

Travail Before You Prevail

by Shane Idleman

In order to prevail in prayer, we must approach God with a clean heart, recognize our unconfessed sin, and develop a burden for prayer by spending time with God and praying clear through until He answers.

Duration: 43:43

Scripture: Psalm 6:1

Topics: "Prayer", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the necessity of travailing in prayer before one can prevail, drawing from Psalm 6 to illustrate the importance of earnest prayer during times of distress. He explains that true prayer requires effort, humility, and a clean heart, as unconfessed sin can hinder communication with God. Idleman encourages believers to approach God with a burden for their needs and the needs of others, reminding them that God hears the cries of the brokenhearted. He highlights the power of prayer and fasting in overcoming spiritual battles and the importance of perseverance in seeking God's answers. Ultimately, he calls for a revival of prayer in the church, asserting that prayer is the engine that drives spiritual life and effectiveness.

Transcript

The title tonight is, and I got this from Psalm 6, so if you have your Bibles you can turn to Psalm 6, and also if you have your prayer journals, I don't know if that's working out well for you, going through the psalm, writing down the prayer notes, we still have a few journals left, the title is, Travail Before You Prevail. Travail Before You Prevail. And what does travail mean? Well it means toil, sweat, exertion, labor, effort, and what I found over the years, I don't know if you found this out yet, but in order to prevail in prayer, there is travail.

I mean I love, I have them, I have the five minute devotional, but it's not going to cut it in these dire times. Microwave Christianity is not going to cut it in the time we live. When the enemy, the onslaught, the enemy has just come against our families, against the church, you have to get back to that point of travailing in prayer in order to prevail.

Now it's interesting about Psalm 6, it's a prayer of faith in time of distress. Now here's what's interesting, if you look at it and as we read it, is he dealing with sickness? Is he dealing with enemies? Is he dealing with difficulties? We don't know on this psalm. And that's good because you can put your situation into this psalm.

Anybody have any enemies out there? Oh, that's pretty good. Not really. Just me, huh? Sickness, difficulties, anybody experiencing demonic attack this week? There we go.

How do you know it's demonic attack? Well that would be for another sermon, but rest assured that you know that this is what is going on. Because when God begins to move, guess who else begins to move? Satanic forces. We see that when Jesus went to the cross, we see that when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, we see that throughout ministry, is when God is moving, so is the satanic forces.

So let's begin, Psalm 6, O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak. O Lord, heal me, for my bones are troubled.

My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O Lord, how long? Now I don't know about you, but that sounds pretty serious. I don't know what you're going through.

I don't know if your bones have ever ached. Have you ever been in that much turmoil? Broken marriage? Loss of a child or loss of a loved one, or watching your kids or family members reject Christ, and when life just begins to come upon you, you feel that way. But he's saying something here that's interesting.

Do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. But again, we don't know. There's no confession of sin.

We don't know if God is chastising him. Did you know that God rebukes those he loves? He gets out the spanking paddle. God will spank me.

Yes, he will. And it's not fun. It's not a physical spanking, you know, right here, but it's a spiritual spanking.

It's circumstances. It's humiliating. God will wake up his children because he loves us enough.

However, if you cross-reference Psalm 38, I think we actually have it up here. Watch how close this is. Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath.

Your arrows have pierced me and your hand has come down on me. Because of your wrath, there is no health in my body. There is no soundness in my bones.

Why? Because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. And this is one of the challenges, I'll just tell you, being a pastor, is we want to encourage people.

I want to encourage people. You don't want to beat them up with the Bible. You want to encourage them.

And you want to love them. You want to restore and help and support. But you can't ignore the clear teachings in the Bible that God deals with sin.

That sin can lead to misery. Sin can lead to depression. Sin can lead to anxiety.

Sin can lead to mental anguish. He's saying it right here. That there's no health in my body.

There's no soundness in my bones because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. So what kind of pastor would I be if I didn't tell you the other half of this equation? That sometimes we need to look, is there unconfessed sin in our life? Is there besetting sin that we've been playing with? Have we opened the door to the demonic realm and that is causing this depression or this weight that is on us? Have you ever felt that weight before? Have you ever been caught in sin? Are you

happy? Not at all.

I could read this and go, yeah, I can relate to that. And so the first point that I want to make here is in order to prevail, prevail in prayer before you prevail, we must approach God with a clean heart. If you want to prevail in prayer, get this settled right now.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Bible says, he will not hear me. And he goes on to say that his hand's not short, his ear's not heavy, but that your sins, your iniquities have separated you from your God. And the reason I love this point is because I've seen people radically change in this area of a boring prayer life to a passionate prayer life.

When? When sin is dealt with. When besetting sin, let's say it's a judgmental, have you ever known anyone or maybe yourself you struggle with a judgmental, critical heart? Do you know they exist in the church? You know, it's in here. I've dealt with this before, I've went through seasons, but a judgmental, critical, bitter heart, you think prayers are going to, you're going to be on fire to pray? Or other besetting sins and God wants us to cleanse our heart of these areas, what does it do? It opens the line of communication between you and God, between me and God.

That's the first, we have to start there. We have to start with looking at the heart. And he said here, ask for mercy, ask for mercy.

Did you know that's okay? God loves it when we say, Lord, beats on his chest, like in the gospels, oh God, have mercy on me, a what? A sinner, crying out to God, and Lord, hear my, hear my prayers, God, hear me. Have you ever been in a point where you're, you're crying out to God and people have tried to shut you up? Don't, don't look to God, be quiet, that's not your problem, you just need to do this, you need to do that, but you know in your heart like the blind beggar, oh son of David, have mercy on me, and what did the people tell him?

Be quiet, be quiet, Jesus is walking by, be quiet, don't do that, and he cried out even the loud, even more, oh son of David, have mercy on me, God, look upon my affliction, see my heart, see my brokenness, and I've told you last week or the week before that God runs to a broken heart, he runs to the cries of his children, he hears the broken heart crying out to him, oh God, have mercy on me, I need you, because I've noticed it's in the brokenness that that's where the strength comes from, it's in the humility that God begins to move in a powerful way.

One of my prayers that I hope God answers, and I pray, God, thank you for giving me this boldness, but I also want to be known for my love, oh Shane, that guy, he's bold, but he loves, I'm not there yet, but I'm getting there, finding that, because when I see the boldness with love, it's the power of God wrecks a life, that's effective preaching, when you can preach about hell with tears in your eyes, when you can preach about sin and understanding that I love you, and I have, I want to offer you grace and restoration, but you got to turn, you got to turn back to God, and you underscore the boldness with the love, that's how we're going to see a nation changed, that's how we're going to see revival in our land, and I thought, oh, how many blessings are waiting at the brink, how many

promises yet to be fulfilled, how many prayers are being hindered, because of this area, listen, this is serious stuff, the children of Israel could not go into the promised land because of sin, prayers are hindered because of sin, God couldn't move in many cities when Jesus went into cities because of sin, so this has to be dealt with right off the bat, did you know this, the blessings are waiting at the brink, promises

yet to be fulfilled, God wants to answer prayers, and prayers are being hindered in many, in the cases of many people, and then verse four, remember, I'm sorry, return, return, oh Lord, deliver me, oh, save me for my mercy's sake, or no, for your mercy's sake, for in death, there is no remembrance of you, in the grave, who will give you thanks, isn't that funny, how he's

reminding God, hey, listen, if you kill me, who's gonna give you thanks, it reminds you of Moses saying, hey, if you kill these people, they're gonna make fun of us, because God couldn't get his people through, and he reminds God, and you know what, this isn't for God's recollection, this is for the person's recollection, when I remind God of his promises, I do that for my benefit, God, remember, your word says this, he's not going, that's right, thank you, Shane, I almost forgot about that point, so it's a spot of, you know, demonic attacks, it's so funny, I don't know what is and what isn't, but I'm doing fine all week, and then I have terrible congestion, Sunday, and now tonight, it's like, and just, I can name 10 other things, if you think a church like this is without fighting in the

demonic realm, you have another thing coming, this is not smooth sailing, if you knew half of what goes on, because whenever we're building up, somebody's trying to destroy, whenever marriages are starting to come back together, here comes the enemy, and it's just this constant battling, and this constant fighting, and I do remind God, oh, save me for your mercy's sake, and here's something you need to know, discouragement is Satan's tool, to knock you off track, discouragement is Satan's tool to get you out of the prayer closet, discouragement is what Satan uses to have you stop praying, anybody like praying when you're discouraged, but it's also, what I've noticed, it's also God's magnet to draw us to him, because if I take my discouragement to the cross, and to the prayer closet, that

discouragement will turn into an overpowering, or an overwhelming empowerment of who God is, and what he's going to do in my life, and I flip that discouragement back on Satan's head, discouragement always comes in, so to quench the flame of discouragement, pour on the mercy and the grace of God, remind yourself of who God is, and also remember that God often crushes our pride to open our ears, I want to highlight that one, God will often crush our pride to open our ears, this actually might be a message you want to get the CD of, and listen every now and then, to bring us back to this point of remembering how powerful prayer is, so here's actually where I wanted to get to tonight on travail before you prevail, this next verse, verse six, he says something very interesting here, he says,

I am weary with my groaning, all night I've made my bed swim, I drench my couch with my tears, have you been there?

A fractured relationship, a difficult season in life, I've got up before, even pastoring this church, I've got up before, and I just can't get back on track because of what's going on, the difficulties, the hard seasons, and you get up from a hard night's sleep, and you go back into the day, and here we go again, it's gonna be a difficult season, and he's talking here, my eyes wasted away because of grief, it grows old because of all my enemies, depart from me, all you workers of iniquity, so we have a clue here that maybe, maybe there are enemies now, he's referencing that that's where all this is coming from, this uprising against him, and you know what, one of the biggest things I've learned, I've shared this before, but I can probably frame this in a different way, I was shocked, and that's an understatement, when I first came back to the Lord, I'm loving God, moving forward, I didn't realize that sheep bite, you know who attacked me more, most are Christians, some of you saw the video we shared on my comments about John MacArthur's comments about Beth Moore, 20,000 views in two days, that means a lot of negative stuff, the national media caught it up, and half the stuff's positive, half the stuff is, I'll never listen to that guy again, he's a

false teacher, really, I'm a false teacher, according to what scripture, now granted, I don't read 99.9% of them, but those who come against, often Christians, especially these kind of messages are either the Pharisee or the lukewarm Christian who don't want to be convicted, or the Pharisee who's convicted by their pride, and Christians have a just, if they're not filled with the spirit of God, most Christians, and I've been there, so I have a lot of sympathy there, most Christians are quenching and grieving the spirit of God, and so they lash out at other Christians, they lash out at other people, they try to pull them down so they look better, and there's just a constant pressure in the ministry, because you'll never please, and I wonder, I often wonder, does God give us these areas that we're not real clear on, or that we might disagree on to see if our Christian character rises to the surface, or if arrogance and judgmentalism rise to the surface?

I think God has given us these differences to see how do we treat one another, especially if they're not essentials, right, if they're not essentials, those things, you know, you have to agree on the essentials.

I shared with some of you, I had a two-hour conversation Monday with a Jehovah Witness and his friend in my house, it was the most exhausting two hours of my life, mentally, like holy smokes, these guys got it down, they are brainwashed, they can twist that stuff, just mentally challenging, they said, well Shane, the word Trinity isn't in the Bible, and I said, well the word Bible isn't in the Bible, but the concepts there, God reveals Himself, we don't pray to Jesus, we pray to Jehovah, so many things just draining me, draining me mentally, and you feel this weariness, this grief and this weariness, but then he says something interesting, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping, the Lord has heard my supplication, the Lord will receive my prayer, how does he get to this point?

That's what I want to know, how does he get to this point of God hearing, he has heard my voice, wouldn't you like to say that? And most people don't ever get to experience that, well here's the key, the man or woman listening to God, obeying God, and wanting to be used of God, will hear from God, though the visionary wait for it, well Shane, that has to do with Habakkuk in the Old Testament, I know, but it's a wonderful principle, God said I'm gonna judge the wicked, don't worry Habakkuk, when I say something, when I promise something, though the visionary wait for it, for in the end it shall speak and not lie, because I am the Lord thy God, my words will not return void, when I speak something, I will see it through, I don't waver or go back and forth, I don't relent and change my mind, the giftings and callings of God are irrevocable, God will promise something, he will do it, so when God says I've heard your prayers, your travail has reached up to heaven, and they've been answered, that is a powerful thing, well Shane, how do I know?

I'm glad you asked, now we can get to the main part of the sermon, because this is so important, see, and I've loved to study this topic, because I would read, you know, I have a lot of books, and I read old books, from 100 years ago, 150 years ago, 200 years ago, my family, my mom says, my grandma said that my lineage can be actually traced to the first baby born on the Mayflower, Cape Cod Bay, Pergam White, but also traced to Methodist circuit riders, remember a letter from my great grandma, I think in the early 1900s, being part of our lineage coming from the Methodist circuit riders, and reading those, the Methodist journals, John Wesley, there's something many times they would say, that we don't say today, or we don't communicate today, and it goes something like this, no matter where you're reading, it's something like, I laid hold of God, and He heard me, I held hold of God, until I had the answer came, and that doesn't happen in five minutes, that's not a quick 20 minute prayer, there's a laying hold of God, until the answer comes, but Shane, what about if that takes a month, well hold on, I'm getting somewhere, if God stirs our heart, in other words, if there's a burden to pray, it's a sure sign that God wants to answer, I might get a

little excited on this point, because I love this point, if there's a burden, see I used to apologize for my burden, not anymore, not anymore, if God has given me a burden for our nation, a burden for our valley to see revival, see something's going with the sound, I'm not doing anything, where are you Jason, no, just, is it this mic, I can use this one, maybe I'm too close to it, anyway, I have a burden, don't many of you, so if God gives me, God's not going to give a wasted burden, it's this pressure of seeing revival, and God wanting to meet, or God wanting to move in our area, or our state, or our nation, I don't know, I just know, there's a burden, like Isaiah, and the prophets would fill the burden, they would actually say, the burden of the Lord, the burden of the Lord is upon me, and a chapter later, a couple chapters later, the burden of the Lord is upon me, meaning they had to speak what God says, and there's a video clip, it'll bring you to tears, it's called, the title is A Call to Anguish, by David Wilkerson, A Call to Anguish, by David Wilkerson, and he said, when God desires to recover a ruined situation, he baptizes someone in anguish, see, out of that anguish, out of that pain, out of that heart cry for our nation, heart cry for the murdering of children, and how far we've drifted from God, and carrying this burden, I feel like Christians sometimes, in the Pilgrim's Progress, you're carrying the burden, but this is a good burden, because this is a burden that God puts on my shoulders, why?

Because so I'll get on my knees before him, and I'll cry out, I might end up on the, I might end up on the floor, I might end up on the aqueduct, crying my eyes out, saying, oh God, would you move, and I'm gonna hold on to that promise, until you do something, I'm gonna hold on to God, and then after that season, there's a peace, there's a joy, there's a boldness, to go and proclaim the truth of what God has given us, because you've spent time with the master, you have to deliver the message, when I get orders from headquarters, I've got to deliver them, there's a burden of the Lord, the problem is, many don't have a burden, so we're not seeing prayers answered, you have to develop that burden, well how, how?

Well first, here's the key, there's a, there's actually a book, Praying Clear Through, written about a hundred years ago, praying, see they used to pray clear through, it would go something like this, there's a prodigal son, there's a prodigal daughter, we've been praying for here, we're gonna meet, we're gonna meet tomorrow morning at 5 a.m., and we're gonna pray, clear through, so that doesn't mean, it's over at 5 30, okay by 6 o'clock, we got to be out of here, praying clear through, is you're gonna be on your face, until God answers, and God's not gonna go, just sit there all week, I don't care, he hears the cries of his children, the burden, he gives them, and then you get up of that altar, tears, and you say, God has heard my prayer, I have that assurance, I have, see I wonder, are

we not spending enough time with God, is that why prayers are not being answered, now don't get me wrong, if you pray a five-minute prayer on your way to work, God please help me today at work, he's not going, oh that was long enough, try again, most prayers in the Bible are, are short, the prayer of Jabez, oh God bless me, and lengthen my territory, and make sure I don't cause harm, and do harm to others, that's a good prayer, Jesus's prayer, they were short, they were powerful, the prophets prayers, were short and powerful, we don't need long prayers, and I'm not actually talking about a long prayer, what this is, this is heart travail, this is, this is a woman giving birth, but imagine in the prayer room, you're giving, you're giving birth, you're traveling, and I just, it doesn't, you

can't make this up, I remember, I told Pastor Abraham, I was on the aqueduct just yesterday, and I can't stop crying, I can't stop weeping for our valley, and the, and the sex trade, and the, and the, and the, and the, and the abuse in our homes, and, and what's going, I just, what is going, God, I'm just crying, I hope nobody drives by, I'm just, what is, where is this burden coming from, he goes, son, when you lay hold of me, I'm going to give you a burden, and out of that burden is going to come a fire, where you change your

community, because without a burden, there's no passion, without a passion, there's no desire, without a desire, there's no movement, without any movement, there's no results, you have to have the burden of the Lord, and it begins, it begins to weigh on you, and

you begin to pray in that direction, but you have to be careful, have you ever heard of the word presumptuous, boy, have we made mistakes, because there's a clear, there's a clear line between faith and presumption, what's the difference, faith steps out on the promises of God, knowing he's going to answer, presumption says, well, I hope God answers, we're presuming, and this has been a struggle for many years, because where do you, where do you find that balance, and then I read something, I'm glad to highlight it, many years ago, I want to share with you, it's by Oswald Smith, again, an author, probably 100 years ago, he said, presumptuous faith believes without the evidence of the Spirit, what are you talking about, well, this is important, this is so important, you Bible-believing,

Spirit-filled believers know exactly what I'm talking about, there's an evidence of the Spirit that cries out, Abba Father, there's something in your spirit that says, this is of God, you spent time with God, the Holy Spirit, there's evidence there that God is going to do something, that this is a profound move of God, it's just not faith in nothing, it's knowing that God is going to move, so presumptuous faith believes without the evidence of the Spirit, genuine faith believes with the evidence of the Spirit, well, Shane, what does that look like practically?

You have to spend time with God, because when you're filled with the Spirit, you have clearer direction from God and what He wants to do, I want to read a quick excerpt from a book called *The Revival We Need*, *The Revival We Need*, about praying through, it's an incident that is told in a place called Filey, think about this, in the early days of the Methodist movement, to which preacher after preacher had been sent, but they all failed, so they went to the city called Filey, I think it was Scotland, I'm not sure now, and the demonic stronghold was too great, and have you ever been to a place where you just feel the opposition and you can't, I mean, you can't plant a church, you can't see anybody come to cry, it's just, there's just, it's like a block while I preach at some places before, when I used to travel and preach, you could tell that it just, it just closed off, something is going on, so they were going to, this village had a stronghold of satanic power, and each one, each pastor had been driven out that tried to make a difference, but just before the matter was finally settled and they closed down their outreach into this, the now famous, he's now famous back then, his name is Prang Johnny, he was, anybody, if you got that name, you know something's good's coming up, so he begged for the conference to send him to this town, they agreed, and a few days afterwards, John set out on his journey, on his way there, a person knew him and asked him, where are you going?

He said, to Filey, and he said, where the Lord is going to revive his work. As he drew near the place, close to Filey, suddenly a view of the town burst into sight, so intense were his feelings that he fell upon his knees under a hedge and wrestled and wept and prayed for success on his mission. See it didn't, five minute prayer was in there.

We have been told, oh I'm sorry, we have been told by a person who was on the other side of that hedge that he heard a voice and Prang Johnny was saying this, oh God don't make me a fool, oh God don't make me a fool, I told them, I told them that you were going to revive your work and if you don't, I will never be able to show my face again. And what will the people say about you then? He continued to plead for several hours, the struggle was long and heavy, but he would not cease, he made his very weakness and his inefficiency a plea, that's a secret right there, make your weakness a plea to God, God I'm weak in this

area, I can't move in this area unless you move, I'm limited by my words, I'm limited by my capacity, God make your weakness a plea, show him your inefficiency, that's okay to do. And at length the clouds dispersed, the glory filled his soul and he rose up shouting, it is done, it is done, Philae is taken, Philae is taken, but it wasn't.

And taken it was though, the book says, and all in it, and you can research, I've read up on this revival, and make no mistake, fresh from the mercy seat he entered the place and he began singing on the streets, turned to the Lord and seek salvation, a crowd of fishermen flocked to listen, unusual power attended his address, hardened sinners wept, strong men trembled, and while he prayed over a dozen of them fell on their knees and cried aloud for mercy and found it. So you have all these pastors going in for decades and decades, we can't touch it, but you get one praying man who takes God as his promise and he holds on to that until he feels the evidence of the spirit saying the burden has been lifted, the fire has fallen, I'm full of God's grace and all of God's glory, and I'm going to walk into a place with the promises of God, and I'm going to call down heaven, the boldness, the audacity to take God at his word. But see, there's a registering of the spirit that has to happen.

Many of you don't know this, but I don't know if Ray's here, he's here somewhere, one of the security, he was actually security at the college when I spoke there and talked about this in front of the students, and it was days leading up to it, there was a lot of nervousness, you know, there's a lot of, so I fasted and I got down and I prayed, I looked over God's word and there came a point, I don't know, maybe two hours, three hours over my message, and there, I can't even explain it, all I can tell you is something came over me to where I got up and said this is going to be a success, nobody's going to thwart this, no protesters, I'm not going to, I'm going to walk in the fullness and the power of the Holy Spirit, and from that moment, I walked into the college, here's your, no, not many butterflies, and I just spoke what God put on my heart. But had I not done that, see, and many times I'll go to preach, I'll get up, I remember when I spoke at that big church in Bakersfield, my wife and daughter came with me, and I got up in the hotel in the morning at four in the morning and just looked over that sermon, took a long walk for about an hour and just prayed over, prayed over, and something happened, it's like it just, oh, this registers, this burden, my prayers have been filled, God's going to answer today, and you go up there with that power and that boldness because you spent time with God, and that time in the prayer closet is where you're able to go out and do what God's called you to do. Prayer is a secret weapon many of us are missing.

You live as well as you pray. Well, let me get to another point here in the scripture. So I'm assuming many of you want to prevail in prayer.

Let's recap a few things. Number one, clean hands, clean hands. You have to go into the prayer closet with clean hands.

Many mornings I'll go before I pray, I'll say, Lord, I should have been, I should have spent more time with my kids, or I shouldn't have said that mean thing, or I should have done this, and I get right with God, and from that there's a flowing, there's a freedom that takes place, there's a cleansing. You know the scripture, who has clean hands, or I'm sorry, who may ascend into the heel of the Lord? Is there an actual heel that you're going to walk up? Or is it who may ascend into the heel of the Lord or stand in his holy place? Who's going to hear from God? In other words, he who has clean hands and a pure heart and has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor has he sworn deceitful. In other words, Lord, I'm going to lift up holy hands, clean hands.

Yes, I might have sinned this week, but I'm coming to you for grace and mercy with a repentant broken heart that's sincere, and God says, oh, I hear the prayers of clean hands and a pure heart, because he's not holding on to that besetting sin. And then number two, I said earlier, you have to have a burden. Has a burden been stirred? Has a burden been stirred? Even to build a mighty fire, you have to light the flame.

Could it be that the prayer life and the lives of many people are dead and down to nothing because they haven't stirred that flame? Stirred the pot, in a good sense, kindled that fire, blow on that fire, and you stir that burden. Leonard Ravenhill rightly noted that the Cinderella of the church today is the prayer meeting. Do you know what that means? The prayer meeting, if she exists at all, is regulated to a dark corner somewhere in the church on an off night, so there is little expectation that anyone will pay her any attention.

She goes about unnoticed, unloved, and uncelebrated, yet she is the one that keeps the house clean. And I think it's time for Cinderella to go to the ball, get dressed for our king, and celebrate what he has done. See, that's why we had to learn this lesson the hard way.

Did you know that prayer drives the engine of this church? People ask often, what is God doing up there? What's going on there? Prayer drives the heart of this church. We have the early morning prayer meetings. We get on our face before God.

We start today with prayer. There's prayer going on. It's the engine that drives the church.

It has to be. If not, you just have a social club. Now, number three, it's not what you want to hear, but it's what you need to hear.

Fasting. Fasting silences the voice of others. It silences, I'm sorry, it silences the voice of the flesh when you fast.

Do you have a lot of competing voices out there? I don't know. Let's see if I can give you an illustration real quick. If we put on, let's say we put on a song you're trying to hear.

I don't know if this is going to work. We're going to try it here, give you an illustration. Or you could imagine, let's say if there's worship going on.

All right, turn up a little more. There we go. A little bit more.

Let's turn it up a little. Let's go to Psalm 7. How about Psalm 8? Okay, here's what the Lord says. He said this.

Okay, I think you get the point. Now, you could hear me, right? Is that going to work? The problem with many of us is we have too many voices, too much going on in the minds. So when we fast, like the Bible says, we can do a whole sermon on fasting if you'd like, I'd love to, but when the fast, you silence the voice of the flesh.

Listen, I'm just going to tell you, my wife can tell you, ask her, is Shane really serious? I started doing something called intermittent fasting. So I usually go about 18 hours without eating every day, including today, or maybe not, but it's not about that. What it's about is I get up in the morning, and guess what I want? A donut and a venti.

And for 10 minutes, I argue with King's stomach. Because I want sugar, I want caffeine, I want, I've got to have that. And when I silence the voice of the flesh, it's been the most powerful mornings I've ever had.

Worship begins to bring tears. The messages come together. Actually, when I go out running, I can run farther and more energy in this, because it's silent, saying, shut up, King's stomach.

I need to hear from God. But it's not some legalistic kind of, the way the monks used to go in the desert and beat themselves up, and you know that, I don't remember the name of it, but they would actually cut themselves. It's like, oh, hurting the body.

Fasting is a biblical command. Jesus says, when you give, when you pray, and oh, by the way, when you fast, it's a wonderful time where it empties your body of the desires of the flesh. Because we listen to that voice, and to feel that empowerment of the Spirit, that dunamis power, there's something, I don't quite understand it.

I just know when I'm feeding the flesh, I do not pray well. When I go to hospital homes, or I go to witness to people, when I debate the Jehovah Witness, I did not eat much at all. And there's something dynamic that takes place.

Unless you don't believe Jesus's words, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. Don't we just not like that last word? But what he's saying there, it's not just, okay, I'm going to not eat right now, I'm going to pray, and everything's good. There's a time where you dethrone King's stomach, and you press into God, and this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.

There's obviously a hierarchy there in the demonic realm, or something is coming, and this is going to take some warfare. It's going to take travail before you prevail. And then number four, this is essential as well.

Perseverance is essential. Perseverance. I lay hold of God, and he answered.

Think about this. How many people are going to spend three hours watching a World Series game, but we get bored with God for 30 minutes? So you have to lay hold of God, and he will answer. And then finally, travail is often followed by peace and assurance.

Travail is often followed by peace and assurance, and the ultimate victory, where he closes with verse 10. Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled. Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly.

So we see this point of desperation. He's crying out to God, and then he says, oh, but now, but God has heard my prayer. He has heard me.

And now all that switches. Now he says, now my enemies are going to run in fear. My enemies are going to tremble before God.

The enemies are going to be ashamed and greatly troubled. Why? Because I heard God, and I held hold of him, and I triumphed in that. There's an old hymn that many churches used to sing.

I'm just going to read the lyrics here briefly. Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on his hands. My name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me hence depart.

In other words, no tongue can come against you. Everything that rises up against the, do you know all those scriptures, why they're written? No weapon formed against me will prosper. See, there's a weapon formed, but it will not prosper.

When the enemy comes in like a gentle dove? No. When the enemy comes in like a soft pillow to the head. When the enemy comes in like a butterfly.

When the enemy comes in like a flood. What is that? The imagery in the Old Testament is that when a heavy rain season would happen, and like maybe a temporary dam or the mountain rain, it would come down and it would just flood the Jordan Valley. There's nothing they could do.

Here comes a flood. There is nothing we can do. Have you ever been in a flood? There is nothing you can do.

This area flooded about, I think it was what, four years ago or so. Terrible. There's nothing you can do.

So God says, when the enemy comes in like a flood, there's nothing you can do. What's going to happen? The spirit of the living God will raise up a standard against him and will hold him back. Why? Because people have been prevailing and prevailing in prayer.

They've been prayed up. They've been built up. And they will raise up that standard by the power of the living God.

God uses vessels for his will. So many scriptures that come to mind about spiritual battle and raising up that standard and holding that line. I love what God told Joshua.

He told Moses. He's told other peoples. He said, other peoples.

Other people, having done all, stand. You're about ready to give up? Stand. You want to throw in the towel? Stand.

You've done everything, Shane. I've done everything. I don't know what else to do.

Having done all, stand. What am I standing on? You're standing on the rock and he's holding you up. He's fighting your battle.

But see, I can't run back because that's retreating. That's a coward. That's what I see in this culture, what's happening in our state, in our nation.

He's calling pastors to stand. Stand. Just hold the line.

Speak the truth. Because if I turn back, I'm a coward and I'm leaving. But if I run ahead of God and there's pride and arrogance leading my way, I will fall on my face.

Pride cometh before failure. Pride cometh before a fall. So God said, that's his thing.

Stand. Stand and do what? You stand and you rest in the promises of God. You might even quote the word of God.

Meditate on the scriptures of God. And stand. Having done all, stand and fight that battle.

I like what Al Whittingill said, if I can remember correctly. The church is dying on her feet because she's not living on her knees. Prayer is the most powerful thing you possess.

That's why it's so difficult. I've actually structured my whole life around my prayer life. Well, you have to do that.

You're a pastor. I started doing this before I was a pastor. I realize if I'm going to succeed in this life, if I'm going to be a husband, a father, whatever God's calling me to do, prayer has to be the foundation.

Everything culminates in the prayer. Whether I succeed or fail depends on prayer. Isn't that so true? We live better, we pray better.

We pray better, we live better. They go together.

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