

The True Path to Joy and Happiness

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes that true joy and happiness are found in trusting God and engaging with His word, rather than in worldly circumstances or influences.

Duration: 43:29

Scripture: Psalm 1:1

Topics: "The Importance of God's Word", "Joy in God"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes that true joy and happiness stem from a deep relationship with God, as illustrated in Psalms 1. He explains that while happiness is often tied to external circumstances, joy is rooted in trusting God regardless of life's challenges. Idleman warns against the influence of ungodly counsel and encourages believers to meditate on God's Word, which leads to spiritual prosperity and fulfillment. He contrasts the blessed life of those who delight in God's law with the emptiness of those who pursue worldly pleasures. Ultimately, he calls for repentance and a return to God for true joy and fulfillment.

Transcript

The message tonight, and I might say this morning a couple of times, so please forgive me. I'm excited about this message because this is one of my favorite chapters in the whole Bible. Especially the first half, Psalm 1. If you can turn your Bibles, if you have your Bibles you can turn to Psalm 1, or you can look in your journal if you have the journal.

The journal is actually the English Standard Version, the EASV, which is a good version. And I can, if you're curious what version is best of the Bible, on the website I gave a message what Bible translation is best. And I spent about an hour and talked about the differences.

And so you can go and listen to that if you'd like. Psalm 1, blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. And there's wonderful advice there.

He doesn't stand in the path of sinners. He doesn't sit in the seat of the scornful. His delight is in what? God's word.

And because he delights in God's word, he's like a tree planted by living waters who bears its fruit in season. And everything he does will prosper. He will not wither away.

I had to memorize that because I need it. I don't know about you, but I need sometimes to pull the word of God out and just begin to quote it because the enemy is alive today. He is alive.

He's wanting to destroy families. He's wanting to destroy marriages. He's wanting to destroy people in general or testimony.

So the message is the true path to joy and happiness. The true path to joy and happiness. And I want to be careful here because there's so much to this topic of joy and happiness that I don't want to get off track and focus on happiness only.

Meaning the word comes from happenstance, what's happening to you. Your bills are paid. You're feeling good.

Everything's going good. You're happy and that's okay. It's good to be happy.

But joy comes from trusting God despite what's happening to us. And it's hard to find that joy. A joy-filled Christian is a wonderful thing.

It's a wonderful person to be. Even when I'm so joy-filled, are you ever joy-filled after Sunday services? Man, I drive home, I feel like I'm on a cloud. And here comes Monday.

And that joy, you know, the emails come in and the different things come in and different issues come in and it's a struggle sometimes. But the true path to joy and happiness is really found here in Psalm 1. And I like what John Trapp wrote. He was back in the 1600s.

He said this about Psalm 1. This says more about true happiness than all of the philosophers put together. Do you know that man has been trying to find happiness for millenniums? Millenniums, can you say that? Millenniums. Thousands of years.

Man has been trying to find happiness by this or this or this. And there's nothing new under the sun. We keep reinventing it.

And I want to, I wish I could speak to Hollywood for just a half hour. Because it's the same cycle. You go back from the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, they rise up to stardom and they fall.

They rise up, look at all this money, and they fall. From Johnny Cash to, because I'm reading his biography right now, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, and you have the recent ones, River Phoenix. And I mean, I could list names all the time.

Amy Winehouse. Look at how far Miley Cyrus from how far when she started with Disney. And you see this, it's the same pattern.

Why? Because it leaves you empty. It leaves you empty. Until they find Christ.

There's a famous star. He's been around a long time. I don't want to say his name.

I was supposed to baptize his daughter at 18. That never came to fruition. But when she turned 18.

But they find that Jesus Christ is that only satisfying foundation on which they build their lives. The money didn't have it. The fame didn't have it.

Because we're not designed to be idols and lifted up on a pedestal. I was even reading something a while back when Michael Jordan turned 50. How depressed he was.

And the man has left basketball, but the addiction has not left the man, the story said. Can you imagine being all that? And then nobody knows you. It's over.

And he was only 50. You're just starting sometimes. But see, where do we find our joy? Where do we find true fulfillment? That's why it has to be found in God's word.

It can't be found in media or the television or looking at what the Joneses have, whoever they are, and trying to keep up with people and just, I gotta have, I gotta have. It's empty. It's unfulfilling.

It never profits. They asked a very wealthy man one time, when were you finally satisfied? He said, I'm not yet. The next dollar.

The next dollar. Same with just seeking the things of the world. Now, I'm gonna read here Psalm 1, and the Bible often uses a negative to highlight something.

It'll use something negative and strong. Do you ever need the negative to finally wake you up? Because we can hear the positives. And that's one thing I just released.

I did a radio interview today, and I released a YouTube video on what the five things pastors need to stop doing immediately. So you can read the op-ed. It's in the different Christian posts, I think, and Christian headlines and Charisma News and the stream.

And it's five things pastors need to stop doing immediately. I put on there number one is they need to stop being just encouraging. Thank God for encouragement.

We need it, and we need it often. But if that's all we do, just encourage, just encourage, people will come in living in their sin and never be convicted to repent if it's only on encouragement. So God's word sometimes twists that encouragement and gives us strong rebukes, but also uses negatives to highlight what God's truth is.

So Psalm 1, blessed is the man who what? Walks not in the counsel of the wicked. If you have the New King James, it will say not in the counsel of the ungodly. And I guess I should stop there.

What does blessed mean? You watch Christian television, you're going to come away with a different definition of that. Or you talk to people at different churches, and blessed, and they think, and usually, come on, let's be honest, we link being blessed with finances. Right? Oh, not the Wednesday night service.

You guys have it down. Boy, he sure is blessed. Boy, they sure are blessed.

It's often finances. And the more I read the Bible, the more I see we have to be careful in this area, because Jesus said it's hard for a rich man to get in heaven. Proverbs says, give me neither riches nor poverty.

If I am rich, I'll deny your name. And if I'm poor, I will steal and profane your name. And we see, though, often people link being blessed with finances.

Now, I think God does bless us in many areas. Throughout the Bible, too, you'll see that financial peace can be a blessing of God. There's nothing wrong with saying that.

God can bless people financially. I don't know, have you ever lived, Morgan, remember this, when we had one month's savings left? Not a good spot to be. Is there more fights during marriage or less? Is there more anxiety or less? You're going through the day, come on, Lord, you've got to do something.

So finances can be a crutch, can be a curse in some degree, can be a consequence of bad choices. But that's not always the case. Blessed, according to the Bible, is having the favor of God upon your life.

That's blessed. I don't know about you, but just meet the basic needs for the rest of my life. And I want to be blessed of God.

Blessed means God's favor. God's anointing is on your life. Your children, your children are blessed of God.

Might not be rich, might not go to the best college. And I know sometimes people struggle with that and they want to give them the best college. And I'm all for a good education, but I'd rather have them be blessed by God and God's favor on their life.

So that's when you hear this word blessed, don't immediately go to, ah, millionaire. Because actually the most people I know, and I do know millionaires, as I'm sure some of you do, most people I know who are very blessed of God are not wealthy. They're blessed, but they're not wealthy.

Some are. Don't rule me out here. Don't throw me out.

I'm not saying that. But I'm saying we have to be careful with this word blessed. It's happy, joy filled, thankful.

And this spills into your family. See, when you're blessed, when you're blessed, it spills into other areas of life, doesn't it? That blessing, that's why I talked about on Sunday that when the believer stays, the home is holy, sanctified. That blessing that God blesses that believer filters into your home.

It will filter into the lives of your children. It will filter into your workplace. It will filter into this church.

I will tell you this too, and I'm not just saying this to your heart, because we visit a lot of churches, we know a lot of places, but this church is by far the best church that I've ever known, me and Morgan, as far as spirit-filled believers who love the Lord and who are hungry for more of God. You don't see a lot of the backbiting and the complaining and the clicks and the gossiping and the carnality. You see men and women hungry for God.

And that's a true blessing. Now, you will weed out the people who are not like that, but that's okay. I'd rather have a Gideon's army than 50,000 people in a big stadium in Texas.

Did I say too much? I'm going to stop. I'm going to stop. Psalm 1, but you know it's true.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, of the wicked, nor do they stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scoffers. New King James would say, the seat of the scornful. Now, let's pick this apart for a minute.

If you want to be blessed, it gives us three wonderful areas here. The reason I memorized this verse probably 15, 16 years ago is because, number one, all the truth it has in it, but how this has helped me in so many areas of life. I want to be blessed, so I'm not going to walk, walks not in the counsel of the wicked.

Now, immediately we think of counsel, a godly counsel or ungodly counsel, and that's true advice. But this word, if you look it up, the psalm is in the Hebrew language. The word counsel is what you would think of more like an attorney.

Have you ever heard attorney called the counsel, your counselor? So blessed is the man who walks not according to ungodly laws, ungodly legislation, ungodly decrees. So of course it can filter into ungodly advice and influence, but look at the direction of our nation. Blessed is the man who does not walk in that direction, does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

Where are we getting our information from? Who are we listening to? And really this is why studying, I told the elders, I'm excited for Wednesday, but I'm a little nervous because to really do a sermon justice, I have about 12 hours, 12 to 15 hours of a sermon. And then I've got that for a Sunday sermon. So that's a lot of time to do it right.

I can just come in here and let's open up and just talk for a little bit. But to really look at what the Bible says, the original language, how are these verbs, how are the verbs used, the verb tense, is it present participle, is it reoccurring, did it happen in the past? And then you adequately try to present God's word to the people. But he says here, walk not in the counsel.

It's this continual walking, but it's also you're being influenced by the world. You're going the direction of the culture. So if the culture is influencing you and you're going in that direction, it's going to be hard to be blessed by God.

You actually won't be blessed by God because you're not walking according to God's rules, God's concepts, God's laws, but you're actually walking away from his principles and his concepts and his laws. So young adults even listen here. I know there's a lot of political rant out there.

Just be careful who you listen to. Be very careful who you listen to because there are groups out there that are hell bent on destroying what God is trying to do in our nation. And what God did in this nation built, what he built in this nation hundreds of years ago, the council that was built on.

I know some of you have heard me say this before, but I know there's a lot of new people, people listening who might not know this. Do you know that when the nation was being built, Harvard, Princeton, Yale were all Christian universities? Did you catch that? Harvard. Actually, the rules of Harvard, I'm sure, I think they're still there.

It says, let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life, which is to know Christ Jesus and to lay Christ Jesus at the bottom as the only solid foundation of learning. Harvard, the public school system was taught to teach, you ready for this? It's going to be politically incorrect. The Bible.

That's why the public school system was teaching kids the Bible. Do you ever read Noah Webster's dictionary? Do you know all the Bible verses have been removed? I have the 1828 edition at home. They would define words according to scripture.

If you wanted to run for public office and lead the people, you had to profess a faith in God the Father, the Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. You had to be a believer to run for office. You look at the Constitution of Virginia, of Maryland.

All of them were deeply ingrained, deeply entrenched in the Bible. Now, what comes up? Well, America's bad. Look at slavery.

Absolutely. A terrible mark on a nation's history. But why do we forget all the founding fathers who fought against it? Have you heard of the Civil War? 750,000 lives were lost.

More than from World War II to the Vietnam War were lost in that war. I just finished, I'm halfway through Ulysses S. Grant's biography and how they hated that and they fought to free men and women. How do we forget that? Because there are groups, there's an agenda to cause discord and anger in our nation.

And we as believers have to rise up above that and speak the truth in love. Listen to people. Try to see where they're coming from.

But you let them know that that is not true. So he's talking here, blessed is that person who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. So let me throw this question out there.

Who is speaking into your life right now? Who is speaking into your life right now? Where are you getting your information from? Netflix? The View? CNN? Or God's Word? Spending time with God. Looking at news sources, if you'd like, a little bit. Don't go crazy.

And I don't think we're meant to absorb everything that's going on in the world. How we dress? How we dress? Maybe talking younger women, modesty. Or men, how they dress, not caring about themselves.

What culture? Who's defining us? Who's setting that stage? Lady Gaga or Matthew, Mark, and Luke? But it's a pull, isn't it? It's a pull. Why? Because our flesh is always pulled away from God. It's like a magnet.

You don't have to do anything and you'll just be pulled away from God. So blessed is that person who walks not in ungodly counsel. Nor do they what? Stand in the path of sin, which you could say, if you look at the original language, they aren't standing in sin's path.

In other words, they're in the wrong spot at the wrong time on purpose. They're standing in sin, in the path of sin. They know it's coming and they want to be there.

They know, it's like in the Bible, it talks about the man went out late at night and walked by the harlot's house. He knew what he was doing. The evening, the location, he stood in the path of sin.

And again, I'm reading Charles Spurgeon's commentaries on Psalms. I would encourage that as well if you are a reader. But then he made a great point that sinners transgress in a certain way.

And if you're susceptible, don't stand in their path. What he means by that is this. What might pull you down isn't going to pull me down.

And what will pull me down might not pull you down. And you have to know what those triggers are. You have to know what path of sin you need to get out of.

You need to run for cover for whatever is going to pull you down and get out of sin's path and just move it from you. And then he says, scornful blesses a person who doesn't sit in the seat of the scoffer, which is another translation is scornful. Now this might be a little convicting.

Are you ready? That wasn't too encouraging. A scornful is full of poison. Just scornful.

But the person actually enjoys it. So you'll go sit with the scornful person. You'll participate in that gossip or in that scorning.

And misery enjoys company, doesn't it? And then you get that scornful person and you go sit in that council. You talk with them. What do you become? Well, let's define that word.

See how we're doing. Full of contempt, mocking, scoffing, sneering, jeering, snide remarks, disbarging, disdainful, and dismissive. This is haughty, arrogant attitude.

So God says, basically, you will not be blessed and filled with joy if you're full of poison. Meaning always down, always bitter, always negative, always looking for the worst, a critical spirit. Anybody struggle with that? I'll raise my hand.

Yeah, sometimes. That's a good word. I'll say sometimes.

Especially if I go on the news sites. Oh, no. The world is falling apart.

But who's still on the throne? And like I said before, if you don't, me and my wife talked about this this morning, it's so important to take your thoughts captive, even though you might not feel like it that morning. Even though you might be fighting depression or anger or something, you still take your thoughts captive because where your thoughts go, your body follows. And if you don't do anything, not in God's word, not doing anything, again, by default, where does your emotions go? To scorning, scornful.

If I just don't do anything, God, I'm just gonna get up, see what happens. I'm gonna gravitate right towards being divisive, or not divisive, but critical, contemptful, scathing, jeering, mocking, full of contempt. Why? Because that's called a negative attitude.

It's called a critical spirit. And without the spirit of God in you, or if you're quenching and grieving the spirit of God, that will come out of you, being full of just poison. Matthew Henry, searching for this sermon, I came across Matthew Henry's commentary as well.

He was in the 1600s. Actually, George Whitefield, if you've heard of George Whitefield, he would take Matthew Henry's commentary and also the Bible. That's all he would study.

Horseback, from speaking engagement. He'd be reading it on horseback. I'm thinking, Lord, I'm so thankful for a car.

Oh, that's one of my points. How to get rid of that scornfulness is to bring back a spirit of thankfulness. If you're not very thankful, talk to me afterwards.

I'll point out 10 things in your life that will make you very thankful, starting with where you live, what you drive, possibly your health, your children, the retirement, or the resources, or the food we're allowed to eat. I just went to Costco for the first time, like three years. I don't know why I avoid that place.

I just feel overwhelmed. Pallets, pallets, and pallets, and pallets of Captain Crunch. I was like, oh, look.

And the shopping carts are huge. I was like, it's way up here pushing it. It's like just abundance everywhere, everywhere.

I said, who eats 44 packets of rice? Who's going to buy that? It's just the abundance, but it may be really thick. God, look at this. Look at this.

And I want to give most of those people my fasting book because it just happens, though. The abundance, the abundance will do that. It'll do that to me.

It'll do that to me. The abundance brings apathy. So there's so many things we should be thankful for.

Thank God for all the things we have. And yes, there are some things going on to some people at some times during some seasons in our life, too, as well, where it's hard to be thankful. I'm not discounting deep emotional pain and hard seasons.

But I am reminding you that God makes provision for all of those things in his word. Some type of provision he will make for us in his word. So that's where it starts out here.

If you want to be blessed, do you want your family blessed this evening? Men, I would suggest men start leading in this area. Singles, get ready because you don't instantly get married and become this godly person. The character is built beforehand.

Blessed is the man who walketh not or the woman walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. I did a radio interview. I'll share with you a podcast.

I didn't even know it, but this guy gets like 185,000 downloads a month. And he said, we want to just interview you, so I'm talking. And he asked me a question that, and I really had to, like, how do you do family devotionals and how do you lead your family? And just, I started thinking about all the things we allow into our homes with our kids and with our own lives, maybe for our spouse.

And we're allowing these things to come into our homes and we're not being very careful. And we're walking in the counsel of the ungodly. And I know it's tough.

I know it's tough. I've got, you know how many kids I have? They all want the phone or the iPad. Are you going to shut off the Wi-Fi? You know, but you start to get beaten down after a while.

And you just, oh, just tired of it. But being careful what we're allowing into our homes. I don't know why that point resonated so much today, but it did.

So, blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the path of the sinner, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. So, how are you doing in those three areas? If you get these areas under control, you will feel a mighty, refreshing feeling of the Holy Spirit of God again. You're back in His Word.

So, now God is influencing you. Now God is the standard. And you're not standing in the path of sin.

You're removing those areas of besetting sin. You're not falling back into that pattern. How many of you know you keep falling back into that pattern, it leads to depression and discouragement and shame and guilt? And I would say this, I don't want to convict people, but just in general, the majority, the reason

many people don't have that passionate relationship with God and don't go to church regularly is because besetting sin has taken over.

They feel the shame and guilt because they keep missing the mark. And I want to encourage you this evening, God just says, come back, return to me. I can fix all these areas with one choice.

And then not walking in the advice of the scornful, basically not being with the scornful people. But then He says, but His delight, so He's contrasting it. Okay, here's the blessed person who doesn't do this.

Here's His delight. His delight is in the law of the Lord. And on His law, He meditates day and night.

I've had people ask me that, well, Shane, that's impossible. Well, it's not, you walk around with the Bible all day, even while you're driving. You know, it's meditating.

Where does your mind go? Where does your mind take you? Sports and things that don't have anything to do with God. Sports, okay, now and then, don't get me wrong. But I know people, I know Christians, they'll spend like 42 hours watching sports all week.

Like, where do you find the hours? I just don't have time to read the Bible. Oh, yeah, you do. Let me, yeah, let me go over and break your TV.

But He's meditating on God's Word. It's not just sitting there like, oh, just meditating. It's throughout your life, Lord, thank you for this.

God, thank you for that. Thank you for, I went to, last night, I had a, sprinkler's broken. It's flooding all the whole backyard, so I have to go to Lowe's at 7 o'clock at night.

I'm so irritated. And then, there's nobody there to help you, because I want to make sure I get the right valve, because I'm not coming back again. One inch, three quarter inch, you guys know better than I do.

Like, 30 minutes later, just waiting, like getting irritated. But long story short, it was able to run to someone, invite them to church, or pray with them, and God will use those things. It's meditating, day and night, Lord, wherever I'm at, in the Trader Joe's shopping area, or at home, you're meditating on God's Word, Lord, what do you want me to do? Because you're either meditating that, or on junk, right? We're either meditating on the things of God, or things of this world.

So, blessed is that man. He delights. Isn't that interesting they use that word? He doesn't just say he meditates in God's Word, he says he delights in it.

Here we go. He wants to. He wants to.

That's why many people aren't in God's Word. They don't want to. It's boring.

It's dry. It's dead. And I'm gonna tell you a secret prayer I prayed that helps.

Say, Lord, I don't want to, but will you help me want to? God, will you help me want to? Will you give me that desire? I want that desire, but I'm being honest with you, I don't feel it. I don't feel it. The Bible's boring.

I don't know where to read. I don't know where to start. It doesn't make any sense to me.

God, I want that desire for your Word. Give me that desire. Fill me with your Spirit.

And you might not feel like a super Bible student that second, but I'll tell you what, when you pray that prayer with sincerity, God begins to give you a hunger, and then you have to act upon that hunger. You have to start to read. Read what? Maybe the journal.

Just a page at a time. One chapter at a time. And you begin to look into, nowadays you don't even need all the stuff I have for interlinear Bibles and the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.

You can just, what does this word mean in the Bible? And you can begin to study and learn, and God can begin to speak to you in many different ways. But you say, God, give me that desire, and I believe that God will answer that prayer. So his heart delights in God as his pattern, as his daily thought life.

His thoughts are taken captive. And don't put me on a pestle because I have not mastered this. My thoughts go a lot of different directions, especially when I have broken sprinklers and flat tires and lots of things going on.

He is like a tree. So because of this, here's what's gonna happen. Here's the promise of God.

That's why I love God's Word. You can take it to the bank. You can take it to the bank.

Actually, I got a black bracelet just made with all my kids' names on it and my wife's name on it to remind me, I was gonna tell you, to remind me to meditate on God's Word and pray for them as often as possible. Remember D6, it's Deuteronomy 6, to train your children in the way of the Lord because I need that reminder. God, you need to show me and remind me to put you first and to put them first.

And you begin to pray for them by name and areas that you want to see changed in their life. So here's what happens. You begin to follow these three things I just said and you say, Lord, I delight in your Word or I don't delight in it, I want to.

And truth be told, I don't get up every morning early delighting in God's Word. I delight in the pillow, especially when it's getting cold out. But that is one reason, side note, maybe this will help somebody, one reason I don't use alarm clocks anymore for many years, couple decades, I let my body naturally go to sleep when it needs to and get up when it needs to, you get that full sleep so you feel rested, you feel better, there's more joy, you don't need a pot of Christian crack to get you up.

You begin to feel better about studying God's Word. And so this is what's happening. You're applying these principles and then now he says you're going to be like a tree planted by what? Streams of water that yields its fruit in season.

I'm so glad it said in season. What does that tell you? Don't give up. Don't give up.

You can't see the seeds that are being planted. You take God at His Word. Actually, that's real faith.

Real faith takes God at His Word. Even when I don't see my prodigal son or daughter changing, even when I see them getting worse, I don't care. The devil doesn't have the final say.

God, you have the final say. Your Word says if I'll contend, if I'll pray, if I seek your face, you will answer. I don't see but I'm watering and I'm watering and I'm watering.

I trust in you. I have faith in you. You are the God of Jehovah Jireh, my provider, Jehovah Nisi, my banner, Jehovah Rapha.

You will go before me and fight my battles. I trust in you even though I don't see it. That faith pleases God.

What pleases God more? When you know things are working out? Without faith, it's impossible to please God. And I found that faith is the evidence of things not seen. You hope for them but you don't see them.

How awesome would that be if you stand someday in your prayer closet and you say, God, I don't see anything changing. I see it getting worse but I trust you. My hope is in you.

I'm going to pray. I'm going to put my face on the ground. I might even fast breakfast.

And I'm going to seek you because I believe in you and I trust you. You have the final say. That pleases God.

That pleases God. But it takes a warrior's heart, doesn't it, to fight that battle? That's why I love that song. This is how I fight my battle.

This is how I fight my battles. And Ronnie was absolutely correct. This is how you fight your battles.

You raise your hand in total surrender and awe of God and you say, God, I give you everything. This is how I fight my battles. When fear comes in, when depression comes in, when anxiety comes in, this is how I fight my battles.

When my kids are not following you, when they're rebelling God, this is how I fight my battles. I worship you. I can't fix this but you can.

So it's a position of worship and posturing yourself to receive from God. That's what really what worship is. When you see people in worship in the Bible, it's either you're on your face prostrate, you can't get down any lower, or it's hands reach to heaven, lifting up holy hands, saying, God, it's a receiving.

God, I need you. I'm lifting up holy hands as if I could reach down and pull down heaven. I'm trusting you.

I don't care what I look like. I don't care if people go, there's a holy roller. You can call me whatever you want.

But God has brought me out of death and destruction. You can call me a Jesus freak. You can call me narrow-minded.

You can call me all these names. But that's because God has transformed my life. And many of you, you know it.

That's why we praise God. That's why we worship God. That's not why we're embarrassed.

Because we have lived this song. Like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season. There are times, good times and bad times, ups and downs.

And I could not stand before you as I do today had I not went through the down times as well as the good times. I found that the down times are really what strengthen you spiritually. I don't grow too well spiritually when everything's just going good.

Just like you don't grow muscle when you don't do anything like this. Right? That's what many of you know. That's how people build muscle.

It's called muscle resistance training. You're subjecting the body to something it's not used to. You start to do a lot of bicep curls.

It goes, oh I'm not prepared for this. I better add something to the muscle cell receptor sites. I better start to grow a little bit to adapt to that pressure next time.

So next time we'll be ready. Same thing spiritually. Same thing spiritually.

God uses those down times to build us up. And then the even lower times sometimes to just break us and mold us into his image. And then he says its leaf does not wither.

Isn't that interesting? Because leaves wither. But again looking into this, you know what was interesting? The leaves were a sign of life. When something had leaves, even the fig tree Jesus cursed it, it didn't have the fruit there.

But at other times a leaf on a tree meant the tree is alive. If you drive around and you see no trees on a tree that should be blooming, what do you think? Time to cut it down. So leaves is a sign of life.

So you're going to be planted by living waters. You will bear fruit in its season and your leaves will not wither. The spiritual life in you will not wither.

That's one thing I know for certain. The spiritual life in you does not have to wither and decay and die. You can keep it alive.

But how? Just explain it for 30 minutes. Blessed is the man who does these things. And all he does, he will prosper.

Everything he does will prosper. That doesn't mean you just run into something haphazardly. That doesn't mean you just start up a business just to do it.

It means as you're seeking God, as God puts things on your heart, as God begins to direct you, whatever you do will begin to prosper. Because you've waited on God. I've told this funny story before and I'll tell it again.

And you'll see I'm not trying to toot my own horn, I should say that, because my wife tells me sometimes, everything you seem to do works out, turns to gold. Like, you want to know why? Because I don't do anything unless I know God is in it. He's got to push me to do it.

The radio stations, he had to push us into doing it. Starting the church, he had to push us into doing it. Ronnie comes from Hope Chapel and Pastor Sean, who pastors that church, when I was going to rent that building, I was so scared, I said, can I try it for three months? I'm just going to teach for three months because I don't know if this is, and he said, no, you either go all the way in or you don't go in at all.

And so God, before I write a book, I've got to know God, I have to know, do you want me to do this? Are you giving me the time and energy to do this? Lord, I want to know if you do that. So it's not that what I do prospers, it's because I have to wait on God because I'm too stupid. I'll rush ahead, I'll do things, and I do do things that don't work out.

But I wait on God more often than not, and I wait for confirmation, for conviction, and I will tell God this, I say, God, I know Shane Eidelman, I don't trust Shane Eidelman, I don't know what the motives are, I don't know if this is going to work out, I can't see next week, let alone next month. I need to know, I need to know if this is your will and if you want us to do this. I need you to show me because I don't, I trust you, I don't trust me because the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.

Who can know the heart except God? So everything you do will prosper if you wait on God and wait for his timing. Now, I could give you a long list of things that have not worked out. One was a website I did, whydietsdontwork.com. Because I thought I was going to speak to people.

When I first came back to the Lord, I was a prodigal son, I said, oh God, you must be having me do this, and kind of, and then he turned that into the church. So it's kind of similar, but there's things I've done before that God kind of just takes, nah, does God ever do that to you? No, not quite what I'm thinking. Let me show you now, man plans, God laughs, right? And so let me show you now what I'm doing.

So we have to try to line up with his will often. And then four, I'm just going to close with this, the wicked are not so, he's contrasting, the wicked are not so, but they are like chaff that the wind drives away, and therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous, for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. See, that's something you have to realize about God's word, it's filled with love and truth and grace, but it's also filled with hard things.

He calls the sinner home, but he also says, you're on your way to hell if you don't turn to me. You're destined to destruction if you don't turn to me. I don't understand it fully, but I just know it's God's truth.

But actually, this judgment, he's not talking about the final judgment. This word means it's a verdict or it's a decision. Basically, the judge in a court of law makes a judgment.

So he's saying here, the wicked will not stand in the verdict and God's decision of being among the congregation of the people. In other words, the wicked will not be with the godly on that day when God comes and reigns again. They will perish.

The wicked will not stand in judgment. So I don't know where you're at tonight, maybe even some listening to this might be just tuning in or listening later, but what path are you on? The Bible is clear. The righteous and the wicked.

The ungodly and the godly. The right and the wrong. The truth and the error.

The light and the darkness. There's a clear line of demarcation that you can't walk in the middle. So if this doesn't apply to you, if you say, I don't know, I do walk in the council of the ungodly.

I love sin. I'm a scornful person. I don't know if I know God.

I want to encourage you to change that tonight or whenever you hear this. It's very simple. The Bible says repent and believe.

Repent and believe that Jesus saved me and Jesus is my savior. I repent, which is I humble myself. Isn't that hard for us to do? Humble ourselves.

But I also want to just throw that out there to maybe some other people who point in this sermon really stuck home with you. I don't want you to leave here discouraged. Like that song Ronnie sang, the new

one, the shame and the guilt has been covered by the cross.

Now conviction's good. Thank God for conviction. Because that means, ah, this is wrong direction.

Let me change. But condemnation is not of God. Condemnation comes upon you and says you'll never be anything.

You blew it again. You're always going to blow it again. Who do you think you are? Why don't you take your life? Why don't you do this? And they just condemn and condemn.

That's not the spirit of God. The spirit of God convicts us. That's wrong.

Turn to me. Release it. Give it to me.

And there'll be tremendous freedom. Tremendous joy. Anytime a sinner turns from his besetting sin and turns to God again, there's a times of refreshing that comes from the presence of the Lord.

It's because now I'm in right relationship with God. And then we go through life and now I fall back and then you turn. I'm back.

I'm right relationship with God. And then something happens. And I'm not talking about completely falling away.

But do you ever have those challenges where some weeks it's just my Lord, I can't wait till I'm in heaven. This body of flesh is dying and decaying. I'm tired of it.

And we just reestablishing that relationship with God.

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