

**“Use the Power of Prayer”**

Let's think about the history of weapons used by humans. We had humble beginnings in using rocks and sticks, then graduated to honing metal with swords and spears, and then to guns, and now we have missiles. And now we are at the height of nuclear weaponry. Many nations have nuclear weapons and are at risk of nuclear war.

Now let's categorize these weapons and think about the purpose for which they were used. What were early weapons used for? To hunt for food. Later on, weapons were used as protection. Now, weapons are about attacking and maintaining power.

I'm not saying all weapons are bad. Of course, weapons have been used for good and for survival. But these weapons have often been misused to intimidate, oppress, and murder throughout human history.

So, are there any weapons in the world that have no such side effects? However, there is a real power weapon given to man by the Creator God. This next weapon I'm going to talk about provides life and joy to all humans. It is the power of "prayer." No matter how weak an arrow of prayer may be shot, it will always reach the throne of God in heaven.

Today, let's take a look at the power of prayer through the scriptures and how to become spiritual soldiers who always use this weapon.

**I. Prayer creates a miracle of victory.**

Let us first examine the contents of the Book of Esther. It is hard to understand the whole contents with only the text we read today. But if we find a short and strong conclusion here, it is a proclamation that "prayer is a weapon of victory."

9:22 says, "On that day the men of Judah were out of the hands of their enemies; on that day the sorrows of the Jews were changed to joy, and the day of the grief and despair changed into a day of joy and happiness." Of course, it was a miracle that the administration of the king was changed.

How, then, could Esther change the heart of the king in the crisis of her own nation's annihilation? We should look at the actions Esther took. It was her fasting prayer.

4:16 records this. "Go and get all the Jews in Susa together; hold a fast and pray for me. Do not eat or drink anything for three days and nights. My servant women and I will be doing the same. After that, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. If I have to die for it, I will die."

What can a nation do when a crisis comes? You can form a secret organization. We can use diplomatic tactics. But nothing was possible for the Israelites in the land of captivity.

Fortunately, however, they were able to engage in powerful spiritual operations that were incomparable to the use of any military organization or weapon. It was prayer to God with absolute faith. Is this kind of miracle possible only in situations like the captivity of the ancient Israelites? No.

Modern people are very accustomed to using the means and methods of the world for their survival. So, we do not use the most powerful and reliable weapons God has given us. People try to substitute money, skill, power, knowledge, and experience in place of the Lord's power through prayer. We must first train the habits of faith and prayer, using God's promised power.

And we must confess with entrusting the Lord for the results of our prayer: "Lord, I have believed in the promise of the Lord, and I have given you the prayer of supplication, and I trust you to grant me the results of Your goodness." So, at the end of verse 22, Esther said, "If I die, I will die." The answer of prayer may return to death. But we believe that if we truly wait for the hand of God, He can bless and triumph as the result of our death.

II. Prayer requires our determination (Mark 9:43).

Let us examine here the lesson of Mark's gospel. What is the point of Jesus' emphasis here? He asks his children to make a decision for faith. We need a resolution to cut some of our bodies to make choices that fit God's will. Being people of the kingdom of God is guaranteed to be worth it.

Prayer is also the same. We are continually tempted to use it as a tool of self-fulfillment through prayer. But there is a clear principle in our petition. We must bear our prayerful mission for the needs of our country, nation, church, community, and the world, as well as our personal needs.

I ask you to earnestly pray to God for our country. As Christians, the prayer topic that should be at the top of our priorities is to seek the continued fulfillment of God's righteousness in this country, rather than who has the political power.

Of course, each of us can pray for the victory of the party we support. However, just because a particular political party in this country has the political initiative, we cannot entrust it to our mission of accomplishing God's righteousness.

Of course, as citizens of this country, we should be interested in detailed political changes and movements. Then, how can we believe that the leadership of one top political leader has a profound effect on the revival and stability of a country?

How can that leadership be compared with the leadership of the Almighty, who created the heavens and the earth and is still in charge? Only those who can see, feel, and discern the reality of the difference are true Christians.

The true freedom and peace that mankind needs, not a temporary peace or one based on deceit, can only be provided by the hand of God the Creator. So, we must rely on the power of prayer. This is because God thoroughly answers the wishes of those who believe and carry out His promises. We must always remember the truth that "one person who prays is stronger than an entire nation that does not pray."

What do we believe as Christians in this day and age? It is God's promise that a nation with the prayers of God's faithful people will not perish but prosper. The national situation unfolding before us today can be a series of chaos. But we have already been assured in faith that the goodness of God will be revealed at the end of all things. That is why we can pray for our country with the same faith despite any change in circumstances.

III. God opens and closes the heavens through our prayers (Jas 5:17–18).

At the end of his letter, Jesus' brother James encourages us to practice prayer life with a great vision of the power of prayer. He reminds us of the events of the drought and rain related to the prophet Elijah recorded in 1 Kings, chapters 17 and 18 in the Old Testament.

This scripture explains that the Creator God has set no limit to the power of the response to prayer. This text also reveals that God has placed the problems of poverty and hunger, disease, natural disaster, human sin, and even the operation of the cosmos within the influence of our prayers. So, we can pray for all of our lives and our faiths. And those genuine prayers are assured of God's answer. All we need now is to pray diligently.

Have you ever come to your church for personal prayer? Praying in the church has its own reasons and benefits. From here, we can avoid various conditions that interfere with prayer, and it becomes easier to focus on prayer. Psychological and spiritual stability can be obtained.

Also, we can experience the presence of the Lord more clearly and strongly in the church. Isaiah 56:7 God declared, "My Temple will be a house of prayers for the people of all nations." Of course, the Spirit of God is everywhere in outer space.

But the Spirit is not such a thing that we will come across it by accident while we are hanging around here and there without our purpose. The Old Testament tells us that God has decided to meet those who seek him in a house built in His name.

First of all, I want you to clearly believe that you can experience the power of God through prayer. That faith will make it possible for you to pray earnestly anytime, anywhere, and for anything. So, I hope that our church will be filled with the mighty spirit of prayer.

All throughout my life, I have met difficulties I cannot handle: when I was in elementary school, middle and high school, the military, social life, immigration, when I got married, when I had babies, and when I entered Bible College.

Also, when I studied at a theological school, when I prepared for an ordination process, at churches where I had ministered, when my children married, and during the trips, I had financial, physical, academic, emotional, linguistic, spiritual, and interpersonal difficulties, etc.

A lot of really difficult things on my life journey did not wear out and followed me. Each time I had to be discouraged by the limits of my ability. But I now have a prescription that will surely win over the difficulties that are coming to me. It is to use the power of prayer. Sometimes there are still moments of frustration when I pray. But I will never sit in the seat of frustration, because God always rescued me from it.

God's faithfulness and companionship toward us are already promised in the Bible. I also assure you that, through my faithful experience, God's help and protection for you are constantly with you. Church, believe in the power of prayer, and ask of God. Then you will always experience the faithfulness and almightiness of God. Amen.

***Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:***

1) When and where do you spend time in your daily life communing with the Lord through prayer? I recommend that you set aside 3 days and 21 days to practice prayer as a habit.

2) When and how have you personally experienced the amazing power of prayer? How do you apply that experience to your current prayer life?

3) Do you have time to talk about your prayer life and answers to prayer with WCUMC or friends? I recommend using the fellowship table after the Sunday service for this.