

The New Civil War - Election or Free Will

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of love and a healthy balance in understanding God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, and warns against divisiveness and arrogance in theological positions.

Duration: 5:24

Scripture: John 13:35, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:3, Colossians 3:14

Topics: "Sovereign Grace", "Christian Unity"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Shane Idleman addresses the divisiveness within the body of Christ regarding theological differences, emphasizing the importance of love as the defining characteristic of true discipleship. He discusses the balance between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, urging for unity and humility in the midst of doctrinal debates. Pastor Idleman highlights the need for a healthy tension between differing theological positions and the ultimate focus on producing the fruits of the Spirit rather than fostering pride and division.

Transcript

Hi, my name is Shane Idleman. I pastor Westside Christian Fellowship, and I recently gave a message on salvation, election, free will, sovereign grace, all these different controversial things. But I want to give a brief introduction, because I've noticed over the years, and I've spoken at many different cross-denominational lines, I've got friends in the Calvary Chapel movement, I've got friends, Charismatic, Pentecostals, I've got friends in the Acts 29 movement, Mark Driscoll, and of course we love Matt Chandler and Mark Driscoll and all, Francis Chan, and all these great men of God that God is clearly calling.

But there seems to be a huge division, what I call divisiveness in the body of Christ, where we're shooting brothers or shooting brothers, we're wounding our own. And these issues have become what should become a healthy debate and allowing people flexibility has now become so rigid and so dogma that we go into our own camps. I'm on this side, what side are you on? Instead of spending energy evangelizing, preaching, building each other up, encouraging, we've become so divided on this issue that it's really raising a concern within my own mind that what direction are we taking? Is love truly guiding us? Is love truly guiding us? Jesus said that my disciples, actually the world will know that you are my disciples, by your love, your love for one another, not how well you translate the Greek and the Hebrew and your pneumatology and your eschatology and your theology, not by your hermeneutics and your homiletics, not

by your sermon preparation, did it have a inductive, deductive, immediate approach to it? Is your theological persuasion, does it line up exactly with mine? They'll know that you are truly his disciples by your love.

That's as much as we don't want to admit it, we don't want to avoid it, we don't like that verse, the truth still stands. Love must underscore everything, it must undergird everything, it is a true characteristic of those who are truly filled with the Spirit of God. Now on that note, I primarily lean towards the reformed faith in regard to theology and erring on the side of God's sovereignty.

I love, of course, Augustine and his debate with Pelagian and you get up to Luther and Erasmus and his great work on the bondage of the will, you look to John Calvin and his institutes and the commentaries, Ulrich Zwingli and John Knox in Scotland, you get to the Puritans and the writings of Richard Baxter, the reformed pastor is one of his greatest works, and of course Thomas Goodwin and John Owen and all these great men of God that have come before us, you look to the late D. Martyn Lloyd Jones and C.H. Spurgeon and I love reading these men, so there's not a problem with theology, the problem comes with trying to understand God's sovereignty. He's clearly sovereign, yet man has a responsibility to repent and to believe, and we have to remember for every George Whitefield, God brings a John Wesley, for every D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, he's going to bring a A.W. Tozer, for every Paul Washer, there's going to be a Leonard Ravenhill, for every John MacArthur, there's going to be a C.S. Lewis. So we've got to start, I believe, being so divisive on these issues.

Yes, have strong convictions, yes, these are foundational truths that have shaped the church for years, but I'm seeing too much division, too much brother shooting brother, too much arrogance, too much pride, and what should be a healthy debate has turned into a really, really strong battle over different theological positions. You can even look back at C.H. Spurgeon's sermon back in 1858 on sovereign grace and man's responsibility. He said that those two things are like two lines, they run parallel, and we don't know where they cross until eternity.

So there needs to be a, what I call a healthy balance there, or a healthy tension. We have to understand that God is sovereign, yes, yet we're commanded to repent, to believe, but as I conclude this introduction, I want to remind the viewers that you have to ask yourself this question, it begs the question, is your stance, now let's be honest here, let's be genuine, let's be humble, let's be real, is your stance, is your stance leading to love, joy, peace, contentment, long-suffering, gentleness, kindness, goodness, self-control, the fruit of the spirit, or is your stance leading to rigidity, dogma, arrogance, anger, and a critical spirit, because the latter is a slippery slope on which many never return. So I just encourage you, as John Piper said, we can be so obsessed with doctrinal error that we lose the ability to rejoice in doctrinal truth.

Let's make sure we're fighting the right fights.

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