



# Message **Transcript**

## Engage in the Fight

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Pastor Jeff:

Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we ask that as we open your word this morning that you will speak directly to us. Lord, we thank you for the gift of your son who died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead. We thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit who indwell all of us who believe. And Father, we thank you that you've given us the honor to glorify your name here today. Father, thank you for the prayers and praises of your people. And Father, we ask now that you would speak through your living and active word because Lord, we believe as a people that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you speak. So our invitation, God, is speak. We're ready to hear what you have to say.

So now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what the Lord tells you and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen? Amen.

The gospel is the greatest message on the planet that culminated with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those three days have so much impact for us now and for all eternity, that there's no greater news that I could ever tell. When Jesus was here in the world and he rose from the dead, He then gathered his disciples and he told them this, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son

and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And lo I will be with you always to the very end of the age. We call that the great commission because that's the commission Jesus left with not only his present disciples at the time, but for all disciples that would come after them. That Jesus Christ desired, that when we repented of our sins and trusted him and the Holy Spirit became resonant in our life, that we would be on mission with Jesus Christ in this world for all that God wanted to do. And what that entails is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. That means proclaiming the gospel to those who are dead in their transgressions and sin, those who are apart from Christ. All are born dead apart from Christ. We proclaim the Gospel so the Holy Spirit will work, awaken their heart, cause them to repent and believe that he's the Christ and he's put us on mission to do that very thing.

That's part of the gospel. The other part of the gospel is sharing with the saints how they can continue to grow in their faith and edify them so that they can become more spiritually attuned to the things of God and fall in love with God more and even grow more in their obedience and holiness.

And so when we come to church, we have this promise from God. He even told us that He would build his church and even the gates of hell would not prevail against his church. We have the victory in Christ. The church is victorious. And so He's invited us through the church to be on mission for him into the world. And yet why is it that so few people who are born again actually engage in a local church and go all in, in the service for their king? Why is it that sometimes we play passive and we don't get involved and we don't go after the things of God?

And yeah, we may dabble our toe here and there, but as I've told you before, there's no sideline on the kingdom. There's no sideline in the kingdom. When God saved you, He put you on the kingdom field. But if you're not playing the game, if you're not getting in the game, it's scary to be in the game if you're not playing. And God wants you to be involved. And God, when he saved you, he gifted you. He has a purpose for you through his church to help advance the cause of Christ and advance his coming kingdom. And yet there's so many Christians that are passive. And I believe that I know why. Because even people that want to get fired up and even people that want to get involved understand this. Criticism comes when you fully engage in the mission of Jesus Christ. Second Timothy 3:12 says, "Anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

When you engage in Christian mission, when you engage in the things God calls you to, when you start living the way God wants you to live, you will be criticized. You'll be criticized from within the church and you'll be criticized outside the church. I can tell you in 34 years of being a Christian, I've been criticized more inside the church than I ever have been criticized outside the church. And that's why many of us step back because we're afraid that if we step forward and people start poking at us, that we're not going to be able to stand firm in the faith. So it's easier to just sit on the sidelines and watch other people do it. And here's what you'll hear people say. Here's when you know people want to be spectators.

They'll tell you about the type of church they're looking for. "Here's what I'm

looking for in a church. I'm looking for for a truth church. I'm looking for a pastor that preaches the word. I want to hear the truth. I want to know what the truth is. Now, I don't intend on doing anything with it, but I just want to hear it and I want to know we stand strong on those things. That's what I'm looking for."

Then there's other people saying, "Nah, I want a grace church. I mean I want a church that appreciates the truth, but I want to go somewhere that no matter how bad I've sinned and no matter what I've done that week, that group of people are just going to love me and they're going to care for me." And what both groups of people are saying, "I'm looking for a place that I can sit really, really comfortable and enjoy everything. And if I don't, I'm going to start looking for another church." See, Jesus Christ didn't call you to a grace Church or a truth church.

He called you to a Christ-centered missional church. And when Jesus Christ is in the center, you can preach the full authority of God's word and call people to the standard that God describes. And you can also be a grace filled church that says there's no way you're ever going to hit that standard a hundred percent of the time and even if this is the 10000th time that you've sinned that way, God's grace is sufficient for you. Welcome back, but let's get back on the field and serve Christ in mission.

See the purpose of the church's mission, and if you miss that, you miss everything. We're living in perilous times. There's no doubt about it. We're living in confusing times. We're living in times driven by satanic agendas and all these different things. But I'll tell you this, if you study world history, which I did with my daughter this year again and refreshed my mind on it, if you study world history, no matter what

decade you lived in, you would say if you didn't know how history was going to unfold, "I'm living in the end. It's over."

I mean just in the history of our nation when World War I happened, the war to end all wars, it's over. When Hitler rose to power, it's over. And we have this tendency in our heart to live in fear rather than to engage in the fight. It's time to fight. And it's time to fight the way God wants us to fight. Because it's not even that you fight, it's how you fight that makes all the difference in the world. So before jumping into all the different elements of spiritual warfare and the things that we're going to cover in this series, you need to know how to fight. And most Christians don't know how. Just because you're fired up, I mean if you ever hear a message and you get all fired up like, "I'm in now," and you get to your car and by the time you get to your car you're like, "I don't know what I'm fired up about anymore, but I was really fired up 20 minutes ago."

It's because you have all the excitement but you don't know how. I mean, just because I would get excited to get in the ring in an octagon with one of the championship fighters doesn't mean I would be successful because I don't know how to fight. So my enthusiasm can only take me so far. And if you ever want to know how to engage in the battle and how to fight and how to avoid criticism so that you're not just, "Well I'd do it, but if I do it, people are going to poke holes at me and I'm not really living all that great right now and I'm struggling with this and I'm sinning there. I don't know. I'll just kind of continue to watch." If that's you, I believe God has a word for you today and in this series for how can you fight? What does he want you to do

and how can you engage in the battle that's before us?

And if you've wanted to know that, I believe God has answers for you today. So open up your Bible to Second Corinthians Chapter 10, Second Corinthians Chapter 10. We're going to look at verses one through six today. And I'm going to highlight three different ways for how you can fight. Second Corinthians Chapter 10, verses one through six.

Now the entire book of Second Corinthians is really about Paul defending his apostleship and showing that he's called of God. He doesn't need to defend himself. He's sharing the things of God. He's talking to this carnal church in Corinth that has trusted in the Lord but is not living out what they need to live out. And Paul's writing back to them. And what we're going to glean from this text today is how Paul is going to engage in the battle with them. You say, "Well what does that have to do with anything?"

Because if you don't know how to fight in the church, you will never know how to fight outside the church. If you can't even engage here, how are you going to engage out there? So we got to start here. This is going to be foundational for everything we're going to be talking about in the coming weeks so that we can wage war, but not the way the world wages war. That we can be on team Jesus for doing what he wants us to do. So let's read these six verses together and then we'll unpack these three truths about how to fight.

He says, "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of

Christ, I who am meek when face to face with you but bold towards you when absent, I ask that when I'm present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations of every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. And we are ready to punish all disobedience whenever your obedience is complete."

And here, Paul, as we hear his heart, as he's writing back to this church where he has spent time leading people to Christ, getting the church planted, getting the church started, helping people grow in their faith, he's writing back to them telling them what they need to do and how they need to continue with Jesus and they're not listening to him. And so here's what he writes back. He tells us how we fight. Now, when you engage in the fight, I'm going to give you point number one which is going to be overarching for everything we talk about. You miss this, you miss everything in how Christians are called to fight. And here's why it's important because when we get upset about what we see in the media and what we see going on in the world and we start bowing up, if we miss this point, we're ineffective in our ability to fight the way God wants us to fight.

When you engage in the fight, maintain meekness by modeling Christ's example. When you engage in the fight, maintain meekness by modeling Christ's example. Notice



what he says. He says, "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." What's he talking about? He says, first of all, this is an individual thing. I'm the one writing to you. You're critiquing me, you're criticizing me. I'm not afraid to stand up when you criticize me and critique me and stand firm, but here's how I'm going to do it. I'm going to appeal to you. I'm going to plead with you. I'm not just coming over the top. I'm pleading with the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. Now, what's meekness? Most people think meekness is weakness. Meekness is bridled power. Meekness is when you have the authority, you have the power, you have the intellect, you have the wisdom with which you can crush another person but you choose not to.

It is power restrained by the Holy Spirit. If you don't have that power restrained by the Holy Spirit when he's trying to work through you, you lose every time. And the devil doesn't want you to know that. The devil wants you to fight in your flesh and the devil wants you to use your words and your intellect and your wisdom to do what? To win a battle by putting other people down rather than winning the war of mission that Christ has put us on the planet to do.

So how's he appealing? I'm appealing to you in meekness. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:5 said, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Meekness. I mean even in Philippians chapter two, as Paul writes further on this topic as to what it looks like, he says this. He says, "Make my joy complete by having the same mind maintaining the same love, united in the same spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but with humility of

mind. Regard one another as more important to yourselves." Do not merely look out for your own interest but also the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourself which was also in Christ Jesus who although he existed in the very form of God, did not regard equality with God, a thing to be grasped but emptied himself and taking the form of a bond servant and being made into likeness of men, being found in the appearance of man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on the cross.

For this reason, God highly exalted and bestowed on him the name which is above every name. He said in the name of Jesus Christ, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. What did he do? He showed meekness. He bridled his power. When you study the life of Jesus and you see who he is and you see what he does, you realize that he didn't always come over the top with all of his authority and all of his power and all of his wisdom and all of his intellect and put people in a corner and just make them feel small to show that he was awesome.

He had bridled power, restraining power. I mean, here's just an example. You remember when he was in the Garden of Eden, the night he was being betrayed and here come his accusers and good for him, He had Peter next to him. Peter picks out a sword and tries to cut off Malchus's head, misses his head, cuts off his ear. Jesus puts the ear back on him and reattaches the ear. And then this is what he says to Peter. In Matthew chapter 26, Matthew chapter 26 verses 52, he said to him, "Put your sword

back into its place. For all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword."

Now think about who's talking. The one who is talking is the one that created the heavens and the earth out of nothing in six literal days. The one who is talking has created every single life on the planet and is sustaining them. The one who is talking is the God of all gods. There is no other. Peter thinks in the moment I could protect him with my sword.

It's pointless. But what's your sword going to do? I mean, I don't need your little toothpick. It doesn't help us. Let me reattach the ear. Thanks for trying. Thanks for playing. Here's what he says. "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels?" A legion is 6,000. Twelve Legions is 72,000. We know from the Old Testament there was one angel that was dispatched that killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night. Jesus says, "I can get more than 72,000 of those guys come to work for me. I don't need your sword. It's not helpful. Your human efforts to advance the Gospel are not helpful." And why does he say they're not helpful? Here's why He says. Notice what he says in the very next verse. It's really important.

"How then will the scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must happen this way?" Why not use your sword? Why not cut off his ear? Why not show that we're Christians? Why not show we're powerful? Because the word dictates that I need to die on a cross and you're getting in the way of what God wants done. Stop doing your human efforts and start submitting to what the word of God says. That's meekness.

Even when Jesus was in the garden praying later, praying earlier that night, when

he was praying, what was he praying? Not? Hey, I'm going to go to the cross and here's what I'm going to do. "Father, I don't want to do this. Not my way though, Father, your way. I will submit to whatever you want. I want the word to be fulfilled." Meekness is saying, "I want God's word to have authority over my life whether I win, lose or draw, that Jesus would get the glory and the honor in every relationship and every conversation I have." That's meekness. And the enemy knows he has no power against meekness.

The enemy knows he can't win against meekness. The enemy knows he can win against all of your human efforts and all of your bravado and all of your intellect and he can beat you. But when you humble yourself before the throne of God and you allow him to work in and through you and you love people the way Jesus loved people and you believe in God the way you're called to in the scriptures, and you want to see the word of God unfold in your life, that's a different way of fighting. That's a different way of fighting. I'm going to give you three words here that will help you say, how do I grow in meekness? Because it seems like something that's a little bit intangible, isn't it? I'm going to give you three words. Here's the three words. Faith, hope and love. Grow in all three. As you grow in faith, hope, and love, your meekness will automatically come from that.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us, "Now, faith is the assurance of things. Hope for the evidence of things not seen. My faith is the belief that Jesus Christ is Lord." First John 5:4 says it this way, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith." Friends, Jesus Christ, when he died on

the cross and rose from the dead, He is victorious. If you're on his team through repentance and faith, you are victorious. Faith in what? Faith in the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord. Lord, not just savior. The Lord does save, but he's not savior without being Lord. He's Lord and savior. That's who he is. Are you growing in your faith that Jesus is Lord? What's Lord? Lord is ruler, master, king, judge, overseer, creator, sustainer, doesn't need you. That's the Lord.

He says, "Jump." You say, "How high?" That's Lord. Is Jesus the Lord of your life? Say, well, how do I know? Look in different aspects of your life. Look in your singleness, or your marriage, or your family, with your kids, or with your mom and dad, or with school, or with your job.

Is Jesus Christ Lord? Is he calling the shots in every area of your life? If not, grow in that. As you grow in faith to believe that Jesus sees the world and that everything he says came true or is going to come true, you begin to have a massive amount of trust. I mean when you look out at the world, we live in a crazy world. I don't know if you know that. We're going to talk about it during this series. There's some crazy stuff going on in our world, but if you know Jesus Christ is Lord, you also know this is no surprise to him. And by the way, this is the best time that you could ever live. Do you know why? Because God created you to live in this time for a purpose for Him to declare that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen.

If you want to grow in meekness, grow in the lordship of Jesus Christ in your life. Just little baby steps of him taking over more and more in every area. That's faith. How

about this? Hope. Hope. Our world is hopeless. The reason our world is trying to figure out all these different things and do all these different things is because they're hopeless. And apart from Christ, this world is hopeless. And you'll never find your hope in this world. You will find your hope in Christ in this world for what he is going to do. Hope is what is going to happen based upon my faith that I believe the word of God is true. That instills my hope. If faith is that Jesus Christ is Lord, my hope is that the word is true. Think about Romans 15:13." Now, may the God of hope..." Who's the God we serve? The God of hope. He's not the God of despair.

He's not the God in heaven that's biting his fingernails. He's not the God of anger and wrath. He's not the God that's like, "Oh, I can't believe this is going on in your country. I can't believe this is going on in the world. I'm in such a panic." No, he's the God of all hope. He sees it all and he's like, "Better days are ahead. I got this. You can have hope in me." Now, may the God of all hope fill you with what? All joy and peace in believing. Do you have joy? One of the evidences of the Holy Spirit in your life, do you have joy? You have peace. It doesn't mean your circumstances have changed, but you still have joy and you still have peace so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Friends, I'm totally hopeful about this world, not because I see the world and I have hope in the people in the world.

I have hope that Jesus Christ is Lord over this world and that he still has things he's going to accomplish, and that he wants to use us as his church to accomplish those things. I have great hope for that. You may remember when I talked through the book of Revelation. We're seeing all the things that we're going to unfold. I had talks

with young people and talks to my own children. Should I even hope to get married? Should I even hope to have kids? Is Jesus coming in my lifetime? Here's what I said. Jesus very well could come in our lifetime and Jesus very well may never come in our lifetime. So do what you're called to do. If you want to get married, get married. Have lots of kids, get a job, serve the Lord with gladness, be involved in the church. Do all those things with great hope, that great days are coming.

That's what God's called us to do. Not to live in despair, not to live in anxiety, not to live in worry, not to say, "Look at this place. It's just so bad and it's going to get worse." No, look at this place. Our God is still Lord over all of it and he is going to redeem every inch of it. That's hope. Amen. When you grow in your faith and you grow in your hope, then you need to do this too simultaneously is grow in love. Love is the litmus test of your understanding of who God is. Jesus said in John chapter 13, verses 34 and 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another."

How will people know that you're a Christian? Not by your church attendance, not by joining a cadre, not by going to BRAVE. Not by saying, I got to say, how will people know? By the love that you have for other people. That's how they know. And the only way you can love other people is to have a genuine relationship and love relationship with God. Because when you understand that God could love somebody like you, then it's easy for you to love anybody else. So a commandment I give you, you love one another in the same way that Jesus loved you. How did he love you? He loved you

enough that in your rebellion and sin and mocking him and walking away, he died for you. That's how you love other people. And here's the truth about the church. Here's the truth about the church. If a church could ever love like that, the world would look on and say, I want to be a part of that. Because the world's looking for love.

But just like the song says, they're looking for love in all the wrong places. They need to look for love in the church. When they see people that have different backgrounds and different skin colors and different socioeconomic groups and different political parties and different opinions and all that, but they love one another and they care for one another and they're willing to sacrifice for one another. That's how the world will know that Jesus Christ is Lord. You do that. You grow in your faith, you grow in your hope, you grow in your love. Guess what? Your meekness will increase. That's what happens. That's a byproduct. As your humility grows in those areas. I mean this is how we can even tell who a believer is and who a believer isn't. And if you ask people if they're a Christian, many times people say, "Well, yeah, I'm a Christian."

"Well, how do you know?" "Well, I go to church." Or, "Well, I got saved to this [inaudible 00:23:22]. "Well, how do you know?" Jesus says, "I'll tell you how you know." In the very next chapter in John chapter 14:23 and 24, Jesus answered and said to them, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. And my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me."



How do you know if somebody's a Christian? They obey the word of God. If the word says do this, they do it. If the word says don't do it, they don't do it. If they're doing those things, you know they love God. If the word says do this and they don't and the word says don't do this, and they do, here's what you know. They don't love God. It's that simple. It's not subjective, it's not feely.

If you're not married and you're living together, I can tell you on the authority of God's word, it's dead wrong. And I don't care what emotional thing you come up with, like, "We're saving money on our phone bill." Come on. You don't love the God that I'm preaching about today if you do. If you do, you'll repent and you'll move out. "But my phone bill will become more expensive." Good. God can foot the bill. It's not that big of a deal. Amen.

And here's the problem. We love to keep biblical authority over others and not over ourselves. So when the word of God comes and we hear the word of God preach, there are times it's refreshment to our soul and there's other times it feels like a sword that's piercing the deepest part of our soul. And both are equally important because that's the Lord telling you, "Okay, this is what it looks like to come under my authority in this area and you haven't been doing that and I need you to repent and get this one right."

That should be ongoing for all of us. That's what builds meekness. And here's the problem. Most Christians don't fight with meekness. They view meekness as weakness. And here's how most Christians want to fight. They want to fight with their

mouth and they want to fight with their intellect and they want to fight with their bravado and they want to fight with their influence and they want to win battles, which at the end of the day they can win. But here's what doesn't happen. The kingdom doesn't advance at all. So who cares?

I mean when you're standing before Jesus someday and you're like, "I was smarter than them. I put them in their place." Who cares? We're talking about reaching people for Jesus and growing up the saints. Why not take one on the chin? Jesus did. He meekly died on a cross. That was great power that he did that.

What is he calling you to do? How's he calling you to live meek? Because if you miss this part, when we start talking about topics that are going to make you come out of your seat, but you don't remain meek, we don't win the battle for the Lord. He doesn't work through someone that's not meek. That's what he wants. That's what he wants. He doesn't want spectators. And he wants us to fight, man. We want to fight for our families. We want to fight for our kids. We want to fight for one another. We want to wage war that way. But really what we're fighting for, here's what I'm telling you, I'm fighting for. I'm fighting for the next generation of the church. I'm fighting for the reputation of Jesus Christ. I'm fighting for the gospel being lived out by the saints. I'm fighting for the salvation of souls.

That's all of our fight. And if our battles don't result in the advancement of that, then we're fighting the wrong cotton picking battles. That's what it means. So when you engage in the fight, maintain meekness by modeling Christ's example. You want to know how Jesus did? Just read how Jesus did it. Read what Jesus did and say, "I

want to be more Christlike. I want to do it more like you Jesus. I don't need to be right here. I can be truthful here. And even if they don't hear me and even if they don't listen and even if I'm a doormat for them and they step all over me, I'm letting them step all over me for you. And that's how I'm doing my battle because I'm letting you win." And when you realize that the creator of the universe has all the power behind that, you'll fight differently.

So when you engage in the fight, maintain meekness by modeling Christ's example. Number two is this. When you engage in the fight, unleash power by gaining proficiency in spiritual warfare. When you engage in the fight, unleash power by gaining proficiency in spiritual warfare. Notice what He says. He says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." So what's he saying? He's saying, "Listen." He's like, "When we fight, yeah, we're human. You're human. But when we fight, I'm not fighting you with human tactics." When it comes to the advancement of the gospel, we don't share the gospel with guns, swords, or a strategy of modern warfare.

Those aren't the weapons that we use. You're going to see in the coming weeks in Ephesians 6, six different weapons that have been laid down and even others that we're going to talk about in this arsenal, but they're all supernatural weapons that we need. We need God to go to work for us. They need to be divinely inspired weapons, not our weapons, not our talent, not our ability. We need God's power to do what? To

destroy fortresses. That word could be strongholds. Here's why.

When we start talking about what's going on in our culture and you see different strongholds, different fortresses, you're like, "How the heck are we ever going to beat that? How the heck are we ever going to do something about that?" Here's how we're not going to beat that. By yelling about it and telling everybody else that they're wrong. That doesn't change anything. Speaking truth about what's wrong and then taking the weapons of warfare that we have like prayer, like the word of God, like evangelism, worship, obedience, all those things.

We start putting all those things together and loving one another and we're faithful and we're loving and we're hopeful and we're trusting God that when he sees his church doing that, here's what God says. "I'll knock that down for you. I got that. Don't you worry about that. That's a paper tiger to me. That's nothing." It's when we fight in our own strength that we live in fear and anxiety and stress, wondering how's this going to change and how's that going to happen? We got to make a stand and we got to do something different. We get all worked up and nothing ever changes. See, God wants to make all the changes, but he wants us to understand that the weapons he's going to use are the ones he's going to give us. They're the weapons that he's given us at his disposal for us to armor up with.

And notice what the goal is. He says, "The weapons over warfare, they're not of the flesh, but they're divinely powerful." Powerful. Now, who's the one saying that they're powerful? God's saying it's powerful. It's not me telling you, "God's got some

powerful weapons." It's God saying, "I got powerful weapons." When you look in the world and say, "That can't change," or "How are we ever going to make a..." God says, "My weapons are more powerful than that. I can knock anything over. I can take anything out. I can make as much room and space for you as you need." But notice what Paul says he's doing. He says, "We're destroying speculations in every lofty thing." Speculations are arguments, and every lofty thing is every arrogant obstacle of what? Against the knowledge of God. What's Paul want to see knocked down? Anything that keeps people away from the knowledge of God. What's the knowledge of God?

It's experiencing the person of Jesus Christ. John 17:3 says, "Now this is eternal life that they may know you. The only true God in Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Knowledge is experiencing the person of Jesus. Paul says, "We're going to use divine weapons to knock down everything that gets in the way of people experiencing personally Jesus Christ." That's what we're fighting. If that's not your goal in the fight, you have the wrong goal. Well, my goal is to change politicians. Okay, fine, but if it doesn't result in greater number of souls being saved and greater number of saints being edified, what the heck difference does it make anyway? Our goal as a church is to advance Christ's kingdom. It's the gospel. Period, exclamation point, end of story. For Paul, it was. He didn't see people according to the flesh. He saw they're either in Christ or they need Christ.

That's how he saw the world. That's how we should see the world. And so what we're fighting for is people who don't know Christ, to see Christ and experience him.

And what we're fighting for is people that know him to grow in him. That's the gospel. That's what he's fighting for. And so Paul's going to use all the weapons at his disposal to knock down everything that keeps people from knowing and growing in Jesus Christ. That's the battle. Every other battle we talk about is secondary or tertiary to that battle.

Our battle is for the souls of men and women and boys and girls to be rightly related to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's our battle. So when we armor up, there's things that people like to use. Sometimes they talk about it. They talk about politics. If we get the right leader in place. They talk about the programs that their church or their para church ministry have. They talk about personalities of different people that are really gifted. They talk about power they've experienced somewhere at some conference or they talk about their own prominence and who they are. Let me tell you something. Politics, programs, personality, power, and prominence is no guarantee of advancing anything in the kingdom of God. None. None.

And I'm going to be bold on this. I'm going to tell you. It doesn't matter who wins the next election. That doesn't matter in terms of who is going to win more people for Jesus Christ. I can make an argument that the worse the politicians are, the better the church will thrive. We're going in the right direction that way.

And it doesn't mean we don't get out and vote. It doesn't mean we don't have opinions. It doesn't mean we don't get involved in the political process. We do all those things. With the goal in mind that why we're doing what we're doing is to advance Christ's kingdom on this planet. Because even if your favorite politician gets elected,

and even if your world's so great here, who cares when you stand before Jesus? Your faith, hope, and love will not be found here. I mean, settling your life here is loving this world. It's like choosing your sweet on the Titanic after it hit the iceberg.

It doesn't matter. What matters is knowing Jesus. What matters is being a mission for Jesus and as a church in general. I'm not just talking about BRAVE. I'm talking about Denver church. I'm talking about United States churches, churches outside. As a whole we lose our mission so much because Satan knows, man, if those people ever live with meekness under the authority of Jesus Christ and those people ever unleash the power of God in their life for what He wanted to accomplish, I'd be in big trouble. So rather what I'd do is just stir them up and get them busy about a bunch of activity that won't really matter anyway. Friends, it's about the mission of Jesus Christ. That's what it's about. It's about his gospel.

God wants us to pray. He wants us to worship. He wants us to preach. He wants us to evangelize. He wants us to be obedient. When those things happen, walls get torn down. And here's the thing. When you unleash power by gaining proficiency in spiritual warfare, proficiencies mean well advance. It's being competent. It's being skilled. Just because you're born again does not mean you're proficient in spiritual matters. It means you have the ability to grow into it, but you're not necessarily proficient. Anytime you learn a new skill, it doesn't mean you're proficient. The first day you learn to ride a bike does not mean you're proficient in downhill mountain biking. The first day you learn to swim doesn't mean you're proficient in being an Olympic

swimmer. I mean, you have to grow in these things. Any skill that you would ever learn, any sport you would ever learn, anything you would ever learn, it takes time.

The same is true spiritually. And here's what we miss out on church sometimes. We think it's if I'm a Christian, I should know how to do this. I prayed for somebody to get healed, they didn't get healed, so I guess God doesn't heal anymore. Well, how have you grown in your proficiency of healing? How have you grown in your proficiency of the knowledge of the word of God? How have you grown in your prayer life? I mean, there's all sorts of things God is always trying to grow us in, and no matter how proficient you are, you have room for growth, I promise you. Because on this side of heaven, we'll never be completely proficient, but we can grow in it. We can grow in what God wants. And here's why He wants us to grow. Because the gospel is primary to everything we're talking about.

Now, when I talk about the gospel, I see the gospel in three different parts in my Bible. I see it in three different thirds. I see a first third is what we call justification. Justification is where we repent of our sin and we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. It's called justification. That can happen in a moment. It happens when God, by His grace reveals to us that we are dead in our sins, that we are apart from him, that if we were to die today, we would be having a Christless eternity. And God, through his Holy Spirit reveals to us, you need to turn from your sin and turn to me and gives us the grace to do that very thing and we come to Christ. That's called justification. When you come to Christ, everything that was true about Christ is true about you in Christ. You're loved, you're cherished, you're blessed, you're favored, you're forgiven.



All those things are true of you because you're in Christ. But you need to grow in all those things. You need to grow in that understanding. So that's justification. Justification is the moment that you turn from your sin and trust Christ. Second is this. There's a second third that we call sanctification. Sanctification is where we grow in holiness. If justification is a moment, sanctification is a lifetime. It's a lifetime. It never ends. You never graduate from the school of discipleship. Sanctification is how do I grow in my holiness? Yeah, I know I'm saved, but then how do I live this out in this area, in this area, in this area, in this relationship, in that relationship? And as my life becomes more dynamic, how do I reflect and model Christ in every area of my life? I want to grow in that. And the reason majority of people come to church is because they're already saved and they're learning how to grow in their faith so they can advance Christ's kingdom outside the walls.

That's the gospel too. So when you say, "Pastor Jeff, why don't you just preach the gospel?" That's what I do every time I'm up here. I'm either calling you if you're lost to repent and believe or I'm telling you, if you're saved, to grow in your holiness with Christ and put that into practice. That's the gospel. And then there's a third third to the gospel. It's called glorification. That's spending eternity with Christ. And if justification's in a moment and sanctification is a lifetime, glorification is an eternity. We get to rule and reign with Christ for eternity. That's a long time. Now why is that so important? Because there are so few churches that even get one third of the gospel right. Some people teach the first third is this, Jesus Christ is savior. Do you believe he died on the cross and rose from the dead?

Yeah, I believe that. Okay, you're saved. You're in. The devil believes that and all his demons believe that, and they're not Christians. That's not the gospel. The gospel is not knowing facts. The gospel is turning from your sin and responding to the person of Jesus. That's the gospel. The gospel is then as a result of that growing in holiness. The gospel then as a result of that is being presented faultless before the throne. That's the gospel.

Here's what Paul was saying. "I will tear down every single lofty argument and speculation against the knowledge of God that keeps anybody from coming to Jesus." That's the war I'm waging. And it's not war of my flesh. It's war with everything that God's given me at his disposal. That's what I'm using. I'm asking God to work through me in a way that every single person I come into contact with has an opportunity to know Christ or grow in Christ as a result of my spending time with them.

That's the fight Paul was in. That's the fight the apostles were in. That's the fight that any person that has loved Jesus over the centuries has been in. That's the battle. The battle is engage in that fight. That's the primary fight. Everything else, secondary, tertiary, doesn't really matter. And when you get to heaven and you tell people, here's how I voted in the 2020 election, nobody from Zimbabwe is going to care. They're not going to be all that impressed. But to say, "Here's how I lived my life for Christ and that every moment I wanted him working in and through me so the people I was around could come to know Jesus, and so the people that knew him could grow in the faith." That's what he said. And then he says this. He's like, "If you're going to live with meekness by modeling Christ's example and you're going to unleash power by gaining

proficiency in spiritual warfare." There's a third, but let me tell you why we don't experience power.

There's a lot of people who say, "I've been praying for revival for years. I just want to see God bring revival to our nation." Here's the point. Now listen. If you're not engaged in the fight, why would God knock down any obstacle for you to go share the gospel when you're not even sharing the gospel? I mean, if God's going to take the time to knock down the obstacle that's keeping you from sharing the gospel, but you're not even going to share the gospel after He knocks down the obstacle, why would He knock down the obstacle in the first place? It means this. Get in the fight now by sharing the gospel now and living the gospel now and going after Christ now so that you can use divine weapons so he can knock down more obstacles and open up more kingdom ground for you to advance into.

God doesn't want you to be passive. He's not just going to open up a door while you sit on your backside and say, "Yeah, you open up that door and you change our culture and you change our politicians and you change our education. I'm in God. Praying for that." Well then go do something about it. That's what he's talking about. And if you can live with meekness and you can let the Holy Spirit work through you to unleash divine power in your life, then you can do this third. The third way to fight is defend truth by living accountably. Defend truth by living accountably. Notice what he says at the end of verse five. "And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ and we are ready to punish all disobedience whenever your

obedience is complete." Defend truth by living accountably. Notice I didn't say living obediently. When I say living obediently, live obediently.

Most people in church are like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I got it. I'm not perfect but I'll get better." I'm not telling you live obedient. I'm telling you live accountably. Who are you accountable to for how you live? This is what he was saying. And he said, "We're taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." That means we're growing in our sanctification. One of the reasons that we're navigating how people walk in obedience with accountability through cadres is we want to see people live for Christ. We want to see people grow in Christ. Now, what does it mean to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ? The mind is the battleground for everything God wants done. Satan knows that. That's why he puts lies in your head all the time. The first thing you have to do is you have to be able to know the truth so that you can expose the lie.

This book is truth. Thy word is truth. The more you know this book, the more you will see lies. The more you know this book, the more you'll see lies. The less you watch the media and the more you read this book, the more you'll know lies. And when you hear it, you will know it's a lie. I mean it's so obvious it's a lie. Because it goes counter to everything God says. And you have to know the truth so you can expose the lie. You take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. You have to know the truth so you can expose the lie. If you don't know the truth, you won't know what a lie is. If you don't know that it's wrong to sleep around in your marriage, you won't know that God says that that's wrong. If you don't know it's wrong not to tithe.

If you don't know it's wrong to treat people poorly. If you don't know it's wrong not to forgive. I mean you have to know what the word says and here's why that's so important. Because the word goes counter to our feelings a lot of the time. I don't feel like doing that. Yeah, I know. That's why God gave us his word because He knew we would never feel like doing that. That's what it is. So we have to know the truth so we can expose the lie. That's when we tell truth. That's a lie. That's a lie. That's a lie. That's a lie. The word of God points out what the lies are, and then by taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, I talk about it like this, we have to practice threshold thinking.

In previous times, sometimes when a man would marry a woman, he would carry her across the threshold of their new home indicating they were in partnership together coming in under this roof. The threshold is the doorway. Your mind has a threshold. You have to know the truth so you can expose the lie and then you have to practice threshold thinking. You can't let that lie in. Because if you let the lie in, it will start to fester and manifest itself in your life. And there's a number of you here and there's a number of people I know that are my age or older who would've said When you were 10 years old, "There's no way I would've ever thought I would've ever done this." But it was just this progression. Maybe you didn't know it was a lie, or maybe you did and you started playing with it.

It's like people that are like, "Yeah, I can get to know her at work. It's not a big deal. I have a pretty strong marriage." That's a lie. I'll just tell you, it's a lie. Guys, if you're married and you're talking to anybody other than your wife or getting emotionally

attached, it's a lie. And every guy I know that's ever had an affair, it was this lie that just manifested and then all of a sudden, boom, here it was. But it started way back there because they didn't know it was a lie. You can handle this. It's okay for you. They're just being fundamentalists. They're just being Bible [inaudible 00:43:57]. You can do whatever. Who are you living accountable to? Who's going to tell you that you're wrong? Who's in your life besides your pastor that's proclaiming the word that can tell you, "I see what you're doing and you're wrong."

That's knowing the truth so you can expose a lie. And then you practice threshold thing. That's a lie and I'm going to make it obey Jesus. I'm going to make this obey Jesus. I got to tell Him. So here's the thought that comes in my head and it's a lie. All right, lie, you got to go obey Jesus. Everything I'm doing has to be obedient to Jesus. Every relationship I'm in has to be obedient to Jesus. Every way I use money has to be obedient to Jesus. All the way I spend my free time has to be obedient to Jesus. Jesus, are you happy with this? Is this making you proud of me? That's what it means. That's how we defend truth. Now, defending truth, I'm glad that we're at a church that preaches the word. I promise you, as long as I have my full faculties, I will preach the authority of God's word and if I ever stop, fire me or leave the church.

I mean I'm glad. But we don't defend the word by just having pastors that preach it. We defend the word when you live accountably, when you walk it out. Because notice what Paul says in verse six. He says, "We're ready to punish all disobedience whenever your obedience is complete." Paul says, "I'll point out all the false teachers

and all the people that are teaching wrong. I'll point out all the lies when you start living obediently." And there are people that come to BRAVE like, "Pastor Jeff, why don't you point out that false teacher and that false teacher? Why don't you talk about them all the time?" Because I don't want to create an environment where all you're doing is coming to see who I'm going to talk bad about. When you're living fully for Jesus, then I'll point them out. That's what he was saying. Live fully for the Lord.

Live fully for the Lord. Live accountably to Him. Here's the way I would say it. Listen to me. Listen to me. It's not just a matter of walking your talk, it's a matter of walking your talk by talking your walk. Now, listen to what I'm saying. There's some people in the church that say, "Well, I just walk my talk. And people see me and they know I'm a Christian." No, they don't. They just think you're a good person. They think you do some things right. Walk your talk by talking your walk. Guys, I listen to a lot of you that travel on business and you'll tell me, "Hey, Pastor Jeff, these guys, they go to strip clubs in the evening. I don't participate in that." To which I applaud you. Good for you. But don't just walk your talk, talk your walk. Here's what you say.

"Let me tell you why I'm not going to a strip club with you tonight. Because it offends God. It offends me. I'm not going to participate because I'm living as a Christian." And then don't go and see what happens. Now they'll know you're a Christian. Now they'll know why you did what you did, right? Talk your walk. Here's why I'm a believer. Here's why I don't spend time with somebody other than my wife. The only women I spend time with are my wife or my daughters and my mother-in-law, my mom. Sometimes my sisters get my presence. Because that's what God calls me

to. And it's the right thing to do and that's what he wants to do. Don't just walk your talk and hope people find out. Talk your walk. Tell your neighbors why you do what you do on Sunday morning. Why do you get up and come to BRAVE?

Tell him I'm a Christian and I believe Jesus Christ is the only way and I believe He loves you and He died for you and He wants to have a relationship with you and the only place you're ever going to find hope is in Him. That's why we go to church and you're welcome to come with us. You talk your walk, they'll see your walk. And it also puts you under a microscope because when you talk your walk, then it tells people, go ahead and watch how I live and watch what I do. And many of us don't want that. I can tell you, rewind the clock 34 years. One of the reasons I didn't want to be a preacher is if I get up and talk about this stuff, I actually got to do it. And it's hard to do it. And I don't always do it right.

I just got back from a vacation with my family. I'm trying to do it, but ask any of them. I don't do it right all the time. But that's what God wants us to do. He wants us to walk our talk by talking our walk. That's what he says. And Paul's saying, "Hey, I'm walking it." That's why when I come, I'm not afraid of you. There's no fear when you're walking your faith. There's no fear about what other people would say. Every Christian has skeletons in their closet. You can pull them all. I'm not embarrassed about any of mine. They're all forgiven under the blood of Jesus and I'm walking with Him. And one of the reasons we don't get engaged in the fight is, well, I struggle with this and I struggle with that. And if I really got involved, then people would know who I really am.

If you really got involved, some of those things you struggle with would go away



because God would put you on mission again. Satan doesn't want you on mission. Satan doesn't want you to live meekly. Satan doesn't want you to experience and unleash the power of the Holy Spirit. And Satan certainly doesn't want you to defend truth by living accountably. Now, we like other people to live accountably, but we don't like living accountably ourselves. God wants us to live accountably. And when we do this, that's when God has power. And he'll test us all the time. I mean, I promise you there's times where you can articulate things. I mean, I just flew an airline this week that I think when Jesus says, "Depart from me you worker of iniquity. I never knew you." I think that's the airline he might put them on to send them away.

And I was at the counter and I was demonstrating meekness and I was keeping my mouth shut and I was apologizing to my family and all these things. I promised them, we'll never fly that airline again, I promise you. But I had a lot of things I wanted to say. But none of them in the moment would've helped advance the cause of Christ. So where's God grow in your meekness? Where's God wanting you to unleash power? Can I tell you, as a pastor, I'm so proud of who you are. I'm so proud of our church that on July 4th with your pastor out of town, I watched online. I was on the beach watching First Tuesday, that 1500 people are gathering on two campuses on Independence Day to seek the face of Jesus Christ. That's where the power comes from. That's where the power comes from.

And when you start to walk your talk by talking your walk and you're living accountably, that's when God starts growing your faith. That's foundational to how we

fight. That's foundational to every battle we're going to talk about in the coming weeks. And that's what the Lord wants you to do. It's his battle. He's going to fight it. I want to tell you, if you're here today and you want to trust Christ, make today your day. If you're here today and you need to repent, make today your day. I'm going to invite you all to stand. I'm going to pray for us. Some of our elders and pastors will be up front. We're going to trust him to do some work.

Father, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we ask in this moment, you would do a work. If you're here today, you've never turned from your sin and trusted Christ. Make today the day. Say, "Lord Jesus, I want to turn from my sin. I know I'm going to spend a Christless eternity if I don't. Come into my life and be my Lord and take over."

Some of you who are here today, realize that there's something the Holy Spirit put on your heart that you need to change. And you can repent now too and say, "Lord, I heard you. I want to turn. I need your help to turn. Help make me that man or woman or boy or girl you want me to be." And Lord, we give you all the praise for who you are and all you're going to do. In Jesus' name, amen and amen. Can we give God some praise today?