**July20200719\_PrayingInTheSpirit**

When everybody thank you for the worship team. We're going to be looking at Ephesians chapter six. Again, this morning, as we consider again, the invisible war, invite you to turn there in your Bibles. Uh, we can looking at, we're going to read through the passage one more time, efficient, six. We're going to look at verse 10 down through verse 18.

We reading that in just a moment. Did want to circle back to something that Mike said early in the service we talked about, he talked about a young adult worship night that is coming hang up. Um, he actually taped that a little earlier in the week and we found we had move the dates. So it is actually going to be.

July 29th will be the worship night. That is a Wednesday night for the, a young adult worship time. Young adults mean anybody post high school. If you have any questions about it. Uh, Joe and Natalia Parker, Dennis and Kate Mark and Tracy, Janice will all be a part of that. All young adults are invited love to have you come.

There'd be a worship team leading. A worship night and a gathering together out under the, the tent. Uh, also be a special guests there. Mister Softee will be showing up providing free, uh, offerings to those that come, uh, really hope you guys can come out to this special night of worship. Ephesians chapter six verses 10, three 18.

And it's really verse 18. We're going to look at this morning, but I want to read the whole passage just to again, get the sense of how this all fits together. Finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power 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, therefore put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.

And after you have done everything to stand, stand firm, then with the belt of truth, buckled around your waist with the breastplate of righteousness in place. And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, take the helmet of salvation and the sort of the spirit, which is the word of God 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 saints. Let's pray,

Lord, we gathered this morning throughout this, our South Jersey community, some far farther afield than that, that are watching online. And Lord, we come recognizing all of us that belong to Jesus Christ. That we are in a invisible conflict that you are seeking to provide for us the capacity to stand, to live lives to your glory, even in the midst of our great weakness and frailty in the face of such onslaught and God, as we think this morning of the place of prayer in this, I pray that you would teach us.

That you would grow us as your people full with thoughts of, of how we are too. Stand through this. Means of plugging into your power source through prayer in jesus' name. Amen. Number of years ago, my community group, we, we seem to have a year, one year where everybody was moving. So we were doing a lot of moving of groups and fi members of our group.

And one of the group members came up with this idea. We decided to get a actually was the person who was moving, got a, got a truck. That had not just a ramp, but actually had a lift to it. And the lift. And so we were having a great time. Actually, I was put in charge of the lift probably cause I was the weakest member of the group for the lifting.

And so my job was to do the lift and I'd press the button and we'd we'd load stuff on. And then, and then it would come down and because there was no ramp to carry it off, we'd actually load it down and lighter stuff. We'd just hand off, but everything went great. And we just finished the last piece that had been unloaded from the truck and I was feeling great.

And. Came down people came, we took it and took it inside. And I came back out to press the button to get this, this, the shelf. Now the lift, the sh that thing sat on was now sitting on the, on the road and the ground. And I pressed the button. It was just nothing. It was just completely dead. So we get the more mechanical people of our group together.

And everybody's trying to figure out what's wrong because you obviously can't drive along with, with this, this lift shelf sitting on the ground. So we tried everything and they're trying to trace it through to the engine to all kinds of different things. And they started the engine I'm, you know what, maybe the battery just wore down or something, but nobody could figure anything out.

We finally had to call the owner of the truck. He came over processed at any, any actually concluded that what had happened was there was a cable that had just come loose that was tied into the battery and it was enough loose. That it had lost connection with the truck battery. And so we were able to get it repaired and get this thing going forward.

It was a visual that you have to kit keep connected to the power source. Sometimes that is exactly what Paul is saying to us here in these final comments about spiritual warfare, he's been giving us all these lists of wonderful. Pieces of the armor that we are called to employ as a means of standing our ground and resisting the attacks that come to us.

But in this, he is saying that in order to employ these pieces of the armor against the attacks that are coming, there is a special tool that is involved. We've seen some of the schemes of the enemy and the word schemes is in the Greek. It literally is the word we get methods from. This is the methodology of the enemy.

And here are some of the things we've seen. We've seen that he uses lies and deceit, and we are given the belt of truth. The truth is our initial primary weapon against the he who Jesus described as. He is a liar and he's a, he's a murderer. And he's a liar from the beginning. Jesus says in John chapter eight, he brings accusations and shame and condemnation.

We are given the breastplate of jesus' own righteousness, which is our standing. Our identity is found in Christ. We attacked with worry and anxiety. And we are given the sandals of the gospel of peace. We are attacked act with fear and terror, the fiery arrows that come, not individual arrows, but arrows as, as an, as a, as an onslaught that come to just strike terror.

And we are given the shield of faith. He attacks us with despair and hopelessness. As we saw last time in our study, where he gives us the helmet of hope of salvation. And then last week, Don talks about that the, the primary vehicle to help us with temptation and other attacks that come the sword of the spirit.

And now we come to verse 18 and it's, it's not just a throw in. The way it's worded in the original gives it profound significance. The NIV new international version says it this way. And in verse 18 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.

Now I would suggest. The, in this particular passage, the English standard version and other versions do a little better translation of this. Whereas the NIV says and pray in the spirit. It sounds like it's a verb and a command, but it's not a verb. It's actually, if you English majors will get this. It's actually a participle.

It is carrying the idea of it is a, the word pray here is actually a word that is modifying something else. In other words, he's been saying the verb has been saying in verses 10 through eight, 17 is Stan, Stan, Stan, and Stan, putting on your helmet, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, employing the shield of faith.

And then he says this, literally, he says, bye. Or while praying. In other words, praying is vital to the employment of these articles of the armor. He says you employ these things by praying, praying in the spirit, praying on all occasions in a context is the occasions are occasions of attack. So what is he talking about here?

Well, I think there are three things that are involved in the type of praying that he is talking about here and gives us three aspects of this prayer. And he says, put your armor on, first of all, by prayer that is founded on your frailty. He says it this way in the beginning of verse 18 and pray in the spirit on all occasions, his emphasis.

On the priority of prayer in the spiritual battle is by the continual use in verse 18 of all. And always, he keeps saying this in this case, in the first phrase, he says on all occasions, in all occasions of spiritual attack, he says, you need to be in a spirit of prayer. And there are two reasons for that.

I think number one, he's told us about this in these verses pre-suit we face big enemies. Verse 12 described this way against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. And he's saying we face unseen foes.

Now you may be out there and say, I can't believe there is still people in this modern day that are, that are thinking there is a literal devil and, and liberal demonic forces. Well, I would suggest to you. That the sense of evil in the world is not explainable without a generating power of evil beyond just our humanness, that there is the reality that there is a spiritual conflict going on.

What we've called in the series, the invisible war. We sense that we ourselves. When we think about who we're dealing with here, angels of God that have fallen are now attacking the church of God, people in general, but it was specificity people that identify with the name of Jesus. We, since we're in, in, over our heads, in this battle, we pray because we are not adequate in ourselves.

And he says, You must have the perspective that the reason we pray in seasons of spiritual conflict is because you face big enemies. You are not adequate in yourselves. Secondly, we pray with prayer founded on our frailty because. It's the spirit alone that employee's God's armor. He says, pray in the spirit, in all these occasions.

It's the spirit that enables us the spirit that is the source of power for us, and that we need to be tapping into God's power. There's a disease called Maya's tinea gravis. I remember reading about this years ago, I've since met a few people that have had this and basically Maya's tinea gravis. And I say simply simply because that's the best I can do with a medical explanation of anything.

But Maya's tinea. Gravis is apparently nerves. I could, if I had my Estonia gravis, I say, I want my hand to close. But if Maya's tinea gravis has impacted me, especially in that particular portion of my body, the signal from the brain does not reach. There is a breakdown in the nerve ending and the nerve message does not get through.

Of course, the danger of that is ultimately if there isn't some resolution, those muscles will atrophy because they are not worked. They're not getting the signals. They're not connected. To the power source of the brain and the, so they are not operative. We must have connection in our spiritual lives with God.

God is all over Ephesians. And he says, you need to be praying. You need to be tapping into the power source. It isn't just you assisting Satan. So I'll put my helmet honor. It I'll wheel my Sheila. No, he says it is, it is crying out to God as we'll see in a moment, what that means it is tapping into God's spirit, who is the one that enables us to do that.

The challenge in our spiritual lives. Is that Satan tries to distract us from this vertical connection. All right, I'll take it from here. I'll resist. I'll speak in the name of God. And, but he says, no, the ultimate way is you, you pray dependently. You recognize your need. Joel back big B E K E. Okay. In his book overcoming the world, grace to win the daily battle, says it this way.

The goal of worldly people is to move forward rather than upward to live horizontally rather than vertically. They burst with self-oriented desires rather than heartfelt supplications. If they do not deny God. They ignore and forget God or else they use him only for their selfish ends. And here's the statement.

He said, worldliness is simply human nature without God. Well, Christians can be that we can act in, uh, in, in, in a behavior that is. Like the world to, to echo. I've got it for here. We, we act as if we don't need God, but this passage is reminding us that, that the foundation of our power source of living with our armor, it is, it is employed through prayer.

It is all about God through his Spirit's power in our lives.

Over the last four years I have spent, this is a ballpark, but I think I could defend it in my own life. And it started four years ago when I first did a S a couple of messages on the fear of God. It just led me to my own study. And I've probably spent between three and 400 hours. Just studying this and every now and then some of my, what I've been studying will come out in a sermon, but I've, it's basically a study of all the scriptures on fear.

Um, I, I put a title to it. Um, basically my, my title would be, of course you're scared. You're God's too small. And the subtitle is replacing fear with awe. That we replace fear of other things by fear of God and in the sense of being awed by God's greatness. And as I've studied this and done a lot of my own journey in this I've come to the conclusion that there are seven specific things in the scripture, in all these passages where God talks about being awed by him and how it overcomes our fear.

That there are seven things about God that he says, these are things I want to stun you. These are the things that if, if you are living in light of these realities, you will overcome fear with all. Here are the seven things. They all start with us. We are awed by the fact that God is stronger than anything that might harm you, that he is sweeter than anything you might lose.

That he is smarter than anyone that works against you, that he is sovereign over any situation you are in, that he is surrounding you from any attack against you, that he is standing wherever you are. And that he is sufficient. For any insufficiencies feel. And I would, I would be willing to, to argue that you won't find a passage that talks about fearing God and how it can benefit you, that doesn't fall in one of those seven things.

Why am I mentioning that? Because God is going to lead us to himself when whatever he calls us to do whatever he calls us to stand against. Whatever attack is coming towards us. God always takes us to himself. And he says, draw near to me. Talk to me, cry out to me. Trust in me and spiritual warfare is no different.

It's not okay. I got it. You know, I just, I gotta put my helmet on. I gotta put, you know, I gotta do this. I gotta get my feet with the right sandals. No. The focus of spiritual armor is God. It's filling our lives with the reality of what he's promising to be these, these seven things he's stronger than anything that might hurt you.

He's sweeter than anything you can lose. When, when we really are living in light of that, what you'll find in the, in the face of spiritual conflict is you'll be talking to God about those realities that you'll be speaking to him. Lord. You're bigger than this. You're bigger than, than the, than the enemy that's coming.

You're smarter than what I'm being confronted with. You're surrounding me with your shield around me. We talk to God with the very truth that he shares with us. We claim those realities. We talk to God about God. We talked to God about his promises. And he says, if you really want to employ the armor, you do it by praying on all occasions.

We'll try to get more specific as we go. God is not looking for strong people. He's looking for dependent people. He's looking for people that cry out to him naturally and spontaneously in their struggles. People who pray on all occasions as he's talking about in this passage and all occasions of, of, of, of times and places where he calls us to stand our ground in the face of the enemies assaults.

But he's talking to people that don't have it in themselves. He's talking to people that are inadequate for that conflict. Who are aware and embrace their own frailty, but are stunned with the greatness and the goodness of their God. The second thing we find about the prayers that are involved here, are they not only flow out or founded on our frailty, they flourish by variety.

He says this and the next phrase in verse 18 of Ephesians six. Pray with all kinds of prayers and request all kinds of prayers. The word used for prayer are here is the general sense of prayer. There are some words for prayer that talk about asking. There are some words that talk about interceding for others.

This word is the most general word. It just means you're talking to God. He says with all kinds of ways of talking with God, prayer than asking. There's communicating, there's doing life with there's relationship and all kinds of communication with God, whether it's Thanksgiving, whether it's just talking about needs, whether it is confessing sins, you've done against him, whether it's just enjoying God and worshiping him, whether it is debating with God over in confusion and struggles.

I mean, all of these are part of communication. He says, Have all this be praying with all these things. This is part of, of embracing God's power. He says, and as you're talking to God in relationship, you find that it isn't just asking years ago. Um, it was a, and this is way back in the original star Trek.

There was a character that was in a couple of different episodes. And I didn't see a lot of star Trek, but I do remember this guy. He was a guy named I mud mud deeds, his last name, I guess. And he had a planet where he was and the enterprise space ship came there with Kirk and the gang. And they arrived on this planet where this guy, I Mudd rule this, this bizarre.

Kingdom. And basically what it was. He had these robot, like women that were gorgeous and, but they had no will of their own. And he had created them basically. They were there to just serve his every need. And he had the best part was he had created one that looked just like his former wife. So he could completely boss her around all the time.

And so I'm on is there, and here is this purportedly, utopian, uh, paradise environment where all these women are there and they just exist to serve him. And the enterprise comes and I Mudd immediately attempts to take over the enterprise with one purpose. He wants to escape his own planet. He, this is horrible because he's got a, a it's like the Stepford wives.

Have you ever heard that story with a women? Just law again, they just serve their man. They lost their mind. There's no relationship in that. He had no relationship. He had bodies. But he didn't have relationship has give and take, right. Relationship involves at times, misunderstanding it involves conflict and involves and having to process stuff.

It involves being emotional with each other. You read the Psalms and you find out that's exactly what it's like with godly people with God. They're doing life. They're talking about stuff that the wrestling was stuff. It, isn't just asking God. And the picture that Paul is presenting to us here in the end, he seems to want to say said, look, prayer is the way you, you activate and employ the armor, but he said, I'm not just talking about a vending machine.

God, where were you? Or, you know, just a robotic God that you just get, that he just exists to serve your, meet your needs. He says, this is relationship. You are relating to God. You're doing life with God. You're enjoying God and he's enjoying you. And he says, this is how to pray. Be praying with all kinds of prayer, asking confessing, debating.

Just hanging with all different things like you would do with a spouse or a beloved friend that you are trying to have relationship with. He says, pray

with God like that. And then he does say also pray with all kinds of requests because there's all kinds of struggles. There's all kinds of attacks that come and they require different things. Right? For instance, we cry out to him when we're tempted, God protect me, free me, deliver me. We seek his comfort and acceptance.

We need him to love on us when we're accused and we're shamed. We need to find a shelter and protection. When the fiery arrows of Satan come upon us, we need to relate with him and talk with him and enjoy him. And when the different onslaughts come, there'll be different aspects of God. That's why one of the stunning things to me as they've gone through the series on fear over these last four years is there's not just one thing.

God just doesn't say, look, here it is. Here's what you need. What you'll be OD with. Just know that I am the surrounding shield around you and everything will be good. Well, that is one of them, but he says, I also remember I'm smarter than anybody that's coming against. You also remember that I'm stronger than anything that's being thrown your way.

So remember when you're scared of what you're going to lose, that I, myself am sweeter than anything you could lose. What is he doing? He's saying. I will be what you need me to be when you're under assault, I will be what you need to hear. I will share myself with you, ask me, cry out. He says, pray with, with whatever you need, but.

But bring your requests to God when you're assaulted. He says, don't just suck it up and think you're going to now be a warrior and you're going to conquer the devil. He said, it's laughable in the Lord. Wouldn't say it that way. I'm saying it that way. It's laughable to think that we're going to conquer the arch enemy, but the power source that we have is available with all types of attacks.

And he says, pray different ways based on what you need. The third thing we find is we come with prayer that flows from constancy. He says, with this in mind, in the latter part of verse 18, with this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. He says you're playing all the time.

Well, how do you pray all the time? I'd suggest there are two things that are involved in that. Number one to be with our spirits. Praying to the Lord, just naturally talking to him in all situations, we must have specific regular times with God in prayer. I'm not asking you to be a, uh, an hour pray prayer person, but I do think we need to carve out time to be with God.

I think the best time is first thing in the day, but. That we get used to. And if you're married, if you're in a serious relationship, you know that you have to be intentional in making time to talk. If you're not sure about that. When you have children, you will find out, you have to make time to talk to each other.

That's how you build relationship. That's how you keep connected. Isn't the only talking you do. But there has to be specific regular time to build relationship. C S Lewis says it this way in his book, mere Christianity. The real problem in the Christian life comes where people do not usually look for it.

It comes the very moment. You wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day. Rush at you like wild animals and the first job every morning consists simply in shoving them all back. And listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in and so on, then it will be all day standing back from your natural fussings and threadings coming in out of the wind.

What he's saying in that context is we will find ourselves being able to sense God's presence and having those that, that awareness of his, his presence with it. But it starts with saying I'm, I'm going to let God into the first part of my day. That's going to be the most intentional part of my day. I am going to have time where I'm with the Lord.

The second thing that are involved in that, that is having this prayer praying, um, always keep on praying is that we have spontaneous conversations with God that the pray at all times is to spontaneously pray. Now. If you're not carving out time for intentional conversation with your spouse. You're not going to typically have natural, healthy conversations other times, because you've got all this stuff that's built up that you haven't processed and work through, and you're going to find your you're distancing.

But if you have been together and there is good communication in your marriage, well, then you're going to find other communication times are much more natural and spontaneous. So it is with God. One of my favorite stories is, is the story actually a missionary told, and it was a story of, he was down in South America.

I don't remember what country it was. And there was a, uh, a young guy. I have always pictured him about 12. I don't know that he actually was, but this kid was there and he was playing soccer and he was a Christian boy. And he was a boy that the missionary just saw. God's the reality God, in his life, he loved the Lord, but he said it was such a beautiful experience.

One day when they're out playing soccer and this guy gets an end, he gets an open shot in front of the goal and the missionary was over to the side playing defense. And so he was right near him and he hurt him. And this kid has a shot and the goalkeeper, and he's got an opening in the corner of the goal and the kid.

Spontaneously says, look, Lord look. And he put it in the corner of the goal. And he said, this kid is just what we all want to be. That the Lord is so real to us that we're doing life so much with him, that we just he's part of the conversation. He's part of the experience. That's what Paul saying. So you pray at all times.

And when assault comes, when you're tempted, When, when you're fearful, when the flaming arrows come, when you're in it, starting to despair, your mind just naturally goes and says, Lord, be my shield around me here. Uh, claim that reality, God, these are the thoughts that I'm hearing. Now I'm hearing on a less than I'm a dirt and, and I feel the shame and accusation, Lord, remind me.

What's true. Affirm again to me, who I am to you, that we spontaneously do those things. If we're naturally taking time to be with God so that when we're tempted to worry or fear or lust, prayer becomes a natural cry for help. Lord, give me strength and not given to worry, help me to trust you right now.

God blot out these horrible visuals to that that are starting to control my mind again. God helped me as I pick up this phone or as I read this letter, when I see that person's name and the address box on my email or their photo on the wall, on my Facebook. And it just, I find my blood pressure going up with fear.

When the fiery darts come, God helped me not to yield, to feel fear and to fail, to do what you want me to do when you're overwhelmed with responsibility and feel fatigued in the battle. God helped me to not carry my cares, but cast him right now. I cast this on you. I cast this appointment, which I'm just reading Lord.

I'm giving it to you that we're naturally giving those things to the Lord. And when we're accused, prayer becomes a cry for perspective. God helped me to remember what's true because I'm your child. God helped me to choose to love and not focus on my own shortcomings. Get my mind off myself. God helped me to not see myself through the lens of self-condemnation and then less than side of the arrow, but to see with your eyes.

It's interesting in the, in the Pilgrim's progress. There's a scene where Chris is, uh, it says he is actually, the mouth of hell is breathing Adam. And here's what he says when Christian perceived the mouth of hell hard by the wayside and the Valley of the shadow of death and saw a flame and smoke and heard hideous noises.

That he was forced to put up his sword and be take himself to the other weapon called all prayer, which is taken from Ephesians six, the word all meaning all, all occasions. So he cried in my hearing, Oh Lord, I beseech you deliver my soul. And he just spontaneously cried out. Lord, help me right now,

we are given armor. As a defense against the attacks of the evil one. It is an armor that is employed through prayer, but I want to talk personally to everybody for a moment. It's interesting in verse 18, it makes this statement. It's the last phrase always keep on praying. For all the Lord's people, there are times, and I'm guessing some of you there right now, when it's hard to pray for yourself, maybe you just beat.

Maybe you're just so discouraged and so overwhelmed with so many things. I think what he's saying is don't only pray for yourself as a means of doing spiritual warfare. Pray for others. We talked about this as pastors, this week in light of this message. We're trying to think of a way that we could make ourselves available to just pray with people.

We know what it's meant for us to have people come alongside and support us to the throne in the midst of our own issues. So what we'd like to do. Is to offer to you. And all eight of our pastors have agreed to do this. That if you would like someone to pray with you, there's a link. If you're in the chat, the host is putting that link up there.

Now I want to say it for you. If you're not looking at the chat part of the broadcast it's fellowship S j.life/prayer. Fellowship, sj.life/prayer. And if you want to go there, just put whatever information it asks. I think it'll be name and a phone number. Probably one of us will covenant to call you by tomorrow evening.

We'll get with you in the next 36 hours. And our intention is just to call and say, Can I pray with you and what can I be praying for you? If you feel the need of that and desire for that, we would, we would be grateful for the chance to come alongside of you and pray. Prayer is the means of employing the power in spiritual conflict.

God has given us all these resources. We know Satan's trying to get in our heads. So he says, put on. The helmet, which is the hope of salvation. He gives us the breast plate. He gives us the shield of faith. He gives us all these things, but he also reminds us that the generating power for that comes by our crying out to God.

And sometimes by crying out for each other, let's pray, Lord.

It's not one thing going on in one person's life on this broadcast. So you don't know,

Lord, the Psalmist said, God, you know our frame, you know that we're dust,

we're not strong. We're not adequate for the conflict father, but you are. You're strong. You're sweet. You're sufficient. You're sovereign. You're surrounding us. You're all these things that we need you to be. You're smarter than anybody in anything else. Lord, we want to lean into you. We want to trust you to see us through the onslaught that many are in right now.

As they listen to this broadcast, God help us to. Be humble enough to make time to be still with you all. Sit with yourself, stun us with your greatness Lord. Be with us in trouble. I pray. Thank you for wanting to be there in Jesus name. Amen. Now, go in peace to love and serve and enjoy the Lord. Thank you.