

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

AN UNFINISHED STORY | SHOULDERS OF SAINTS

AARON BROCKETT | NOVEMBER 3, 2024

Video

Awake, O Sleeper. Rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. Ephesians 5:11

Aaron

I think there is an awakening that God wants to do in your life. There is a very active enemy advancing against you. And if you are a threat to Satan, then he advances—he throws everything that he has against you. And if the world looks at the church and the church is asleep, or they just see a bunch of legalistic, religious people we'll miss it.

What we have to do is we have to be awakened to the voice of God to recognize that now is the time for us to say, individually, "God, everything I have is Yours."

Awaken Vision Update

Release The Church

1456 Kids Preteens and Teens Attended Summer Camp

200 + Camp Baptisms

1723 Rooted Graduates

144 Rooted Baptisms

Revive The City

Fishers Campus Launch

Midtown Campus Launch

17,289 Easter Attendance

176 Easter Baptisms

598 Total Baptisms

Restore Hope to the World

Brookside

Wheeler Mission



Shepherd Center

Missions of Hope International

It's time for us as individuals to listen to the voice of God. We have to listen to what it is that He is saying and what it is that He desires. And now is the time.

Awake O Sleeper

Now is the Time

Release

Revive Restore

Aaron

Right now, as God looks at the condition of the world, what He is looking for is a handful of committed men and women, students, kids whose hearts are fully surrendered to Him to be awakened.

End Video

It's hard to believe that we began that journey over a year ago—called Awaken. If you are new to our church, we are at the midway point of a two-year generosity initiative that is paving the way for the future of our church. And we called it Awaken because it's based out of Ephesians, chapter 5 where Paul writes, "Awake, O Sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." He goes on in that passage to say, "I want you to walk, not as unwise, but as wise because the days are evil."

So, as a church we want to be awake to what it is that the Spirit of God wants to do in us in this time of our lives. And the tag line behind that is Now is the Time. Now is the time for the church to be the church and bring the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of a really dark and divided time.

So, at this midway point, over the next four weeks we're going to jump into a new series of messages called The Shoulders of Saints. Here's the big idea. I think that most of us would agree that at some point in our lives, I hope this is true for you, somebody, maybe it was a coach or a teacher or your first boss or a mentor—there was somebody who saw some things in you before you saw them in yourself.

They believed in you before you believed in yourself. They gave you a shot. They opened the door and invited you into rooms you never could have gotten into on your own. All of us need that in life and all of us need to pass that blessing on to other people. We are all standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us.

And that's never been more true than in our church. Many of you may not know this, but our church is 190 years old. In another 10 years we'll be 200. That just



continues to blow my mind because I can't think of too many things that are two centuries old that are still around and are still functioning or are still relevant.

But our church is 200 years old and yet God has chosen to continue to breathe new life into it. And the reason why is because of the saints—the men and women, the redeemed, who have gone before us and it's been their faith that has paved the way, it's been their vision that has paved the way, it's been their generosity that has paved the way.

I am and will forever be grateful to my predecessor, a guy by the name of Howard Brammer. That name many of you may not know or recognize. He went to be with the Lord earlier this year, on Easter week. He and his wife, Martha, served our church faithfully for nearly 25 years.

I'd always been told by people, "If you ever get the opportunity to follow a long-tenured, well-loved pastor—don't. Because you'll be the sacrificial lamb. Nobody is going to like you."

And that just wasn't the case here. Howard immediately embraced me and immediately loved me and he immediately loaned the trust that this congregation had in him, he extended it to me. And I told him all of the time, "Howard, I feel like I'm standing on your shoulders. I don't deserve this role. You've opened the door for me to be able to serve in this way."

As I look back at our church over the last 17 years since I've had the opportunity to come and serve with you—November 2007—as I look back, we are not the same church that we were. And yet the DNA of our church has not changed at all. We have been marked by the saints who have come before us.

One of my favorite stories about Howard... For those of you who didn't know him, if you look up the definition of the word pastor in the dictionary, you'd find Howard Brammer's picture. That's just who he was. He would carry himself with such class and he was so kind and soft spoken, and yet he also knew when to be bold.

One of my favorite stories is that Howard would oftentimes pray down at the racetrack before the races. I believe he started in the 1990s and he would always pray in Jesus' name. And he would get a lot of backlash for that. In fact, somebody took out an op ed in the newspaper and really took him to task over it and really put a lot of pressure on the track to tell him to stop praying in Jesus' name.

And they were kind of like, "Howard, we're getting a lot of pressure. You can't do what you do here." And I just want to show you one of the races and what Howard chose to do. Take a look at this.

Howard Brammer Video



We are blessed, O Lord, to be able to assemble here at the motor racing capital of the world to enjoy one of the most important events in all of sports. Thank you for this venue and race. We pray for the safety of every participant and spectator. God bless America and may America bless God. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

End Video

I love that so much because he knew what was on the line, And I find it kind of an ironic twist that the guy who took out an op ed to slander him for doing that, his family owned the property that this building sits on right now. So, that's a little bit of God's sense of humor.

What I love about Howard is that he wasn't abrasive and mean spirited. He was humble and bold. He was pastoral and prophetic. He was winsome and uncompromising. And that is baked into the DNA of our church.

He's not the only one. I could go through, and I could list off the names, I would just call them faith legacy names of people in our church. People like the Starkeys and the Roths and the Gilberts and the Drapers. I could list dozens more, whether you'd recognize those names or not. I don't want to leave anybody out. There are so many more. We are part of a rich legacy of faith in this church.

And I say all of that to say this. Now is our time. Now is the time for what God desires to do in this season and in this time in this cultural moment that we are in. And that's what Awaken is all about.

We're going to be in the book of Philippians. And in Paul's words to the church in Philippi he speaks to them about this critical role—the works that he wants to in them and through them during their time.

And at the end of our service today, if you consider Traders Point your home church, I want to encourage you to grab one of these Vision books and take it with you and read through it. Inside you'll find a commitment card. That is not a financial card, that is a formation card.

I want you to take both of these and I want you to put them next to your Bible, wherever you drink your coffee in the morning, wherever you do your best thinking. I don't know, maybe it's the bathroom or something. Too much information.

You just keep that wherever you do your time with the Lord. And I just want you to pray and ask God, "What do you want me to do with my time? What do you want me to do with my time and my treasure and my talent? I want to be a part of something much, much bigger than myself. I want to be a part of what you are doing in this world."

And then on Sunday, November the 24th we're going to have an opportunity to come together as a church to commit to give God our first and our best in this time. And this is for all of us.

There are a whole bunch of you that did this a year ago. We're going to do it again. There are a bunch of us who have come to this church since then. We're going to give you a first time to do it. And then there are others of us, like Lindsay and I, who are wrestling through this, "God, do You want us to take another step of faith because now is the time."

So, we're going to take a look at the book of Philippians, and I want to give you a little bit of context. The Philippians were considered to be, out of all of the churches, one of the most generous. And Paul celebrates that in them multiple times in Scripture. And he encourages them and uses them as an example for the other churches to follow.

You would think that if they were one of the most generous churches then they likely had fat bank accounts, but they didn't. In fact, it was far from that. Listen to how he describes them in 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, verse 3. He says:

"Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being," listen to this equation, "tested by many troubles, and they are very poor.

"But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.

"They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do." 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (NLT)

They gave beyond their ability

On their own accord

With great joy

I want to just draw your attention to three things Paul highlights in that passage. He says the Philippians, number one, were tested with trouble. They were going through hardships and difficulties in life.

But they were also filled with joy. And you wouldn't think that that would have been the thing that described them right after that. If they were going through trouble, you would think that they would have been filled with sadness or filled with grievance.

But instead, they were filled with joy, which then resulted in an overflow of rich generosity. Now, that equation doesn't really seem to compute—does it? You would

think that it would read: They had a rich uncle who left them with an inheritance. So, life was good. So, they go on a cruise, buy a car, and they give what was left over.

But that's not what he says. He says they had a bunch of trouble. The bills were piling up. Life was hard, challenging, difficult. But they were filled with joy that can only come from the Lord, and it overflowed in rich generosity for them to be a part of advancing God's Kingdom. And Paul says, "That's the way that a Christian has to look at this and think about it."

The Philippian church was one of Paul's greatest supporters, not because of the amount that they gave but because of the heart behind the gift. Look at chapter 1, verse 3. He says to them:

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:3-6 (NIV)

I think that Paul and what he says to them many of us need to hear today. Maybe some of you right now are right in the middle of it. I've been praying all morning with people right down front who are just in the middle of so much trouble and pain, whether it's with family members or personal health, finances—trouble is advancing against us.

I just wonder if I'm talking to somebody right here and you are really, really close to waving the white flag, like, "I just wonder where God is, and I wonder when He's going to intervene." Some of you just need truth spoken over you before you feel it or believe it. You just need to receive it. The God who loves you and sees you, the good work that He began in you, He's going to carry it on to completion. He's going to see you through that trouble and trial.

I just wonder how many of us get right up to the breakthrough and in our pain and struggle, we back away from Him. It was like, one more step. And God just wanted to urge you to push through that. God has begun a good work in your life. Trust Him to carry it through to completion.

This is one of my favorite passages because he's writing to this church that meant so much to him. Because Paul was a leader, he had people persecuting him and saying all kinds of untrue things about him. And I'm sure that there were times when he felt so alone. So, he's writing to this church and he's saying, "You guys are such an inspiration to me. I thank my God every time I remember you."

I've been here long enough, we've been through enough, and I don't plan on ever going anywhere else, I hope not anyway. I could say the same things to you. Every time I think of you, I thank my God for you. You are my family. I love you. And I'm so grateful for the fact that we get to partner together in the gospel.



I thank my God for our elders, for their wisdom and their love and their nurturing and their willingness to tell me the truth even when it hurts.

I thank my God for our staff team that is so talented and spends long hours and makes sacrifices to do what they do.

I thank God for all of our difference makers around here who have manned their station around the battleship to allow God to work through them to impact the lives of others.

Man, can I just urge you together today to just lavish and show all kinds of love and support and prayer and encouragement to our staff team, both today and throughout this whole week? There were a lot of people who were grateful for and appreciated the message last week, but not everybody. A lot of our staff took it on the chin. And they had people who were serving on their leadership teams who chose to walk away, to step away.

So, our staff had holes that they needed to fill. And you know what church? Now is the time to rally around them and love them and encourage them. Find them and say, "Hey, is there a way that I can step in? Can I serve? Can I help carry your load?"

I want you to know, as a church, what happens when God wants to transform a city. It's not just by what happens in this room. This is the staging area for what happens out there. And so, man, I thank my God for all of you who choose to represent Jesus in, I don't know, maybe in a hostile work environment.

Those of you who are first responders—like you're right there on the front lines—I thank my God for our fire fighters, our law enforcement, our medical professionals, our school teachers, faculty, and staff who are choosing to be salt and light in the midst of a world that desperately needs to see and hear and experience the love of Jesus.

Some of you might be ready to wave a white flag. I just want to urge you that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Translation: He's not finished with you yet. So, don't give up. He's been working on you. You're a work in progress. And we're all falling forward as we grow more mature in Christ Jesus.

You have an Unfinished story.

And right now, this is our time to continue to ensure, if the Lord tarries, that this church will be here for another 200 years. That it would be just as fruitful in reaching people for Jesus. That we would never become so locked down in traditionalism and legalism that the Spirit of God leaves this place.

Last year I asked in every service at all of our locations... I just started asking a bunch of questions. How many of you, this is the church you came to know Jesus in? I said raise



your hand and keep them up. And a bunch of people raised their hands, and they kept them up.

I said, "How many of you, your marriages were restored here? Raise your hand and keep them up, join with everybody else." I just went through a list of questions: How many of you, your kids have been disciplined here? How many of you have experienced encouragement? Been in a group? I just went through a whole list.

By the time I got done just about every single hand in the room was up. And I just said, "If your hand is up, that is because you are the recipients of somebody else's faith, sacrifice, and generosity. And that does not stop with you. Now is our time to pass that on to the next generation."

A little further down Paul writes this in verse 27. He says:

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

Like, whatever happens. Just conduct yourself well, be controlled by the Spirit, make Jesus proud:

"Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm..."

You don't have to stand firm if there is not resistance. You only stand firm if there is resistance:

"in the one Spirit, striving together," not apart but together, "as one for the faith of the gospel..." Philipians 1:27 (NIV)

So, he says. "Whatever happens, whatever resistance might come, whatever push back you may receive, you remember that you're living for an audience of One, so you conduct yourself in a way that Jesus would be proud."

I've been spending a lot of time this week with the Lord. Lots of prayer. Lots of dark moments of the soul. I just remember thinking to myself, this question, "What does our church need? What do you need? What do I need?"

Right now, more than anything else, in the midst of such anger and rage and chronic anxiety, in the midst of a very contentious election, in the midst of all of the emotions, and the events, and the darkness what do we need right now more than anything else? Because, if you notice, we're not convincing each other of anything. Usually when someone has a different opinion than us, we just dig our heels in. What do we need more than anything?

The Spirit of God in the silence of those moments said this to me, "What you need right now more than anything else is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that's what you need. You need an experience with God."

Can I just say this to those of you who, maybe right now... Maybe you grew up in church and maybe you're trying to recover, very understandably, from some church hurt in your past.

Maybe God feels really distant since you've been crying out to Him, it doesn't feel like He's answering you. And quite frankly you're really angry at Him. You just kind of feel like, "I'm in the spiritual doldrums, the sails are flat. I don't know where to move forward. I'm actually really fearful and anxious about the future and what's happening."

Could I just very gently yet very directly say to you, "What you need is an encounter with God that is undeniable. It's a Saul on the road to Damascus kind of thing. Where you're just like, 'I don't even really know if I can fully explain this. I'm trying to get my head wrapped around it.'"

And that's what our church needs at this time.

I'm all for strategy, all for leveling up, and all for organizational health, all of that but what our church needs now, more than ever, is not better strategies and processes—we need an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

We need an encounter with God. And you just read through the New Testament, just read through the book of Acts, you just read through church history—that always comes in the midst of darkness, division, persecution, and slander. Always.

So, let me just share with you two stories. Alright? One, I've made reference to this in the past, but I've never gone into the details of it. I am in a cohort of pastors. There are about 10 pastors who pastor great churches around the nation. And I get together with them every two years.

In fact, right as soon as I'm done preaching, I'm going to the airport to fly to be with them for the next two-and-a-half days. I always look forward to this time because we pray over each other, we encourage each other, we admonish each other. I'm so grateful for this group. We've been together for five years.

In September of 2023 we went over to England with our wives, and we spent a day with theologian N. T. Wright. Some of you might recognize that name. He is in his 70s. He is a living legend. One of the most prolific theologians of our time.

We were in Oxford with him and then we took the train back to London. And there is another prominent spiritual leader in London who is a contemporary of N. T. Wright. He's in his 70s as well. And he knows one of the pastors in our cohort.

The two of them got together for breakfast one morning and he was asking this pastor, "Who are here with?" and He said, "I'm here with my cohort and these guys lead churches all over the nation." And he goes, "Well, tell me who they are."



So, he pulls out his phone to show this man a picture of our group. And he just starts going through the names telling him who we are and what churches we lead. And he got to me about halfway through and this man looked at my picture and he stopped him, and he said, "Who is that?"

"Well, that's Aaron. He leads this church in Indiana called Traders Point" He goes, "Do you think I could talk to him?" So, he texted me and he said, "Hey, I'm down in the lobby with this spiritual leader. He wants to meet you. Could you come down?" I was like, "Okay."

So, I go and I meet with him in a little parlor of the hotel lobby. He sits down and I'm just thinking this is going to be like small talk, kind of get to know you kind of a thing. So, I jumped in with a little bit of small talk. I've read some of his books and I know who he is. He just had a book released and I'm trying to ask him about it.

You could just tell that he didn't want to talk about it. Actually, it was kind of awkward. I thought, "Do I have something on my face? Is my fly undone?" it was just very weird how he was interacting with me. He would look at me and then look away. He would kind of look at me like he wanted to say something and then he would look away.

Finally, he just kind of looked at me and he spoke in this prolific British accent. I wish that I could preach in a British accent. I think in heaven we'll all have British accents. It just doesn't matter what you say, it immediately sounds so much more intelligent when you say it. I would try to do mine, but it just ends up going Australian for some reason.

So, he looks at me and he says, "I know we don't know each other very well." "But," he said, "when I saw your picture on that phone, I feel like God laid a prophetic word on my heart to give to you." And I said, "Okay."

And he goes, "I don't know how you think about any of that. I don't know what kind of church you lead." And he goes, "You know, Aaron, this could be a bunch of rubbish. I don't know." And he said, "I just need to tell you that as soon as I saw you that the word that came to my mind was reset." Like a reset.

He just kept saying that over and over again, like a seed in soil that kind of punches up through the dirt, I've got to do some earthwork here that is going to be painful. The seed is going to come up through the soil like a new plant. It's going to be a reset." He goes, "Almost like an awakening."

And I said, "You know, we're getting ready to jump into a thing at our church called Awakening." And he goes, "That doesn't surprise me." And then he just said this. He looked at me and he said, "Um, this is going to be so awkward because we don't know each other."

And he said... I've been in accountability groups, and I've sat with people before, but here's how he phrased this. I've never had anybody say this to me. He said, "Is there

anything in your life right now that displeases the Lord?" That question will stop you in your tracks. That's different than, "Hey, do you have any secret sins? Are you looking at something that you shouldn't? All that."

"Is there anything in your life..." that could speak to motive and attitude. He goes, "Is there anything in your life that is displeasing the Lord?" And he goes, "Don't think about it. I don't need to know. Just yes or no." And I was like, "Yes." And he goes, "Great. Me too. Hey, just consecrate yourself before the Lord and repent before Him and be ready for an awakening."

Here's what I said. I said, "You got all of that by looking at my picture on a phone?" And he goes, "That's how this stuff works." He goes, "Good day." And left.

I didn't quite fully know what to do with it. I'm beginning to figure it out.

Story number two. Earlier this year we had worship night. Many of you were here. I'd been traveling. I landed at the airport that afternoon. I made my way over to the church and I met with a young man in my office named Issac. Issac, buddy, I don't know if you're in this service, but man I love you and I'm cheering for you.

And Issac, he's nineteen (at the time he was), came into my office and he was like, "Pastor Aaron, I really want to be in ministry. I really want to do what you do. I don't even know where to begin. Do I go to seminary? Do I go to Bible college? Where do I start?" He was like, "You know what? Just give me a mop, I'll start there." And I was like, "Man, I love you so much. You're not entitled. You're just ready to go."

And as I was listening to him, I just felt that same kind of prompting. And I looked back at Issac, and I said, "I don't know if you need to hear this or not," I said, "Man, I think God has His hand all over you. And I think He's going to use you in profound ways for the Kingdom. And I can't wait to see what He does in your life. And I'm here cheering you on, man. Let me open up some doors to some rooms that you can get into."

And he looked back at me, and he teared up and he said, "You have no idea how much I needed to hear those words. Thank you so much. I'm going to be chewing on that for a long time."

Can I just say this to you? For those of you who maybe get that prompting in your life and to speak to somebody else's life, you don't hold on to it. You speak a blessing over other people. That's how this works.

So, then I came into the auditorium, and I met Lindsay in the front row. And the room is filling up. I love worship nights because all of our campuses come together under one roof. You guys see me, but I don't always get a chance to see you.

And I get up and I look around and I told Lindsay, the room is so young, so many young people. And then Pastor Landon was like, "Hey, about three-fourths of the way through

I'm going to give an opportunity to kind of jump up and say a few things." And I was like, "Okay, I should probably figure that out. What am I going to say?"

And he goes, "Hey, I'm going to be reading in the book of Isaiah, the Old Testament. Just give that some thought."

So, during the worship time Lindsay kept looking over at me, my wheels were kind of turning and I'm trying to think through what I wanted to say. And it was as if the Spirit of God said, "Say to the room what you said to Issac in your office."

So, I got up on this stage. The worship team didn't know what I was going to do. And Isaiah, chapter 6, verse 7, the passage, where he comes before God in repentance and it says that a coal touched his lips and then the passage says, "Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven."

Which, by the way, some of you are pinned in so much shame. God wants to do something in you and through you and shame from an enemy is keeping you pinned down. There is a difference between conviction and condemnation. God convicts and sets you free. Satan condemns to keep you down. There isn't anybody God uses that isn't a sinner. We consecrate ourselves and repent and then He purifies us and then He always uses us.

That passage goes on where God asks a question, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" And Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me."

So, from this platform I just said, "You know what? I just feel this prompting that if you're under the age of 30 (because the next generation is not the future of our church, it is the present of the church, God wants to work in them now) so I said if you are under the age of 30 and you, just like Isaiah want to repent of sin and you want God to use you in the marketplace, the community, the school—you want to be Jesus' representative as ambassadors and your prayer is, "Here am I, God, send me," (by the way we hear a lot about calling, you can volunteer too) so I was like, "Here am I, send me," I said, "If that's you, come down front we're going to pray a prayer of blessing over you."

I did not know how that was going to go. I thought maybe 12 people would come. This picture behind me shows over 500 came down front and we prayed over them. And, actually, one of them who came down front we just hired on our staff.

So, what I'm saying is:

This is OUR TIME

And I just want to reassure you that we are not in a battle with culture. Don't get drug into that. We are in a battle with the principalities and powers of darkness behind the culture. So, we desire to be a Word of God church devoted to the mission of God, empowered by the Spirit of God.



There are a lot of churches that are Word of God churches and that's great. But then maybe they neglect the mission of God or the Spirit of God. There are a lot of churches that are mission of God churches but a little bit Bible light and maybe not as dependent upon the Holy Spirit. There are a lot of churches that are Spirit of God churches, but maybe they need a little bit more Bible, maybe a little more mission.

I'm telling you that my observation right now about churches across the land... We hear a lot about denominations that are declining and people going to church less and less and less, and that is true.

Something is also happening at the same time. People are seeking an encounter with God. They are not seeking a show, they are not seeking finer teaching, they want to be on mission with God led by the Spirit of God and directed by the Word of God. And when you can thread the needle with that bullseye, then the Spirit of God empowers that church to make a difference.

We are not trying to draw crowds. We are not even simply trying to dunk people and make converts, because if that's all that we do, the result of that is cardboard Christians who get blown over by the winds of a hostile culture when they come and they will come.

So, I just want you to know that we want to help you progress more and more into the image and likeness of Jesus. I want to help you develop a robust trust in Jesus and a biblical worldview that can withstand the storms that will inevitably come.

And the combination of that is radically loving you with the grace of Jesus. There isn't anything that you have done that keeps you from Jesus Christ. He died for you. It doesn't matter how dark, detestable, gross that it is, you can come to the feet of Jesus and be received and redeemed and welcomed. He takes on your sin and exchanges that. He gives you His righteousness. And also, to be loving and bold enough to speak the truth. It is the combination of those things that then invite the anointing of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit that can change your life.

But, we've got to be ready. Ephesians, chapter 6 puts this so well. It says, "Put on the full armor of God so that you'll be able to stand firm." Well, against what? Well, he answers that in the passage, "Against all the strategies," that is plural, "of the devil."

In other words, he doesn't just have one strategy, he has multiple ones. So, you're like, "Oh, well, I think I can avoid that strategy." He's like, "No sweat. I'll just pick out another one that you'll fall for."

"For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, therefore put on every piece of God's armor so that you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. And then after the battle you'll still be standing firm."



That is the kind of church I want to lead. After the battle you might be banged up, but you're still standing. So, you stand your ground. You put on the belt of truth, the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes you put on peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. You take on the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit.

You pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. You stay alert. Head on a swivel. You stay persistent in prayer for all of the believers everywhere. And pray for me too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain. If it's not hard to hear it doesn't take boldness.

God's mysterious plan is that the Good News is for everyone. I love how John Elders puts it. He said, "God loves you. He's pursuing you. And we are in a battle. So, there is a love story that is being developed within a war." We have to be awakened to recognize that.

Jesus would say in Matthew 11 that the Kingdom of Heaven is forcefully advancing. Against what? The Gates of hell. You only put gates around things that are on the defensive. And He says, "No, we're actually charging the gates of hell because there are people who need to know and follow Jesus." It requires a battleship mentality, not a cruise ship mentality.

I want to equip you with a durable faith to follow Jesus in turbulent times. That's what I want to give the rest of my life to. I've been thinking a lot about that. I don't know. I'm kind of at half-time. I'm 48.

What do I want the next 20, 25, 30 years to be like? I don't want to coast. I don't want to wave a white flag. I don't want to be a shell of what I used to be. I don't want to go back and listen to my sermons in my 20s and 30s and say, "Man, there was a fire there. Where did that go?"

I want to have a renewed sense of the Spirit of God in this time and in this place. I want to follow Jesus faithfully when it's not just easy, but when it is difficult to do because that's when the Spirit of God lays on me an anointing. It's going to require a soft heart, durable feet, powered by the sword of the Spirit.

This summer I sat with a Christian therapist; Lindsay was with me. And one of the days she walked us through this exercise that I'd never been through before. She said, "Hey, I want you guys to close your eyes, we're going to spend roughly 20 or 25 minutes a piece," so almost an hour of this, "and I'm just going to lead you through this." And she said, "Aaron, we'll start with you."

So, we both closed our eyes. And she said, "Just imagine the place that you love the most." And that was easy for me. "The Amalfi Coast in Italy. Lindsay and I did our 20th

wedding anniversary there.” She said, “That is awesome. Tell me about it. Describe it to me.”

I described the infinity pool and where we sat. She said, “Aaron, Jesus is there with you. Look around and notice Him. The two of you are going to sit down and have a conversation. Where do you sit? What do you smell? What do you see?”

She was leading us through this whole thing to where at some point I just began to immerse myself in this. She said, “Aaron, Jesus is looking at you. What’s the look in His eye? Aaron, is there anything that you want to say to Jesus?”

And I’d tell you what I said, but it’s personal. And she said, “Aaron, is there anything Jesus wants to say to you?” And then she brought us to this place where she said, “Aaron, Jesus is trying to hand you something. What does He want to give you right now?” This is the first thing that popped into my mind. I said, “Tactical boots and a sword.” And she goes, “Awesome.”

And then she moved on to Lindsay. And Lindsay’s was much better. She and Jesus were holding hands, singing, skipping through the woods. It was awesome. It was so much better.

We got back to the Airbnb later and I was sitting there thinking, “Why did that pop into my mind? Tactical boots and a sword?” Ephesians 6. Armor of God. The Word of God describes itself as a sword, living and active, sharp, it penetrates. Psalm 40. The Psalmist cries out, “Make my feet steady through unstable terrain.” Yeah. Tactical boots and a sword.

I love the lyrics of that song that we were singing today: Trust in God. The opening line says that He was that fourth man in the fire all along.

It’s a reference to Daniel and Daniel’s three friends: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were threatened. They were told to eat pavement and worship false gods or be thrown into the furnace. And I love their faith. They weren’t angry. They weren’t abrasive. They conducted themselves, you could say, in a manner worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They just resolutely said, “We’re not going to do that.”

“Well, you’re going to be thrown into the furnace.” So, they said, “That’s fine. We believe God will rescue us, but even if He does not, we will not bow.” Tactical boots and a sword.

So, the king threw them into a furnace. And if you know the story, the flames didn’t touch them. They weren’t consumed by the fire. And the king peered in there and was like, “Hey, I thought I only threw three people in there. There are four in there.” Jesus was in the furnace with them preserving them. See, God never promises you a furnace free life. He promises to be with you in the furnace.

I ended the message last week by saying, “I would much rather be in the furnace with Jesus than outside of the furnace without Him.” And I had no idea how quickly I’d need to put that into practice.

We call that type of experience a Joel 2:28 experience. When the anointing of God falls upon people who hold radically to grace and to truth, where they are courageous enough to stand, not to be abrasive and not to win an argument, but to recognize that there is a whole world that is deceived by an enemy.

And you cannot do the Christian life with what’s coming by just doing an occasional devotion and claiming to believe in God. The demons believe in God. That doesn’t mean that they have His anointing.

Some of you believe in God, but you don’t have an anointing. And the only way that you can have an anointing is by repenting—repenting of attitude, repenting of false narratives, repenting of sin consecrating yourself before the Lord. I would take the prophetic word given to me and pass it to you: reset. Reset.

With the week we’re getting ready to go in to, what a great time: reset. There is a seed that God is wanting to punch up through the soil of your life that gives fruit, but it’s got to come from people who have repentant hearts and who are crying out, “God, we need an encounter with You.”

There is no other way to explain this. In a natural world, we need a supernatural God to bring us to the place that we can not get to on our own. So, we’re standing on the shoulders of the saints who have come before us.

I want to serve this church with all that I’ve got. I want to go, I don’t know, the next 20, 25 years—I’ll be gumming my Cream of Wheat, you’ll be wheeling me out of here. I want to go full on with tactical boots and a sword. I want to serve this church well.

And I want you to know that I never want to be abrasive and crusty and legalistic and mean. I want to be gracious and kind and humble and pastoral. I want to hold on to grace, I want to boldly declare truth. I never want to back down from that because that invites the anointing of God.

Quite honestly, there are a lot of churches where God’s anointing has been pulled off of them and they are running on strategy. And what we need is the anointing of God upon us. We’re a Bible church and Jesus people. That will never change. We are ambassadors, not of earthly nations, but of the Kingdom of God.

So, it’s not about looking left or looking right. It’s about looking up to the Kingdom of God saying, “Your Kingdom come down on earth as it is in heaven.” And we need to be ready, as a people, for the stirring God wants to do.



So, let me just end with this. I've shown you this graph before. This is a chart of the last four Great Awakenings in our nation. A Great Awakening is when a people have an encounter with God, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit marked by repentance and confession and prayer and God moves.

So, people are radically trusting in Jesus, not because somebody wrote a book or somebody created some pamphlet that helped them understand Him, but because the Holy Spirit got poured out and people saw with eyes that could never see before.

The first one started in 1730 and lasted 10 years. It was started by a couple of young men named Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. It ended—50 years go by. The second one started in 1790 by a guy by the name of Charles Finney. It ended. Another 50 years go by, the next one started in 1900. God used a guy by the name of Dwight Moody. Fifty years go by and in 1960, maybe you've heard of him, a guy by the name of Billy Graham, who God used to start the fourth Great Awakening.

Now, here's what I want you to know about all of those men. If you google them, they look like old guys with white hair. They were young when God used them. It's always young people who God does this through. Look at me. There are some young people, or some young groups of people and God is going to use you, quite possibly, I pray, to spark another Great Awakening in our church. I am most excited about our young people in our church.

So, I am not predicting the future. I'm making an observation that since 1730 there have been four Great Awakenings and in between each of them was 50 years. So, if God works the way that He has done in the past, then that means the fifth one would come next year, 2025. Wouldn't that be timely given what we've come through post COVID, given this contentious election, given all of the chronic anxiety, the anger, the rage, the division?

Come Lord Jesus. Come. We're not playing church, man. We need the empowering of the Holy Spirit. We need people who will wake up to recognize what it is that God desires to do in you and through you.

So, we're going to pray. I say this in love. Some of you need to repent, some of you need to get your eyes up, some of you need to fall on your face, some of you need to consecrate yourselves before the Lord, some of you need to confess sin.

Some of you need to have your hearts broken, some of you need to ask for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on your marriage, your life, your kids because you've tried everything else, and nothing works because nothing else works like the Holy Spirit. You're leaving so much on the table. And that's what our church needs right now.

Father God, I pray a prayer over our church that You would pour out Your Spirit upon us. We need it. We trust You. We love You.



I pray that there is not one person here who wouldn't feel You chasing them down. You are still beloved, beloved. It doesn't matter what you've done, it doesn't matter how far you've drifted, it doesn't matter how dark things have gotten.

You are a God who is beckoning us to wake up, by Your Spirit, the power of Your Spirit, for Your Spirit. God, would you please use us at this time. We ask this in Jesus' name: Amen.

