

# Hope for the Backslider

by Shane Idleman

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*Shane Idleman emphasizes the critical role of repentance in restoring one's relationship with God and overcoming backsliding.*

**Duration:** 25:49

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 28:13, Isaiah 55:7, Luke 1:76, Acts 3:19, Romans 10:9, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Hebrews 12:6, James 4:8, Revelation 3:19

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Restoration"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and turning back to God to restore relationships, receive answers to prayers, and experience joy, peace, and contentment. It highlights that repentance is essential for receiving further guidance from God and restoring broken areas in life. The speaker stresses that repentance leads to a renewed relationship with God, bridging the gap caused by sin and judgment, and ultimately, turning the heart back towards the Father.

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## Transcript

This is how you turn a heart back in marriage counseling, in counseling young adults, or older adults, or problems, or family issues. This is the word that changes everything. This is the word.

Repent and turn back to God and what is right. I like what John Rice said. He was a Baptist evangelist born in 1895.

He said, there is no way you can please God, no way you can have sweet communion with Him and get your prayers answered if you are in rebellion against the known will of God. Did you catch that? He is absolutely right. There is, it's impossible, impossible for us to please God and have communion with Him and to get our prayers answered if we are in open rebellion to the will of God.

And I see so many people, including myself, we pray and we pray and prayers aren't being answered. Life isn't, what's going on Lord? Because there's areas, there's an area of rebellion, not perfection, but there's an area, a huge area of rebellion in some of us that we don't want to turn from and repent and restore that area so the floodgates are open, I can restore my relationship with the Lord. There's nothing more special, there's nothing more joyful than having that bridge fixed and that gap covered and having that renewal with God.

For those of you experienced, you know exactly what I'm talking about. When the joy returns, when the peace returns, when the contentment returns, and they say on fire for God, God is everything again, He's an all-consuming passion. His presence is in us, we can feel that.

There's nothing better than that. And often there's something, there's rebellion that prevents that. And that's what repentance does, it turns the heart back towards God.

And I just read this morning in my study Bible that I think will help. People sometimes wonder why their prayers are not answered. But if they don't fulfill the responsibilities that God has already given them, then they should not be surprised when He does not give further guidance.

Let me say that again. People sometimes wonder why their prayers are not answered. They often wonder that.

But if they don't fulfill the responsibilities that God has already given them, then they should not be surprised when He does not give further guidance. And it's very true, we pray for things, don't we? We pray, Lord, I know about that, I know I've got to take care of that issue, I know I've got to fix that, but what about all this? And He says, no, first, get back, repent, get the heart right, get the heart back in tune with me. Fix that responsibility and get back on track, then, then I will answer those prayers.

If you want a scripture for that, there's a few. I like what Isaiah said, is not the ear of the Lord heavy that He cannot hear? Or His arm long that He cannot save? But your sins and your iniquities have hid His face from you so that He will not hear. See, actually, I look at this topic much differently.

I look at this topic as a surgeon doing surgery that will help. That's why I don't run from this, this will help people. We had a half-dozen people after the first service saying this type of topic literally changed their life because it reconnects with God.

What's more important than being reconnected with God and getting back on track? Nothing. That's why I love this topic. Yes, it hurts some people.

Why does it hurt? Because it convicts. And those who are not open for conviction don't like to be hurt by the Word of God. They want to avoid those things.

So here's an excerpt from that article I told you about. Richard Owen Roberts said, You can be certain at the forefront of every significant recovery from backsliding, the doctrine of repentance has been among the precious truths that God has quickened and used. What he's saying there is, at the forefront of every significant recovery from backsliding, throughout history, the church has backslid.

You know what that is? Most of us in this room have done it. You're going, and pretty soon, you're going this way. And you're backsliding.

And you're bringing habits in that shouldn't be back in your life. You're going back to the old nature. And the church goes back to the old nature.

The children of God, God just delivered them in the Old Testament. They go back to their old nature. A new king comes up, whether it's some of the good kings, Josiah and different kings that would bring the children of Israel back to God.

Then they would slip back, backsliding. And at the forefront, at the forefront of every recovery, when the backslider comes home has been the precious truth of repentance. Anytime a prodigal son comes home or a wayward daughter comes home, or something, you come back to God.

Repentance is at the forefront. You can't avoid it. You can't avoid repentance any more than you can avoid going through your front door to get home.

It's there. It's at the forefront. Repentance is one of the first commands in the gospel, and it may be the most important word that a person ever hears.

Have you ever thought about that? If you read the gospels, one of the very first things in the gospels, Luke 1 and John, and you go through different things, Jesus said, go and preach repentance. Go and preach repentance. John the Baptist comes on the scene saying what? Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Peter preaches his first sermon and doesn't say something nice. He says, you put Christ on the cross. They said, what must we do to be saved? Repent.

Another two chapters later, repent and be baptized. Paul says, repent. God in times and past has overlooked your ignorance, but now he's calling all men everywhere to repent.

You look at Genesis, Cain and Abel. God called him to repent after he killed his brother. Then you get into the other books.

It's everywhere. It's everywhere. The danger is twofold.

We talk about it so much, it's in one ear and out the next. There goes Shane again. Man.

Or it's never talked about. It's actually avoided like the plague. And the reason we want to avoid it is because it hurts.

And you can know, it's said, I don't know if it's focused on the family, talking about marriages or different things, but they said you can tell how much somebody loves you by how much truth they're willing to tell you about yourself. Is that true? You can tell how much somebody loves you by how much truth they're willing to tell you about yourself to help you. That's helping.

That's not hurting. So we look at this precious truth. This precious truth.

This actually put Christ on the cross. Sin. The only way to bridge that gap, repentance and acknowledge what he did.

And it bridges that gap. And many mistakenly believe that Jesus did not mention sin. After all, he was a friend of sinners.

However, scripture reveals quite the opposite. For example, John 5.14, Jesus exhorted a man to sin no more or a worse thing would happen to him. He also told the woman caught in the act of adultery to go and sin no more.

So see, the very thing we need is an answer to our problems. It's a sin problem. And the way to get back on track is repenting.

Really, if you look up the word, it's twofold. It's a change of mind that leads a change of action. I was walking that way, now I'm walking this way.

There's a change. I change the way. And here's where we have to be careful.

Sorrow is not repentance. Sorrow is not repentance. I've seen a lot of guys cry big little alligator tears.

Oh, if you just come back, if you just change, I'll just be better, I'll be nicer. And nothing changes. They were sorry.

They weren't repentant. They were sorry that she's going to get half the income at the divorce court. Big tears.

Oh, wailing tears. Or the wife, same thing, go either way. That's not repentance.

That's sorry because your reputation got hurt. That's sorry because you're going to lose half your income. And worldly sorrow does not lead to repentance.

Repentance, if you're curious, repentance, you want to restore what you broke. You want to fix what you damaged. You're not pushy.

You better be home by tomorrow. That's not repentance. Repentance is whatever it takes.

I've damaged, my heart is changing. As a result of my heart changing, I want to help in these areas. What can I do? You're not arguing, you're not defensive, you're not excusing.

You're repentant. So that's a good way to gauge repentance. And sometimes you have to sit back and watch for a little while.

Because everybody says they're repenting. But you watch the actions. Do the actions back it up? And that's exactly what repentance is.

It's turning and getting back on track. And this involves a lot of God's mercy. We talk about God's mercy a lot.

And this ties in. And I don't know if you're aware of this or not. But when people say, what about love? They go, wait a minute, wait a minute.

What about God's love? What about John 3.16? But you have to realize that love doesn't nullify repentance. In other words, love doesn't cross it out. Love doesn't cover it up.

Love encourages it. Because when God sent his only son, that whosoever believes in him, shall have eternal life. That's a love of God.

But how do you embrace that love? Through repentance. They're married. God's love and grace and mercy and repentance.

How do I embrace, how do I grab God's mercy? If there's anybody here tonight who has not ever repented of their sin and trusted his Christ as Lord and Savior and reached out and grabbed God's mercy and his forgiveness, how do you do that? Do you just think a little thought in your head? Or is it repentance? Lord, I'm repenting. I'm changing the way I view life and you. I believe in you.

I repent of my sin. I acknowledge you. Would you save me? So love and repentance go together.

And we talk often about the mercy of God. Do you know what the definition of mercy is? It's having compassion or forgiveness shown to me by someone who has within their power to punish me. And God, people don't like this aspect of that God, we are under the wrath of God.

The Bible says the wages of sin is death. There's a part of me, this might be hard to fathom, but there's a part of me that hates God. Theologians call it the Adamic nature.

The nature of Adam is in me. It's cancer. And when you come to Christ as a believer, you repent and you believe that Adamic nature is still there with the new nature of Christ.

Paul says in Romans and Corinthians that our choices are never free from this conflict. Our choices are never free from this. So do you go back to the Adamic nature or are you filled with the spirit of God and go forward in Christ? And that's why repentance is so important.

Repentance kills that Adamic nature. And that's why I believe Christians should be in an ongoing state. And I told somebody this and they got mad.

I repented once, I don't need to repent. You better be in a state of repentance. Unless you can walk on water, unless you can walk on water and there's no sin found in you, you should never make that statement.

Repentance is getting back on track. I'm off track, I'm getting back on track. We're in a state of repentance.

Every morning for prayer you think I'm never repenting? Lord, my attitude. Lord, this. Lord, I'm repenting.

I'm getting back on track with you. And as you repent, the love of the Lord comes in, the mercy of God, the grace of God. I was under the wrath and judgment of God.

That's mercy when God says, I will send a sacrifice. I will provide the way. All you have to do is repent.

That turns the heart back to God. So how can you take out repentance? How can you remove sin? How can you remove judgment? They go together. When they talk about the judgment of God, I say, oh, thank God for his mercy.

When I look at the wrath of God, I say, thank God for his forgiveness. When God says, repent and believe, to embrace that, I have to preach both the difficult truths and the pleasant ones. That's why Paul told Timothy, go and preach, Timothy, the difficult things.

Because a time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. So convince, rebuke, exhort with all wrong suffering and prayer and supplication. Tell people about heaven, but don't forget about hell.

Tell them about God's love, but don't forget about his justice. Tell them about his mercy, but don't forget about his righteous indignation, his holiness, the holiness of God. If we could get back to the holiness of God and the fear of God, you would see your lives change.

You wouldn't walk in here with some condescending, arrogant attitude as if God's gonna do us a favor. We would walk in here, humble and broken before him because that's the fear of God. That's how we should come in this place.

There's many scriptures that say, will you come into the house of the Lord with arrogance, with sacrifice, but not your heart be broken and contrite before me? Thus sayeth the Lord. That's a powerful truth. So how do you engage all of that? Through repentance.

That's how you turn the heart. He will turn the heart back towards the Father via repentance. You cannot discard this truth any more than you can discard the love of God.

You see how they work together? And somehow we've had this concept where it's one or the other. Hell, fire and brimstone and God is just an angry God up there. You better walk out of here just right.

That lightning bolt might hit you. Just wrath, wrath, wrath. Man, I don't have anything to do with that God.

Neither do I. How is a wrathful God that lays out everything? Says, you fell, you fell into sin. Here's your damning nature. The wages of sin is death.

You're under a curse. But I have a solution. All you have to do is repent and turn back to me.

He says, I have a solution to fix your marriage tonight. Repent and turn back to me. I have a solution to get off that addiction.

Repent and turn back to me. I have a way to come back to the Father. Repent and turn back to me.

But then you have the other side. Just love. Just love them, Shane.

Why are you so loud? Just be quiet. Just love them. I said, yeah.

But if I love them, I tell them the truth. It's funny. The first service I saw a guy I usually see.

I said, I haven't seen your wife all year. And he really cheered me up. He goes, she thinks your messages are too hard.

She's at some other church down the street. I'm like, wow. Really? But then he says, because she doesn't want to hear what you have to say.

She doesn't want to hear what the Bible says. To me, that's a loving father would say, son, come home. Son, you're off track.

Son, this is going to destroy you. Son, how long are you going to play with that baby cobra until he develops fangs and the venom comes in? You need to come back. Son, come back.

That's a loving father. Won't be to the father who lets his two-year-old play on the freeway. That's what some pastors are doing.

They're letting their congregation play on the freeway. There's heaven and hell at stake. Some of those people they will never see again and they have the audacity to never mention difficult things.

The difficult things put Christ on the cross. That's what the cross is. Do you think he hung there bloody without recognition? Without being, without, he was spit upon.

He was, I mean, our God, our Savior was mocked and ridiculed and he says, don't talk about anything that put me here. Don't talk about why I died. The Bible says that he became flesh.

He became sin actually. He became flesh and dwelt among us but he became sin and the wrath of God was poured out on the cross and that's when Christ cried out, oh God, where are you? Why have you forsaken me? Why have you forsaken me? God, you're gone. And that point in history, the wrath of God fell on the cross at Calvary because of sin.

The blood. Sin. Judgment.

Yeah, bad things. But thank God for repentance. Thank God for the cross.

So you can see that that's why this is such a difficult topic. And what you have is a lot of churches not filled with the Spirit of God. They want to please men.

They want to build masses. They want a massive audience. They want all the cathedrals built in their names.

Again, not all churches. I want to be careful there because there's a lot of churches who do things better than we do. They preach better than I preach.

I listen to them on the radio all the time. There's good churches doing good things. But the vast majority have drifted off course.

And the only way at the forefront of every significant recovery from backsliding has been when repentance is preached. Because you have to think about this. If it's not preached, when will people repent? If it's not preached, when will people repent? I was at a fireman's retreat about a year ago.

I think Wade, you're up there too, right? And there was a lot of firemen. And it was not an easy message. But I've never heard more testimonies in my life of big guys crying, coming to the Lord.

It was unbelievable. Throughout the whole weekend, people said, we never hear this. And after the 50th time of hearing, we never hear this.

We never hear this. You start to wonder, well, why not? Well, why not? You think you're going to get a 230-pound fireman hooked on porn, cheating on his wife, and getting drunk every weekend, just always turning to cozy, comfortable stuff? No. It doesn't work that way.

God loves us so much that He brings conviction. Conviction's a wonderful gift from God. Why do we have smoke alarms in our hallways, in our rooms? Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep.

Get out of there. That's what conviction is. That's conviction.

Get out of there. Turn. Turn.

That's a loving, gracious Father. I want you to see that. That's how important repentance is.

And that's why, again, Luke chapter 1, verse 76, And you, child, will be called the prophet of the highest, for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins. Why does the Bible talk about repentance and the remission of sin all the time, but we avoid it? It's everywhere. And then He goes on to say, in the same sentence, not the same sentence, but the same chapter, the same context, He will give His people salvation by the remission of their sin, through the tender mercy of our God, to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of

death, and to guide our feet in the way of peace.

They go together. So I want to encourage you. I don't know if the audience decides, if you're sitting in darkness, if you're sitting not knowing Christ, I would encourage you to truly look at your heart, and one thing is required, repentance and belief.

Repent. Paul says, actually in Romans, if you confess with your mouth that Christ is Lord, and that God raised Him from the dead, if you repent of your sin, if you believe. It's a package.

There's no way you can believe that God exists and not repent. How do I know? Because the demons believe. The Bible says the demons believe in God, and they actually tremble.

They know, oh it's coming. They believe. But do you think they've repented? That's the difference maker.

I don't know if they could at this stage, but their fate has been sealed, but it doesn't have to happen to us, or to you. Anybody hearing this, that's the good news. Anybody hearing this, anybody hearing this, can turn to God tonight.

You can turn to God. It doesn't matter. And I'm going to say, as often as I can, I want to get this point, because I just talked to them.

We have a radio station now in Los Angeles. They said there's probably 300,000 listeners now. I'm like, whoa.

I want people to know as they're driving down the 5, or the 405, or in Pasadena, and they're high, they're drunk, they're desperate, they're heading to maybe commit suicide, that there is hope. All you have to do is turn to the one who loves you, the one who died for you, and you repent, and you get your heart back on track. That's all you have to do.

That's it. But another encouraging thing, I see so many Christians that are living in darkness, and depression, and fear, and that God has just been taken from them. And not all, but many times, the one word that will change that is repentance.

Repenting from the darkness that maybe we've brought in. Repenting from maybe the lifestyle choices that we've allowed to take us down. Because anytime there's a Christian in a rebellion, it's not fun.

You know what I'm talking about. You snap at your wife a little easier. You yell at your husband a little quicker.

You're rude. I see a lot of people smile on this one. We need a repentance.

We're going to do about four hours of worship tonight. But that's what happens. It happens to me too.

I know it's hard to believe. Yeah. When God says, deal with this issue.

Go to this person. No, no, no, not this year. And I sit down to pray.

I can't pray the Bible. Oh Lord, what's going on here? And you try to go weak like that. And then Morgan says something like, what? I don't care.

Take out the trash. It's not anything. You're just walking because you're in rebellion on certain areas.

There's nothing more miserable than a miserable Christian. Because they know what to do. They know all they have to do it.

They don't have to climb Mount Whitney and learn a poem and learn seven steps. They just have to repent. Repent.

It's very easy. You say, I'm sorry. I was wrong.

I'm going to restore. I'm going to rebuild. I'm going to renew.

I'm going to make amends. And I'm going to start now. And Lord, thank you for your grace and mercy.

And you do it. Because this without actions is hypocritical. That's what hypocrite actually is.

And they don't do it. Let me tell you right now. It's so easy to say.

So easy to say. But the rubber meets the road when it comes in the application. So I would just encourage you.

Wherever you're at tonight. Maybe you don't need this type of message. Maybe you're on fire for God.

But I would encourage you to dig deeper. To get in more into his will. And more into brokenness and humility.

And let him change everything from the inside out. Because this type of message is what changed me from the inside out completely. Is getting that heart right with God.

And then when it gets off track, you get back on track. And you get your heart right with God.

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