

# The Test of a True Church

by Shane Idleman

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**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:36, James 1:22, Revelation 3:10, Hebrews 3:15, Mark 1:15

**Topics:** "Perseverance in Faith", "Endurance through Trials"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Company, or succeeded in business, succeeded in parenting, amen? Succeeded in marriage, persevering. Anybody trying to get rid of those holiday pounds from eight months ago? It takes perseverance. And sometimes as Christians, we forget these principles that we know so well in the world, perseverance, discipline, self-control, fortitude.

But when we get to Christianity, we forget that they also apply into Christianity. The reason is they are God's principles. And God's principles are so powerful that even an unbeliever can apply them and succeed in business and in athletics.

How important is perseverance in athletics? Anybody that you've ever heard of in the NBA or the MLB, major league baseball or football, NFL, anybody that has ever done anything had to persevere. Natural ability will take you so far, but it's the perseverance that will see you to the end. Same thing this morning, you need to be encouraged in this area.

The power of perseverance, the test of a true church. And you're seeing a lot of, anybody not unaware of what's going on in our nation? As they raise the rainbow flag in the fire departments and right below the United States flag, it is mockery. It's perversion at the highest level.

And you're starting to see churches that remain silent. They don't wanna say anything. Then, and those who do, there's a line of demarcation being drawn in the sand between those who will speak the truth of God and those who will not.

And often you see the churches speaking the truth that are growing and flourishing. A lot of persecution, but they are still growing and flourishing because God is behind them. God is not behind a weak, woke church.

He blesses those who want to speak His truth and love. And as I was preparing this message on perseverance, I came across this old hymn. Does anyone remember these words? When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.

Man, some of the greatest hymns we have ever sung have come from the pain of perseverance. Like Job, sometimes we have to say, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Guys, this principle is so important because this really tilts the scale to whether you become a bitter Christian or a better Christian.

Because as we go through challenges, we can become bitter and resentful and angry at God, or we can say, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul. And let me remind some of you, most of some of you know, but some of you don't know that this hymn was written as Horatio Spatford, I believe he was over the Atlantic possibly, probably the Atlantic back then.

And the captain woke him up and said, okay, sir, you can come out. This is about the spot that the vessel went down earlier in the week and where all of your daughters perished. And his wife sent him a telegram back.

I think he was in London or somewhere, or she was, and she said basically that all are gone, all have been lost, saved alone, I think was her two words, saved alone. And he lost his daughters at sea. I don't know what you've went through, but I don't think you've went through four or five kids all at once.

And he was able to write that, though that has taught me to say it is well, it is well with my soul. And guys, this is so important because I've seen so many people become bitter and critical and just walking around in a state of depression for the rest of their life because of something they went through. And I'm not minimizing what we go through because it can be challenging, extremely difficult, but at the end of the day, you need to strengthen yourself in the Lord and say it is well, it is well with my soul.

I will persevere to the end. No matter, God, what you take me through, I will hold on to you, but you better be holding on to me as well because He's the one that keeps you going. I mean, we talk a lot about, I'm just holding on to the cross, I'm just holding on to Christ.

That's good, but thank God He's holding on to me because I don't trust me. I don't trust me to hold on all the way. I trust Him to hold on to me.

And perseverance is a mark of a true church. And so we are in Revelation. We're finishing up next week on Father's Day.

Make sure you're here, man. We're finishing up with the last church in Revelation, and then we're getting into the next message after that. The title is Rapture Anxiety.

Rapture, do you know that's a clinical term now? Rapture Anxiety. So many people have anxiety about the rapture. And that kind of tells you where they're at spiritually because I have, many of you, we have no anxiety about the rapture, and I'm gonna teach through it.

When is that gonna happen though? That's the question. That's the question. We might go through some difficult seasons before God comes again.

And I'm gonna be doing a podcast on that. I'm gonna be teaching more because it's a very important topic. There's different views on this, and that's where terms like pre-wrath or post-tribulation or these terms, that's where they come from.

A lot of them, the millennium, of course, is one, but the rapture is where a lot of Christians can be divided. Are we out of here before the Antichrist is revealed in this one world system? Or will we go through this time of tribulation, but God will preserve His people just like He preserved the nation of Israel when He judged Egypt? And so I'm gonna get into the different things. I'll just tell you up front, I don't have a strong, this is what I believe without a shadow of a doubt, this is exactly how it's going to happen because when great men of God, theologians are divided.

What's a country preacher? How am I gonna take a position when these great men of God are divided on the issue? But it's an important one because my concern has always been, I didn't talk about any of this at the first service, so you get an extra here. My concern is, and ever since I came back to the Lord, 1999, reading, I mean, I've read, of course, David, Jeremiah, Amir, Sephardi, Jacob, all the Calvary guys. I know the rapture theology, premillennial, postmillennial, inside now.

I know the amillennialism. I know these views. I've studied them and love these thoughts on it, and there's different thoughts.

But something that has always concerned me, and I said, you know, when I have children, though, I'm gonna be careful because I don't want to tell my kids, hey, don't worry. As soon as it gets tough, you're out of here. Because what about if they're not? What about if they're not? Can you imagine the blow to your faith? Dad taught me, we see the Antichrist.

We see the one-world system. Should I question everything about the faith now? And because we do not know. I know people get upset at me, and they might get upset at me now.

People have left this church over about what I'm telling you. At least there is a part of it. I cannot, for certain, tell people they're out of here when I don't know if they are gonna be out of here.

We might go through difficulties. We might see the Antichrist. And I'm gonna break down why there are different views.

Now, I'm hoping God comes again. But what happens is you'll see a lot of the Scriptures. I'm gonna go through all these.

It's gonna be a long teaching, probably a couple Sundays. All these teachings, these Scriptures that are used for the rapture, where we leave before the tribulation, those same Scriptures are used for the second coming of Christ at the end of the age. And you can't use Scriptures for two different events.

And so I'm gonna try to unpack all of that. I'm gonna show you the view of the rapture before the tribulation. And the reason a lot of people believe that is because God's wrath isn't poured out on believers, obviously.

So either He preserves us or we're out of here before the tribulation. And also, a lot of people believe that God's plan for Israel can't happen until the church is removed. But I've always asked the question, why not? Why can't God run two parallel plans? And so I'm gonna try to unpack these in the weeks to come.

But I'll also be preaching in Idaho and different places. So it'll be sporadic here and there with Pastor Abram preaching while I'm gone. He'll be, I think, in the Gospel of John still.

And so it's great to mix the Gospels with the Revelation series. So anyway, Revelation 3, Jesus is talking to the church in Philadelphia. He said, write these things to this church and remind them that this is coming from He who is holy and He who is true.

I have the key of David and I open and shut doors. And when I shut a door, no one can open. And I was reminded of the dire and urgent need for truth and holiness again.

Isn't that so true? The predicament we are in in our nation is directly related to these two issues. Instead of embracing holiness, we're embracing perversion. And if you've seen some of the clips from the gay pride parade in Hollywood, little kids watching, it breaks my heart.

This is Sodom and Gomorrah times 10. And yes, that's gonna upset people, but that's the truth. We need to return to God's standard, return to holiness.

And if that upsets people watching later, I don't care, I don't want to accept God. I'm more afraid of God than you. Did you know that? I'm more afraid of God than the negative Nellies out there.

It's kind of nice the lights are low because I can't tell if you're upset or not. Because you know, sometimes you get these looks. But holiness, guys, we gotta get back to the holy standard of God.

His Word says, come out from among them and be holy. Teach your children what is right and good and things that are pure and honest, not things that are perverted. And especially sexual perversion of all things that will take a nation down.

I can just, can you imagine the boardroom in China at their executive level in their military? Look at these clowns. Look at these clowns in the United States. They're teaching their children how to break down a nine millimeter.

We're teaching them how to change your sex. And also truth. Jesus said, I am He, full of holiness and truth.

The truth of God's Word. The truth will prevail. And that's one thing that we have that the others don't.

We have the truth on our side. So yes, I might be marginalized. Yes, I might be canceled by the canceled culture.

But I want to wake up the woke. I want to get back to God's Word and the truth of God's Word. And this type of authority, Jesus said, I have the key.

And this authority points to the fact that Jesus fulfilled God's covenant to David. What God said to David, they call it the divinic covenant. And Jesus fulfilled that.

And this last one, you need to be reminded of often. Who can close a door that God opens? We get so worried, oh, look what's going on. If God opens a door, who's going to close it? Who's going to stop God Almighty? Is He confused? Does He not know what's going on? Nothing can stop God Almighty.

We need to remind ourselves. I wish I could just tell you that every Sunday. All right, guys, next thing, let's get started.

Who can stop God Almighty? No matter what you're going through, what plans can be thwarted by the enemy that God wants to do? How can God stop, or how can the devil prevent what God wants to do in your life? How can the enemy rob your children of spiritual victory if God is for you? Who can be against you? And reminding ourselves, who sits on the throne? The enemy is a created being. God is not a created being. He says, the earth is My footstool, and I will put a step on the neck of the enemy.

And we remind ourselves that if God be for you, who can be against you? But it's also interesting, Jesus said, I tell you the truth, I am the door. I am the door for the sheep. And in that passage of the Gospel, He talks about that there are many wolves and thieves and those who try to come in and grab the sheep.

Jesus said, I am the only true shepherd. He comes, I am the door for the sheep. And of course, it parallels with Him saying that nobody comes to the Father except through Me.

So this could have obviously far-reaching implications. And He said, I know your works. I know your works.

I see, even if nobody sees what you're doing, God does. God sees how you're giving to people and your gracious heart, your humility. He sees those things.

And He says, see, because of this, I've set before you an open door, and no one can shut it. Now, theologians are divided if you look at different commentaries, Ellicott Commentary, the different Bible hub has different commentaries on there. And it could be an actual door where the church is able to go through and minister more or possibly a new building.

You know, in this time, they had church plants, maybe a bigger, you know, or an open door to testify for me. We're not really clear exactly what it is, but we know that Jesus set before them an open door and nobody's going to shut it. For you have a little strength.

Anybody here this morning with a little strength? I can relate. I can relate. You know, as we often say, if you're barely holding on, make sure it's to the hem of His garment.

Do you know God just needs a little strength? It's amazing, just a little strength because in your weakness, you are strong, Paul said. And it's interesting, Jesus took the smallest seed almost in the world. Have you ever seen a mustard seed? I could drop it and you wouldn't even see it.

And then from that, He said, if you have faith as a mustard seed, it's going to grow into one of the biggest fruit-bearing trees there. I don't know what mustard is. I don't know how they make mustard.

I guess let me retract fruit-bearing. I don't know what that tree is. It's a big tree though.

I've seen pictures of them in Jerusalem and in Israel. It's a big green, it looks almost like a bush, but it's enormous. And it comes from this tiny seed.

And so He said here, you have a little strength, but it's great strength in God's kingdom. And you have kept My Word and have not denied My faith. This will be the biggest test to your Christianity that you have ever faced, and that is persecution and tribulation.

That's where the rubber meets the road. That's why you have a lot of these actors and actresses in Hollywood, oh, I thank God, and I thank God for this. Yeah, watch when the hard times hit.

Watch when it might cost you something. This is the true test of a church and a believer, perseverance. Perseverance, because that means your faith is golden.

It's real, it's genuine. Because no matter what it costs, Christ's cost paid a greater price. And the cost to follow Him outweighs any other cost.

So they have little strength and they have kept His Word and they did not deny Him. Now, that word kept is interesting. In the Greek, it means like a vessel, a boat that they would have where you'd steer with the rudder, it keeps its course.

So when a vessel heads out, does it keep its course perfectly? Or does it drift off sometimes? The wind can blow it off course. But instead of the wind blowing it off course and it getting completely out of direction, what does it do? It uses the compass. And it turns the rudder and it keeps the course.

So even through the storm, even through the waves, even through the wind, it keeps the course. That's what He's saying here. The believer, even through the waves, the storms, the difficulty, you are keeping your course.

And that's why I often say it's not about perfection, it's about direction. Stop beating yourself up because you're not perfect. I know, I've played that game before.

And it's hard. I'm not giving you permission to sin, but I'm giving you grace to get back into God's will when you fall. Keep that course.

Keep the course regardless of setbacks, storms, and difficult situations. Now, because we're on this topic of open doors, I want to offer a few thoughts on open doors. Because the question comes up a lot.

How do I know if God is opening a door? Well, these will help you. Number one, did you know the enemy can open doors? Oh boy, can he. He'll bring this person you should not meet and you together and try to detour you from your destiny.

He'll open doors. Oh, look at this door. I got this incredible job opportunity.

I'm going to make double the income. This has to be God. Not necessarily.

Do you know how many, over the years I've seen, how many men have fallen away from the Lord or it cost them their family because they chased the almighty dollar versus letting God bring things to them and open certain doors? Just because a door opens doesn't mean God. It's God. The devil can do certain things.

Number two, revisit your motives often. What are motives? It's why we do what we do. So as we think this door is, God's opening this door for me.

Man, it could mean so many different things. An opportunity for you to work somewhere, to invest in something, or to meet someone, right? If you're single, or to start a ministry, or to relocate this or that. I mean, it could be a lot of different things.

But we do know that our motives can get in there. And we can force a door open because my motives aren't right. My motives aren't pure.

And number three, a good idea isn't always God's idea. Anybody relate to that one? Good idea is not always a God's idea. A good idea isn't God's idea, always.

And if you listen to last night's message when I talked about prayer, it was so important on this topic that the enemy often uses the good to get you away from the great. So in other words, the reason many of us, think about this, the reason many of us don't pursue God more is because we're too busy with good things. And if a good thing takes you away from the great thing, you have to reevaluate your life.

Now of course, there's seasons where you've got things going on, and there's busy seasons, but it shouldn't be the mark of who we are. It shouldn't be the mark of our lifestyle. And so a good possible, man, this is a pretty good open door, doesn't mean it's God opening the door.

Number four, wait and pray for confirmation if possible. Obviously, sometimes we have to make quick decisions, but pray and wait for confirmation. Okay, this looks like an open door, this looks like a good opportunity, but Lord, I don't trust my instincts, or I don't trust my motives necessarily.

Would you give me confirmation? Would you show me that this is you? I'm just gonna pray and wait on you, and as you pray, what happens? You build faith. As you're building faith, you build peace and assurance. Or you begin to realize, I don't know if this is God.

Because what happens immediately? If you're like me, you have immediate, oh, this feels right. Or this, I could see this potentially happening. And you begin to, how does it feel? And that's why if you take it to the prayer closet, wait on God, you can sift through those feelings and just see what God wants to say to you.

Number five, peace should be present. There should be peace, even in the midst of storms, even in the midst of challenging situations. If you're asking God, Lord, is that you opening the door? Is this something you want me to do? Is there peace? Now sometimes I know something is God's will, but it's challenging.

You know, you get bombarded or hit with depression or anxiety or fear, that can be normal, but you have peace knowing, okay, I have peace about this decision. Or how many people have stopped something because you didn't have peace? As believers, I just can't move forward. I don't have peace about this.

Peace is such a great indicator. I remember one time a church approached us after we planted the church, two years after we planted it and wanted us to take over their building and merge with them. And it sounded good initially, but the more we pray and waited on God, do you ever have that sense like I just don't feel, I just don't feel good about this.

I just, there's like, it's like a gnawing at you. Like you're just not comfortable. You don't sleep as well.

Things like you get agitated easier. It's like, I'm trying to make something happen that shouldn't happen. And let me tell you, the longer you delay, the harder it is to get out of it.

The longer you keep pushing that lack of peace away and you keep basically rebelling against God's will, the harder, go ahead and get that. The harder it's going to be able to get, become to push away. Does that make sense? So God, okay, I don't have peace about this.

I don't think I should do this. And the sooner you obey that, the easier it is. But the farther you get into that rabbit hole, down that path, oh, I know I shouldn't be, but I know I shouldn't be.

And it's the harder it is to get out. You don't believe me? Ask somebody who's been, went on a few dates and they broke it off. Whew, I didn't have peace.

Glad that's over. Versus the day before their wedding and crying. Oh, I know I should.

There have been times where people not showed up for the wedding because they couldn't muster up the courage to say no initially. And see, that's why it's much easier to obey God initially than try to fix the damage later. But thank God if you're in damaged areas right now, God can rebuild and restore.

It's better to be inside of His will doing the right thing than outside of His will running in the wrong direction. So if you sense there's not a lot of peace about something, don't delay obedience. Because it just gets more difficult.

I've been in situations where I wish I would have obeyed early on. And it becomes harder and harder. So He gives us that peace.

Number six, wisdom is vitally important. People, God gives us wisdom for a reason. So many people I've seen, people make bad investments or make bad choices because they say the Spirit is leading.

And I believe in the Spirit's leading. How many of you do? I believe that God speaks to His people. I believe that God directs us.

But He gives us wisdom in His Word as the primary mechanism for guidance. I'm very confident in saying that. I'm not going to say, you know what, I think He leads me better by inner voices and divine impulses.

Okay, but how do I gauge that impulse? A divine impulse from a Shane Idleman impulse? Because if I just go by impulses or what feels good or what I think is right, I can be led astray. That's why the Word is the guide. The wisdom is the guiding point.

In Proverbs, it actually says wisdom is the main thing, the principal thing. Therefore, get wisdom. And in all you're getting, get understanding.

She will exalt you. She will promote you. So as a Bible-believing, Holy Spirit-inspired, Spirit-led Christian, like many of you, that's what we call it, Spirit-filled church, open to the gifts of the Spirit, open to the power of the Spirit, the anointing of the Spirit, the leadership of the Spirit.

My voice better not be going out this soon. I was passionate at first service. But, oh, and last night too, I guess that's why it's happening.

There's a, we're open to the work of the Spirit, but what God does lines up with His principles. And He gives us wisdom for a reason. You know, I'm not going to say, well, I just feel, I feel, you know, but this isn't wise.

I feel I need to empty my retirement for those of you who have retirement, and my savings, and I just need to venture out in this. I mean, that's a good thing, but is it a God thing? Is it wise? Because I've had to counsel people and tell them, hey, stop tithing, and get your family finances in order. And you need to, that whatever deal didn't work out, you need to get back into hard work and using wisdom.

And sometimes we can follow the wrong things. And I've seen that. In conservative churches, sometimes it's just too much about the Word.

Not open to the Holy Spirit whatsoever. As a matter of fact, do not mention the Holy Spirit. Unless you read it in the Bible, of course.

But other than that, don't get into that Holy Spirit stuff. And that's not very, that's pretty, it's like a dead church. Because it's the Spirit that gives the Word life.

They go together. I have the Word, but I need a little help. Holy Spirit, help me.

Is this really you? Did you really call me to be a pastor? Because I can't find it anywhere. 1 Thessalonians or John 12, there's nothing. I need a little help.

I see it's biblical. I see it's possible. And that's where the Holy Spirit can come in and bring people to help you and encourage you.

But then the other side, the Pentecostal churches, the charismatic churches, right, you've heard me say it before, if it's odd, it's God. If it's weird, it's God. And just, man, whatever, whatever, whatever.

The Holy Spirit's doing this, the Holy Spirit. No, but you're not using any wisdom. There's no discernment.

I don't care how high you jump. I want to know how straight you walk when you come down. And so you have to have wisdom to see, okay, is this a why? Because God gave us wisdom.

Our mind to think and apply the Word of God and to make choices that are wise. And I can look over my life, I'm sure many of you can too, how important wisdom was. Because sometimes I didn't have clear direction.

What is wise? What is the wise thing to do? Because we can just be led astray by our feelings. You know, I'll tell you, it's kind of common knowledge, I'll tell you. I don't know if I should or not, but I'll tell you.

But many of you know we bought 91.9 and 88.5 in Bishop, and we bought these radio stations, right? And I got to a point where, I've talked about this, I can't tell you how much confirmation, because, man, I was like, I do not want to be out of God's will. I don't know anything about running a radio station. This can't be of God, right? And then that week, He brings in a Christian radio station manager who helped us ever since.

So, God knows what He's doing. But anyway, so it's a good idea. It's a good idea.

And like, hey, let's just go for it. But they wanted \$150,000. I said, nope.

Wisdom says, half of that. And they got mad at me. And next day they said, okay, we'll take it.

See, wisdom. I could have just went for the whole thing. Hey, it's God's will, let's just go for it.

No, that's not wise. And when we first came up to this building, we started to make double and triple payments on the loan to get it paid off within a year and a half. We didn't have to.

We actually could have took out another loan. People said, why don't we take out a \$500,000 loan and fix everything up? Because that's not wise. All the elders agreed, let's not be.

So see, you can do things that are good, but you've got to apply wisdom to your life. And I saw this a lot of times. I don't know how many of you know this, but I stayed in real estate when we planted the churches for a few years and just built up the church financially in all different areas.

I would do short sales and REOs and foreclosures and land deals, commercial housing. I just loved it. And God called me to pastor instead.

But so many times I would take Christians out and they would, let's say, qualify for a \$500,000 house. You know, just barely. If they didn't pay their tithe anymore, they didn't go to, you know, they didn't eat on Wednesdays and Fridays.

And you know, they could just barely, barely qualify. And I mean, I'm talking dozens of times I heard this. Well, let's go ahead and put an offer in and if they accept it, hey, that's an open door at God's opening.

I'd say, no, no, no, no, no. They can accept it regardless. Don't just trust in that.

Don't throw it out there and just, hey, if the offer's accepted, it must be God. Nope, they might accept your offer and then not be God. See how we play games sometimes? Now, there are times though, I believe in certain situations.

Okay, Lord, we've been looking. You know our budget. You know this.

And you trust God and you stay below, live below your means. If you barely qualify for 500, go find something for four. Trust me, you're gonna be happy you did it at some point.

And God will lead you to step out in faith and put an offer to see if he opens that door. But nine times out of 10, it was not a good idea for people to do this. And that's where wisdom comes into play.

That's why it's so important. What about number seven? Godly counsel is God's safety net. So, if there's an open door, it's good to go to godly counsel.

You know, those who know the Word and are unbiased either direction and they will speak truth to you. But you know what, sometimes we do, right? We kind of tell a half truth. Like we only tell them part of the situation because we want to hear a yes.

And God's safety net is godly counsel. And we've seen over the years, I remember 30 years ago or so, even when I was a younger man, and my parents or my mom, we sought godly counsel. Me and my wife sought godly counsel a lot.

We talked about five different people before we got married. Nowadays, it's almost like nobody really seeks godly counsel in many areas. It's like, hey, here's what we're doing.

And they don't ask. Me and Abram talk about this often. Rarely do people ask us anymore for counsel.

Hey, what do you think about this situation here? They tell us, hey, here's what I'm doing. Like, okay, well, good luck. I mean, are you sure? I mean, so we've kind of just thrown this one out there.

And I know it's difficult. Sometimes I avoid godly counsel because I don't want to hear it. Correct? Let's be honest, come on, 11 a.m. Let's be honest here.

I've made up my mind. I've made up my decision. I know spirit-filled believers, mature Christians aren't going to necessarily agree with me.

They might challenge some things about this, so I'm not going to go there. I'm going to tell them what I'm doing. And so, though, they forget that this is a safety net.

This is a safety net. Because what happens with godly counsel, you tell them the whole story. And I believe it is an act of obedience to God's Word.

Hey, I've got these people in support of me. It seems like it's God's will. It's God's Word.

It lines up with God's Word. I'm going to step out in faith. But if we have to alter the truth a little bit, and we don't want to seek godly counsel, often that's a good indication that we need to step back and really rethink what we're about to do.

Because that's an internal alarm clock that we're ignoring. I do it too. It's hard to tell people the truth all the time.

Sometimes I'll tell my wife, hey, I've got to go get gas in my truck. But I'll forget to tell her I'm going to stop by Starbucks and get a chocolate pop. Right? So I'm really not going to get gas.

But that's my thing not to hear, okay, Mr. Fitness Nut, chocolate pop. Don't act like you don't know what I'm talking about. And that's okay on a small scale.

But on big major plans, we can't play those games. Because how many I've talked to, I mean, over the years, a lot of people who did things that weren't necessarily bad, but they didn't seek godly counsel and they come up regretting it because they didn't see all the different things that come into play with the decision they're going to make. But then number eight is important too.

Faith plays an important role. We must have faith and trust God to open doors. But presumption can knock us off course.

Okay, here's the difference. Faith is I trust, Lord, that this is You. I've been in Your Word.

I've been praying. I confess besetting sin. I've been up front with people.

I've sought godly counsel. And Lord, I feel this is the direction You're leading. And I'm going to step out in faith, not completely knowing, because part of why faith pleases God is because you don't know everything.

That's where trust comes in. Hey, if I know exactly how things are going to happen, and that's not really faith. That's like, thanks God, I got this.

But to say, Lord, I don't know how, I just feel You're calling me to do this, and you step out. You feel that solid rock beneath. But it's not until you step out that you feel it.

Presumption comes, the word presuming comes from it. Presumption is usually married to pride. Right? Here's what I'm going to do.

God bless my plans. I don't want godly counsel. I've been really taking this to prayer and fasting.

This is what I want to do. And I'm going to step out and assume it's faith. Oh, it's not.

Uh-oh, I presumed. See, the attitude behind it's a lot different. Faith waits on God.

And when it steps out, it knows because it's been waiting on God. It's got the peace of the Holy Spirit. It's got the, Lord, I've been waiting on You.

I've got to make a decision. And they step out in faith and there's peace. Presumption is a more of a prideful, kind of arrogant, this is what I'm doing, regardless.

It's the person, I've done this, Lord, here's what I'm doing, now bless my plans. This person says, Lord, I want to know what You're doing. And I'm going to step out in faith and I'm going to trust You.

You see the difference? It's a heart issue. And it can be the same thing. Same thing, you're stepping out on, but one be of God and one not be of God just yet.

Timing plays a role too, there's so much. I just know when I've presumed that God was doing something, it's usually because it's something I want. And I don't really want to take it to the Lord because I don't want Him to say no.

Anybody can relate to that one? You singles can. If you've dated the wrong person. That happens a lot in dating.

We've counseled people all the time. You know, the presumption, but it just felt right. But I'm attracted to them.

Well, that's called the lust of the flesh. You don't just gauge something off of that. Versus the person waiting on God, equally yoked.

And God seems to put this together. It's really the attitude behind it. And so after telling them about keeping His word, you've not denied my name, He goes on to say, indeed, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, basically these belligerent anti-God people in the church, He says, who say they are Jews, but they're not.

They lie. I will make them come and worship before your feet and to know that I have loved you. In other words, God will show Himself strong.

God will prove the validity of your faith. God will smash the face of the enemies right before you. Like David said, He will make a table before me, before my enemies.

And God will, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He will make a table out in front of my enemies. I will fellowship and eat and act as if they are no threat to me.

But this group will not worship. It's not this group comes and worships the people. What they do is they fall down at their feet, confirming that they know the true and living God.

And we see this in Paul when he writes in Corinthians. He's actually speaking about tongues. He said, don't speak in tongues because an unbeliever's gonna come and think you're out of your mind.

But if you prophesy, if you preach God's word with passion and authority, and the Holy Spirit's convicting them, they will fall down on their face before you as an unbeliever saying, truly, God is in this place. So it's not falling down worshiping these people. It's confirmation.

God proves Himself in a living church. Have you ever been, I'm not gonna name names, but have you ever been in, I've had to go to certain events at cultish churches. Man, the power of God like left, it's not even near the road.

Like just going through the motions. The teacher has no passion. They have no purpose.

They have no unction of the Holy Spirit. They're going through dead rituals. It's void of the Spirit of God.

And that's why nobody's changed and nobody's challenged and nobody is convicted. And Jesus says, because you have kept my command to persevere. Did you know perseverance is a commandment? Like Jesus said, when you give, when you pray, when you fast, when you do these things, here's a new commandment I give to you.

Love your neighbor. I command you to persevere. In other words, I command you to pick yourself up off of the ground.

Get back up like David. Strengthen yourself in the Lord and move forward. Let the fear of God rule and reign in your heart.

And the love of God rule and reign in your heart as well. Persevere. Get up and fight again.

He said, I will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole earth. Shane, here's the proof of the tribulation right here. Maybe, maybe, hold on.

I will keep you from the hour of trial which will come upon the whole earth to test those who dwell on the earth. Well, a few things. Persevering through life's challenges has many rewards.

Let's not forget that. See, even though it's very hard, persevering through life's challenges has one of the greatest rewards that you will ever know. And that is intimacy with God.

Intimacy with God. I just talked to a family going through a very difficult situation. I won't go into any details at all.

And on the surface, it looks like it's not something to be encouraged about whatsoever. And it's not on the surface. But underlying that, I try to get people to realize if that persecution can push you down to the foot of the cross, and therefore, as I said last night, you get to know God in these different ways.

Like the Hebrews, they didn't just give God one name. They used to say Elohim, Elohim, Elohim, Elohim, Elohim, all throughout Scripture. They would say Jehovah-Jireh, God is my provider.

He saw me through Jehovah-Nissi, Jehovah-Sikkenu, Jehovah-Rapha, all these names of God. He is my shield, He is my banner. This is the God of the angels of army.

He has conquered my enemy, I will call Him this. This is the Lord who has not left my side, I will call Him this. This is the Lord who provides, this is the Lord who heals.

And they would give Him these different names because they met Him in a special way. Listen, you talk to mature, spirit-filled believers, I can tell you, they've been through hell and back. They know God as a sustainer.

They know if God, without Him, there would be nothing. They know Him as healer or redeemer, or if He's brought them through difficulties and challenges, they don't understand why didn't things work out. They know Him as an ever-present help in time of need.

They know Him in all these ways. The only way to know somebody is to go through the challenges of life. So could it be the very things we're running from are the very things we need to mature us for battle? That's how you become strong in the Christian faith.

You go through hell and hold on to the rock of your salvation. That's how you know Him as Jesus Christ. And you can see it many times in worship.

You know, when those who sing amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Or we sing the songs about Christ setting us free and breaking every stronghold. And we can relate because He's took us through those difficulties.

That's why worship is sweet. A sweet sound to our ears. And those who have not went through much can't relate.

Christianity is boring. The relationship with Christ is dry and dull and dead. The Bible, I don't even know where to start.

But for many, it's their food. Their daily, their spiritual food that's more important than physical food, Jesus said. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

He says, I have bread that you know not of. I don't need your food. I need God's food, the spiritual food.

And this will be an encouragement to some of you as well. It's not about perfection. It's about direction.

Get back up and fight again. And perseverance is biblical momentum and it's linked to God's promises. If you want to hold on to the promises of God, you have to persevere.

Those who persevere till the end will be saved. If you persevere, the rewards will be such and such. Perseverance, holding on to Christ.

Keep them from the trial. He says, I will keep you from the trial that shall come upon the whole world. Now that can mean deliverance, like completely remove them.

And I could take you through verses that could mean that completely. Just He reroutes the enemy. He reroutes this catastrophe.

He parts the Red Sea. He can deliver them from the catastrophe. But half the time, I don't know if it's exactly half, but half the time, He takes you through it, not around it.

Lord, like a big tornado there. I don't want to go through it. I want to go down to Florida.

Get away from that tornado in Oklahoma. God says, nope, come with me. You were going through the eye of the storm.

We're going right through it. And that's why all the scripts like Job said, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raises up a standard against him.

When the waters begin to consume you, I will not drown because the Lord my God is with me. That tells me He's swimming in some pretty deep water. When I walk through the fire, you will not be scorched because the Lord your God is your God.

Jehovah, Jireh, Nisi, Sikanou, all those terms, you know Him as you go through the storm. It's the storm that builds and strengthens the Christian. And that's why we can't be helicopter parents.

You know what that is? Surrounding your kids and never let them do anything. Try to shelter them. And I try to shelter my kids a lot, of course, but they need to experience a little bit of life too.

What do we do? Shelter them and at 18, just... Good luck, good luck. And it's usually the young adults, the teens have experienced difficulties and storms. They can weather life.

They can weather life together. You can show them evolution versus creation and not be scared. Oh, just shelter, shelter.

If not, they're gonna go into the world and go, what is all this? Prepare them for battle. I remember a couple of people didn't agree with me, but that's okay. I took my daughter.

She was, I don't know, 15 then. You know, Dr. Rainbow who teaches at A.V. College. We took him to his class on evolution for three hours.

And I taught and we talked about afterwards. And they have a deeper understanding now for creation and for that. And by the way, hopefully you'll see them at church soon.

We've been emailing and touching base. We've remained friends for four or five years. But it's okay to show them because you have the truth.

The truth always says, come, let's talk about the truth. Air will run from it. That's why if you ever get any of these activists waving a rainbow flag, they'll never sit down and have a conversation.

Hey, let's talk. No, no, no. You hate, you're a narrow-minded white supremacist, white national fundamentalist, hate monger, homophobe.

Oh, you just don't wanna hear the truth? What do you do? You have to call me names because you don't have the truth. Guys, this is getting militant. This is getting very, very dark and perverted and demonic.

And we need to call it out. I can speak the truth and love and call these things out because my heart isn't anger and hatred. It's to lead people to the cross.

But at the same time, to stand for those who have no voice. Did you know your silence speaks volumes? I don't wanna say anything with that little kindergartners. All those little kindergartners are being confused.

Because some people won't say anything. How dare you? That's cowardly. That's cowardly.

Yes, we're called to be gentles, doves. Don't forget the other part of that verse. Wise as serpents.

We're called to expose the unfruitful works of darkness. How do you expose it if you don't talk about it? And my heart breaks for some of these people that they'll contact us. You shouldn't say anything like that.

You just need to talk about Jesus. Well, don't talk about all these. No, no, no, no, no.

That's outside the church. You just stay in your lane. Well, my lane is to speak the truth and expose the unfruitful works of darkness wherever they lie.

Wherever they lie. There's a lot of rabbit trails in this message. But let's talk about this.

I'll close here shortly. I will keep you from the hour of the trial which shall come upon the whole earth. Now, whole earth, sometimes, I can show you a lot of scriptures that means the whole earth.

The whole North America, South America, everywhere. But there's other scriptures that do not mean the whole earth. They mean, and they'll say that.

A census went out to all the earth. Caesar, Augustus, or whatever. And it's really that localized area.

Samaria, Judea, the nation of Israel. It didn't mean Canada and Mexico. And so, this could be, does it have to do with the upcoming tribulation? Possibly.

We just know he's gonna keep this church from the tribulation that is to come. But here's my question. My thought is, this was written to an actual church 2,000 years ago.

So how can we say it doesn't apply to them and applies to us 2,000 years later? That's why I think it might have a dual application. Possibly, could have to do with God preserving His church, which He will. But I guarantee it had some type of application for the church in Philippi, or he was lying, or Philippi, Philadelphia, or he was lying to them.

He said, I'm gonna keep you, Philadelphia, I'm gonna keep you from the hour of tribulation that is to come. And we don't know exactly what that relates to, but thank God, God is going to keep them and us from the tribulation that is to come. Here's the thing, though.

If you look back at that Scripture, and you guys can do your own study, just pull up a Greek lexicon and you study different things. I will keep you from the hour. Many times in our mind, that means out of here.

But it also could mean keep you through it. In other words, if I take a promise from God's Word, okay, He's gonna keep me from any type of persecution, tribulation, praise God, the rest of my life is gonna be carefree. Or is He gonna keep me through it? He's gonna hold on to me.

Aren't you glad that God holds on to you more than you hold on to Him? He seals you with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to you as a guarantee. So as I'm faltering, my faith is being challenged, God keeps me, I will keep you through the tribulation that you're about to go through.

Go ask Sister Sarah, who spoke here a few different times and spent, what, five, six years in a Chinese prison. They would put a hot iron and things under her mouth if she could feel her saliva boiling and beat her up and rape her. He kept her.

You see, He kept her, not from it, but through it. And I'm just concerned that a lot of people think He's gonna keep us from tribulation. Now, I hope that's the case.

Don't think I'm all tough guy, Navy SEAL. Oh yeah, bring it on. No, no, I'm saying don't bring it on.

No, no, no, no, no, Lord, you just keep it away. But we've gotta be prepared either way. You've gotta be like the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace.

Guys, why didn't God blow out the furnace? They said, we will not bow to you. You're seeing the same thing right now. All this agenda, the rainbow flag and all, that's what it's getting, it's gonna keep, where's it gonna end? Come on, guys, wake up.

It's just a militant, vigilant thing. And at some point, they want you to bow to that. And He said, King, oh, King, we will not bow to this false religious system.

Our God will deliver us. Our God will deliver us. But what does the rest of the sentence say? But even if He doesn't, oh, if you have that view, you can get through life.

God will deliver me. I'm not going to jail, I'm not gonna be persecuted, people aren't gonna harass me, but even if He doesn't, I will not bow to the system. I'm well aware, I'm well aware, I'm well aware, like many of you, I've prepared, my wife and I've talked, I'm well aware that this type of voice could end up in prison, the way things are going.

Have you heard of hate speech laws? Do you know they stopped a lady, I think it was in Canada, from praying in front of an abortion clinic, and she wasn't praying out loud, the thought police. My God will deliver me. But even if I'm sitting in Twin Towers, in Los Angeles, maximum security, my God has still got me.

That's the only way you're gonna get through life, because that's biblical. You show me where God just, nothing ever bad ever happens. He takes you through it, and sometimes around it.

We don't know, we just gotta say, Lord, whatever my lot, it is well with my soul, it is well with my soul. And I don't have a lot of time, but He goes on to say, I'm coming quickly, I'm coming quickly, therefore hold fast what you have. Again, even if you have a glimmer of hope, a glimmer of faith, folks, reignite that this morning.

During closing worship, reignite that. Get to this altar and say, Lord, my candle is flickering. I need to refuel it, the flame is dying.

Lord, would you pour some gasoline of the Holy Spirit onto my life and my prayer life and reignite a passion for me. I want the word of God to come alive again. I want worship to be sung down in my soul.

I'm tired of following the world and rejecting the things of God. God, reignite a passion in me again. And He will do that.

And as you overcome, He will make you a pillar in the temple of God. A pillar supports the load. You will handle the loads of life.

You will withhold the word of God. It's interesting that word pillar, you can find it in another place where Paul writes. He said, the church of the living God is supposed to be pillars who support the truth.

Churches are not supposed to be vague and seeker-sensitive and woke and not offensive. They're actually supposed to offend sin and draw us back to God, call us to repentance. And he said, I will write on you the name of my God in the new Jerusalem.

It will come down from heaven and I will write on Him my new name. Are you marked by God? Are you marked by God? Is He your God? Is the one true and living God your God? There is no other God. Ask the Philistines about their gods and how God defeated them.

Ask the Babylonians about their gods. Ask the Assyrians, does their God still live? Ask the Egyptians how it worked out, worshiping their gods. You can go down throughout human history.

No other God but the true and living God stands the test of time. He stands unchallenged and unchanged. And of course, the final words, he who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

And I have a message for you this morning. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Word of God is saying to you this morning. Some of you need to repent.

Some of you need to be encouraged. Some of you need to confess that Christ is Lord and Savior in your life. Some of you need to get baptized.

Some of you need to stop following sin and start following Christ. But here's the thing about he who has an ear to hear, that tells me some people don't have an ear to hear. They can hear what I'm saying, but not hear what I'm saying.

Because any time the Bible talks about hearing, do you know what follows the hearing? The obeying. Hearing without obeying is living in deception. I may someday do a whole sermon on this, but in counseling or being a pastor, I'm shocked.

Now I know because that can happen to me too, but I'm shocked at how many people live in deception. And they know the Word of God. They'll quote the Word of God.

But James says, be doers of the Word and not just hearers. Because if you're just a hearer of God's Word and not a doer, you will actually live in deception. Deception.

My closing thought, Christian, you were not meant for failure here. Get up and win this race. I'm gonna give you a quote here.

Actually, it's a quick poem I've read before a couple times. It's about this young boy, teenager who keeps, he's trying to win this race to impress his dad. He's trying to win this race to impress his dad.

Have you ever been there, guys? We won't admit it, but often we wanted the affirmation of our fathers. I might talk about that next week on Father's Day. But he kept falling and kept falling three times.

Now he's in last place. And so the author wrote this, so far behind the others now, the most he's ever been, still he gave it his all and he ran like he could win. Three times he'd fallen, stumbling.

Three times he rose again. Too far behind to hope to win. He still ran to the end.

They cheered another boy who crossed the line and won first place. His head was high and proud and happy. No failing, no falling, no disgrace.

But when the fallen youngster crossed the line in last place, the crowd gave him a greater cheer for finishing the race. And even though he came in last with head bowed low and unproud, you would have thought he won the race to listen to the crowd. And to his dad, he sadly said, I didn't do so well.

I felt like that with God many times. Have you? I didn't do so well. To me, you won, his father said.

You rose each time you fell. And now when things seem dark and bleak and difficult to face, that memory of that little boy helps me in my own race. For all of life is like a race with ups and downs and all, and all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall.

Praise God. Praise God. There's one more line that I've never read, I don't think.

And when depression and despair shout loudly in my face, another voice within me says, get up and win that race. Guys, perseverance is the mark of the true believer. It is the thing that helps you weather the storm.

It is what helps you keep your testimony. It is what helps you lead your family effectively and keep your marriage strengthened. It is perseverance.

I saw something I want to share about the woman at the well. You've heard the story of the woman at the well where Jesus came. And He told her, woman, I have water of which you do not know, and if you drink of My water, you will never thirst again.

And she said she realized it wasn't the water that Jesus came for, it was me. Guys, never forget that. We have a loving Father who wants you to fully surrender your life.

There needs to be a passion, a fervency, a desire to seek Him, to want more of Him. And like we sometimes sing that song, there's an urgency building up inside of me. Everything else can wait.

Is that the heartbeat of your soul? There's an urgency building up inside of me. Everything else can wait. God, You're on the calendar.

You're the priority. All else must fall at the feet of King Jesus. I need to rearrange my life to where I have this urgency towards Christ and it's building up inside of me.

I have the fervency, the passion, of having that desperate relationship with God. Think about that. We either have that or we're lukewarm.

Well, no, Pastor, I think there's a middle spot. I don't know. I've never found that middle spot.

I'm either on fire or I'm fading. And you guys can make that difference. And I want to encourage you to think about that urgency, that urgency.

The Bible isn't always urgent. Next week when you hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your heart. Does it say that? Today, today, when you hear His voice, harden not your heart, three times in the book of Hebrews.

After the second time, you begin to wonder, the author, what is he, forgetting what he wrote earlier? No, that's what urgency does. Isn't urgency a reminder as well? Three times when you hear His voice, harden not your heart. See, it's a choice.

It's a choice and that's why I get sometimes, I feel like Paul, like King Agrippa, oh, King Agrippa, I wish you would come to know Christ. Oh, I wish that many of you would soften your hearts and know Christ intimately and passionately. But remember, the same sun that melts the wax will harden the clay.

Same with your heart. It's your choice. Are you gonna let the Word of God this morning cut deep and melt your heart? So there's an urgency, urgency to seek Him.

And maybe some of you need to repent this morning. Repent, repent and believe in the gospel. It's another thing about the American church, it drives me crazy.

People think they can ride their parents' coattails in. They think they were born in America, they hang a flag in their front yard, I'm a Christian. Yeah, I've known God since I was born.

No, you have to repent and believe. I've been coming to church a long time, pastor, or my favorite, oh yeah, I'm a Baptist. What does that mean? Well, you know, I'm a Presbyterian.

You know, I'm a Methodist. If you have to identify with the denomination and not Christ, you might wanna recheck your faith. He didn't die for a denomination.

Listen guys, life is short. Turn to God completely.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/wAiTR7dy6Xs.mp4>

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