

Fighting for the Weak

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FIGHT - For What Matters Most | June 7, 2026 | Isaiah 1:17; Hosea 4:1; Micah 6:8; Deuteronomy 10; Jeremiah 22:16; Proverbs 31:8-9; Psalms 68:5; Psalms 82

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Well, it is a great honor to get to stand in the pulpit for Dr. Jarrett Stephens, my dear friend and my pastor.

I was talking to Jarrett last night at the N.T. Wright lecture at the library, and I said, "Now, I know you're preaching at North Klein, but which message are you preaching?"

He said, "Well, I'm preaching the same one you are: fight for the weak."

And I said, "What does your sermon say?" He told me, so I rushed home and rewrote mine.

No. I will get to hear his later, and you will want to hear his because he will be speaking from a slightly different perspective than I am. We're both saying the same thing. We just come at it from our unique walks in life.

My walk in life is one where, during the week, I make a living in courthouses. I try lawsuits for a living. I spent the first three months of this year in Los Angeles trying the first social media addiction case in the history of our country.

I represented a young lady named Kaylee G.M. who got addicted to social media. The case was against two of the largest corporate entities in the history of human civilization. We're talking about multi-trillion-dollar companies that own the world's data. Companies that brought in neuroscientists to try to understand how the brain works. Companies that the jury found purposefully designed their features to addict children like Kaylee.

Social media addiction is just as real as tobacco or any other addiction in the way it's able to work in the human mind. It was my honor to argue that case, not just for Kaylee, but ultimately for so many people in a generation who have lost a part of who they are to the trap that social media addiction can be.

That's what I do for a living. Whether it's social media addiction or, several years ago, the opioid litigation in Ohio, this is my life. I think it's a biblical calling.

But even more so, it has helped me read Scripture with a different mindset. Before I went to law school, I took a degree in Hebrew and Greek. I've tried to continue reading Hebrew and Greek in the Bible for the last 45-plus years. When I do it now as a lawyer, the words in the Bible that are law words jump out at me. It's just natural.

When I read Isaiah 1:17, this is God talking in the Old Testament to the people through Isaiah the prophet. God says:

*Seek justice,
correct oppression;
bring justice to the fatherless,
plead the widow's cause.*

— Isaiah 1:17

That word **riv** in Hebrew, translated "plead the widow's cause," means bring a lawsuit. I feel pretty good about that passage. It means litigate. Or, in the words of Pastor Jarrett's sermon series, it means to fight. We fight for the weak.

We had Mother's Day recently, and Pastor Jarrett preached on fighting for your families. Great sermon. Go back and listen on the internet or read it. He puts the transcripts on there as well.

Proverbs 31 is famous for speaking about the virtuous woman. The start of that chapter has the woman, the mother, telling the king how to be a good king. In verses 8 and 9, it reads:

*Open your mouth for the mute,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
Open your mouth, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

— Proverbs 31:8-9

The mute is the person who can't talk. The king is to open his mouth for that person and for the rights of all who are destitute. He is to open his mouth and judge righteously, to defend the rights of the poor and needy.

That word **din** there, translated "defend," is a lawyer word. It means to render a verdict in their favor. If they are poor and needy, they still get their rights vindicated. It's fighting for the weak.

Now, we could read passages in the Bible, or we might live our lives, thinking, "Well, we feel bad for the weak. I pity the weak. I feel bad for those people."

I was walking to court one day, and there was a fellow who didn't have legs. He's sitting there with a cup. He probably hasn't showered in forever and a day, and he's begging. I wish I had the power of Peter to say to him:

Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

— Acts 3:6

But I can't do that. I can pity him. I can feel bad for him.

But these aren't passages that say, "I feel bad for you." These aren't passages that say, "Pity the weak." These are passages that say, "Fight for them." You go to the mat on their behalf. You figure out how to do something for them.

I want to talk about fighting for the weak in three sections. Section one: Let's talk about who the weak people are. We've got to know that first, right? Section two: I want to focus on Scriptures that show how God fights for

the weak. Then we bring it home with section three, where we need to talk about how we carry the commission of God. We are his image-bearers, and so we have an obligation as well.

Who Are the Weak?

I went to the gym to try to figure this out, and it turns out there are a bunch of them. There are some guys who are bench-pressing, and they're topping out at, what, 250 or something? I think, "You weakling."

If you've ever bench-pressed and you're looking at me, you know that's a joke, because in my entire life, I don't think I've benched 250 pounds if you put together every time I've done it.

But that's not what the Bible is talking about with weak people.

I want to talk to you about who the weak people are, and I've got to warn you. Usually during this hour, I'm teaching class across the way, so I don't get to speak to you much. There was a woman in the 8:00 service who said to me, "I'm 85."

I said, "That's great."

She said, "Please don't put a bunch of Greek up there, because it's just over my head."

I said, "Don't worry. I've got a bunch of Hebrew up there today." And I will put pictures there just in case you don't like it.

I'm concerned because we can read our Bibles and see the word **weak**, but what does that mean? In Hebrew, there are so many different words being used. If we look at the different words, they'll give us a fuller buffet of what's being said.

Let's start with the word **dal**. In Hebrew, it means something that's thinning out and drooping. It's depleted. It's that plant that can't stand upright, like this.

It's the same Hebrew word used for a two-way door that doesn't have a hinge or a stopper. The reason is that you just go up to the door and push it, and it'll open. Or you push it this way, and it'll go that way. It's not strong enough to stop you from pushing it. It just goes back and forth. Whichever way you push it, it goes.

That's a word we translate as **weak**.

There's a second word we translate as **weak**, and that's the Hebrew word **ani**. **Ani** means bent over, weighed down, carrying too heavy a load.

We kind of use it that way. Pastor Jarrett and I are training for a half marathon in August. This weekend, Becky was in L.A. for part of the weekend, so our oldest daughter's father-in-law came to stay. I don't know what relation that would be to me. I call him John.

And his name's Ralph.

No, his name's John.

John came in from St. Petersburg, Florida, to batch it with me and to hear N.T. Wright last night. He knew I was training for this half marathon. Well, he does triathlons every week just for the fun of it, right? He's svelte. His body has never heard of the concept of body fat. This guy is like a vapor.

He says to me, "I know you've got a long run Saturday morning. Why don't we run together?"

I'm like, "Not in your life."

He said, "Come on, let's run."

I said, "Well, how fast do you run?"

He said, "I'm running really slowly right now." Then he told me his pace, and I'm thinking, "In your dreams. I'm not running with you. You go run like the gazelle you are, and I will go trot like the Hulk."

While he's out doing his thing and I'm out just running in what feels like wet concrete, I realize something: I weigh 55 pounds more than he does. If he had a 55-pound backpack on, I might run with little Johnny Hotshot. But I'm too weak to keep up with him.

That's the same idea. I'm bowed under a 55-pound weight he doesn't have. He is a stronger runner. I'm a weaker runner. It's the same idea of the word *weak*. I'm carrying a lot of extra weight.

Who else are the weak people? There's a third Hebrew word, *evyon*. It references what we would commonly think of as someone who is weak, but they're in want. They're needy. They're impoverished. They're poor. They don't have what they need to sustain a thriving life.

Now, I can't leave it alone without hitting the triad in the Old Testament. There are three groups that, when the Old Testament talks about the weak, are constantly included together. Here they are: the orphan, the widow and the immigrant - or the sojourner, the foreigner or the alien. They're all translatable as the same.

Why? Because the rain of life, the deluge that falls down on all of us, falls down on them. They get it, and they get it, and they get it. It just continues to fall. It's horrible for them because, in the Old Testament, there's protection in certain structures of society.

Here's what I mean. The father was supposed to protect his children. That's the responsibility of a father in Old Testament times. It's still a responsibility of a father today. You protect your children.

John and I were talking yesterday about our offspring. My daughter is married to his son, and they have three daughters. Jarrett and Debbie have four daughters. Becky and I have four daughters. You want to see a dad protect his daughters? Look at any of them. We protect them. That's our job.

Back in the Old Testament, there was also a structure for women. Their husband was supposed to protect them. That was a responsibility of a husband.

For anyone, there was a general protection that came with land. If there is land, you can grow some food. You can graze a sheep. You can have a goat. You can do what you need to do with land that you can't do if you don't have it.

These structures of protection gave a level of thriving for life that, when removed, left weak, vulnerable classes of people. Those are the weak.

God Fights for the Weak

If we're reading our Bibles correctly, we'll see that God fights for the weak. That's the Old Testament story. It's the New Testament story.

One place you'll find it is in the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is the last of those books of Moses. You have Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It's called the Pentateuch, the five books of the Law, the Torah. You can call it whichever you choose.

The last one has a collection of speeches that Moses is giving to the people before they go into the Promised Land. These speeches recount what has happened and what they're supposed to do.

In one of these speeches, in chapter 10, Moses does something very close to what Darrell and the team did this morning. If Darrell were up here instead of right there, I'd have him spontaneously sing this, because he could:

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God.

— Deuteronomy 10:17

See, *LORD* is in all capital letters because it's the holy name of God, and the translators don't even want to translate it. We are comfortable saying it as Yahweh, but it's four Hebrew letters: Yod, Heh, Vav, Heh.

It's so holy that a practicing Jew will not pronounce it. They will simply say *HaShem*, which means "the name." Or they might say *Adonai* or *Adonoy*, depending upon whether they're Ashkenazi or not. But that means "Lord."

So it uses the name of God and says, "For the LORD, Yahweh your God, is God of gods. He is Lord of lords. He is great. He is mighty. He is awesome."

Doesn't that sound incredible? I've got echoing in my brain what we just sang, because he's just great, great, great. What a wonderful name! His CV, his resume, all of the stuff he's done - he's the greatest. Our God is an awesome God. I just love it.

In Hebrew, it's singable. I'm not going to make you do it, but I'm going to make you hear it: *ha-gadol*, the great; *ha-gibbor*, the mighty; *veha-nora*, the awesome. It comes just that way. There's no extra sound.

You're reading the Hebrew, and he's God of gods, Lord of lords: *ha-gadol, ha-gibbor, veha-nora*. It's just cool.

I'm ready for the next verse, because you set up the heavens and the earth! I know how those books of Moses started: *Bereshit bara Elohim et hashamayim ve'et ha'aretz*.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

— Genesis 1:1

He's awesome! Our God is an awesome God. He reigns. I'm ready for it, man. He's done it. He's awesome.

So I'm looking for the next verse. Are you?

He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.

— Deuteronomy 10:18

That's the reason Moses is telling the people, in a speech that will live for eternity, that God is great and awesome and mighty? He's God of gods and Lord of lords because he's taking care of the fatherless, the widows and the aliens?

Well, I wasn't expecting that.

Moses does not define God's greatness by what God can crush. He defines the greatness of God by whom he defends.

Isn't that the whole storyline of what Israel was doing there, listening to Moses? They had been immigrants. They had been aliens in Egypt without land, suffering under the oppression of Pharaoh. The patriarchs, their fathers, were gone. They had a Pharaoh who didn't know their fathers. They were weak, and they were afflicted.

Moses had been goat-herding for 40 years in the wilderness when God appeared to him in a bush that was burning but not burning up. God said, "I've surely seen - I couldn't miss it - the affliction of my people who are in Egypt."

The whole story is one of God rescuing the weak.

Is it any wonder that Israel's songbook says what it does? We don't really have songbooks in church now, do we? When I was growing up, we had hymnals. You'd open up your hymnal, and they'd give you a page number.

Israel had a hymnal. They had a songbook. We call it Psalms, and they would sing these songs. That's why we've got songs like Psalm 68:5.

You want to sing this together? Who is God?

*Father of the fatherless and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.*

— Psalm 68:5

When he is dwelling where he dwells in holiness, unlike everybody else - holy is our God, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty - he's the Father of the fatherless and the protector of widows. God in three persons, helping out the immigrants. That's in their songbook.

Keep reading and singing through the Psalms, and you get to Psalm 82. God calls a council of the gods, lowercase *g*. That's a reference, by the way, to the leaders of Israel, the human leaders. The divine council he calls to him, and he says, "Look, y'all are the leaders. Y'all are the judges. Let me give you some instructions."

*Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.*

— Psalm 82:3-4

You need to give justice to the *dal*, to the weak, to the droopy plants, to the thinned-out, to the door that just gets pushed around. You need to give justice to the fatherless. Those are the orphans.

You need to maintain the right of the afflicted, those who are heavy and bowed down with weight. And the destitute - you need to rescue the weak and the needy, those without.

We can read that and think, "Yes, God, take care of them, and thank you for us." But if we're careful enough, we'll understand that, to some degree, that is us.

I'm not saying totally, but I can tell you there have been times when I've been whipped and depleted, thinned out, not knowing how I would ever stand up for what I needed to do. I've felt that way as a lawyer.

You want to try a case against somebody powerful? I stand up to try that case, and by the grace of God, I have a wonderful team behind me. But at counsel table every day, "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I'll be trying this case with my daughter Rachel and my daughter Sarah." And we're against all of the lawyers money can buy.

David versus Goliath.

There are some days when you just feel like, "I can't do this. I'm not up for this. I feel weak and depleted. I'm supposed to be cross-examining Mark Zuckerberg today, and I don't want to be a door that just gets pushed around. I need something beyond me. I feel weighed down and burdened."

I know that I am impoverished, maybe not economically, but blessed are the poor in spirit. Poverty can hit us in lots of different ways.

There really are orphans. There really are widows. There are aliens, immigrants and sojourners among us.

I read my Bible, and I know certain facts are true.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

— John 3:16

Is that a fact? Amen. If it's a fact, say amen. It's a fact.

It is a fact that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried and resurrected on the third day, walked among people and then ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God. That's a fact. Amen?

Let me give you another fact: It is a fact that God seeks to set right what has gone wrong for the people who can't set it right themselves. That, my friends, is a fact. God does that.

And he didn't just do it for Old Testament people. That's the story of all of us if we are Christians.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

— Romans 5:6

God didn't say, "Okay, as soon as Lanier gets on his knees and prays the sinner's prayer, I'll send Jesus down, and we'll take care of it."

Jesus came down and took care of it before any of us knew enough or had enough sense to ask him to.

That word **weak**, **asthenon**, comes from this **sthenon** word. **Sthenon** in Greek truly does mean "macho man." It's strength. It's the gym word.

But in Greek, if you take the letter **a** and stick it in front of a word, it means, "Uh-uh. Not." We do that today. We stole some of it from Greek. If someone is moral, we say they're moral. If they're not moral, they're amoral or immoral. **Amoral** means without morality. So **a** means "not."

Asthenon means not strong. That's the word Paul's using. We weren't strong. We were weak.

Christ came. Why? He died for us. Why? Because God fights for the weak.

We Carry God's Commission

Let's bring it home. We carry God's commission. We are image-bearers.

The first book of Moses, in the very first chapter, says:

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

— Genesis 1:26

Then it says:

*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

— Genesis 1:27

If you are a male or female human being, you are created in the image of God.

Does that mean that God has a nose, two ears, a full set of teeth and probably double wisdom teeth? Does it mean that God has a perfect chin? Or two? Three? He's got a great torso?

No. That's not what "image-bearer" meant.

To be made in the image and likeness had a very special significance back in the day of Moses. The best way to show it is to go to the Damascus Museum, when it's not being bombed, and look for the statue of Hadad-yith'i.

Hadad was a governor of that area, or a king, depending upon whom he was talking to. If he was talking to the real king of the Assyrian Empire, he would call himself a governor. But if they weren't looking, he would tell everybody else he was a king.

He had a full-size statue made out of basalt - B-A-S-A-L-T - and carved. It's two meters tall if you count the base. On the skirt, it's written in cuneiform Akkadian on one side for the Assyrians and Aramaic on the other side for the local people.

Aramaic, by the way, is the language Jesus would most commonly speak. This is the oldest Aramaic inscription we've got. It dates from somewhere around 850 BC, maybe as early as the 11th century BC, depending upon who's dating it.

The Aramaic inscription says this is the king's "image and likeness." It uses the Aramaic words we have in Genesis: "Let us make man in our image and likeness." They're the same two words, just in Aramaic, a sister language to Hebrew.

Why was this statue made?

Statues like this were made because Hadad rules right here. But this is before the internet, so he's only in one place. He can't be seen everywhere else. He's got subjects over here, so he's going to put in a life-size statue that says, "This is the image and likeness of the king," with lots of instructions on it, because everybody needs to know his authority reigns right here even though he's not here.

He may not be over here, but his image and authority still reign over here. He's going to construct a statue over here so all of you know his authority is here. This is who he is. This is what he expects.

God says, "Let's make humanity in our image and likeness."

That means we were made to show the world what God is like. God doesn't have a physical presence right here, but he's got us. People should look at us and say, "Oh, God's got authority over there. That's what God's like."

The same thing is true over here. We don't have a physical presence of God over here, but we've got the image and likeness. People see you and say, "Oh, God's got authority over here. Look at his image and likeness. That's what he wants. That's what he's like."

That's the instruction we've got.

Paul uses a different word. Paul uses the Greek word for ambassadors.

We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

— 2 Corinthians 5:20

We've been sent. That word for ambassadors, *presbeuo*, refers to an envoy or emissary.

You want to see God upset? Go back and read the Minor Prophets. Read Micah. Micah is a courthouse book. Micah has God suing Israel and Judah.

In my courts, a bailiff might come out and say, "Oyez, oyez, oyez." Well, the equivalent back then was Micah, who comes out three times in different places and says, "Shim'u, shim'u, shim'u. Hear what the Lord says."

God is telling them, "Hey, I'm suing you. You can plead your case. Look, we've got witnesses here. We've got mountains. We've got hills. You plead your case in front of them. You tell them, because what I'm going to do is tell the mountains my indictment."

That's a legal word.

"I'm going to tell the enduring foundations of the earth my indictment against the people, and I'm going to sue Israel."

Why? Because they're not taking care of the widows, the orphans and the poor. They live in a world where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. They live in a world that caters to people of power, popularity and prestige.

God says, "I'm not having any of that. I'll tell you what you should do."

Here's what's good, he says five or six verses later:

*He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

— Micah 6:8

That's it.

Go back and read Hosea:

*Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel,
for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or steadfast love,
and no knowledge of God in the land.*

— Hosea 4:1

Hold on to that. You don't have knowledge of God.

Why? Are we just mean people? I don't think so. I think we're cruel, but we're busy. We're not always well-informed. We've got stuff going on.

And true, we do live in a culture that tends to cater to the rich and the powerful. And true, God's calling us to go contrary to the current of our culture. But that's the calling. That's what God tells us to do.

Now, somebody out there is going to put on a lawyer hat and say to me, "Objection. We aren't God with his power."

But remember, Jesus came in weakness to rescue us.

For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

— 2 Corinthians 13:4

We're also weak. We're living by the power of God.

There's no excuse for saying, "Well, God's powerful. He can look out for the weak, but not me. I'm weak myself."

No, no, no, no, no. That doesn't work. Or, as we say in Latin, "Ha ha."

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

— Mark 8:34

Jesus also said:

You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

— Mark 10:42

They take. They're He-Man.

But Jesus says:

But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant.

— Mark 10:43

Then he adds:

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

— Mark 10:45

Do you know what *Christian* means?

Don't answer out loud, because a lot of you may have heard that it means "little Christ." It doesn't mean "little Christ."

Christian means *Christ* with *-ianus*, which is a Latin ending. It means you belong to Christ. It means you bear his image. You're stamped with his image.

It's what Paul talks about in Romans: We're to be conformed to the image, the *eikonos*, of his Son. You were made to look like Jesus.

We carry God's commission because we are his image-bearers.

So where does that leave us? One more lawsuit passage, and then we're done.

In Jeremiah, Jeremiah is talking to the people as the Babylonian captivity is taking them away to Babylon. He's

saying, "I know when your dads were in charge, when your forefathers were in charge, as long as they were honoring God, life went well for them."

Here's the passage out of Jeremiah 22:16:

*He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
then it was well.
Is not this to know me?
declares the LORD.*

— Jeremiah 22:16

If we know God, we will fight for the weak. That's his responsibility that he gives to us, his image-bearers.

Amen? Let's pray together.