

Power On

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

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. And we just pray that as we get into the Word, most of all the Word of God will get into us and transform these hearts more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, there was a missionary who came home on what they call a furlough. This is where a missionary comes home to share with supporting churches all about the work the Lord is doing in their ministry.

And as he was preaching in his home church in the state just north of us, he was telling a story of how he would make a bicycle trip through the jungle about every two weeks to a nearby city to get supplies.

It was about a two-day journey each way where he would head through the jungle and he had to camp overnight. Well, on a certain trip, he arrived in the city where he got some money out of the bank and then he purchased some much-needed medicines and supplies for his village.

[1 : 11] Then, before he got out of the city, he witnessed two men that were fighting and one was hurt pretty badly, bleeding really bad. So, being a doctor, he kind of doctored him up a little bit, got the bleeding to stop, put bandages on him, even shared with him the good news about Jesus.

And the man just kind of stared at him straight-faced. And then he said bye, he left the city, camped overnight in the jungle, and arrived back at his village safely. Well, two weeks later, he made that same trip again.

But this time was met in the city by that same man he had doctored up, but the man told him that they knew he carried money and medicine and supplies. And then the guy actually said, he said, On your last trip, a few of us followed you into the jungle.

We stayed far enough back where you had no idea we were behind you, but we knew you had to camp overnight. So, our plan was to let you get fast asleep, wait to the middle of the night, and then sneak up, kill you, take your money, and take your supplies.

But just as we were about to move into the campsite, we knew you were probably asleep. Just as we got close, we were shocked to see 26 armed guards surrounding you.

[2 : 28] The missionary couldn't help but just laugh, thinking the guy was playing a joke on him because he knew he was all alone. But the young man didn't laugh back. He said, Sir, I'm not the only one who saw the guards.

My friends saw them too, and we even counted them. We were shocked. We saw you enter the jungle by yourself, and we didn't know how you now had these guards around you. We were so shocked, we counted them.

There were 26, and we were no match, and we didn't want to die either. And so, we quickly slipped away and traveled back to the city. And it was at this point in the message, as this guy's preaching, a man just stands up.

And he says, Pastor, I'm really sorry to interrupt. I don't mean to be rude, but can you tell me the exact date that happened? Well, the missionary thought for a moment because it wasn't that awful long ago.

And he kind of figured out a date in his mind, and he threw it out. And the guy, tears just start to stream down his face. And he said, listen, on the night of your incident in Africa, it would have been early morning here.

[3 : 33] I got up really early. I was playing golf. I was on the green, getting ready to putt, when I felt a strong urge to pray for you. So I said a prayer. But as I got in my golf cart and went to the next hole, I just could not get you off of my heart.

You were so strongly placed on my heart that I drove to the clubhouse, got in my truck, called my men's prayer meeting, and we met in the sanctuary right here to pray for you.

And we prayed our hearts out for whatever you were going through for probably an hour. And then we felt peace, and we stopped. And then he asked the men, he said, if you were one of those men who prayed, will you stand up?

And as they did, the missionary wasn't so interested in exactly who it was. He was too busy counting the men, exactly 26 armed guards.

Church, there is power in prayer. So welcome back to the ninth and last week of our series on spiritual warfare. Like it or not, the Christian life is not a playground.

[4 : 42] It is a battleground. There is a war raging for your heart and mine. Satan is real. The battle, vicious. And we must put on the full armor of God if we're going to take our stand against the enemy who wants to rob us of our identity and our position in Christ.

Today, as we close out this series, we're going to talk about a topic that the church desperately needs to hear about, understand better, and mostly needs to put into practice.

Now, if you want to turn in your Bibles with me, go ahead and go to Ephesians, probably 90% of the way through your Bible, the book of Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 18.

And the first thing you'll notice is there's no more armor to talk about. However, this may be the most important part of the series because prayer is that spiritual power button that activates the armor.

Let me put it this way. Everything we've talked about in this series is dependent upon consistent, sincere, and faith-filled prayer that always lines up with the Word of God.

[5 : 51] Ephesians 6, verse 18 puts it this way. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Father, we just thank you for the privilege to be able to talk about prayer. And we ask that you will open our eyes to understand prayer more deeply and to be committed to it.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, so before we jump into some teaching points today, the first question has to be this. What is prayer?

Now, I put out a post on Facebook this week asking the question, Who's the most famous person you've ever met? And I got some pretty good responses, although I can't share all of them.

Some famous actors that my friends and family have met include William Shatner, Gene Hackman, Mario Lopez, Will Smith, and the guy who played Luke Duke from the Dukes of Hazzard.

[6 : 57] And then there were some famous sports stars like Bob Knight, Larry Bird, Marshall Falk, Chuck Person, all Indiana legends. The horse trainer Bob Baffert, Pete Rose, Dickie V, Joe DiMaggio, and don't forget about the Colts mascot, Blue.

A few people even mentioned politicians like Mike Pence, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Chelsea Clinton, Mitch Daniels, Ronald Reagan. Then there's the famous musicians like Sandy Patty, Trace Adkins, Madonna, Brad Paisley, Lori Morgan, Miles Davis.

And we'll end this list with complete opposites in Jerry Springer and Billy Graham. Now that's a pretty good list of the celebrity who's who in our world, past and present.

And yet there's someone more famous than any of them that you and I have the privilege and the access to encounter every single day.

Somebody who every single person will bow before someday and confess as Lord. His name is Jesus. He is the Lord of Lords. He is the King of Kings.

[8 : 10] And for those of us who by faith have surrendered our hearts to his Lordship, we have been covered by his blood and invited into his throne room.

In fact, Hebrews chapter 4 verse 16 says this, Listen, you have been invited before your heavenly father because of the blood of Jesus and through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is simply that line of communication between us and the God of the universe. The one who created everything out of nothing in six days. The one who handcrafted you in your mother's womb for a purpose.

The one who sustains this world and puts breath in our lungs. And the one who will come again to take his children with him to eternal glory. And he wants nothing more than to seek and save the lost and have that intimate relationship with his children.

Prayer brings us into his presence. In 1 Thessalonians 5, starting in verse 16, it says, Rejoice always.

[9 : 31] Pray, listen to this, continually. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. And then if we look at Philippians 4, 6, and 7, the Apostle Paul says, Do not be anxious about anything.

Now, I don't know about you, but I'm kind of an anxious person. I'm a nervous personality. And I can get anxious really quickly. But he says, do not be anxious about anything.

So what else do I do instead? But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. Now listen to this.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. He wants you to walk in joy, live in his presence, and have the eyes to see his blessings in your life as you abide in the peace of God.

But we have to be a people of prayer who kneel before our God in praise and worship, who humble ourselves in repentance when that's needed, and who continually thank him for his blessings and provisions, and who also cry out to him in prayer for others and ourselves when life just doesn't make sense.

[10 : 48] See, there's been so many false teachings on prayer. And contrary to how some were raised, we go to God's word. Prayer is not meant to be an old English exhibition of your silver-tongued elegance.

It's not meant to be just a public display of reputation to impress the masses. It's not just a church tradition or even a token acknowledgement of God before a meal.

Prayer is that humble, sincere, faith-filled, persistent line of communication with the Lord God, where you and I are reverently and boldly coming before his throne, acknowledging that he is God and I am not, while also realizing that my relationship with him is personal and intimate, as Jesus calls me friend.

Heavenly Father, we just thank you for the privilege that you give us to come before your throne. Help us to do that with confidence, not arrogance, but with confidence, knowing that we are children of God.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So I want to show you a few things from this Ephesians 6.18 passage today that if you want to go ahead and go to the YouVersion, Y-O-U version Bible app, absolutely free.

[12 : 12] If you click on that, go down to the bottom menu, go to events, go to First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. You can see our outline that way.

Even put notes in the little section there. But here's the first thing I want you to see. Prayer is how we put on the armor. Prayer is how we put on the armor.

How many of you have ever had an electronic device that talks to you and says something like, Power on. See, we have a Bluetooth speaker that does this, where it says, Power on, ready to pair. Power on, Bluetooth connected. Well, the same thing is true with the armor. In one sense, prayer is that power button to put on the armor. See, if we look back at Ephesians 6.18, this phrase that says to pray on all occasions literally reads in the Greek, By means of praying.

In other words, when we put on the armor, we put on the armor when we pray. When we invite God into our daily life and ask Him to be our protection, to be our victory, it's not this ritualistic thing where I literally have to mention every piece of armor by name as I put it on.

[13 : 28] Although, if you want to do that, there's nothing wrong with that. But it's so much more than that. It's all about the heart that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. That heart that wants nothing else but to walk in the power and the purpose of my God.

See, as our previous lead pastor, Danny, used to say, when you roll out of bed and your feet hit the floor in the morning, you can respond in one of two ways. You can say, Good God, it's morning. Or, you can say, Good God, it's morning. And today, Lord, I invite you to go before me, to equip me with the spiritual armor I need to have victory, to stand in my position as a child of God, covered by the blood, walking in the joy of my salvation.

Now, it may take some coffee to get some of you there, but hey, it can still happen, okay? But this is the grateful heart that we approach each day with as children of God.

We even see this theology saying in the old hymn by George Duffield that says in verse 3, Stand up, stand up for Jesus. Okay, I'm not going to sing. For Jesus.

[14 : 39] Stand in His strength alone. The arm of flesh will fail you. Ye dare not trust your own. Now, watch this. Put on the gospel armor. Each piece put on with prayer.

Where duty, cause, or danger, be never wanting there. Church, as much as I believe in discipline, as much as we need to be driven individuals who get ourselves up in the morning with a fire in our belly to make a difference in this world, I also realize that I can't do this in my own strength, in my own wisdom.

I need the truth of God's word. I need to be immersed in prayer that always lines up with the word of God. I absolutely need to kneel before my Savior with a heart of worship and faith.

I need that lifeline of communication where I am pouring my heart out to Him and He's pouring His grace and wisdom and power into my life through the Holy Spirit.

See, prayer is how we put the armor on. And in the words of Warren Weersbe, we put on the armor by faith and exercise this faith by means of prayer.

[15 : 49] Here's the second thing I want you to see. Prayer is the power that makes the armor work. We put it on by prayer, but it's also what makes the armor work.

I can't help but picture in my mind two soldiers with their armor on. One is fierce in battle, using every piece of his armor, including his sword, as he marches through the enemy as a great warrior, kind of like Maximus from the Gladiator movie, right?

And the other one is just kind of paralyzed in fear, has no idea how to use his armor, and therefore, he gets struck down pretty quickly. Now turn back here to a passage we looked at earlier in this series, Ephesians 6, verse 11.

That's where we'll start. And I want you to count for me, just in your mind, how many times I say the word stand as I read these four verses, okay?

So count how many times I say the word stand. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[17 : 03] Therefore, put on the full armor of God so when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground. And after you've done everything to stand, stand firm then.

So four times in this passage, we see stand. It's talking about standing your ground against the enemy. But don't forget, as Christians, we don't fight for our victory.

We fight from a place of victory. And that makes all the difference. See, Jesus already went to the cross. He already took the sins of the world upon his shoulders.

He took the punishment that your sins and mine deserve. And then three days later, when Satan thought he had won, the grave could hold him no longer.

And he came busting out of that grave, conquering death, and offering life on this earth, and life eternal to all who would pick up their cross and follow him.

[18 : 01] So if you are in Christ, you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You are destined for glory. The war has been won. And when we're told to stand firm, it's not for the purpose to win the ultimate victory of salvation in Christ.

That's already been decided. You can know that you know that you know that you'll be with Jesus for eternity because you're sealed with the Holy Spirit. But listen, our stand that we're called to take in this world is to keep Satan from robbing us of our position in Christ that we can walk in right now, of walking in the fruits of the Spirit.

See, if you study Ephesians chapters 1 through 3, this whole series we've been in is Ephesians chapter 6. So as Paul writes chapter 6, he's got chapters 1 through 3 already in his mind because he's already said it.

So you discover in these first three chapters some incredible truths about who we are when we're in Christ. Here's what God's Word says. And I'm not going to give you a chapter and verse, but I'm going to start from chapter 1, verse 1 and just work through all these things that we are told that we are in Christ.

First, I'm a saint. I have every spiritual blessing in Christ. I've been adopted by my Heavenly Father. I'm a recipient of grace. I'm redeemed and forgiven.

[19 : 23] I have a wonderful inheritance of spiritual riches. I am filled and sealed by the Holy Spirit as a child of God. I have access to spiritual wisdom.

I have been raised to new life in Christ. I have been saved by grace through faith. I am God's workmanship. I am a masterpiece and a brand new creation. I have been brought near, reconciled, I have access to, and I am a part of the family of God.

I'm an heir, a member of the body of Christ, and a partaker of the promises of God. I'm a mirror that displays the glory of God with His supernatural power at work in me.

See, this is what Paul is telling us to stand firm in. Because if you've been around the church for very long, you know not everyone walks in the power, the purpose, and the peace that we have been offered as children of God.

And I get it. We're a work in progress. It's one day at a time. It's a marathon, not a sprint. And yet we have to stop making excuses for why we walk in a maze of mediocrity.

[20 : 26] We have to stop making our faith into just a religious rule-keeping convention. We have to stop looking like the second coming of the Pharisees and fall on our knees in repentance, sincerity, and enter into that intimate relationship with our Abba Father where we are being transformed.

Know who you are because of whose you are. And walk in a manner worthy of a child of God. See, in the book of Joshua, we don't always see a perfect example.

But you know what? We see a generation whose parents and grandparents really dropped the ball. And they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. It was just an ugly thing because of their disobedience, because of their grumbling.

And we see them, this new generation, rise up in obedience and faith, standing their ground as the rightful heirs to the promised land. On the other end, generations later in the book of Judges, we see God's chosen people bow down to idols, walking away from their inheritance.

And we see God removing His blessing as the enemy overpowers them. Church, authentic prayer is entering into that intimate relationship with God where my heart is being molded daily into His image.

[21 : 45] And prayer is what activates that armor to be used for the glory of God so I can stand firm as a soldier of Christ living in the joy of my salvation.

Father, we thank You that we can approach You and we pray for an authentic prayer walk with You. And as prayer activates that armor, can we just walk in the victory that You give us in Christ.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me show you one more thing today. Prayer brings victory for the army. Earlier, I bragged on Joshua and those who God used to take control of the promised land.

But let me share with you a couple mistakes that they made and definitely learned from. After the amazing victory at Jericho where the walls came tumbling down, God delivered the city over to them.

Next came the battle against the city of Ai, which looked like an easy victory. Joshua was so confident, probably more arrogant, after Jericho that it turned into arrogance.

[22 : 49] His confidence turned into arrogance. And he didn't seek the Lord in prayer for his next battle. And in Joshua 7, we see that God's army was soundly defeated because they didn't seek the Lord's face.

Even in Joshua 9, we see that they're told to conquer the whole land. And a group of Gibeonites who lived in the land are seeing what they're doing to all the enemies. So they come claiming to be someone else and they trick Joshua into a false covenant because he didn't take it before the Lord. He didn't pray about it. And this would come back to bite them as well. See, there's no question that prayer is an intimate time between us and our Heavenly Father. But we also understand that prayer isn't just about us.

It's about lifting up the army of God. It's about bringing others before God's throne. If we look back at Ephesians 6, verse 18, the second part of that verse says, with this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China who lived from 1832 to 1905, he once said, the prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity.

[24 : 01] If we want to see mighty wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure, and disappointment, let us answer God's standing challenge. Call unto me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.

Last weekend, I had the privilege to serve at an Emmaus walk for men. And while I can't share too many details and spoil the experience for some of you in the future, as you can imagine, at a spiritual retreat, there's going to be prayer, right?

And even though I was a small part of the team leading the event, I saw God do some amazing things through sincere and humble prayer. And the Lord simply confirms something that He's been leading me to put in place here at the church for a while now.

And that's having men and women in place during our invitation time, right after the sermon, when we're singing the song, during that invitation time, to pray over anyone who needs prayer.

Now, we've always had the prayer room and we got somebody back there after the service, but we want to have people pray over you if you need it during the service, if you feel comfortable.

Because listen, there's power when God's people come together and pray for one another just like that missionary in Africa.

[25 : 17] And we hope to get that in place here really soon. Because listen, chains are broken, wisdom is spoken, bodies are healed, lives are changed, and hope is restored.

FCC, I love what the Lord is doing here. I stand amazed at the lives being surrendered to Christ through baptism. I'm in awe of the growth and spiritual maturity that is happening in this church body.

I am humbled by the amount of Christians placing their membership in this body. I'm blown away by the number of babies being born and children running around this place on Sunday and Wednesday.

It's loud and we're happy about that. I am overwhelmed by the pure growth that we've experienced over the last four years, but I can tell you, like Joshua, we're not perfect in this area.

But we've done a lot of praying. And as we start to look toward the future strategically in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can never waver from letting prayer to a mighty God lead us every single step.

[26 : 20] So church, here's our challenge. Power on your prayer time. Power on your prayer time before an awesome God and activate that spiritual armor as we stand firm in the victory that we have in Christ.

I hope that you've enjoyed this nine-week series on spiritual warfare. And I'm excited as we get on our knees in prayer, as we get into the Word of God, and as we put on this armor that we can stand our ground and walk in victory.

Amen? All right. Pray with me. Heavenly Father, we just thank you for just how good and gracious you are. We adore you.

We worship you. We give you the praise that you deserve. And Father, I just pray as we wrestle with this topic of prayer, I know that I too can struggle sometimes and feel like I'm too busy to pray. But just like the book by Hybels says, too busy not to pray. So Father, I just come before you and just ask that you will give us a hunger and a passion to know you deeper, to pray and seek your face, not always just on our knees, but all day, every day, unceasing in prayer.

[27 : 42] And Father, I pray that we can put on this armor, know who we are in Christ, and walk in your victory. Thank you for how you've spoken to us over the last couple of months.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to give you this quick invitation. If you've been listening to this and maybe you've got some faith questions, maybe you want to talk about giving your life to the Lord, maybe there's something else about the church that you want to ask about, here's some ways you can reach out to us.

You can call us at 812-663-8488, 812-663-8488, or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com. Hey, God bless you, and thank you for listening today.