Tim Pool's Anti-Vax Equivocation

Tim Pool tweeted this: "The COVID vaccine doesn't stop you from getting COVID, doesn't stop you from getting sick from COVID, doesn't stop you from spreading COVID. They call that "effective"."

Here's my reconstruction of his argument:
(V1) The COVID vax doesn't stop you from catching, spreading, or getting sick from COVID.
(V2) If the COVID vax doesn't stop you from catching, spreading, or getting sick from COVID, then it's not effective.
(V3) So, the COVID vax is not effective.

This argument commits the fallacy of equivocation, where the meaning of a term shifts midway in an argument, making it invalid. The equivocation here is over the term "stop". Here are two things it could mean:
- Guarantee to prevent (with 100% certainty)
- Make less likely

Premise 1 is only true on the first meaning. The vaccine isn't 100% guaranteed to prevent catching, spreading, or getting sick from COVID, but it does make it less likely. It also makes it less likely that you'll have worse symptoms or die if you do get sick.

But Premise 2 is only true on the second meaning. After all, condoms aren't 100% guaranteed to prevent pregnancy or STDs, but we wouldn't say they're not effective, since they make it less likely.

So, in order for both premises to be true, here's how the argument has to be interpreted:
(V1*) The COVID vax isn't guaranteed to prevent catching, spreading, or getting sick from COVID.
(V2*) If the COVID vax doesn't make catching, spreading, or getting sick from COVID less likely, then it's not effective.
(V3) So, it's not effective.

Now clearly this is an invalid argument. The conclusion doesn't follow.