

The Darkness Before the Dawn

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman's sermon emphasizes the inevitability of darkness in life but assures believers that it is temporary and encourages them to remain steadfast in faith and action.

Duration: 43:09

Scripture: Psalm 30:5, Psalm 121:1-2, Isaiah 59:2, Isaiah 59:19, John 16:33, Romans 8:37, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Ephesians 6:12

Topics: "Moral Decline", "Spiritual Victory"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the darkness before the dawn, highlighting the struggle with discouragement and frustration in the face of societal challenges. It calls for righteous indignation and action in response to the moral decline in the nation. The message reminds believers that darkness is seasonal, drawing parallels to the victory over darkness through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Transcript

The message this morning is the darkness before the dawn. The darkness before the dawn, and with your Bibles you can turn to 2 Corinthians 11 and Jeremiah 6, 2 Corinthians 11 and Jeremiah 6, New and Old Testament. But I want to just open this morning by confessing something, don't worry it's not bad.

But I'm pretty optimistic, right, I trust in God and I'm an optimistic person. But I do struggle, especially right now with a lot of discouragement and just being frustrated with the direction of the nation, of where our church, not this church, but the church in America, just what we're seeing in the news. Is anyone else discouraged and disappointed? And this optimism can easily be crowded out by discouragement.

But the good thing is concern is biblical, or can be biblical, if it leads us in the right direction. If it pushes us in the right direction. Jeremiah was so concerned about the sins of the people that he would weep tears, massive tears.

He would talk about in his writings, and Isaiah, and we also see Nehemiah, when he heard about the destruction of Jerusalem, and the walls were torn down, the king saw him and he said why should I not be sad when the place of my father's tombs lies in waste? Couldn't that be said today? Why shouldn't we be sad when we see something that was once, especially America that once held to God's standards, and looked to God's word, and in the schools, and 50, 60 years ago even, and look at how far we've drifted. Why should I not be sad when the place of my father's tombs lies in waste? And we also, Jesus' word, oh

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I wish I could gather you as a mother gathers her children, or a chicken gathers her hens, and I wish I could just bring you in. And so, we see this concern that we have, and it's okay to some degree if it causes us to act, righteous indignation, the Bible would call it.

There's a concern, and I want to act. We see in the schools, many times that God is discarded, right? God is dead, and evolution is taught as a fact. It's not a fact, it's a theory in crisis, and they're teaching it.

This is what is fact, and God is dead. We came from monkeys, so we can act like animals, right? Isn't that what they teach? Come on, 11 o'clock, you're going to have to help me out a little bit here. All right, good.

The 9 o'clock was asleep, but you can't excuse that at 11. I mean, that excuse just doesn't work. You can even get to bed at 1 in the morning, and still have energy at 11.

But I also look at the legislation. Do you know that there are bills trying to be passed, mainly in California, in nursing homes, where if you call a man a he, that you could be in trouble, because he wants to be called a she. Gender, you call the wrong gender.

You bake a cake, and you're not going to bake a cake for, say, a gay marriage, and you can lose everything. I mean, is this just ironic? I mean, we look at how far we've drifted. Entertainment now is calling evil good and good evil.

In entertainment, what we're watching, what a lot of our kids are watching, evil is good, and what should be good and wholesome in the family unit, the family dynamic, is evil. It's like, my goodness, I just want to punch somebody. You know, of course I'm not, but you want to, come on, folks, wake up.

I'm optimistic, but really? I mean, look at the sex slave trade. You know, somebody can be taken a girl and then sold into that? Where's the cry going out? Where's the concern? It seems like we're so selfish and so self-focused that we don't have the same heart that resonates with the heart of God, heartbreaking for the massacre of children. What about sports? Now, I'm coaching, and I see it all the time.

It's this idolatry mentality. We're sacrificing our families on the altar of sports. That comes above everything else, and then maybe we'll squeeze God in, and our career takes center stage, and maybe we'll squeeze God in.

I see it in all facets of life. So while I'm optimistic, I'm concerned. While I'm joyful, sometimes I get depressed.

Because you see what's going on, and I was reminded of that old country song by the Judge. Remember? Grandpa, tell me about the good old days. Tell me about the good old days when the line between right and wrong wasn't so hazy.

Did daddies really stay? Did lovers really fall in love forever? Daddy, tell me, Grandpa, tell me about the good old days. Did families really bow their heads and pray? Folks, we've got to wake up at some point. We've got to wake up and say, okay, enough is enough, devil, I'm going to pray, I'm going to fast, I'm going to have my concern be focused in the right direction.

Because the church that's always stood to be the beacon of light has lost its illumination. We've cowered back. We've become just like the world.

And we'll get anxious, we'll get fearful, but we don't take action in the biblical sense. And action in the biblical sense is praying and fasting and pulling down heaven and fighting hell and standing up for the things that are right. I could stay there a while, but I'll get right to the sermon.

I don't want to upset too many people. But being the light of the world means that we are surrounded by darkness. So the message is the darkness before the dawn.

Now the encouragement to that is, as believers, darkness is seasonal. If you're in darkness, going through difficulty, it's always seasonal. Even if we're in darkness and death is upon us and we die, it's only seasonal, right? We know that we are with our Savior.

So in all aspects of life, darkness is always seasonal. But we need help getting through that darkness. And we're actually, I'm going to pull a few examples from Paul's life.

We are ending the book of Acts. We would be in Acts 28, but that really just talks about Paul. It says here that he rented a home.

So good for you home renters, right? If you haven't bought a house yet, Paul actually dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him. So he went through seasons of darkness. He's got a couple years here of relaxation and getting the word out.

And the darkness has ran its course. Speculation what happened on later in his life. But I'm going to pull things from his life here in just a minute.

But then we go into Acts 29. Does anyone know what Acts 29 is about? Is there an Acts 29? No, Acts 29 is about you, the church. It's God writing the story of the church, Acts 29.

It's where the church has continued to grow, the church has continued to move. But it does beg the question, and most of you know this, but I thought it would be good to at least throw it out there, why darkness? Where does the darkness come from? Well first and foremost, we know it comes from the evil that has saturated the DNA of man. From the sin of Adam, evil entered into the world.

With that evil comes a darkness and a perversion. The whole idea is for that darkness to snuff out the light. The wrong to overcome the right.

The evil to overcome the good. And it's this battle. And then not to mention, we have an enemy of our souls who is sent to kill, to steal, and to destroy with the darkness.

So that's the course that darkness likes to take. Colossians 4.17, that's why Paul said, see to it. He was talking to one of the disciples in this passage.

See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord. The reason this is so important, the whole point of darkness, is to knock you and to knock me off course. It's to derail us.

It's to get us off target, off focus. That's why Paul said, see to it. Make it a point that you complete, that you carry out, and you fulfill what God has called you to do.

So all of life is like this huge going toward the things of God. You want to honor God. You want to do His will as a believer.

And darkness comes in for a season, and it tries to knock you and me off course. But I'm going to read it. We're going to actually put it up on the screen.

2 Corinthians 11. In your Bible, 2 Corinthians 11, verse 22. And we're going to talk a little bit about Paul.

But let me read the context before I get this. Paul is saying false apostles are in the church deceiving the church. They are deceitful workers transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

And no wonder, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Always remember that Satan doesn't always look like this dark image. With the red horns and this pitchfork.

And oh, I can see this guy coming. He often sometimes appears as an angel of light. What looks good? What looks good to our... And that's how he comes in.

For you put up with it, Paul said. You put up with these false apostles in the church. One brings you into bondage.

One devours you. One takes from you. And another exalts himself.

One strikes you in the face. You know, they used to slap in the face a lot more back then. Luckily, they don't do it much now, at least in America.

Because you get hit back. But these false teachers were in the church. And Paul's saying you're putting up with these guys bringing you into bondage.

They're devouring you as far as taking your money, taking your resources. And then he goes into adding credibility about who he is. Are they Hebrew? That might not be up there.

I think I skipped... I'll get to that in a minute. So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool. I am more in labors, more abundant.

He says I work in stripes. I've been beaten beyond measure. In prison more frequently.

In death, in encountering death more often. And this is a good time to remind you that false prophets don't have the wounds and the scars that true believers often have. A false prophet is avoiding the controversy, right? They're avoiding the difficult things.

A false prophet won't go through the furnace of affliction. They won't go through the dark seasons. They'll bail out on God.

And then verse 24, from the Jews, five times I received 40 stripes minus one. So he was beaten five times by the Jews. Verse 25, three times I was beaten with rods.

Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I've been in the deep.

He spent a night and the whole day in the ocean. In perils of water. In perils of robbers.

In perils of my own countrymen. In perils of the Gentiles. In perils in the city.

In perils in the wilderness. In perils in the sea. In perils among false brethren.

That does not sound like fun. All areas of life. Things robbers.

People trying to take from him. His own countrymen. He supports fellow Jews, right? Fellow Americans in our day.

You know you have people that aren't believers. They will harass you often. And then even there's difficulties among our own people.

Within the church, in the city where I live. And pretty much everywhere you go. That's his way of saying wherever you go, in every situation, there's something there or someone there sent to knock you off course.

To derail you from your destiny. And we encounter many of these same perils today. Many of these same dangers.

And then verse 27, this is Paul talking again. In weariness and in toil. You can see it right there in the middle.

In weariness and toil. In sleeplessness. Often in hunger.

In thirst. In fastings. Often in cold and nakedness.

Beside the other things what comes upon me daily. My deep concern for all the churches. So this is what Paul who wrote, I believe it was 13 books in the New Testament.

The person we look to, this is what he went through. This was his life. This was the challenges and the difficulties.

So let's look at the first one. In weariness and toil. This will happen to you as well.

When you're serving God, did you know there's little recognition? There's a lot of toil. A lot of work. There's little recognition.

But God sees the work. God sees the hard work. But Paul was feeling that weariness.

Then there was sleeplessness. He was tired, wanting to give up. Ever been there? That's where that phrase comes in.

Throw in the towel. I just wanna throw in the towel. There's this sleeplessness.

There's this weary, I wanna give up. There's hunger and thirst. Now this wasn't by choice.

Paul was going, as he's ministering for God, there were days when people would not eat. We can't even fathom that now, can we? There's something on every corner. How can a person not eat? Well, back then, there wasn't a McDonald's on every corner.

It was actually okay for the body to not eat every three hours and not listen to every impulse. So he would go days without eating. Sometimes, a lot of time, maybe a day or two without finding water, there was this hungering and thirsting and there was fasting often.

The difference between hungering and thirsting and fasting is fasting was by choice. He would fast often, and I don't wanna talk about that today. If anybody's interested, we have that whole topic on our website.

But it's a time to starve the flesh. It's where the flesh is put in submission. It's starved.

And the spiritual man, spiritual woman, is built up on the fasting. And then cold and naked, he lacked provision. He didn't have the things that he needed.

He was destitute. And it's interesting, in America, we often take this for granted. We are very blessed.

That's why you've heard me say that before. We are very blessed here to receive everything that we receive. And they said, beside the other things, what comes upon me daily? My deep concern for all the churches.

My deep concern for all the churches. What was happening? Well, people were drifting from the faith. Do you know that happens? People will be drifting from the faith.

So in Colossians 1.23, gonna paraphrase, Paul said, continue in the faith. Continue in the faith. Walk the straight and narrow regardless of how you feel.

Stay grounded, well balanced, on the right foundation. And steadfast, stay firm. Do not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

So that tells me that I can be moved away from the hope. That I can start to get on shaky ground and on sturdy ground. So he says, continue in the faith.

Walk the straight and narrow regardless of how you feel. And that's a good thing for us this morning to remember. Do not trust your feelings.

Got that? Is everybody awake? All right. Don't trust your feelings. Feelings make a wonderful caboose on the train, but not the engine.

Don't let them take you certain places. So Paul says, not trusting our feelings. We continue.

We stay grounded, well balanced, on the right foundation. We stay steadfast, which is firm. Not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

Now, the reason I introduced and opened up the beginning of the message with the concerns and how I feel is because it's misleading to only focus on the positives. It's misleading to only focus on the positives. To say peace, peace, when there is no peace.

Did you know that actually throughout the Old Testament that was a sign of a false prophet? To say peace, peace, when there is no peace. God would judge the nation. He would bring something and it would judge the nation.

And the false prophets would say, don't worry, that's not because of your sin. Don't worry, no, just go back to sleep. Everything's fine.

And then God would want to turn the people back to Him. And they'd say, no, peace, peace. Peace, peace.

Read Jeremiah 23 tonight. It talks about that. God says, I haven't sent these prophets, but they ran.

I haven't spoken to them, but they prophesied. But had they truly stood in My counsel, in My Word, had they truly spoke My Word, they would have caused the people to come back to Me. And that's when He says the famous Scripture, is not My Word like a fire, like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? So the Word of God gets the people back to God.

Preaching it in its totality gets it back to God. Gets the people back to God. And on this topic of peace, peace, I'll have them put up on the screen again, Jeremiah 6.10. So God is saying, to whom shall I speak and give warning? To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? So God's asking the question, who's going to hear? Those who have ears to hear, let them hear, right? So He's saying, who's going to listen to My message? Who's going to hear? Indeed, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed.

Behold, the Word of the Lord is a reproach to them. They are displeased by the Word. So anytime that the Word of God is a burden to people, they don't want to hear it.

Do you ever have people that say, don't tell me the Word of God. Don't preach to me the Bible. I don't want to hear it.

You're not in a good spot. Anytime you're displeased by the Word of God, you're not in a good spot. They have no delight in it.

They do not take pleasure and delight in it. So God is dealing with His people, and they're not listening. They don't want to hear the Word of God.

They don't take pleasure and delight in it. And that's a good question this morning. Is this boring to you? Is the Bible boring? I don't want to read it.

I haven't read it. I don't really want to come to church. Then there's something wrong in your heart.

Whatever, if the things of God are displeasing to you, and the things of the world are enjoyable, and that's all you want, you don't want God, then the heart, there's a disconnect with the heart. And people often come to church and say, oh, I didn't want to hear that. I want to hear the opposite, but I'm here to tell you the truth.

The Word of God needs to resonate in your heart, not to be displeasing. And also, when people offer advice, if they offer advice with the Bible, and we don't like that advice, don't tell me that, then there's also something going on in the heart as well. Is your ear uncircumcised? Let's see, what does that mean? Well, according to the Bible, an uncircumcised heart is a hard heart.

And ears that are uncircumcised are ears that are shut, they're closed off. I don't want to hear. Remember how kids do this? Bah, bah, bah, bah, bah.

I'm not listening. I'm not listening. Bah, bah, bah.

And that's how people walk around to God. I'm not listening. I don't care, tell me anything, anything but the Word of God, anything but the Bible.

I'm not listening. Verse 13, because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness. Do you know what that is? It's when we want what I don't have, but I want what you have.

I covet, I want things. And he's saying the people, from the least to the greatest, everyone is given to covetousness. They want something that's not theirs.

And from the prophet even to the priest. So you have the prophet, which was, this might be a good history lesson, the prophet would proclaim God's Word to the people. He was God's mouthpiece, God's spokesman.

He would proclaim His Word. And then the priest would intercede for the people. He would go and make the sacrifice for the people.

So you actually see Jesus as our prophet and our priest and our king. The soon coming king, the prophet and the priest, he fulfills all those roles. So the prophet is saying even from the prophet to the priest, everyone deals falsely.

Everyone is not being truthful. Everyone is not looking to my Word. So that's the context Jeremiah is in.

They have also healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying peace, peace. See, there it is. So the people are not obeying God and these false prophets are saying peace, peace, when there is no peace.

Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? Were they disgusted? See, that's a good place when a person is disgusted by the abominations. Let me put that into terms we'll know. We should be disgusted by the perversion we are seeing in our culture.

If it doesn't disgust us, remember when you would blush? Remember when people would blush, like oh, that's not good for me to see. He even says it here. They were not at all ashamed, nor did they even know how to blush.

And here's where we need to be careful because the church can get caught in with the culture and we forget to blush. We forget that this is a perversion. This is not healthy.

It's not good. And it begins to lead us astray the same way it led the children of Israel astray. It begins to pull us away from God.

And then God says, because you speak My word. Jeremiah 5.14, it's not up there. Because you speak My word.

Jeremiah, this is an encouragement to you. All of you in this room. Myself as well.

Those who speak God's word with the right heart. Because you speak My word, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people would and it will devour them. Wow.

So when you speak God's word, that's why the culture wants to get rid of it. That's why the schools want to get rid of it. The legal system, that's why they want to remove it out of everything because when you allow it to go in its undiluted form, it will go like fire and the people will be like wood and it will devour and consume them.

Now you remember the other scripture, is not My word like a fire, like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? So so many people need to be stopped being afraid of the word of God, especially pastors. Oh, that's going to offend. That's going to offend.

I need to stay out of that book. That's not going to go over well. The tithing group's going to leave on that one.

And they just avoid it. But let it speak for itself. Let the lion out of the cage.

You don't need to defend it. You preach it and what it says and it will go out like fire and devour. Now you have to make sure you have the right heart because if not, you'll just be angry.

You'll be an angry person quoting scripture. That's not good either. But when it comes with a heart so full of God's Spirit, see Paul's been broken.

He's been beaten. You go through this, you go through this, and you will be a broken man or woman on fire for God. That's why I quoted last week A.W. Tozer that it's doubtful that God can use a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply.

And then from that pain, from that anointing, I'm not scared of that word, anointing just means God has anointed it. He has put His seal of approval on it. He's put His power on it.

From that anointing, when you preach the Word of God, it will devour the people. They're like wood and here comes a fire and it just penetrates the heart. And that's my goal often when preaching or when we're going into the college is to just, here's what God's Word says.

We don't have to cower back. Oh, I know it seems silly. I know it seems this, but please.

No, you just speak it. It seems silly not to believe in a God. You look at the moon and the stars and the planet, the universe.

You look at how you were made. That's silly. That's foolish to not believe there is a God.

I just thought of a Scripture. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. See, if you just release it and let it loose into marriage counseling, here's what it says.

Here's what it says about your marriages. Husbands, love your wives. And wives, respect your husbands.

That's a marriage made in heaven. But we do the opposite. Here's what it says about handling your finances.

Here's what it says about sin and repentance. What about if we start getting this on the airwaves? This on the television sets? Instead of all the covetousness and all these things that just make us feel good, but don't change us from the inside out. So that's why he said, woe be to the false prophet who says peace, peace, when there's no peace.

If we're always encouraging. Now people need to be encouraged, don't they? Amen to that. We'll get there in a minute.

But there also comes a time and a place where we need to be lovingly challenged. We need to be confronted with the Word of God. Like a sledgehammer to the heart.

That's what it is. Because the whole point, the Word of God in addition to building up and encouraging and pointing the right way, it's supposed to go and it hits areas where we need to work on. Areas we need to improve in.

Where there might be besetting sin that is getting ready to destroy a marriage or destroy a family or destroy a person. And it goes in there and it highlights that area. It highlights that cancer.

It exposes it and it brings that feeling of utter shame and embarrassment and the only thing to do is turn to God. And it's like that fire comes upon you and you're the wood. So that's why this is, they're wanting to remove this from Hollywood.

Everywhere. Just as a side note, all these people that are attacking Christianity, right? In America, they're attacking Christians. They don't say anything about Muslims.

I haven't heard them putting down Hindu or Buddha or anything. No, won't even mention it. It's because there's power in the name of Christ.

There's power in the Word of God. That power upsets. That spiritual battle disarms and disgusts them because that's where the battle's happening.

They won't mention all these other things that they'll go directly after who Jesus is. God said, for this very reason, in the Old Testament and I believe today that God says, I have sent watchmen over the people to warn them. See, God would appoint watchmen.

And a watchman, we don't need it now because we have phones, right? Or we have whatever. But back then, you could see an approaching army coming miles and miles and miles away and they'd have a watchman up high in the city walls and they would see the people coming. They would alert the people.

So God said, metaphorically speaking, I've also set watchmen on my walls to warn the people. See, he's called watchmen. Us to be watchmen, not cowards.

Watchmen, not pacifists. Watchmen, not truth negotiators. And a watchman isn't always popular.

The people aren't gonna like what he has to say. The enemy's coming. I just got, I just sat down in a spa with a glass of wine.

Not me, right? I'm just, analogies here. The enemy's coming. I have to get out of this comfortable environment.

And I have to get out. I've get dressed. I've gotta go to warfare.

I don't like that watchman. I wish he would be quiet. But God has appointed watchmen for this very reason.

Anytime I talk about this, I can hear people often thinking or saying, but Shane, where are the New Testament church? I like Jeremiah, but that doesn't apply to me. I like the Bible stories in the Old Testament, but we're in the New Testament now. Well, then you might wanna read Paul's words to the church in Corinth.

He said, these things in the Old Testament were given as our examples that we might not lust after evil things like they lusted. So Paul's saying to the church, look at the Old Testament. Look where they messed up.

Look where they blew it. Look at what they did. They were written to be examples for us that we might not lust after the evil things that they lusted after and what led them astray.

And one verse that I've used often and I hear people say, and this will just be one example of putting something in context. Isaiah 59. Isaiah 59, 19 through 20.

I'm gonna say half of it. I hope you know the rest. When the enemy comes in like a flood.

The 9 a.m. didn't do too well, so I'm gonna give you one more chance. When the enemy comes in like a flood. Okay, there's different.

Now I know what translation of the Bible you're using because it does have different translations. I should have thought about that first, right? But it says, when the enemy comes in like a flood. Have you ever felt like that? I'm just gonna give up.

I'm just gonna, I'm done. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will raise up a standard against him. See, we quote that.

The enemy of the Lord, the Lord's gonna put up a standard against you. In Jesus' name, I cast you out, devil. And it's wonderful, wonderful, but also you gotta read that in context.

At the beginning of Isaiah 59, this is when the Lord says, behold, is my hand, my arm not short that I cannot grab down and save? Is my ear not heavy that I cannot hear? But your sins have separated you from me so that I cannot hear you. Your iniquities, unrepentant sin. Remember, I'm not going for a popularity contest.

There's no form to fill out when you leave to say, did shame please you? Did he, was he positive? Was he a positive motivational speaker? Will you be coming back? Check off, please let us know. We don't, we just, what God's Word says, that that is a truth, that your sins have separated you from me and I will not hear you. Now, I'm not talking about believers who have embraced Christ.

God hears our prayers. But there's something that happens when we continue to sin and continue to sin and I don't care what God says, I'm turning to my sin. There's something where the line of communication is interrupted.

There's a disconnect. And God says, but my arm is not heavy. I'm sorry, my arm is not short that I cannot save.

I can, my ear's not heavy that I cannot hear, but your sins, your iniquities, have separated me and you, the line of communication. And then he goes on to say, no one calls for justice anymore. No one pleads for truth.

Truth has fallen. See, this is, and he's speaking to his people. See, we forget about this.

Oh, this doesn't apply to me. God is speaking to his people, the children of Israel. He's saying no one stands for justice anymore.

No one stands for what is right. Truth has fallen in the street. Truth has been discarded.

People, you are growing complacent in the things of God is what he's saying. And then he also says, before we get to this verse, the Lord saw all this and it displeased Him. And there was no justice.

And He saw that there was no man. He saw that there was no intercessor. And I was reminded of Ezekiel.

God said, I look for a man all around. I look for a man who would build a wall and stand in the gap between me and the people that I might not devour the people. So we see this image of God and we see this image of the people.

And God's looking for an intercessor to come in between and saying, God, we have the blood of innocent children on our hands in this nation. God, we've developed into this perverted culture. God, I'm interceding.

Daniel would identify with the sins of the people. Nehemiah would intercede and identify with the sins of the people. So would Jeremiah.

They would intercede. And then God says, when the enemy comes in like a flood, then I will raise up a standard against him. As a matter of fact, before that, God says, I will bring salvation.

I will fix what is wrong. I will clear the broken path. God says, I will redo that.

I will do that. I will redeem that. So we have to remember that.

It's wonderful to quote Scripture. I do it often. But remember the context.

Because it's hard to claim the promises of God if we don't know the context of when it was written. And I know it's demoralizing sometimes and discouraging. But it's also not biblical to focus only on the negative, right? The flip side of that is it is demoralizing and discouraging if all we do is focus on the negative.

If that's all I was gonna preach every Sunday, man, we'd shrink down pretty quick probably if all we're doing is discouraging and discouraging. Oh my gosh, here comes Shane again. So we don't wanna just focus on that.

But sometimes the pendulum swings, doesn't it? It's all encouragement. Here's the pendulum swing. It's all encouragement.

And nobody really is challenged or changed or repents or any of those things. And then the pendulum swings in this direction. It's all hellfire and brimstone and Bible thumping and all those fundamentalists and those words they like to throw out there.

It's just all that camp. And it's hard, I'll be honest with you, it's hard to find where that pendulum swings in the middle. But I also believe there's times and seasons.

I think God calls us to this season from time to time where we look at what's in our nation. I wish more pulpits would swing to this side sometimes and warn the people. And warn the people.

Because you might not be living in the same world I'm living in, but there are people that come to church and they worship, but then they're still hooked to their sin. And they don't wanna give certain things up. And I just feel that it's important to challenge people in this area.

This is where I've seen in the lives of many people where you see the most amount of healing take place. Is when that repentance takes place and God begins to free them and set them free, then they become worshipers. Then they love their Bible.

But when we're caught in certain transgressions, we don't like to read the Word. We don't like to worship. But to just stay there is discouraging and I don't wanna do that.

I wanna remind you that darkness is always seasonal. So you're going through something or you know somebody else that's going through something as a believer. If you're not a believer, I cannot make that statement.

But as believers, the darkness we're seeing is always seasonal. One of the most profound, at least for me, is sentences that I read in the New Testament is when Jesus is arrested. And they're coming to get Him.

He makes an interesting statement. Depending on what version of the Bible you have, I believe it's the NIV. He tells them, this is your hour.

This is your hour when darkness reigns. He tells them, this is your hour. Well, they handcuffed Him, right? They didn't have handcuffs.

But they took something and they bound Him. They're pulling Him to be judged. And He said, this is your hour when darkness reigns.

And it was at that point, hell celebrated, I believe. It was at that point, the religious leaders, seeing Him beaten, going on a cross. We're getting drunk and celebrating.

The Romans were taking pride in what they did. Pontius Pilate was probably, I'm glad I'm done with this. Hell is celebrating.

They are saying, finally, we get rid of this nuisance. The darkness, right? There's nothing more dark than that. Can you imagine the disciples? Everything we've lived for is over.

Everything we thought. I don't know if you've ever invested a majority of your time or energy and money and resources, changed everything, and it comes to be, in your mind, an absolute failure. Darkness was reigning.

If you would live in that time and you were following Christ, you would be discouraged and disappointed where the others are celebrating. And I wonder, I would love to ask God sometime or Jesus sometime if we could, what was the devil thinking? I mean, we get a little glimpse into death. Paul says if they knew what they were doing, they would have not crucified the Son of Glory.

But what were they celebrating? They think they got Him? The town's in an uproar. Darkness was reigning. But then something interesting happened.

Jesus said, Father, I commend my spirit to You. It is finished. It's over.

And His life ended. Then, it's interesting, the entire ground shook. The sky was dark.

Roman soldiers, who were the toughest men on the planet at that time, were shaking. I mean, you don't say truly this is the Son of God unless you're fearing for your life. The ground was shaking.

The dead in the city were being raised. The temple was being shook by the earthquake. The veil, God basically said, blasphemy.

What you believe is blasphemy. He ripped the entire, this four-inch-thick veil, He ripped it. The whole city now is going from rejoicing to chaos and confusion.

See what happened? Darkness had its season. Darkness had its season. Hell, death, and the grave were all defeated in one final blow.

And that's what you have to remember. That's what you have to remember this morning is that darkness is a season. You have to focus on the Scriptures.

Where does my help come from? Where does it come from? Oprah? Making my, is she still on? Making my next appointment to meet with my whatever, and where does my help come from? The Old Testament says, I look to the hills. And people may not understand that, but even in our early American history with the Calvary and different things, you would see the hills coming down. These groups of people are coming.

You say, thank God, here comes our help. Here comes the Calvary. Here comes the army to help defeat us.

And you're losing this battle, and you look to the hills. Where does my help come from? It comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He's not only coming down the hills, He's saturating the entire battlefield.

That's where we look. Although tears come, joy comes in the morning. Where does my help come from? And if you're not going through darkness, it's coming.

And you have to be prepared, because this is when many people, what we just talked about with Paul saying, stay grounded, continue. Don't be moved away from the hope that is within you.

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