

The Cure for Judgment - Call a Sacred Assembly

by Shane Idleman

The sermon calls for a sacred assembly to acknowledge and respond to God's judgment through humility and prayer.

Duration: 51:34

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Joel 1:14, Joel 2:12

Topics: "Prayer and Fasting", "Humility", "Repentance"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the urgent need for repentance and humility in the face of God's judgment, urging believers to call a sacred assembly to seek God's mercy. He explains that judgment is God's response to sin, and that both individuals and nations must acknowledge their wrongdoings and turn back to God to avert impending judgment. Idleman highlights the importance of lamenting over sin and the necessity of fasting and prayer as means to reconnect with God. He calls on the church to awaken from spiritual slumber and actively engage in seeking God's presence and restoration. Ultimately, he reassures that God is willing to restore what has been lost if His people genuinely return to Him.

Transcript

The title of the message is The Cure for Judgment. The Cure for Judgment. I know that's not going to get a lot of clicks on YouTube, but it will if God's tugging on your heart.

The Call for Judgment. Call the Sacred Assembly, if I had a subtitle there. But Call the Cure for Judgment.

Let me just explain this word, because it is mistaken a lot of times. Judgment is God responding to sin. In short definition.

Judgment is God responding to sin. It's a very broad term though, because we know the great white throne judgment that we're reading about, where all humanity, well mainly unbelievers, will be judged. The believers are judged at the beam of seat of Christ.

There's rewards and different things, and I'll hopefully get into that in the theology series. But there's a judgment at the end of the age, obviously. But there's also a judgment that has been on the world since the fall of Adam.

There's a judgment of God. There's a... The wrath and condemnation of God is on the world. There's a judgment there.

That's the point of the cross. To come and fix that and redeem us and stand, as it were, in the gap between us and that judgment. But there's also times throughout the Old Testament you'll see and you'll read a lot, that I believe God still does a lot of the same things in the Old as He does in the New.

It's one God, one book. There's a point where a nation or people will reach a point of judgment. God, in His loving patience and His mercy, as we know, a lot of the promises to Israel, if my people are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, was written to the nation of Israel, and Solomon was there.

But I believe there's underlying principles that still apply. I believe that if God's people humble themselves, I mean, call me silly, I don't know, but if they humble themselves, they pray, they seek His face, they turn from their wicked ways, there might be a blessing right at the end of that. Or God might relent, or there might be a change in the atmosphere if these principles are applied.

So I don't just take a scripture and immediately apply it to America. But I do apply the principle of God judging uncertain things, judging sin. And we don't like to hear the word, but it is something we need to understand.

Because the bottom line with judgment is we are to respond before the judgment comes. There's a response before the judgment. That's what we do a lot of times, pleading and preaching.

There's a judgment coming, respond before that judgment comes. Or, in the case of what we're going to read in a minute, Joel's case, God's judgment was poured on the nation of Israel. He explains it in one of the other prophets, this wonderful bride, and he nursed this little child, and raised this child, and then this child withdrew and rejected God.

And God's saying, No, come back. Come back. Come back.

Would you come back? Come back before my judgment has to fall. My truth cannot change. I've set the course of truth.

It can't change. My judgment is going to fall. Here's what's going to happen.

Actually, there's more spent on the cursings and deuteronomy than on the blessings. Just for food for thought, we talked about last week, Jesus spoke more about the realities of hell than of heaven, depending on how you translate the words and different things. But we see that there's a warning.

There's a warning. That's the reason to talk about this, because if we never talk about it, how can anyone respond? You know, you turn on the guys on TV, right? You never hear judgment. You never hear repentance.

You never hear any difficult things. How are people supposed to respond? They think they're already good. They're good with God.

So there's a call to this area of judgment that we are to respond before it comes. But also, there is a sense of response after judgment falls. So when judgment would fall on God's people, they could respond in a certain way to reposition their self in the heart and the will of God again.

Now, again, a broad term. We can have it in our own lives. I believe that God will allow things to happen to believers, discipline them, judge them because of besetting sin.

Listen, I'm warning you on this. I'm convicting you on this. And God's challenging and challenging and challenging because He sees what the end result of that is.

So see, it's never just to judge and hit you over the head with the 2x4, the Bible, right? It's to change that direction and come back. He says, here's what's going to happen if you don't change. But by the grace and mercy of God, when you're in that judgment, you can call upon the name of the Lord again, and He can reach down and pull you out of the mire and out of the depth of destruction.

I mean, that's incredible. You say, Lord, I'm sitting in this judgment. He says, that's okay, call on Me.

Call on Me. So what is the cure for judgment? Well, I'm glad you asked. God puts a warning label on certain things, right? We read warning labels.

It came on the tobacco industry many years ago, remember that? This can cause cancer. This can kill you. This can lead to birth defects.

This can, warning labels, warning labels. What's the point of that? What warns the user about the risk associated with the use of it? Or the lack of it, in the case of the Bible. The warning that the Bible gives us is, hey, do this, or else this will happen.

A person is not to wait for God's judgment. They are to remove the cause of it. We're not supposed to, well, here it comes.

And that's why I hear so many people, well, we're in the end times, brother. Let's just wait for His judgment. I don't think that's the heartbeat of the church.

I'm praying for revival. I'm praying for renewal. I'm praying for restoration.

I'm praying for God to relent and maybe leave a blessing instead of a curse. God's people are supposed to petition, not just wait for judgment. You'll never find any support for that.

But we get lazy, don't we? Well, it's a lukewarm era. The Laodicean era. Well, the rapture's coming any day now.

Really, they've been saying that for 150 years. Any day now. Any day now.

I mean, I listened to guys in the 1980s. Some of you know who they were. Well, I know before I died, Christ will come.

Well, they died a long time ago. And we just, well, it's just the way it is. We read about it.

But God never tells us the judgment that is to come for us to become passive. He tells us so we can contend and so we can pray and we can fast. Arthur Wallace wrote these words.

If lukewarmness and apostasy are predicted for the end time, it is not that we might apathetically await the fulfillment, but that we may be forewarned and strive to avert it. If you look at just, here's the reason why America's an interesting spot. If you look at the history from pilgrims, Puritans, if you look at the Mayflower Compact, if you look at the Declaration of Independence of the Founding Fathers, if you look at the

constitutions of different states and running for office and having to profess a belief in Jesus Christ, if you looked on, that's where people say that America, it's not a Christian nation because a nation can't be Christian because it's people.

But it was built on initially biblical principles. Yes, some evil came in just like everything is, but it was the Mayflower Compact said something like to the glory of God and to the advancement of the Christian faith. Now, in that, people didn't do things perfectly, but they wanted to honor God.

The Puritans and the pilgrims coming over 1620s, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, the sparking revival. So you see this possibility of this nation that wants to honor God. Of course, here comes slavery, and it takes Christian men and women to get rid of it.

Here comes Salem witch trials, takes Christian men and women to get rid of it. So we see this because people say, well, what about slavery? Yeah, it was a terrible marker on a nation's history, and Christians fought for it. I have a list of pages and pages and pages and pages of founding fathers who abhorred the practice, but you'll never hear that on the news.

You'll never hear that. Fox News, CNN, here I got. Oh, no, we don't want to see that.

Oh, no. So long story short. So you look now at where it started.

Actually, the laws in the court were based on Blackstone's commentaries of the laws of England. And by every law, they had a scripture reference. They put, in God we trust, the Ten Commandments.

That's where that term comes from, a nation built on Judeo-Christian values. Now, fast forward to the 1900s, and now you're ordaining gay clergy to speak from the pulpit. You're saying that marriage between two men or two women is okay.

The Bible had it wrong. You see that you're aborting millions and millions and millions of innocent children, literally aborting them, killing them, murdering them. And every time I see people, be softer, be softer.

God, help us. That's the problem. That's the problem.

We're too soft. You encourage those who have went through this, but you don't encourage the sin. My goodness.

So you see all of this. You see the rebellious. You see the rebellious nature of kids.

I mean, I can't believe what kids do. If I did that 30 years ago, I would have been slapped on the backside of my head and hoeing weeds for two days. So you see this debauchery.

You see this perversion. You see all this. Now it's not only being glamorized, but it's being called good, and good is being called evil.

That's what I'm called by secular people. I'm evil. Honestly, what I'm saying, this is evil.

A woman's right to choose. People can act upon their own feelings about marriage. That's good, but Shane, you're evil.

The Bible's evil. And the prophet said, woe be to that nation who calls good evil and evil good. And the direction of leadership determines the direction of a people often.

And God, I believe it's not the call to Washington or Hollywood. The call is if my people will humble themselves and seek my face. If my people.

That's my call is always to his people. Not to, gosh, if Lady Gaga would just repent. And Justin Timberlake and Justin Bieber, if we could get them on our team, right Steve? If they could be on our team, we could do pretty good.

I could maybe have them come speak next month. If he would just repent. No, God's call is to the church.

You'd be amazed at what, I believe again, I talked about last week, what judgment is averted because God's people come together and they pray and they seek him. So here's the key with judgment. We are to act before it happens to avoid it.

But we're also to act after it happens to reestablish and reconnect with God. So where we're at in this area of judgment on America or on, I mean, I'm not being specific because only God knows. And you will see though often a judgment we think of pestilence, famines, and that is true.

But there's also, what we talked about last week, there's a famine in the land. Not for water, not for meat, but for the word of God. God begins to remove his influence.

God removes. You think that school shootings, all that would happen if you had the Ten Commandments back and prayer in the school? Well, you can't force that. I know the ACLJ or whatever has been doing a great job of telling everybody that there's separation of church and state when actually the public school system in 1620 was founded by a pastor to teach kids how to read the Bible.

My goodness. So when you see how far you've drifted, the alarm gets a little louder. Beep, beep, beep, beep.

Off course, off course, off course. Get back on track. And so that's what this has been burning in my heart.

Now ironically though, if judgment is coming or if it's already came, the response is often the same. So what I'm supposed to do to advert judgment is what I'm supposed to do if judgment comes. And what judgment sometimes happens, individual, I tell you, there can be believers.

They're following the Lord. Then they start to drift. They make bad decisions that cost them maybe some integrity.

They go in a wrong direction and they know it's not right. They continue and God says, you need to turn from that. There's going to be judgment.

There's going to be discipline on that. And the person just continues. They're losing their marriage and their job's falling apart and the judgment starts to happen.

The discipline of God might be a better word on believers. He starts to discipline them. So it's going to be the same answer.

It's interesting though, as a culture, we don't want to hear about the penalty but the pardon. Don't tell me about the pain. I want the pleasure.

Don't tell me about the judgment. Give me the freedom. And there's a scripture I've quoted many times but I want to put it on the screen.

I don't know if it's been on the screen. 2 Timothy 4, 1-2. This is Paul talking to Timothy.

Probably, in my opinion, one of the most powerful first sentences that there is in the Bible, in the New Testament when he is saying something powerfully. When you say, I solemnly charge you, Timothy, in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ. It doesn't get any stronger than that.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Jesus Christ who will, who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing and his kingdom. Timothy, here's what you are to do. You are to preach the word.

Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with patience. Great patience and instruction.

Basically, tell them about the pain but also the promise. Tell them about the judge but also the pardon. Martin Luther, many of you know who he was.

He nailed the 95 Theses to the church doors in Wittenberg, Germany, 1517 and sparked the Protestant Reformation. It was actually sparked many years before that. But that helped to fuel it.

He said this, Always, always, and I try to remember this, always preach in such a way that if the people listening do not come to hate their sin, they will instead hate you. Don't clap for that one. I don't know about that one.

But think about that. Isn't that true? Because we want to preach in such a way that we don't offend, we don't hurt, but when you truly preach God's Word, people will leave hating their sin, hating their condition, wanting to come back to Christ and Christ alone. Or they'll hate the messenger.

That's the power of the Gospel. That's the power of truth. It hurts.

It divides. It pierces. And that's what solemnly charges.

I solemnly charge you. I mean, in my opinion, this should raise an alarm in the heart of every pastor. Are you encouraging sin by your silence? Are we encouraging sin by our silence? Because to say nothing is to say something.

Is it not? Millions, millions of people, I'm not going to vote. Well, you just said something. You just put who knows what in office.

Jane, you're getting political. No, I'm getting biblical. That we're called to be stewards of what God has given us.

To make a difference. To speak out on things. I mean, if you had the vast majority of pulpits speaking out on abortion, gay marriage, and loving and mercy and love and all those things, but balancing it.

I solemnly warn you, Timothy, preach the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So help me God. So here's a reminder I said last year.

And I went back and forth, but this is what has been my heartbeat on this topic. Paul is saying to preach the difficult truth as well as the joyful ones. Preach the cross and preach the new life.

Preach hell and preach heaven. Preach damnation and preach salvation. Preach sin and preach grace.

Preach wrath and preach love. Preach judgment and preach mercy. Preach obedience and preach forgiveness.

Preach that God is love, but don't forget that God is just. See, it's interesting. When you preach, when you just preach what God says, you warn the sinner, but you encourage the saint.

Spurgeon said that. You preach, you encourage the person. I need to get back on track and thank you for that.

But you also convict the person who needs to turn from the wrath of God. It's God's Spirit moving because you're preaching the whole counsel of God's Word. Regardless of where you're at, Joel offers a cure for judgment.

Now to the message. It's a little bit... Steve, by the way, I'm breaking all the rules of homiletics in these sermons. In this case, judgment has already come.

Okay? We're going to the book of Joel. Judgment has already come on the people. Joel 1. I think it's on the screen too.

The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethol. Hear this, you elders, and give ear to all you inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days? Or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it.

Get this. Tell your children... Wait, Joel, no, I don't want to tell my kids about this. Right? Remember, I tell my kids, avoid the book of Revelation.

Don't read the Pauline epistles just yet. Avoid the Old Testament at any cost. Stay out of Jude and James and Peter.

Stick with just John. Just John. Repeat.

Tell my children about the wrath of God? About God's judgment? He says yes, let your children tell their children and their children another generation. It's interesting, in Judges, the Bible says, and another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord. Another generation arose who did not know the Lord because they didn't pass down these truths.

So here's the first cure for judgment. I don't know where you're at. Are you about ready to lose your marriage? Are you about ready to backslide into a certain area? Do you just need to be encouraged and continue? Do you not even know God? Here's the cure for judgment.

Acknowledge it. Own it. Pass it down.

First thing we see, there's an acknowledgement. There's an own it. Tell your children, look, we brought this upon ourselves.

Own it. Own it. Americans used to own things.

Now they don't. They blame shifted on everybody. We don't want to own it.

God says, own it. It's okay even as a pulpit. Daniel, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, they would cry out because of the sins of the people.

They owned it. Lord, we have done this. And then we pass it down to our children.

We tell them, who are we to soften God's blow? Who are we to ease the pounding of the hammer? Who are we to silence the trumpet that God is blowing to get our attention? See, I want to see my children crying out to God. I want to see them weeping under the magnitude of their sin because then they turn to the Savior. Then they have genuine faith, and they are born again.

What will be the parent who paints a glamorous picture of Christianity and then a shooter comes in and asks them, do you really love Christ? To their school or something? We have to own it and say, look at what we've created. Look at what we've done. Here's the answer, turning back to God.

The greater the need, the tighter the hold. It's okay to point your kids. Tell them the truth.

Tell them the truth, obviously, not maybe like you would an adult, depending on their age, but you tell them. Tell them the truth. You own it.

So when there's a pitting judgment, or when things are difficult, or when we're out of God's will, you own it. Actually, it's called repentance and confession, right? Lord, we own this. Do you know how much blame shifting goes on in the church? You'd be, well, yeah, but.

It's a yeah, but. That'd be a good sermon. No more buts, right? Yeah, but.

Yeah, but. Yeah, but you don't know. Yeah, but you don't this.

Sounds like rabbit or something. But that's what he's, we just, God says the first way, the first cure for judgment, acknowledge it, own it. Acknowledge it, own it, and then pass it down to those underneath us.

And then verse four, what the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten. And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.

Can you imagine that? It's this army of locusts coming in to the land, and it is devouring everything. There's different types of locusts, and they're coming in, they're devouring every hint of vegetation, everything that is for food. They've just devoured it, because why? Because God's people begin to drift from him.

So he doesn't bring calamity in always just to, you know, just to rebuke and to judge and a mean father. It's calamity to get your attention. Most people come to the Lord as a result of, right, hey, I just lost my job.

I better turn to God. I just, my marriage is on the rocks. My wife, my husband just left me.

What am I supposed, and because of calamity, often judgment, it'll get the heart of the person back on track. So he says, Awake, you drunkards, and weep and well, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth. There will no be grapes, there won't be fruit of any kind, for a nation has come up against my land, strong and without number.

His teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. So after we acknowledge it, the second thing is clear here. I'm going to circle that.

Second service. Awake, awake, awake. Remember last year I wrote an article and spoke on are you among the living dead? The church is full of the living dead.

Right? Christians should be vibrant in their faith. They should be excited. They should be Spirit filled.

They should be joy filled. They should be wanting to do great exploits for God. They should be filled with this Spirit and can't wait to get to church, can't wait to get to worship mornings, conviction, right? Right? They just can't wait.

They're alive in the things of God. They're filled with this God's Spirit, so they're alive. If you're not alive to the things of God, you are among the walking dead.

Spiritually speaking. So God says awake, awake, awake. I know dozens of people right now, not mainly here, but out in the valley at different places.

They're Christians and you just want to go shake them up. Wake up from your spiritual slumber. Get up out of bed.

Wake up. Throw some water on you. Wake up.

Don't you see what you're doing to your family? Don't you see what you're doing to your marriage? Don't you see what you're doing to your health and your spirituality? Don't you see it? Wake up. Because what happens when you wake up? Then you get up and you take a different direction. That's why this is so important.

He's saying wake up. A.W. Tozer said a Christian will make spiritual progress exactly in proportion to his ability to criticize himself. Did you catch that? Do you want to make progress as a Christian? It's directly related to, and I totally agree with this, your ability to criticize yourself.

Your ability to examine yourself. It's almost like we'll go to a doctor. Would you remove this? But we won't go to God.

Would you remove this? I need to remove this. I've got this going on and this going on and this going on. I need to remove this, God.

I need to remove these issues. I'm examining myself. Paul even said he took a step further.

Examine yourselves. Do you not know yourself? Is Jesus Christ in you? Is even in you? Examination. So once we acknowledge it, we have to wake up.

Let me just ask this question. I've asked before. Are you hungry for prayer? Are you hungry? Are you desiring the Word of God? Are you craving worship? Are you craving worship the same way you're craving lunch? Are you craving prayer and church the same way you're craving other things? If not, there could be something that's dying in your heart spiritually.

Because we should crave the things of God. But to most people craving the things of God is like broccoli over pizza. Right? I'm not craving broccoli.

Something amazing happens. If you eat only God-given good food for a month, you will crave broccoli and bell peppers and all the good stuff. Why? Because you've changed your cravings.

Same thing with the Word of God. You've got to awake from your spiritual slumber. And I don't want to embarrass people, but I could go around this room and I could point out people that need to awake from their spiritual slumber.

I can tell. And that's my heartbeat. It's for you.

To awake. What else would I be doing this for? To win a popularity contest? Hey, great. The sermon on your way out.

Do you feel great and loved? And nobody didn't get convicted? Didn't step on your toes? Or is it trying to help? So you have to awake. And then verse 8. I think it's on the screen as well. Now, lament.

Lament like a virgin, girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. Basically, it's as immature as a virgin waiting for her husband, but because of unfaithfulness. It never happened.

And God often uses that imagery. Like a virgin putting on the sackcloth and the ashes and mourning over what could have been, what should have been, but because of her error and her disobedience. She was not allowed to marry.

And that's what Israel is here. It's a picture of cheating on God. Let me be clear here.

Cheating on God. Having an affair. Spiritual adultery.

Not physical. It's spiritual adultery. Because when physical adultery happens, what happens? A person gives their heart.

They gave into lust or whatever. But physical adultery is when they give their heart to another as well. And he's saying here, just like a virgin who's girded in sackcloth for the husband of her youth, the grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off from the house of the Lord.

The priests mourn who minister to the Lord. The field is wasted. The land mourns for the grain is ruined.

The new wine is dried up. The oil fails. Be ashamed.

That hit me this week as well. Be ashamed. We've lost our ability to blush and to be ashamed.

We allow things in our homes. We watch things. We view things.

That's why I often say what amazed us 40 years ago we would have never allowed now amuses us. And what used to amaze you and used to blush at you said no, now amuses you. Remember on movies, you're just a little nudity and you'd be blushed as a Christian.

That's just not right. Now it's entertainment. See, God hasn't shifted.

So priests mourn. Mourn who minister to the Lord. The land is wasted.

The land mourns for the grain is ruined. The new wine is dried up. The oil fails.

Be ashamed. Be ashamed, you farmers. Well, you vine dressers.

All the trees of the field are withered. Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men. He's telling the farmers, the vine dressers, He's telling people, be ashamed.

Be ashamed of what you caused. And that's the third point, the third cure for judgment is lament. Lament.

Lament. It's a passionate expression of grief. You know the difference, right? Lamenting is a passionate expression.

Not just, you know, you hear people say, I'm sorry. I mean, that's what you want to hear, right? That's not going to work. I'm sorry, I know, but here comes the but again.

You're right. If you ever have your sorry and then but, you might be in trouble. But this is a genuine, he says, lament.

It's a passionate expression of grief. The deeper the lament, the deeper you realize just what has happened. When a person laments and travails, it's because of the pain.

Anyone ever lose someone close to you? Of course. A child? Was that lamenting? Oh, the grief over it. There's a lamenting.

And God says, I want that to parallel how much my relationship means to you and how you've drifted from me. Lament over that condition. Let it break your heart.

We must recognize our condition. See, this is one flaw of the self-esteem movement. You know what the self-esteem movement is, right? A psychologist got involved, 80s, 1980s or so, and it's all about building self-esteem.

And there's good, I mean, you don't want to just beat people up, right? Of course. But the flaw in the self-esteem movement is because we actually start to validate our sin. We excuse our pride and we justify our actions.

So they would actually validate, see, build their self-esteem. And I'm reading headlines, you see them too in different reports, you know, teen suicide is increasing and all these things. But they need more self-esteem, Shane.

No, because if you're validating in their sin, their sin is going to keep leading to depression. You've got to point them to the answer, to the Savior who has all the answers, all the hope. That's how you help somebody.

You don't validate them in their sin. Now, you encourage them in their sin, right? You can get back up. You can fight this fight.

You can prevail again. That's a struggle. I struggle with this, you struggle.

Let me encourage you. Let me show you the price of Christ. And you encourage them, but you don't validate it.

If we just keep validating and validating, it's not going to fix anything. More self isn't the answer. That's the problem.

More self. More self. More self-esteem.

We've forgotten how to weep, how to blush, how to be ashamed. Have you ever thought about why? It's because the tenderness of Christ, the holiness of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit are lacking in most Christians. Now, I'm saying this.

Let me take the pastor hat off for a minute. And I could sit right there. I'd probably be in the balcony, but I would be out there, and I'm susceptible to the same exact things.

I've mastered everything. Let me tell you how. It's more a cheerleader and the group of cheerleaders, right? And getting back on track.

But if you are not careful, when you lose the tenderness of Christ, and you don't have tears when you see the homeless woman walking with her child in Lancaster. You don't hear abortion or gay marriage, all those things. And I'm not trying to make this a hot-button issue, but it's important, because when you don't have the tenderness of Christ, or the missionaries out there, the persecuted church, and you've lost that tenderness, you'll begin to develop a hard heart.

And you drift away from the holiness of God, being holy and set apart for God, and the power of the Spirit. So if you're not tender, you're lacking holiness, and the power of the Holy Spirit is not in your life, you'll become very hard and rigid. You won't be able to lament.

That's why you're cold and calloused. That's why you never weep. Has Scripture ever made you weep? Has worship? Why is that? Because there's lamenting, there's something taking place.

We don't play Mr. Tough Guy in church. I'm sorry to drop a bomb on you. But there's not like, I'm stoic.

No, you're arrogant. I just wasn't raised to be emotional. Oh, you got really emotional at the Super Bowl.

What's the difference? You lack that tenderness. I do. I remember I grew up, my dad always said, boy, don't cry.

Boy, you don't cry. Don't cry. Broke my leg.

Dad, don't cry. And I know that. I would err on the side of not very emotional.

But that's a danger spot to be. Because unless you have the heart of Christ, which is very tender, very emotional, you'll start to get a very hard heart. That's why one of the keys here is to lament.

Even as I'm speaking, some of you need to repent and lament and say, God, give me that heart of compassion again. Give me that heart for others. Because what happens too, is if we don't have that heart, we become hard and legalistic and rigid.

You know, it's more formality. And church has a lot of rules and spirituality. We forget the real message of the church is to go out and be the light in the darkness.

To go be that cup of water. To go be that hug. To go to the hospital homes.

Right? And just sit and minister and talk with them. That's the heart of Christ. See, we think, oh, I went to church and sang worship.

That's not the heart of Christ necessarily only. That gets your heart ready to become the heart of Christ. That coming here gets, now my heart's ready to go out.

Some people, we come in like, okay, I'm done for the week. No, that's not the finish line. This isn't the finish line.

This is the starting point. And we get broken before God. We sing those songs.

Oh, how He loves us. And God, You're building me up. You're strengthening me.

Abba, Father, I cry out to You. And you get lamented and broken again in your heart. And the heart breaks for the things that break for God.

It's not little trite sayings. It's true. If your heart doesn't break for the things that break the heart of God, something's wrong.

We're supposed to have that tenderness. And then verse 13, gird yourself and lament, you priests, starting with leadership. Gird yourself and lament.

Well, you who minister before the altar, come lie all night in sackcloth. You who minister to my God for the grain offering, the drink offering, are withheld from the house of your God. So it says, leadership in the church.

See, that would be a good call. Sometimes the leadership in the church, even abroad, America, they need to come to the altar. They need to repent.

As leadership goes, so goes the congregation. Right? If I'm too busy to be here at 6 in the morning on my face at the altar worshiping, then we've got problems. Because from that is going to come the service.

So he's saying, priests, leaders, this is serious. Get on your face before God. Come to the altar.

Humble yourself well before the Lord. Now verse 14, here we go. Here we go.

Everybody knows it, but very few want to do it. What is that word again? Fast. I cannot get away from that word.

It's everywhere. Nehemiah fasting. Esther fasting.

Moses receiving 10 commandments after fasting. Jesus, you had to fast. Paul, in much tribulation, fasting.

Peter, fasting. I can keep going. Ezra wanted the Lord's protection.

Fasted. Elijah, 40 days. Fasted.

The reason it's so difficult is because it's so important. When God says, turn on air one and drive to Baskin Robbins, that's not very difficult. But when he says, go sit in your prayer closet for an hour, put on worship, worship me, and don't eat.

What do you think is going to have the more benefit? I've been going back all week if I want to make a public confession or not, and I think I will. The reason I haven't been able to fast to the extent I want to is because of the fear of men. You've lost too much weight.

Are you sick? The fear of men. Opinions. Consecrate a fast.

Call a sacred assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord. It's not that difficult.

Consecrate a fast. Do you think after a big turkey dinner you can come in here and seek God? Let's try it. One time let's do that.

Thursday after Thanksgiving around 6pm we're going to have a worship night. Who's going to be here? Me and my wife and Brant probably. Right? Because we have to.

But see there's a lot of truth in that. There's a lot of truth in that. Last time I ate was Friday for this very reason.

Just water. And I'm not saying it to... I'm saying God I need you. I need to practice what I preach.

I can't just say it and not do it. So I understand the struggle of the flesh. I understand that monster that wants to take you down.

You say, but if it wasn't for the grace of God there go I. Lord I have to starve the very thing that's destroying me. Do you understand what is against you is within you? What is against you that is bringing you down is within. You have to starve that to death.

I'm not talking about legalism. I'm not talking about rituals. I'm talking about following the example set forth in the Bible.

Call a sacred... You think worship this morning is sweeter on an empty stomach? Or Krispy Kreme and coffee? I wouldn't even come here. I'm just going home. Right? There's a fasting and a starving in the flesh.

Those who don't like to hear this are those who need to hear it. Those who are convicted about this and say, ah, that's Old Testament stuff. Prove it.

Prove it. It's in all the writings of early church fathers. Ignatius, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Augustine.

It comes into the Reformation. You think Luther fasted? He fasted when he translated the Bible. You think John Knox, John Calvin, Yerkes Wingley fasted? You think John Wesley fasted? He brought in one of the great awakenings twice a week.

You couldn't even be a Methodist pastor unless you fasted twice a week. Now, it's a little hardcore, I guess, right? But what he's doing, he's testing the spiritual discipline of his leaders. If you can't discipline this area, I've got news for you.

It's disciplining you. It's spanking you. You're not spanking it.

Right? It's leading you around. I've talked about this before. So it's a very important thing.

Consecrate a fast, so you're not going to die. If you know that, right? You're not going to die. Everybody know that, right? I'm hoping to speak on this in the future, but you were actually created to store some and then get rid of it.

That's how God created us. To put it on for the lean times and take it off, and not to just stay around and never fast from the flesh. So consecrate a fast.

Starve the flesh. Come hungry. Call a sacred assembly.

Not just any assembly. See, I'm careful even on this Wednesday. I'm calling a sacred assembly.

Those who are hungry. That's why we say fasting. You'll get rid of half the people who don't want to come.

Wait a minute. No Subway sandwiches afterwards? No, just water. That's who I want.

I want Gideon's army. That's who God's asking for. He's not asking for the compromiser.

Those who try to compromise. Okay, does fasting mean just no donuts? No, it means nothing. Okay, does it mean can I have Daniel fast plus chicken plus some steak? Can I alter it? He's just saying no, fast.

Just starve the flesh and seek me. So you call a sacred assembly. You gather the leaders and the people and you come into the house of the Lord and you cry out to the Lord.

And cry out this, Alas for the day. The day of the Lord is at hand. It shall come upon.

It shall come as destruction from the Almighty. So that was the fourth point I was going to make. The cure for judgment is calling, if you can't do it in a church, in your own home.

You call for a time of worship. A time of praying and seeking God. A time of fasting and denying the flesh.

The reason is the magnitude determines the response. Fasting is depriving the flesh of its boastful arrogance as we pray and we seek God's mercy. So let me read verse 16 in closing.

Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? But it begs the question, is joy and gladness cut off in your life? Is joy and gladness cut off in your life? You know, I skipped this verse I wanted to read. If I can find it. It was about, maybe it will come to me.

Joel 2.25, we're not going to get there, but it says this, And I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten, the canker worm and the caterpillar and the palmer worm, my great army, which I sent among you. See, that's a famous verse they like to quote. I will restore to you.

I will restore to you what the enemy took. I'll restore everything. How God, if you return to me, return to me and call upon my name.

The chewing of the locust will be nothing compared to the roaring of the lion. The buzzing of the insects will be nothing compared to the trumpet sounding from Zion. The devastation of the crops will be nothing compared to the devastation of God Almighty.

So three people I'm going to talk to, and we'll close here. Is there lack in your life? Are joy and gladness nowhere to be found? I'm not talking about money right now. I'm talking about joy, gladness.

There's lack. God's been distant. The cure is the same, return.

Are you on the verge of God judging you? Are you on the verge of making a very foolish decision and doing something you probably shouldn't do? Are you on the verge of that? God says, just return. Return to

me. Reposition yourself with me, and that will advert the judgment.

Just return. If my people return to me, or the final person, do you simply need encouragement? Do you simply need encouragement to keep going forward? I talked about this last week. God looks at the fruit, not the failure.

Right? He looks at the fruit in our lives, not the failure. So we don't ever take, I mean I don't, take from this message, oh goodness, God's gonna start raining down hell stones, right? And fire and brimstone. It's not that.

It's a God who says, my absolute truth has went out from the moment I created. Truth has been established. Here's what happens if you stray from that truth.

I'm telling you not only what happens, but I'm telling you how to advert it. I'm not only telling you what happens and how to advert it, but I'm telling you how to come back to me when it falls. So I don't have this image of a mean, wrathful God all the time, even though the Bible talks about the wrath of God, and I teach the wrath of God and preach the wrath of God, obviously, right? Because the wrath of God will fall on a disobedient people and on a disobedient nation.

It will fall. But God is still calling, saying turn to me. Return to me.

And sackcloth and ashes and prayer and fasting. See, if it doesn't mean anything to you, it won't mean anything to God. We have too many people trying to negotiate obedience.

God says, that's why fasting is so important, in turning from things. If it doesn't mean anything to you, it won't mean anything to God. So the cure for judgment, in a nutshell, is everything we just talked about in turning back to Him, repositioning yourself, and He will begin to restore.

Has the enemy ever taken anything from you that you want to get back? That's not very encouraging. Come on. Your health.

Your family. Your relationships. Your thing.

God says reposition. Reposition. I will return to you.

If the enemy took it, God will return to you. Sometimes we're just in a fallen nature and it doesn't fall under those guidelines, but there is always the availability of calling a sacred assembly. So I want you to come Wednesday hungry, broken, and alive.

Okay? Those three things. Hungry? Why? Take medication. Well, be careful, right? I mean, if you have to take medication, you have to take medication.

I'm not saying that. But you come hungry for God, and you come alive. Wanting more of God.

Or even if you're dead, come because God can resuscitate. God can rebuild and renew. Interesting thing about prayer.

I've noticed. Those who need it aren't there. Those often who need it the most don't go for prayer.

Why? One word. Often pride. Pride.

I don't need that. I don't want to confess. I don't want to take that step.

But that's the first step. Turning from that pride. Turning from that hard heart.

Saying, God, I need you. I'll go for prayer. I'll go for prayer.

I need Him. I don't know about you, but I'll pray with somebody. I need Him.

My tooth is killing me right now. I need prayer. I was having a root canal a week ago and it didn't work out good, so it's not a fun thing.

It brings on tears sometimes. I need prayer. Marriage needs prayer.

Our kids need prayer. You know pastors' kids aren't perfect? Anybody know that? They're not. We need prayer.

Everybody in this room needs prayer. Who are we fooling? Who are we fooling? We all need prayer. We should be on our faces before Almighty God, weeping at the condition of our nation, at the condition of our churches, the condition of our children.

Look at the school system now as a battleground. They can't go anywhere. Bowling is an epidemic.

Drug abuse and opiates are skyrocketing. Where's the answer? We can't sit in church and do nothing anymore. Where's the church that used to pray? Where are they? Do we just come and hear a message and sing some songs and go home? The enemy would like that.

But God calls us to warfare, to pray, pull down heaven, break down strongholds, cast down every argument, every hyphen that exalts itself against the name of Christ and bring it into captivity. As you're praying, we can pray against these things. Lord, in our nation, in our family, in our church, we come against addiction.

We come against these strongholds. We will not stand here and allow the darkness to continue to penetrate. We will bring the light into the schools.

We will bring the light into the darkness. We will stand our ground having done all. Stand.

I'm standing here with the truth of God's Word. We will not back down. We will not cower down.

That's how you pull down strongholds. I don't know how you pray, but little quick-mint devotionals are nice from time to time, but they're not going to stop the enemy who's sent to kill stealing to destroy. If that doesn't motivate you to pray, I don't know what will.

We've got to contend. We've got to fight. So come to the altar.

Stay in your seats and put your heads down and bow your head and pray or just come next door. It's a heavy pressure on me to not just do church. You know what I mean? We've got our four songs.

We've got a message. What time is it? We've got one more, two more. I better stop or I'm going to get in trouble.

So just meet us next door if you want to pray. Come to the altar if you need to, but we're not going to hurry. We're going to petition God, and I would pray.

I would encourage you to pray. There's a lot going on in our nation that we're not aware of with many different things. And people say, you shouldn't be concerned about that.

I'm not for me. Take me out. I'm ready to go.

But I'm concerned for the next generation. You give me one verse that says we should not plant trees for them. Plant the seeds now so they can bear the fruit of righteousness.

And Judges, it says, another generation arose and departed from the Lord because they didn't know Him. Teach your children in the morning. Teach your children in the evening.

Pray in content, because the warfare is great.

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