

# The Day the Devil Almost Won

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of holding the line in spiritual battles, relying on patient endurance, and trusting in God's sovereignty to overcome challenges and struggles.*

**Duration:** 52:07

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 31:20

**Topics:** "Perseverance in Faith", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

Shane Idleman delivers a powerful sermon titled 'The Day the Devil Almost Won,' emphasizing the spiritual battles Christians face and the importance of holding onto faith during difficult times. He discusses how discouragement and challenges can feel like the devil is winning, but reminds the congregation that God is always present, carrying us through our struggles. Idleman encourages believers to recognize their flaws, repent for self-created storms, and rely on God's strength to overcome adversity. He draws parallels between biblical figures like Hezekiah and the ultimate victory of Christ over sin and death, urging listeners to never give up in their faith journey.

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## Transcript

This morning, the title is The Day the Devil Almost Won. Did it grab you? I have a confession. I'm a little bummed out.

The last three or four messages have been ones I've been saving for the stadium. So, there goes my stadium sermons. So I've got to, you know, kind of work on those now in the next coming weeks.

But we do meet at Jet Hawk Stadium, Lancaster Stadium, beginning June 12th. Every Saturday at 6.45 p.m., we're going to start worship at 6.45, except June 26th. This would be a good time to maybe invite friends and family.

We're taking it to the Lord. I'm going to be focusing mainly on outreach and the prodigal son, the wayward daughter, and reaching out to the community and pointing people to the cross. And then on Sundays, going through the Bible, overviews of each book of the Bible.

And it is so interesting, so compelling of what God's Word says and how it can change our lives. I want to encourage you to do that as well. And then Pastor Abram's going to speak a few times at the stadium in August.

And we're just excited about this because we believe, we're hoping it takes some of the crowd away so we don't have, the church isn't really designed for this many people. But if it doesn't, then we're going to have to start thinking of another service once the stadium is over. So we'll be praying about that.

So the message this morning, the day the devil almost won. Anyone ever feel beat up? Lost? Discouraged? I don't like this part of Christianity, but it is a battlefield. It's not a bed of roses.

It's not, well, now I'm in the center of God's will, everything's going to be great. Often we are shaken to our core. And I just prayed this morning.

Prayed two things, I prayed, Lord, help me not to cry, please. Because just the burden of what God's Word is so heavy. Especially in where our nation's going, the church is going, the families.

But also, Lord, why would you use me? Why would you use someone like me? I don't understand, and I might not understand this side of heaven. But you need to know that we're all flawed individuals. You need to be encouraged in that.

Because there's people who think that they're super Christians and they're not quite there. Now granted, we always need to be striving to, we're growing in godliness. We're working, not working for our salvation, but we're working out our salvation.

With fear and trembling and growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and becoming more mature. But there are days where the devil hits you with the right hook. There are days when you want to throw in the towel, when you want to quit.

You wonder if it's even worth it. You get discouraged. Anybody deal with fear, anxiety, depression? A lot of those are sometimes demonic attacks.

And we do wonder, am I even a Christian? Lord, why are you allowing this? I've talked to people who struggle a lot of times with addiction, and they ask that question too. Why are you allowing this? God, don't you love me? And we think the devil is winning. He's almost, not only the right hook, but he's almost going in for the knockout.

But I like what Robert Murray McShaney said, one of Scotland's most anointed preachers. He died at actually 29 years of age. He said, Christ will not save you and then leave you in your sins.

That's been a great comfort to me, and it's a biblical truth. Christ doesn't save us and then leave us in our sin to fend for ourselves. Now, there's a struggle.

There's a demonic influence. There's a fleshly nature that's pulling against us. But Jesus Christ does not leave us.

I love that picture of those footsteps in the sand. Right, we've all seen it. It's like, Lord, where were you during this time? I just see my footsteps.

He says, no, those were me carrying you. And it's a precious time because this is when we truly know God as healer. When you go through physical challenges, you know God as deliverer when he sets you free.

You know him as an all-sufficient savior when everything else is. So, what we don't like actually draws us closer to God. The difficulties and the challenges draw us closer to God.

We come out of that experience with a deeper, more thorough relationship with Jesus Christ. And I love that verse too that talks about the woman who's been forgiven much, loves much. Because the more we've been forgiven, the more that God has got us through things.

There's a deeper appreciation. I mean, the title of the sermon could have been, Hold the Line. Just hold the line.

Having done all that you can do, you just stand there. You stand there on the foundation of Jesus Christ. And like Job, you say, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

You stand there and you say, Lord, I can't take this anymore. But you can. I'm just holding the line.

I'm not going forward. I'm not falling back. I'm not letting the devil knock me out.

But I'm standing strong in my faith. God, I'm holding the line. And there's a strength that can rise up within you.

I think I shared this probably six months ago. A.W. Pink. Funny name, but good commentaries.

He said, writing about, I think it's called The Gleanings of Joshua. About the children of Israel going into the promised land. He said this.

On one hand, the promised land, Canaan, was a free gift. Correct? We can all agree with that? Oh, maybe it's up there. There you go.

It's a free gift of God. Where? We enter in by grace alone. Same thing.

Here's your promised land. Enter in by grace alone. They didn't deserve it, do they? If I were to be honest with you, I did not deserve salvation.

It was the mercy of God that reached down and said, This young man is repenting and coming back to me. It's the grace of God. I don't deserve it.

But then he said, on the other hand, they had to fight for every inch of it. Joshua, here's your land. Now go and fight.

For years. So battle, spiritual battle, is normal. There's a normality about it.

It's part of the Christian faith. But it's what we don't like. So on this theme, I just want to share an Old Testament and a New Testament example that is very relevant.

If you'll see in the notes, I don't know if it'll be up there, but 2 Chronicles 31. How many of us can relate to this? Hezekiah did what was good and right and true before the Lord, his God. And in every work he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment to seek his God.

He did it with all his heart and so he prospered. And Hezekiah, if we had time, which I'm actually going to go through as I'm surveying through the Bible. You're going to want to be at this because you'll learn what the prophets were for.

What's the role of Jeremiah and Isaiah? What period of history did they prophesy? What are these kings? What's the significance of it? But Hezekiah brought reform back to the children of Israel. An evil king would

be raised up or they would be born, however you want to. And then another evil king and then you'd have this good king come in, Hezekiah, Josiah.

And they would bring back the things of God, what is good and right. But then he got a right hook. After these deeds of faithfulness, you think it would say he was able to relax and enjoy his prosperity.

The vineyard was growing and they had the chairs out on the porch, probably wood chairs. And it's just relaxing and my faithfulness to God has been rewarded. But no, right hook.

After these deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib, king of Assyria came against him. Isn't that so true? Now you have to understand, Assyria, they were brutal. They would kill entire armies and take the skulls and build pyramids and things with the human skulls.

To kill, I mean to scare their enemies. They were feared, they did not mess around. Around Nineveh, it was said that their wall was 100 feet high.

You could ride a couple chariots on it. I think it was 60 miles long, 1500 watchman towers. The Assyrians were incredible.

Nineveh, that's where Jonah went to Nineveh and preached to them. And they repented for 150 years. And then Nahum, the prophet Nahum prophesied against Assyria and they fell 150 years later.

Now I'm getting to the Bible message, so let's wait on that one. But back to this point of, he pleased the Lord and here comes this king against him. Assyria of all places.

And Zephaniah, the prophet, prophesied against Assyria. And they would actually, the Bible records this, they would say this, the city, it was known that the city would say this. I am it.

I am it. There is no one beside me. We are the greatest city.

We are the greatest conqueror. There is no one who can overtake us. I am it.

Recording in the word of God and God said, you are not it. I am it and I will judge the wickedness of this nation. And nothing, you have to remind yourself of that.

Who can come against God Almighty? Sometimes we get, we're more afraid than Bill Gates than God. A vaccine more than Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Now I can comment on all that but I'm not going to.

But it's the fear. Fear. Shame, we might have to take a mark someday.

Well, it just turned to Revelation. You've been warned of that for decades. Or thousands of, 2,000 years, depending on when you think Revelation was written.

Yes, things are getting tough. Yes, evil is going to rise up against us. That's how you have to make sure, is your foundation solid? See, the microwave Christianity, as I've said before, is not going to cut it in these dire times.

This is going to be times where spiritual warfare is going to be intense. Where there's going to be the enemies coming against families hard. That you've got to be at the altar.

You've got to be in prayer. You've got to be in worship. God has got to be your all-consuming fire.

You've got to be filled powerfully with the Holy Spirit. Because if not, you will fall to the ground because the foundation will come crumbling down. If God is not anchor.

Listen, show me any verse that talks about following Jesus. Jesus sometimes. Carrying your cross when it's convenient.

Seeking God with some of your heart. He is an all-consuming passion of ours. Now, yes, we fall and we are sinful.

I mean, we're saints. Don't get me wrong. But there's a tendency to drift from God and do things that don't please God.

And it's a battle. You're going to walk into heaven with a limp. A set of crutches.

Some battle scars. Maybe missing an arm. I mean, but that's how we go into it.

We go into it as a soldier coming back from battle. But you always have to remember. And you hear it.

And some people don't understand what it means. You are never, never, never fighting from position of defeat. You're always fighting from a position of victory.

In other words, the mountaintop has already been taken. The mountaintop has already been taken. Like in the Marines, they used to say, this is a hill on which to die.

We have secured this hill. This hill is ours. But now we've got to hold the ground.

And that's what Christians do. They fight from a position of victory. Now, do I wish we could just relish in the victory and not fight? Yes.

But how wimpy would we become? Think about it. It would be sad. Because just as building muscle physically, these things build up spiritual muscle.

Count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Knowing the testing of your faith produces patience. It's interesting.

We read that and we think, well, I'm just patient with my kids. Patient with others. That's true.

But really, when you break it down and look at the original and look at commentaries and look at early church fathers, it's patient endurance. It's enduring patiently through the trials of life. So you count it all joy when I fall into various trials, because without those trials, I will not develop patient endurance.

And I shared this last week, and I don't know if it's good to know or not. Sometimes I think I talk too much. I don't know.

Hopefully. But a living, vibrant church. That's what this is.

It's not me. It's not anyone. It's God is moving.

All the people serving. All the volunteers. Your hunger.

That's what it is. I'm just the loud mouth mouthpiece to rally us up once a week. But in a living church where God is moving, guess who else is moving? You have no idea.

There is what are the kids called? Drama. I mean, when this day is over, here comes this day. When this day is over, here comes this day.

And the enemy is always working against the church as well. And it's very exhausting. We just came back from up by Mammoth with two of my kids.

I don't know how they talked me into a two-and-a-half-hour hike. Round trip. And I was exhausted.

But as I'm driving home yesterday, I realize I kind of feel like I feel after Sundays. Because you're pouring out your heart. There's a spiritual battle taking place in my mind that you have no clue about.

Don't say that. You're going to upset that person. Uh-oh, such and such is here.

They're not going to like this part. Uh-oh, here you go again. Don't get too worked up.

And it's a spiritual battle. Nobody cares. What are you doing up there? You have no degree.

Look at your past. And your spiritual battle, which you know is not true. You just take those thoughts captive.

And having a speech impediment or a speech and learning disability when I was younger and still struggling with those things. And you feel this vulnerability, but you also feel that reliance on the Spirit of God. And that's where the strength comes from.

But then you go into the prayer room. Because you're praying against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. The Bible says we wrestle not against flesh and blood.

Our battle is a spiritual battle. So you are wrestling against things. People coming out of addiction.

I prayed for a man who was just coming down off of crystal myth. And prayed over that. And you could feel he's wanting that.

You could feel the enemy is not wanting to be released. And other people coming out of Satanism. Coming out of their suicide and suicidal fear.

And if you truly believe in prayer and the spiritual battle that takes place. And you are exhausted because you're investing into that. And you are fighting against that.

Why do you think it's so hard to get to a prayer meeting? Any ideas out there why it is so hard to get to a prayer meeting? Because the last thing the enemy wants you is on your face before God praying. He doesn't care if you put air one on in your car. Or you open your little Bible app.

Look at the reflection for today Proverbs 12. Isn't that nice? All those are great. But that does not build up a strong soldier.

That is built in the prayer closet. Where you're contending. You're fighting the flesh.

You're pulling down heaven. And so this great army is coming. And I just want to share a few things on this topic.

You need to understand that valleys often follow mountaintop experiences. When things are going great, here comes a health report. When other things are going great, here comes a discouraging call or a disappointment.

Or a death in the family. Or financial ruin. Always, always valleys in mountaintop experiences.

We see this in the stock market too. Uh-oh. Uh-oh.

And it really shows what we're trusting in. Because when we read, I love the whole passage on the Lord is my shepherd. Isn't that such a one? The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want.

I shall not be in want. He makes me lay down in green pastures. Come on Shane, you're going to go to sleep.

Green pasture. He restores my soul. And that's like on a record.

Or fingernails on a chalkboard. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Wait a minute, I like the green pastures.

What do you mean? What is it? Both. Both. But the verse I quoted earlier, James.

You count it all joy when you fall into various trials. Knowing the testing of your faith produces patient endurance. In other words, you can get through life.

You can be that anchor for your family. It's the worst thing you can ever do is for your kids to see the parents falling apart. When the kids are the strength of the home.

It's sad. And patient endurance. What happens when you build patient endurance? You don't react to things, you respond.

You can stay out of trouble. Anybody ever sent that text that they wish they could pull back? I finally have my email set up on a delay. It's like a three second delay.

It's going out. Are you sure you don't want to cancel? Right, and reacting. Reacting instead of responding.

We get in trouble when we react. That angry word. That bad decision.

And then also, this patient endurance helps us wait on God. Wait on God. And then fear doesn't control us.

When you're waiting on God, fear can't control you. God is controlling you. And then you can rest in faith.

There's something about resting in God's sovereignty. And I get worried just like most of you. I mean, you see the things and you're like, wow.

What is going on? But then you bring yourself back and you rest in God's sovereignty. Rest in his faith. And I found that most people are so fearful who are not ready to meet their maker.

That's often where it comes from. I don't have a good relationship with God. I'm not ready.

Or I'm distant from God. I'm not living how I should. And you can change that today.

You can absolutely change that today. It's a decision. Isn't that interesting? It's a decision.

It's that easy. But on this topic, I can't avoid this truth as well. That Paul here, I'm sorry, James is talking about counting it all joy in various trials.

He's talking about natural storms. Those are a little bit different than self-created storms. You know how many people I've seen quote this out of context? They're creating all this havoc in their home.

And they go, but Shane, count it all joy. No, you're the problem. You're the storm.

You're the storm. You don't count it all joy. So they're self-created storms.

Now if that's you, what has to happen is repentance needs to take place. I have created this storm. I have created this problem.

I own up to it. That's how you get back into the center and will of God. That's how you begin to experience peace and joy again.

That's how you start to get discernment and wisdom again. That's how you start to want to be at church, want to be at the worship nights or worship mornings, whatever it is. It's that repentance of getting back on the right path.

That's what repentance is. I'm on the wrong path. I'm going to stay on the wrong path or I'm going to repent and get back on the right path.

And then many times that storm is eased. The storm is calmed. Or at least you can see.

But now I can see my way through. Now I can see my way through. I'm back on the right path.

That's different than a natural or a spiritual storm, I should say. You're doing nothing and all hell is breaking loose. Have you ever been there? Just me? I'll raise up two hands.

That is where these need to be applied even more so. It's not about a matter of repentance. It's a matter of holding on and refocusing your faith back on God.

So that's what you have to discern. What is causing the storm I'm in? Because one of the hardest parts about pastoring, I've shared a couple of other things, but one of them is seeing clear as day that they created this storm, yet they're unrepentant and they're still in the storm wondering how to get out of the storm. But they don't see they caused the storm.

Your attitude, your actions, your attitude, your choices caused the storm. No, I don't think so. Well, it did.

No, no, no. They did it. My spouse did it.

My kids did it. And they're caught in that blame and not taking responsibility. We are so good at making excuses and why it's the other person's fault.

Not saying that's not the case many times, but we can stay stuck in a storm, stuck in a storm when all you have to do is repent. Say, God, I've created this. My attitude's been wrong.

I'm prideful. I caused this. I own it.

God, would you please help me? And then although you might be in the storm, now you're positioned correctly. And then from that, like David said, that the joy of my salvation may return. Because he was in unrepentant sin for a good year.

And then, you ever read the Bible and say, wow, that's wonderful. They went through hell. He killed Uriah, married Bathsheba, the child died.

And he's just, no, no, I'm the king. King David. That's why we call it King David, whatever, it'll come back to me.

Yeah, what was that? Oh, yeah, King David syndrome. It's when somebody thinks that, you know, it's everybody else's fault, and they've been a Christian 30 years, and they know all about the Bible, and it's just, you know, King David syndrome. They think that they're not wrong.

They deserve this. But as soon as that person can repent, that's why David said, Oh, God, create in me a clean heart. God, create in me a clean heart.

I see my sin. Renew a right spirit within me. Oh, God, let the joy of your salvation return.

Even my bones that you have broken, Lord, even they will rejoice when I have a right relationship with you, God. Nothing can restore me except you, God, and you alone. And I confess, and I turn back to you.

That's how you get out of that storm. And just from experience, are you guys ready for this one? I would say most storms are self-created. Swallow.

Correct? And we want out of the storm. But God doesn't do that. And God's not in a hurry.

And God doesn't negotiate. Listen, guys, I've seen, I've visited people on their deathbed who would not repent and mend broken relationships, get themselves out of the storm. Then 10 years, 20 years later, I remember when a pastor friend of mine, I think it was 20 years ago at the hospital in town, went to visit a guy and he couldn't speak anymore.

And he wrote, he wrote on a little chalkboard piece of paper, and he just began to weep. And he apologized to his family that he had not been a better husband, a better father. And that haunted me for a while because I'm thinking, if he would have just did that 30 years ago, and so many other storms, even counseling, you know, if we talk to couples, marriage couples, many times it's a self-created storm.

Often. Financial problems. Many times.

Did you know that? Many times financial problems are self-created storms. I can give you a quick word of advice that will really help you. If you don't have it, don't spend it.

And live below your means. If you can't give to God, and you know what? We don't pass a plate. I rarely speak about tithing offerings.

I will when it comes up because I think it's valuable, I think it's biblical, and I think it's helped our marriage tremendously. But if you're not giving, all giving is really God doesn't need the money. It shows us our own heart.

And I've found that the people in the most financial troubles are usually those who aren't giving. Because they can't give because they're in financial trouble, understanding that, no, that will unlock the door. Not that you give a whole, okay.

Well, I've never had a clap during tithing message. And not one sentence of that was in the first service. So I'm hoping that, and I pray that all the time.

God, this is your service. I don't want these to be cookie cutter sermons. There's different people going through different things.

But that's a big deal. Financial, and we buy things we don't need. We shared this, or I shared this, at a marriage, I think, message many years ago.

We really struggled with this when we bought our first house, I think it was. The agent was, you can qualify for this. Like, oh, wow, look at that.

Whatever it is, it was over by the prison, housing tract, and we just, our first house. And oh, yeah, but here's our bills. We give 10% right off the, oh, you don't have to do that.

That's not a bill. The bank doesn't count that as a bill. Oh, they don't? No, no, no, no, it's just credit card.

Like, what's your for sure debt? I'm like, oh, yeah, if we swing this, if we move this out, we don't have to pay, we can pay tithe when we make money later. And you start to justify, right? Bigger, better, faster, stronger, live above our means. And at that point, it was when we decided to just live, where if this isn't the top bill, we can't afford it.

And so, but in saying that, my point was, I actually don't remember exactly. But there, what was I on, Pastor Abram? You should remember. Wait, what was it? Oh, live below your, but what was that in relation to? So anyway, that's, oh, yeah, money storms, money storms.

The majority of people in money storms, often those are self-created storms. Often, not always. People go through financial challenges.

It's no fault of their own. But I'm saying the majority of, just from my perspective, relationship storms, majority of time, it's self-created. And you can tell by the attitude.

Oh, you can tell by the attitude. Because they say, right, I know I'm so broken over this. I just need to spend more time with God.

Oh, what can we do? Can we pray? Can we fast? No, you're earlier that year. Well, it's not my fault. No, that's not my, that's their problem.

That's their problem. I do everything I can do. I've tried and I've tried and I've tried.

Attitude, stiff necked, arrogant. Self-created storms. If you're in a self-created storm, repent.

Repent. Say, God, I'm the problem. That's why I love that communion.

I've done a communion message from the New Testament when Jesus said, one of you will betray me. And they all said, Lord, is it I? How honest. How honest.

They said, well, that guy or that guy. I said, Lord, is it I? Is it me? That honest and openness. When you're honest and open, because God knows more about you than you know about you.

You are not fooling anyone. God knows the deepest desires of our heart. He knows my motives right now.

But when you come in and say, Lord, I am truly sorry I created this storm, or at least participated in it. Amen. Take some responsibility.

I'm tired of people in relationship storms who take no responsibility, as if the other person did 100%. And they have no responsibility whatsoever. So let me just encourage you this morning that this isn't meant, I'm not here to be Debbie Downer.

But to encourage you, if there is a storm, difficulties right now, take it to the Lord and ask Him, God, am I causing this storm? Have my choices in the past caused this storm? Because I want out of it. I want to be back in the center of your will. Hard is the way of the transgressor.

Listen, you might be caught in sin. A sinful lifestyle, sinful choices. God's word just says, repent.

Come back to me. Let me fix this storm. That's what I love.

I've been there many times. Don't think I'm preaching at you. I'm preaching to all of us.

I've been in that storm. And when you confess it, you repent, you get back on track. The joy that follows.

That's what you read about in the Bible. Return to me the joy of your salvation. David cried out.

Oh God, return to me the joy of your salvation. I want that joy again. But look at what Hezekiah did.

Now because of this threat, King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah. So Isaiah was prophesying during the time of Hezekiah. They prayed and they cried out to heaven.

It's a great reminder that your praise must be louder than the storm. You can write that down. You can tweet it.

Facebook it. But your praise must be louder than the storm. Now I'm not talking about coming in here and being loud.

Lord, we praise you today. I'm praying. Shayne said if I'm louder.

Not volume here. Heart engagement here. So the storm is great.

My praise is going to be greater. That's why I am. And I've talked to Pastor Abram about this.

We are sometimes just shocked. It just like doesn't make any sense if they believe the Bible. They're going through huge storms.

Why aren't you here at prayer meetings or worship nights or whatever? Why aren't you praying? Why aren't you contending? Why aren't you fasting? The answer is right there. Just take of the living water. See, your praise has to be greater than the storm.

But what happens, we get in our storm and we get bitter and critical and cynical and negative and Debbie Downer gossiping. I'm not going to church now. Let me show God.

Oh, yeah, how's that going to work out for you? Do you know God never negotiates? You know, it's been a couple months. You're right. Let me give in.

He never gives in. It's that drawing of the Holy Spirit. We'll keep convicting and convicting and convicting until you finally say, God, not me, but your will be done.

I submit my entire life to you. God, get me back on track. I'm tired of running.

I'm tired of being the prodigal son, eating with the pigs. Oh, my father, if I just come back to my father's house, he will take me and he will give me the fat of calf and throw a party and be excited for me returning to him. We are our worst enemy.

We are our own worst enemy. I used to say this a lot, and I guess I've kind of forgotten about it, but the sermon reminded me that I'm not as worried about the devil as I am the devil within. The old man.

The old Shane from the 1990s. Remember me? He shows you all the good stuff, right? Come on. It doesn't show you the bad.

And it's that enemy within, the carnal nature that even though we're dead to, the Bible says we're dead to sin, or you can say no, but that temptation, that pull, that whatever you want to call it, that magnet is still there, drawing us back sometimes to that old nature. But they cried out to heaven, and they prayed. The prophet prayed.

The king prayed. Your praise must be louder than the storm. In other words, are you investing more time thinking about your problems or thinking about God? If I was in a deep storm, I would be at this church, or at least in your home, waking up, putting on worship, and turning off the ungodly entertainment.

I did something recently. I don't know. I was somewhere, and I put on Netflix.

I'm like, let me see how many of these are even worth watching. Maybe one. I don't know.

Maybe a couple. But think about that. We're inundating ourselves.

The top thing was like some guy about a lion king or a tiger king or something. It's like, that's the top show? And half the people who watch things are Christians? And we wonder why we have no passion for the things of God? Why there's no hunger for the things of God? You watch a tiger king at night, you're probably not going to be hungry for the king of kings in the morning. This is convicting.

Exactly. So they prayed, and they cried out to heaven. It was not uncommon for them to fast.

They would often fast in a storm. Anybody ever heard of Esther? Well, if I perish, I perish. Call a fast for three days and let's cry out to God.

Nehemiah fasted before he went and repaired the wall of Jerusalem. Ezra said, the king has given us all this provision. We're not going to ask for security now.

It'll look like we're not trusting God. Let's fast for security and protection. David fasted, and Moses fasted, and Jesus fasted.

Again, I don't want to overemphasize fasting. I struggle with that. I want to make sure.

And what happens any time throughout church history, any time we neglect something, sometimes when we try to bring it back, we overemphasize it. And that clearly is the case with fasting. The church, it was not uncommon to say Wednesday and Sunday prayer and fasting.

When people would come to church, they would be fasting. Not full on Krispy Kreme and Dunkin' Donuts and a burrito. Even though we served burritos next door this morning.

Hey, that's different. That's not a calorie-dense burrito, so I guess you're okay. But it's good to fellowship.

It's good to have food. Thank God for it. But when it becomes our idol, and we have to have it, how many of you had to have your Christian crack before you got here? It's black, it's in a cup, you know? I mean, there's so many things, and sometimes those things, I know it might seem like a joke to some people, but it's true.

If something's got you, it's got you, and you've got to have it, and you've got to have it, and you've got to have it before God, that's called idolatry. It's something has me instead of God. Now, some of these things might be light struggles.

I'm not trying to overemphasize things and promote fasting too much, but there is something to that position of starving the fleshly appetites to draw closer to God. So as a result of this, the Lord sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, every leader, and every captain in the camp of the king of Assyria, and the king went home defeated. Isn't that amazing? Actually, what he could have done is, I believe what, they're in Judah, I believe Israel, the northern kingdom made a covenant.

We're going to get into this when we're going through the Bible, with Assyria. They wanted to line up with Assyria. Judah did because they saw that Israel had fallen.

The northern and southern kingdoms, I'll get to that later, but the whole point of that is they could have tried to maybe do a peace treaty, or submitted, okay, we'll submit to Assyria, we'll give you money, we'll give you taxation, and we'll intermingle with your gods. We'll compromise. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

And there's many scriptures on this, but they could have did many things, but instead they prayed and they cried out to God. And I believe any time we pray and cry out to God for something that is true and noble and right from a right heart, that God hears that prayer and wants to honor that. And he said, so what he did, a different portion of the Bible records, that 185,000 Assyrians were slayed by the death angel, or the spirit of God, whatever this was, that went in and killed 185,000 of their army by crying out to God.

Now, though sometimes God doesn't deliver. That's what I was going to mention here. God will remove the obstacles, but sometimes he doesn't.

Sometimes the army's coming. Sometimes you're going to go through that battle, but he will carry you through. And those are really the options.

God's going to remove it, remove the enemy, change the court case, alter the judge's decision, different things, family dynamics, sometimes remove the obstacle or sometimes he's going to take you through. And we always want this one, right? But sometimes it's this one. And as we're going through this one, while he's carrying us through that challenge.

So as I'm being beat up by slander or gossip, for example, you can stand strong on who Jesus is, who he says you are. The family dynamics sometimes aren't getting better. They're getting worse.

Anyone been there? Local, I mean, not just, but extended family. I better be careful here. I'm going to get in trouble.

But things aren't improving. They're getting worse. But you keep, how do you develop patience if you're not tested? Did you ever meet those people with great patience? Hear their story.

They've been tried. They've been tried. They've been through it.

They've had kids. And teenagers. Don't you just chuckle at people giving you parenting advice with no kids yet? It's like.

All right then. But I wanted to encourage you this morning because many times, a lot of times God doesn't remove the enemy. Doesn't remove that obstacle, that challenge.

Sometimes he walks you through it. And there's also a reason. So you can be that light in the midst of the darkness.

You can be that salt in the midst of something that needs that nutrient. You can be that difference maker. They see how you handle yourself.

And you're there to minister to other people. Two scriptures I want to share with you. Job 42.2. I know that you can do all things.

No purpose of yours can be thwarted. He's talking about. Is that really the time? Wow, I'm halfway through.

Maybe we have to come back next weekend. Wow. All right.

Make sure to be here next Sunday for the rest of this. I'm kind of joking but kind of not. So Job 42.2. I know that you can do all things.

No purpose of yours can be thwarted. So God is reminding through Job, reminding us that no plan of God can be thwarted. Listen, some of you need to rest on that.

I rest on that sometimes weekly at this church. God, you built this church. What plan can come against that? What enemy is going to destroy that? What government official is going to stop God Almighty? And you remember that what God initiates, he will complete it.

He who began a good work and you will complete it to the day of Jesus Christ. Some of you need to repent and get right back on that right track. Some of you just need to hold the line.

Some of you need to stop letting fear and anxiety and worry and doubt control your every decision. Start living as if God Almighty sits on the throne because he still does the last time I checked. Well, I will come back to a lot of this.

But the other example I wanted to give was in the New Testament. We don't need to put up the scriptures right now. Maybe I'll talk about this a little bit more.

But the biggest example of the day the devil almost won, many of us know, correct? That day on the cross. And I was just this week reading in John 14. Can you imagine the disciples? Jesus is saying, do not let your heart be troubled.

You believe in God, believe in me. I'm going to prepare a place for you. And they're all excited.

And then I just kept reading. That was the calm. And then the storms coming.

Here comes Judas with his detachment of troops and they take Jesus by force. And now the people are looking and saying, now our king has been captured. So they went from calm.

This is great. This is the Messiah going to conquer Rome to now our king is captured and he's not doing anything. And they watched the whole process unfold.

Can you imagine the disappointment? Here's our king. Now he's carrying his cross. Beaten.

Ridiculed. There's spit on him. His beard was pulled out.

The thorn. He's carrying this cross. Thank God we see both ends of the storybook here.

But not the disciples. The devil has won. All hell was rejoicing.

I guarantee. Because Paul says, had they known what they were doing by crucifying the son of God, they would have never done it. And so now our king has been captured.

And then he dies on the cross. And they say, now our king is defeated. The day the devil almost won.

But then and I highlighted my Bible. I'm sure some of you do too, as well. Every time God would say, but.

You know, you're reading, you're getting discouraged. Hold on. But or nevertheless, or even so, or yet, you know, these transition words.

But on the third day. So you get this. He's coming.

But do you trust in God's word? Though, you see, you cannot look at what's going on or you will go crazy. You have faith as the evidence of things not seen. The things that are hoped for.

And what I'm liking about these difficult times is more people are getting anchored in the word of God. Let me tell you right now that you better either believe what it says is true or forever hold your peace. As they say in wedding vows, right? It's the word of God is true.

It is in my guide. I anchor my entire faith on the son of God, Jesus Christ. And so when it says, but.

But on the third day, after the ground shook, after the dead were raised in the graveyard. And after the veil in the temple was rent and ripped open, allowing us to have access to the father. The day the devil almost won the party in hell.

They've got the whole keg of beer lined up. All the drugs and everything. Let's just party.

What is going on? But on the third day, the Bible says he conquered sin, held death in the grave. All in one fell swoop. And I've got something very important from Habakkuk.

And when you're not seeing fruit in your life. And when there's no reward. And when your provision is dried up.

I want to talk about that next week. The day the devil almost won. As a believer, let me tell you this with the authority of God's word.

Never give up. Never give up. Oh, the devil has hit me with right and left.

I failed. But I will get back up. And I will focus on the savior.

And I will try to improve. I will not go back to the pig's food. But I'm not going to let failure and defeat stop me from following the Christ who gave himself for that failure and defeat.

He's telling some of you get up and fight again. Get up. Yes, I see.

I see you're eating with the pigs, prodigal. I see you've made many bad decisions. I know you're not where you want to be.

Get back up. Take my hand. Though the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

Though he falls. He will not be utterly cast down because the Lord pulls him back up. Now, I'm not giving anyone permission to go and continue sinning.

I'm encouraging you to go ahead and grab the hand of God again and get back on the right track. But the sad reality is. And some may be listening or hear.

The devil is winning. Unless you make a chance. Unless you make a decision.

He will win and have your soul. Unless you repent and believe in the Son of God. That's just the truth.

Like I remember the clip I did. I just saw it the other day on JetHawk Stadium. When I was talking about that man who went to mock George Whitefield.

I don't know if you remember that. George Whitefield was preaching all the wrath that is to come. The wrath that is to come.

And there are tears from it because he's telling people the truth. Turn from it. Turn from it.

And this man who went to mock George Whitefield and eventually got converted. He lived a life of misery and debauchery and came back to the Lord. And now we sing that famous hymn.

Prone to wander. Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.

Lord, here is my heart. Take and seal it. Seal it in the courts above.

That reassurance that God is your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But if you don't know Him, repent of your sin today. Say, God, I've been playing church.

I don't really know you. I need to get my heart right. I need to repent.

And God will save you and set you free. And that's the day the devil almost won. Praise God.

Praise God.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/31/SID31774.mp3>

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