

The Secret Sauce

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 6. Ephesians chapter 6, people that know what they're doing in the kitchen have special touches that just set off a dish and make it right.

Somebody confessed to me between the worship hours that today they were going home and serving an experiment with a stow-bought cake.

Wow. I said, that's the stuff you do at home. Don't bring that stuff to church. You bring the good stuff to us. Sometimes folks do stuff like that and they don't tell you what they do.

It's a secret. They don't want you to know how good, how they got what they got. The secret formula for Coca-Cola is 130 years old and it sits in a vault at the Coca-Cola Museum in Atlanta. KFC's original recipe is a secret. 11 herbs and spices. And I thought Heinz 57 had 57 ingredients, but I found out that J.H. Heinz' favorite number is 5 and his wife's favorite number is 7.

[1 : 10] And that's where they came up with the name. So I know Dawn's grandmother's secret recipe was bacon grease. And she served bacon grease with about anything.

And I'm convinced that you could pour bacon grease on something in the yard and eat it and it would be good. I haven't tried that and I encourage you not to try that, but I'm just saying.

It's the secret sauce that makes one dish stand out from another. Now I realize it is Christmas time and we're all ready, but I got to finish what I start.

And so today I want to conclude a series on the real war. Because folks, we're in a war that we can't see.

We see the evidence of it. A war that is filled with battles that we need to win. And our goal is to win every daily battle.

[2 : 11] That's the goal, okay? Now I will tell you that we were born in sin and we're sinners by our own commission. So we will not win every battle, okay?

You will fail. But our effort is to win every daily battle. At least as many as we possibly can. And to be clear, the war has been won, thank God.

Christ won the war on the cross, but now we're fighting skirmishes that we don't need to be fighting. And we lose too many battles. We've been talking about spiritually defending ourselves and we talked about the offensive weapon being the word of God.

Now, what I want you to know today is what will really set you off for victory. It's what I call the secret sauce. For context, I want to read Ephesians chapter 6, beginning in verse 16, where it says this.

In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

[3 : 20] Our key passage today, praying at all times with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

And also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak.

The secret sauce of spiritual victory is consistent, heartfelt, dedicated, life-surrendering prayer. Like a secret sauce, you need to make sure that prayer is part of your processes. Now, how do we do that? Well, this passage tells us how to do that.

First, it tells us to pray on all occasions. When do we pray? Do we pray in the morning?

[4 : 28] Or do we pray in the evening? Yes. Both. When we think we need to pray, we pray. When we don't think we need to pray, we pray.

When we want to pray and feel like praying, we pray. When we don't want to pray and don't feel like praying, we pray. When we feel strong in prayer, we pray.

When we feel weak in prayer, we pray. Verse 18 says, Praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer. All prayer means that's the kind of prayer you pray on your knees.

It's also the kind of prayer you pray driving down the road. It's the kind of prayer you pray with your hands folded in front of you. It's the kind of prayer that you pray with your hands up in the air.

And I discourage you from doing either one of those when you're driving and praying. Okay? It's about praying publicly. It's about praying privately.

[5 : 36] It's about praying with loud cries. It's about praying with silent whispers. Pray prayers of praise because of who he is.

Pray prayers of thanksgiving because of what he's done. Pray prayers of confession because of what we've done. Pray prayers of petition for what we want him to do.

Pray prayers of intercession for what you want, who you want him to do it through. and with. We're to pray at all times. It is to be an ongoing conversation.

1 Thessalonians 5, 17 says, Pray without ceasing. Now, that means when a burdensome thought crosses your mind, give that to God.

When a hateful thought crosses your mind, give that to God. When an impure thought crosses your mind, give that to God.

[6 : 34] When an inappropriate thought crosses your mind, give that to God. When a negative thought crosses your mind, give that to God. 2 Corinthians 10, verse 5, says take every thought captive to obey Christ.

I compared it a couple weeks ago to playing the arcade game Whack-A-Mole. When them things popped up, you hit them with a hammer. When another one popped up, you hit it with a hammer.

And the reality is in our life, we need to be whacking the moles that come up with prayer.

When thoughts cross our mind that don't need to cross our mind, we take those thoughts to God.

We catch them. We take them captive to obey Christ.

When good things come, give God praise. When bad things come, give that over to God. Trust Him with it. Don't wait until the evening when that time comes.

Don't wait until the morning when that time comes. Don't wait until you get still. There's great value and very biblical value.

[7 : 41] And the men that journey with me on Tuesday mornings know we've been over this again and again and again. There is a need in your life to have a still time with the Lord, quietly, quietly, alone, with His Word in your lap and seeking His face in prayer.

There is desperate need of that in all of our lives. It needs to be a habit, a practice that we do every day that God allows us to.

But we also address the Lord in an ongoing fashion. I get confused these days between who's crazy in the world and who's got an earbud in.

When I'm in the store and somebody's having a full-blown conversation with nobody and I don't know that they got something in their ear and they're talking to somebody or maybe they're just talking to themselves, you know.

I want to help, but it don't seem appropriate, you know. Whether verbal or not, that's the kind of ongoing prayer that we ought to have with the Lord.

[9 : 06] When things come up, give them over to God. I mean, prayer is about taking time to be still and alone and before the Lord.

However, it's also about walking with Him and talking with Him. That's what praying in the Spirit is all about. Part of what praying in the Spirit is all about. Now, how do we do that?

Well, the way it works is we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, let me explain something to you.

As a child of God, if you surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you receive all the Holy Spirit you're ever going to get. Okay?

The Holy Spirit in several things happen when we're saved and one of them is the Holy Spirit indwells us. Okay? So we have the Holy Spirit in our lives.

[10 : 05] But there are times when we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Okay? It's kind of like a balloon for lack of a better. There's not a good illustration. I'll promise you.

But it's kind of like a balloon. It can be there, but it can be deflated or it can be inflated. There's times when we walk with the Lord faithfully, obediently, taking matters that are not obedient and laying them before Him and asking Him to forgive us and then walking away from Him that He fills us with His Holy Spirit.

We already got the Holy Spirit, but we get filled. Our balloon gets inflated, if you will. We're where we need to be. I make it a practice not to run out of gas in my vehicle.

Okay? Just don't do that. I'm not going to do the push of shame. I'm not going to do it. Okay? But at the same time, it's not always full.

And the reality is that we always have the Holy Spirit, but we're not always filled with the Holy Spirit. Our lives don't reflect that.

[11:14] And I wish that by your attendance this morning that you'd just be fully inflated and leave here filled with the Holy Spirit. But the reality is that's not what it's based on.

It's not based on your appearance here. It's not based on your presence here. It's not based on being excited about the music. It's not based on enjoying the sermon.

All of those things can play into it, but the reality is it's got to do with your personal relationship with Christ. Where are you at with the matters that He's laid before you that you know you need to deal with? What have you done with that?

And when you walk away from that, God blesses such as that and He'll fill you with the Holy Spirit of God. You'll be filled. The Holy Spirit will take over your life.

You'll make good decisions because you're not leaning on yourself. You're leaning on the Holy Spirit of God to do it. You'll live more godly. And that kind of relationship, you don't fall out of relationship with the Lord when you're not walking with Him if you're a child of God.

[12:17] But you're not filled with the Holy Spirit. You're not making good decisions. You're not doing it right. And so the challenge for us is to keep that, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and we're filled with the Holy Spirit when we take God's Word in and when we respond obediently to it.

There's not a ritual we can do with that. It's a life. We live for that. And God loves us regardless of our actions but He does greater things. Get this now.

He does greater things in those who are filled with the Holy Spirit of God. He does greater things in those that are walking obediently to God that are conversing with the Lord about matters that they need to deal with and are walking away from the things that become a hindrance to them.

God blesses such as that. James 5, 16 says the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it's working. But it does make a difference in what kind of life we're living.

It does make a difference if we're trying to be independent or we're being dependent upon Him. I want you to listen to what happens when we pray in the Spirit. Romans 8, 26, and 27 says this.

[13:31] Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness for we don't know what to pray for as we ought. You ever been there? When you're in a situation and you need to pray about it but you don't know how to pray?

Maybe I'm the only one. But for we don't know what we ought to pray for as we ought but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words and He who searches hearts knows what's in the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Now for that to happen we have to pray in the Spirit. That means not pray selfishly, not pray about what I want but pray about what God wants because prayer is not about trying to get my will into heaven.

Prayer is about getting God's will into my life and on earth and God moves in such prayers as that. He'll move in the prayer. He'll move in the prayer.

The one that's doing the praying. So we pray on all occasions. The second thing is we pray with every effort. He says keep alert with all perseverance.

[14:50] Now I want you to think about something. I want to ask you something. If someone's trying to break into your home and you are at home and you know he's trying to do it when do you give up and open the door and let him in to do whatever he wants to do?

Well I don't. Okay? I don't. I warn him. I call the law and then I introduce him to my little friend.

Okay? However, I'm not going to stand by and let somebody endanger my family. It's not going to happen.

And I want to advise you something. We're in a war and someone is pursuing your family and you better be on watch.

And I'm telling you don't get weary. Fight, defend, do it on your knees. When Jesus was praying in the garden right before his arrest he told his disciples to watch and pray.

[16:06] And you know what they did? They fell asleep is what they did. And in Matthew 26 verse 40 through 41 he says this. And he came to his disciples and found them sleeping and he said to Peter.

And notice he's talking to Peter. Now why did he talk to Peter about this? Because they were all sleeping apparently. He says that to Peter because he knows Peter's about to face a huge temptation that night.

The temptation to protect himself by denying Christ and he falls to it again and again and again. But he also speaks to Peter because he knows that God's going to use Peter in a mighty way.

If you don't believe it read the book of Acts this afternoon. Okay? God's going to use Peter in a mighty way and Jesus knows that so he speaks specifically to Peter. It relates to all of them but he says so could you not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. Now when he's saying watch there he means prayerfully prayerfully be on your guard.

[17:10] Paul says to pray with perseverance steadfastness don't let up. Jesus left them went back to pray. Do you know what they did in the garden?

They went back to sleep. They went back to sleep their eyes were heavy it was the middle of the night give them a break but they went back to sleep. Listen we may grow weary but we can't stop praying folks.

Things may get tough but we can't stop praying. Jesus tells a story in Luke chapter 18 of a widow begging a wicked judge for justice against her adversary and he would not respond.

And so the woman just kept on and finally the judge gave in because of her persistence and Jesus said if a judge that does not fear God or respect people will change his mind and relent don't you think a loving father will?

And then he asked when I return will I find such faith? Now people have a hard time with Luke 18 because they say is he saying that Father God is like the wicked judge that wouldn't listen.

[18:30] No that's not what he's saying. He's saying if a godless man will finally respond to somebody who pursues how much more will a loving father do that? Take your matters to the Lord.

Take them in prayer. Leave them with him. Luke 18 1 says that he told that story listen so they would continue to pray and not lose heart.

That was the point of telling that story. In Luke chapter 11 he tells of a man banging on a friend's door in the middle of the night wanting bread for his family and the man didn't want to get up.

You know why? Because they were probably all in the same bed probably in some big pallet in that place and he probably had a baby because if anybody has a baby they don't want to get up in the night.

Don't mess with a baby. I don't know what his family structure was I'm just telling you the man didn't want to get up. He had locked the place down. He had secured it. He had everybody bedded down.

[19:32] He didn't want to get up and the dude just kept knocking. Why? Because his family was starving. He wasn't asking for a cup of sugar he was asking for bread and the man because he kept knocking the man that was in the bed got up and I want you to listen to what Jesus said when he followed up that story you're familiar with this probably but I want you to know the context in which he says it.

It's in Luke 11 9 and 10 it says this and I tell you ask and it will be given to you seek and you'll find knock and it will be opened to you for anyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and the one who knocks it will be opened.

We are in desperate need to keep spiritual watch over our lives over our loved one's lives and to pray persistently that God would work and move in our lives.

I don't understand everything about the economy of God I trust it by faith but I just have to ask this question what if we're one prayer short of the persistence that God was seeking and all I got to say about that is let's not be let's not be one prayer short so pray with every effort also pray for others pray for others the best way to keep from getting self-absorbed about your own pain and your own worry is to prioritize the praying for others because God blesses intercessory prayer intercessory

prayers are those prayers that we pray for other people and intercede on their behalf and such prayer puts us second and puts the one that we're praying for first when we take on that concern to the right place to the throne of God and I'll just tell you

God blesses such as that and if we spend so much time praying for other people that we run out of time and don't get to our own needs God's not going to neglect us because we were busy praying for somebody else I promise you he'll provide the devil would much rather you be concerned about yourselves he wants us to want our way he wants us to look out for ourselves instead of prioritizing the will of God he wants us to ask well what's in this for me what do I get out of this nothing about an attitude like that is godly and it shows up quickly and the devil uses those attitudes to divide families pray for families pray for your family pray for other people's families families are under attack folks families are attacking each other and they're being attacked all at the same time pray for families pray for the church

[22 : 40] I mean do you think the devil likes when a church grows do you think the devil likes when we reach people for Christ do you think he likes when people grow in the Lord do you think he likes when we preach on satanic attack we've poked a bear folks pray for the church Satan would love for selfishness to come in the way selfishness takes our mind off what God wants to do through us and puts our mind on what's in it for me and God's plan is bigger than me and it's bigger than you it's bigger than all of us it's God's plan we just get to be a part of it we just get to join in so let's look to him and pray for the church and and pray for this nation God's not done with America I'm convinced God's not done with America Jesus still saves folks and pray that God would bring revival and renewal to our country and on that note I want you to notice how

Paul tells them to pray he didn't ask for them to pray for his well-being he didn't ask for them to pray for his ease he didn't ask for him them to pray for his comfort he didn't ask for them to pray that he'd have his way no no he asked in verse 19 that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel so lastly pray concerning the gospel pray concerning the gospel we are quick to pray for Christians to get well man we spend a lot of time trying to keep Christians out of heaven you know and there's nothing wrong with that there's nothing wrong with that but we spend a lot of time praying that Christians will get well that they won't hurt and that they'll be healed and there's nothing wrong with that but I want you to notice how centered the message that Paul gives them is message of the gospel Paul says pray for boldness and he describes it as the mystery pray for boldness and sharing the mystery now what is the mystery well this word when it is used in the

New Testament it is defined as either a mystery or a secret and that's two different words in our language but it's the same kind of word in the Greek and it's talking about the life changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ being a mystery or a secret is it a secret no however it's a mystery because you don't understand it until you have it years ago my family drove out west I had seen pictures of the Grand Canyon all my life we had a set of encyclopedias at the house we didn't have world book that was for rich folks but we had one and and when I when I look in there I could see those black and white pictures of the Grand Canyon I had seen pictures of it I knew it was big I knew something about Paul Bunyan's axe and all that stuff but I had never been there before and when I stood on the south rim of the Grand Canyon and looked across that thing those pictures didn't didn't measure up wasn't a secret I knew where it was but it was a mystery because I had never seen anything like that from a picture it was different when

I experienced it in a similar way the power of the gospel is not known until it's experienced now understand we have a responsibility to share the gospel with folks and they're not going to understand it they may submit to it they may give their heart and life to the Lord Jesus but they're not even going to know what they're getting when they do it until they have it and Paul says we pray that I'll have boldness to to share that because it's a mystery that's hard to fathom Alejandro is a Peruvian he was on mission to God years ago this church took a mission trip to Peru and led Alejandro to the Lord and Alejandro got on fire for the Lord and he served the Lord faithfully and when you give to

First Baptist Church there's a line besides the Lottie Moon and side squad program besides that there's another line a significant line in our budget that's international missions there's another one called North American missions anything we don't spend in those lines goes toward Lottie Moon Christmas offering but but those lines are set up for us to partner with missionaries on the field with ministries on the field and to subsidize those who go from our church on mission trips over there

short-term mission trips that's what it's set up for Alejandro is supported through that budget line because of his faithfulness and he when we go over there he translates for us and when we're not there he boats up into the jungles to reach tribal people and recently he baptized 18 people there one man that was baptized was formerly a shaman that is that he was a wizard of sorts that practiced rituals of witchcraft he had always challenged those that tried to share the gospel around him however one day someone gave him a gospel track in his own dialect he had never seen the gospel in his own language customized to his dialect and the simplicity and the clarity of the gospel just jarred him it was like a mystery reveal he tried to challenge the man but the man just kept giving him biblical answers and the shaman asked him he said why don't you run away from me like everyone else does and the witness said it's the holy spirit who convicts sin it's not man man that does that and he said I will continue to pray for you and in due time you will listen and you will obey and two weeks later the shaman came back got saved and he was baptized among those with Alejandro that my friend is the power of the gospel and it's through the gospel that God unites all people from every tribe every people and every language and it's a mystery how all of the things that we have done wrong can be put upon Christ and taken off of us for all of eternity but that's part of the gospel when Paul was writing this to the church of Ephesus he was about to face the Romans and he knew that was coming and the Romans thought that Christianity was just a sect of the Jews and Paul was going to boldly go and proclaim that Christ is where our hope is and it is only in Christ alone and so he concludes this by saying I want you to pray that I'll speak boldly and that God will give me the words to say my friend that's a good prayer to pray every time the words preached because God works in and through such prayers whatever we try to do for the kingdom [31 : 50] we can't make it happen we can't conjure that up only God can do that and we must rely upon him and how we rely upon him is through prayer faithful selfless gospel driven prayer Adrian Rogers said this Satan can't keep God from answering our prayers but he will keep us from asking and I'll just tell you friend a prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian with every head bowed and every eye closed I want to ask you this morning if you've ever surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ you say well I don't know about all that well we'd love to guide you in that it is a mystery you'll be amazed when you meet the Lord Jesus personally but if you've never done that we're going to stand and we're going to sing in just a moment and I want you to obey God maybe everybody around you thinks you have but you've never done it quit worrying about what everybody else thinks and make it right with the Lord maybe you've done that privately you've never done that publicly and you want to come and acknowledge that biblically through baptism you come we won't baptize you this morning but we'll line it up and set it up you come and acknowledge that publicly maybe God's drawing you to this church

God's doing a move at First Baptist I'm thankful for that and so God's leading you here I encourage you to come we guide you in that process or maybe you just got stuff you need to deal with and you can deal with that when we stand where you are or you can deal with this altar or this pastor would love to pray with you if you'd like for me to I don't know what God's doing in your heart but you'll never be satisfied unless you follow it so just be obedient Heavenly Father I love you and I thank you Lord for your love for us and I ask right now that you'll work and you'll move in our midst as only you can Lord Jesus in Jesus name Amen