your mind? Oh my Lord. I'm going to have to stop there because it's not going to go good. So throw off, cast away all thoughts and attitudes just in case you don't think obedience is important.

And again, being upfront, honest, a lot of reasons churches don't talk about this is because it upsets people. Obedience? Did you say what I thought you said? Obedience? I'm not going to be obedient. We want comfortable Christianity.

We want the cross light. We want the narrow road broad. But look at all these Scriptures.

Submit yourself to God and resist the devil. Endure temptation as a good soldier. Deny the flesh and be filled with the Spirit.

Do not yield to temptation or make provision for it. Crucify it. Flee sexual immorality.

Don't be brought under the power of temptation. God will make a way for you to escape that you may be able to bear the temptation. Boy, this sounds like it's going to be a little bit of a battle, doesn't it? The Bible says, see, we have a responsibility.

That's what we forget. That's what we forget all the time. We have a responsibility.

It reminds you of the man who prayed for a year. God, make me into a solid Christian man. Make me into a solid Christian man.

Lord, I want to be different. Lord, I want to. Holy Spirit, You have full control.

But he spent his whole day watching garbage and playing video games. He's going to keep praying that until he's gone. He's going to pray that prayer until his deathbed.

Now, God will aid you. He will help you. But at some point, we've got to take action.

It's called faith without feet. It's not faith. Faith has feet.

And then I love 1 Peter. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles, meaning we're really not from here. The kingdom of God is not here.

We're just passing through. I urge you. I urge you to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul.

Anybody think of a stronger language than that? I can't. To avoid the lustful passions that actually wage war against your soul. Are you telling me I've got something in here that wants to kill me? If your flesh left to its own devices would destroy you.

It would self-destruct. We have something in our DNA that the flesh just wants to bring us down. I urge you.

I urge you. The passions of the flesh. Now, many people think this is... I mean, it can be sexual passions of course, but whatever.

But he's talking about the passions of the flesh as anything the flesh craves and goes after. Any addiction, any lifestyle, any habit that draws you away from the things of God. That's a lust of the flesh.

That can be everything from food to nicotine to caffeine to alcohol. I mean, I can sit here. Opiates, Xanax, whatever it is.

Whatever it is that begins to pull you. That flesh is craving it and craving it begins to pull you away from God. Those fleshly lusts actually war against your soul.

They fight against you. The Holy Spirit, Paul says, the choices that you make are never free from this conflict. Isn't that encouraging? The choices we make are never free from this conflict on this side of heaven.

So how do you win? How is there victory? Exactly everything we just talked about. Because God says, there's no temptation that's overtaking you that's not common to all of us. But God who is faithful will make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it.

That means there's a load to bear. There's difficulty sometimes. And you know how the best way to defeat temptation is? God will not give you anything you cannot bear.

It's actually two little tiny letters. N-O. Right? No.

No. No. You can say that as a believer.

I remember I shared with the first congregation. I'm glad I remembered. I wasn't sure if I wanted to share this with you as well.

But in 1999 I came back to the Lord. I'll never forget this day. It was earlier in the year.

I came back to the Lord. I was just so happy. Have you been there? Remember that? And joy and there's peace.

And just driving. I remember driving on Rancho Vista Boulevard. I can tell you right where I was.

There's a school there. And just the peace of the Lord. Joy.

Worship was coming alive. I exchanged country music television for worship. Back then it was Darling Check and Hillsong.

And I just exchanged that. And I got into the Word of God. And just on fire for God.

And I could see He's doing wonderful things. And then I heard a knock at the door. One evening I answered that door.

And it was one of my old friends who had those big 40 ounce Mickey Big Mouths. He said, hey the fair is open. Let's go to the fair.

No. Or yes. That's what I should have said.

But I chose yes. And it led me back into a few months of bondage. And fighting that same thing.

Fighting that same impulse. Fighting that same lust of the flesh. Because when you give into it.

You don't give the devil an inch and he takes an inch. You give him an inch, he takes a mile. Because once you open that door.

And you give that lust power. It gets stronger because you feed it. And the more you feed it, the more you have to fight it.

The more you fuel it, the stronger it will become. That's why you have to nip these things at the root. And pull them out.

That's why holiness and righteousness is so important. And then the fourth point. God is faithful.

God is faithful. That's part of His character. You need to know this.

In 1 Corinthians, remember. Remember that the temptations that come into your life. Are no different than what others experience.

And God who is faithful. Will keep you from the temptation. I'm sorry.

I'm reading this NLT. But I'm thinking in my mind the New King James. Let me just say.

No temptation will overtake you. But what is common to man. God who is faithful will not allow you to be tempted.

Beyond what you are able to bear. So God says. I am faithful.

See you're not faithful. I'm not faithful. God's the one who's faithful.

So He says. You give the right response. No.

You can bear it. And then I'm faithful to help you. You respond.

See God often responds to us. I'm waiting to see what you do. Repent and believe.

You're saved. Repent and turn to me. I will heal you.

The prodigal son. Come to yourself and come home. Seek me.

Then you'll find me. Say no to the temptation. You'll be able to bear it.

I'm faithful. And I will not allow you to go beyond what you can bear. Listen.

I've seen people come off of heroin addictions. Talk about a nightmare. Or years of alcohol daily.

And you want to talk about something that's hard to come out of. That's why God though in His faithfulness. Allows a believer to say no.

In their weakness. Lord, all I can barely do is say no right now. If I get in this car, I'm going somewhere I shouldn't go.

But I'm saying no. And the power of the Holy Spirit comes in. And God is faithful to keep you anchored and delivered.

He's faithful. He's faithful every time. Name one time God has ever let us down.

He's faithful. That word means this. Loyal.

Constant. True. Devoted.

Steadfast. Dedicated. Commitment.

Can you imagine that? Sometimes I think we put more faith into social security than God. Stock market more than God. Oh, America.

Oh, the housing market. You think everything is just holds by a thread. Everything.

Our economy by a thread. Nuclear bombs by a thread. Internal explosions.

Civil war by a thread. But God is faithful. He's consistent.

He's loyal. He's true. He's devoted.

He's steadfast. He's dedicated. Shane, why do you get so loud and passionate? Because I feel it.

I've seen him take people through the fire of affliction and bring them through. See, the more passionate you get is because God has brought you through things. Amen, saints? Amen.

Those who've been through something. Anybody been through the waters that overtook you? Then you read the Bible and it says these floodwaters, they will not overtake you. In that flame, they will not scorch you.

Though they come against you, I, the Lord, am your God and I will hold you up from my right hand. So when you go through that and you experience that, then you have faith. You have faith that can move a mountain because you've been through it.

Faith that has not been tested is not faith. Do you ever wonder why it's a process? Little kids have wonderful faith until they're tested. Young adults, great faith until they get older.

But God is faithful. Faith is tested when we are under pressure. It's formed and it's shaped and it's compressed.

Do you know how things are made? Often things are made by being compressed. Wood, compressed. The kitchenware, you have bowls, plates, everything is compressed.

Putting a fire, a heat, often plastic, and it's compressed. Same thing with faith. Often God will compress things in our lives.

How do you know if He's faithful if you don't go through things that are challenging? Answer me that. Yeah, God is faithful. Praise God, I've never been through anything, but I can sing the song.

I know God is my healer. If you've been healed, I know God is my strength. If He's brought you through a storm.

See, the more you go through, the deeper your relationship often becomes. If you become better and not bitter. Right? So if you go through and say, Ah, God, I've had enough of Him.

And then they go backwards 20 years. But allow that faith to be strengthened. Job was... I just can't even picture this.

I'm not going to go through what he lost, what he went through. But he had the audacity to say these words. I mean that in a good way.

Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. He's saying, though God kill me. Though God kill me, I will trust Him.

That makes me think, I look at my faith. Can I say that? I mean, I read books sometimes from missionaries. And they've lost children on the mission field.

Though you take my child, I will trust you. Though you take my spouse, I will trust you. And though you slay me, I will trust you because you are my God.

Folks, that's the only option. Because it's either that or how dare you. And pride comes up and we become angry at God.

There are many people, not in churches today, because they are mad at God. Now, it's okay to be upset. And not understand things.

I've prayed for people that I didn't have answers for. Why did God allow this? And I don't know. I think sometimes we have to stop trying to explain God.

And just listen. Well, theologically speaking. If you look at the soteriology aspect of it.

And the salvation, the fall, and the redemption. Anthropology, and man, and this, and this. And Romans.

Oh, Romans. We all like to quote Romans. What is that? 828? Well, brother, all things work to good for those who have called of God.

And those who do things according to His purpose. Don't ever tell that to somebody who has lost somebody. Well, it's okay.

Just get over it. All things work together. Now, those are powerful verses at the right time.

But God is faithful. Jesus said, I will never leave nor forsake you. I am the solid rock.

I am... This is an incredible verse. God said, I will complete the work that I have begun in you until the day of Jesus Christ. Now, either you believe that or you don't.

But Shane, what's happening? See, it's not God's fault. We have to realign ourselves. Repent and get back on track.

And then the fifth point. Many of you, we already know this, but I couldn't skip it. God is love.

God is love. For this is how God loved the world. We all know, John 3, 6, many of us do.

He gave His only Son. His only Son. That whosoever believes in Him has everlasting life.

And if you doubt that, I encourage you to come to Easter service. I'm going to hopefully talk about the resurrection and different things. But this aspect of love, we have to remember that holiness and love go together.

Right? Righteousness and mercy go together. Here's a big mistake we make in the church. I still get emails on this and in the society.

God is love. Therefore, He's going to let me do whatever I want to whoever I want, whenever I want, however I want. Because God is love.

Well, try applying that, parents, to your children. I love my children so much they can do whatever they want. Is that a rattlesnake you found? Good girl.

You want to go out on the street? Go for it. Let me take you to a busier street. You want to go to bed when you want? You want to eat when you want? What would happen? They would destroy themselves.

So that's not genuine love. That's not God's love. God says this, that lifestyle is wrong, but I love you enough to pay the price for it.

So all you have to do to turn to me. See, that's where mercy and grace and righteousness and holiness and judgment, all these difficult things, they fall and they submit to this area of love. God said, I loved you so much that I will provide the solution.

So a person who's enjoying their sin, right, we see it all over the news now, all over Washington, D.C., and rallies and different things, and they say, well, God is love, God is love, God doesn't judge me. That's not love. Because love tells you the truth that that lifestyle is wrong and taking you in the wrong direction, but you can't do anything about it, so I've paid the price, I've made the provision, all you have to do is accept, repent, and believe.

That's love. That's the definition of love. And that's one of the character attributes, I believe, of God that is so misrepresented in our culture and in the church.

The problem is never with God. The problem is with man's rebellion. Preaching to myself.

I understand how deadly pride is. And the problem is never on God's end. And then number six, God is merciful.

God is merciful. I want you to just take this in for a minute. Just listen to this.

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love, because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sin, create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me. Do not banish from me your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

Isn't that interesting? David wrote this after committing adultery and murder. I don't know about you, but not too many people have done that. All in one time, right? Created me.

So David is saying, listen, listen, I want to get back to your holy standard. I walked away from holiness. I walked away from righteousness.

But God, in your mercy and in your failing love, create in me a clean heart. God, renew a right spirit within me, and don't take the Holy Spirit from me. O God, in your mercy, return the joy of my salvation.

God, I want to be excited again. I want to praise you again. God, would you return that joy to me? I can see it off in the distance.

I can feel it. I can taste it. But God, I need you to move in my heart.

And God is merciful. God is very merciful. Mercy is this compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone.

To whom it's within one's power to punish them. Mercy is saying this. You deserve.

Saying, put it on me. I deserve judgment. I deserve the wrath of God because of sin.

But God in His mercy says, I'm not going to give you what you deserve. I'm having mercy. And then grace says, I'm going to give you a blessing you didn't earn.

Let me read it the difference. Grace is receiving a gift I do not deserve. So God says, I'm going to spare you.

I'm going to spare the judgment. I have mercy on you. I'm sending my son this wonderful gift.

I don't deserve this gift. It's a gift I can't, how do you give back that gift? So the grace of God gives me a gift I can't repay and shows mercy on me. I mean, if we just grab hold of that for a second, that would change your worship.

That would change your worship. What's that guy's name in the Dodgers again? Oh, Pui. Can't never pronounce his name.

I watched him play at JetHawk Stadium a couple years ago. He had a home run over the fence and over the fence, it's a freeway, I think. I think it's landing up against a freeway off ramp somewhere.

And the crowd went wild. Went wild. Did you see that home run? Did you see it? High fives, alcohol flying everywhere.

But when it comes to church and we worship a living God, we're silent. We don't get excited. It's no big deal.

The mercy and the grace of God, we get excited over a home run, but not over what God has done in our heart. What's wrong? I'll tell you what's wrong. It's a heart problem.

It's a heart problem. You go to a cardiologist, what are they going to tell you? You've got a heart problem. You go to the Word of God, you see there's a heart problem.

When we can't worship, don't want to worship, there's a heart problem. Because we don't truly understand mercy and grace. I often think this.

If God could take us back 2,000 years ago, put you at the foot of the cross, and you watch, you see Him dying. You see the blood falling on the dirt. You see the crown of thorns piercing His skull.

You see the Roman soldiers mocking. You see Him almost naked on the cross. And He said, I'm doing it for you.

There wouldn't be a dry eye in this room, would there? You would weep, and you would weep, and you'd fall down at the magnitude of the sin of what put Him on the cross. People say, well, Shane, that's all fairy tale. Well, you better do your research.

Roman historians, secular historians, Jewish historians, most now all admit that Jesus Christ lived. That He lived. He lived.

So then you're faced with the problem, right? I brought that up a few weeks ago. He's either a liar, He's a lunatic, or He's the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot say He's just a good teacher.

I'll talk to Jewish people. Oh, He's a good teacher. I'll give you that much.

He's a good teacher. Do you have time to go through the Bible? If that's all He was, He was a lunatic. I will rise again on the third day.

Before Abraham was, I am. I am God, by the way. Well, a good teacher, have you lost your mind? Listen, you have to struggle.

Those are the only options. Liar, lunatic, or the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why the Bible says every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord.

Not a lunatic, not a liar, not a fable, not fairy dust. Every knee bows. Hitler? Yes, every knee bows.

Trump? Every knee bows. Obama? Every knee bows to Christ. No, no, no, not North Korea.

Oh, you better believe it. Not only North Korea, and Putin, and China will bow at the foot of the Savior because there's no other name that is given to man on which we will be saved. The mercy of God.

The love of God. You know what's interesting? The resurrection we celebrate on Easter, it's coming up. But that's not the end.

That's the beginning. Jesus says, do business until I return. Conquer the enemy.

Pull down strongholds. And expose the unfruitful works of darkness. He calls us to fight.

He calls us to be obedient children. He calls us to worship Him. And folks, I think many people need a mighty filling of the Holy Spirit in this church and many other churches.

They're running on empty if they're running at all. They're going through the motions. They haven't witnessed about Jesus ever or in years.

The Bible, they don't even know where it's at. But they want to, and I understand. I have compassion for that.

I've been there. I've done that. All throughout my 20's, right? All throughout my 20's.

It was closet Christian. You watch me go into schooners, but don't watch me go into a church. I'll tell everybody I'm going to Vegas and Palm Springs for spring break.

But church, sir, aren't you a Christian? Yeah, but see, love the things of the world. That's what my master was. That's what was controlling me.

So I just encourage you this morning, if you don't know who God is, just repent and believe. Don't take my word for it. Ask Him.

Repent and believe. And let Him change your heart. And if you're a believer, like many of us, you've been in neutral.

Or maybe reverse. God is faithful. He is merciful.

I've never seen anybody genuinely seek God and not find Him. Genuinely say, Lord, I need to be filled with your spirit and God not come through. If you seek me, you will find me.

When you seek me with all of your heart. All of your heart requires a little bit of humility, doesn't it? Doesn't it? Think about this. I'm not going to do it, so don't worry.

Unless God changes direction. But if I said, I want everybody who wants to be filled mildly with the Holy Spirit to come to this altar. No, no, no, no, no.

Moi? Me? Nah. I've been a Christian 30 years. I'm not doing that.

See pride. See how that works? I've been at Christian events. I spoke at Christian events.

Hume Lake are different places. The speakers have had calls like that to come up, rededicate, be filled with spirit. I'm like, I'm speaking next.

I'm not going up there. That would be embarrassing. They're going to think, why did we get this guy to speak? But when I finally fought the pride and humbled myself and went there, God poured out His spirit again because we have to be humbled often.

See, either pride is growing or humility is. They can't coexist. So as pride grows, humility wanes.

And as humility grows, pride wanes.

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

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