



Message **Transcript**

Stay in the Fight

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Father, we give you great praise and thanks for who you are. We thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ, who came to this world on our behalf. And that when we repent and believe, we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit that indwells each and every one of us. Father, we give you praise this morning because we believe that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you speak. Which means Lord, you have a message for every single person that is willing to listen to you this morning. Lord, we believe that because faith comes through hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. And so now, for all those who have gathered here today, who desire to hear the Lord 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. Amen.

Attending church this morning is an act of spiritual worship. Anytime that you want to be on mission and live for Jesus Christ, there is opposition that goes against that. That's why for many of you that arrived here this morning, you know it wasn't easy to get here. Why is it on Sunday morning that you forget the keys or that the gas goes out or that relationships go a little sour? Why is it on Sunday mornings when you're exiting your car, you tell everybody, put a smiley face on and get in there? Why is it on Sunday morning that it's so hard? Why do we wake up sometimes and say, do I even feel like going to church today? Do I even want to go? I mean, what am I going to get out of it?

What is it? It's an act of spiritual warfare because God knows that you need to be with him, and the enemy knows that you need to be with him, and the enemy tries to oppose everything that God wants. Last week we talked about how to engage in the fight and this fight being a heavenly battle that is taking place. And we talked about being meek. We talked about growing in Christ's likeness. We talked about unleashing the power of God in our life, and we talked about being able to walk the way that he wants us to walk by living accountably. And we talked about how all those things come together and help us work out what God wants. But we talked about the fact that we can be fired up about this battle that we're in, this spiritual war that we're in, and yet we make it to our car on the way home or we wake up on Monday morning, like I don't really feel like fighting anymore.

I'm kind of done with that. I mean, that fired me up for a while, but as of right now, I don't know that I feel like participating. And here's why, because you need to understand that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not neutral. I think for many Christians, they think the gospel is neutral. So when it comes to evangelizing our neighbors, we think that they're living in this sea of neutrality. So we picture the loss like this, that they're just kind of living their lives and some are living them morally and some of them are living them immorally. Some vote this way, some vote that way. Some have this view, some have that view. But our hope in this neutrality that they're choosing to live in is that one day they would trust Jesus before they die so they can go to heaven.

And so when we come and share the gospel, we think this is neutral ground and we don't want to offend them. We have plenty of time to share the gospel. And so let's

just take our time and do this. So we don't have a picture of what gospel mission is all about. Jesus Christ set us on mission. We talked about it last week, to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, son and Holy Spirit and teaching him to obey everything he commanded and he'll be with us always to the end of the age. Why? Because the gospel's not neutral. It's not neutral at all. What the Bible makes clear and what the Bible claims. And I'm giving this as a background to what we're getting into today because if you don't understand this, you won't understand why we need to stay in this fight.

You won't understand why we need to engage in spiritual warfare and why we need to continue to do that. And here's what the Bible says. From the moment that you're conceived, you're conceived in sin. And when you come out, you are already dead in your transgressions and sins. And then you start to spend time demonstrating that you have this virus of sin inside your life and you come up with myriads of ways from the time that you exited your mother's womb, you made your life all about you and what you needed to eat and when you needed to eat and when you were unhappy, you let everybody know about it because that was your sin condition. And it manifests itself as you get older in all sorts of different ways. And here's what the Bible says, the reason that is because spiritually you're already dead.

You may be alive physically and people may think you're cute and oh, what a cute little kid. And oh, they're growing into a nice young woman or a nice young man, but you're spiritually dead. You're also spiritually blind, so you're not aware of the fact

that you're spiritually dead and you're listening to cues of your father, the devil. You're either on Jesus' team or you're on the team of the devil. And what the Bible says and it makes clear is from the moment that you're conceived that you're on the broad road. That's why the Bible says enter through the narrow gate for broad is the way and wide is the road that leads to destruction and many are on it. Why? Because from the time that you're born, you are on that road and you are walking and as you age, you start sprinting and you start picking up speed and you are going towards hell as quick as you possibly can.

And some people think, well, no, I go to church too. You can go to church and still stay on that highway and go that direction, right? You need to know that. Everybody you meet that is not in Christ is racing towards hell. And the devil has his hands all over them and the devil has blinded them so they don't even know that they're in trouble. They don't know that when they die their sins are going to drag them into hell. Some may say, yeah, I know that, but they don't realize what hell is. But most people think if there is a God, when I die, I know he'll take me because the God I've conjured up in my mind is a loving God. So how I live and how I respond doesn't matter at all. That's how the enemy has tricked everybody. He's tricked even some of us. That's why the gospel is necessary because the gospel's not neutral and every single person that you meet that is not in Christ is sprinting towards hell. And they have no hope because if they die in their sins, that's exactly where they're going.

That's why we're called to evangelize and not moralize. If you saw somebody being carted off to sea in a current. They were on the beach, they were swimming with

their family, and finally a couple of them get separated and they start getting carted off to sea, you wouldn't then get on a boat and drive out next to them and say, hey, looks like it's tough out there. Let me teach you how to swim. Make sure to get your elbow up. Make sure you turn your head to the side every other breath. Make sure you're getting enough energy. By the way, you want to swim parallel with the shore so you can get out of the current. If they were drowning, you would reach in and grab them and pull them in your boat. They're aware of their condition. Most people in our world are not aware of their condition. They're not. Most Christians are not aware of the world's condition. That's why when we read passages, and I'm still just setting up the sermon, I'm not even preaching yet.

Just wait. In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes to a church. He writes to a church. And in chapter six and verse nine, here's what he says. He says, or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom. Unrighteous people don't make it in. Let me say it again. I'm not saying this. These are not my words. These are God's words. Unrighteous people don't go to heaven, unrighteous people do not spend eternity with Jesus. Do you not know that? That's what the Bible says. Now listen, just pay attention. The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Do not be deceived. Don't be fooled. Don't be tricked. Don't be duped. Unrighteous people don't inherit the kingdom of God. He spells out who? Neither fornicators, those are people that are engaging in sexual intimacy outside of marriage. Fornicators don't get in. Yeah, but I go to church.

You're not getting. Adulterers don't get in. People that worship other gods, don't

get in. Adult adulterers, don't get in. People that engage in relationships outside their marriage, they're not getting in. Nor effeminate nor homosexuals. Whether you're in the giving or receiving of a homosexual activity, you're not getting in. Nor thieves, people that steal from people. Nor the covetous, people that are always looking, I need more stuff. I'm jealous of what they have. They don't get in. Nor drunkards, people that engage in drink to the extent that they can't control themselves or revilers people that are antagonistic or hostile nor swindlers, people that steal will inherit the kingdom of God.

Now, I'm not making this up. This is what the Bible says about those that are not getting in. Don't be deceived. You heard it here. You heard it from God's word. You can disagree with God's word, but God's word's going to hold true, I promise you. Nobody like that goes to heaven, nobody. People that live like that are straight on their way to hell according to the word of God. Now, we read that passage as Christians, and the only word that jumps out to us is homosexuals. And we say, well, I'm not a homosexual.

Do you ever lie? You ever cheat, you ever steal? I mean, people that live unrighteousness do not enter the kingdom. That's a fact. See, the gospel's not neutral. Most of us think the gospel is this, everybody's neutral. And then when somebody dies, we say something like this. "I think they might have prayed to receive God. I don't know." Unrighteous living doesn't result in the kingdom of God. That's just a fact. So if people are sprinting towards hell, you need to know that's their condition. It's just like when you see people, you should see them dead and drowning in the sea. That's the

level of compassion you should have for them. And notice what he says about us. Such were some of you. If you're a believer in here, I promise you, you can see yourself in some of those words before you got saved. Such were some of you, but what? But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God.

What does that mean? It means there's only one hope for those that are racing to hell. And it's not religion. Religion won't help. Praying a certain prayer won't help. Getting religious won't help. Trying to be good won't help. Jesus Christ is the only one that can help. He is the way, the truth and the life and what people are looking for is not a religious prayer to pray. They're looking for the God of a universe to reach down and rescue them from the sin and destruction that their life is in. That's the gospel. So when we proclaim the good news of Jesus, people have to realize that they're dead in their sins. If they don't, what need do they have for Jesus? Right? That's the gospel. And that's why when Jesus Christ puts us on mission, there's opposition to that. That's why even some of you that are listening to my voice are offended and I'm only nine minutes into my message because that's the gospel.

Because you start asking yourself, well, am I even saved? And then the Bible would say, well, examine yourself and make sure that you're in the faith because God loved you so much, he sent his son to die for you to be in your place for all your sin. And he rose from the dead to validate the fact that he is indeed God's one and only son. Would you come to him? Would you be willing to turn? That's why repentance is

essential to salvation. If everything's neutral, then you can just stay here. I believe in God. I believe in Jesus. Good, even the demons do that. And shutter repentance means I know I'm being dragged this way and I got to turn. Now, I grew up going to church from the time I was a little kid, vacation Bible school, the whole nine yards.

I had everything in my arsenal. Went to a Lutheran grade school from K through eight. So I had nine years of memorizing scripture under my belt and learning theology. So wouldn't it be a surprise to you that after high school, after going to church my entire life for 18 years, somebody had the audacity to tell me that I was on my way to hell because I had never repented of my sin and I wasn't living righteously. Like who does he think he is offending me like that? But praise God, that's what it took in my life to realize I wasn't in need of religion. I was in need of Jesus. See, salvation is Jesus. So if you're questioning, am I saved or not? Here's my question, here's my question. Do you have a relationship with Jesus? Have you turned from your sin and turned to Christ?

When did that happen? Because for you, it had to happen at some time. If you were dead, blind and on your way to hell, you would know when you turned away from that. You would know when your life changed. When did that change? If it hasn't changed, make it change today by repenting and trusting Jesus. That's what the Bible is. Now, like I said, that's just a backdrop for what we're talking about. That's just setting up the message. Because if we really care for the world, the way Jesus cares for the world, if we really love the world, the way Jesus loves the world, if we love people, then we're going to be on mission to see as many people come to Christ as

we possibly can. Because people are either in need of Christ or they're hungry to grow in Christ and that's the only two groups of people.

That's it. And that's who God calls us to proclaim to. And if you're a believer and you say, I want to live this life, I want to be in the fight, I want to know that God put me on this earth for such a time as this to win as many people as I can and to see as many people grow and to see the kingdom advance as much as possible during my lifetime, how do you stay in the fight? Because it's one thing on a Sunday morning to get fired up about a message and be like, I needed this. I'm signing up. Count me in. I'm all in. It's another thing on Monday morning or Wednesday afternoon or Thursday when things don't go right, I don't know if I feel like it today. And what does Satan do? He does everything he can to distract us from spending time with Jesus and staying on mission.

Everything. And every time I get ready to preach this message, I promise you, I know this is for somebody because... That's why I'm so fired up. Every time I preach on spiritual warfare, things go crazy in my life, crazy. I mean there's crazy things going on all week. They culminated on Friday night with my youngest in the emergency room. And as she was there, she's fine, by the way. As she was there, I'm like, I knew this was going to happen. It happens every time I preach this stuff, every single time because here's why you're here and here's why this is spiritual battle. Because even for some of you that are dozing off, the reason you're dozing off, it's not because the message is boring, it's because Satan doesn't want you to hear it. And that's a fact because God cares about your soul and I care about your soul.

And so listen. But Paul writes to the Ephesians, I want you to turn your Bible. If you want to know how to stay in the fight, turn your Bible to Ephesians chapter six. Ephesians chapter six, starting in verse 10. As you're turning there, as Paul's writing this book to this church in Ephesus, he spends three chapters talking about salvation and what God has done in them and giving them a new identity. And he spends the next three chapters talking about how do you walk that out? It's a great book, one of my favorite books in the Bible. But before he leaves at the end, he gives them this final exhortation of how to stay in the fight. And here's what he says in verses 10, 11, 12, and 13. He says, finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his mind. Put on the full armor of God so that you'll be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you'll be able to resist in the evil day and having done everything to stand firm, to stand firm. So what I'm going to do is highlight four ways to stay in the fight, four ways to stay in the fight. Four ways to persevere when you feel like, I don't know I've given enough to God, I've given enough to his mission, I've given enough to church, I don't know. Here's what you need to do. Notice what he says. He says, finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his mind. Finally means from now on, it means from this point forward.

Some of you are not believers, you need to give your life to Christ today. Many of you today are believers, but you haven't been in the mission for a variety of reasons. Either you've been distracted by pain or discouragement or frustration or all sorts of different things, or you've been having a habitual sin problem in some way and you feel like I'm not worthy to do this. Here's what he says, from now on, like it starts today. Don't wallow in your past. Don't wallow about where you've been, but from now on, here's what he says number one, champion your new identity. Champion your new identity. He says, finally, from now on, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his mind. One of the reasons that you're so discouraged, you've been trying to live out your own strength. You cannot live the Christian life apart from Christ, and you cannot live the Christian life apart from other people.

It's impossible. You can't isolate from God and other people and expect to grow in Christ. You can't expect to stay on mission apart from other people. You can't. When I hear people like, I'm not going to go to church. I'm just going to be the church. I'm like, you're nothing. If you're not engaged with other people that are doing the work and you're not submitting the leadership to get the work done, you're not. It doesn't work. I've never seen someone like that. Finally, be strong in the Lord and then the strength of his might. It means this, be resolute in your identity. It means when you come to Christ, here's the great news. You were dead, you were rebelling, you were a sinner, you were all these things. But now in Christ, you've been born again. You've been made new. Behold, all old has passed away. Behold, all things have been made new.

You've been given a new identity. You've been given a new purpose. And by the way, you've been given a new name. You're not a sinner that's filthy and rotten and horrible. You're a saint, God's holy person. You're one that he has purpose for that He said on the planet. And here's why this is so important. Many Christians, even if they know about identity, don't live out their identity. That's why in brave, the R stands for being resolute in our identity. I'm preaching to your identity, I'm not preaching to your behavior. Every single one of us this week has behavior we wish we could rewind and erase and do differently all the time. I'm preaching to your identity. I'm preaching to who Christ says you are. And what the Bible says is that the moment you trust Christ, you've been given a new identity. And when you start speaking that and you start living that your life will change.

Now, think about some of the things the Bible says, I'm not going to, I have like a hundred of them here, but I'll just give you a couple. This is what you are in Christ. I'll use it first person. I am a child of God. I am the salt of the earth. I am the light of the world. I am reconciled to God. I am in peace in my relationship with him. I am free from the vicious cycle of sin and death. I am and dwelled by His Holy Spirit. I am a joint heir with Christ. I am seated in the heavenly realms in Christ. I am already washed, sanctified, and justified by the blood of Jesus. I am bought with the price and so on and so forth. Now, why is that so important? Because anytime you look in the mirror, you won't feel like that.

No matter how mature you are in Christ, you won't feel like that. I am pure, I am holy, I am good. Why? Because of who I am in Christ. The mystery of the gospel is

Christ in us, the hope of glory. Because Christ is in me, all the things true of Christ are true of me. And here's what most Christians think because they thought they were neutral before they came to Christ, they think it's still neutral after they come to Christ. Friends, I didn't sin the ways I sinned until after I became a Christian. Once I crossed the line, I was a good religious kid. Now all of a sudden, I was tempted in ways I'd never been tempted before and failed repeatedly. And then I thought to myself, well, I'm not even a Christian. Because before I became a Christian, I was like a better person than after I became a Christian.

But the reason is I didn't know my identity. I didn't realize I'd been transferred from the king of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved son. And I didn't realize that there were weapons that I needed to fight with now. And I didn't realize that I had to stand on my identity. And when I stopped standing on my behavior and started standing on my identity, things began to change. Let me explain. Let me explain. Let's make it real this morning. Some of you struggle with something. It can be depression, it can be some emotional issue, anxiety, whatever. It can be a habit or anger. It can be porn, it can be alcoholism, it can be drugs. It can be whatever. It can be the way you treat people. It can be your anger. It can be that you swear. And here's what we tend to do when we think the world's neutral.

I heard that message, I'm going to work on that. I'm going to try harder. How's it working for you? Things go from bad to worse when you try to work on them. Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might as I'm rooting myself in my identity.

Instead of saying, Lord, I can't believe I looked at porn again. Lord, I can't believe I got drunk again. Lord, I can't believe that I did this again. Lord, I can't believe I got angry like that again. Lord, I can't believe... I'm going to try harder. The devil smiles every time you say you're going to try harder because he's not afraid of you, but he's afraid of Christ in you. But when you struggle with something, you go over here and you begin to say, Lord, forgive me. I don't want to live like that.

And Lord, teach me to love what you love and teach me to hate what you hate because I want to live with you. And I don't want to ever get caught up and bound in that sin that dragged me off. And Lord, I know I'm forgiven and I know I'm holy, and I know I'm righteous. Help my behavior catch up with my identity. Every time I've struggled with anything and I've rested in my identity, my behavior eventually catches up. Every time I've tried to change my behavior, it goes from bad to worse or I have to hide it. And there's a number of people, men, I'll talk to you. There's a number of you guys that aren't involved in mission for Jesus outside the church or inside the church because you're steeped in sin of porn and you've been trying to get free from it forever.

And you go to conference after conference and group after group, and it goes from bad to worse. And here's why. Because you're fighting the wrong battle and Satan loves it. Instead of trying to fight to change, why don't you come over here and say, Lord, I know I'm pure. You made me pure when you forgave all my sins and I am pure and I want to live pure and I want to love purity. And Lord, teach me to look at the right things and teach me to be satisfied in who I am in you and all these things. And

Lord, take that garbage away. Teach me to love what you love. Teach me to hate what you hate. Teach me to love women the way you love women and teach me to hate the way other men do when they don't do it that way. When you live that way, it'll go away. There is no sin that has power over you unless you give it to them. Amen.

Which means whenever you come to church, you don't have to be ashamed to come to church. We've all had behaviors this week we'd be ashamed to put on the screen or come up here and testify to. Every one of us has. I have, and you have. But we don't come here to put our behaviors on display. We come here to put Jesus Christ on display. We come here to remind ourselves of who we are. We come here to remind ourselves that our behavior will catch up if we continue to worship Jesus and champion our identity and we get strength from Christ.

I mean, 2 Corinthians 12, Paul said he rejoiced in his weakness for where I'm weak, there he is strong. When I relinquish my power and say, God, you fight that battle because I can't do it anymore. That's when Satan has no power. The reason most of us don't change is we keep making commitments as to what our strength is and how we're going to get better. And every time we do that, you can picture the enemy in the corner. Ha, ha, ha. Keep trying. You'll never change and I love it because now you're going to get discouraged. Then you're going to blame God and it's all your fault because you won't let God work through you.

Friends, any sin that you sinned, welcome. The cross of Jesus is bigger than that. His blood covers that, his blood cleanses that. But now that he has, don't wallow in it forever. Claim it, speak it. When you start speaking about who you are and you

start living that way, I live with God's favor. I'm blessed. I'm holy. I'm righteous. I'm good. My behavior doesn't always look that way, but it's catching up. It's a process of sanctification until I meet Jesus when it'll be perfectly aligned. But I'm done wallowing in my sin. I'm done talking, I'm terrible. I'm a loser, I'm this. I did that for years. It never got me anywhere. And some of you need to stop blaming yourself and wallowing in your sin and say, Lord, the reason it's so miserable is I haven't let you work in and through me. I'm going to champion my due identity.

Will you come show me that I actually am that? Will you teach me to love what you love? Will you teach me to hate what you hate? Will you teach me to live how you want me to live? And I'll do whatever you show me? I promise you, in a matter of weeks, you'll be in a different place standing firm on the Lord. So be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. How powerful is the Lord? He created everything out of nothing. He can handle your problems. Amen. So from now on, champion your new identity. When you're counseling people speak to their identity. When you're encouraging people, speak to their identity. One of the tricks the enemy plays when people are struggling with stuff, we point out, well, here's what you did wrong and here's what you did. Try harder. All that does is exacerbate the problem.

Here's what you did wrong, here's why you're doing it wrong because you're not letting God lead in that situation. Here's who God says you are. Here's how God wants you to live. Do you want to live the way God wants you to live? Start claiming your identity and start moving on from your past. Amen. So from now on, from this point

forward, you champion your new identity. Number two is this. From now on, choose to oppose darkness. From now on, choose to oppose darkness. Notice what he says. Put on the full armor of God. We're going to talk about the pieces of armor in the coming weeks, but put it all on you. You don't just need one piece. I mean, this spiritual battle requires the fullness of everything that you're going to need for the missions God's called you to. So that you'll be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

What are the schemes of the devil? The schemes of the devil are his methods of getting to you. He has game film on every single one of us. He knows exactly what he needs to lob in your way with who needs to say it and the tone they need to say it with, or the circumstances need to happen just to get you all riled up. He's got all sorts of game film on you. He's got game film on our church of how to get under our skin as a church. He's got game film on Denver. He's got game film on Colorado. He's got game film on the United States and every other nation around the world. He knows how to do it individually. He knows how to do it corporately. He's always at work. It's never neutral for him. If you're not saved, he's constantly working all the time to keep you from knowing Jesus.

He doesn't care if you're religious, irreligious, good, bad, doesn't matter. He just doesn't want you in Christ. If you've met Christ, he's constantly at work. He doesn't take vacations. He doesn't take a break just to get you distracted from knowing and growing in Christ and staying on mission for Christ. He does everything just to get you to feel bad about yourself and then blame God for how bad your life is. He's always at

work. So if we're going to choose to champion our identity, then we got to do this too. We got to choose to oppose darkness. Now notice what it says so that you'll be able to do what? Stand firm. Stand firm against the schemes of the devil. The devil is alive. We'll talk about him in a minute. He's alive. He's coming after you. Most of us picture this because we don't think of this in the context of mission because so often this Ephesians six has been taught in the context of a local church where everything's good, stand firm therefore.

Here's how we think. I had a hard week, but I got to stand firm. I'm standing firm. I got to stand here. I'm just a passive person and I'm... That's not what he's saying. Stand firm means this. You choose whose side you're going to be on. You choose, are you going to live for Jesus or are you not? Pick a side. Pick a side. When Jesus, in the book of Revelation writes a letter to the church in Laodicea, in Revelation chapter three. He says to them, he goes, listen, I wish you were hot or cold, but you're neither one. You're lukewarm and I'm about ready to vomit you out of my mouth. What was he saying? Pick a side. Quit wallowing in neutrality. Before me or against me, quit staying in the middle. I hate that. I mean, if I've saved you and you have a new identity, then get on this side and stay here and start working with me.

Choose it. That's what it means to stand firm. And what do we choose to do? We choose to oppose the darkness. When you're in spiritual battle, you're opposing the darkness. It's an aggressive, hostile act against that which is wicked. That's what it means. It means when we see things in ourselves and in others that are wicked, we highlight them, we point them out, we expose them, and we oppose them. We expose

and oppose the darkness. That's what we do. And every time you try to expose the darkness and tell people, here's what's really going on, you will have a counter-attack. You will feel something in your life that goes a different way. Choose a side. I mean, there's so many characters in the Bible we love. Did John the Baptist choose a side or did he say, well, what's good for you is good for you but I would never do that. I would never sleep around with somebody else's wife. But that's your business.

No, he told the king, what you're doing is wrong. God hates it. You need to repent. Stop. Did Jesus oppose darkness or did he pick a side? I mean, Jesus told the truth. Jesus loved everybody. There wasn't a person on the planet Jesus didn't love because he created them all. But read through Matthew 23, we talked to the religious leaders of the day. You sons of hell, you children of the devil. You whitewash tombs. You clean the outside to look good, but inside you're full of wickedness and dead man's bones. You sons of hell. You travel the world over to win a single convert. And when you do, you make them twice as much of a son of hell as you are. Did you pick a side? I mean, where do we get this idea that being with Jesus means just love everybody and just associate with everybody and make sure everybody's happy with you? That's not Christianity. That's a lie. Christians stand firm on the truth and they live it out. Amen.

Pick a side, expose darkness. Oppose darkness. Say, well, how do I do that individually? When you sin, you participate in darkness. Every time you say to yourself, eh, that's not a big deal. Nobody's going to know about that. Nobody needs to know about that. I would never share that at church, but nobody needs to know. Every time

you do that, you're saying, I'm crossing the line. I want to go back. When you're neutral, you participate in darkness. I mean, we know this intuitively as parents, we must choose to oppose darkness. You must choose it. I mean, when we talk about confronting and correcting the behavior of our children, why do we do that? It's because we love them. It's not because we hate them. We love them. We want them to change. If they're disrespectful or they're disobedient or they're doing something, we tell them what we're doing, not because we hate them.

We're telling them because we love them and we want them to grow and be the fullness of what God created them. Or how about this? I mean, I just got back from vacation. I mean, I'll make it personal. I mean, you've been to the beach lately? Seen how people dress. I mean, some of the women I saw, I mean, it was like dental floss and a fig leaf for the bathing suit. I mean, it's disgusting. It's gross, right? I mean, why can't we tell people that? Not because I don't want to look at you, which I don't want to look at you, and it's wrong, and it is, but it's not good for your soul. When I'm watching an eight-year-old boy or when my kids tells me, dad, an eight-year-old boy was taking pictures of his mom like that. It's disgusting. It's wrong. Girls listen to me, if you have daddies at home that tell you how to dress better, listen to them. They know what in the world they're talking about. Amen.

But it's not just kids. I mean, we grow up and we think we grow out of correction. But what about when a friend lies or lacks integrity? Or what about when a coworker is heading down the wrong path? Or what about when a person who says they love

Christ is steeped in sin? Can we not expose that and oppose that? Not because we hate the person, but because we love them and we see where that ends up. I mean, we hear about this great apostasy that's coming. That's what the Bible teaches. You know what apostasy means? Literally, it means to choose to fight for the other side at the last minute. That's what apostasy is. It's saying, I'm on team Jesus. I professed that, but at the last minute, I'm going to fight against everything that I was for. That's apostasy, right? Friends, here's what people say in church.

Well, don't judge lest you be judged. Yeah, yeah. Read through the Bible. Judgment begins at the household of God. We're called to judge each other. You say, well, that sounds rude. It doesn't. You want me to be judged, don't you? If I were having an adulterous affair, which I'm not by the way. But if I were, would you not want me to be judged? Would you not want discipline to come down on me? Would you not want me to repent? Or would you want me to stand up here and say, well, my personal life's my personal life, but I'm still a good preacher? Because that's what some churches do, and it's garbage and it's wrong. So we judge each other, not because we don't love each other, but because we do. So as the veil gets pulled back, we judge things, right? That's why from here, I preach biblical authority. Not just here, so I get applause, but out there because we care about the people that are steeped in the sins.

We as a church have lost all biblical authority because we're afraid to tell people that the way that they're going is wrong. I remember when I taught through the Book of Genesis and had leaders in our church leave because they said, if you teach that, I'm

not going to come back here. Which only gave me more fervency to preach it hard because I'm not going to punt or change the word of God to make you feel comfortable because I have to answer to God for what I say. So when you're studying the Book of Genesis, you learn that God's the only eyewitness to creation as to when it happened and how it happened, then we better pay attention to what he says.

And if God said he created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, that's just what I believe. If you don't, it's because you don't believe God. God said in the first chapter, he created two genders, male and female. God said in the first chapter, marriage is between a man and a woman. There is no other marriage. God said in the first chapter, there's only one race. I mean, you can offend everybody with Genesis chapter one in the world. So when we're talking about the LGTBQ, we're talking about Black Lives Matter. We're talking about all these organizations and different things that oppose God. Why am I opposing it? Because I don't like people that are steeped in that sin. No, it's because I love them enough to know if you stay on that road, you'll spend an eternity apart from Christ in hell, and Jesus died for you and loves you, and there's a way out. He can free you from your sin. That's the gospel.

It's loving to correct behavior. It means if I'm going all in with Jesus, it means my attitudes towards him, my speech, my speech against the darkness, my behavior corresponding. It all has to line up. I mean, the devil's put his hands everywhere in our society. He knows that the world is the Lord's and everything in it. So he wants to have a hand in everything. He wants to have a hand in how we view gender and marriage and life and science and history and eternity. But God's already ruled on what

happens. God's already shown us everything that's true. So anything that doesn't align with this book, we expose and oppose and we're hostile towards it, not towards the people in it, but towards the ideas behind it. Does that make sense? And here's the reason why many of us don't fight this fight, and here's the reason many of us don't stay in the battle. Here's why. Because you appreciate comfort more than you value Christ. I just want to be comfortable. I don't want anybody to be upset with me. I mean, I want to have a nice Thanksgiving dinner.

I just want to have a good, comfortable working environment. I want my neighbors to know that I'm a good person. I'll just cozy on up to them. Man, you can cozy on up to lost people. But if they're drowning and on their way to hell and you don't speak the gospel and they don't see a difference in your life, there's no hope for them. I was talking to a friend of mine this week that shared the gospel with a Muslim that was so offended that said back to him, you're telling me that if I don't believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, I will go to hell for all eternity. He said, that's exactly what I'm telling you. She left the party before the party even got started. This guy's talking to me on the phone. He said, I just feel so discouraged. I'm like, you did awesome.

That's the gospel. You're either an aroma of life and an aroma of death. And when this woman comes to Christ, I want to do a video about it so you can tell people, this is how you did it, because that's the gospel, right? That's why we choose our new identity. We choose to live in our new identity, and we choose by God's grace to oppose the darkness. We have to. We have to. Because Satan's a liar. He doesn't just lie in church. He lies everywhere. And once you're a liar, you know what that makes

you? A liar. That means you're never going to tell... You can never be trusted. It is what Satan does. And so as you get older, you see, well, the same sins I felt for him, the same lies I told, the same lies I believe are the same lies he's using with that generation of people. I mean, same stuff. Singles. Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen, listen. I'm coming forward.

Some of you singles are so discouraged that you're not married and you hear every one of these lies. It's because you messed up sexually. It's because there's nobody out there that's living for Christ like you are. It's because if you go all in with Jesus, everybody's going... I mean, I heard every lie you've heard. Jesus can't redeem that. There's no other virgins out there, whatever. It are all lies. You can't trust what the devil says. Here's what you can trust. I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, and they're plans for good and they're not harm. And I'm a God of favor, and I'm a God of blessing and keep walking with me. I got you. That's our God. That's why we have to know the word and focus on whatever's true, whatever's right, whatever's noble, whatever's excellent, admirable, praiseworthy, any of those things, dwell on that.

Because here's what the devil will get you to do. The devil will get you to say, well, you chose to fight and now you're dealing with some of the consequences. Now, listen to me. If we send people off to war, if send soldiers off to war. We knew in World War II when the soldiers were storming the beaches in Normandy and reports came back, many died. Nobody said, are you kidding me? How did that happen? But

yet, we're shocked when we're on mission for Christ that bad things happen. Cancer happens, people die, discouragement friendships you thought you had that didn't... All these things go haywire? And then the devil whispers in your, and he says that see, Jesus isn't as good as you said he was because if your God was good, you wouldn't be going through this.

And then we get mad at God because he's not doing what we want him to do for us because our life's no longer comfortable. When in reality God hasn't changed and he's still good, and you're on mission, and your life's never going to be perfect on this side of heaven. You stay in that fight and you keep walking and you persevere, and you live for Jesus. And I promise you what's coming is greater than anything you would ever know. Amen.

So that's why we have to champion our identity and choose to oppose darkness. But here's a really important one. Number three is this. From now on, you've made mistakes here. You have to target your real enemy. You have to target your real enemy. Notice what he says, verse 12, for our struggle, that means it's not just your struggle, it's my struggle. It's all of our struggles as believers. It is not against flesh and blood, literally blood and flesh. Here's what he says. Your battle is not against another human being. Your battle is not your boyfriend or your girlfriend. Your battle is not against your spouse. Your battle's not against your kids. Kids your battles not against your mom and dad. Your battle's not against your boss and your battle's not against your employees. Your battle's not against your neighbor.

Your battle's not against the politician that we didn't or did elect. Sorry. That's not

the battle. Here's what he says. But against where? The rulers against the powers against the world force of this darkness and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Where's the battle? It's taking place in the unseen realm. It starts in the unseen realm. The unseen spiritual realm is where the problem starts. Why? Because we have an enemy of our soul. One Peter five, eight says, be sober and on the alert for you have an adversary of the devil that prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. You study who this devil is in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and other passages. And you'll realize that he was a created being by God and was created so beautiful, so wonderful that as he was leading the worship to the throne of God, he decided, why should he get all the glory?

I'm pretty awesome too. Worship should stop with me. And that's when he got booted, and that's when he took a third of the angels with him. And we don't understand all these spiritual forces of darkness, but it appears that there's different levels of demonic influence like presidents and governors and mayors and city council people and all that kind of stuff. So when I say the devil's coming after me, he may be, but it's probably not him directly because he can only be at one place at one time. But he's got hoards of those that help him to keep me off mission, to discourage me, to distract me, to discourage you, to distract you from giving Jesus all your worship and living on mission for him. He's constantly at work doing that. And the battle, if we don't realize it, we'll end up fighting each other rather than fighting where the battle's coming from.

I mean, if you're in a marriage, let me just give you some marital advice. You're

going to have some challenge from time to time, but your spouse is not the problem. The spiritual entity behind your spouse is the problem. And if you don't deal with that first, you can't fix what's reality in front of you. When things happen, it's what's going on behind that we have to watch, not just what's coming through the people that we're talking to. Your spouse is not your enemy, never. And here's why we need to know that. Because if you don't know that, here's what you're going to say. Well, you've never met my spouse.

But see if I'm going to champion my identity and push the darkness back, and I'm not going to allow my spouse to live in that darkness, but I'm going to focus more on me and say, God, I'm a new creation. I'll do it for me. I'm a husband. I'm a father. You want me to be a good husband and a good father. I clearly don't know what I'm doing, and I need you to help me to become that because you told me I could. And I want to love my wife the way Christ loved the church, and I clearly don't know how to do that. So start with me. Change me, and then you do whatever you want to do. But I know your forearm marriage, so you'll make it work. Now you do that, and then you get a wife that says, dear Jesus, I do not know how to submit to my husband as unto the Lord, and I have a really hard time doing that. But I want to because I want to do what you want me to do.

But Lord, I clearly can't do that very well. So would you help me. When two individuals are doing that, man, marriage can sizzle on this side of heaven. Not perfect ever but sizzle. Why? Because when Christ's power is coming through, it's a different

entity than when there's two individuals trying to work it out. And I'm for counseling, but too much counseling is about work on your behaviors. If I hear one more married person telling me they have a communication problem, I'm going to be like, I know. You have two genders, you see the world totally different. You're both sinners. You both have different backgrounds. How could you not have a communication problem? Everybody has that, but you don't fix it by going to counseling for 25 years. You fix it by centering on your new identity in Christ and letting Christ be Lord over all of that. Amen.

You got to target your real enemy. When you get mad at people, you get mad at your boss. You get mad at your pastor, you get mad at your church. You get mad at your neighbor. You get mad at whoever. There's something else going on behind that. You get mad when you watch the news. There's something else going on behind that. You got to target your real enemy because if you know truth, you realize that the enemy is always at work trying to take truth and distort it and twist it and make it normative for Christians. And a bending of the truth is never normative for Christians. And we don't just need to say it here, we need to say it everywhere we go. Because when people know that you're what side you're on and who you're for, and they see the love coming out of your eyes, but that you're unwilling to bend, that's when the power of God is unleashed.

I mean, this is why we have to target our real enemy. John 10:10 says, the reason he comes to steal, kill and to destroy. He wants to destroy your life. He wants to destroy your singleness. He wants to destroy your marriage. He wants to destroy

your family. He wants to destroy your home. He wants to destroy your neighborhood. He wants to destroy our church. That's all he cares about. Massive destruction, right? Target him. You start fighting him in the heavenly places. We're already seated with Christ in the heavenly places. You start praying. You start saying, God, I can't change anything, but you can. Unleash your heavenly forces. You do what you need to do to make this a reality. You start targeting your real enemy and he can start, Jesus' power can start coming through. Your battle's not against other people. Even when we see politically what's going on or education... Your battle's not with individual people, your battle is with the system of evil and the heavenly forces that's behind all of that and driving all that.

You're going to see me get... I'm not not there yet, but you're going to see me get passionate during the series about some things. But I'm not mad at people. I'm mad at the Satanic influence in people that's keeping them from knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm really upset with the way that Christians are being duped to believe it all, or Christians are being duped to remain neutral rather than push back. But I'm not against people, even people that think 180 degrees different. I'm not against them. I'm praying for them. That's what we're called to do, right? We're called to pray for our leaders and all those in authority. Not if they agree with us, but we're called to do it because we care for their soul.

And that's what means to target our real enemy. So before you get angry at another person, or when anger comes up or frustration or fear, target, what's going on behind this? What's really driving this? And why is it that I'm upset? And take it to the

Lord? And if you'll do this and you'll champion your identity and you'll choose to oppose darkness, you'll draw a line in the sand. You'll target your real enemy. Then here's the final point I want to make, don't ever back down. Don't like ever back down, don't ever stop. Here's what he says. Therefore, take up the full armor of God. That's not part of it. Piecemeal, that's all of it we're going to talk about in the coming weeks so that you'll be able to resist. Resist, oppose, be hostile to.

James four says, resist, be hostile to oppose the devil. And he'll do what?

Congregation:

Flee.

Pastor Jeff:

He'll flee from you. He can't handle resistance. He can handle neutrality. He can handle you turning tail. He can handle you saying this is too hard. He can handle you dealing with criticism. He cannot handle you saying, no, I'm choosing this side. And you may take my life, but I don't care. You will not take me from being on team Jesus until I meet him face to face. He can't handle that. Can't handle it.

Resisting the evil day. I think there's an evil day coming unlike any other that we've lived through, but we're living in evil days. And he says, and having done everything to stand firm. Having done everything, choose your side. Having done everything, resist. And what? Never, ever, ever back down. Now, here's what you need to understand. Many of us hear this and we think, well, we're fighting from the remnant side. We're like the losing team. We got to really battle. You're not. You're on the

winning side. Even though there's a remnant, and I'm battling from the position of this. I know I already win.

So what am I afraid of? I've already died and my life is hidden with Christ and God, when Christ shows, my life appears, and I'll also appear with him in glory. What do I care? I'm pushing back the darkness. I'm holding back. The darkness, not for me. I'm already saved. But for whom? For our church for our kids, for future generations. We can't just talk about truth. We have to exercise truth. That's why we're starting Brave Academy to build up the next generation. That's why I hope we get another campus and can build a couple more brave academies. That's why I hope we get a high school. I got so much vision. I want to drive the darkness back. Amen.

And I believe God called you to this church because he created you to be a warrior and not a wimp. It's in your gut. See, and when you drive the darkness back and when you oppose the darkness, the only Christians that criticize are cowards. When you hear a Christian criticize, well, that guy's too involved and that guy's... Here's what you know about them, they're not engaged in the mission, they're not in the fight. They're in for comfort, and they realize if people started living like that, they'd have to give up their comfort and actually get in the mission too. So when you hear criticism, just know that's a sign you're doing things the right way. If you're being obedient to Jesus, if you're living in a Christ-like manner, if you're letting his power come through, if you're depending upon truth, those kind of things, then when you hear criticism, it ain't you, it's them.

But don't ever back down. I'm seeing a hostility against Christians in our world like never before. I mean, it's coming. We used to talk about it in the early nineties, like there's coming today where it's going to be hard to be a Christian and I would think, okay. It's hard to be a Christian if you're going to do this. I mean, you can't just wear a WWJD bracelet and go to youth group and that's enough. I mean, you're going to have to make a stand. People are going to have to see what you're making a stand for. You're going to have to speak it with your mouth and live it with your behavior and be willing to deal with the consequences. There are very worldwide, real physical threats that are coming. I'm telling you, 2020 changed me. It developed my theology of resistance and hostility and opposition towards those that don't uphold the truth of God. And I will not apologize for upholding the truth of God. I won't ever.

There are threats on you if you have a mind where the scientific community will say that you're wrong. And you can only say this, and you can't say that. There are threats against what you're going to speak and how you're going to speak it and what you believe and what you don't even if the facts are contrary. There are economic threats that are coming. I don't know if you know this or not, but in Australia right now, if you go to get cash out of your bank, you can't get it out of your bank because they want everything to go to a cashless society and they want to put a chip in your finger within the next year. Friends, it's coming. The end is near. Now, how near it is, I don't know. And I believe God can breathe his life through his Holy Spirit and push it back for a long time.

I'm not gloom and doom. I have great hope, but I know this. These are the days

God's given us to stay in this fight. Don't you ever back down? Don't you ever give up? You stand on the truth. You stand on the character of who Jesus Christ is, and you let his power be unleashed in and through you and you will never ever have to apologize. Because what I'm preparing you for is the day that you stand before Jesus face to face and no matter what happened to you, you can hear these words well done, good and faithful servant. Let me present you faultless before my father. It's what we've been talking about for years, and it's all happening right now.

That's what we should be looking forward to. Don't be surprised if bad things happen in this world. They're going to happen. But link arms, stand together and keep fighting. See, I believe our best days are ahead. That's why God says to run with perseverance. So from now on, never back down. From now on, champion your identity. From now on, choose what side you're going to fight on. And from now on, let's target our real enemy, the enemy of our soul and the souls of all those around the world. Amen. That's what God wants from you.

So I'll leave you with this nugget of hope. If you've come to church today and you say, I thought I prayed a prayer, but I'm not so sure I'm saved. I just think I'm being religious. I have great news for you today. If you're in the throes of saying Jesus Christ is more powerful. You can turn from your sin and turn towards Christ right now. And if you say, well, I may have done that. I may not have. Then get it right now. Make Jesus Christ the Lord and Savior of your life. And if you have and you know that you're in Christ and you know the Holy Spirit's in you and you felt conviction in some area today,

then repent of that and start fresh so that from now on, you can live out the identity that Christ has for you. He wants to put you on mission.

He wants to use you, and he wants to get His glory in and through each and every one of us, not just individuals but us as a church. Friends, this is where we're going. This is the battle that we're going to engage. This is why we're forming cadres, not just so that we can have loving accountability and study the word of God and all those different things that are great. But so we can put people on mission to do prayer, care and share and pray for the loss, and care for the loss, and share the gospel with the loss and stand boldly for him. You can be a part of that. You're at a church that wants to do. It's not just about getting more people to come. It's about putting the people that come into mission to go be brave warriors for courageous kingdom advancement.

That's what we're here to do. If you're feeling your heart stir, here's why. Because that's the Holy Spirit in your life telling you to take a step and always ask you to do is take the next baby step. Amen. Would you stand with me as we pray? Our Father in heaven, Lord, we thank you for your word, your living and your active word. Lord, we thank you for who you are and for all you're doing. If you're here today and you've never trusted Christ, you've never repented of sin and come into a relationship with him, it's just been religion. Here's how you can pray. Jesus, I know I'm in sin. I want to be free from it. I don't want to go to hell. I don't want to experience any of the darkness in my life anymore. Lord, I want you and you turn to him.

Here's how you can pray. Jesus, come into my life and be my Lord and Savior

right now. And if Jesus is the Lord and Savior in the life, if there's been anything he's called you to repent of today, repent. Turn from your sin, turn to Christ and let His Holy Spirit wash fresh over you. Let you know in your new nature in your new identity, you're completely washed. You're completely cleansed, you're completely pure, you're completely holy. You're completely right, you're completely good, and that God's Holy Spirit promises you a future of purpose and hope and enjoy. Father, do a work in this place, even as our elders come forward and our pastoral team, and as we have moments of prayer, Lord, stir the hearts of your people to respond the way you want. We give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise for His word?