

The Gathering - Call a Sacred Assembly

by Shane Idleman

The sermon calls for a sacred assembly to wake up and take action, to sound the alarm and blow the trumpet in Zion, and to experience revival and renewal through prayer, fasting, and repentance.

Duration: 46:58

Scripture: Joel 1:14, Joel 2:12

Topics: "Repentance", "Sacred Assembly"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the urgent need for a sacred assembly among God's people to pray, fast, and mourn for the state of the church and the nation. He reflects on the historical practice of calling the community together to seek God's face during times of moral decay and spiritual apathy. Idleman shares his personal journey and the burden he feels as a preacher, distinguishing between the roles of pastor and preacher, and calling for genuine repentance and humility. He warns against the dangers of complacency and the necessity of afflicting the soul to experience true revival. Ultimately, he urges the congregation to return to God, promising that He will pour out His Spirit upon those who seek Him earnestly.

Transcript

Tonight, the title of the message is Call a Sacred Assembly. And most of you who are familiar with the Old Testament know that this is something that the people of God did often. They would call a sacred assembly.

They would call the people together. And they would not only pray, they would weep, they would fast, they would mourn for the direction of the church, the direction of their nation. And sometimes we need to do that.

We need to just stop and call a sacred assembly. And you'll notice also that the notes are blank. The notes are blank.

And there's a reason there. I want you to just focus on the message and maybe jot down any thoughts you might have. But also you can get the complete sermon notes online later this week.

It'll be underneath our video. Everything that I'm talking about is in the sermon notes. So that'll be there.

Also just look at your phones if you have a chance. Just make sure your phones don't vibrate. I just ask that we just be quiet as much as we can today.

Check your phones. Check your email if you want. Everybody has a fake Bible.

They try to do your email and texting as well. But just turn that off. Shut it down if you can.

Because what I'm going to do, I'm going to kind of tie this in, not to Mother's Day of course, but in honor of my mom who prayed and fasted for the types of messages that I give here and the type of message that I'm going to give tonight. See a lot of these messages were prayed for and fasted over 20 years ago from my mom praying that God would take this party boy and draw him back to Him. And I want to thank her for that obviously tonight.

But I also want to do it in honor of my wife who encourages these types of messages. And as you probably haven't guessed, it's not easy to be married to somebody like me. You know, with the criticism and the constant turmoil of the church life and ups and downs and having that type of messages that I give.

In case you're not aware, this is not a popular message in our culture today. The church doesn't want to hear it. And a lot of people don't want to hear it.

And the number one... I hear this so often now. Me and Randy were joking about it recently. Many people come and they go, I thought this church would be thousands of people even though we only planted it three years ago.

The problem is a lot of people don't like to hear this message. So it's not a shocker. You guys ever heard of A.W. Tozer? You ever read his writings? You want to take a guess at how many people attended his church at the maximum? 400.

So these types of messages, people, they don't want to hear too often. If I'm not living right, I don't want to hear it. If I don't want to go and be convicted, I want to go and be built up.

Well, that's what TBN's for. We need a balance. I'm going to get in trouble.

I'll just leave it there. I'm not endorsing it. But also, this message is in honor of all the moms who are tired of carrying the burden.

Did you catch that? The moms that are tired of carrying the burden, and I hear that a lot from women, that they're the prayer warriors in their homes. They're the ones praying and contending and fasting. They're the ones encouraging reading the Word of God.

They're the ones encouraging the devotionals, and they desperately want the voice crying in the wilderness to awaken the sleeping church, to awaken the sleeping family, to awaken the sleeping men. Would you wake up? So that's what really this message is in honor of, those types of things. And I actually have a confession tonight.

Don't worry, it's not the type of confession that will get me fired. But it's a type of confession that I want to let you know. There's something about this.

I'm going to confess tonight. It's a secret to some people. It's not a secret to those closest to me.

But that confession is, I'm not primarily a pastor. It's on the business card. It's on our website.

It's on the bulletin. But I'm not primarily a pastor. I'm primarily a preacher.

And there's a big difference there. And I want to give you a few of those distinctions. Although these roles overlap, of course, but there's primary giftings and primary callings.

The pastor builds. The preacher tears. The pastor counsels.

The preacher convicts. The pastor rejoices. The preacher weeps.

The tears even shed over this message. It just reminds me of that. The pastor plants.

The preacher uproots. The pastor teaches. The preacher preaches.

The pastor mends. The preacher breaks. The pastor is full of hope.

The preacher is full of fire. The pastor loves to listen, but the preacher needs to speak. The pastor sees the good in others, but the preacher sees the depravity in man.

The pastor desires to be among the people, but the preacher desires to be alone with God. And I've never quite figured that out, and I'm tired of trying to excuse why I just want to go walk for hours in the morning and be alone with God and avoid social gatherings. I'm done apologizing for it, because that's how God has created me.

And a lot of times when I used to travel and I would preach and the power of God would be moving mightily, I would see people weeping, men on the seat in front of them crying, and then they played worship, and then the place would just be thick with God's presence, and then after the song, they'd turn on the lights and the pastor would go, come on, let's go get lunch. Pastor, I'm like, no. I just want to stay here and be in the presence of God.

We can eat later. So there's a different mold there, so I'm not primarily a pastor. Although that's what I do, and I accept the Lord's calling, and I love it.

But the primary calling of what God has called me to do is not to pastor, it's to preach. And there is a different role there. And there's a different distinction.

There's a different makeup. That's what you'll see at the church. It's just prayer, the Word of God, and worship.

Not a lot of announcements. Not a lot of videos. I can't get my sermons down to 30 minutes.

It's a different calling. And I used to be hard on other pastors when I first started, to be honest with you, in 2003, 2004, 2005. I'd go, what's wrong with you guys? You speak about the fire of the Holy Spirit as if you're sitting on an iceberg.

Where's the conviction? Where's the passion? It's okay to get a little excited. The nation is going to hell in a handbasket. We've got to have one eye on eternity and one eye on the present.

And I begin to realize that it's more of just a calling. It's a gifting that God has called me to do. So to not be judgmental, but to be complimentary, and we compliment each other.

Pastors, teachers, different churches, we should compliment each other instead of compete. So that's really where this message comes from. These types of messages, they are birthed in the prayer closet like the famous Puritan Richard Baxter says, that I've quoted often.

He says, I preach as a dying man to dying men. And I feel that. I preach as a dying man to dying men.

I preach as a dying man to a dying nation. I preach as a dying man to a dying church. And I'm often asked about the state of our nation when I do interviews and different things.

And I want to remind people that America cannot fall. Uh oh. Not too many amens on that one.

America cannot fall. You want to know why? She's already fallen. You know where this is going? If you want to just excuse yourself and use the restroom and not come back in, I understand.

Just put up that finger and say, we'll see you later. But America cannot fall because America has fallen. How do you know that the nation has fallen? You look at the moral decay and the moral depravity that has taken over.

And sometimes we need to wake up. God's Word says, wake up. Wake them up.

Wake them up. As a matter of fact, the preacher in the Old Testament, he said, I sent my messengers to warn my people to wake them up because I had compassion on them. But they mocked my messengers, they despised my word, and they scoffed at my prophets until the anger of the Lord arose against His own people.

How can we just ignore those things? I can't. The burden of the Lord is heavy. It's heavy upon me.

America, her moral heartbeat has stopped. She needs resuscitation. She needs renewal.

She needs revival. And as I often say, the Titanic has been struck. What's inside is spilling out.

What our goal is, is get as many people on that lifeboat as we can. Now, please don't misunderstand. I don't like doom and gloom and this.

But there comes a time when you've got to sound the alarm. You've got to call a sacred assembly. Sound the alarm.

Joel says, sound the alarm. Blow the trumpet in Zion. Awaken your people.

God, bring them back to you. And you can't wake in the church with bedtime stories. Oh, I lay you down to sleep.

That's what I do to my little daughter. Not the church. Because what happens? We stay asleep.

And I like what Leonard Ravenhill said. If you've never heard of him, you should order some of his books. One great work that he's done is called *Why Revival Terry's*.

And it's not going to be for the weak at heart, I'll tell you that right now. *Why Revival Terry's*. He wrote, God has always had His specialist whose chief concern has been the moral breakdown of the nation and the church.

Such men were Elisha, Jeremiah, Malachi, and others of their kind who appeared at critical moments in history to reprove, to rebuke, and to exhort in the name of God and righteousness. Such a man is likely to be drastic and radical. The curious crowd that gathers to watch him will soon brand him an extreme, a fanatical, and negative.

And in a sense, they are right. For he cannot turn off the burden of the Holy Ghost. And that's true.

I looked up this word burden. Masah. M-A-S-A And I looked through it, and it's God giving a burden to His preachers.

It's a burden on the heart that you have to speak. It's like spiritual pregnancy. If I can use that term to kind of bring you into this.

It's a burden. And this type of message is the burden of my soul to call a sacred assembly. And with that said, we left off in Matthew.

And I thought it was interesting, this ties right into where I want to go. Matthew 9.14 We left off at 9.13. Let me look at 9.14 real quick. Then the disciples of John came to Him.

John the Baptist. His disciples came to Jesus saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast? Often, but your disciples do not fast. And Jesus said to them, can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and they will fast.

And this is interesting because as we know, praying, what we do after our service, praying opens the hand of God, right? Preaching the Word secures the truth in our hearts. Worship brings down heaven. Obedience opens the door to God's blessing.

But fasting, but fasting is the hardest spiritual discipline that you will ever encounter. That's why most people don't do it, right? Let's be honest. How many people have fasted this month? Or this week? A couple hands.

Okay, good. Fasting is the hardest spiritual discipline. It stars the flesh and it fills us with the Spirit.

The focus is on denial. The focus is on denial. That's why it's so hard.

Anytime we have to deny the flesh to be filled with the Spirit of God, the flesh doesn't want anything to do with it. All the excuses in the world come up. So that's why this is so important.

The last time we saw fasting, it was tied to temptation and spiritual disciplines. Think about that. The last time we saw fasting was tied to temptation.

Jesus in the wilderness. He fasted 40 days, went into the wilderness. The enemy tried to tempt Him.

And then Jesus talks about, a few chapters later, He says, when you give, when you pray, and when you fast. Nobody wants to do that today. But this case, He's talking about mourning.

In essence, Jesus is saying, we're not fasting because we're celebrating. The bridegroom is here. I'm here.

But when I leave, when I go, there will be a time of mourning, a time of weeping, and then you will fast. So this whole context of mourning and fasting and weeping, is not a bad thing. It's often tied with and into affliction of the soul.

Have you heard that word before? As you're studying the Bible, to afflict the soul. These things we don't like to hear, but we need to hear. It's often those things.

Everything we don't like to hear is what we need to hear. And when the Bible would talk about humility, throughout the Scripture, humility, a lot of times it was talking about afflicting the soul. To afflict the soul.

Afflict why, Shane? Well, here's why. For the purpose of humbling. See, when you afflict the soul, when you afflict the flesh, when you fight the flesh, that's humbling.

That hurts. It's for the purpose of humbling. And here's why.

Our sorrow must match the situation. Our sorrow must match the situation. Can you picture me at home, on the couch, with my feet propped up, with a Big Mac and a Dr. Pepper and French fries, and saying, Oh Lord, forgive us for aborting those 50 million babies.

Oh, now it gets silent. Why? Why wouldn't that, I mean, of course you could do that, but why wouldn't that doesn't fit, does it? Because the sorrow must match the situation. So when God would call His people to repentance, He didn't call them to big parties and big feasts and tons of wine flowing.

He called them to affliction of the soul. He wanted them to get down on their knees and wear the sackcloth that rubbed against their skin and the ashes. Why? To feel the pain that they've caused.

That's what's afflicting the soul. That's humbling. That's humiliating.

And that's a good thing, because it's a God thing. So always remember that sorrow must match the situation. Feel the pain.

We must feel the pain that God feels. It's very healthy to mourn over sin. Very healthy to mourn over sin.

Do you realize that? Let me just tell you right now, it's very, very, very, very healthy to mourn over sin. Why? Because joy returns. Joy comes.

And it's through this mourning. We must feel the pain that we caused. Why? Because genuine repentance produces genuine remorse.

When somebody is genuinely repenting, they are genuinely remorseful. Right? And then from that remorse, they want to fix the wrongs that they've created. That's where this whole idea of afflicting the soul and mourning and looking and humbling ourselves.

Hence the need for these types of sermons. This is the whole point, right? God would tell the prophets in the Old Testament, your words will be like fire and the people will be like stubble. Out of the mouth.

Why? To convict the people, to have that fire go out and that stubble and consume them. This is God's labor and delivery room. Women know what that means, right? Travail.

Travail. Why? Why does it hurt? Why are they screaming? It sounds like a warehouse. Every time my wife has a baby, I leave there just walking like this.

Like unbelievable. Not only what she goes through, but trying to hear that and hear the women. Why? Because when Zion travails, sons and daughters are born.

When travail comes, that's when the pregnancy, it hurts, but then that's when that blessing of life comes. If you want to experience the power of God in your life, you better travail. You better start weeping.

You better start repenting. You better start breaking. You better start fasting.

Spiritual discipline is designed to birth forth the promise of God in our lives. That's what this whole point is. In Leonard Ravenhill, I'm quoting him a few times in this sermon, he said, if the church today had as many agonizers as she has advisors, we would experience revival within a year.

That's enough right there. I don't need to continue. If the church had as many agonizers as she has advisors, we would experience revival within a year.

And I have to agree. Because I know a lot of advisors. You need to do this.

You should be doing this. We should be doing this. You've got to be doing this.

Very few agonizers. How do you know? Because the agonizers are silent. They're not advising.

They're praying. They're not advising. Their humility is all about them.

They are people of humility. And he goes on to say, we need to close every church in the land for one Sunday and cease listening to man so we can hear the groan of the Spirit which we in our lush pews have forgotten. Wow.

Bring out the spiritual sledgehammer today. That's great advice. Close every church in the land for one Sunday and cease listening to man so we can hear the groans of the Spirit which we in our lush pews have forgotten.

Now this doesn't mean go out and watch the football game on Sunday. That means get on your face before Almighty God and cry out for revival and renewal. That's what this means.

That's where that power comes from. So you might say, well, Shane, why a topic like this, a sacred assembly, this solemn, this wake-up call, why? Well, I'm glad you asked because 2 Timothy 3.1 says, but mark this, there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, and abusive.

Doesn't resemble today, does it? Paul must have been talking way back when he was in the Philippi and Ephesus and all these places. Not now, Paul. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents.

This caught me. This week, I'm walking down the street, Vines, and there's three, four, you know, 14-year-old kids. I've got to walk out of their way.

And I'm worried. Back when I was 14, I'd move out of the way. Yes, sir.

Now, these kids with their pants down to here and their ball caps and they're chewing gum and looking at me like they're gonna, 14 years old. There's no respect. You teach kids in school they're animals, guess what they're gonna act like? That's exactly right.

Disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good. They're lovers of pleasure. They're treacherous.

They're conceited. They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. They just nailed the United States of America right there.

Right there. And I'm sure you want a few examples, right? Because I have to bring this home. A form of godliness.

A form of godliness. Do you know what that means? They have a form of godliness. They go to church, or they'll talk about God or their own Bible, but they don't know the power of God in their lives because they're following sometimes the wrong god, or they have religion and no relationship.

I got steamrolled this week when the Christian Post picked up an article I wrote, California pastor offers five biblical reasons why gay marriage is wrong. You would have thought I shot the president. Seriously.

I'm glad you guys can laugh, because I sure can't. All the comments, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of comments, I didn't want to read much of them, but one of them said, those of us who don't go to his church or believe in his God aren't troubled by his opinions, and we certainly will not be governed by his bigotry. Well said.

Let me remind you, these people are Christians. That's what they say. Brutal.

Brutal. Mark this, there will be terrible times in the last day. People will be brutal.

Just pulled up the news. Police find seven dead babies in Utah, county home. Woman, 39, allegedly gave birth and killed the infants and put their bodies in the garage.

Lovers of self, lovers of perversion. Our sex-saturated culture will continue to pervert with the ultimate goal of destroying. You remember I mentioned this guy a while back, Ariel Castro, who was exposed in 2013 for kidnapping three women and holding them for ten years, admitted that his deep addiction to pornography fed his perversion.

He eventually committed suicide in prison. And everybody's got their porn star bumper stickers on their car. Now it's cool for young adults.

That's cool for young adults. You realize that? And there's this new rage within. I can't even talk about it because kids are in here.

It has to do with incest and different things. Our culture is becoming so perverted, I just want to throw up. Call the sacred assembly.

That's our hope. Listen, the hope isn't leaving here and going by In-N-Out Burger. That's not going to cut it.

Leaving here and nothing changes isn't going to cut it because that's what got us in this problem in the first place. Disobedient and abusive and treacherous. These kids disobedient to their parents, abusive and treacherous.

Just in the news, Florida, a 13-year-old girl and her 15-year-old boyfriend were charged with attempted murder. After they, and I can't say what they did because kids are in here, the teenagers admitted to the investigators that they planned to kill both the girl's mother and father so they could continue dating. What about Minnesota? Just got, last week I believe it was, he was charged Thursday, a few weeks ago, with 10 attempted murder and explosive counts and a plot to shoot his family to death and then kill himself and take out as many students as he could at his school.

This isn't Afghanistan. This is the United States of America, folks. And I'm not going through trying to find these things.

These things are finding me. What is the perversion we don't even hear about? Unbelievable. Disobedient, abusive, treacherous.

I remember Chuck Swindoll. You guys know who Chuck Swindoll is, I hope. If not, try to listen to him.

He gave a story about this lady who was in the public school systems, I think in the 1970s, and she would leave for 25 years and raise her whole family and then came back into the school system and was shocked. 25, 30 years ago, she used to hear, hello, Mrs. Jones. How are you today? Now she hears, shut up, B-I-T-C-H.

Chuck Swindoll said the actual word. I was going back and forth all week. It's not a good idea.

Elders will chew me out after the service. But you get the idea, right? Hello, Mrs. Jones. Just shut up.

If this doesn't raise some concerns in your hearts, I don't know what else to do. Of course, I saved the best for last, right? Blasphemers. They will blasphemy God.

This happened in January, and they're still working on it. The satanic temple, the satanic temple recently submitted plans for a monument they want to place at the Oklahoma capitol next to the Ten Commandments. The sculpture will feature a seven-foot tall goat-headed creature, Satan.

There you go. They're submitting that to be placed next to the Ten Commandments at the capitol in Oklahoma City. Take a good look.

Well, Shane, how can you show that in church? Well, how can you not? That's what they want. You can take it down. That's what they're trying to get next to the Ten Commandments.

And the wonderful thing is, tourists can go sit in his lap and take a picture. Wow. Folks, this is the direction of a nation out of control.

This is the direction of a church who's silent. Fasting. I'm not going to fast.

You better fast. You better pray. You better repent.

You better plead to God because we're confusing His patience with His approval. Judgment starts in the house of God. Remember that.

God's house must break. God's house must repent. He revives us to revive others.

The church must first repent. Then the world will break. The church must first weep.

Then our altars will be filled with weeping sinners. See, we're the conduit. We're the conduit.

We're held responsible for these things. But what happens a lot of times is the excused church prevents revival. You know what the excused church is? Probably not, so I brought some examples.

Here's what the excused church says. He has a problem with his bad temper, but mine is just righteous indignation. He is proud, but I'm just confident.

She is moody. I just have a lot going on. They are contentious.

I'm just passionate. They like to argue. I just have convictions.

They are greedy. I'm just trying to save my money. He has a problem with porn, but I just struggle now and then.

The excused church. That's all we hear is excuses. Excuses.

But, but, but, but. There cannot be no buts when repentance is genuine. These kind of things do not warrant any buts or excuses.

If the sin occurred corporately, repentance needs to occur corporately. If my people who are called by my name, not Hollywood, not the media, not Fox, not CNN, not the President, not the Senate. If my people who are called by my name will afflict themselves and humble themselves, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land.

If my people, but if my people is smally dwindling down to the frozen chosen, because the church needs to be awakened. So what's the answer? The answer is called a sacred assembly. The answer is called what I've been speaking about.

Anytime you get a person or a place or a church to turn back to God, I'm not concerned with as much the whole nation or the whole church. I'm talking about us collectively. And the people who hear this message on Vimeo and YouTube and the Sermon on the Index and all these different places.

That's who I'm talking to. All of us. Now this is interesting.

You'll see up there Joel. Joel chapter 1 and chapter 2. I spent some time in this week. It's interesting.

Joel was a preacher, basically. He was called by God to go and wake up the people. And it's interesting.

I found a lot of parallels. Joel was ministering in a time where God's people were prosperous, but they were apathetic. Does that look like us today? Prosperous, but apathetic.

They had a religion, but not a relationship. They had a form of godliness. They did the sacrifice.

They did all these things. But God says, listen, judgment is coming upon you because you have a form of godliness. You've rejected me in your heart, even though your outward actions are revealing that you have a form of godliness.

Your heart is distant from me. Now here's the only difference. The only difference is that prosperity has not been taken from us.

When I read Joel, the only difference is prosperity has not been taken from us yet. Right? By the grace of God, we're so blessed and we should thank Him for that. But that's the only difference.

That's why people sometimes wake up is when all hell breaks loose and everything's falling apart. Oh, now I'll come back to you, God. But a lot of times, He sends the messengers first.

He warns them first. First, wake up, church. Wake up, church.

Wake up, church. Here's what happens when you're disobedient. Wake up, church.

And He calls us. That's a loving Father. But even though we haven't been hurt financially the whole nation yet, many individuals have, peace has been consumed from our land.

How many people are living in peace now? Fear is gripping the hearts and minds of many. Morality has been ripped from our hands. Truth has been raped and taken advantage of.

And God has been blasphemed. Everywhere. So let's look at Joel 1. You don't need your Bibles.

You don't need to look up there. Just listen. I wrote it down.

And here's the great deception, I believe, that we should avoid the Old Testament. I hear that sometimes. Oh Shane, you're always in the Old Testament.

Well, Jesus was. Eighty-four times. Depending on who you read, or who you look at, or what strong concordance you use.

And guess what? It was not always go, go, go, cheerleading. It was, have you not read? It is written. You draw nigh unto God with your lips, but your hearts are far from Him.

It is written, you will not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Paul actually said that the Old Testament was written so that we might not lust after evil things as they lusted. It's very good.

The Old Testament and the New Testament are married. The Old Testament, the old covenant under God, how he ruled his people through the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system. Jesus comes as a fulfillment of all that, but you don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

They go together. Actually, the whole Bible makes a lot more sense when you read them together. I'm always in the Old Testament.

I'm always in the New Testament. I'm amazed at how many times. Oh, parallels all the time.

Read Hebrews. Just read Hebrews and look how much times they go back to Melchizedek, back to our high priest, back to the sacrificial system to show the fulfillment in Christ. Then the Old Testament, it is written, the Old Testament fulfills of Christ, and Christ came to fulfill, not even a jot or a tittle, the smallest little Hebrew, little tiny marks that change the nuance of a word.

Not even that will change. I've come to fulfill all of that in Christ. It goes together.

The reason they don't like Old Testament preaching is because they don't like this kind of preaching. Remove the Old Testament. Let me just hear about love and grace and forgiveness and longsuffering and gentleness and kindness.

That's all I want to hear. And to be honest with you, that would be a lot easier for me to preach. I wouldn't carry around a burden all week.

If I could just go, guys, I know it's been a hard week. God loves you. You're more than conquerors.

Just leave here knowing that he's got you, and he's got you in the palm of his hand. Your whole week's gonna go great. He loves you.

It's a loving father. He wants to bestow blessings upon his children. Go get him, guys.

I'll see you next week. Everybody leaves. Oh, that guy, he's so upbeat.

He's so cheerful. Golly. He smiles all the time.

Well, what do you do with all the burdens of the Lord? The burden of the Lord. The burden of the Lord. See, there's a time to rejoice, but there's a time to weep.

There's a time for harvest. There's a time to plant seed. There's a time.

And this time, God's been waking up. Hey, listen. If you just look at what's happened over the past 50 years, the moral decay, the depravity, from when I was little to where we are now.

Imagine you go back another generation, leave it to Beaver and I Love Lucy and all that to now where we're at. It's amazing how far we've drifted off course. And when we sound the alarm, we're political.

Oh, another way to silence the messenger. You can't talk about that. No.

God loves his people. Absolutely. He sent his messengers, rising them up early and sending them because he loved his people.

He had compassion on his people. But what did they do? They mocked his messengers. They despised his word.

And they scoffed at his prophets until the anger of the Lord arose against his own people until there was no remedy. That's the part of the verse we don't like to quote. See, I believe there becomes a time when the judgment hand of God must fall.

You can cry. You can weep. We can fill up this altar.

We can fill this church every night this week. Let's have a revival service. But the judgment hand of God, there are times when that may fall.

Many of the kings, you look back in the Old Testament, they prayed, they fasted, and still judgment had to come. David sinned. God didn't say, don't worry about it.

What did he say? These three things will come upon you. For you want to number my people, choose which one of these is going to be your judgment. And our judgment now is what's happening.

Trust me. I've got little kids. I don't like this.

But I love it if it gets God's people back into a place of where God wants them. Because then that's where that revival comes from. I haven't even started on Joel yet.

Joel 1. It's the word of the Lord that came to Joel. Hear this, you elders, and give ear all you inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days? Or even in the days of your father? Tell your children about it.

Tell my children about it? That's a little negative. Right. God wants us to warn people.

Listen, tell your kids, here's what happens when you reject God. He's not just a ball of love. He's not just a doting grandfather.

Kids, this is what happens when you reject God. He says, tell your kids what happened. Let your children tell their children and their children and another generation what the chewing locust has 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. Unbelievable.

God sends millions or billions, who knows, locusts across the land and destroys everything. He says, okay, now you'll listen. Now you'll listen, right? And I just pray he doesn't have to do that to wake us up and bring revival.

I can't imagine. Can you imagine millions of grasshoppers? I told the first service this week on the aqueduct, one hit me right here in the face as I was jogging. Bam.

And it went down my shirt jacket. I'm doing the Indian rain dance. One, one grasshopper.

One grasshopper. God can use whatever he wants. I remember the couple days before that up there, and I look and it's just like a cloud of bees.

And they're, I mean, they're, I'm like, oh my, am I going to jump in this aqueduct? What's going on here? So they fly by me, they hit my face. And it's like, they just go just a swarm the size of a semi truck. Where did that come from? I'm just up there amazed.

God's using illustration. Look, look at what I, he can just, he can just command these things. It's amazing.

So locusts had destroyed all of their crops, all of their grain, all of their grass. And then it says, verse 6, For a nation has come up against my land, strong and without number. His teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has fangs of a fierce lion.

He has laid waste my vine and ruined my fig tree. He has stripped it bare and thrown it away. And in our setting as well, our land has been consumed.

Satanic influences, strong and without number, have laid waste to our hearts and minds. Families are being devoured. Lives are being destroyed.

And truth has fallen in the street. Same parallel. But then he goes on to say, here's the solution.

Verse 13, Gird yourselves and lament, weep, you leaders. Wail, you ministers before the altar. Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister and call upon God.

Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people and the inhabitants into the place of the Lord. Bring the people, call a sacred assembly.

Call a fast. This is where God's people are going to come together and pray and fast and contend for these things. That's the only hope.

Listen, that's the only hope. It's not reading the next book that's out there five steps to do this, seven steps to do this. It's not going and stopping at Cinemark and trying this.

It's not trying to be a better person. It's not coming to church. It's a very simple solution.

Come to the house of God and pray and fast and cry out to God. And then he repeats it now. Therefore says the Lord, turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, so rent your hearts and not your garments.

What does that mean? Well, in the Old Testament, they would rip their shirts off. No, I can't believe this. God, oh Lord, how terrible it is.

God would say, stop it. Rip your heart. Not your shirt, you arrogant Pharisee.

Don't do outward displays. Everybody gets so outward, spiritual outward. God says, listen, I see your heart.

Stop trying to play Christian. Stop trying to play church. I know the depravity of your heart.

Break your heart. Rent your heart. Not outward, superficial things.

And sometimes I think we do. We come to church, right? Hey, brother, so and so, I'm doing great. Hey, how's it going? Smiley face, and we're just so great.

Everything's so great. If you could see our heart, the bitterness, the jealousy, the envy, the gossip, the backbiting, the pride, the lust. You want me to keep going? God says, listen, rent your hearts.

Don't come to church as if you're doing me a favor, because you're not. We're only fooling ourselves. So God says, break your heart.

And then I love this part. Return to the Lord. That's all you have to do.

Return to the Lord. Shane, we don't have to give money to your church? No, please don't. Return to the Lord.

We don't need to read our Bible every day and do this and not go to the movies and do this and not drink alcohol and not do this. Just return. Return to the Lord.

See, religion is man's attempt to find God. I've got to do all these things. Relationship through Christianity is God reaching down to man and saving man.

Saying, listen, just return to me. It's always an issue of the heart. Christ Jesus shed his blood on the cross, and once our heart breaks and repents, we receive that.

That's all. The heart has to break and receive it and repent. Return to me, and I will return to you.

I think some of you need to hear that, because this is a heavy message, but you also need to hear the other part. God says, return to me. If you've been raised before, you've heard church before, you don't know.

God says, just return to me. Just return to me. I'll return to you.

I'll rebuild you. I'll restore you. That's a loving father.

That's a loving father warning his kids, saying, listen, return to me, for I'm gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and great in kindness, and he relents from doing harm. You might say, Shane, that's contradictory to everything you just said. No, it's not.

God is gracious. God is loving. He wants to relent from doing harm, but we cannot continue to confuse his patience with his approval.

How long does the clock of God just keep ticking? Oh, no big deal. I'm just gonna look the other way. Just look the other way.

Guys, just continue doing what you're doing. Year after year after year. He says, I'm patient.

I'm relenting, but when I turn around, the judgment's gotta come. Remember what Billy Graham said. If God doesn't judge America, he's gonna have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah, and that's true.

The state of our nation, the state of our families should wake us up to the fact we just need to cry out to God. We need to be in worship and prayer. Not weird, and not some monk up in a castle somewhere, but just men and women fill with the spirit of God for the love of God.

How can you live in this sex-saturated, perverted, filthy culture and not be drawing closer to God? I don't know how people do it. Do you know that there's Christians more concerned about the party atmosphere than the holy atmosphere of prayer and worship and fasting? If that hurts, it's supposed to. It's supposed to.

Because God says, listen, I love you so much, I'm calling you back. And then it says, who knows if he will turn and relent and leave a blessing behind him. Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly and gather the people.

Return to God and I will return to you. And then many of you are famous where this continues. This is Joel 1. We're going into Joel 2. What happened else in Joel 2? And it shall come to pass in that day that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.

And it shall come to pass in that day I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men dream dreams.

Your young men see visions. And on My men servants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh in that day. That's the end result of this.

Now contextually, the theologians in the room will know that this is applying to Peter and Acts. Probably, I'd better not say exactly. I'm not sure.

600 years ahead when Peter says, listen, we're not drunk. We're filled with the Spirit of God. This is that that the prophet Joel spoke of.

In those days I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. However, the overlapping principle still applies. When God's people call out to God and cry out to Him, He pours out His Spirit on them.

He doesn't beat them up. He doesn't condemn them. He doesn't continue to spank them.

He doesn't harass them. It's a loving Father filling them with the Spirit of God because through genuine repentance comes genuine joy. Through genuine rebuke comes genuine sorrow.

And from that genuine sorrow, our hearts begin to break and cry out for God. That's a very healthy thing. And I just want to encourage you to do that tonight.

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