

Through It All

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[0:00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But listen, our heart is to simply get into the Word of God, but most of all, let that Word get into us and transform these hearts more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, there was a little boy who offered up a prayer at mealtime for his family. And here's what he prayed. Dear God, this is Jimmy. Thank you for everything you provide for our family.

Thank you for this cheeseburger and french fries. Thank you for mom and dad, for my little sister, even though sometimes she can be in pain. Thank you for books and TV and my Nintendo Switch. Thank you for loving us. And oh yeah, take care of yourself, God, because without you, we're sunk. Amen. That little boy is right. And as we continue this series called After God's Own Heart, one thing I so admire about David is that he recognized that without the God factor in his life, he was nothing.

[1:13] According to society around him, he was a nobody from an insignificant family in a podunk town. He wasn't born into royalty. He wasn't built for Israel's special forces. He was a simple shepherd boy who loved the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And he truly believed in the Word of God, the power of God, and that he could accomplish all things through his Lord. And it's that faith, that obedience, that led him being called by God himself, a man after God's own heart.

That's what led to the prophet Samuel coming to his home and anointing him as the next king over Israel. That's what guided his battle against Goliath, where he defeated the toughest man in the world with a slingshot and a stone.

David, in essence, says the same thing that the little boy said in his prayer. Without you, Lord, we're sunk. And today, we say the same thing as a church.

When your roof starts leaking, when the bills are rolling in faster than the cash flow, when your world's been turned upside down by a medical prognosis, when family drama is more than you can take, when life seems to kick the snot out of you, when you just don't know how you're going to make it through this one, through it all, without you, God, we're sunk.

[2:31] And then David had the chance to show that trust by how he lived his life. See, although David's journey to this point would seem rather smooth, it started to get real rocky, as we talked about last week.

King Saul's jealousy boiled over as David's popularity grew. So David finds himself on the run for his life, not just for a few days or months. We're talking years, until finally one day, he's hiding out in Philistine territory, and he hears that King Saul died in battle.

He also hears that his best friend Jonathan, which would be King Saul's son, has been killed as well. Instead of running back home to say, okay, time to crown me, even celebrating, the first thing he does is honor his fallen king.

He mourns his loss. He grieves his friend. He even defends King Saul. And then in God's timing, not ours, not David's, he left the Philistine territory, went up to Judah, to the town of Hebron, and it's here where the men from the tribe of Judah, just one of the 12 tribes, come and anoint David as their king at the ripe young age of 30.

Now, realize that David was not yet the king over all of Israel. That title belonged to Ish-bosheth, the surviving son of Saul. And for about seven and a half years, David ruled the tribe of Judah, and Ish-bosheth was the rest of the tribes.

[3 : 59] And as David continued to seek the Lord, we see God's blessings, we see God's hand of protection. Over and over again, God is strengthening him, giving him victory, even against the rest of Israel as they came after him.

And then one day, David finds out that Saul's son had been killed by his own people. Once again, this man of integrity mourns for his enemy. He brings the men who did it to justice.

And then he honors Saul's son. And at the age of 37, about 20 years after he was first anointed by Samuel, 20 long years of patiently enduring and seeking the Lord through good times and through bad, the elders over all the tribes come to David at Hebron and anoint him as the king over Israel. Can you imagine that? Just the celebration, the joy this had to be for David's life, just the fulfillment of knowing that in God's strength, you've done the right things.

You've made the God honoring choices. No matter how anyone else around you acted and they did not act well, you did the right thing. You've given everything you are to be faithful to the Lord and His word.

[5 : 13] And the future is bright because now God's in the driver's seat. And He has been. And here we see David getting up from being anointed as king over Israel. And the next thing we know, he is off to rid his nation of the enemy.

Right away, David conquered Jerusalem from the arrogant Jebusites. Then came the Philistines. The moment they heard David was king, they came to get revenge and take him out.

And twice we see God hand them over to Israel. David then brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem. Then he set out to build a temple.

But before he could do it, God spoke through the prophet Nathan. And David was told, you're not to build the temple. That job will be reserved for your son. But David's line would continue to be blessed.

His kingdom would endure forever. And this brings us to the passage that we're going to focus on today. So go ahead, turn with me here to 2 Samuel chapter 7.

[6 : 16] 2 Samuel 7. By the way, it's the 10th book of your Bible. So pretty close to the front of your Bible. Old Testament. And if we start at the very beginning, here's how you get to 2 Samuel.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, and then you come to 2 Samuel. Chapter 7, starting in verse 18.

And we're going to see this very intimate prayer from David, where his heart is just so overjoyed in his God. Not only had the Lord set him straight on the temple, which David was fine with, because he wanted nothing more than to do God's will, but God had so blessed him and his family, was even promising to bless his descendants, that David is just overflowing with thankfulness.

And there are four things I want you to see today from David's prayer. And here's the first one.

Through it all, God's people need to pray. Through it all, we need to pray.

And one thing the church in America struggles with today, and sadly, I've been guilty of this myself at times, maybe you have too, but we talk a lot about prayer. We teach on prayer.

[7 : 26] We brag on our God being awesome and hearing our prayers, answering our prayers, and he does. And then we simply ignore prayer too often in the midst of day-to-day life.

In fact, we spent seven weeks on this topic in a series two years ago as we looked at the Lord's Prayer and just exactly what that means in our everyday life. We're seeing too many church business meetings, not enough prayer meetings.

Too much of us, not enough of God. But I'm telling you, when a church walks the walk in their commitment to prayer, when it starts with the leadership, permeates through the body, when we truly mean the phrase, not my will be done, but God, your will be done, that changes everything. And those churches and the power of Christ will impact this world. Absolutely impact this world. And that's why David's heart throughout 1 and 2 Samuel is so refreshing to me.

I counted six times in the story of David up to our passage today where Scripture records that David stopped everything and prayed. He asked his Lord what he wanted him to do.

[8 : 35] And there's one thing I've learned. If there's one thing I've learned about the Hebrew language from the Old Testament is that if something's repeated, same is true with the Greek that the New Testament's written in, if something is repeated multiple times, it's not a coincidence.

It's not an accident. It would be like me and you bolding something or highlighting something to make a point. It's because God is making a point. That's why he's repeating himself in different ways over and over.

And he's showing us here that as weak, fragile people, we need him. We can't do this on our own. Only by his power, only by his wisdom, his grace is what allows us to be a part of something so much bigger than ourselves.

In 1 Samuel chapter 30, we see David and his men still living in Philistine territory. This is right before King Saul dies in battle.

And one day as they returned to the city where they had been living, they saw that it had been burned. All their families were gone. And here are these men not knowing whether their wives and children are still alive, whether they've been tortured, what's going on.

[9 : 40] And the Bible tells us that these big, tough dudes wept until they had no strength left in them. And here's what I love about David that set him apart. Instead of letting his emotions get in the way, and can you imagine how easy that would have been to do, how easy you could have done that with your family missing?

But instead of just taking off after the Amalekites, especially since he as the leader was getting the blame for it, instead, David gets down on his knees and he seeks God's counsel.

He prays. He pours his heart out before El Roy, the God who sees me. And the best part is that he's quiet enough to hear God's answer. Pursue them.

You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue. And so off they went in God's will and they got their families back safe and sound. You know, one of my favorite modern day examples of what prayer can do comes from a church in Brooklyn, New York.

Years ago, they had just a handful of members barely able to even pay the bills. Times were tough. The church was struggling. Right outside the doors was too much drugs, violence, prostitution, everything else.

[10 : 47] They were in the wrong part of town. And one day, this young pastor in his 20s who kind of inherited this church, didn't even necessarily want to do it, wasn't even a trained pastor, he was praying in desperation as he was close to giving up.

And as he was praying, he heard God whisper into his heart this message. Lead the people to pray and I'll supply your sermons, I'll supply all the money you need. There will never be a building large enough if you lead the people to pray.

Well, this young minister ditched his message the next week and led the church in just a long time of authentic, sincere prayer. Well, from that day on, they started to see God's power in very practical ways.

Prostitutes and pimps and drug addicts and every kind of person you could imagine started coming into the church. And God began to move in their midst as they continued to pray. And now today, roughly 50 years later, this church averages more than 10,000 people in worship on a Sunday morning.

And get this, they have at least three, it may be more than that now, but at least 3,000 people who come every week for a midweek prayer service. And oh yeah, their choir, one of the most famous choirs in the world, the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir.

[12 : 01] See, church, this isn't about Jim Cimbala and his leadership. Although he loves the Lord with all his heart and there's no question God has used his obedience. This is all about a church who got on their knees in prayer, seeking to be God's hand and his hands and feet.

And I believe with all my heart that the Lord wants to use us. He wants his light to shine in this community right here in Greensburg just as much as he does in Brooklyn.

But we gotta be like David. We have to be a people of prayer. People who are desperate for God and know that without him, we're sunk. Without him, our churches fall apart. Look at so many churches today that are going away from the word of God, making their own rules and see how their churches are falling to pieces.

And I love how 2 Chronicles 7, 14 puts this. God says, If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land.

See, that's a promise. He says, I want to do things so amazing in your life that people will look at you and shake their hands at all and say, I knew that person when? I knew that church when?

[13 : 19] But now look at what God has done. Second, God's people have to pray. We need to pray. That has to be the priority. And then second, and I want you to see why God's people need to pray.

I want you to see God's track record here because through it all, God's plans are perfect. His plans are perfect. You probably thought that I forgot about 2 Samuel 7 starting in verse 18, but here we are.

I want to show you this passage now. Look at this with me. 2 Samuel 7, 18-21. Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and he said, Who am I, Sovereign Lord?

And what is my family that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, Sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant and this decree, Sovereign Lord, is for a mere human.

I mean, David is just humbled. He says, What more can David say to you? For you know your servant, Sovereign Lord. For the sake of your word and according to your will, you have done this great thing and made it known to your servant.

[14:25] See, in only four verses, David uses the word your 12 times, talking to God, referring to his perfect plans. David looks back at his past, his anointing by Saul, perfect shot against Goliath, supernatural patience against Saul, incredible skill in battle against the enemy, overwhelming anointing as king.

And he basically says, God, this is all you. It's not me. I'm not going to get a big head here because I know I'll fall to pieces the second I do. You've given patience.

You've given strength. You've given endurance. You've given skill. You're the one to be praised and honored. You're the one we lift our lives up to. You're the one we sing our praises to with everything we are.

And this is what I love about David's heart that I honestly want to have too. In a time where it would have been so easy for David to start taking credit for some things, he teaches us an incredible lesson.

He shows us that if you and I are willing to lay down our own desires, to give up our own plans at the foot of the cross, if we allow God to have his way in our lives, that's when we're going to see him use our lives in ways we never could have imagined.

[15:39] You know, there's an old sailor who was constantly getting lost at sea. So his friends gave him a compass and they told him, hey, this will always lead you in the right direction.

So the next time he went out, he took it with him. And once again, he got lost and had to be rescued. And when they found him, I mean, as you would guess, they were frustrated. I mean, they're just ticked off. And they said, hey, why didn't you use the compass that we gave you? And that's when the old man said, listen, I tried, but it just kept pointing southeast. You know, sometimes, some of you are going to get that in a minute. Sometimes I do the same thing with God. Maybe you do too. And I'm so thankful that he's a God who's gracious. Here he is more than willing to show us the right direction, to point us north. Now some of you get it. Instead, our rebellious hearts can too often say, God, well, I think the right direction's over here.

Or I think this is a better plan. God, I know you would rather me not live with my girlfriend before marriage, but God, it's 2024, man. Get with the times. What could it hurt? I mean, you're just an eternal God.

[16:43] How would you know what's right for 2024, right? Sarcasm. God, I know you're calling me to step out in faith and tithe, but do you see these shoes, this house? If I could have that car, then I'll be somebody.

I couldn't have all this if I actually tithed to you. Do you see the things are tight right now because of all that I'm buying? God, I know you don't want me living this lifestyle that I'm living on the weekends, but I have to have some way to numb the pain of this world.

And all the while, God is saying to us, my child, I love you. I've got you under control. I have plans for your life that are better than anything you could dream, but you have to make the choice to let me be God.

You have to make the choice to step out in faith and trust that my plans are greater than yours. See, the first thing David proclaims in his prayer is that, God, your plans are perfect.

But the question for us is, will we surrender or will we go on playing games with God? And Lord, we ask that you give us the strength to wave that white flag completely, to take up our cross, and to follow you.

[17:50] Next, I want you to see that through it all, God's power is unmatched. So turn back to 2 Samuel 7 with me. Starting in verse 22, and here's what David says.

He says, How great you are, sovereign Lord! There's no one like you. There's no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself and to make a name for himself and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their little g-gods from before your people whom you redeemed from Egypt.

You, God, have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you, Lord, have become their God. So David's saying, not only are your plans perfect, but you have the firepower to get it done.

Nothing compares to you, God. You are awesome in power. And here are these other nations around us with their false, phony, little g-gods using their religion as an excuse to do terrible and perverted things.

By the way, it still happens today. Gods might look a little different, maybe a little more materialistic, but it still happens today. But David is saying, here they are. Here they are, but Lord, you're the only one who shows up on game day.

[19 : 09] You're the only one proving yourself over and over. All these other gods leave their people empty. But you're the only one who backs it up. And even fast-forwarding past David's days about a thousand years to the day when God in the flesh came to this earth.

In power, Jesus overcame the sting of death and sin and Satan. And the best part is he died on the cross to take our place. He innocently died a criminal's death to take our place and offer us the gift of eternal life in him.

And I want to read you Revelation chapter 5 and just remind you of a few verses here, starting in verse 1, that describe God's awesome power. So here's what John says as he sees this amazing revelation.

And I'm going to read this one from the New Living Translation. He says, Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. There was writing on the inside and on the outside of the scroll and it was sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel who shouted with a loud voice, Who is worthy to break the seals on this scroll and open it? But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read it.

[20 : 23] Then I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and read it. But listen to this. But one of the 24 elders said to me, Stop weeping. Look, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne has won the victory.

He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals. And one thing we learn when studying the book of Revelation is that the number seven often signifies that something is perfect or complete.

And listen, none of us are complete in our own strength. But it's only because of Jesus Christ that he went to the cross, that he rose from the dead to conquer the grave, that we are complete.

Not in ourselves, but in him. C.J. McIntosh put it like this. He said, There is power in the presence of a risen Savior to solve our difficulties, remove our perplexities, calm our fears, ease our burdens, dry our tears, meet our every need, tranquilize our minds, and satisfy every craving of our hearts. So through it all, church, God's power is unmatched. But the real question for the church is this, do we really believe this? And do we walk with him in a way that shows it?

[21 : 36] And then last, I want you to see that through it all, God's promises are guaranteed. So let's finish off our passage here, starting in 2 Samuel 7, verse 25.

And here's what it says. And now, Lord God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised so that your name will be great forever.

Then the people will say, The Lord Almighty is God over Israel, and the house of your servant David will be established in your sight. Now look at verse 28 with me. Sovereign Lord, you are God, your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant.

Now, moving over to the New Testament, I love how 2 Corinthians 1.20 echoes this very same idea when the Apostle Paul through the Holy Spirit says, For no matter how many promises God has made, they are yes in Christ.

And so through him, the amen is spoken by us to the glory of God. So there's no question we live in a world where you can't believe everything you hear. We live in a get-rich-quick society where there's always some new pyramid scheme.

[22 : 46] We live in a place where people will let you down, where politics are dirty, and I'll be honest with you, if you're around me enough, I may let you down too. I hope not.

It's never going to be my heart, but I'm as human as you are. But the amazing thing about our God is that he's not like us. His thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are not our ways.

And when he makes a promise, you can take it to the bank because he is faithful. So listen to me, church. Through it all, through everything life will ever throw your way, the ups, the downs, the in-betweens, we're going to be just fine as we pray to a God whose plans, whose power, and whose promises will never fail.

Amen? All right. Pray with me. Heavenly Father, we just thank you for your word this morning and just how you've spoken to us.

We just give you permission to have your way in us, through us. We ask that if there's anything in our lives that doesn't honor you, that goes against your word, sin that just holds us back from truly walking in your power and your grace, that you will deal with that.

[24 : 02] We give you permission to have your way and to help us follow you more faithfully. So, Father, thank you for David's prayer. Thank you for just his call for us to pray and to see that your plans and your power is perfect, that your promises never fail.

And we just pray that we will not just know this in our mind, but in our hearts we will follow you with everything we are and it will come out in how we live and how we love the world around us.

So, Father, thank you for your words of hope and your words of life that you have spoken over us today. Thank you for Jesus and what he did on the cross to set us free.

Thank you for his resurrection that offers us life on this earth and life eternal. Jesus, you are so good and holy and righteous and we just give you praise.

We pray all of this in the name above all names, the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Well, I want to give you just this quick invitation today.

[25 : 13] If you're listening to this and maybe you want to have a conversation about giving your life to Jesus, what does that look like? What does the Bible teach on that? Maybe you just have some faith questions.

Listen, we here at First Christian Church, once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor. We would love to come alongside you. We would love to be that support system. We would love to open up the Word of God with you because it doesn't matter what we think.

What matters is what the Word of God teaches. And so, if you'll reach out to us, you can do that in a couple different ways. You can call the church office. It's 812-663-8488.

Once again, 812-663-8488. Or, you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com. Have a great week and hopefully you'll be back with us next week.

God bless.