

First of all, I'll greet the Holy Spirit, and Pastor Steve, and all of you saints in Christ: I greet you and I greet my wife as well, make mention of her, who's been with me come October 20-years, so it's a special anniversary this year for us. So I just give God thanks. And whilst I was getting prepared to come here on this morning, and my wife and I was in prayer, God really spoke specifically to my spirit, and so I'm just going to do what God has asked me to do. And I'm just going to ask Pastor Steve to just stand here please.

What God actually said to me this morning is that as a church, even as young as I've been in this church, I can't recall when we as a body of Christ have actually prayed corporately for Pastor Steve, and I'd like to take this opportunity, and God has put it in my heart for this to be done now, at the beginning before anything else. And I was battling with that, 'cause, like, really, you know, let's get this word out the way and whatever, and then, you know, we could do this afterwards. But no, it's a good thing to be obedient, because delayed obedience is still disobedience. Amen?

So I would like us all, for those who are able bodied who can stand to stand; I'd like two elders from this church to stand next to Pastor Steve, please, either side of him, as like we did with Moses. So could whoever is elders here, could just stand – just two – just to stand either side of Pastor Steve. And I'd like us just to open up our mouths and just to pray for Pastor Steve: he's here as the leader of this church – there a lot that he's doing for this church and in the community, there's things that going on that we don't know that's going on in his private life. There's so much that he has to contend with on the day-to-day business of being the pastor of this church, of this assembly, and it's no, kinda like, it's not an easy job.

And also it's a job of your soul – he's accountable, he's accountable for everybody that's in here, and he has a higher calling and a higher price if anything goes wrong under his stewardship. And this is a serious serious thing. But he's actually stepped into Woodside to be the pastor of everybody who comes in here. So as a church, as a corporate body, as everybody under the sound of my voice, could you please pray for Pastor Steve right now, in the name of Jesus. It's not about my voice: your voices, pray – as you feel led pray; lift up your voices church in prayer...Amen, amen, amen. Thank you. Pastor Steve and Elders you can take your seats.

I don't know why God put that on me so pressingly this morning, but it is a thing that I'd rather be obedience to what the Spirit of the Lord says than to anything else.

Today we're going to be looking at "Prayer as spiritual warfare", and my intention, with the little bit of time I have left, is really to outline as much as possible: what spiritual warfare is, and how to wage a good fight.

You may think what the number 536 is as the bottom of here, of that Powerpoint, means or says, but the actual meaning of that number is that 536 times in the Bible prayer, or praying is actually mentioned. So if that's a kind of like indicator of how much we ought to be actually praying as a people, as Christians seeking God's face, prayer to the Christian should be like oxygen. Prayer should be like the lifeblood of the Christian walk of faith. And the irony of it is that up and down the country, whichever country you go to, more often than not prayer is one of the things that we as a body of Christ fail to come together, as we do on a Sunday, or any day of the week, where we're supposed to be coming to assemble together. And we've got to like really wonder and ponder why is that.

“To pray it to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us.” That's by Richard Foster. And then, underneath it says “Prayer is the soul of faith.” That's John Calvin. And basically what that means is faith soon becomes lifeless without prayer. So we can see how prayer and faith is intrinsically linked together, because if we do not pray then our faith becomes weakened, and when we actually do pray we ought to be praying what the word of God says, because when we actually pray what the word of God says, then God has a duty, or he is duty-bound, to cat upon his word, because that is what his word says.

So it's not about basically you're feeling that moves God; it's about what his word says about your condition or where you are. So, basically, it's the promises that is in the Bible that God adheres to, because he's bound to: he can't do anything outside of his word, and he's bound to that. It says “Heaven and earth shall pass away but my? But my? My word shall not pass away”. So, before we go Ephesians 6, 'cause, like, that is the key scripture, I'd like us to quickly turn to II Corinthians 10 - I'm just going to read a couple of verses there (I haven't got much, honestly - it's just one sheet today). So, let's turn to II Corinthians, and we're looking at chapter 10. (Are we there? If you're there in your bibles, let's say “Amen” so that we know we're there together. Ok, Amen). And so, reading from verse 3 (and I'm reading from the King James):

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”

So the reason I'm starting here is that to bring some foundation before we look at the armour as we're so fully aware of what Ephesians 6 tells us in there. And the thing is that we need to recognise that our warfare, or what we go through, is not with Jack or Jill on the job, or the person who is like causing issues where you are whether it is at school, college or wherever it is; the thing, the Bible says to know no one after the flesh but after the Spirit. So it's not what spirit is at work within these individual, that's like riling you up the wrong way, what is it that is taking place within certain individuals that is causing you to have some tension, to cause you to be going through whatever trials or tribulations you might be going through, the fact of the matter is that the devil knows what buttons to push, or what buttons to press, in order to get you to react, and to get you to do things which is not in align and accordance with what God has called you to be, as being a Christian and following in his footsteps.

We need to understand the devices of the enemy. The last time I was here, we spoke about three things in John which tells us the way in which the enemy works, and that is through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the fresh, and the pride of life - so that's the three main areas in which the enemy look to attack us in. So we need to be understanding that how the enemy works and the devices that he uses: the way, the schemes (the NIV says “Being aware of schemes”). We need to understand that.

That we need to be able, as well, to be reflective of who we are and where we are in Christ, and why certain things affect us the way they do. Because if we are, then we can go in prayer and confess our thoughts, and we can confess our sins - we can confess what we're dealing with - and ask God to, like, bring change in that area, because you will go round the same kind of test time and time over again: the environment might have changed, the environment might be different, but the lesson is the same, the questions are the same, because you haven't passed that test.

We're not fighting a natural war, we're in a warfare whereby it is supernatural. What takes place

in the supernatural, what takes place in the spiritual, is more than takes place in the natural.

These things were all here before. It's like God spoke things into existence, God used man's intellect, God uses people for these things to come into existence in our environment, in our time. But the fact of the matter is that what happens in the spiritual then takes place, at some point, in the natural. Case in point: Daniel. Daniel turned his face to pray and then angel Gabriel sent but was withstood 21 days, and they had to call for the archangel Michael to come, and there was a warfare in the heavenlies. We need to understand that there are things taken place that we cannot see, and that the unseen is more real than the seen. And there are angels warring on your behalf. Amen?

So when we look at the word "stronghold", it means a place that's been fortified so as to protect against attack, or a place where a particular a call to belief is strongly defended. Sometimes we actually have the battle with ourselves: the stronghold often times is actually within us, the stronghold is often times within our minds - why? Because we're not believing the word of God. If we're not believing the word of God, then who are we believing? So if we're not believing what the Bible says concerning us, concerning our destiny, concerning promises, then who are we believing?

Then we believe in the lie of the devil, then we're being convinced that what he says is true about us rather than what the word of God says, and what God has said about your situation. That's why we need to have that Helmet of Salvation: we need to protect our mind. That's why Joyce Meyer's, one of her best-selling books was, "Battlefield of the mind", because we are in constant battle - the battle is for our mind, for our salvation, for what we need to learn, live and believe through the word of God, that we listen to, that we can fulfil our destiny and the promise and the purpose of our life.

Too many of us live beneath the means. Too many of us are not living in a quarter of what God has promised - he's promised it but there's a condition upon us as individuals to actually act upon that. We need to act. It's not because somebody's prophesied something great and blessings upon your life, that it's just going to magically appear and magically happen. God likes to co-labour with us; even Adam in the garden, he had the garden to tend to in Eden, but he had a job to do. We have a job to do. We have this onus upon us to actually see out the fulfilment of what God has promised upon us in our life.

When we look at the word "warfare" - the art of engaging a war: military operations between enemies marked by specific characteristics; what do you mean by specific characteristics? There's different kinds of warfare; there's political warfare, there's chemical warfare, there's guerilla warfare, but the warfare that we are in: we're in a spiritual warfare, we're in a spiritual battle. The battle - I'll let you into a little secret: the battle and the warfare is about you; if you never knew it before, it's about you. It's about you. It's about what pertains to you, what's concerning you, concerning whether it's your family, because if the devil can't get you he goes for your family, your kids, or he'll go for other family members. If that doesn't work, then he'll go for your belongings or something along those lines, that you end up maybe losing your car or something happens, or you lose your job and it's "Oh, woe is me!", and stuff like that.

And then now what he wants to get you in the place like where he wanted to get Job to, like, curse God and die. That's the devil used his wife to say: "Why don't you curse God and die? The kids have gone, the cattle's gone, the business's gone, everything is gone, now look at you. Now look at your situation: your health's gone. Why don't you just curse God and die?"

When we look at Jesus as our example whom we want to exemplify and live by, and when he was tempted in the wilderness, he said “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord your God” and he said that “man shall not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds out of?...out of?...” Ok. So when we're talking about words proceeding out of the mouth of God, what does Paul say about words preceding at the mouth of God? The words that precedes out of the mouth of God, the word is faith. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by?...and hearing by?... Ok, so therefore, if we need to hear the word of God, we've got the word: this [holds up his Bible] whether in electronic form, written form, whichever form you have, that is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. This is what we have, but how many of us actually use it?

We need to be in a place to be able to quote the word, defend the word and speak the word. How many of us do that? When situations in our lives come up against us, causes us to be in grief, causes us to be concerned about what's going to happen in the present and tomorrow. But how many of us actually stand upon the Word of God? Listen, whether you want to do it or not, whether you engage in it or not, you are in a war. And Paul advises us in Ephesians 6 – and let's turn there real quick. Ephesians 6:10. And it says:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the lord, and in the power of his might.” So who do we need to be strong in?...Pardon, who do we need to be strong in? {congregation: The Lord} Ok, so is it a thing that we need to be strong in our own self? Ok, so we need to be strong in the Lord, not reliant on our own self, not reliant upon our own capabilities – our complete reliance is, needs to be, and lives in, God.

Put on, verse 11, some of the armour – does it say “some of the armour”? Ok, what does it say? To put on...? {The whole armour} The whole armour. Why does he say that? “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to do what to do...” what? You may be able to do what? {Stand} Ok. So if you haven't got the whole armour on that means that you're not going to be able to stand, does it not? Would it not mean that?

So, therefore we need to put on the whole armour because if you're not wearing the whole armour of God, you are not going to be able to withstand what the devil puts your way. The Bible says it's impossible: you're not going to go to do it. You, in your own strength, in your own flesh, are dealing with a supernatural villain that want you dead, wants you to go to the same place where he's destined to go.

And if you're not careful, and if you're not in your word, if you're not praying, (because that is the lifeblood of the Christian – that's our lifeblood, that is our connection), then you're not going to be able to stand against somebody, or entity as powerful as the devil – you can't do it in your own strength, it's only through God, it's only through Christ, it's only through Jesus, it's only through his blood, it's only through what he's done on Calvary, it's only through his blood shed on Calvary and on the cross, whereby he's risen again on the third day, that we have victory, and at the end of the Bible it says that we win.

“For we wrestle”, verse 12, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood.” So it's not the person on your job that you're in warfare with, yeah? It is that you're wrestling against flesh and blood, against – now here we're going in ranks, now Paul's talking in rank – against principalities, against powers, against rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. So there are different ranks of what you're dealing with in the supernatural that you're up against. But to go into that is another matter and another conversation for another time.

“Wherefore”, in verse 13, “take unto you the whole armour of God.” Paul is telling us again: put

on the whole armour, put everything on. If you don't put it on you're not going to be able to stand, you're not going to be able to do it.

So, once you've put it on, what does Paul say? "that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Sometimes that's all you need to do is put it all on and just stand; you don't have to do anything. Remember the prophet Elijah says "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" when there's...come away from army and, like, his servant was scared and fearful, and of all these people coming after him. But Elijah prayed and said "God, please open his eyes because there's more fighting for us than against us." Sometimes we just need to open our eyes. Ask God to open the eyes.

So "stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having the breastplate of righteousness." So you see Paul starts with truth. That is a thing that underpins everything that holds everything together: the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. So you're not standing in your own self righteousness, you're standing in God's righteousness, in right standing with God.

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." So, it's funny, it's like the word of God also says that everywhere your feet shall tread, that land you'll possess - we're talking about taking land, we're talking about taking territory territory, whether that territory is in the working environment, whether it's in a political environment, whether it's in the actual borough that you live - in terms of, like, taking ground, taking territory, evangelising the area. Having warfare against what's taken place within our city, claiming back our city for God, claiming back the country for God, standing in the gap. We can only do that through prayer - through prayer for intercession, praying.

And "above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The shield of faith. So what is faith? The Bible says "faith", in Hebrews 11, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." In fact it says "Now faith..." actually. So faith is a continuum, something that's continual, meaning that one, two, three, four, five seconds from now it's still now. So if that principle applies for 5 seconds, it applies for 5 minutes: from 5 minutes from now it will still be now; so 5 years from now it will still be now. So what it's saying is now faith - the faith that you have currently now - is what you need, yeah?

And to build upon that, add to that faith, because we've all been given a measure of faith. But from that measure of faith we've been given, we can also increase our faith. How? Why? Because we need to, because we're in a war. How do we increase our faith? We increase our faith through the word of God, because faith comes by...? {hearing} And hearing by...? {the word of God} So, how do we get the word of God in us? By...? {reading the word} By reading the word. Absolutely, by reading the Word of God - that's the only way. That is the only way: by reading the Word. We have the Word, so let's use it, let's utilise the Word, let's apply the Word to our lives, every area of our life.

And that way we'll be able to quench the fiery darts. So it's not just arrows that's coming in our direction, there's fire attached to it, yeah? He wants to burn us, he wants to incinerate us, even, like, when you think back to Nebuchadnezzar and of the three Hebrew boys (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) into the fire because you're not doing what I'm saying to do. But even they said, this is their faith, "Even if God doesn't, we will not bow, O king." We need to get to a point and place where it says even if God doesn't, I shall not! Because I know what the Word of God says. Because of God's word, I will not! Because God has proven it time and time and time again in my

life, I will not!

We need to stand, and when we actually come in prayer, we need to come with thanksgiving – it says “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, his courts with praise.” And entering into his gates of thanksgiving is actually talking about the goodness of God. Last week, bless my soul, hearing the testimonies that people spoke openly about as what God had done for them, that Pastor Steve said that, you know, the preaching had pretty much been done by all of you, that actually gave a testimony of the goodness of God. That's what we need to do: we need to speak about the goodness of God, speak good about what God has done, because that is reminding and increasing our faith because if he's done in the past, surely God is able to do it again, and do it again, and do it again. There's no failure in God – the failure is with us: the failure is that we don't believe, the failure is that we don't trust in the Word of God.

How can we be calling ourselves Christians, and if we believe more what the devil says more than what God says. How can that be so? How can we be living the way that we live in, and there's no real fruits happening around us? What's going on? Pastor Steve was talking about being in the vine, I believe last week, and be a fruitful. How do we allow God to purge us and to cut off what needs to be cut if we don't come to him in prayer, if we don't come confessing our sins? Prayer is that key which has a direct link to God.

When we pray – it's quite graphic in revelation – it says that when we pray that our prayers go up as a sweet smelling savour unto God in the bowl of incense taken by the seraphim and brought before our God. These images conjures up the magnitude and the greatness of God, the person whom we serve.

So all of this tied together is by verse 18, and it says here “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” None of this works without prayer. And when we talk about prayer: prayer could be akin to, say, sports, for example. There's loads of different sports, and if we look at sporting involving a ball, you've got football, you've got rugby, you've got American football, you've got golf – all are those are sports played with a ball but have different rules. Prayer is similar in that, is that they are different kinds of prayer for us to be praying, and to be interceding.

So we've got intercession, confession, submission, petition, adoration, thanksgiving, communion.

I just want to just quickly talk about intercession. I'm not going to go to those scriptures 'cause of time, but Paul is talking, when talking about intercession here in Romans, he's talking about the active role of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit making intercession on our behalf, and with words which cannot be uttered, with groanings – that is the point of the Holy Spirit when we're talking about warfare: we might not understand with our intellect what we're saying, but God understands, it's a Spiritual language. So he's talking about the Holy Spirit and being able to speak in tongues, in another tongue, in another language.

And that is very key because that is praying the heart of God; we don't know what is in God's mind, 'cause, like, Paul says “Who knows the mind of God save the Spirit of God?” So therefore we need to be able to pray in the Spirit. We need to be able to intercede – intercession is often times praying on behalf of somebody else, like we was praying for Pastor Steve: you wasn't praying for yourself, interceding praying for Pastor Steve and for what he needs, and what he's going through, that God will meet those needs and will supply all of his needs according to his riches in glory.

So that's what intercession is about. Because intercession's about not praying for yourself, praying for others, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. We're also told that Jesus sits on the right hand of the Father interceding for us. Amen? So we've got Jesus praying for us—how wonderful is that?

So when we look at the scripture here - you can look at that in your own time, read that whole chapter in Samuel [I Samuel 1, especially vs 9-15] that's about Hannah who didn't have a child, who was unable to give birth, and she went into the house of God to pray, and Eli saw her and thought she was drunk. Thought she was drunk, but she was so sorrowful in heart and spirit that she poured out as it were a drink offering - she poured out of her soul, poured out of her spirit, speaking in another tongue, speaking in groanings that can't be uttered.

I've a last scripture there [1 Corinthians 14:13-17] is saying - Paul in that scripture there is saying - that he's talking about the edification of the body of Christ. And yes, speaking in tongues, 'cause like the church in Corinth wanted all these Spiritual gifts and so on and so forth, and is craving it, and Paul was suggesting to crave that which is better when he's taking about prophesy. But in this particular scripture here he's talking about the gift of tongues, and speaking in tongues, and speaking in unknown tongues, and basically, what he says, at end of verse 17 there, is that in speaking an unknown tongue brings edification to yourself - not to others but to yourself. It's building yourself up when Paul talks about building yourself up in the most holy faith - you're building yourself up.