

# Overcoming the Pain of Regret

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon emphasizes overcoming the pain of regret through God's grace, repentance, and aligning with His will.*

**Duration:** 49:16

**Scripture:** Psalm 1:1, Psalm 107:10, Matthew 21:28, 2 Corinthians 7:10

**Topics:** "Regret And Repentance", "Spiritual Restoration"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the topic of regret, focusing on overcoming the pain of regret by acknowledging the harm it causes, the endless cycle it creates, and the need to turn to God for restoration. It emphasizes the importance of encountering the pain of discipline over the pain of regret, highlighting the power of repentance and the hope found in rebuilding one's life with God. The sermon concludes with a call to examine one's heart, repent, and surrender to God to experience salvation and transformation.

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## Transcript

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Matthew 21. Matthew 21 verse 28. But I'm not going to go right into the text.

I'm going to talk to you tonight about the topic of regret. And actually more specific, overcoming the pain of regret. Does anybody have any regret in this room? The first service wasn't very honest, so I need some honesty at the second.

Okay, thank you. Because nobody raised your hand. I'm like, well, this is pointless.

Right, Jim? We're all good here. But this type of message too, you're going to want to probably get copies of CD or online and send it to people. Because there's a lot of people dealing with regret.

The addict who has lost everything. The person whose marriage is falling apart. Moms and dads who look back and they say, we just did not raise our kids good.

We have so much regret. And we live in a lot of regret if we allow the enemy to come in and continue to badger us in that area. And I'm just going to talk about three things.

I'm going to talk about the pain of regret, the path of regret, and the power of regret. And no, I didn't plan it with three Ps. It just happened that way.

But the pain of regret, the path of regret, and the power of regret. Because I truly believe that God can take stumbling blocks and turn them into stepping stones when we give him everything. Interesting thing, the first point, the pain of regret.

Regret is one of Satan's tools to discourage us. It can lead to shame and depression. It's an endless cycle that leads us back into sin and bondage.

So this is the harm with regret. I regret something and I get into this mode of regret and shame, and then it causes me to fall back into the very thing that put me there. And then I fall back into the sin and regret and shame.

And then because of that, because now I'm depressed and regretting and just feel like worthless before God, I fall back into the thing that put me there again. And it's this endless cycle that I believe God wants us to get out of. And what happens is private sin will eventually become public disgrace.

Private sin, when sin runs its course, will become public disgrace. Everybody thinks, well I can just hide this little sin here and no, James, as James says, it grows like a little child and it gets bigger and bigger and sin eventually leads to death. Death of a marriage, death of a family, death of spiritual, of our spiritual life toward God.

And the enemy will use that. He'll expose things so we get caught in the cycle of regret. With that said though, there is tremendous hope.

Here's the hope. If you choose to encounter the pain of discipline over the pain of regret. And I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but there are two pain.

I mean, you're gonna feel pain either way. There's living with the pain of regret. And any of you who've been there, you know, and if some of you stuck in that, the pain of regret is very debilitating.

But you're gonna either have to experience the pain of regret or the pain of discipline. When Jesus said, count the cost, pick up your cross, follow me, there are certain spiritual disciplines that must occur in order to pull us out of the pit of regret. And the reason I call it a pit of regret is because what happens is you've got to get out of that one step at a time.

There is a way out. There is hope. There is freedom.

But it's one step at a time. And that we want to tell people that you do get out. I want to tell the addict in their fifth recovering home, you can get out.

Or the person on their third marriage, and now they're heading to divorce court, you can get out. I've blown it in this area, but you can get out of that pit of regret. Don't allow the enemy to keep you there.

I like what Paul said, one thing I do, one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and pressing forward to the things that are ahead. This is Paul who killed Christians. This is Paul who mocked the church.

This is the same Paul who held the coats as they killed Stephen, the first martyr. And he said, I forget those things that are behind and I push forward to the goal of honoring Christ. And unfortunately, it's often not until a person hits rock bottom that they turn to God unconditionally.

I wish it wasn't true, but that's the sad truth of everything, is many people, until they hit rock bottom, don't turn completely, turn everything over to God. That's the wonderful thing about, say, a U-turn for Christ, or David Wilkerson Teen Challenge, those kinds of things, is people get to the rock bottom and then they finally turn everything over to the Lord. But I want to talk about that rock bottom moment for a minute.

I think I read this excerpt last summer, but I thought of it this week and I wanted to, again, read it because it's so important. And it's from the book, Embracing Rock Bottom. She said this, maybe you've hit your rock bottom moment, maybe you're right there now.

If so, I've got good news for you. Many times, God does his best work in our lives when we are at rock bottom. When we are finally there, you know that you've got nothing except what God can give you.

And let me tell you, friend, that's the best place to be. Embrace your rock bottom moment. They continue, realize, the author continues, realize that while you are at your very low point, possibly the lowest in your life, God doesn't want you to stay there.

That's vitally important. God does not want you to stay there. As Psalm 346 says, I cried out to the Lord in my suffering and he heard me.

He set me free from all my fears. Thank God it doesn't say I cried out to the Lord in my suffering. He said, too bad, stay there.

These are your consequences. Leave me alone. He just says, cry out to me.

Cry out to me in your suffering, in your despair. I will hear you and I will set you free. That's one of the wonderful things about a rock bottom is it can focus us back towards God.

Your greatest failure and your lowest point, your rock bottom moment may very well be the precise time and place that God is choosing to begin a great work in you, if you're willing to humble yourself and allow God to start the process. In the rock bottom, really what it is, you've heard that term, a person gets to the end of themselves and they finally say, I'm done. It's over.

God, please, would you help? Would you save me? And that's so true. Many times we get to our rock bottom and we get depressed and we start to regret and we go back into addiction, back into bondage, back into relationships because we're at that rock bottom saying, woe is me. Instead of looking at that point and saying, God, now you can rebuild my life.

Because to be honest with you, to be transparent, in 1998, I hit my rock bottom. I lost financially, I lost relationally, my wife divorced me, I had biblical grounds, adultery, abandonment, and just alcohol, addiction, arrogance, everything took its toll. I mean, just bam, everything.

The prodigal son was eating with the swine. And God used that rock bottom moment to turn me back to him. Actually, there would be no West Side Christian Fellowship if it wasn't for God redirecting me in that rock bottom moment in time.

So I have a great passion to help people when they're at the rock bottom, understanding that when God rebuilds a life, no man can shut that door. No man can pull you back. When God rebuilds and when God strengthens, and we look at the rock bottom as a ton of regret.

I've blown it now, everybody knows. I've got this big D on my forehead, right? You've been there, you know that. And I just, this is just misery, this is depression.

God says, good, now you'll get rid of everything you think about yourself. You'll remove that arrogance, you'll remove that pride. Now I can shape and humble you and mold you like a piece of clay.

The rock bottom moment. So we look at the rock bottom, we look at the regret as this is over, I'm toast, I've ruined everything. God says, no, now you're in a position to where you'll hear my voice and you'll truly follow me.

So whoever you know, if you get this message out to them or if you need to hear this, understand that God can create, God can use your rock bottom moment, this period of tremendous regret, and it can thrust you to him. Because we've talked about this, how do you know God is healer unless you've ever been sick? How do you know him as Jehovah Jireh, my provider, unless you've ever been in need? How do you know him as the great Redeemer unless you've ever been held captive? How do you know him as the God of the universe unless you've looked up at the stars and cried out to him? I mean, we usually don't know God in his fullness until we go through something, until we hit that rock bottom moment. But I need to say this, the pain may not leave completely, but God's grace will be sufficient.

And people need to be reminded that sometimes they hit their regretting and they cry out to God and then two days go by and they go, but Shane, I still feel the pain. Yeah, I do too, many times. I feel the pain, I feel the anguish of mistakes I've made in my past.

If I could go back, whoa, if I could go back, if I could go back, I'd probably have a 24 year old son or daughter. I've talked about before and when I conceded to my girlfriend's request to abort our child 24 years ago and living, I mean, that never leaves. I don't know about you, but that pain is there.

There's consequences, but God's grace is sufficient. And I don't know how this works, but I thank God that it works, that sometimes the greater the pain, the greater the relationship with the Father. Those who have been forgiven much, love much.

So tremendous pain can bring a tremendous relationship with God. My grace is sufficient. See, most people don't really understand God's grace until they've been to a point to where there's been so desperate for him that his grace actually becomes a reality.

We look back and we say, God, I should have died 10 years ago or 20 years ago or 30 years ago, but your grace has held me. Your grace has sustained me. That's why Paul said, remove this thing from me.

We don't know what it is. A lot of people think they know what it is. They don't know.

You don't know what it is. Paul said that he was given a thorn to buffet him, a messenger of Satan to keep him humble. And he prayed and he prayed, God, take this away, and God said, my grace is sufficient.

Somehow, somehow, this pain draws us into a deeper relationship with God, and thank God for that. And I've seen people, you have too, as I say, they were raised in a leave it to beaver home. They went to school and nothing's really ever bad has happened.

They don't know God in a powerful way often. They don't know him as healer and redeemer. They've never cried out to him at 2 in the morning.

They've never spent three hours on their knees before him and in the Word of God with tear-stained pages ministering to their heart. And then they come out of there and they know God. See, there's a big difference between knowing God intellectually and knowing God relationally.

Many people have religion but not a relationship, and it's often through that pain and through that suffering that that relationship is built. It's a very healthy thing. I also want to remind you that you plus God is a majority.

If you have God, you have all you need, and you are far better than 70% of the entire world. Now add to that the blessings of America, and you're in the top 1%. And I see so many people they're going through so much, and thank God you have friends and family member that love you, and they'll walk through this with you.

Look at you have a roof over your head. You have running water. You have you plus God as a majority, and you can get back on track.

You can take that pain of regret and put it off to the side. So that was the introduction, the pain of regret. Let me let me read Matthew 21-28.

And Jesus is asking this question. It's actually an amazing question. He's standing with the religious leaders.

He's talking to these. Now these are religious leaders. So we think, oh, they must have been Christians.

They weren't Christians. Actually, the word Christian didn't come until later when the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch after Christ left. But there could be, in the time when Jesus walked the earth, there could be followers, people who have repented and believe that He is the Messiah.

So you have these religious leaders who have not repented. They actually mock John the Baptist's ministry at the Jordan River, and they're questioning Jesus. So Jesus says, what do you think? Matthew 21-28.

What do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, son, go and work today in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not. But afterward, he regretted it and went and worked in the vineyard.

Then he came to his second son, and he said, did the son go and work in the vineyard? And he said, oh, I'll go, sir. But he did not go. So Jesus asked the question, which one of these two did the will of the Father? Do we all know the answer, I hope? First one.

But Jesus says, who did the will of the Father? But he said, no, I'm not going to go. But he regrets. See, that's the power of regret, the power of repentance.

A person can be out of God's will, and a moment later be in God's will. It's a mystery. The son is, I'm not going to go work in the field.

I'm out of your will. But he regretted it. He turned.

Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action. The real word, repentance, I believe it's *metanoeo* in the Greek or *nakam* in the Hebrew language. If you study those things, it's interesting.

It's mentally and physically. I have to think it, and then I have to act it out. Because you can't just repent in your mind without actions backing it up.

And some people do the right actions, but their mind is not repentant. They just don't want to get caught again. So true repentance is the mind changing and the feet following.

That's true repentance. And that's what this man did. He said, I will not.

But then he went and repented, and he was back in the center of God's will. Now, I'm going to make a statement here. I know it's true.

You can think it's not if you want to. But all of us have said at one time or another to God, I will not. Everybody in this room, you don't have me fooled for one second.

Everybody in this room has told God at one point or another, like this man did, I will not. I will not do that. I will not go.

I will not not do what you're convicting me to do. But that's really not the point. The big question is, do you change course? See, it's not have I disobeyed God.

It's what am I doing now? And I think that's a word of encouragement for some people today. You know there are areas that God has been convicting you in. You've been saying, I will not.

And it's time to say, I will. It's time to get back on track. I don't know if it's changing anything from changing lifestyle habits, addictions, relationships you know you should have ended, people you should have forgiven, unforgiveness, bitterness.

Whatever it is, there's something out there for some of you that you need to get back in the center of God's will. It's time to stop fighting God and stop ignoring that and get back in the center of God's will by following that conviction. And many people actually, who did the will of the Father? That brings up another question.

A lot of people ask, I'm sure you've asked before, what is God's will? Have you ever thought that? What is God's will? Well, I'm going to share with you a few things right out of scripture that says, this is God's will for your life. Start here. This is where we start.

Number one, God's will. And you can get these in 1 Timothy, 1 Thessalonians, Ephesians, and Matthew. I've got these references if you need them.

His will is that you are saved and worship him, to be holy and set apart for his glory, to be filled continually with the Holy Spirit, to witness to others, and to make disciples. That's his will. In other words, start here.

This is how you get out of the pit of regret really quick. Number one, his will is that you should be saved. The Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish, but all come to saving faith.

Start there. So many people are dealing with regret. Even they come to church, and they're dealing with tons of regret because they're not in right relationship with God.

They haven't repented. They aren't saved. So that's God's number one will for your life.

I've talked to people, believe it or not, saying, Shane, I want to know what God's will is for my life. Should I go to this school? Should I marry this person? Should I? I mean, no, I've never repented. I've never done

all that weird stuff.

And I really don't have a relationship with him. But what is his will for my life? And I want to say, get a big referee whistle out there. Say, stop.

None of that matters. His primary will is that you are saved. That you're saved.

You have a relationship with him. The next one is to worship him. To be saved and to worship him.

That's his will. So here's a big, big biggie. If you're not worshiping God, you're not in his will.

And driving down the road, putting on a radio station, listening to worship is not worshiping. That's driving while listening to a good song. Worshiping is taking time out of your day.

And that's a great song. When I'm listening to Let It Rain sometimes, I'll say, rewind, rewind, rewind. People say, that's weird.

That's emotionalism. No, I call it worship. Because it takes the first 20 minutes to get all the junk out of my heart.

It takes the first 20 minutes to get me positioned right again. Don't worry about, what's my phone? What's the text email? And what's going on today? And you have to take time and pull back and begin to worship God. That's how you determine what his will is.

Because as you're worshiping God, his will becomes crystal clear in many areas. Because you begin to pray like the would want you to pray. To be holy, to be set apart for his glory.

What's holiness? Well, we've talked about that how many times? It's you look like a Christian, not the world. That's the abridged version. Do we look like a Christian or do we look like the world? And to be filled continually with the Holy Spirit, to witness to others, and to make disciples.

That is the will of God. This is where we start. So if you're still reading Matthew 21, verse 32.

So here's where it gets interesting. Jesus said, who did the will of the Father? Well, obviously, we know. But they said him the first.

And Jesus said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But tax collectors and harlots believe in him.

And when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him. Now, we just read this and go, oh, that's interesting. If you were 2000 years ago, and you heard this, Jesus is scolding the religious leaders of his day.

These men, they're dressed in expensive robes. They're leading the temple worship. And Jesus says, harlots and tax collectors are getting into heaven before you.

You think that went over well? But he's telling them the truth. He says, you saw sinners going to John's baptism, John the Baptist, in the chilly Jordan River. They're repenting.

They're being filled with the Spirit of God. Well, the Spirit was given later. Let's just say they're repenting and being in right relationship with God.

And God could have given him a spirit. The difference between Old Testament and New Testament is Old Testament. God does pour out his spirit on certain individuals.

The New Testament, now the comforter has come. Once you believe, you have all of the Holy Spirit. So these believers that were being baptized, they're followers of Christ.

The religious leaders saw it, and they saw these changes, and they still didn't relent and actually repent. But even though they saw the good works of God, it reminded me that the super spiritual, the religious, and the legalists are on the broad road to destruction because of their hypocrisy. This is why Jesus says, well did Isaiah say of you.

You draw nigh unto me with your lips and honor me with your words, but your hearts are far from me, and in vain you worship me. I just thought about the church today. How many people are in our churches that are super religious, legalistic, like these Pharisees, and they're worshipping the Lord in vain.

What does vain worship mean? It means unsuccessful, to no avail. There's no purpose. It's fruitless.

There's no heart engagement. There's nothing there. The heart's not engaged.

It's like singing that song, Let It Rain. I mean, worship a heart that's not engaged is going to be bored. They're going to be like, let it rain.

Okay, what's for dinner? Man, we're past. Isn't Shane supposed to be up there already? I mean, this is running late. I mean, and there's no heart engagement.

We're worshipping the Lord in vain. And that's a place that we need to check our hearts often to make sure we are worshipping God. And you can look into a person's heart by how they treat others.

You can see a person's heart. You show me how a person treats others, and I can show you their heart. Think about it.

They didn't want harlots, and tax collectors, and all these people at the church. They were better than them. I can't believe that one man who prayed, that one religious leader said, Jesus, I thank God that I'm not like this tax collector.

I'm so spiritual. And that's what they were. But this person, even today, they become indignant when the drunkard, the divorcee, and the addict is sitting next to them in the pew.

Shane, does that happen today? Oh, you'd be very sad at what I can sometimes see in expressions and what we know. And people just, oh, who's that? Yeah, they're a church. See, your heart's not in a good spot.

If you can't worship with sinners, your heart's not in a good spot. So let's take the test we like to take twice a year. Are you known as a loving, joyful, peaceful, content, gentle, and kind person? Or are you rigid, arrogant, divisive, critical, and angry? Let me read the list again, or is that enough? And that's when people say, I'm not sure.

Ask your spouse. Ask your spouse or your kids. They will not lie.

Out of the words of Babe is perfect praise, right? The kids will tell you the truth. And in all seriousness, though, it's important to take the test, because are we known? Are we filled with the Spirit? Of course we're going to get angry. Of course we're going to deal with arrogance, and of course we're going to have a critical spirit from time to time.

But is the outflowing work of the Holy Spirit obvious? Are we loving and kind and gracious and gentle? Because that's the filling of the Spirit. If none of that is ever present, you have to wonder, what am I filled with? What am I filled with if I don't have the fruit of the Spirit there? And that's why you can look at a person's heart by how they treat others, because eventually out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth is going to speak. And how you treat others speaks volumes as to where your heart is at.

Do you care for those who are addicted or divorced or the drunkard or the homeless person? How do you treat them? Could they sit next to you? That's a good test. Could the person sit next to you? Because that's what these religious leaders were doing. And Jesus said, you hypocrites, they're going to enter heaven before you.

I mean, it's amazing. It's absolutely amazing, this scene. So my encouragement would be to stop saying, but stop making excuses and start surrendering to the work of the Spirit like the first man did.

The first man said, I will not. He regretted it. There's a conviction there knowing he didn't do the right thing.

And he went back and got into the will of the Father. That's very encouraging, that no matter where we're at right now, we can get back into the will of the Father. But let's talk about the path of regret for a minute.

Psalms 107:10, those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, they were bound in affliction and iron because they rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. Therefore, he brought down their heart with labor. They fell down and there was none to help.

Whether you know it or not, that's what a person caught in regret feels like. And I know probably a lot of people in this audience maybe are saying, I'm not sure. I've never quite felt that low.

Well, that's good. But there's a lot of people who have been that low. They can feel the shadow of death.

They can feel that what the Word of God says here. Their heart is heavy with labor. They fall down.

There's no one to help. They're in this pit of despair. But, verse 13, then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he saved them out of their distress.

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death. He broke their chains in pieces. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness.

And the Bible just doesn't put oh there because it needed some space. That oh there is powerful. The psalmist is saying, oh, would you not look to God? Oh, please.

Oh, turn to him that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men. For he has broken the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron in two. What's he talking about? He's talking about iron and bronze were the strongest things back then.

And when God can just break those things into any chain, any addiction, any bondage, like that song we used to sing a long time ago, break every chain. God can break every chain. He can't if we turn to him.

But that's what happens. That's a path of regret. That's a true portrayal of regret.

Those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. Those held captive by sin can relate. Darkness and depression seem to overshadow everything.

So how does a person fall into regret? Because they rebelled against the word of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. Therefore he brought down their heart with labor. They fell down and there was none to help.

Now that's not a very popular verse, is it? If we take a survey right now, you're probably not in a happy mood. You're probably like, oh man, that's heavy. But the reason it's heavy is because it's true.

See, there's a consequence to our actions. And when we're dealing with regret, many times we have to look at this. Have I rebelled against God's commandment? The imagery here is of a person stumbling through life or locked in a prison where no one can help.

Their heart is heavy and burdened as a result of not doing God's will and obeying His truth. And I have no problem saying with that. I want to shout it from the rooftops.

If you disobey God's will and His truth long enough, if you keep mocking God, basically God says you want it, you got it. There's something in the Bible called Romans 1 that says, and they suppress the truth with all ungodliness and God gave them over to their debased and corrupted mind. See, that should be preached.

That should be proclaimed. That should be on TBN every hour. Those kind of messages, right? Turn to God.

Turn back to Him. Because so many people are going through regret and because they rebelled against the Word of God. And instead of giving them the solution, we keep patting them on the back and saying, it's okay, buddy.

No problem. Just keep them pressing forward. And we don't give them the solution.

The solution sometimes is to, all the time, is to cry out to God and say, God, deliver me. And He will often allow trials, burdens, and the pain of regret so that we look to Him. He's the only one that can truly help us.

Verse 13, cry out to the Lord in your trouble and He will save you. Listen, that's a promise that will not fail. I want to just talk about that for a minute.

When you cry out to God in genuine repentance, when you cry out to Him, that's a promise that will not fail. When He says, cry out to Me, I will save you. I will deliver you.

That will not fail. Listen, you might not rely on Social Security. I don't know who you're going to vote for, but they're not the answer.

The church will let you down. Your parents will let you down. But God will never let you down.

Why? Because He cannot lie. When He puts truth into motion, that truth will continue. He cannot lie.

Anything, whatever. That's why I often say, you can pass all these laws in favor of same-sex marriage, but it will not change God's mind. He put that truth into motion from the foundation of the world.

You can't bypass it and discard it and remove it as if God will negotiate. Once truth is set in motion, it's set in motion. You either conform to it, because it will not conform to you.

God's Word doesn't conform. It doesn't change with the times. It remains solid and unyielding, and thank God for that, because that's something you can count on.

Now, we're in a culture now. You better raise your kids in a culture. You're raising your kids in a culture of relativism.

Relativism says, what's right for you might not be right for me, and what's true for you might be not be true for me. And they go through life thinking, well, I'm not sure it's your truth, my truth, your truth. No, you need to let them know that God's absolute truth is unyielding and will not bend.

It's not flexible. It's like I said when I preached before, it's like a guiding light. It's like a lighthouse.

It can't change. Jesus said God's Word is truth, and when you set truth in motion, it can't move. It can't get out of the way.

And here's how this works. Regret often, regret is the result of wandering from God, much like a ship that has drifted off course. But as soon as the correct course is set, hope, peace, and joy return.

Here's how it works. A person gets in regret, or they get into misery by disobeying God's Word, and they just feel like this weight of the world. They feel this burden they can't get off, and once they turn their course around and get back on track, God often frees them of that.

Now there's this joy and peace that returns. The joy of my salvation, David said that it would return, but it took him a year of running from God. Nathan the prophet came in, rebuked David.

He repents, and now that restoration process started. Now I'm not saying that all anxiety, all fear, all regret is the result of sin. I hope you realize that, but I would say that the vast majority of regret that we deal with is because we've disobeyed God's Word.

I mean, I look back at all the regret of my life. I never said, you know, I regretted, I really regret obeying God's Word back then when I was 25. That has not paid off for me.

Never, ever. It's always the result of disobeying many times, and it kind of breaks my heart because that's a loving Father. We don't realize.

I mean, you talk about second chances. How about 150 chances? I mean, sometimes I go, God, how do you deal with us? How do you deal with us again and again and again? I mean, I should have been dead at 17. I should have been dead at 22.

I've rolled trucks and vehicles and totaled them and not even know how I got home. I've made tons of mistakes in my past, and I go, God, how? I don't understand. But see, that's how you understand grace.

Now grace makes sense. And I don't like when people just flippantly use that term, grace. And they allow, they continue in sin, and they just use the word grace, and they actually mock God's grace.

Because Paul explains in Romans that, well, should we sin more because of God's grace? Certainly not. The goodness of God should lead us to repentance. And when somebody truly understands God's grace, you see, that's interesting, because people see, you know, I get emails sometimes that, oh, you're just, you know, moralistic, or people have to follow all these rules, and we're under grace now, brother.

I always say, yeah, but when you truly understand God's grace, you want to live for Him. I don't understand where you're coming from. It's not rules.

It's I want to please the Father who saved me. How is that? That's not rules. I want to live a holy life, a life set apart for Him.

I want to worship Him because I want that relationship, not rules. And the closer you draw to God, the more different you're going to look in the world. And they're going to say rules.

I say no relationship. Rules, no relationship. Legalism, no relationship.

Legalism at its core is I'm going to do these things because I'm spiritual, and I'm going to be right with God because I do all these things. Relationship says, Lord, because you saved me, and because this grace and mercy is just poured out on my life, I want to obey your word and please you, and I want to follow your guidelines. Big difference.

Big difference. It's a hard issue. It's always a hard issue.

But here's a caution I want to throw out here for those going through the pain of regret or trying to rebuild their life. Be very, very careful who you share your thoughts with, and your life with, and who you call friends because a listening ear can also be a running mouth. That's tweetable.

Is tweetable a word? I don't think so. Twitterable. But it's true.

A listening ear can also be a running mouth. Surround yourself with people who build you up rather than pull you down. Here's why.

You can research this. You can look to any resource. You already know this.

I don't even have to tell you. The number one reason why people fall back into the things that put them in a state of regret is because of ungodly influence. They fall back into a pattern of sin because of ungodly influence.

They get hooked, especially young adults. I mean, that's off the chart. I talked to a while back, probably earlier in the year, a guy come, and gosh, I don't know where these kids get this stuff, but heroin, Oxycontin, crystal meth, they're coming off these things.

I say, disconnect Facebook. Throw that cell number away and get a new number that just your mom and your dad have. You get buried in a church.

No, I can't do that. That's not fun. And what happens two weeks later? Back to the same thing.

Back to the same thing. Why? Because that influence. See, when you're dealing with those kind of things, you're not strong enough to pull somebody up to your level.

They're going to pull you down to theirs. That's just the truth. When you come out of something, you can't instantly begin to go back in that same environment.

The number one reason why people fall back into sin is because of ungodly influence. Just read Psalm 1-1 tonight. Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor does he sit in the seat, or nor does he, blessed the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor does he sit in the seat of the scornful.

And he doesn't stand in the path of sin, but he delights in the law of the Lord, and he meditates day and night. That's the success story. Who is influencing you? Those who pull you back into that lifestyle, or those who lift you up out of it? Because I see this a lot.

People fall back into sin when they're talking to the wrong people. People fall into adultery and say, oh, but my co-workers were encouraging it. Yeah, exactly.

They watch Desperate Housewives, and then they encourage you to do that. Is it still on? I don't know. Give me some new programs after the sermon that I can start picking on now.

I mean, when I saw Swapping Lives, I was, Lord, help us. That's all I can, help us. God, help us.

I mean, this, and Christians love these shows. It just amazes me. And we wonder why we have, we've lost our spiritual power.

We wonder why the church is, there's no passion for God. It's because of the wrong influence. We're putting our mind in the wrong area.

And lastly, I want to talk to you about the power of regret. Now that you know the pain of regret, the path of regret, how we get on that path, here's the power of regret. I love God because of this reason too.

He allows us to turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones. What the enemy intends for evil, God makes for good. I don't know how it worked.

I don't know how he designs all that, but whatever the enemy is going to make for evil and regret, God says, nope, I can turn that around and make it for good. Remember I just talked about 1998, the hardest year of my life. Everything fell apart.

God is like, oh Lord. He says, don't worry. You give your life to me.

I'll rebuild. And now I have a lovely wife. Couldn't pick a better, I mean, God just knows what he's doing.

Four gorgeous kids, right, that God, so I'm going to give all that up and go back to what I, no, no, no, no. Thank God for that time. See, isn't that interesting? Now I thank God for that time, but at that time I was miserable.

Because when you give your life back to God, you say, Lord, rebuild the years that the locust and the kangaroo and all these things took from me. It's Old Testament imagery there of how the locust would go and devour the whole land. And God says, when you turn back to me, oh nation of Israel, I will rebuild everything that they took from you.

I don't know how it works, but that's what God does. He takes, he takes what the enemy intends for evil and he makes it good. But we must cry out to him in full surrender.

Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men. He broke the gate of bronze and cut the bars of iron in two. A one hour prayer can tear down a year of the devil's work.

One hour of prayer can tear down a year of the devil's work, and one hour of prayer can tear down a lifetime of regret. Here's the key, there may be withdrawals, there may be consequences, and there will be pain as we heal, but it's much easier to experience the pain of discipline instead of the pain of regret. And here's why there's power in regret.

Regret can redirect a person back to God's will. Remember the first person said, I will not, and then he regretted it and went back to God's will. So without regret, we would probably stay out of God's will.

We jump out of God's will and said, this feels pretty good, I like this. But God, because of the conviction of the Spirit, says you don't like this, you're not happy, you know you're not happy. Let's be honest, many people aren't happy.

They want to, they want to put happy face on Facebook. That's one bad thing about Facebook is they make everybody think they're happy and they're miserable at home. Right, just got my nails done, got a latte, loving life.

No, you're not, you're miserable. That's why you're telling everybody that, because you're getting me sidetracked again. Regret can redirect a person back to God's will.

So look at regret and go, God, I regret that. Use it as a stepping stone back to God's will. Regret can lead to brokenness and humility.

You know, I talk about brokenness, humility all the time, but regret can lead back to that, because sacrifices of the heart are things that God will not turn away. This is interesting. We don't live back when Abraham lived, right? We had to bring a she-goat, a heifer, a turtle, a ram, and a pigeon to give to God.

And God said, split these up, make these, I'll make a covenant with you. And then people would bring their sacrifices to God. God says, I don't, I've done away with all that sacrificial system through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Now all you have to give to me is your heart, your life, sacrifices. Sacrifices of God are a contrite and broken heart, and those He will not turn away. Paul told the church in Rome, beginning in chapter 12 of Romans, he said, I beseech you, brethren.

He says, I beg you, I beg you, would you present your bodies to God as living sacrifices? That's all God wants. Anybody can give Him that. It's a living sacrifice, not money, not status, not seven steps, but a living sacrifice.

And finally, regret can rebuild a marriage and a family and a life. Don't let it continue to drive you down, let it build you up. Regret can rebuild your life if you put it in the right direction.

Because what happens when we get regret, do we usually get happy and joyful, or do we get miserable? And with misery, misery like company, so we like to be miserable, complaining, bickering, no fun to be

around, negative, and I just stay in this hole of regret. Don't do that. Use it.

Say, okay, devil, you got me the first round. You should have killed me back then because now I'm coming out. Now I'm coming up.

Now I'm going to allow God to direct my life, and you're not going to continue to win. So allow regret to push you in the right direction. And one of the things I love, the final thing about regret, is regret can lead to salvation.

2 Corinthians 7.10, I'm going to read from the nearly inspired version, NIV. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation.

So when a person regrets, many times they don't come to the altar. Many times they don't pray and believe in the name that saves and confess their sins and allow God to change them without regret. But I mean, when life's going good, sadly, God is often the last thing on people's mind.

So regret can lead to salvation. This is one of the hardest things you'll see as a parent. When you see your kids going through tremendous suffering, sometimes it's the result of their own choice.

It's very difficult. But you know that that might be what it takes to bring them home. Because the party lifestyle has a kick to it.

The heart is the way of the transgressor, the Bible says. And they have to get to a point sometimes of regret and anguish before they cry out to God. And I remember I was reading, many of you know Jim Cimbala out in the Brooklyn Tabernacle, I think it's New York.

And he talks openly about his daughter, Christy, when she was into drugs and everything in New York. For two years, him and his wife were just broken over this. But as a result of that, now she's leading ministry.

Now she's on fire for God because of going through that pain. And many times we want to pull them out of the pain and we want this, but God sometimes lets them go through that pain so they'll finally turn to Him. So regret can lead to salvation.

So here's my closing thought. You may be on your fifth recovery home, your fourth marriage, you're living in the twilight years of tons of regret, but God can rebuild and restore and He can bring peace in the midst of pain, enjoying the midst of regret, if we call on Him. Don't let discouragement and failure stand in your way.

I can write an entire book. I can write an entire book on my failure, but instead I choose to follow Paul's advice. He says, but one thing I do, but one thing I do, I forget those things which are behind and I reach forward to those things that are ahead.

And I often think of that verse, I forget those things that are behind. That tells me that I can remember and I can stay in that constant state of remembering the past, remembering that regret. Paul says, I choose to forget that.

And you forget that the mind is very powerful. The mind is very powerful. That's where decisions are made.

That's where sin is first conceived. That's where you take your thoughts captive. The Bible says, take your thoughts captive.

And you can say, Lord, that's not who I am. I'm forgetting those things now and I'm reaching forward. I'm reaching forward to you.

So lean on Him, love Him, and allow Him to love you. This is how we overcome the pain of regret. We allow God to rebuild our life.

It's interesting, this afternoon I circled, allow Him to love you. And this is hard. Many of you remember I shared about my past that I realized that my dad never told me that he loved me.

So I had this concept of God. You know, it's hard when he doesn't love me, he's going to, you know, you have this concept of God because often of your father coming from a hard home and anger and just not saying you love you. I don't remember hugging or any of those things.

And you have to allow God to love you. It's funny, I mean, I thought I'd never say something like that. But you do.

Lord, love me, please. I know you're a loving father and I just need your love. I need you to rebuild me.

I'm turning everything over to you. I don't care if I don't get immediate results. I don't care what the court decision is tomorrow.

I don't care what this person says. I'm following you 100%. And that's how you rebuild your life.

That's how you overcome the pain of brokenness and regret is you turn everything over to him. You turn your pain over to him. The problem is many people don't become better, they become bitter.

You know the old adage, the old saying, it's true. Pain makes you bitter or makes you better. I remember that from 20 years ago.

I heard that and it's stuck with me ever since because it's true. We can lean on God. And that's how he pulls a person out of regret and pain and suffering is you give him everything.

And then the final question is the one that Jesus asked, will sinners enter the kingdom of God before you? I don't know everybody's spiritual condition in this room, but will sinners enter the kingdom of heaven before you? Basically the same thing Jesus asked, I'm asking. There are sinners that will get into heaven before some people in the church because the people in the church think they don't need God. Some people, like the Pharisees, they're indignant.

They couldn't believe. I'm spiritual. We're sons and children of Abraham.

I've been raised in a Christian home, right? All of my life I've heard it. I've heard people say, oh, I'm Baptist. Of course I'm going to heaven.

What does that have to do with anything? Or the big one, I'm Catholic. That's not going to, prayers to Mary is not going to cut it. Are there sinners going into heaven before you because you, like the Pharisees, you fail to repent.

You've never repented. You never relented. You'll come and judge.

You'll come and do certain things, but you never repented and allowed God to change your life. So I just want to encourage you, if that's you tonight, you've been listening to sermons before, you've been to church before, stop playing games with God. He knows the heart.

This isn't a hard message. It's an easy message for those who want to embrace him because these Pharisees, these religious leaders would see sinners and they would mock them in their heart. Look at that person.

Look at that person. But when you truly come to know God, you realize we're all in the same boat. We're all sinners saved by grace.

So I would just encourage you, if you have never, never repented, truly repented and relented and you know there's judgmentalism and arrogance and your heart's not right before God, you've been playing church, I would encourage you tonight during worship to change all of that. Change it all with one simple prayer. God, I need you.

I repent. I'm not going to be like these Pharisees. What's scary is all of these religious leaders in Jesus's day, if I were to guess, I would say 90% of them are spending hell and eternity.

They not only rejected the Messiah throughout the Old Testament road of the Messiah, they rejected him when he was there, they rejected his good works and they rejected all the good things they saw people coming to know him. They rejected everything because the pride in their hearts. And that's why the Bible says the pride of your heart has deceived you.

And we have to talk about this area and we have to look at our hearts. Paul said, examine yourself. Do you not know yourself? Is Christ not in you? Examine yourself.

Examine. It's very healthy. Every one of us can do this, even a 12 year old.

If you examine your heart, do you know God? No. Do you want to know him? Yes, I do. That's all you have to do is cry out to him and say, Lord, save me.

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