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Sermon by Bishop Joseph Swilley, held on October 22, 2006, at Bethlehem Healing Temple Church. The Spirit of the LORD was in the place! Prayer is very important in our lives as we serve God. This sermon is a reminder that we need to pray, not only for ourselves and our family, but let us remember somebody else. Let's pray for our neighbors, our city, our state, our country. Let's pray for those in positions of power, so that we can live in peace.

Note: Sermon was edited. This is not a verbatim citation.

BISHOP SWILLEY: Let us praise the Lord!

CHURCH: Halleluiah.

BISHOP SWILLEY: Dear Heavenly Father, Lord God Almighty, in Jesus' name we come thanking you this morning for our life and health and strength.

Lord, we thank you for healing our bodies, even when we didn't know we were sick. We thank you for giving us a mind to come and worship and praise your holy name this day.

Lord, we ask you to strengthen us and unite us in the spirit of love between one another and the power of the Holy Ghost come in and be with us and rest upon our soul. Lord, drive out every sickness and disease and, Lord, help us to believe every word that proceeds out of your mouth, that we may become a doer of it in Jesus' name.

Lord, rebuke the unbelieving spirit and doubt and fear, take it away from our heart, and help us to go forth that we may trust in your Word and rely upon thee because thou are God and your Word is true and faithful. Lord, help us and heal us of our backsliding and give us a mind to rise and call on your name. We ask you in the name of Jesus today, heal, my God! We need healing! Lord, we need healing. In the name of Jesus, our soul needs healing. Lord, our mind needs healing. Our body needs healing. We ask you, renew in us the righteous and Holy Spirit. Take away the stony heart and give us a heart of flesh. Give us a mind, Dear Heavenly Father, to seek you and call on your name, and, Lord Almighty, draw us closer to you. Great God Almighty, draw us closer that we grow deeper and higher in you, that you may get the glory out of our lives, and we thank you for it, and this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen and again, amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 15

A Psalm of David. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

BISHOP SWILLEY: We will go into our subject of the message and that will be Second Corinthians, Chapter 10, verses 3 and 4. We will also go to Ephesians Chapter 6.

"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 strongholds."

Ephesians, 6:12

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

And I will go over it again. I'll just read it one more time.

"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 strongholds."

The last message I preached was about, "I can't do anything until you come out of the city." God said, I can't do anything until you come out of the city. God can't do anything until we make up our heart and mind to change, and if we are not ready to change, then there will be nothing done. See, sometimes we want to deal with God, but we want to also maintain our own ways, and that don't work. God is looking for a change.

We don't war and fight against the flesh, and the weapon of our warfare is not carnal. We don't use material weapons to fight back with the devil. Our weapon is prayer and the next weapon we use is patience. A lot of time we don't realize that we are losing our patience, and that's where we yield to the enemy, but when you have patience, after you have prayed, after you have fasted, asking God for the things that you are desiring from the Lord, then patiently wait for it.

We are not fighting against flesh and blood, but we do see the after effect of the enemy dealing with flesh and blood when we see our loved ones sick, our loved ones financially in pain, burdened down, financial burdens and the things that are attacking our loved ones, we see that in the flesh, but we don't fight with the material weapon with the devil. Our weapon is a prayer. Our weapon is a faith that God will answer in some given time, and the enemy is taking, as I said last time, our children and causing many excruciating pains in their lives because they didn't know -- even though they know but they still didn't know. And even we ourselves that have God in our lives, we know and then don't know and, therefore, we are caught sometimes in a

snare, but the snare will not stay if we will be attentive to God in prayer, and that is one of our greatest weapons that we will use against the enemy.

We will not allow the enemy, which is Satan, which is demon power and I want you to know, demons are alive. They are not just little ornaments somewhere sitting around. They are very active. I want you to understand the man that was in the tomb cutting himself, hollering and screaming, he was overwhelmed with demons. And his mind, he had a good mind but because of the legions of demons, which are spirits that came into his body, overwhelmed him and taking his mind and ruling him and making him cry out because of the pain, and the more the pain, the better enjoyment for the demon.

And the thing that you see that is going on in your body and your fellow loved one's body, those are demons that are attacking, and I want you to also know that a spirit of some kind is ruling your body. When the spirit is gone out of your body, you are dead. When the spirit is in your body, you are alive. I want you to understand, the spirit of God if it comes into your body, it rules and keeps you. But that demon comes into your body, it rules and destroys you.

We want to know that God is on our side. We want to know that God will deliver us, and he will deliver us if we will humble ourselves and begin to seek him and call upon his name. Our warfare is not carnal. We cannot use materialistic things to fight the devil. But if we will begin to get out of the natural realm and move into the spiritual realm of God, then we are in battle with the enemy, that we know that we can win because God has already said we can win. If we will only shift from the first gear into the second gear, we will find ourselves accomplishing the things that have been destroying and holding us down.

At times we wonder. Sometimes, well, the Lord God has forgotten about us. You heard the song, "I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me." And I want you to understand, let us not be weary of our testimony. By the path of God, we shall overcome by the word of our testimony. I remember so many hardships of my own personal life that associated with one of the testimonies I heard, but I praise God because he has brought me, and I look back around and see why he has made a way for me. My dad died when I was seven, and my mom went into the mental institution when I was nine, and there was this little insignificant boy walking and crying and starving and what have you, but I heard one day, I hear the Word of God!

Let's praise God!

The weapon of our warfare is not carnal.

God can do anything! God can heal anything!

Let's praise him!

We want God to give us a holy mind, a mind to fight. Let's praise him! In the Old Testament, there is a war going on, and that's the way it went. They had to fight, human fight human, but in this grace, we are fighting spirits. But it's the same old thing. When the Philistines get to fight against Israel, it was a stronghold of the Philistines, but God said, I am with you when you are doing right. God is on our side. I want you to praise him now! Let's say, Halleluiah!

CHURCH: Halleluiah.

BISHOP SWILLEY: So now we are in a spiritual war. There is a war going on and a battle gathered together against Bethlehem. I said, there is a battle of demons has come and gathered themselves to battle against Bethlehem! When Sister Dancy went into the hospital, she came out all right!

Let's praise him!

Let's praise him!

CHURCH: Praise him!

BISHOP SWILLEY: When Louise went into the hospital, she came out all right! There is a war going on around here.

Let's praise God!

When Mother Graham went into the hospital, she came out all right!

Let's say, Halleluiah!

What's wrong here?

There is a war going on, and it's a battle against our children. Battle against our loved ones, but we are going to pray. We will fight! We will fight, I said, until we gain our children back!

(Applause.)

BISHOP SWILLEY: Oh, Lord! There is a war going on! You don't see anything, but it's there, and it's powerful, attacking our kids. You think, This is something that's supposed to be. No, it don't. God is perfect, and everything he do is perfect. When things are out of order, it's not of God.

You heard the testimony of our minister here. He had a little territory. Satan had given him a territory. Colostomy bag he had to wear, all that stuff, but God said, I got a better job for you. Come work for me, son.

Let's say, Halleluiah!

CHURCH: Halleluiah.

BISHOP SWILLEY: It's time to get our mind together, Saints. I will work for the Lord. It's time to get our heart saying, I will work for God. I am tired of this way of living. I am tired of doing the things that I used to do. I am going to repent, make up my mind, "Who's side will I lean on?"

We are going to pull down the stronghold that is trying to destroy our body, destroy our mind. I want you to understand when I heard the Word of God, I was only 18, but I heard the Word of God. Nothing like the Word of God. The Word of God is powerful! The Word of God is strength. The Word of God cuts through the muck and miry clay. The Word of God is all right! I am so glad that I heard the Word. We walk. "Walk" means live. We walk not in the flesh. We do not war after the flesh. It's not about the flesh. It's about spirits. Spirits come in and take over your body. They don't ask you, Can I come in. They just come in and cause a lot of pain, dysfunction and a lot of sorrow.

We are going to put on the whole armor of God.

You see, you didn't see perhaps anything from that five-day fast, but you felt it. Yes, you felt your big gut want to eat up the little one. You didn't see anything. But you don't know what damage that you did to the spirits that is in here tackling.

Let's say, Halleluiah!

CHURCH: Halleluiah.

BISHOP SWILLEY: And our carnal warfare would not have done any damage to the spirit, but because of the fast and because we obeyed the Word of God that's given us, then we were able to put in action the fast and God was able to put in action, also, in moving certain strongholds. All the strongholds are not gone, and I am not going to say right away, Let's fast again. It won't be that long but, however, it's time to put extra time in for prayer. And if we pray, God said, I will hear from heaven. If we will humble ourselves and turn from our individual ways and seek his face, which means pray every day, I will hear from heaven, he says, and I will heal your land.

Let's say, Halleluiah!

CHURCH: Halleluiah.

BISHOP SWILLEY: [God said]: I will change the things that need to be changed in your life. I will change the things that need to be changed in your mind. I will change the things that need to be changed with your family. I will change things that need to be changed on your job.

A certain soul came the other day and was telling me about that we had prayed for a person concerning their job, but we wasn't anticipating a quick response from God, but having done so, God went to work immediately. The prayer was made on Saturday. Monday, action God had taken, and it is now completed, and the path is completely open for that person. Prayer is a powerful thing. Prayer will pull down the strongholds in your family. Prayer will pull down the strongholds in the church. Prayer will pull down the strongholds on your job. You are going to pull down the stronghold. Satan has his own block. Satan has got his own little dominion, even in the church. Satan has his own little dominion in your family. I want you to know, it's time to tell Satan, "Get out, Satan!" It's time to stop letting Satan kick you around. When I was a little boy, there was a boy in my classroom. He used to beat up on me every day. I was scared of him. One day I was hungry, and I had forgot all about him, and he began to mess with me. He shouldn't have messed with a hungry boy.

Something about a little bit of fasting.

The same boy began to pick on me like he always used to do. I turned around and gave him a left-hand jab, and he fell on the ground. I heard somebody crying back there. When I heard him back there crying, I looked back and saw, Oh, I got him! I want you to know that's what we are going to do to the devil. I am not going to run. I will give him a left-hand jab. I was scared of that boy! He used to work on me every day. I'd come home every day messed up from school. But I want you to know, after I gave him that left jab, he became humble under me. I had him under my feet! I had him under my subjection. Satan is nothing but a bluff. Satan is nothing but a liar. He is a liar! Let's put our feet on him!

Satan is scared of one thing, and that is the Word of God. He trembles at the name of Jesus. Use it. Get that big stick and hit Satan over the head every day with prayer, Saints.

"If my people will humble," we don't want to labor in putting down the strongholds, the hard strongholds that Satan has got. Stronghold means he has a block. He owns this block, this block. He's in that block, in your block. He is in your life, and he is trying to capture as many bodies, souls that he might possibly can capture. These demons are fallen angels. They were once in heaven. They are fallen. They are treacherous. There are yet demons not a loose that will be turned a loose later on. These spirits, they are going to come and you thinking that you are having a hard time, you are thinking it's bad now, but if you notice carefully, it's bad now, worse than it was 30 years ago, uh? It's worse than 60 years ago. It's getting worse and worse and worse.

So these spirits are trying to capture as many souls that they possibly can capture, but Jesus has made it possible that we will not be captured in the realm of Satan and God has said, "If my people would pray, I will hear from heaven. I will heal their land." You say, "I don't have land."

[God said]: I will heal their body. I will heal their home. I will heal their job. I will heal their family. I will heal because I am God! I wound because I am God. I will kill because I am God Almighty. I will make alive because I am God Almighty.

It's time to rise up and fight!

How do I fight, Pastor? Prayer.

Put on the whole armor of God, so you can withstand the power and the tricks of Satan. You don't get this message on the dance floor. You don't get this message at the bar trying to win a girl. You've got to come to the house of God. In the midst of the heavy burden and whatnot that come against you, you've got to come to the house of God.

When Satan had David on the rope, like Muhammad Ali had his day -- they had David on the rope. He almost slipped. David said, "My foot." As David looked at the world and their accomplishment and all of those things and Satan began to work with him and began to show him, Look, you may as well come this way, and he said he stumbled and made it to the church. And when David got into the church, he began to hear the message and not only hear it, he began to read. This is just only temporary, but you, David, I haven't forgot you. You loved ones here, I haven't forgotten you. It's God talking now.

David said, My foot almost slipped. Satan almost had me. I almost went on the left side, but I began to get a little strength as I made my way into the house of God and I sat and I heard the Word.

When you heard the Word, you got deliverance.

When you hear the Word, you are delivered.

When I heard the Word, I was delivered!

I am so glad that I heard the Word, not only did I hear it, I read it for myself. I read it. I accepted it. When I accepted it, I was delivered.

Let's praise God! He is a good God! What a mighty God!

David said, My foot almost slipped. I almost. I want you to know, the enemy, he don't have any mercy. He is a good shooter. He is a sharpshooter, he don't miss. So therefore, you need the whole armor of God. Let's praise God! Let's say, "Halleluiah!"

CHURCH: Halleluiah!

BISHOP SWILLEY: Prayer. You need the whole armor that you may be able to stand, that you may be able to overcome. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. This is a spiritual war going on. Put on the whole armor and the breast plate of faith, the helmet of salvation. You need all of these things to stand.

When things are going good, sometimes we forget about our Creator, but I want you to know, it's good to keep God in mind when things are going good, and I tell you one thing, it's time to send up some prayer because after a while, you are going to reach up and grab a prayer off the shelf.

Can I lay up prayers?

Yes, you can.

It's time to lay a prayer because there is a storm coming over the ocean and moving in our direction, and we want to be able to stand the storm that is coming in our direction; the storm that is coming against our children; storm that is coming against our mind, body and soul; storm that is coming against our finances. There is a storm coming, and the only way you are going to stand is through prayer. You are able to stand because of prayer.

You say, Listen, I go to church.

Do you pray? I go to church.

Do you believe?

If you pray, you will get a little bit of faith. But don't come to church and don't pay attention. That's another trick of the enemy. You have lost.

Out on the dance floor, out on the beach, you don't get it. Oh, no. At the bar, you don't get it.

What is the use of coming and you don't pay attention?

The rich man and the poor man came together, and God put it that way. The rich is to handle the money, and the poor to handle the work to balance it out. When the rich has it all, there is a problem. When the rich man wouldn't assist the hungry beggar -- they both died. Evidently the rich man didn't pay attention. Evidently the rich man didn't hear. Evidently the rich man didn't believe. Instead of him helping the man, he sic the dog on him, and the dog licked his sores.

So when the time comes for him to die, and he did die, he didn't even know where he was going. And when the beggar -- the poor beggar only asking for food, he died, also. And in heaven he opened his eyes in the bosom of Abraham and having done so, he is safe and sound and comfortable. But the rich man that didn't pay attention,

the rich man that didn't realize, "I have to go the same way," in hell, he opened his eyes in excruciating pain.

He said, Listen, will you send him here that he may dip his finger into water, and let a drop cool my parching tongue?

He is trying to make deals now, and that's what I am trying to get over to you. Deals are to be made while you are moving around, while the blood is running warm in your veins. God is ready to make a deal, but God don't call it a deal. He calls it "covenant". God is ready, but we say, "Well, next time." And Satan has won again. He said, "Well, there is a gulf between you and Lazarus. He can't come there, and you can't come there."

"All right. I accept that. I got five brothers back there. Send him there to preach to them."

God said, "Un-un. We got preachers there. They have been preaching like they preached to you, and you didn't hear. Rich man, they preached to you, and you said you don't want that stuff, that mess."

But I want you to understand, he said, "Listen, I have preachers back there," and they are to minister, but we don't want to hear because we are too wrapped up with carnality. Carnality is against God. If you want something from God, get ready to give something to God, and it's not money.

God wants your soul. God wants your mind. God wants your body. When he gets them three, he is going to give you his spirit. And that's why I heard somebody say today, "I thank God for the precious gift," not "the gift," the precious gift of the Holy Ghost! I didn't buy it. I can't sell it. I can't give it away. I don't know how I got it in here, but I got it like the Bible says, and it's a gift! It's a gift come from heaven. Can't nobody take it. Can't nobody give it. Don't nobody know where it is. It is a spirit of God. The thing is we don't know how precious it is.

I made a little parable. Some of us are in a jungle, and there is a huge big animal that we have no control over, and we are down in some big crater hole. Finally, our government located us. Before the government came, the animal was eating up a lot of us. When we heard the voice of the animal, we trembled because we had no power over it. Then the plane comes. They said, We are only able to carry 20, and there are 30. And then they said, we are going according to the number that you got. And so they ask, "Where is your number?"

And you put it forth, and you get on the plane. Another one comes up and wants to get on the plane, but they don't have their card. The card is the Holy Ghost. The last one gets on the plane, and as the plane is going up, the terrible animal is reaching at them.

Can you imagine how stressful?

You see that, barely escaping out of the mouth of this terrible animal, and this animal is the devil. And we don't know how barely that we are going to escape. Only God knows that. So, therefore, trim your lamp. Clean your globe. Pray a little bit more -- put a little more oil in your lamp, and the only way you will make it in, carry a little bit extra oil. The oil is a little more extra prayer. Where there is prayer going on, there is deliverance.

I am so glad that I got on board. When you look back and you see where God has brought you from, all you can do is praise him. Blessed is the person that takes some time to look back. A lot of us grab our blessing and take off. But you got to hang around with the blesser because he got more to give than what he gave you, far greater than what he gave you.

We are going to deal with this thing. We are going to knock a dent in it every time until we knock a hole in it, and you will see some great things. You will see some mighty things, and the things that you are going to see, you cannot even explain them because they are more than you can really comprehend. I want you to understand God cares about us. I said, "God cares about us." All he wants us to do is humble ourselves and pray. I have been praying! Seems like nothing, but I want you to understand, every time you pray, you are knocking a dent into the enemy's wall. Every time you cry and pray, you are destroying the work of the enemy. And early one morning, you are going to wake up and say, I got it! I am healed. I am delivered. I got a job. I got my house. I got everything. I got it! God paid me a visit.

[God said]: I heard the prayer before you started praying.

God knows what we are going to say before we start praying. "I heard you before you started. I know your needs. I am sending it on." The enemy is standing in the way. You have to pray him out. I can't do nothing until he gets out. You got to get him out. I can't do nothing until you pray. Wipe your eyes. It's all right to cry. Wipe your eyes and pray. Don't pity yourself, that is another form of the enemy. Don't pity yourself. "I am the only one," no, that's another lie. You aren't the only one. "I am the only one," that's what the great man of God said, but you are not the only one. Oh, I got my foot, half my foot been cut off. I am pitying myself. Later on God shows you, there are some with no foot and no legs. Years going without transportation, and there is some only got the wheelchair for their transportation. You are not the only one. I don't care how bad your situation, you are not the only one. There is somebody in the same situation or worse.

When you pray, don't be selfish with your prayers. Include somebody in your prayer? That's why I am able to stand before you, because somebody -- I said "somebody." I don't really know who but somebody prayed. That's why I am standing before you today. The enemy desired to grind me up like sausage. He meant to sift my body like wheat, but somebody prayed, somebody sent up a prayer for me.

Somebody had me on their mind. Somebody cried out to God for me. It behoves us to cry out for somebody else. When you pray for somebody, God also will reward you of your needs. Never get down with a selfish prayer. Add somebody in your prayer because there is a war going on, and that war is a powerful spiritual war going on. You got to do it! You will see that sunlight will get better and better every day.

What do you mean?

Sometimes God do instantly and then he do gradually, but nevertheless, the sun is shining, and bask in the sun, bask in it because God has granted us that day.

Song: I found the answer, I learned to pray with faith to guide me,
along the way. The sun is shining over me each day. I found the
answer, and I learned to pray.

I was weak and weary, and I had gone astray, walking in the darkness, I could not find the way. Then a light came shining to lead me from distress. You know, all my sins was forgiven, and I was free from that.

I found the answer! I learned to pray.

Keep your Bible with you, read it every day. Always count your blessings, stop and always pray. Learn to keep on believing, and faith will see you through. Now you seek to know contentment, and it will come to you.

I found the answer, I learned to pray, with faith to guide me along the way. The sun is shining over me each day. I found the answer, and I learned to pray.

Learn to pray.

Those that want prayer, come.

The answer to all our problems is prayer. The answer to our burden and our sorrow is prayer, and when you pray today, don't get impatient and say, "Nothing is happening." God has already got it all stated, typed up and ready. Your healing is already ready. Your financial burden is already delivered. Just don't give up.

(Prayer was made for those in the prayer line.)

CLOSING REMARKS AND DISMISSAL:

BISHOP SWILLEY: We are glad that you stayed and what have you and you came, and I hope that you got something from the message. We are going to fight, and the best way to fight is prayer. Let's let this week coming up be a prayer week, and we are going to pray for somebody else because there are people that need your prayers. You know about praying and they don't. Let's pray for them.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word today. We ask you, Lord, to give us strength where we are weak. Give us a heart for others. Give us a word to cry out for others. Lord, strengthen us and bless us, and we thank you for it right now in Jesus' name.

Lord, our children, we ask you, Lord, to please have mercy and bring our children back to us. Lord, we thank you for our children, and ask you to deliver them from the unreasonable man. Oh, Lord our Lord, and deliver them from the sickness and disease that is lurking the streets in the earth and hide them under your wings of mercy. Bring them back to us and save them from this untoward generation, and place them in heavenly places. They don't see, they don't understand, they don't feel, but give them a heart of flesh that they may see and feel again.

We praise you for the happiness and joy that you brought.

This I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Lord, I pray, restore us. Revive us and unite us, and make us whole. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.