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[00:00:06] All right. Well, you can stand and we're in Revelation chapter three. Revelation chapter three. We're going to be in verse eight today. So you can turn there with me this morning. All right. Good to see everybody. You all got your Bibles. Good Bible says in verse seven. This is one of my favorite sections. Sections of Scripture. You ready? And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia. Right. These things says he who is holy, he who is true, he who has the key of David. He you know who he is. Who is he? Jesus, right? He who opens and no one shots and shots and no one opens. When he does it, it's done. I know your works. See, I've set before you an open door and no one can shut it for you. Have a little strength, have kept my word and have not denied my name and father. We pray today that you would speak to us through your word. God unite us as. Your sons and daughters. God, as this is the community of believers that we belong to Awaken Las Vegas. We pray that we would be all in on the mission that you've set before us, that we would not be stragglers, that we would not be sitting on the fringe, that we would not be in the stands, watching others play the game. But God, that we would be all in for the calling that you have upon our lives. We ask that it would be your Holy Spirit that would unite us in this purpose. We pray today that for all of the justifications and reasons that we have in our minds that keep us from this great high and holy calling, we pray today that you would just deconstruct those and disassemble them.

[00:02:06] God, that you would lift the cloud, as it were, so that we could see what your will truly is. And we love you, Father. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. And you can have a seat now. And if you do have a phone, put it in the vibrate position. So so listen, today the topic is or the title is, we should be in an army. And I just want to tell you, like right off the bat, because we keep it real here at Awaken Las Vegas. I have an agenda today. I do have an agenda. There's always an agenda. But but my agenda today is that that you would be locked into the mission that we have here at this church, that you would really know what the mission is and that you would be engaged in it, that you wouldn't be just this individual Christian on your individual journey with your own individual mission that's disconnected from what God has called us to as a body of believers. And so that really is the goal today. And the terminology that we're using is military terminology. We should not just we in the sense the general sense of the church like across the globe. And and this statement is true for that. But we as a community of believers that have identified themselves as belonging to this particular group of people Awaken Las Vegas, we should be an army. Now, military terminology has been used to describe the church for thousands of years. And of course, we know it makes sense because we see that in the New Testament, Paul likened Timothy to a soldier. We know that Paul and other New Testament writers used terms like weapons warfare, battle and armor to describe the spiritual conflict that we're all in.

[00:03:54] We know because we know our Bibles in the Old Testament and in the New Testament that there's a real enemy, that real battle lines are drawn, and that there is a winning side and a losing side. You guys know all that stuff today. All right. So I'm just saying to you, this this military terminology makes sense because we see it in scripture. There is a downside. There is a downside. Sometimes this military terminology is applied or it's used in ways that are not healthy for the people of God. For instance, we can develop or we can devolve into a group of people using worldly methods to accomplish worldly purposes and put that all under the banner of God's mission. Let me just say it again. Sometimes we can use military terminology, we can gather around it, and yet there's a problem in it, because really we're focused on using worldly methods to accomplish worldly objectives. And then just because we want to be able to justify what we're doing, we put it under the banner of God's mission or God's purpose. Probably the worst example of this are the Crusades in the 11th and 12th century. I don't have to remind you how how bad those events, three different crusades over the course of 250 years. Another remind you how bad that was. I mean, it was bad theology. It was motivated by greed and violence. And there was within the church a conflating of God's heavenly kingdom with an earthly kingdom. All those things are bad, bad motivations, that theology and then misconstruing God's heavenly kingdom with an earthly kingdom. And the reality is this the consequences couldn't have been greater. Like we are still paying the price today for the church hijacking terminology used in Scripture and applying it in a way that 100% absolutely was not the will of God.

[00:06:00] You guys know how this goes. You're witnessing to somebody and you're talking about the love of Christ and the power of the cross and how exclusive the way is to God. And oftentimes the unbeliever will object and they'll say, Well, what about the Crusades? Explain the Crusades to me. And, you know, I just want to encourage you never try to give some like bandaid excuse or explanation for something that was just absolutely wrong. All you can do is apologize, right? I mean, it was just the church. The church was a major mission drift at that time. And I know some of you like your you're in your mind because you're a debater, right? You're a challenger. You're like, well, it wasn't really the church. It was a Roman Catholic church. Set all that aside for the moment, you understand that sometimes we can hijack terminology used in scripture and then do things that we put under the banner of God's purpose. And it's never really the purpose of God at all. That's the downside. And by the way, that's happening today. The upside is this. When it when we use it in a good sense, we it is good because we're reminded and I think this is important for our current Christian culture. We're reminded when we use military terminology, when we're talking about us being an army, we're reminded that we are disconnected individuals on our own independent journeys with. Our own independent missions. And I think that that's important in our consumer oriented Christian culture, because oftentimes this is how we live, our Christianity out, like we're doing our own thing. We have God's own independent mission that's coming to pass in our lives. We're on our own journey. We're fragmented, we're splintered, we're disconnected.

[00:07:44] And that, of course, is not the experience that God wants us to have in his church. And the reality is this if we're going to live independent, splintered and fragmented lives, we will never really experience the fullness of God's power. I want you to think about this statement. When the church is united around God's mission and is fulfilling it in God's way. It is the most powerful group of people on the planet. Do you believe that today? Do you really believe that today? So. So when we are united around God's mission, let's just take our church, for example, when we together are united around God's mission and we're fulfilling it in God's way, we are collectively together the most powerful group of people on the planet. And I think the military terminology helps us to be reminded that we are together on mission, that we are together say the word together, that we are together, say the word together one more time that we are together. Say the word together that we're together on mission. So the overarching point is up on the screen for you today. Every local church should be united in the mission that Christ has set before it, bringing to bear all the resources He has provided and exercising them in the way that God has prescribed for the advancement of His Kingdom and for His glory. Every local church is on mission. That mission we'll talk about in just a minute is worked out uniquely in every local church. But together, all of us are united in the mission that Christ has given to us and we bring to bear all the resources. Because, you know, we're on mission and we're not using worldly resources, we're using divine heavenly resources, and we're using them in a way that God has prescribed.

[00:09:36] Right? We don't just get to make it up as we go along. God is clearly prescribed the way that He wants us to be operating as His people. And the purpose is not our opportunism or like I was talking about from the perspective of a shepherd. It's not our glory, it's not our ambition. It's not our opportunity. It's not our self. It is the Kingdom of God that we're advancing. And His glory. So. So. So I just want to ask you today, are you in on that? Are you in on that? Let me let me let me put it like this. If this is your church, right, you're saying you would say, hey, this is the local community, a believer that I belong to you. Raise your hand today. Just curious. Raise it. Okay. Awesome. So are you in on that mission that God has given to us? Let's hear it today. Yeah. All right. If you're taking notes. There are four things today that I want to share with you. They're not for sure. This is not rocket science. This is not brain surgery. This is probably not going to be the deepest, most intellectual Bible study that you've ever heard in your life. But these things are important to be reminded of. So like an army, we have a mission. Like an army, we have a mission. There are three aspects to God's mission. There are three different aspects viewed in different ways for the mission of God. Number one is the overarching story of God. So from, you know, I'm talking about the 30,000 foot view. I'm talking about stepping back and seeing the big picture of what God is doing. There is this story that God has been writing for thousands of years.

[00:11:16] The big picture is that God is redeeming humanity and creation from the rebellion of the fall. And so we have to remember that, listen, it's not just about what God's doing in my life or our life. It's about what God has been doing over the course of time that today, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, your your relationship with God, your experience of God is connected to the story in Genesis that there was a promise that God gave, that he would send His anointed one, that God would send His chosen one who would overcome the curse. And that story has been progressively playing out through human history for thousands of years until its ultimate fulfillment in the coming of Christ his perfect life, his crucifixion on the cross, and His Resurrection. And now the Kingdom of God has been made available to all who will come to Him in faith. And as you put your trust in faith, in Jesus Christ, you are part now of this beautiful story that God is writing and its ultimate climax we see in the Book of Revelation, where the new Jerusalem will descend from heaven, and we together collectively, as the people of God, will worship the Father and worship the lamb in this eternal city. So it's important for us to step back and to see that there is this big picture story that God is writing. The second aspect to the mission of God is God's mission in any given local church. So every local church has a particular unique mission that God has given to it. Of course, the fundamentals of the mission are all the same. It's the Great Commission, but the way that that works out, there are differences, there are uniqueness is in churches across this valley.

[00:13:02] And the way the Great Commission works out is unique in each church. But there is that mission that every local church belongs to or is a part of it every person in that church should be engaged in. Which leads me to the third aspect of God's mission, and that then is the individual mission that God has for each of us. And this is just simply the working out of God's purposes in our life. Right. And we oftentimes, like when we're preaching the gospel, like we hit this one hard and heavy, sometimes it's overemphasized, sometimes it's emphasized to the exclusion of the bigger picture that God is doing. And some of that, I think, is a reflection of the influence of the Enlightenment in our obsession with individualism. And it's not altogether bad. You know, we talk about, hey, God has a plan for you and God has a purpose for you. And when you put your trust in faith in Jesus Christ, God will do amazing things in your life. And listen, that is absolutely true. But we don't want to be so obsessed on that. We forget the bigger picture of what God is doing. The truth is this when we talk about the mission of God, oftentimes it's just centered on the individual. And then if that's the case, that should be no surprise to us that our churches are splintered, fragmented, that leaders have a hard time. It's like it's like wrangling cats, right? When you're a pastor just to get people together behind the vision that God has given. Not always a neat, easy thing. And sometimes it's because we have over preached individualism at the expense of the community of God's people. And so I just want to suggest to you that this is this is the order.

[00:14:44] Like, I didn't put them in this order arbitrarily. This is what we ought to emphasize. First, we emphasize the big picture of what God's doing. Then we emphasize what God is doing in the local church that we're a part of. And then we emphasize what God is doing in our individual life. Because, listen, if you don't see the big picture and if you don't see what God's doing in the local church that you belong to, you will never fully experience the beautiful thing that God wants to do in your life as an individual. Some of us have the story upside down. We start with ourselves, and then if we have anything left over, well, maybe the church will get it. So so the Church of Philadelphia, I read to you today Revelation chapter three, verse eight, one of my favorite letters, of course, to the seven churches, my favorite church in the Book of Revelation, for sure. This was the church that was on a mission. Let me just reread verse to you. Jesus said this. He said, See, I've set before you an open door and no one can shut it for you. Have a little strength, have kept my word, and have not denied my name. So remember, he is giving a message to the church through the senior leader. And he says to the church, Right, let's go to the end first. He says of the church, I've set before you an open door. I've got this mission for you. But he starts that whole statement off with an interesting word. He says, See? Or maybe your translation says, Behold. Right. So it's almost as if he has to draw the attention of the people of God to this very thing that they should have been seeing all along.

[00:16:20] But maybe they had lost sight of, you know, maybe they, for whatever reason, weren't really paying attention to what the mission Jesus had for that particular local church was. And so what he has to do is he has to remind them collectively, hey, guys, listen, you know, get your eyes off of those things that are distracting you. Right. I know. I know. There might be a recession coming. I'm just filling the blanks in here. I know there might be a recession coming. I know there are political issues. I know there's great division in the culture. But you can't be so distracted by all those things that you missed. What I have for you. And so lift your eyes up and look. Because I've opened a door. And when I open a door, no one can shut it. No one can shut it. I've sat before you a door that no one can shut. I just want you to note a couple of things. This is not a study on Revelation three versus eight today, but I think it's germane to the point. He doesn't say to them, Hey, I've set before you an open door and I'm going to drag you through it. He doesn't say, Hey, I've set before you an open door and I'm going to twist your arm and manipulate you into a position where you have no other choice but to go through it. He doesn't force. He doesn't drag. He doesn't manipulate. You know, he he invites us. He invites us. Some of us are missing out on this beautiful work that God desires to do in our life because we've been resisting the invitation. You know, maybe we do see the door and we like we go up, we look in, we try to see around the corner.

[00:17:54] We're like, I'll walk through the door when you tell me what's on the other side. When you lay out the details and by the way, when you when you approach God like that, you have stopped walking by faith. And now you're you're asking God to base his relationship with you solely upon reason that satisfies your questions. And that will never happen. If you are waiting for that to happen, you will wait until you go home to heaven and you will never be fully satisfied in this life, because faith is the language with which we speak to God. This this church was a church on a mission. It was a church that was fulfilling the Great Commission. It's called the Mission Minded Church. It's interesting that Jesus describes this church as having a little strength, and a lot of commentators believe that this church was a small church. It didn't have a lot of leverage with respect to worldly resources. Right. I mean, it didn't have a big website. It wasn't known nationally by other churches. It didn't have a big financial portfolio. But what they had was Jesus and Jesus was enough. And so. And so they were a church that was known. I told you this wasn't Revelation three eight study today. But did you know that of all of the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation, all in Asia minor that the Church of Philadelphia was the last one standing after the Muslims came through and and turned the tide on Christianity in that area and turned it into geographically an area, though, that worshiped Islam. And, you know, it's interesting, I think, to me to think about the longevity of that church because they were a mission minded church. You say, well, what is the great commission? How can we be missions minded if you're new to the Scripture? I want to read to you the Great Commission from Matthew Chapter 28 verses 18 to 20, where Jesus said this to His disciples then, and He says this to us now.

[00:19:57] All authority has been given to me in heaven and on Earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo, I am with you into the end of the age. So he says to his disciples. Then he says to every church, Now the mission that I have for you is to make disciples of all nations, teach them everything that I taught you, and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So like in practical terms, when you pick a church because this is how it works today, right? I mean, you go church shopping. If you were living back in the time of the Church of Philadelphia, you'd roll into that city. And there was one church that was it. But today it's like you've got multiple churches, you've got First Baptist, Second Baptist, you've got Hope Baptist, you got Faith Lutheran, you got Calvary Chapel, Las Vegas. Now Awaken Las Vegas you got Calvary Chapel, Green Valley, Calvary Chapel, Lone Mountain Calvary Chapel. Henderson Calvary Chapel, Boulder City, Calvary Chapel, Pahrump. For those of you who live in Pahrump, I mean, there are so many options. Right. And and oftentimes we approach we approach our church shopping with very worldly criteria. We go in and we're like, well, what kind of chairs do they have? I mean, because that's important, right? I want to make sure like I really like those theater style seats that have a cupholder. Do you think I'm joking that have a cupholder? And if it has a cupholder, then it better have a coffee shop because I want to be able to bring my cup of coffee into the worship service.

[00:21:43] And if the church in fact tells me I can't, that church is right off the list. Right? I mean, if I can't bring my coffee in. They're not getting me. We have technological expectations, right? What is the level of production? You know, because in some sense we've connected production to connecting to God. Sometimes we think know well, how close is the parking? How close is the parking? Because it's hot in Las Vegas. And I don't want to have to walk a long way from my car to get to the worship center, because if it's summer, I'll be sweaty and stinky and it's just nasty. And so, like, we use criteria like that, we think sometimes, well, how long is the service? How long is the service? How long is the teaching? Not long enough, man. I love you, Doug. Thank you for that, man. How long is the teaching? Right. Because if it's not. If it's not. Get me in and get me out as quick as I can until I can check the box. I don't want to linger. I don't want to wait. I don't want to have to drill down on on things. I don't want to waste my time. I just want to think about the criteria oftentimes that we have the so worldly and we never ask the most important question, which is what mission is this church on in the first place? Like what? What is this church all about? How are they executing the mission? And is that mission in alignment with what Jesus says the mission of the church should be? One aspect of the mission of the church is to fulfill the great commission. We collectively are a witness for the Lord. You know, I've used this illustration before.

[00:23:20] I'm going to just going to use it again if if you were to liken the church to a military naval vessel. Right. I think the church is like a Coast Guard cutter. We're like a Coast Guard cutter. We are on a mission to seek and to save. That's what God has called us to do. We're on where we're equipped. We know that there's a battle. We can deal with the battle when it comes. But fundamentally, we're we're looking at saving lives. We are not a battleship, right on a mission to search and destroy, seek and save. Search and destroy are two very different missions. And there are some today who are like, Oh man, my church for like a battleship, man, we are blowing people out of the water. You know, we're just looking to go to the next cultural issue that we can address, and we are looking to decimate as many people as we possibly can. And if that is our attitude, we have lost sight that we are called to be an army of God's light and we are called to be an army of God's love. We are a collective witness. We're like a city that's set on a hill, and our lives should be being filled with the power of God's Holy Spirit in such a way that people are drawn. Listen, this is why, in ancient times, one reason at least this is why they set a city on a hill so people could see it from far away and they could be drawn to it. And your life individually should be like that. It should be filled with the power of God's love, God's transforming power in such a real, tangible way that the unbeliever is attracted to what God is doing in your life.

[00:24:56] And then if you take your life and add it to my life and add it to someone else's life, and you have all of these lights collectively together, how brightly does a local church shine for the glory of God? And so we as a local church ought to be like a city set on the hill. Unbelievers should see the great work that God is doing through our lives, and they should be being drawn to him. Blaise Pascal, who was a brilliant 17th century mathematician, he gave his life to Christ. He became a philosopher. He said these words, I just think they're beautiful. He said. Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect. Next, make it attractive. Make good men and women wish it were true. And then show that it is. Make no mistake, the gospel transfer transforms people, but your life attracts them to it. I'm just saying, like your reputation. Our reputation as a church and your reputation individually matters matters to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. People are watching how you go through adversity and difficulty. People are watching how you live out your marriage relationship. People are watching how you handle your friendships and how you raise your kids and how you operate your business. And all of that should be so attractive with respect to God's working in your life that even if they're resistant to the gospel, they can't deny that they see something different in you. Right. They're brought to that place where it's like, listen, I don't believe in all that, right? I don't believe in all of that. You know, and I'm not I'm not convinced.

[00:26:45] I'm not convinced of that. But there is something going on in you that I can't deny. Can you explain to me how you have had such amazing peace in this time of adversity? And then you have the opportunity to point people to Jesus Christ? We do this collectively as a church. Gary on the video today was talking about the Gospel Advancement Department. I want to encourage you to take a step into what we're doing together to fulfill the mission that God has given to us in church planting, in missions, trips. We have trips to Cuba, to Mexico, to Romania, to Brazil. Coming up, awaken Tijuana and then also awaken aid our LV Reach Center, Veterans Outreach, 10,000 Bibles that we pass out in the city of Las Vegas once a year. Evangelism Blitz our Awaken Christian Academy. Many of our students do not know the Lord and so you know be be praying one encourage you today to pray, to send and then ultimately to be willing to go. The second thing this morning is this like an army, we need to be trained to execute the mission. Are you guys still with me today? Oh, we got a mission, right? God's given to us a mission like an army. The second thing is, we need to be trained to execute that mission. We have Rachel to have really good friends, John and Jojo Wood, who run Syndicate, which is an MMA training gym, and they're with us today. You can you can follow up on the things that I say, make sure what I'm saying is true. But they train UFC fighters. And so, you know, if you want to get trained, I mean, they do other stuff as well just for the average person like you and me.

[00:28:18] But if you want to get trained to fight in mixed martial arts, you go and you enlist, you sign up and then you go with great expectation, right? Because you expect that they're going to as coaches, they're going to train you that that training is going to be strategic. Strategic. It's going to be specific. It's going to be rigorous. It's going to be difficult. It's not going to be soft, that they're not going to miss train you, that their attitude isn't going to be something like, hey, well, listen, you know, you can learn these things and maybe it'll work. Maybe it won't work. I hope it works out for you in the Octagon and maybe you'll live. Maybe you'll die. Who knows? I mean, if that was the case, you're like, okay, hey, I'm out. I want coaches who are serious. I want coaches who are really going to help me and train me. And I just want to make the spiritual correlation with you today. Like, that's what you should expect from your pastors. That's what you should expect from me. You know, you don't want soft pastors. You don't want pastors that are going to be like playing it, you know, loose and free. With God's truth, you should expect to have your feathers ruffled. You should expect to be pressed and exhorted to take another step in your relationship with God. And if you sit here and you're like, well, you know, a pastor really meant he leaned in on me today I'm out. I'm out at that thought goes through your mind that I just want you to think what you would be substituting for God's truth or God's spiritual coaching in your life. Because if you are going to choose something that's soft and weak, if you want to find a place where your ego is going to get stroked or you're going to get coddled like a little baby, you know, in the long run, when adversity comes, you will not stand.

[00:29:58] You will not stand. And so sometimes listen, sometimes we do lean in hard. Sometimes we do. I mean, we always say it straight, but sometimes it just needs to be said in a way where we are awakened, kind of like a splash of cold water in the face. And that ultimately is the spirit of God convicting us of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. You have to expect that from your spiritual leaders. Ephesians 4:11 says this, and Paul is talking about spiritual gifts and the sense of officers that God has given. He says, and he himself gave some to the apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. Well, why? Why why are there why are there apostles? Why are there prophets? Why are there evangelists and pastors and teachers? Well, the Bible says for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry. For the equipping of the Saints. For the work of the Ministry. Who are the saints? Are you. Are you a saint today? Hey, let me do this. If you're a saint, raise your hand. Some of you were really nervous. Some of you were like, is this a trick question? Right. Because I know I'm going to raise my hand and he's just going to wallop me. Listen, you are a saint. If you put your trust in faith in Jesus Christ. You are a saint if you put your trust in faith in Jesus Christ. You're like, well, doesn't that doesn't that mean that I that I'm absolutely perfect and that there are miracles that have been done through my life and I've been venerated by the church. And no, it means none of that. The root word is haggis, which means holy. You've been made holy by your trust and faith in Jesus Christ.

[00:31:36] And so, so remember, listen, when he says this for the equipping of the saints, he's talking about every child of God. For every child of God should be being equipped. For what? For the work of the ministry. You say, wait a minute. You just ordained Ray today for the work of the ministry. Now you are in the work of the ministry too. You are too. You have a calling of God on your life. You play an important role in what God is doing. And all of us should be being trained. All of us should be living out what God has set before us. When we're gathered together, we should have the mindset, you know what? God grown me, strengthened me, challenged me. Reveal yourself to me. I don't want to be stagnant. I don't want to I don't want to plateau in my relationship with you. I don't want to live this, like, attitude of self-satisfaction that, well, you know, I am not who I used to be. And and that's good enough for me. While you're still not who you really should be all together. Because God's work never stops in your life. It never stops in my life. And so one aspect of the mindset when we gather together here is like, God, equip, betray me when you're in your life group. God equipped me, train me when you're listening to a message online, God equip me and train me, make me stronger, make me stronger. Train these hands for battle. And so I just want to ask you today in your own life, self-evaluation moment and I do this to write God and have I've been getting stronger spiritually? God, have I been growing spiritually or have I plateaued? Have I hit a wall? When you hit a wall? Don't just stop.

[00:33:17] You've got to press into the heart of God even harder during those times and lean on him until you have breakthrough. And then when you have breakthrough, God will take you to another level. Listen, an untrained army will fail in the heat of the battle every single time. An untrained army will fail in the heat of the battle every single time, and so will an untrained Christian. The third thing, like an army, we operate best when we're united. Somebody say amen to that today, like an army, God does not like division, right? Like an army. We operate best when we're united. I'm going to read a scripture to you. I just want to give you the picture of what Paul had in mind before I do. Paul, when he talked about being united together and striving for the faith of the gospel, I do think that Paul had a military picture in mind. We know this was this was common to the Apostle Paul when he was talking to the Church of Ephesus or writing to them. Of course, you remember that there was spiritual armor that he was talking about them being suited up in. And all of that was pulled from the armor of a Roman soldier. And so when Paul is thinking about collectively all of us fulfilling the mission of God, he had the picture of the Roman army in mind because because there is no army that was able to defeat the Roman army of Paul's era. And part of the reason was they were so united. Like, if you were living in those days and you were maybe an army on the other side, you would look and you would see the Roman army all lined up. They would have these four foot shields that they would lock together.

[00:34:58] So, so literally there was no space between them. Their shields were interlocked and they were wide enough where if you're standing there with your shield, your shield is partly protecting the person to your right. It is partly protecting the person to your left. And so your shield isn't just to protect you, is to protect those around you. And and in addition to that, there were, of course, all locked together. They had really special sandals where there was this, you know, innovative idea of putting steel studs into their sandals, like birkenstock's Birkenstocks, you know, with like a football cleat in a way. But it gave them a big advantage because they were able to really dig into the ground and be immovable. And so because they were united and because they had these specialized Birkenstocks that they were wearing. And I just want you to think, you know, of course, right now you're thinking about spiritual armor. Paul talked about the shield being the shield of faith. He talked about shielding our feet with the preparation of. The Gospel. This is everything that Paul has in mind, and this is the expectation of God for any local church. Paul said it like this to the Church of Philippi. Only let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may hear of your affairs like, Hey, if I'm present, I want to see it. If I'm not present, I want to hear it. We'll see and hear what he says. That you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. So he says, Hey, Church of Philippi, listen, I love you. You've supported me. I might be with you.

[00:36:34] I might not be with you. But this is the one thing I want to hear. I want to hear that there's one spirit there. I want to hear that there's one mind there that you are single minded with respect to the mission of God and that you are striving together. This is the picture of the Roman army with their shield interlocked, special spiky Birkenstocks on striving together for the faith of the gospel, like moving literally together as one. That is the type of unity that God has called us to. Now, listen, our unity is based on our faith in the gospel. Well, we share together that's non-negotiable is our faith in Jesus Christ. He lived. He was incarnate. He lived a perfect life. He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended to the right hand of God on the third day. And no one comes to the father but by him. Right. This is the fundamentally this is the non-negotiable that we share together as the people of God. Yeah. With that being said, with that being said, there are many areas that we can differ in that we can disagree on and that we can even dispute among each other. There's a lot of difference. If you look at churches throughout the valley, you know, there are a lot of differences that we have. We share in common the gospel of Jesus Christ. But there is this beautiful diversity. I love the diversity of the body of Christ. Hey, we may be a nondenominational church, but that does not mean that we're anti denomination is absolutely not the case. You know, there are so many beautiful aspects of the body of Christ that that we see through out the church and we embrace those things. Now, we may differ and there may be some aspects of disagreement and we may really struggle over some things that we're willing to kind of go toe to toe on.

[00:38:27] But if it's a true brother or sister in Christ, we will never we will never forsake the unity that we have with our brothers and sisters in Christ. As Christians, I'm saying all of that to you to say this as Christians, we don't cancel each other because of our differences, right? If God doesn't cancel us, we shouldn't cancel each other. And. And I'm just saying that to you today, because we live in a current Christian culture where Christians, Christians complain about how the world cancels, and then so many Christians are canceling each other like I've been, I've been canceled, I've been defriended and like all kinds of crazy stuff in the last couple of years just because of disagreement over nonessential issues. And that does not please the heart of the father. It does not please the heart of God. God is never the one who is behind division. Right. Understanding today that we're in a spiritual battle. Make sure that we are fighting on the right side. The tactic of the adversary is to divide and conquer. And I know you've heard this a million times, and I just want to say it again. United we stand, divided we fall. We were in Muir wood's last week and we were in the Bay Area north of the Golden Gate and we were walking through. Muir Woods beautiful redwood trees. I mean, if you've been there, you know, some of these trees are 300 feet tall, their diameter, some of them like 35 feet in diameter. You can drive a car. You could if it was carved out, you could drive a car. There is actually a sequoia you can drive your car through. I don't think they do that anymore. But these massive trees. Right.

[00:40:11] And they're hundreds of years old. And it's amazing. You walk through this forest and you're like, man, how is it how is it that these trees have withstood so many storms over the course of time? And it's even more fascinating when you discover that the root system of those massive trees only goes 6 to 12 feet deep. Yeah, I know. Huge trees, and then you would expect that their root system would just go down so deep. But it doesn't. So it begs the question, how is it that these trees have been so stable and sturdy over the course of time with so many storms? And the answer is this Their root system is interconnected. It's intertwined. And so if you could look underneath the soil, what you would see is, yeah, on the surface, you've got this massive tree underneath the surface there is this interconnected web of roots. And that's how these trees are sustained and stable over the course of time and through many storms. And that is the way the church is supposed to be. We are supposed to be so interconnected and intertwined relationally that we find our strength in one another. Final point today, thanks for being patient like an army. We have weapons sufficient for the mission, for taking notes like an army. We have weapons sufficient for the mission. Paul said this in second Corinthians Chapter ten. He said, For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. He's just saying they're not worldly, right? They're not like the weapons that the world has. We're not using we're not using guns and tanks. We're not bullying people and manipulating people. We don't use we don't we don't need to rely on that because our weapons are mighty and God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments in every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

[00:42:00] So this verse finally here says We to war, and we do have weapons. Our weapons are worldly and we're not fighting for an earthly kingdom. We're fighting for a heavenly kingdom. When I asked you a question today, who are we fighting? Who? Okay. Good thing no one said they're my wife because I would have been. Would've been a problem. We have an adversary. His name is the devil, the serpent of old. He has arranged himself and all of his fallen demons into principalities and powers and rulers of darkness. He's very strategic. He's not arbitrary. He has himself an army that is fighting against the army of God, and he is our adversary. What are the weapons that God has given to us? Said nice and loud. Okay. We're in prayer. The word. You guys did it. You said fasting. I'm so impressed. The first service totally failed. All right. Totally failed. It was like, man, they had so many great answers. Prayer, fasting, love, fellowship, the word of God. And. And yet I had to get to the place where I'm like, okay, could you guys think of a word? It starts with F and ends with G, and they're like, fellowship. Like that does not end with G. Fasting, right? Fasting. So fasting is one of those disciplines that we don't talk about in our Christian culture, partly because we just sometimes are so committed to gluttony, right? That fasting just doesn't fit within our our paradigm or our framework. I'm just saying to you today, and I'm wrapping up with this, God has given you resources. God has given you weapons. How do you expect to win the battle God is given to you if you're not praying, if you're not fasting, if you don't know the Bible and you're not walking in the power of God's love, it's not possible.

[00:44:01] Jesus said this to his disciples. They couldn't exercise a demon from this young boy. And He said to them, This kind does not come out, but by prayer and fasting. So remember, our mission is to see the lost saved. I'm going to give you a verse in a minute. Right. The lost or under the prince of the power of the air. Their eyes have been blinded. They don't know the truth. They can't see the truth because the light of the glory of God, of the Gospel has not shown in their hearts yet. They are not the enemy. They have been taken captive by the adversary. And the mission that we're on is to see them rescued. And that will not happen unless we are praying, unless we are fasting, unless we know our Bibles and unless we're walking in the love of God. Paul said it like this. He said, But even if our gospel is veiled, that is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds that God at this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the glory of the Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine on them? For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. I want to wrap up today with an encouragement to encouragement. Number one is this. Get engaged in the mission of this church. If it's your church, one of the most important aspects of this church is the mission that we're on. And if you don't align with our mission, find a church that you align with. Don't try to change our mission. All right. We have a set mission from the Lord and take a step of faith and get engaged, because we need the spiritual gifts God has given to you to fulfill what God has set before us.

[00:45:38] And we won't be able to fully do that if you're not taking a step of faith. The second thing is this maybe you need to be rescued today. Maybe the reality is, man, you've wandered into church. You've wandered into church for who knows what reason. Maybe for you, you've just been struggling with a sense of lost ness. Maybe there's there's been a sense of emptiness in your heart. And you know that there must be something more to life. You're. You're missing satisfaction. You've tried everything in the world. Nothing is met that need in your heart. And so you're thinking, well, maybe it's God. Maybe today you there's just this great sense of guilt and shame because you see that there are things that you've done in this life that you can't shake and you try to numb yourself to the feelings that you have with alcohol or with drugs or with relationships or with entertainment. But, you know, once that experience is gone, there it is again, that guilt and that shame and that sense of failure. Today, there's good news for you. He will rescue you. He will rescue you. Today you can come just as you are. It's not the institution of the church that saves you. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And He will take you just as you are. And He will live that guilt. He'll live that shame. He'll give you forgiveness. He'll satisfy the need that's in your heart because he is the only one who is able to do that. You've been made with a God shaped void in your life and only God can satisfy it. He will live the cloud of confusion that's been hanging over your head, and you will learn for the very first time that you've been made to have a relationship with God, who is your Creator and who is a lover of your soul? Let's pray.

[00:47:26] Father. Thank you, God. We thank you today for your faithfulness and goodness. And. And we're humbled that you love us. And. And we thank you that. It's a relationship that we have with you. It's communion. It's intimacy. It's personal. God it's not a. It's not that we've just deposited some coin of faith into this celestial vending machine that's spit out salvation. God is not a consumer oriented relationship that you've. That you've rescued us to. You're our Heavenly Father, and we're your sons and daughters. Today as our eyes are closed and our heads are about maybe today you need to take that step of faith and trust in Christ. You need rescuing today and he is present to do that. Today he is present to rescue you from. The adversary and. The blindness, the veil that he has placed over your eyes. And today he is willing to shine the light of the glory of the good news of Jesus into your heart. Today you can experience that freedom. From the power of sin and from sins present and eternal consequences. Today you can be renewed in the love of God. You can leave this place with a belonging. You can lead this place knowing that that there is somewhere that you fit. You fit in God's kingdom. Today you can experience real family. And so this morning, if this is your need, God has been speaking to your heart. It's no accident that you're here. He's been working behind the scenes. He's been shaping situations because he loves you enough to bring you to this moment, to look to his son and to trust in him. And today, if this is your need, you need Jesus Christ in your life. You need to be born again from above.

[00:49:43] I want to pray for you today that God would give you the strength to take this step of faith. And I'm just going to ask you right where you're sitting. If this is you, would you raise your hand this morning? Stretch your hand up high. You need to put your faith in Jesus Christ right here in the center. Thank you. Over here in the back. On my left. And over here. In the back. On my left. Thank you for raising your hand. Over here in the back on my right. God bless you. Thank you for raising your hand here in the center. Thank you as well. Anybody else? Right here. God bless you. I see you. It's awesome. You know, the Bible beckons us to come just as we are. You don't have to fix your life and make it right and then come to God. You can come with all of the stuff in the sin and the baggage and chaos and confusion, and God will sort it out. There's anybody else today. Raise your hand. Awesome. Thank you, I see your hand here in the front. Thank you. It's your hand. I see your hand. Thank you. Over here on my right. Thank you. You can put your hands down. Today. Also if you're Christian and. Maybe you've been off mission. And just honestly, today, your life has really been just self-absorbed. Maybe today you've plateaued and you've plateaued. It's been a long time since you've really grown spiritually. And you just need a fresh work of God in your life. He's present today to give that to you because he loves you and he doesn't quit. He never gives up. But we have to. In that crossroads choose. We have to make a choice.

[00:52:19] To not continue as we have on this road that is leading us. Away from God's best. And so today, as a Christian, if you just need some sort of spiritual renewal in your life, maybe the things I mentioned, maybe something else I want to pray for you, too. Would you raise your hand? Thank you. I see yours. I see both of you. I see you here in the front row here on my right. I see your hands over here on my right. Here in the front and the back. Here in the center. God bless you guys. Thank you. Over here on my left. The back of my left. He is with you. You can put your hands down and fight it. Thank you, God, so much for these today. Father, we pray that you're you are the lover of these souls. God, you see every single heart in life. And, Father, there is something special that you have for each of them. We pray today that you would enable each of these to take a step of faith and with great anticipation, receive the good work that you desire to do in their life today. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Hey, today, for those of you who have raise your hands maybe to give your life to Christ for the first time, or maybe as a Christian, you just need that. You just need that thing. And you know what that thing is. God is present to give that to you today. It's good to be prayed for. But listen, you need to pray. You need to bring your heart to God. Maybe for some of you. It's for salvation you've never trusted in Jesus Christ. This is the moment that God is appointed for you.

[00:54:10] And then, maybe as a believer, this is also an appointed moment for God to do that special work in your life that you need. And so I prayed for you. And that's good. But you need to pray. I want to lead you in prayer. If you raise your hand today, we're going to ask you to stand up right now. Come on forward to the front and stand next to one of our follow up leaders. If you raise your hand, just stand up right now. Come on forward to the front here and give us the privilege to pray for you. All right. I'm gonna leave you guys in prayer. You can just turn and face me. And very simple prayer today. It is a prayer of confession you're just turning away. That simply means you're turning away from doubt and unbelief. You're putting your faith in Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life. And he himself said, No one comes to the father, but by me today, as you open your heart up to him, he is going to pour out into your life exactly what you need. And so let's bow our heads together. And I want to encourage you to pray this prayer out loud after me. God today. I surrender my life to you. Today I'm turning away. From my doubt and from my unbelief. And I'm choosing faith. And trust in Jesus, your son. And today, through faith, I receive all of his promises. Satisfy my soul. Fill my heart with your love. Show me the way you have for me. And fill me with your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, I pray all God's people said Amen. Amen.