



Message Transcript

Increased Opposition

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Pastor Jeff:

Our father in heaven, we give you all the glory and honor and all the praise that is so rightfully yours. Lord, it's so great to gather with a body of people that love you, that want to exalt you and tell you how wonderful you are because you and you alone deserve all of our worship. Lord, we thank you for your living and active word, and we as a people believe that every time it is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you are speaking. So our prayer this morning is Lord speak for we are ready to hear. And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to you, who will believe what he 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?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. It is said that beginning is half done. Perhaps you've heard that when you procrastinated on a project and somebody's told you, Hey, just get started because beginning is half done. And really when people say that what they're trying to encourage you to do is get started, because if you don't get started, it becomes even more overwhelming as it sits and sits and sits. But if beginning is half done, have you ever wondered why is finishing then so hard? If beginning is halfway there, why is getting all the way to the finish line so challenging and so difficult? Have you ever

wondered that in your spiritual life that there's many times in your life where you get started with the Lord or you hear a message or you're moved in your Bible study time or your prayer time with the Lord and he shows you something to do and you say, now I'm making a change. Now it's going to be different.

From now on I'm doing it this way. This is going to change in my relationship with this person. This is going to change in the way I do my work. This is going to change in my family. God, you have it all. I'm going to start taking steps. I'm seeing some forward progress only to find that it's really difficult to keep it going. Have you ever had that experience as a Christian where you say, I know I know the Lord and I want to continue to grow in the Lord and I see other people that are growing in the Lord and I'm trying to take steps of faith, but as I'm taking steps of faith, it's become harder and harder to do. It becomes difficult. It's almost like it's opposed. And the reason that it feels that it's opposed is that it is opposed.

The more steps of faith you take closer to the Lord, the more opposition that you're going to get. And many times as believers we're not expecting that. Jesus told us that in this world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I've overcome the world. Peter told us not to be surprised at the painful trial that we are enduring as though something strange were happening to us. We're also told by Paul that anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Friends, you have to realize that when you've come into a relationship with Christ and you begin to take steps of faith with him, each and every one of those steps of faith is going to be opposed with greater and greater levels of intensity. And if you've ever wondered about the truth of

increased opposition and you've ever wondered, how do I get through that and what does it look like for me to continue to grow if everything is opposed, I believe God has a word for you today.

I want to encourage you to open up your Bibles to Nehemiah, Nehemiah chapter four. We're going to take a look at the first 11 verses today. And in those 11 verses we're going to unpack five truths about increased opposition. Five truths, for those of you who would say, I want to grow with the Lord, I want to walk with the Lord, I want to get closer to the Lord. I've been trying to go that way, but every time I go that way it gets harder and harder. Help me understand how I can manage through that. And in the book of Nehemiah, what we've seen so far is that God's given Nehemiah the vision to come and rebuild the wall. He's blessed him, he's resourced him. Nehemiah has been obedient to come. He's begun the work. And last week we took a look at all the forward progress.

If you were here and had the privilege of listening to me read all the names of chapter three, you'll know that we labored through that and I was okay mispronouncing many of the names because you didn't know how to pronounce them either. But as we saw what God was doing, he was using everybody to come together and do the work of the Lord. So what we have now is one man got a vision. Everybody's doing it now, and success is starting to happen. Forward progress is being made and now intensity of opposition is going to increase. Notice what happens in chapter four, in verse one.

It says, "Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that they were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. He spoke in the

presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, 'What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble, even the burned ones.' Now Tobiah, the ammonite, was near him and he said, 'Even what they are building, if a fox should jump on it, he would break the stone wall down.'"

So what do you expect? Here's the first point. Increased opposition escalates through the anger and irritability of those who hate God. Increased opposition escalates through the anger and irritability of those who hate God. Notice what it says in verse one. "Sanballat became furious and very angry." He's furious and he's irritated, he's bothered. Why is he bothered? He's bothered because there's a man that's got a vision from God that's seen it fulfilled by rallying God's people to do what God wants. The enemy is opposed to the work of God. We have a real enemy. We have a real devil. He comes to steal, kill and destroy. He hates you and he hates God and he hates the work of God. So when you as an individual or you're part of a group of people that love God, that are wanting to get done what God wants to get done, he will oppose you, because he hates God.

And when he's in the heart of those who hate God, what do they do? They hate you because they hate God. And that's what's going on here. He's becoming very angry and very irritated, so they're going to mock them and lob verbal grenades. They've been doing that before, but now they're getting more intense. They're asking, what are these Jews doing? Why is it that God's people think they can do what God

wants them to do? Why is it the church today thinks the church can speak on all these topics? Why doesn't the church learn that this book is just written by a bunch of men years and years ago? It isn't true. What makes the church think that they can see God's work finished? Can they really do what God wants? Do they really think they're going to change the world? Here's what he said, "Even if a fox were to jump on that wall, it would break it down." What's he saying? It looks like Pastor Jeff built the wall.

It has no sturdiness to it. You put something on it that weighs about eight pounds, it's going to crush this thing. It's not good. They're mocking the work of God. And that's what people that hate God always do. Listen to me, hate is not an emotion. It's an activity for evil. It's a behavior. It's also a passivity for doing good. In other words, if you're engaging in evil or if you're passive and you do not oppose it, that's wrong. That's hate. That's hate for the things of God. And when Jesus Christ came into the world, we saw all these different people that hated him because they were losing their influence. Herod was losing influence because of Jesus Christ's birth. And he hated the fact that another king had been born in town. This king happened to be the eternal king. The Pharisees were losing influence and they hated it because Jesus's message said that he was the one that people needed to put their attention on and he was the way, the truth and the life.

The synagogue was losing influence because of Jesus Christ's ministry, because everybody was flocking to Jesus rather than flocking to the synagogues and they hated it. And the government was losing influence because of Jesus Christ's authority, because disciples were going around instead of saying that Caesar is Lord, they were

saying, Jesus Christ is Lord. When Jesus comes to town, when Jesus is being lived out through a believer, we have to realize there's not neutral ground. You are either for the Lord Jesus Christ or you are opposing the Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to get that right because in our culture, we don't believe that. We believe there's Christian people and there's some good ones and then there's those really fanatical ones. And then there's a bunch of people in the middle that are pretty good people. They're really good, they're philanthropic, they're good neighbors. They pay their taxes. They're nice. They may like God, they don't really hate God, but they're neutral, they're not quite there yet.

And then there's a really small percentage of about 5% they hate God. They make it known that they hate God and all that stuff. The Bible doesn't make those distinctions. The Bible makes the distinction, you are either dead in your trespasses and sins, an enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ and hate him with everything you have as a rebel, or you've been born again into a new family and you are a friend of God and you are his son or his daughter, and there is no middle ground, there is none. And we need to understand that when we're witnessing to people, we need to understand the truth of the gospel, that the reason people oppose you is because they hate God. Jesus said, do not be surprised, John 15, if they hated you, don't worry about it. They hated me first.

We get surprised when we're being opposed like, what am I doing wrong? All I'm doing is trying to follow Jesus. For some of you, when you were born again, you found out very quickly that your "religious family" didn't support your being born again. They

didn't mind you being religious. Just don't be born again and be one of these fanatical Jesus followers. You may have had some friends that you lost because you started walking with the Lord and you couldn't hang out with them anymore. But I'm telling you this, I John chapter two says that friendship with the world is what? Hatred towards God. If you love the things of this world you hate God according to the Bible. In James four, four, what does he say? The half brother of Jesus in James chapter four, verse four says that, yeah, James chapter four, verse four, "Do you not know you adulteresses that friendship with the world is hostility towards God."

Let me take you to I John chapter two. That's what I was trying to read. I John chapter two, I John chapter two, verse 15, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world." Now, we read John three, 16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life." Why? "For the God did not send the son into the world to judge the world but in order that the world might be saved through him." But listen to verse 19. This is the judgment that light has come into the world and men loved their darkness rather than the light for," why? "For their deeds were evil."

Verse 36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Ephesians two, one said, "We were all by nature children of wrath." The reason that people oppose you is they're not worshiping the true God. They're worshiping their created God, made up in

their own image, which is idolatry. And they hate you because you worship the true Christ. And that's a fact. You say, well, where do you get this from? The Bible. The Bible. Think about it. What was John the Baptist killed for? For taking the truth of God out into the marketplace and telling King Herod to repent because his deeds were evil. What was Jesus Christ killed for? For claiming that he was God and that he was the way, the truth and the life and that he was the only way to the Father.

And if you didn't repent and come through him, you didn't have a relationship with God no matter how spiritual you thought you were. And they killed him. They killed the Apostle Paul for proclaiming the same truth. They killed Peter for proclaiming the same truth. They killed a majority of the apostles for saying the same truth. Why? Because the world hates God. That's why the world opposes you. Make no mistake about it. Well, they don't really hate God. They don't even really know God. That's right. They worship their own God and they hate the true God. And you need to realize that's why intensity increases when you continue to walk with the real true Lord Jesus Christ because as it exposes their own hearts as to how much they hate the Lord, and we need to believe that. That's why when you step with the Lord, it escalates the anger and irritability of other people.

That's why we can stand here in this pulpit and talk about truth and everybody can be like, Oh yeah, pastor, that's so great. But you take that same truth out there and nobody's clapping. Marriage is between one man and one woman till death do you part? Oh yeah, pastor, good job. Take that truth out there and see how many people

applaud it. There's only two genders, male and female. That's true. Take it out there. See how many people applaud it. God created the world in six literal days out of nothing according to the word of God. Take it out there. See how many people applaud it. God destroyed the world once through a flood because of people's unrighteousness, because God is so holy. Take that truth out there. See how many people applaud it. We can applaud all the different things God does.

We can champion what truth is here, but when you start walking in it out there, people will try to shut it down. Why? Because they don't want it. And here's what they'll say. Just keep it in the pulpit. Just keep it to yourselves. Don't tell anybody, but I got news for you friends, the world is the Lord's and everything in it, and there's not one square inch that doesn't belong to Jesus Christ. And we are to proclaim it everywhere, everywhere. And it's unfortunate because many churches shut their Bible and shut down just because they don't want to deal with the anger and irritability of those who hate God. Friends, increased opposition will continue to escalate as you continue to march with the Lord and they hate... You say, well, why are they so mad at me? Because they hate God. Think about this.

Remember when the apostle Paul was converted on the road to Damascus? Remember when that happened? What was Jesus Christ's first question to him? "Saul. Saul, why do you persecute me?" Why do you hate me? Why are you treating me like this? And what's his answer? "Who are you, Lord," I don't even know who you are, not persecuting you, just these Christian people. Whatever you do to one of the least of these, you do unto me. Don't be surprised when people treat you poorly or say all

sorts of false things or evil about you. Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great. If people aren't saying those things about you, it's probably because you're not walking out the fullness of what God wants you to walk out. Don't be afraid of what other people think. Don't be afraid to deal with opposition. It's always going to escalate through the anger and irritability of those who hate God.

And the truth is when people are angry at Christians and angry at what Christians say and they're Oh, they're not angry at you, they hate God, and they're just expressing that towards you because you love him. Number two is this, increased opposition forces the faithful to trust and call upon God's providence. It forces the faithful to trust and call upon God's providence. Look at verses four and five. He begins to pray, "Hear Oh, our God, how we are despised." Look at us God. Do you see what these people that hate you are doing to us? He says this, "Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity, don't forgive their sins and let not their sin be blotted out before you for they have demoralized the builders." Now, that doesn't sound like a Christian prayer, does it?

When you read through many of the Psalms, these are called them purgatory prayers. And purgatory prayers are prayers that are like, Lord, watch what they're doing and kick their teeth in. I hate what they're doing. Go get them, God. Judge them. Now through the lens of the New Testament, we have to see some things a little bit differently, don't we? The Bible, Jesus said this. He said, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. He also said this in the Lord's Prayer. Lord forgive us our

sins as we forgive those who sin against us. That's true as well. But let me tell you where I believe in purgatory prayers can still be prayed today in alignment with who Jesus Christ is and what a real true and purgatory prayer is, and what they're praying here. Give you four truths about them.

One is they're praying for God's righteous judgment. They're praying for God's righteous judgment. They're praying for God's righteous judgment to expose the guilt of his enemies. When we pray the Lord's prayer, we're praying that our Father who ought in heaven, hallowed be thy name. God, you're in heaven and you're holy. And Lord, we love that you're holy. We love that you're nothing like us. We love that you're perfect in every way. We love that every decision you make is righteous and good. We love that you're outside of us. We love that there's nothing wrong with you. We love that you're magnanimous and you're beautiful. We love the fact that there's not enough words in any language to describe how incredibly awesome you are and you're holy. And we want your holiness to be put on display in and through our lives and in our nation and all around the world because Lord, you're holy and we love that.

And so when we're praying in purgatory prayers, we can pray for the holiness of God to be shown. We can pray for God to show his righteous judgment. When we pray prayers like let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. What are we praying for? Well, one of the things we're praying for in order to let the kingdom come, the fullness of the kingdom will not be here until the Lord comes. And one of the things that the Lord is going to do when he comes is he's going to slay all the wicked and sentence them to an eternity in hell. So when you're praying, let thy

kingdom come, let thy will be done. Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Lord, do everything you said you were going to do because we love your righteousness and we love your truth and we can't wait until you write every single wrong. That's praying in purgatory prayers. Or what about this? Lord, may every sin be laid bare before you.

Lord, expose it all because you hate sin, you want none of it. Lord, deal with it all. Number two is this. It's not just praying for God's righteous judgments. It's giving an invitation for God to act. It's not asking to take personal vengeance. The New Testament makes clear vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord. We don't have the opportunity to take vengeance on anybody. We have the opportunity to forgive other people. We have the opportunity to love other people, but we're inviting God to act in a situation. Lord, you see this, Lord, you act the way you want to act. Lord, you do what you want to do. Lord, you make yourself known. Lord, you show yourself to be righteous. Number three is this. When you pray this way, it gives you a zeal for God's holiness when it's being attacked. It gives you a zeal for God's holiness when it's being attacked.

Do you remember when Jesus went through the temple at the beginning in the end of his earthly ministries and overturned the money tables and was angry, very angry. Why? Because the holiness of God was being taken for granted. And when the disciples saw him act like that, they were reminded of the scripture, the zeal for my Father's house will consume him. He was consumed by the holiness of God. He was

consumed by the holiness of his Father. He didn't just come to earth because he saw sinners and was so in love with sinners. He had to come for sinners. He came to the earth to restore the glory to his dad that had been robbed by a fallen humanity. He came to this earth because we as human beings had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. He came to this earth because he wanted to see his dad high and lifted up. And no matter what it takes, dad, to get the glory back on you, I'll do it. I'll take it.

Restore the holiness to God. The longer you walk with the Lord, can I just tell you this. The longer you walk with the Lord and the more you desire his holiness in your life and the more you want to see his holiness put on display, the more it will kick out lukewarmness in your life. The more you champion who God actually is, the more you will see that. You'll grow as a deeper zeal for God's holiness. You will grow a deeper passion for the authority of his word. You'll be consumed about what is right and what God honors and what God hates, because you'll start thinking, Lord, from your perspective, what should I do?

Lord, from your perspective, how should I think. Lord, the world says this and then the world says this and everybody's fighting. What do you say God? And how should I do it? And what should I respond and why should I respond? And what makes you happy and what makes you frustrated? And Lord, I want to do it your way. That's why we pray those kinds of prayers, not because we want to get back at people, but because we want to see God's holiness put on display. And then number four, we pray in purgatory prayers over personal outrage when God's people are being attacked. Personal outrage. When we see Christians being treated poorly because they're

walking in the fear of God, it should outrage you. It's an outrage when we see people walking away from the word of God and calling it truth, it should bother you. You shouldn't be able to stand it.

As you grow in holiness, you won't be able to. And why is this so important? I'm just telling you, in our culture, if you were to poll our nation and ask people, just go around, just ask your neighbors, ask your friends, are you a Christian or not? Probably 85%-ish would tell you, yeah, I'm a Christian. They probably say that. And I'm not judging people's salvation here, but just listen to me. I've heard Taylor Swift say she's a Christian. I have. I've heard Barack Obama say he's a Christian. I've heard Joe Biden say he's a Christian. I've heard Oprah Winfrey say she's a Christian. Everybody says they're a Christian. But when they begin to unpack what they mean by being a Christian, it's anything but what the Bible says being a Christian is. Some people be like, I'm a Christian, and I'm a Christian, I'm not one of those fanatic ones. I'm a Christian and I love the LGBTQ people and I think people should be able to choose whatever they want.

I'm a Christian, but I don't believe Jesus is the only way. I believe he's one of the ways. That's the way that I've chosen. But there's many ways. I'm a Christian, but I don't think you need to live any different. It doesn't affect my life. I'm a Christian but... Come on, there's only one kind of Christian that believe that Jesus Christ is God's eternal son who has always existed from eternity past as a second person to the Trinity that put on flesh, that came here in this world to restore the glory to his dad and to die on the cross for sinful humanity, who shed his blood and died, who three days

later got out of the grave, who invited people into faith. And through repentance of sin and trust in Jesus, you can have life and life to the full. And apart from that, there is no salvation for anyone under the sun, ever.

But Pastor Jeff, what about the migrant farmer in Africa? There is no shred of biblical evidence anywhere of anyone going to heaven who hasn't repented and trusted Christ. So how are they going to hear? It's up to us. It should burden you. And let me just say this. If you really love the holiness of God, you won't have sweet, sappy, sentimental love for people that don't know God. It won't be like, Oh, I want you to come to our church and Oh, you got to come to Christ because you don't have to change anything. You can be cool like me and not change anything and we can just be friends. But then when we die, we both get to go to heaven. That's not the gospel. The gospel is this. I love the holiness of God. I love the righteousness of God. I love the fact that my God is going to come restore all the glory on this earth to himself, that it's going to be a monarchy, that Jesus Christ is going to rule it, that he's going to slay every single wicked person that's ever gone against him in any way.

He's going to wipe every tear out of every Christian's eye that has ever wept. And I love his holiness and his righteousness. And because of that, I weep for any of you that haven't repented and trusted Jesus because I love God's holiness so much, and I love the fact he's going to destroy those who don't know him so much, then I plead with you, turn from your sin and come to Christ. He wants to save you. He loves you. He loves you. Quit waiting to come to Jesus. Come now, because I know what's going to happen. The Bible makes clear what's going to happen. We're going to rejoice

at what happens now. It's hard for me on this side of heaven to intellectually get to this place where we will cheer for God's holiness over punishing the death of the wicked. It's hard for me with relationships to think that because I have friends and family that don't know the Lord, so it's hard for me to hear that.

But this false gospel that says when people are being carted off into hell, that they're going to be looking at you as a Christian saying, Oh, how come you didn't tell me? How come you didn't tell me? I wish I would've known. That's not the gospel. Jesus said, there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth when people are going to hell. They're going to be without excuse because through conscience and through creation, they know there's a God that they've rebelled against. They've been rebelling against him since their inception and they never turn to him. And when they're thrown into hell, they will grind their teeth at the Lord. They'll be angry at the Lord, they'll be cursing the Lord. They'll be telling him, who are you to throw me into hell? I hated you anyway, from all eternity. That's what every single person that goes to hell will say, every single one.

And here's what we're going to say with the angels. I'm just read you scripture in Revelation chapter 14. We can read about some of this. Revelation 14, verse 11 says this about their torment, "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. They have no rest day or night, which means hell's eternal, and those who worship the beast in his image and whoever receives the mark of his name. Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in

Jesus." What do you have? You have torment going up forever and ever, and the angels are using that torment and smoke from hell to worship the Lord. That's hard for me to get my head around as a human being. But it's true. Your friends, your family, your neighbors that don't know Christ, that's their future.

And you need to be excited about the holiness of God as much as you're excited about the shed blood of Jesus. And that's what makes the shed blood of Jesus so powerful. It's his mercy. We always ask, how could a loving God send anyone to hell? You want the answer? Because he's holy and he should send every single one of us to hell. And when you're born, you're heading there. And if you've never repented and trusted Christ, and you've never been born again, that is exactly where you're going. The question the Bible attempts to answer is not how could a loving God put people in hell? The question the Bible attempts to answer is, how could a holy, perfect, righteous God that can't bring any sin into his presence ever welcome any sinner in the world? And the Bible answers that, through his son, Jesus Christ, who's the only payment for your sin, and there is no other way. Come to Jesus.

You get what I'm saying here? Trying to be clear. I am just telling you as your pastor, it breaks my heart because I know what's coming. I don't know when it's coming, I just know it's coming soon. And I don't cheer for that because God takes no delight in the death of the wicked. None. You need to understand God's not up in heaven cheering when people die and go to hell. He did not create you for hell. The Bible makes it clear he created the devil and his angels for hell. That's true. But if you're going to continue to rebel against him and play all sorts of games and be a hater

of God and be a rebel. One day God's wrath is going to be poured out on you in the full. You say, well, how serious is that? Take a look at the cross. How serious was he about his own son? How did he treat sin when sin got put on his son, slaughtered his son? Because holiness demands a full sacrifice.

So at the cross, we not only see the perfect mercy of God, father forgive them for they know not what they do. You see the perfect justice of God, that sin is once and forever cleanse for anyone who repent and believe in the gospel, and both are equally true. Amen. Now as we're on this topic, I think we should talk about how does this play out practically in our lives? Because if you're going to take a breath in Denver, Colorado or Colorado Springs or Westminster or anywhere you're watching online, you're going to bump into sinners. You're going to bump into people that don't know God. You're going to bump into people that you've got to live with for God.

And I know there's a number of people in our congregation that have friends, family members, siblings that have chosen a "alternative lifestyle" because they've been propagated with the idea that you may not know your gender and maybe you need to switch or transition or do all that. And if this hasn't happened to you already, it's going to happen where a nonbeliever who's homosexual is going to invite you to their gay wedding, what are you going to do? It's a big debate right now online. There's very popular pastor in our country that I have the utmost respect for, I still have the utmost respect for, that made the comment to a grandma in his congregation and he said it from the pulpit that he was talking to her and she has a granddaughter who's a lesbian that's getting married to another gal, and what should she do?

And as they were talking, he told her, "Go to the wedding, overwhelm her with God's love, bring a gift and show her God's overwhelming mercy." And it's blown up all over the internet. Everybody's fighting about what do you do? What do you do? What do you do? But think about this for a second. If you love the holiness of God, here's the question that you're asking. God, what do you love? God, what do you support? God, what are you in favor of and what are you against? Because I want to be in favor of what you're in favor of. I want to be against what you're against. The Bible makes clear that marriage is only between a man and a woman until death do they part. That's the only thing it is. So there is no marriage that's taking place.

It's a satanic ceremony that our culture would deem as appropriate. Now, think about this. For those of you that are wrestling with, I don't know what I do, because we have friends that have a gay son or daughter and they're going to invite us and we've had these conversations in our family, and what are we going to do? Think about this. What if it was a 24-year-old man marrying a 7-year-old boy? Would you go? I would never go to that. Why? Because it's an abomination. It's a pedophile. So is homosexuality, because the Bible makes clear in I Corinthians six, no practicing homosexual enters the kingdom of God. So why would you go? Well, I want to show them love. Show them love, if you love them, show them you love them enough that you'll never participate in their satanic ceremony, show them you love them enough that you're not going to participate in their highway to hell. Show them you love them enough that you're going to stand firm in what truth is.

Parents, you do this all the time with your kids. Well, my son wanted to get drunk and drive the car, so I just let him. No, you didn't, because you love your son and you love your daughter and you wouldn't let him do that, and you wouldn't participate. And if they choose to do that, they're choosing to do that on their own. Friends, it is loving to not participate in other people's sin. It's loving. Well, Pastor Jeff, Jesus hung out with sinners. He was called a friend of sinners. Who else could he have hung out with? What other choice did he have? But you don't see him going and celebrating those things. You see him talking to people in the middle of those things, showing mercy to those who are looking for it and then telling him what? Now go and sin no more. You need to turn around. You need to change your way, or something worse will happen to you next time. He didn't mince words. Don't participate in the sins of others. Amen.

And trust me, I know how hard this is for some of you, parents that have raised your kids in the church and they're going that way and they're going to invite you to their wedding as their mom and dad. The most loving thing you can do is tell them I can't because I love you too much. And then you come to church and you weep your eyes out and we'll stand with you and we'll love you and we'll pray for you and we'll ask for God to turn your son or daughter back to him. Amen. That's what we do.

So let's talk about a third one, increased opposition intensifies as you continue to take steps of faith. We've been talking about this all day. It intensifies. I've been walking with the Lord for 32 years. The longer I walk with the Lord, it's not that it's less intensive, I used to falsely believe when I would see people that would teach at seminary, they've been walking with the Lord for 50 years or whatever, they got it

made now. They're at a plateau where the devil doesn't mess with them. I tell you what, the longer I walk with the Lord, the more I feel his breath, the more I hear his lies, the more I feel the opposition, the more I feel like you better not try that. You better not do that. You better not say that. You better stay quiet. You better not live that. I hear it all the time.

I either hear it in my ears or somebody else tells me that publicly. The longer you walk with God, the more opposition you'll face. Notice verse six, it says, so we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height for the people had a mind to work. Everybody's come together, they're working. We're going to do this thing. It's half the height it needs to be. No way a fox jumps on that thing and knocks it off. It's half the height it used to be. When they've discovered the walls archeologically, they found them to be nine feet wide. These are strong walls. They're doing the work. And that's why the better work you do, the more opposed you're going to be. The more sincere you walk with Jesus, the more accusation you're going to get. So notice this, you're going to see him surrounded on all sides.

It says, "Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, the Ashdotites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on and the breaches began to be closed. They were very angry. All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem to cause a disturbance in it. So now they're going for more than just words. We're going to come fight you. Before we were just taunting you. Now we're going to get involved. Before we were just saying you should stop. Now we're going to go make

something happen. Now we're going to do something about it. And they're surrounded. You got the Samaritans to the north, the Ammonites to the east, Ashdod to the west, the Arabians to the south. They're all coming together surrounded on all different sides. As you continue to walk, the more opposition you're going to get. It can come inside your family, outside your family.

It can come inside the church or outside the church. It can come inside your workplace or outside your workplace. It's going to come no matter what. You can't avoid opposition unless you stop walking with God. And then Satan says, welcome home. I'll be your daddy. But you can't walk in the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ without having that. Now if I've heard this story once since we started our church, I probably heard this story hundreds of times, different people, different circumstances, but the story goes something like this. You know what? I never knew about BRAVE, but I started coming. And then they'll tell me what happened when they got here. I got saved when I got here or I thought I was saved when I got here. But I realized I wasn't actually saved, I guess that was religious, or I was saved when I got here, but I've grown like I've never grown in my whole life.

And the ongoing story is ever since I got to pray, because the word's being preached because we're worshipping the Lord because we're challenged to be set on mission because we seriously sincerely pray and seek the Lord, my faith has grown a lot since I've been here. And then they'll continue to talk and they'll say something like this, but my life's been falling apart. Work's gotten way harder. My marriage has become more of a challenge. My finances have been stretched. My people at work

have come after me. People have said stuff. It's been so hard in my life since I've been here, to which I want to say, welcome to the team, because that's exactly what it looks like to walk with the Lord. If you sign up for the infantry, bootcamp's one thing, but don't be surprised when you're on the front line the bullets are coming over your head. That's what you signed up for.

And we don't tell people that nearly enough. Yes, your joy can increase. Yes, your focus on the Lord can increase. Yes, it's wonderful to worship the Lord. Yes, it's beautiful to be with the saints, but it's really hard to continue to walk with Jesus in a world that's hostile to him. And friends, it's always been hostile to Jesus. Our friends in other parts of the world, Christians in other parts of the world are probably saying, Hey, welcome, because for decades and centuries, they've been getting martyred in all these things. And for the very first time in our country, we're starting to face opposition greater than what we've ever experienced. Amen. And we need to be ready for it. We need to know what God is doing. Certain people have come here, they've lost friends, they've been challenged in different areas.

And even if your life is more difficult, there's great joy in the Lord, but there'll always be people that will tell you, just stop. I'm going to come after you, I'm going to come after you. If you don't stop, I'm coming after you. In 2020, I was hearing every single week from the health department, if you don't stop, we're boarding your doors. If you don't stop, we're going to shut you down. If you don't stop, we're sending people in. If you don't stop... And I remember one October morning, I was praying with my wife before I rolled into church like I do pretty much every week. And we were praying

that day because the intensity had gotten so big that I was saying, I think this is the day they're going to come shut us down. This could be the day they're going to cart me off to prison.

So let's pray that if I go that I get to witness to a lot of people in jail and then tell the kids I'll be home later. And we were praying this way in America in 2020. Can I tell you, I'm a different pastor now than I was in 2020. You know why? Because when challenges come like that, it makes you strong. It makes you strong because at the time I was like, whoa, I want to obey the government, I want to do... Now it's like this. I want to obey Jesus. I'm not shutting my mouth. You can shut me down. You can cut my head off. I don't freaking care. I'm going to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ until he comes.

And here's the truth. That means I may not always be standing here. That means it may be next man up. What difference does it make? What are we here for? Are we here for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel? Are we here because it's the right place to be? Why are we here? Make up your mind because opposition's coming and opposition's getting stronger. But do not fear. God did not give you a spirit of fear, but what did he give you? He gave you a spirit of power. He gave you a spirit of love, and he gave you a sound mind, spirit of discipline. So hang tough. And here's the reality. When you do, they cower. When you do, they fold. When you do, they can't stand. And even if you die doing the very thing God calls you to do, God will advance the seed of what he started in you through many other people. You cannot stop the work of the Lord. Amen. It's so true.

So not only does it intensify and have a mind to work, but notice this, again, they get mocked, they come pray. It intensifies. We're going to come after you. We're going to grab you. We're going to fight you. So what are they going to do again? They're going to pray. So what it does, increased opposition requires wisdom as you continue to pray. Prayer is one of your greatest weapons, but it requires wisdom. There's action steps that you have to take. Notice verse nine. But we prayed to our God, now they're going to come fight us, but we prayed to our God. Now they're going to come get us. But we prayed to our God, and because of them, because we knew the threat, we set up guard against them day and night. So we're praying, but we're acting. We're praying, because we know what they're going to do, but we're ready for what they're going to do.

We know what's coming, so we're getting ready for what's coming. We're not being blind. We're not being silly. We're using wisdom. We see the signs and the culture. We see what they're planning to do and we're just going to be ready when they happen. Friends, you better be ready for what's happening, because if you have a love for your money that's greater than Jesus, if you have a love for your family that's greater than Jesus, if you have a love for anything else that's greater than Jesus, it's going to get tested in the coming days. We're not living in the same days that I grew up in. And I know because I have children too, and I know if you're in high school right now or college, you look at me and you're like, man, Pastor Jeff is so old, and you're right, kind of. My grandma just turned a 101 on Friday, so I'm feeling pretty good.

So if I got some of those genes, she still lives at home by herself. I'm telling you, we don't know how long we have to live, but what difference does it make? If this is the last sermon I ever preached or I get to preach for another 50 years, what difference does it make? Only may Jesus find me doing the very thing I'm supposed to be doing until I die. That's all that matters. And don't wait until you get old. Start now and give God your best because you don't know how much time you have. When you pray, are you listening for answers? When you hear a sermon or do you hear God speaking to you? What is it you must obey? Friends, it's time to act and get ready. You have to take action. And here's why. Fear is not an emotion either. Fear is a spirit for God did not give you a spirit of fear.

Fear is a spirit. It's not an emotion. It's how the enemy works. Fear is always his lead. It's always what he does. You can't take that step. If you take that step, you might lose your job. You might lose your friends. You might change your family. You might change this. This might not go well for you. You might lose your life. Fear, fear, fear, fear, fear. And the greater the ask of step of obedience, the greater the fear will be. Just think about when Peter stepped out of the boat, when he called to the Lord. "Lord," in the middle of the storm, "if it's you tell me to come to you in the water, I'll come." And Jesus says one word, "Come." Now Peter steps up, gets out of the boat, starts walking to Jesus. What had greater fear? Was there more fear in Peter or was there more fear in the 11 disciples in the boat?

Now we don't know. The scripture doesn't tell us, but if I were speculating, if I was there in the boat, I think it would be way more fearful to get out of the boat in a

storm than to stay in it. And yet, when you start taking steps of faith, even though it's fearful, it's fearing, it feels like fear. Fear begins to dissipate. You realize God can do what he said he's going to do. God is going to show up in this. And there's something about standing firm in the faith that makes you strong. There's something about standing with Jesus Christ and what he wants that makes you strong and more unbending than ever. And I know what the lies of the enemy are. I don't know what they all are, but I hear them all the time still. I know what they are in our church.

I think about six lies when it comes time to act. Six lies that I know that you're told. If you haven't heard these yet, you'll hear them. I've heard them all. Hey, you're not really saved because if you're really saved, why would you still sin? Why do you still struggle with things? Look around you at BRAVE, nobody else sins but you. And those who don't believe that lie anymore, laugh. I haven't made it through a week since I've been a pastor without sinning. Even in my best efforts, if sin is as comprehensive as I know it to be, the closer I walk in the holiness of God, the more sin I'm aware of in my life, the more I realized my thought life or my emotions or my behavior and what I thought wasn't a big deal is now a big deal that wasn't a big deal a year ago.

Friends, everybody's sins. It's why Jesus came. You're not disqualified because you're a sinner. You're only disqualified if you're unrepentant and you don't believe in Christ. But quit setting yourself up for failure by thinking everybody else in the church doesn't have any sin. Every single person I'm looking at today, and I can see every single one of your faces, and I can see every one of your faces online. I can say it with

authority. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Don't let him lie to you, or how about this? Well, you may be saved, but you're of no value to God. You're not really one of those good Christians. You really don't have much to offer. So stay put and stay silent. No, no, no, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

God prepared you for greatness y'all. So start taking steps. Or how about this lie? You should start getting mad and judge zealous people, especially those who say they want to live holy, those holy people, they're not better than you. Those holy people, they don't drink and they don't do that stuff, and they're so judgmental. No, they're so holy. Holiness is not a bunch of do's and don'ts. Holiness is about, I want to align my life so much with the holiness of God that I reflect who he is and I want to love what he loves, and I want to hate what he hates. And if you're walking in lukewarmness, people like that will bug you. And Satan will have you hate the very people that are walking in the fullness of God. Don't believe his lie. Or how about this one, this lie. He'll get you to justify your passivity because most Christians aren't doing anything either.

Think of all the Christians. They didn't come to church today. You came to church for heaven's sakes. You're way better than they are. You serve in a cadre and they aren't even in one. You serving kids and they don't even serve in our church. You were here early this morning making coffee and serving in the parking lot. They don't even do anything. You're probably doing too much. Settle in. That's a lie of the enemy. Here's a lie. Most everybody saved anyway. So what's the urgency of the great commission? If

you really know the gospel, here's what you would realize. Probably about 10% of the people actually believe in the biblical Jesus. About 90% of the people you meet all around the world are apart from Christ if the world ended today. The urgency of the Great Commission has never been more urgent, it's never been more necessary.

As I said last week, there is no missions department in a church. The mission of the church is missions. And the mission of missions is the church. It's all of our job to reach the lost. It's not a select few. Everybody's to be on mission and we're to celebrate those that are engaging in that battle. Or how about this one, this might be my favorite. The lie is stop fighting for the truth. Just be nice. Just be nice. So on the video this week when Eric Metaxas was here, Charlie Kirk unpacked this, the original meaning in the French and the Latin of the word nice means ignorant, foolish or stupid. And I loved that and I was taking good notes and looked it up later. We're called to be kind. It's the fruit of the spirit. We're called to have compassion. We are not called to be nice.

Well, you need to agree with me because I want to do this. No, I don't. I do not need to agree with you at all, because I love you too much to agree with you. I don't need to be nice, I need to be loving. I need to be compassionate. I need to prepare you for who you're going to answer to. We have too many people that think Jesus is nice rather than compassionate. Friends, this nice Jesus that you think about. Read through Revelation chapter one, verse 12 and following where you see him walking through the lamp stands, which represent the churches with his eyes like fire and a sword coming out of his mouth and his feet burnished and bronze, and him coming as

the king of kings and the Lord of Lords. And when John, the apostles, saw him, the one who had put his head on Jesus when he was on the earth, the one who was his best friend, the one who felt so comfortable when he saw the resurrected Christ in all of his glory, he fell at his feet as though dead because he's that powerful.

That's the Jesus that's coming back. Are you ready for that Jesus? That's the one who's coming. And he's coming to right every single wrong, which should be terrifying to you. If you have unconfessed sin, confess it. When I think of God's holiness, I'm like, Lord, forgive me for that. Forgive me for that. I know I'm forgiven and I know I'm yours, but Lord, don't let anything be in me because I want to represent you well. And thank you for the blood and thank you for dying for me. And thank you that without you, I'd have no hope, but in you, I have everything. Thank you, Jesus. That's what it looks like. And friends, we need to not believe the lies of the enemy. We need to stand firm because I'm going to tell you right now, because I hear it all the time as a pastor, and you're going to hear it all the time as parishioners.

Just keep your Bible in your church and shut your mouth. This dead old book, it has no value to us. No, there's not one jot or tittle that'll ever wash away. The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our Lord stands forever. And you'll be judged by every single word in this book. And if you have the courage to read this book, this book will read you and show you everything I'm telling you is true. Amen. It requires wisdom. So as we're praying, we're preparing, as we're praying, we're seeing our culture, as we're praying, we're getting ready for whatever might happen because of this final one, that increased opposition continues to discourage and threaten until or

unless you're willing to stop your allegiance to God. Increased opposition continues to discourage and threaten until you stop your allegiance to God.

Notice verse 10. Thus, in Judah it was said as they were so overwhelmed, the strength of the burden bearers is failing. That means we're exhausted. Yet there is much rubbish. There's dust everywhere. We're not done with the job yet, and we ourselves are unable to rebuild the wall. What was going on? As they were feeling the opposition and they were feeling the threats, and they're going to come fight us, and here's what we're doing. It's like, why go on anymore? I don't think I have the strength. I don't know that I can do this. And here's what I would say. Inside discouragement is a much greater problem than an outside threat. It's never those outside the church that are going to bother you. It's always the discouragement that comes from within, when people start listening to the voices on the outside. Don't listen to those on the outside. Don't take counsel of what other people are saying.

You band together with other believers and we continue to do the work of the Lord, and we have nothing to fear. And notice why? Because when they realize they can't mock you and they can't threaten you or fight you, what do they say? Our enemies say now they will not know or see until we come among them. We're coming now. Kill them and put a stop to their work. Now the threat is not just we're going to come. We're coming. You'll see us. And when we come, we're not coming to stop. We're coming to kill. Why? Because the enemy has always been a murderer from the beginning, he comes to steal, kill and destroy. The threats will increase until people will

say, we'll take your life if you believe this stuff. But isn't it true that Jesus already warned us of this?

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. You got to be willing to die. Paul said, for I've been crucified with Christ, is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the son who loved me and gave himself for me. I've already died. I've been buried with Christ. What more can you do to me? Let us fix your eyes upon Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. Or Colossians three, "When Christ who is your life appears, you'll also appear with him in glory." Friends, discouragement is huge in the body of Christ. That's why we need each other. That's why we must serve each other. That's why we must advance the kingdom together. I would just tell you this, do not fear. Do not be discouraged. God will not fail you.

You'll see the goodness of the Lord and the land of the living. I do believe our best days are ahead, but I do believe it's going to be a fight. I do believe it's going to be a fight, because I'm watching now just saying simple truths in the pulpit. Even if I whispered them, sounds so hostile to people that are living in their deadness and sin. And yet those people that are living in their deadness and sin, they're under the wrath of God currently. And if they don't repent, they're going to experience it to the full. And yet God is so kind. Romans two, four said, "It's the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance, that Christ came to die for sinners." He came to give his life for you so you wouldn't have to live in your sin. He said that you must be born again. He said that you must live for him.

Here's my question. Are you born again or are you just religious? Well, I think I've always been a Christian. Then you're just religious because if you've been born again, you've been translated and transformed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved son in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. And you have time and space to come to Christ right now, today. And if you hear the Lord's heart, hear the Lord's voice, do not harden your heart. It's no good to put a seatbelt on after the accident. If I would've known I was going to be in the accident, I'll put the seatbelt on. It's no good to jump out of a plane and then wish you had a parachute. You put it on before you jump out. It does no good to say One day I'll get around to repenting and believing that Jesus is the Christ. Put on Christ today. What are you waiting for?

He loves you. He cares for you. He's so holy and righteous and good and is going to pour out wrath on every sinner who hasn't repented. But he loved you enough to give you this message today so you wouldn't have to be one of them. Come to Christ. I plead with you as your pastor, I plead with you. Come to Christ. He loves you. Come to the cross where perfect justice and perfect mercy meet. God's holiness is put on full display as he slaughters his son, and his mercy is put on display as Jesus is reaching out his arms saying, "Father, forgive him for they don't know what they're doing." Come make today the day, make today the day. And if you are a believer, what's your next step of faith? Don't ever back down. Forget about things that are behind, strain towards what is ahead. Continue to persevere. Continue to persevere. Continue to get back up, continue to persevere. Get back up. God's mercy will meet you new right

where you are right now. Experience his grace and his mercy in your life. Amen. Would you stand with me?

Our Father in heaven we give you praise, glory and honor for who you are. Lord, we talked a lot today about your holiness and your character and it makes us uncomfortable because we're not like you. So Lord, we thank you for your kindness today of reminding us that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary and his resurrection from the dead, we can have life in your name. If you're here today and you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your personal savior, I invite you to come. You can pray like this. Jesus, I know that you're God and I believe you died on the cross for all my sin and that you rose from the dead. Right now, I want to exchange my sin for your life. I want to repent on my sin. I want to turn from it, and I want to receive everything you have for me. Come into my life, Lord Jesus. You are my new Lord and Savior.

And for those of you who know Jesus, what's he calling you to do? Take the next step of faith. Do not fear. He's with you. He will show up in the moment and he'll be your firm foundation. He has a perfect track record. He has a perfect resume. He will never fail you. He won't. He won't. He won't. He'll walk with you every day until you beat him face to face. Take the step of faith He's showing you today, and let's sing to the Lord about his goodness. We give you all the praise, God, and it's in Jesus name we pray. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise for who he is.

