

# When Darkness Reigns

by Shane Idleman

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*Shane Idleman's sermon 'When Darkness Reigns' explores the challenges of faith during dark times and the importance of seeking God amidst discouragement.*

**Duration:** 43:38

**Scripture:** Psalm 30:5, Isaiah 40:31, Jeremiah 21:3, Romans 8:28, 2 Timothy 1:7

**Topics:** "Dark Nights", "Gods Sovereignty"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the theme of 'When Darkness Reigns' from Matthew 26, highlighting the challenging dark nights of the soul that Christians face, emphasizing the need to persevere through discouragement and trust in God's sovereignty. It explores the importance of obedience bringing light into difficult situations and encourages not to fear the final hour, which is death, but to trust in God's promises for eternal life.

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## Transcript

The title of the message tonight is When Darkness Reigns. When Darkness Reigns from Matthew. We've been in Matthew 26.

It's been a few years in Matthew. I'm hoping to get through the end of Matthew here in the next month or so. Matthew 26, verse 47.

And what I mean by when darkness reigns, as Christians, one of the things that is challenging is there are dark nights of the soul. Aren't there? And if you've been there, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Where life is not what we read about in Scripture.

It's not this joy and peace and contentment all the time. There are challenging, challenging situations. There are people in this room I know who have lost children.

And that's probably one of the darkest nights of the soul that the soul will ever know. And there's darkness that comes when you get that phone call from the doctor or you get the divorce papers in the mail or a child that you love and you raise them in the fear of the Lord. And when they turn a certain age, they're hell bent on destruction.

That pulls at you. That pulls you apart. And you can't really explain it.

You have to experience it. So for those who haven't experienced it, just thank God, but it's coming. Probably, because that is life.

And even Jesus experienced this. Now let me paint the scene before I read Matthew 26, verse 47, beginning in verse 47 from the New King James Version of the Bible. The scene is the Messiah is here.

We've been walking through all of Matthew. The Messiah is here. It's our hope.

It's our salvation. It's our conquering king has arrived. That's what the disciples are thinking.

He's the man. We just saw the healing. We saw all the food, the loaves, all these things.

The Messiah is here. For the last few years, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised. Families are restored.

People are saved. Tremendous healing takes place. There's all this excitement.

Jesus, they put him on a donkey in fulfillment of the prophecy, saying that he will ride into the town of Jerusalem on a donkey. And he wept for the city of Jerusalem, seeing that her destruction is near. But Jerusalem didn't see that.

Jerusalem saw all the festivities and our conquering king. And they were celebrating. The disciples were, we're gonna sit on the right hand and another on the left.

We're gonna rule and reign with the Messiah until the dark night of the soul, when darkness reigns. So all of their hope is vanishing right here. They're in the garden of Gethsemane.

We talked about Jesus praying, asking Lord if there's any other way. God, if there be any other way, take this from me. Take this cup from me.

And the cup and the wrath of God is poured out. And it's imagery there, Old Testament imagery of the cup and the wrath of God. And Jesus is praying, God, take this from me.

Father, please. And I can almost, the Bible doesn't record this, but it's as if the Father's saying, there's no other way, son. There's no other way.

This is why you were born, born to die. And he's praying there. So verse 47, and while he was still speaking, that being Jesus, behold, Judas, one of the twelve with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Now, I was going to keep reading, but I stopped yesterday. And I wanted to just talk about this for a minute because it's interesting. Judas, one of the twelve, betrayed Him.

And I was reminded that going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than Judas being a disciple made him one. See, there's an interesting thing that we can't quite understand, but we know it's true. It's called the new birth.

Being born again, people would refer to it. And there is a literal transformation of the heart. You go from darkness to light.

You go from hell to heaven. You go from wrong to right. There's a change there.

There's a transformation. And you can ask my friend, if you go there tomorrow morning, if he shows up, ask him about Laughlin and Vegas and Palm Springs Spring Break and San Diego and all the nightclubs and all the things. Who is Shane now? The people that know me now cannot believe who I was.

And the people that knew me back then can't believe what I'm doing now. What happened? God changed and transformed the heart and the life. And that's one of my concerns for the church, especially in America, is we can come and think that, well, we're on God's side.

Well, who's on God's side? Whoever's repented of their sin and embraced Christ's wonderful sacrifice on the cross. Everything we sing about. So it's just a good reminder that Judas walked with Jesus.

He talked with Jesus. There's glimpses of his heart in the Gospels that he wanted the money for himself and not to give to the poor. So we see among the 12, this devil.

This person that was not right with God. So I would just encourage you. I know it probably doesn't apply to this service.

Maybe Leona Valley. That if you have a form of religion or a religion and not a relationship, really look at your heart. And people say, well, I'm not sure.

I'm not sure. Well, either you know you've been transformed by the power of the Gospel and you've repented of your sin and Christ is your Savior, or you don't know. And if you don't know, that's a good indication that maybe that hasn't taken place.

And I just want to encourage you because I love you enough to tell you the truth, that Jesus Himself said He is the only way, the only truth, the only life. Nobody can come to the Father except through Him. Well, Shane, I don't like it.

Well, it's not my idea. It's God's idea. Verse 48, Now His betrayer, being Judas, had given them a sign, saying, Whomever I kiss, he is the one.

Seize him. Now, I don't know really the significance here on this, but there's a couple things. You have to remember, they didn't have street lights.

And it's dark. It's in the garden. Who's Jesus? Judas said, I'll show you who He is.

I'll go and I'll give him Judas' kiss. The kiss of death. The kiss.

That's who the one. You'll know. And it was common in those days.

I'm glad we don't do it today, but it was common in those days that you would give them a kiss on the cheek. And as a sign of, maybe like a handshake, what we do. Now, interesting, I forget what commentator was.

David, I think you gave me the commentary on Matthew. This commentator said that actually that is a sign of disrespect because the teacher should go to the disciple, not the disciple to the teacher for that greeting. It was almost a mockery.

Jesus should have come to the disciple. The teacher to the disciple. So it's interesting.

It was probably at night, which we know it was at night. He gave him a kiss to signify who He was. But Jesus said to him, Friend, why have you come? Then they came, and they laid hands on Jesus and took Him.

And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Another gospel tells us it was Malchus. It was a servant of the high priest.

Peter actually cut off the ear of Malchus, probably aiming for his head. Not a good shot there. Missed the head and got the ear.

But Jesus said, Put your sword in its place. For all who take the sword shall perish by the sword. And I don't know if I should, well, if it's not a good idea, I won't talk about it tomorrow.

But those advocates for taking away all forms of self-defense, guns and different things, you're seeing that big on the news now, they'll use scriptures like this. And I think that's out of context. The sword has its place.

It was for self-defense. And that's why Jesus would say, I'm leaving. Now go get some swords.

So I'm a big proponent on, if you want to not defend yourself, that's fine. There's biblical grounds for that. But when it comes to defending women and children and they weaken the fatherless, I think there's a mandate and there's nothing wrong with protecting.

That's why Jesus, when he says, Why have you come against me as a robber with swords and clubs? See, that's how you would handle a robber, with swords and clubs. That makes sense. So this scripture cannot be taken out of context and say, see, there's no need for guns today and self-defense.

I don't find that here. But Jesus said to him, Put your sword in its place for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to my father and he will provide me with more than 12 legions of angels? Now this is interesting.

Jesus saying, If I wasn't supposed to go right now and this wasn't of God, I would call down 12 legions of angels. What? To fight, to battle, to defend him. So we see that self-defense.

I'm not trying to get off on that rabbit trail, but you have to read scripture in context. Now this is interesting. Do you know how many are in a legion? I believe it was 12,000 are in a legion.

And he's going to call down 12 legions, maybe one for each disciple, I don't know. Or 11, and Jesus being the 12th because Judas is not going to count right now. But that's 144,000 angels.

And let me remind you that one angel slew an entire Assyrian army of 185,000. Just like that. So Jesus is saying, and it's interesting, Jesus is in control of the conversation with Judas.

He's in control of the conversation with the men. He's in control of the conversation with his disciples. He's in control.

This isn't how somebody would act who's fearing for their life, and oh no, they've come to get me. He's commanding Judas, why have you betrayed me? He's commanding, why have you come out against me as clubs? I've taught publicly everywhere. And that's an interesting thing you have to remember about

Christianity.

It's not like all other religions. Mormonism, even what we're reading in Islam, and all these things, they have a private revelation or a private dream or a private angel visits them and they form a religion. Where Christianity is Jesus coming in the public, teaching in the public, preaching in the public, being crucified in the public, resurrecting and showing Himself to over 500 witnesses in the public.

The truth is public. The truth invites scrutiny. Anytime you want to sit down with anybody, you say, let's look at the truth.

They'll say, no, I don't want to. Let me have you read this book instead. Or this magazine.

No, let's go to the truth. See, the truth will defend itself. And that's interesting.

Jesus is saying, I've been public about everything. Why do you come at night? The reason they came at night, we've read before in the Gospels, that had they tried to take Him in the day when the people were around, they would have been killed themselves. The people are not going to let Jesus be killed.

So out of jealousy, and out of rage, and out of anger, they went at night. Secretly, they took Him. The trial, I mean, if we had time to talk about the trial, it wasn't even according to Roman law, a death penalty.

The Jews could not even put somebody to death. When Rome would come in and conquer a nation or conquer an area, Rome had the only authority for the death penalty. The reason is, they allowed, usually would allow the Jerusalem or whatever area they conquered, they would allow those people to govern themselves, but would take away the death penalty.

They had ultimate control and ultimate authority there. So I just thought that was interesting that Jesus is commanding this whole situation. Or do you not think that I can pray to my Father, and He will provide me with more than 12 legions of angels? How then could, you know, it's interesting on this point too.

He could have prayed and 12,000 times 12, 144,000 angels could have come and guarded Jesus. So when we talked about it I think last week, it's that the Nels didn't keep Him on the cross. The Roman soldiers didn't keep Him on the cross.

These people, actually they thought they were taking Him, bringing Him to His execution. He was willingly going to obey the will of the Father. Nothing could keep Him from that cross.

Nothing. That's why He was born. Born to die.

In that hour of verse 54, how then could the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen thus? In other words, it must happen this way to fulfill the Scriptures. In that hour, Jesus said to the multitude, Have you come out against a robber with swords and clubs to take Me? And I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

And that's interesting. You can mock the Bible, but did you know that 300 prophecies were fulfilled in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Other prophecies, did you know that science confirms the Word of God? Did you know that archeological discoveries confirm the Word of God? Did you know historical accurate records confirm the Word of God? You can go and find the cities and the kingdoms and the kings. The Word of God confirms itself if you're open and looking.

It will confirm itself. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. Now it's interesting.

Luke 22.53 records this. It's in the NIV version. Every day I was with you in the temple courts and you did not lay a hand on Me, but this is your hour when darkness reigns.

And that's where the title comes from. And what he's saying here, it's not an actual 60 minute hour. He's saying, this is what the prophets spoke of.

This is why I'm here. This is your hour while darkness reigns. Supposedly reigning, right? They think they've got Him now.

And it's their hour when darkness reigns. Throughout life, as I said earlier, there will be seasons when darkness reigns. The call from the doctor, the blood test results, the divorce papers, the loss of a job, financial failure.

We call it the dark night of the soul. And how Jesus went through this I think is a good model for us. And I wanted to share a few things from it.

Number one, discouragement can knock us off track or strengthen our faith. Discouragement. That's what a dark night of the soul will do.

Not too many people going through a dark night of the soul will wake up with joy in the morning and get through, I'm just so happy this week. I just love God. I gotta get to church.

It's sometimes the opposite. Often the opposite. Discouragement comes in.

And that's what the enemy will use. So discouragement can be used of the enemy to knock us off track or it can actually be used to strengthen your faith. Those usually, those people I meet with the strongest faith, they're like, how did they get so strong? Well, they're not a wimpy Christian.

They went through hell and back. They've seen God provide. They've seen God sustain them.

They've seen God heal them. They've seen God hold them in those dark hours of the night. Now their faith will not waver.

It will not falter because it is founded on the rock because of what they went through. Usually immature Christians, they don't go through a lot. Or when they go through a lot, they run for cover and not Christ.

So it's one interesting thing that discouragement comes upon all of us. Even you, Shane. Oh my goodness.

Yeah. Remember I've told you before, so I'm not ashamed to admit, but when this church first started, we talked about quitting a few times. And just, oh, this is not working out.

Why? Because it's difficult. It's challenging. It's frustrating.

It's disappointing. All those things come in. Do I still think that way sometimes? Maybe.

But I've got to get the mind back on track. And it's not people. It's not like, oh, Shane, you don't like us.

No, we love you. That's why we're here. But still discouragement comes in.

And the enemy will use opportune times and he'll wear us down. Look at Jeremiah, a powerful preacher. Jeremiah 20, 14.

Cursed be the day in which I was born. It sounds a little discouraged. Let the day not be blessed in which my mother bore me.

Let the man be cursed who brought news to my father, saying a male child has been born to you, making him very glad. And let that man be like the cities which the Lord overthrew and did not relent. Let him hear the cry in the morning and the shouting at noon because he did not kill me from the womb that my mother might have been my grave.

That's pretty disappointing. And in the context, Jeremiah is done preaching. He's done talking to people.

He says, I'm not going to talk about God. Have you ever felt that way? Or just me? Like, I'm done. I'm not talking about God anymore.

It gets me in trouble. Nobody wants to listen. Oh, fundamentalist, legalistic.

You're no fun to be around. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. And you just get discouraged.

No, I've never felt quite like that. Let my mother be my grave? I mean, he's so discouraged. But see what Jeremiah sees, what a lot of people do see today, but what a lot of people don't see today.

Jeremiah saw this wonderful nation of God turning their back on God. By then, the northern and southern kingdoms were divided. They had succumbed to pagan worship and idolatry.

And God's wonderful gift that he delivered, brought out of Egypt into the promised land, they had turned and actually were committing spiritual adultery. And Jeremiah wept. He saw this, and the people wouldn't listen.

They wouldn't turn back to God. And I feel that sometimes. You feel that you're, turn back to God.

Please turn back to God. And he said, I'm not going to preach ever again in your name. I'm sick of doing this.

Nobody listens. They just want to kill me. And then you know the famous verse, but his word is in my heart like a burning fire.

It's shut up in my bones. I'm weary of holding it back, and I cannot. And I can relate to that.

Every time I say, I'm done, or I don't want to do this anymore, you can't, because that word of God, if you focus your frustration in the right direction, that word of God just starts bubbling over. You're discouraged one day. You wake up the next day and say, I'm ready to preach again.

I'm ready to do this again. And that word will be burning in your heart. And I'm often reminded that God isn't impressed with my results.

He wants my faithfulness. Doesn't he? He wants my faithfulness. It was interesting.

I spoke in Sun Valley this morning, about two miles from John MacArthur's church, at just a smaller gathering of people coming in from out of the area. And they wanted me to talk about the power of the

Holy Spirit, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the plan of the Holy Spirit. And just starting to give my own testimony about how the Holy Spirit radically changed my life and changed everything.

But the question that came up is, why don't we see what we read in the New Testament today? Why don't we see that in our churches? Why aren't people being healed and set free and the church is packed, and nobody's in a hurry? We'll leave at one in the morning. Why is that? That's a hard... We like to excuse it. Oh, that was back then.

We don't need to do that anymore. I'm not going to tell you what all the answers were. There was a lot.

But there is a consensus out there that the more you seek God, the more you find Him. And what we're seeing, without the passion and presence of God, is really a resembling of what's going on in our own hearts. God will visit hungry people.

His word says, if you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me. And there's a cost to that, and we don't want to pay the cost often. So discouragement.

Be very careful. What does discourage mean? It means to lose confidence and enthusiasm. Have you ever been discouraged? If not, please talk to me afterwards.

I want to know that trick. But discouragement is to lose motivation. Well, what's the opposite of that? Encouragement.

And you've got to learn how to encourage yourself. That will be the best thing you have ever taught yourself. You need to learn how to encourage yourself.

The church will let you down. People will let you down. But God will never let you down.

The best way I encourage myself is I open my Bible to Psalm 1 and go through the Psalms. All the things I've highlighted. And if you're not encouraged by the end of that, then something is wrong.

Because that will encourage you. Because you're being encouraged. What you're doing is you're putting things back in that have been removed.

Strength and fortitude and perseverance and commitment. All these things that we don't talk about anymore. We want an easy Christianity.

Discipline, perseverance, dying to self, crucified to this world, committed, unwavering, unfaltering, holding strong. Oh, these are difficult things. But that's what Christianity is.

And you have to go back to that and read that blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor stand in the path of sinners nor does he sit in the seat of the scornful but his delight is in the law of the Lord and he meditates day and night. He'll be like a tree planted by the rivers of living water who bears its fruit in season. The Psalms just start to build you up and encourage you in your walk.

That's how you encourage is you get rid of the discouragement. And another just tip. This one's free.

Remove the discouraging influences. Now if that person is your spouse, you're in trouble. You've got to pray for that.

You don't do that. But there are people in your life that shouldn't be in your life. They will discourage you and they'll continue on the phone, eat, whatever.

You know who they are. And you've got to get back into just focusing on those who encourage you. And be careful.

Jesus, I'm sure, was discouraged because he was tempted at all points like we are but he was without sin. That's interesting. Jesus was tempted in all points like we are but he was without sin.

Hebrews talks about. He wasn't tempted with adultery. He was never married.

Child abuse. He didn't have kids. But tempted in all points means the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.

He was tempted in all three of those areas. The lust of the flesh, what the flesh creates, hunger after his fasting. Eyes.

What the eye sees. Father, take this cup away. I want to sit on the right hand of the power right now.

Take this cup away from me. And he fought discouragement all the way to the cross. And it was so interesting.

I read this week that when he was walking to the cross and the ladies in the city was weeping for him and he said, don't weep for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children. Because he saw the destruction that was going to take place in 70 AD by Titus who would come in and conquer that city and bring it to ruins.

He saw that. But he encouraged himself to the cross. Not my will, but your will be done, Father.

And that's one great way to re-encourage, reinvigorate yourself. Lord, not my will, but your will be done. Listen, I hope most of you believe in the sovereignty of God.

It means that God's not in heaven going, I didn't know that was coming. What's plan B? You know, the sovereignty of God is he's in control. He knows.

He knows. And we just trust. Lord, I trust in you.

I'll let you encourage me. The second point, we must persevere to fulfill God's will. We must persevere to fulfill God's will.

You can look at some of the great, Albert Einstein and Helen Keller and Bach, I think, who wrote some symphonies. Tongue-tied again. But you can look at all throughout history, great men and women have come before us.

They all had to persevere. You have to learn to pick yourself up and persevere. That's the Christian walk.

It's falling down and getting up, falling down and getting up. And that's why I remind you sometimes in my testimony, barely graduating high school, and having that learning and stuttering and speech challenges and having a speech therapy teacher and all these things. I had to keep persevering because people would make fun of me.

You know, when you say, silly, silly, sunk, seven, six, you know, those kind of things. And couldn't speak and just reading. I couldn't read in public.

And it's still very challenging because this sentence wants to skip down to this sentence. And it's just numbers. It's just very challenging.

But you have to persevere. And it's in that weakness that God's strength is manifold. His manifold strength comes out because in that weakness, you rest.

And Lord, you have to do this. You're sovereign. It's your strength, not mine.

But it's important that you must persevere. And persevering is, come hell or high water, I'm fulfilling God's will. I'm getting to the end.

I'm going to seek God in this journey. No matter what happens, I'm going to persevere. And the enemy will try to knock you off track.

Any chance he gets. And that's what we talked about this morning as well with the Holy Spirit. One of the things Once God has you, I believe that God has you.

The Holy Spirit seals you. The Holy Spirit's given to you as a guarantee you're God's child. But he will do whatever he can to make you ineffective.

He will do whatever he can so you don't witness. You're not the shining light. You're the miserable Christian at home.

Oh, woe is me. And that's how he goes after Christians in these areas. He will discourage.

See, it's not worth it. It's not worth it. You've got to persevere.

One of the times when I felt like quitting was when we started the church September 25th, 2010. This whole place was packed. 200 people.

220 people. Well, I don't remember exactly what it was. But within six months we were at like 55.

Uh-oh, this is not the right direction. What is going on here? And in case you haven't realized, not everybody likes these kind of messages. I don't know if you knew that or not.

You know, little I've been called hardcore or too extreme or too hard or too passionate and all these things. And it will wear on you. But I went home and I said, God, I don't care if there's 50 or 500.

I'm going to preach your truth. I'm going to persevere. It's what you've called me to do.

You planted this church no matter how Leona Valley's had its challenges. You're blending churches. How's this challenge? Did you ever blend a marriage? Well, times that by five because there's all kinds of other issues.

So it's been a challenge. But we have to say, I don't care what happens. I have to persevere.

God, you've called us to do this. I have to do this. And quitting is not an option.

And do you know how many couples get divorced when divorce is not an option? Did you catch what I said? Because many times people go in as if being the option. And when divorce is an option, guess what? That option will probably be taken because it gets difficult. It gets challenging.

So you have to persevere. Here's what happens when you don't. And what happens many times is when delay, when God delays things, that's when sin slips back in, doesn't it? We fall back into our own old patterns.

The addict isn't getting what he thought quick enough. He goes back into his old pattern. Or she goes back.

The person who was caught in this and their fire for God and now this isn't happening. There's a delay and now they go back to their old pattern. They go back to that old sinful nature.

And here's a great example. Exodus 32. Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron and said to him, come, make us gods that will go before us.

These people sometimes crack me up. They see God part the Red Sea. They see God with all the things going on in Egypt and delivers them from Egypt.

The power of God, he's feeding them in the wilderness. And oh, Moses is gone. Now let's make gods.

Let's do something and make gods. They shall go before us. For this Moses who's brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.

And Aaron said to them, then break off the golden earrings which are in your ears and your wives and your sons and your daughters and bring them to me. So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and he fashioned it with an engraving tool and made a mold and calf.

Then they said, this is your God, oh Israel, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt. So Moses delayed probably I think 40 days, probably went on a 40 day fast, came down from the mountain. Now there's this calf.

It's funny when Aaron's confronting, he says I just threw this gold into the fire and here comes this calf. It wasn't my fault, it was the people. But that's what delay happens.

Delay will, if things aren't, God, do you ever say, God, you're not moving quick enough. God, you're not moving quick enough. Well, Joseph waited 13 years, Abraham 25, Jesus 30, and Moses 40.

So delay is not always deny. Something being delayed doesn't mean denial. Often in the delay process what I've noticed is God is building and shaping your character.

You don't see a little apple tree bear abundant fruit when it's one year old. It would collapse. In the same way God is molding and strengthening.

However, I don't want everybody to leave here thinking, oh, he's just molding and strengthening me. Your delay could be because of grumbling and complaining and besetting sin. I love you enough to tell you the truth.

Many times, sometimes our delay is God is waiting. He said, until you get that issue right, you're going to be in a state of delay. Would you have any proof for that, Shane, with the Scriptures? Yeah, it's called 40 years of wandering in the wilderness because the people grumbled and complained.

I thought about this today as I was driving. I think I heard a sermon online. I was listening.

Can you imagine Caleb and Joshua? They go into the land. They say, we are well able to conquer this land. But 10 other spies said, no, no, no, no, no.

We can't go in there. Delay, right? Can you imagine Joshua and Caleb having to go around and stay in the wilderness for 40 years because of the delay and the discouragement of these others? And I just thought, that's a good word even for us today as far as fathers or mothers. We can affect our family.

We can affect those around us by our actions. It's a ripple effect. Delay builds and strengthens faith.

Delay reveals our true motives. Doesn't it? When delay, when something's not happening quick enough, the true motives come out. Because somebody who's truly just waiting on God, yes, it will be challenging, but they're waiting on God.

Delay. Delay tries to replace God. This is your God, oh Israel, that you have brought out.

Many times delay. Okay, God's not working. Let me take things into my own hand.

How often have people done that? God, you're not getting me a house. Let me go buy one that I don't qualify for. Lord, you're not getting me a car.

And they have 0% financing if you finance for 84 months. And you're going to owe twice of what the vehicle's worth. And you get bound in this payment that you never should have had.

And this person isn't, Lord, you said my marriage would be restored. And that was a week ago. And what I'm going to do, I'm going to write them a letter telling them they've got until next week and they better let me know.

No, no, no. That doesn't work. So many times delay, we start to take things into our own hands.

I can't get a job. I've seen a lot of people take jobs that, you know, God, I want this. God, you call me this, doing this.

They're waiting on God, but then it's a little bit too long. So let me just go and take this and do this. And the delay causes them to do something they normally wouldn't do.

Now, delay should point you to God. And the famous scripture I love to quote is those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. That imagery is not just sitting at home with the remote control.

Waiting on God is serving God. What does a waiter do? A waitress, they serve God. They're waiting on God.

And as you wait in your delay, Lord, I'm not, how many people, oh, here's one. How many people run into marriage because they're tired of being single? I've been single 52 days and my biological clock is ticking. Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.

I'm going to go and make this happen. Bad, bad, bad, bad. Wait on God.

Wait, because you can't force God's hand. You can, and you can make your own decisions and force it, but it's best to wait on God. Well, Shane, how do I know? Is there peace? Do you feel rushed? Because the voice of the enemy rushes you.

God's voice will steal you and calm you and give you peace. The enemy wants to push, rush, rush, push, rush, rush. God wants you to sit and wait.

And then you know, when you do something, you've made the right decision. The third point. Obedience often brings light into the situation.

Because we're talking again about when darkness reigns and being discouraged and how to get through this. Sometimes obedience, obeying God's word, can bring the needed light, can bring the needed clarity that we need. Jeremiah 21, Then Jeremiah said to the people, and God's speaking through him, You shall say this to King Zedekiah, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn my back the weapons of war that are in your hands, which you fight against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who besiege you outside the walls, and I will assemble them in the midst of the city.

I myself will fight against you, Israel. What? Did I just read that right? God says, I'm going to fight against you, Israel, and you have time to read all of Jeremiah 21. I will have a strong arm against you, even in anger and fury and great wrath.

He shall not spare them, nor have pity or mercy. And people say, I don't understand. What's a loving God? See, a loving God, God is love, right? But he's also just.

He's also holy. Actually, if you want to get technical, the attribute most defined in Scripture is holiness. The angels cry, Holy, holy, holy is our God.

I, the Lord God, Israel, am one. I am holy. You shall be holy and set apart.

So God is holy. He is just. He's a God of love.

All these things, the attributes of God. So when a loving father warns the nation of Israel for years and decades and decades and decades, saying you can't be involved in idolatry, you can't burn your children on the hot arms of Molech and child sacrifice. You can't go and prostitute yourself.

You can't keep doing these things. Nation, turn back to me. Turn back to me, because the judgment hand of God is going to fall if you don't turn back.

He said, I sent messengers to warn my people early in the morning, rising them up and sending them to warn my people, but they mocked my messengers. They despised my word, and they scoffed at the prophets until the anger of the Lord arose against His own people. So it's not God saying, Oh, I'm against you.

He's saying, But as the time goes by and you keep rejecting me and rejecting me and rejecting me, the hammered judgment of God will fall upon that nation. And that's a concern many have for America. My Lord, you're aborting over 53 million babies.

You're ordaining gay clergy. You're sanctifying all these things that God says is an abomination, and you're going to use as your symbol, as a rainbow, the same symbol that God used as judgment, saying, I will not judge you again.

Are you serious? Because you need to be crystal clear that there will come a time, no matter what your sin is, if you're bound in it, that the judgment hand of God falls, and it's not an angry father. It's a loving father saying, I warned and I warned and I warned. But because I cannot lie and I cannot go back, the truth has to go forth, and this is what I've decreed.

So he's saying, I'm against you. I'm against you, and I will be against you. I'm setting myself against you.

Now say to this people, thus says the Lord, behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. Choose carefully. So see, even through all that, all that, he still says, I set before you the way.

Choose. Choose. So this impression that people have, like, oh, just some angry God.

I don't see that. I see God is angry at things. He's angry at sin, but I also see, I mean, what God is going to warn people, as far as conviction, the conviction of your own heart, let alone the word of God, let alone preaching, let alone looking at the universe and saying, oh, that just all came together.

How in the world did all that just come together? It's impossible. The odds are, there's not even odds for that. I mean, you start looking at the human body, the eye forming itself, and the lungs breathing at the right time, and they're starting to find signs when the heart starts beating, and that pulse, and it's moving the blood to the electrical, the skeletal system, the muscular system, the foot, all these things coming together is not even, a miracle is not even a strong enough word.

It's absolutely unbelievable. You see the little baby, and it screams creation. All that could not just come from pre-mortal ooze, by DNA proteins and different things.

That's like saying all these chairs were put like this by a billion years. It just happened. The rubber and the plastic, and again, I'm not mocking, I'm just being truthful with you that if you look, the reason people don't want there to be a God is because they want to be God.

And God says, listen, step down from the throne. Put me on the throne. And let me change you.

Let me redeem you. Let me save you. That's another thing I love about God is he comes and he saves us.

People say, I'm not going to church until I get my life right. No, it doesn't work that way. You come to church as a sinner needing a savior, and God does the changing.

God does the restoring. So we see that obedience often brings light into the situation. So if you're going through darkness right now, if there's a darkness in your soul, and you don't know God, you're unclear about anything, and you don't know what to do, and life is difficult, obedience often brings light into the situation.

What I would do, and what I encourage people to do is just say, Lord, if you're real, God, if you're out there, if you're real, I want to know you. But that guy, he's baldhead and too loud. I don't want to listen to him.

I want you to show me. I want you to show me if you're real. And who in their right mind, who in their right mind wouldn't say, God, show me if you're real.

Show me. And say, well, that's silly, because there's no God. Really? Well, how did all this happen? I've talked about it before, the earth and the sun rotation, and the moon, and the gravitational pull, the nitrogen, oxygen levels, just enough to support life.

If they were off like 1%, by my life, if the sun was just a little further, it would just be an ice ball floating in space. A little closer, we'd all be gone. It'd be just a flame of fire.

Everything is just perfectly designed. Everything. You look at the body supporting life, and fish in the water, oxygen in their gills, and it's like, it's impossible.

It's impossible to know, it's impossible to say that there is no God, when his invisible attributes are clearly seen. I want to just encourage you on this point, obey and hold on to the promises if you're going through difficulties. Romans 8.28, we know that all things work together for good for those who are called according to God's purposes.

So all things will work out for good if you're called according to God's purpose. And then the fourth point is don't fear the final hour when darkness reigns, and that is death. It's an interesting thing, even I was thinking about my kids this week, that all of us will die.

Even our kids. These little kids running around. All of us will die.

And when that hour comes, I've sat with people a few hours or a few days before they died, and you can tell those who know the Lord and those who don't. And as a believer, fear is a normal human emotion, but it's not a God emotion. He hasn't given us a spirit of fear.

If we think it through, as soon as I leave here, I'm present with Christ. You've gotta stay focused on that. And I'll give the enemy an hour of darkness for eternity with God.

I'll give him an hour of going through darkness because even though weeping may endure in the night, joy cometh in the morning. And he's gonna have his hour. He's gonna have his hour in your life.

But don't give up. Don't give in. You persevere.

You persevere everything we just talked about. And God will see you through. I think what I'm gonna do, I have a whole other section.

I'll leave this for next week. I'm just gonna have that worship team come back up and close out. We'll just do worship and prayer.

And it's a heavy topic. It's a heavy topic, but there's nothing more important than this. Nothing more important than this.

Not... I don't remember his name. Who led the Cleveland Cavaliers to victory? LeBron James. Okay, those guys.

I mean, we're all caught up in all these things, sports and this and that. The most important thing is where our soul's at. Where are we at in relationship to God? Are we discouraged? Are we going through the dark

night of the soul? Use this time of worship to refocus.

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