

Taking Back Our Nation - Today We Fight (pt.2)

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the need for Christians to reclaim their nation by boldly speaking truth and engaging in spiritual warfare against cultural challenges.

Duration: 56:38

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10

Topics: "Boldness in Faith", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the urgent need for Christians to reclaim their nation by standing firm in their faith and speaking truth into a culture that often promotes sin and division. He argues that America was founded on godly principles and that the current narrative of America as evil is misleading. Idleman calls for believers to engage in spiritual warfare, utilizing the armor of God, and to confront societal issues with love and truth rather than fear or anger. He stresses the importance of prayer, worship, and boldness in sharing the gospel, reminding the congregation that the battle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces. Ultimately, he encourages Christians to be active in their faith and to fight for the values that align with God's word.

Transcript

The title this morning of the message is Taking Back Our Nation, Taking Back Our Nation Today We Fight. And you'll remember that last week I spoke about this same theme, but I said I didn't finish so this is going to be part two of that message, Taking Back Our Nation Today We Fight. However, I think I need to clarify what exactly I'm talking about because that title in and of itself could be a little inflammatory, a little confusing some people out there if you just do the title alone.

But what I'm talking about is taking back our nation. I believe that God has given us freedoms. That's why they're called God-given freedoms.

And it's not the freedom to sin. That's what we understand. It's not the freedom to publish pornography.

It's not the freedom to abort children. It's not the freedom to sin. Our nation was built initially because God wanted to be a blessing, I believe, to not only people coming over, but America has been the biggest support and blessing of other nations than any other nation.

There's no one even in second place. And sovereignty allows us to be a blessing. So a lot of us view America as God planting this nation, growing this nation.

Yes, there was atrocities done to the Native Americans, for example. But we forget about the Christian men and women who spoke up. The Salem witch trials were not good, but we forget about the three Christian men who brought those to an end.

Slavery was not good, but we forget about the plethora of Christians who fought for that and the hundreds of thousands who lost their lives in what we call the Civil War. See, people, when they have a narrative and you begin to challenge that narrative, they begin to get upset and angry. And the narrative that they're trying to promote right now is that America is evil.

It is bad. And you have to remind people, America isn't anything. She's simply a reflection of her people.

A nation can't be good or bad. It's a reflection of her people. Some people say, is America a Christian nation? Well, a nation can't be Christian.

It's a big piece of land from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But was it built on godly principles? The Mayflower Compact, when they came over to the glory of God and to the advancement of the Christian faith, the constitutions of Maryland and Massachusetts and Virginia all acknowledge the sovereign hand of God. The Supreme Court justices would actually rule according to Scripture.

The Founding Fathers quoted or referenced the Bible nearly four times more than any other source. Newsweek magazine in the 1980s actually said the Bible could be our founding document. Now within that, evil is working too, though.

You got it? Yes, there was evil, but there was also goodness. And the light was going forth. It was trying to be quenched and grieved.

And people were trying to stop what God was doing. So that's what I talk about. When I talk about American freedom, I'm not talking about nationalism and America's so great and let's put the flag over the cross.

God forbid. But God does want us to acknowledge what He has done. Thank you for the blessings.

Thank you for giving us this republic. And remember the lady who asked Benjamin Franklin when the nation was formed, what did we get? Did we get a republic or a monarchy? And he said, you have a republic if you can keep it. A nation focused on God.

That's my heartbeat. Freedom to worship God. And that's why we have to say something.

Because the whole point that God, I believe, wants us to do, I think many of you would agree with this, is to get the message of the gospel out, correct? To worship God. And when legislation and political hot buttons, when they begin to stop evangelism, when they begin to mock God, when they begin to pervert justice, we are to speak boldly the truth back into our culture. That's actually what the pulpit, one of the reasons the pulpit was created, was to speak into the culture of their day, of our day, of any other day.

And that's why you're seeing right now the emails we receive the most, which many of you know I've talked about, are people trying to find a good Bible-believing church. Somebody preaching the truth, not watering down the gospel, not walking on eggshells, not trying to offend anyone. Let me sound the alarm

right now, clearly and boldly.

When you preach the truth of God's word, you will offend. Get over it. Get over it.

We're not, we're not, this culture, right? This culture, this culture that doesn't, what they call the woke, woke culture, and the cancel Christianity. Everybody's offended. And I'm gonna skip ahead real quick.

I have a message to the woke, cancel culture. You cannot cancel the gospel. The gospel will hurt and it will offend you.

Let me say that again so the clapping doesn't drown it out. The gospel will hurt you and it will offend you. It is designed to crush and break arrogant hearts.

We are becoming so cowardly that we can no longer fight the good fight, so weak that we cannot fight the right battles, and so timid that we cannot engage in spiritual warfare, so woke to the things of the world that we are asleep to the things of God, so apologetic that we lack boldness to confront. And I said something on Facebook that drew a lot of attention. I want to clarify it.

All of it wasn't good, so let me clarify. When your apology makes you weak and ineffective and cowardly, you are no longer the voice crying in the wilderness. You are the capitulating coward warned about in Jeremiah 23.

What happened in Jeremiah 23? I won't rehearse that. I did last week, but God basically called out the false prophets, the false spokesmen. What were they doing? They were saying, peace, peace, guys, it's okay.

Your sin is no big deal. God is winking from heaven. He's like a doting grandfather.

It's okay. Don't worry. There's no big deal.

We'll get through this. Does that sound familiar? No confrontation. And God says, I didn't send these false prophets, but they ran.

I didn't speak to them, but they spoke. But had they truly stood in the counsel of my word, they would have turned this nation back to me. And so many pastors primarily are so busy apologizing for everything and walking on eggshells.

And does this pulpit offend you? Does this, I'm sorry. At some point you got to speak the truth of God's word through a humble and broken heart and let the chips fall where they may. Yes, sin will confront you.

It will, it will upset you. It will offend you. The gospel offends.

It's calling out darkness. It's calling out sin. And you know, maybe you don't know what our cancel culture is.

Our cancel culture is basically, if you've done anything bad in your past, you can't be effective anymore. Or they're calling out things that make no sense. Now Aunt Jemima has to go.

And Oat Brands and Quaker, who knows what's next. Now Jesus is too white. Now stained glass windows.

It's just, it's absolutely ridiculous. And the reason many of us are frustrated is because no one is saying anything. The pulpits are silent.

Why? Why? Why are they? Have you thought about this? Why are they silent? Because they will lose half their audience if they start standing up for the truth now. There are pastors I told you about in our area. It sounds like they're almost apologizing for being white.

Let me tell you, you don't have to apologize. Black, brown, gray, purple, blue. You don't have to apologize for your skin color.

It's a pigmentation of the skin. God created you in his image. We don't have a skin problem.

We have a sin problem. So you're not going to win this. You're not going to win this trying to force things down people's throats.

You're going to win this by hearts changing and repenting and being born again and having a new heart, a loving heart, a gracious heart. That's how we're going to fix this problem. I love what our 18th US vice president said.

Henry Wilson, 1800s. Remember, remember ever and always. Now he is addressing the nation, I believe, if you can believe that, that your country was founded by the stern old Puritans whose first act on touching the soil of the new world was to offer on bended knees thanksgiving to almighty God.

Not to mention he left the Whig party in the mid-1800s because they would not stand against slavery. See, there's so much truth out there, but they don't want to hear it because it doesn't fit the narrative that they're trying to promote. America is evil.

It's a bunch of this. We've got to restructure everything. No, actually, you have to go back to the old truths.

You have to go back to the foundation on which God built our nation. So how do we fight? What does this look like? Well, thank God we have the word of God and not our flesh, right? Because if we had our flesh, we would be in trouble. We will resemble the world instead of lovingly confront it.

And I know of no better place to start than in Ephesians 6.10, Paul said to the church in Ephesus, finally, my brethren, picture Paul speaking to us, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. See, many times, including myself, we want to be strong in ourself, in our opinion, in our Facebook posts, in our tweets, in our emails. We want to be strong in ourself.

I've got this. No, you don't got this. I mean, I try not to alarm too many people and things, but just to speak the truth, I've never thought a nation could crumble so quickly than what we're seeing out there.

And it seems like nobody is saying anything, which they are, please understand. I think many are confused, but it just seems like, Lord, what is going on? So in all of this, he's, be strong in the Lord. Some of your translations might say, be strong in the 2020 November election.

That's not supposed to be there, right? But so many people are putting their hope in that, and I get that question all the time. But Shane, what do you think will happen in November? I'm not concerned with November right now, I'm concerned with who is seeking the heart of almighty God. That's our only hope.

Put on the whole armor of God. Isn't that interesting? Put on the whole armor of God. That tells me I can put on a piece and not be very protected.

And I thought of this this week. It would be like you telling, or actually the sergeant, I don't know if that's the right term right now, let me just say, a commander telling a Navy SEAL that's getting ready to go into battle, hey, do you have your pocket knife? He's in shorts and a tank top, hey, make sure you got your pocket knife. You got one thing, that's not gonna do anything.

So as Christians, we have to take on the whole armor of God. Many people put on, I put on Sunday church. That's not enough.

I put music on, Shane, I put on our church radio station on my car, that's not enough. The whole armor of God surrounds the believer, wherever they go, they're filled with the capacity of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. That word is interesting because it means trickery or deceit.

Be able to stand against the trickery, the deceit of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. So that's the bottom line.

Our battle is not on Facebook or the protesting or the rioting, I should say, actually, protesting is fine if it's done right, but the rioting, the civil unrest, a lot of these things are, we're not going to win this with flesh and blood. But you're wrestling against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. There's a demonic realm that is working overtime to try to cause division and trying to cause fear in our hearts.

And he said, therefore, he goes back to this, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day. And having done all, in other words, once you've done it all, have you ever felt like that or just me? I'm in my wits end. Lord, I've done everything.

I don't know what else to do. He said, having done all, stand. Let me fight for you.

And I would love if I had time to go into a lot of what that weaponry is and maybe next week. But right now, I just want to share a few things with you. Again, we have to utilize all these tools.

We can't, this is not a time for partial Christianity or casual Christianity or half-hearted Christianity. The Bible actually has a word for that and it's called lukewarm. And what I talked about last week, I want to remind you again, this week is number one, stay alert in the battle.

Men, we've got to wake up. We've got to wake up. Stay alert in battle that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

And we talked about 1 Corinthians. Be watchful. Stand firm in the faith.

Act like men. Be strong. So the men have to sometimes admit that, hey, we haven't been standing strong.

We haven't been rising up. We've been in there. I'm amazed at how many people are, men are addicted to video games.

Gaming, they call it. Hours a day. I'm like, who has that much time to sit and watch a screen? Or the media or chasing the almighty dollar or comfort and they're not waking up to what is going on around us.

But I also want to share with you, I believe right now, there's other ways, of course, but the wiles of the devil, the trickery of the devil, there's two primary methods he is using right now. The big one to me, I see out there is offense. Have you ever been offended? No, nobody has this.

I'm going to have to wait until the 11 a.m. service on this one. Balcony, has anyone ever been offended? Of course. That's what's happening right now.

Who's not being offended? And he'll use that offense. The bait of Satan, I think it was John Bevere wrote that book many years ago. I remember reading that.

There's so much good stuff because he uses that offense because when I'm offended, now I'm angry. And now I'm bitter. And you can't be offended and allow those things to fester in your heart and still be filled with the spirit.

That's why Paul also said, let all bitterness and anger and clamor, clamor is that, you know, just that gossiping, and evil speaking be put far away from you, but be tenderhearted, loving and forgiving. Well, that sounds great, but it sure is hard. But that's how you fight this battle.

That's the only way we're going to be. So you can't look at this like the world. We have to look at this through the lens of what Christ says.

So he's using offense right now. Everyone is offended. Why, why are they redoing all these packaging on, on cereals and syrups? And, and I mean, it's just, what's next? White Jesus is in the crosshairs and then stained glass windows.

And, and it's like, everybody's offended. So he's using that offense. And then that offends us.

Some things, some things, I think we need change. We need to change some things. I got it.

I'm with you. But where does this landslide stop? Because once you start this type of landslide, there is no stopping it. God has to raise up a standard and stop that.

And then the, obviously the other thing he is using that is tied together is emotions, emotions of anger and rage and being unsettled and fearful. And, and you've got all that working right now. And it's coming out in our hearts.

And so many young people are offended as well. They don't even know what they're talking about. And they're offended.

Start this hashtag. You don't know what you're talking about, but I do have, I do have a hope. God gave me this.

If not, I'll apologize later. I couldn't stop writing though. I believe I have a message to the woke cancel culture.

You cannot cancel the gospel. The gospel will hurt you and it'll offend you every step of the way. God uses offense to break our arrogant hearts.

We are becoming so cowardly that we are no longer fighting the good fight. So weak that we cannot fight the right battles. And so timid that we cannot engage in spiritual warfare.

So woke to the things of the world that we are asleep to the things of God. So apologetic that we lack boldness to confront. And that's why I saw some of you saw this on Facebook.

When your apology makes you weak and ineffective and cowardly, you are no longer the voice crying in the wilderness. You are the capitulating coward warned about in Jeremiah 23. And we do need to be woke.

We need to be woke to the things of God and we need to cancel sin. That's the answer. Now, let me explain that in case somebody takes it the wrong way.

It's good to apologize. You see Nehemiah interceding for the land. Lord, we have sinned.

You see Daniel interceding for the land. We have sinned. But especially pastors, when we take on instead the cloak of boldness and the anointing of the spirit, we take on this type of apologetic nature.

I'm so sorry. Oh, this. And, oh, does that offend you? Does the pulpit offend you? Let's get.

Does it? What? And you walk around in eggshells. That's not. We're not called to do that.

We're not called. Well, you don't have to. Let me just say this boldly and loudly.

No matter what skin color you are, you do not have to apologize for your skin color. That is how God designed you. That's how God designed us.

It's God's design. And you see how the enemy is working in all of that. And I'm becoming so frustrated.

All these primarily white pastors who don't want to say anything. They're almost apologetic. I'm sorry.

I'm white. Well, what is that? We need to be woke to the things of God and cancel sin. The only way.

Let me. I'm going to go on record here. Here we go.

The only way you're going to fix this problem is by a heart changing. You can protest. There's 100 people protesting the Palmdale Sheriff's Station.

That's not going to change a deputy's art. That's actually going to produce anger. And we can do things on our end.

That's not going to work. The heart has to change. So you have to let God back in our schools.

Can we go preach to the deputies? Oh, no, you can never. Separation of church and state. Well, then you're not going to see a revival.

You're not going to see the fear being quenched in the schools. And now the schools want to remove all law enforcement. Let's just police this ourself.

Well, how's that been working for you? That's why you needed the police officers. Now, yes, there's sin everywhere. There's racism in the protesters.

There's racism in the rioters. There's racism in police departments. There's racism in churches.

So do we just get loud and carried away? And that's going to change the heart. No, that's why I'm passionate. I'm not being uncaring.

I'm trying to point us in the right direction. Because when the heart changes, everything else falls in place. You can make all these changes.

But if the heart doesn't change, we will not see our culture going in a very healthy direction. And here's what's happening. Because we are being so apologetic, we are allowing all this evil to push us back.

And it's just, just here they come. Here comes the landslide. Remember I talked, and we're just pushing back and pushing back.

But at some point you have to say, hey, listen, we love you enough to boldly speak into the life of our culture and our nation and say a lot of this is not right. This is not right. We cannot continue down this path.

So number one, you have to stay alert in battle. Well, Shane, what does that look like? Well, the word alert in battle, or the word alert actually, it's being discerning of the schemes of the enemy. So alert in battle means I'm alert to what the enemy is doing behind the scenes or in my own life or in the life of those you love.

Remember, this is a spiritual battle. So we have to alert, discern the times, understand what's going on through the filter of God's word. And I can tell by post, Facebook posts, if somebody's in God's word or not.

Because they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. In the last days, there'll be perilous times. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of evil, disobedient to parents, reject authority, blasphemers, all these things.

And then it says having a form of godliness. I love when a little millennial quotes a scripture to me and they're smoking pot and getting drunk and looking at porn. And we're the ones in error, right? A form of godliness, a form of it, their form of it, their form of how they should follow God.

Really what it boils down to is who God is to them. I want the God that doesn't upset my life. I don't want to be confronted and I don't want to be convicted.

I'm now offended. That's the big thing right now. Did you know that? I'm offended.

I'm offended of this. I'm offended of that. So the next point that we glean from this, trust, trust, which is basically faith.

And I did talk about this briefly last week. Taking back our nation, this is how we fight. You fight with faith.

Be strong in the Lord and then the power of his might taking up the shield of faith. That faith blocks you. And listen, as even as a pastor, I have to remind myself daily, daily.

I don't even have, I say, you know what? I'm not going to look at the news today. I'm not going to look at the news today. And then people text me the news.

I'm like, well, thank you very much. That did not help things. Can you believe this is going? I'm like, stop it.

Stop it. I'm putting up the shield of faith, not the helmet of fear. And you have to put that faith.

But God, I know that you're on the throne. I know that you're allowing some of this and you put up that shield of faith. What? To block the fiery darts of the enemy.

You have to trust in God. And I've talked to so many Christians, probably since March. And when we talk about just have faith, you know what many of them are saying now? Shane, I know.

But, well, that's not a good, whenever you say God is all sufficient, that God is full of truth and faith and God will not let the righteous soul famish and that God will stand strong, God will prevail. And then you say, but, but what about the one world government? What about the vaccines? What about this? But, but don't you know, look what's happening. But, but, but no, no, no, no, no.

You got to remove but. If with the but in there, you're not trusting in God because you're actually saying, yeah, I know that, but this is greater. This concern is greater.

This fear is more dynamic in my life. Anytime we say but, right? If you talk to a person who needs to apologize and they apologize and they say, yeah, but, well, there goes their apology because but cancels out the first statement. You can't say God is great, but this is happening.

So we have to get back to that. But he who puts his trust in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain. There's a, there's a, there's a point where we have to get to.

And that's why the church is so important right now is you get back to, oh, that's right. I need to trust in God. I need to put faith in God.

That's why the saints need to encourage and build up and strengthen. We need to get back to that point of having faith and trust in God. And then number three, many of you are not going to like this.

Because I didn't like it. We're going to have to fight with gentle answers, gentle answers. Thank God it doesn't say preach with gentle.

And it says words personal to one-on-one. Proverbs 15, a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Have you heard that phrase stirring the pot? That's where this comes from.

I'm not cabbage patching younger people. No, you're stirring that pot on Facebook at family gatherings at church. And that's why I said this is hard, right? Because I feel the pot being stirred.

You know, you want to, but a gentle answer just, I mean, on Facebook, people, some people on different pages are like, you know, supreme white supremacist and all this stuff. And you don't care. And all white people, I'm like, hey, brother, I understand, appreciate it.

And I give them the gospel. This is how we're going to have to change. Our heart's going to have to change.

Now, is that what Shane Idleman wants to write? But see, you have to calm those. And now I haven't done 100% good on this test, but we have to get to the point of fighting with gentle answers. And notice how it doesn't say no answers.

It doesn't say, just be quiet. Let them be the steamroller and you be the pavement. It says a gentle answer means you give them an answer.

It's okay to say that's not true. That's not true. You never have to worry about defending the truth.

The truth defends itself. And truth will invite scrutiny, but error runs from scrutiny. And you use that gentle answer, whether it's on Facebook or whatever you're doing, communicating with people.

And it's often good to open with that. Hey, I understand. I see where you're coming from instead of going right into a rant because you have to see where people are coming from.

Yeah, I understand. I see where you're coming from. Why you've experienced that.

But have you thought about this and why this isn't good? And you listen. Uh-oh, number four, fight by listening. Fight by listening.

Any talkers out there? Balcony talkers? No, there's more talkers. You're not being honest in this service. Talkers, this is for you.

This is for me. My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this, James says. Everyone should be very, very quick.

Quick to speak and slow to listen. If you did not catch that, then this is for you. My dear brothers and sisters, everyone should be very quick to listen and slow to speak.

I don't know how many of you heard the interview I did with the black pastor friend of mine. It's on YouTube. I don't know the title of it.

Dr. Michael Brown did it. We purposely, and we talked about this before. I purposely, me and Dr. Brown said, let's allow him to talk.

It's not gonna be this. So he talked for 40 minutes. I had about eight minutes.

It was, there's a reason there. Now, at some point we might need 20, 20, 30, 30 minutes. And there, it might be there, but we have to be willing to listen.

Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. And I don't know why, but as I was working on this point, finalizing it, YouTube video came on. Do you remember a guy named Micah Tyler? The lyrics are this.

I don't wanna hear anymore. Teach me to listen. As I'm writing this point, I'm listening to worship.

I don't wanna see anymore. Give me vision. I can't waste a day.

I can't stay the same. I wanna be different. I wanna be changed.

Till all of me is gone and all that remains is a fire so bright the whole world can see that there is something different. So come and be different in me. But that line that caught me was, I don't wanna hear anymore.

Teach me to listen. Personal confession, when I don't wanna hear, I just wanna argue, it's called pride. Oh, you could hear a pin drop.

That's what it is. When we want to be heard, if you're listening to that person and you're not listening, you're ready. You got your argument already going.

You're ready to just unload. That's not listening. So what I try to do now, this is just a tip, note the word try, is if I'm talking to people, I'll have a pen and note, and I'll just, I'll listen and I'll, if I think of something, I'll write it down to bring up later and just listen and listen and listen.

If you, actually, if you listen, if you won't see this, but if you go to YouTube and you put Shane Idleman on Fox News and we did that hour-long debate on homosexuality, one pastor embraces it and agrees with it, I don't, and I had a notepad, and as he's talking, I'm writing down what I can go back and challenge him on. But if you say, oh, no, that's not right, don't listen to me, see, then it's a battle of who's louder, who gets their point across. You listen, you diffuse it, and then you're able to come back.

A lot of times I say, hey, listen, I just gave you 10 minutes, you need to give me 10 minutes. Shh, mm, mm, mm, mm, mm, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh. And then I'll be two minutes into it, and I'm like, shh, mm, mm, mm, mm.

Do I need to get a timer? That's not good either, so don't do that. That's just, I've done that in the past, and I've learned the hard way. But sometimes you gotta call it, and it's work.

Hey, listen, you've given me 10 minutes, or I've given you, let me, give me 10 minutes. And we have to, guys, this is the time to listen. We have to listen.

Because you cannot tell the protest, you cannot argue this. What's happening? Let me tell you what's happening. Years and years, decades, decades of frustration.

Frustration and anger is coming up. And that, you can't just argue that out of a person. Go ahead and get that, I'll wait.

It's okay, we don't mind kids crying, we don't mind phones, we're just, we're church. So anyway, fight, I've always dreamed of answering and picking up during the sermon. Wouldn't that be cool sometime? So, and I gotta check mine.

So number five, fight by speaking and living the truth. See, we like the first half. You fight back by speaking the truth.

No, no, no, no, no. Live it out, and speak it. I wanna talk to you about that famous verse, Ephesians 4. Well, let me give you the setting of Ephesians 4. The church, unlike a lot of churches today, not unlike, was being tossed back and forth.

Paul says, by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men. He gave the analogy of a wind blowing a vessel. And this church is just, does it sound familiar? I mean, just, there's no grounding.

There's no, it's just, whatever. What they say, and this person, what do you think about this? The church is never called to be naive. She's called to be bold and loving.

And then he goes on to say, instead, speak the truth in love. And you will grow in every respect and mature like Christ. Isn't that amazing? Speak the truth in love.

Now, I think, not only will you grow, but the other person will grow. Most of us have grown spiritually, not by the positives, but by the negatives, right? We have grown by the people speaking the truth into our hearts. That's how we have grown spiritually many times.

If we're receptive. If we're not respected, not open, the pride barrier comes up, right? Like a shield. I'm not open.

Don't talk to me. And we don't grow. You will see, have you ever met someone 20 years ago 10 years later, and they have not grown at all spiritually? It's because they're not open to constructive feedback and criticism.

Listen, my week often is spent being chiseled by the hammer of God. Shane, there's some pride growing on your shoulder. There's some this, and it's just that growing in the mature.

That's how we, at the end of our race, we look more like Christ because we've allowed the criticism and the speaking of truth into our hearts to change us. And that's why, just so you guys know, I've talked to Pastor Abram and the elders and vice versa. We all have.

If you start to see things, you have the freedom. Ask my wife how our marriage is doing. Ask, you have the freedom.

Please let us know if you see something. And they actually talked to me. That's why I took a sabbatical because I was going 100 miles an hour.

And Randy and Joe and a couple of people said, man, you got to take some time. What about, no, no, no, I'm Superman. But see, that hurt a little bit.

Well, what do you see? What's wrong? I just tell you, you're getting a little edgy and you need to take some time, you know, and so you learn and you grow. But so many people do not want to, they're not open for constructive criticism. That's why he said, speak the truth in love.

So we have to speak the truth in love. But here's a tip. The ones who often speak the truth in love are the ones who need a lot more humility.

The ones who don't say anything need to step up to the plate. Get up there. Come on.

Isn't it interesting? Those speaking the truth in love or speaking the truth, you need a lot more humility. Because often pride will speak out too. Isn't it just humility and pride? Pride wants to speak out and be justified and get my point across.

But humility has to come across different. And so some of us need to put on the brakes. Others need to step on the gas in this area.

And I don't know who you are, but God doesn't. He's probably convicting you. Maybe some of you need to tell your children, listen, I love you enough or family members.

I love you enough to tell you the truth about this area. This is not good. It's not right.

Others of you need to apologize for saying too much and voicing too much. And sometimes our homes are divided, aren't they? I don't know if you would guess in our home, who the one is who speaks the truth too

much, right? Where my wife's like, no, don't say that. Don't do that.

She's more than she's with the balancer. So God often brings us this balancing together. You know, he takes this boldness and then he harnesses it back.

And then we encourage the other person to be more bold. A Holocaust survivor said this. I had to really process it this week.

I want to make sure I'm saying this right. He actually said, and this can definitely apply to what's going on now. Always take sides.

Always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.

Always take sides. So there's a lot of people in America right now, like I'm just not going to take sides. So when the white community does that, you actually help the oppressor, not the victim.

We encourage racism if we don't say anything. But on the flip side, if we say nothing to the ungodly writing that's going on and the ungodly comments from some of these movements that are causing havoc in America, if we say nothing, I just want to remain neutral. No, you can't.

It actually encourages them. Can you imagine if governors were standing up and pulpits were standing up and saying, listen, this is not right. We need to stop this.

Instead of marching with these groups that are causing these issues. See, it works on both sides. There is not a neutrality that you always have to take a side and that side is God's side.

That side is God's side. Take that step. Then number six, fight with... You ready for this one? You doing okay so far? Fight with love.

What? Fight with love? What is it? I want to fight with this. Fight with love. This is why it's so difficult.

Jesus said, you've heard it said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. Here's what's interesting. I don't know.

And I studied this to make sure I'm okay on this one. It was actually encouraged. Read some of David's Psalms.

It was actually encouraged in the Old Testament. You can hate your enemy. David would say it.

I hate my enemy. God, destroy them. Wipe them out.

Have vengeance on me. Destroy this group. That's why the disciples said, should we call down fire on these people? That was a thought.

And that was... The thought was, you hate those that hate you. You come against those who are coming against you. It's okay to hate your enemy.

God, destroy right now the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the wicked Egyptians. God, would you destroy our enemies? It was consistent throughout Psalms. Now, there's an undercurrent there that a lot of that can be still prayed today.

God, would you move on our behalf? Would you destroy this wickedness? Would you come against these evil forces? But Jesus then twists it. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. That you may be children of your Father in heaven.

How can you be children of God in this area? Because God loves those who hate him. God loves his enemies. God loved the world so much that he gave his only son.

And that's why it's so hard. This actually... This doesn't come naturally. You've heard me say that before.

This doesn't come naturally, okay? If you say, yeah, I need to be more loving. It's not going to come naturally. It has to come supernaturally.

And you have to begin by saying, Lord, I haven't been loving. I've been angry. I've been mean-spirited.

I do hate people. I have racism in my heart. I have anger in my heart.

And you repent of those things. And as that repentance takes place, a cleansing takes place. And the heart begins to change.

And now you have a love where there used to be hatred. You have a love where there used to be anger. And the heart changes.

See, that's what... So we have to love those that we are disagreeing with. Go to the protest and bring water. And say, how can I pray with you? Love you.

And maybe pray about it. I don't know. Some of those are a little violent.

So you have to be careful in this area. This tit for tat is not going to work, right? Left hook for right hook is not going to work. Anger for anger is not going to work.

This is the only way we can quench and calm the storms. So I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. I mean, I even see... Maybe I shouldn't say this, but I will.

But like on Facebook, there's some popular... I don't know if you call them entertainers, Christian leaders. You know, they're Christian, but I don't know. Yes.

And they'll sit like with the flag behind them and holding an AR-15. Like, this can't go any farther. I'm like, oh, that's going to send a great message.

Yeah, that's going to change some hearts out there. Good job. And see, so it's inflammatory.

It's inflammatory sometimes. Because see, the flesh wants to do those things. But we have to love our enemies.

And it's tough. But God says, that's how... Because see, when you love your enemies, now you've got God's support. Now God's going to move.

God's going to convince. God's... Let God rebuke on your behalf. Oh, I've had to learn that lesson hard the last few years.

Amen. Let God rebuke. Let God rebuke those who come against you.

And love them instead. And be open and loving and affirming to them. Listening.

And then number seven. I talked to you about this already. But it has to fit in while we're talking about the armor of God.

Fight with prayer and worship. Amen. Fight with prayer and worship.

And sometimes I... You know, Gabe went into that song I love. The lyrics. That my chains have been gone.

And many people can't relate because their chains haven't been gone. They're still bound. And it's hard to worship and sing something you're not yet experienced.

Or you're still bound. And that's why I believe many Christians are handcuffed during worship. I'm not talking about this.

I'm just talking about your heart. There's not a worshipful heart because they're still living in sin. They're still caught in things.

And they haven't... So it's hard to sing what I'm not experiencing. But let me just encourage you. Fight with prayer and worship even when you don't feel like it.

Ephesians... And why do I mean by... Because I believe they go together. I really do. I've talked to people say, I pray but I don't have to worship, do I? Well, hmm.

Or you got these worshipers, right? They're just at worship but they're not at prayer meetings. What's going on here? Prayer and worship is always combined. Because I don't know about you, but when I'm worshiping, I'm praying.

And when I'm praying, I'm worshiping. It's the heart crying out to God. Sometimes you pray and sometimes you worship.

And worship is a lifestyle. But more specifically, often it's a time of consecrated surrender to allow God to work in your heart and lift you up and convict you and encourage you. Praying always... He said praying always and being watchful with perseverance.

So as we're praying and worshiping, there's a watchfulness. There's being alert and we're persevering. That word persevering is used often.

Why? Because that is the key. So many people fall out of the battle, get weary and quit. The Bible says persevere.

You might not feel like it. You might live a very difficult life. But you persevere to the end.

I actually told my wife that recently. I said the life we knew is probably over for a while. The civil unrest, the virus spiking.

Here we go again. The confrontation, the conviction, the nation falling apart. And if you think this voice crying in the wilderness is well received by everyone in America, you have another thing coming.

This is stirring all kinds of hell up in America. We're hearing from people, thank God, from all over the United States, most positive. But you're also stirring up a lot of demonic oppression and demonic influence.

When you start to see emails that say... A lot of times I don't share them with my wife. She's not here so I can show you this one. But we will rejoice in the day you die.

But I don't get upset because I know... Isn't that true? Of course people are going to... I mean, they're going to be... Yay! Finally! You know? That's the world we live in. So it doesn't really bother me. It doesn't offend me.

These people aren't my friends. They aren't looking out for a best interest. But you begin to stir.

That's why without perseverance, I would fail. Perseverance is saying, God, you've called me to do this until I take my last breath. I have to walk into that.

I have to. I have to walk in that. For the spirit of heaviness, put on the garment of praise.

How many of you came in this morning heavy? Heavy! Shane, not me. Just look at the news and you'll change real quick. The heaviness that is coming on.

So God says, put on the garment of praise. What happens? An exchange takes place. I have this heaviness, but I put on this garment of praise.

And instead, I'm lifted up. Psalm 95. Oh, come, let us worship God and bow down.

Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker. Exalt the Lord, our God. Worship at his footstool.

Holy, holy is he. There's this constant theme of worship and worship and worship and exalting God. Do you have any other plan? Let me know.

What is plan B? What is plan B? You think if your person wins in November, it's going to be calm. No, all hell could break loose. Be careful, people.

Put your trust in Christ, in Christ alone. Worship him. There is no other way to win this battle.

There is no new plan. When the enemy comes in like a flood, it's the spirit of God. And only the spirit of God that will raise up a standard against him.

There is no plan B. There is no plan B. God is our plan. If the devil is doing his utmost to remove the weapon of prayer and worship, we must do our utmost to restore it. That's why we added Wednesday prayer and worship.

Every Wednesday, 10 to 12 for those who can make it. 6 a.m. Sunday mornings for those who can. We have to be more.

I'm going to say something again else. I don't know what is God and what's not. And I pray, I do pray before I say things.

But I just texted Pastor Abram this week. I was kind of frustrated. I thought more people would be coming and we would keep the daily prayer meetings going.

No, people at work, I got it. I know I'm not naive. But it shows you the hunger.

And I told him, I said, America is not there yet. She's too comfortable. If the next hit is to your pocketbook, are you ready for that? Our economy is hanging on like a thread.

What keeps that thread from dropping? Only Almighty God and his sovereignty. Why I say that is because the prayer meeting is the only true real gauge of the spiritual health of any church. That's it.

Bottom line, straight up. You can tell how popular the pastor is by who shows up on Sunday. But you can show how popular the church is and how popular God is by who shows up at a prayer meeting.

And again, I'm not saying any of that in anger. I'm just sharing the truth. Speaking the truth in love.

Think about it. If you begin to lose most everything and fear is dominating your life, you wouldn't care if you had to drive an hour. Many of you heard of Charles Spurgeon.

But what they don't tell you is he had 100 people praying for him every service in the basement under the church. I read American history revivals and people on stagecoaches and horses. Leonard Ravenhill had a Friday night prayer meeting in Texas.

I've just finished his biography. People would drive roundtrip 12 hours. 12 hours.

And God caught me. He convicted me. I said, why would two if it was Leonard Ravenhill? God said, but I'm God.

I would drive to listen to Ravenhill preach in a prayer meeting. Of course. But God.

Look at God. Now, the reason is, here comes another bomb, is that most people are bored during prayer. There's no passion.

As soon as Cinemark says we're open, here we go. I'm excited. See, we've lost that excitement for God.

We've lost that zeal in that Lord. And yes, sometimes it's hard. Do I want to come to every one that we had? No, the flesh didn't.

But once you get here and you find yourself on the altar or the floor or the pew or wherever, you begin to, God begins to minister in your heart and you thank God. The only reason I say that is you can tell, you can really tell where we are spiritually by our hunger for prayer. You really can.

I've seen dozens of protests all over, but no prayer meetings. Why don't we say Hispanic, black, Asian, white pastors, prayer meetings? No, no, no. But I'll protest.

Prayer is positioning. Prayer is positioning. Is it not? You're positioning your heart.

If we believe the Bible. Now, if you don't believe the Bible, yep, you're right. Prayer is boring.

It's dead. It's something we go through. But if you read and understand and believe the Bible, it is the most powerful weapon you have in your arsenal.

I want to read this to you. Many of you weren't here when I read this because nobody was here. The church was empty and I was preaching to a camera.

The enemy hates prayer. He knows that prayer is a great sin killer. It's a fear quencher.

It's a power bringer. It's a victory giver. It's a holiness promoter.

It's a lust eliminator. It's an obstacle remover. It's a time changer.

It's a life sustainer. It's a demon slayer. It's a wisdom giver.

It's a peace elevator. It's a depression lifter. It's an anxiety demolisher.

It's an anger suppressor. It's a weakness remover. It's a strength booster.

And it's a revival stimulator. That is the power of prayer. Every single one of those I can give you scripture references for.

That's how you pull down heaven. That's how you stop fear. That's how you restore your marriage.

That's how you get rid of lust. That's why how you tell fear to get out of my house. That's how you guard your children.

You don't put big locks on the door, cameras everywhere. That's fine, but you better be on your face before Almighty God. And calling down heaven and calling down God to move.

I just saw an email from a person in DC, an area of DC that's hard, and a group of, I won't say the name of the group, but you know the protesting group, right? They went through and they're going door to door in some cases. And this lady pled the blood of Jesus Christ. She cried out to God and her place was spared.

That's how we fight this battle. And then Paul says, and having done, having done all stand. Having done all stand.

Do you ever get, Lord, I can't do anything else. Okay, he says, don't cower back. Having done all stand.

Let me tell you something. The secular media will continue to demean, slander, and mock the king of kings. But having done all stand, stand therefore with your loins girded about with truth, holding to the truth.

I need to tell you something. Are you ready for this? Are you prepared? Are you sitting down? Yes, they might take your beloved star spangled banner. They might pay.

You might have to pay for the sins of your fathers. The statues may come tumbling down. Marxism may begin to dominate the headlines.

Your retirement plans may fall apart. Everything that you look to for comfort and trust and may vanish. Why? Because God often removes everything so that he becomes everything.

And that's not where we're at right now in America. Oh, we can hear the pin drop. Do I want them to remove the star spangled banner? No, I know the history.

When America is fighting for freedom and you see the ships in the harbor from Britain. Bombs bursting in there. We've become cowards and babies in this culture.

Everything offends me. People actually said, Gene, you're too loud. That offends me.

I said, well, you know what? Click off. Go find someone else. You have to sometimes lovingly confront offenses.

And then I don't know if we'll get to this next week. But he said at the end, you know, or not the end, but in the middle there, take the helmet of salvation. Take the helmet of salvation to protect the helmet of salvation.

I'll share something with you that happened last week. I was looking here throughout. And I remember our old location looking, kind of remember where everybody sat.

And I started to remember the people that are gone. They've passed away. One sitting there, one sitting there, one sitting here, a balcony.

Dozens, dozens gone. This isn't some emotional workup. This is the truth.

Dozens of faces no longer here. Don't take this for granted. Don't keep putting God off.

The Bible never paints that picture. Not even once. I tried to find it.

Where God says, well, have fun. And then when you're ready, do what you want. But then someday, you know, every day today, today, today's the day of salvation.

Now, now, now, you're not guaranteed tomorrow. Turn now, look to Christ now. Repent now.

Jesus was adamant for the Son of Man came to bring peace on the earth. I came to bring a sword to penetrate the hearts, to call the nation to repentance. We are so confused on this area.

I'm seeing so many pastors, especially in people. Jesus said, go out and preach love. No, he didn't.

Look it up when you get home. Go out and preach repentance. Which means turn from your sin and turn to God.

The same call goes out today.

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