

Praying in the Spirit

- What does it mean to pray in the Spirit?
- How important is it that we pray in the Spirit?
- What can we do to assure we are praying in the Spirit?
- What happens to prayers that are not prayed in the Spirit?
- Is praying in the Spirit the same as praying in tongues?

Those are some of the questions you should be able to answer after you read the notes on this topic.

First let's observe what God says about **praying in the Spirit**. We find this description in two passages in the New Testament with one parallel passage in the OT:

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; **praying in the Holy Spirit**; (Jude 1:20-note)

With all prayer and petition **pray at all times in the Spirit** ("in the power of the Holy Spirit" - [NLT](#); "by means of the Spirit" - [Wuest](#)) and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Ephesians 6:18-note)

In a prophetic OT passage, which will be fulfilled in the believing [remnant](#) of Jews at the [Second Coming](#) of the [Messiah](#), the prophet Zechariah writes...

And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **the Spirit of grace and of supplication** (prayer), so that they will look on Me (Messiah) Whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. (Zechariah 12:10)

Paul also describes the role of the Holy Spirit and prayer in Romans 8 but this is not us praying in the Spirit but the Spirit Himself praying for us

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (Ro 8:26-note)

(Amplified Version) So too the [Holy] Spirit comes to our aid and bears us up in our weakness; for we do not know what prayer to offer nor how to offer it worthily as we ought, but the Spirit Himself goes to meet our supplication and pleads in our behalf with unspeakable yearnings and groanings too deep for utterance.

Although we will answer this in much greater detail below, how can a believer continually pray in the Spirit? Although it might seem paradoxical, the simple answer is that we can pray in the Spirit...

- By continually depending on the Spirit!
- By continually being filled with the Spirit!
- By continually being controlled by the Spirit!

May the prayer of the Prince of Preachers, **C H Spurgeon**, also be our frequent prayer so that our praying will avail much for the King and Kingdom...

Lord, teach us to pray. Put the thoughts into our minds, the desires into our hearts, and the very words into our lips, if it be your will, that so all through it may be praying in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT
100% OUR RESPONSIBILITY
100% GOD'S ENABLING ABILITY

Jesus taught that "It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (John 6:63) Later Jesus said "I am the Vine, you are the branches; he who [abides](#) in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) **Nothing** means just that -- absolutely nothing of eternal value, nothing that endures forever! And that includes praying (cp "fruitful prayers" - Rev 8:3,4-[note](#))! And so to [abide](#) in Jesus in order to bring forth spiritual fruit

(including praying in the Spirit) that endures (cp "remain" = Jn 15:16) calls for continual dependence on "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7) "Who gives life" (to our prayers).

Paul taught that "it is God Who is at work ([energeo](#) in the [present tense](#) ~ "continually working, continually energizing") in you (via His indwelling Spirit - 1Cor 6:19-note), both to [will](#) ([present tense](#)) and to work ([present tense](#)) for His good pleasure." (Phil 2:13-note)

The **New Living Translation** paraphrases Phil 2:13 as "God is (continually) working in you, (continually) giving you the **desire** to obey Him and (continually giving you) the **power** to do what pleases Him." What pleases our Father in heaven? In the context of our present study, clearly one of the things that pleases Him is when we talk with Him, communing with Him. And so one aspect of Spirit initiated and empowered work in us is **praying in the Spirit**. But if we leave it there, it sounds like it all depends on God, and that we are simply left to "Let go, let God" but that is not Biblically accurate. Yes, it is true that if we were left to ourselves, we would not seek to speak to our Father unless His Spirit in us first energized us to do so. However we need to "balance the equation" so to speak. Paul does this in Philippians 2:12-note which clearly shows that our responsibility is to "**work out** (our) salvation in fear and trembling." (**Work out** = [present imperative](#) = command to continually, as a lifestyle work it out - [See our abject need for the Spirit](#) regarding our ability to obey any of God's commands!) In short we are to work out what God's Spirit works in! Is this somewhat mysterious? Yes, but it is totally Scriptural. As Jerry Bridges says we are 100% dependent and 100% responsible. And in regard to prayer we are 100% dependent on the Spirit and at the same time 100% responsible to pray!

Along the same line of reasoning it is notable that the verbs "**praying**" (**praying in the Spirit** - Jude 1:20) and **pray at all times in the Spirit** (Ephesians 6:18) are both in the [present tense](#) which is an exhortation to pray continually, much like Paul says in 1Thes 5:17-note where he commands us to "**Pray** ([present imperative](#)) without ceasing." Now, think with me for a moment. Is there any way we as fallen, even redeemed, human beings can pray CONTINUALLY ([present tense](#))? This is a "trick question" because the answer is "No" and "Yes." Of course there is no way we can pray continually depending on our *natural* strength! However, what is impossible for men *naturally*, is possible for believers *supernaturally*, **praying in** (dependence on) **the Spirit**.

When we are filled with self, we cannot pray in the Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, He can give us the desire and the power to pray in a manner pleasing to the Father. (see note on Ephesians 5:18) When we are walking in reliance on our own fleshly, natural strength, we cannot pray in the Spirit. When we are walking by the Spirit, we are able to pray in the Spirit. (see [notes](#) on Gal 5:16).

If you observe the context of the exhortation to '**pray at all times in the Spirit**' (Eph 6:18), you will notice that this exhortation is simply the end of a long list of commands and exhortations which flow forth from the verse I like to refer as the "headwaters" so to speak, Ephesians 5:18-note. Too often in reading Ephesians 5:18, we lose sight of the fact that everything Paul calls us to do beginning in Ephesians 5:19 through Ephesians 6:20 is completely dependent on the believer first being filled with (submitted to and controlled by) the Holy Spirit. It follows that the only way to "**pray at all times in the Spirit**" (Eph 6:18), is by continually relying on the the filling of the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. It follows in turn that ONLY Spirit filled believers can truly **pray in the Spirit**! Finally, it follows that we need to be very careful not to grieve the Spirit (Ephesian 4:30-note) or quench the ("fire of") the Spirit (1Th 5:19-note). See [Wiersbe's discussion of "fire"](#) in the OT picture of praying in the Spirit), for when we do, we cannot pray in the Spirit!

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

In the following section we will record the thoughts of many great men of God in regard to what **praying in the Spirit** means to them. When you finish reading the wisdom of these godly men, you should have a firm grasp of what it means to pray in the Spirit. Then there is only one thing left to do...PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!

Warren Wiersbe gives a wonderful depiction of **praying in the Spirit** as foreshadowed in the Tabernacle - "In the Old Testament tabernacle, there was a small golden altar standing before the veil, and here the priest burned the incense (Ex. 30:1-10; Luke 1:1-11). The **incense** is a picture of **prayer**. It had to be mixed according to God's plan and could not be counterfeited by man. The **fire** on the altar is a picture of the **Holy Spirit**, for it is He who takes our prayers and "*ignites*" them in the will of God. It is possible to pray fervently in the flesh and never get through to God. It is also possible to pray quietly in the Spirit and see God's hand do great things."([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Spurgeon in his comments on Jude 1:20 writes that Jude "has told us about the one foundation, now he bids us build thereon: "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith." "Praying." That is the next thing; there is no preservation like that which is given by God in response to believing prayer (**Ed**: So one element of prayer in the Spirit in Spurgeon's mind is that it is praying with faith). "**Praying in the Holy Ghost**" There is a kind of praying which is without the Holy Ghost, and it speedeth not (will not prosper or have success; will not advance one's enterprise). There is a praying which is the breath of God in man (**Ed**: Spirit in Greek is

pneuma which literally means "breath"), returning whence it came; this will keep us from falling, and bring us untold blessings."

Spurgeon - The prayers, however, must be deeply spiritual, written on the heart by the Holy Ghost, and presented with energy of His creating. Formal, lifeless petitions are but a Chinese painted fortress, but **praying in the Holy Ghost** is an impregnable castle.

Praying in the Spirit is NOT praying in tongues (glossalalia). Let me quote Dr John Piper- "The first thing to notice is the very close parallel passage in Ephesians 6:18, where Paul says, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit." The reason this is important is that it shows that "praying in the Spirit" is not a special form of prayer—like speaking in tongues. We can tell this is so because Paul says in Ephesians 6:18 that we should pray "at all times" in the Spirit. In other words, all prayer should be "in the Spirit." Praying in the Holy Spirit is not one form among several. It is the way all prayer is to be offered."

George Lawrence Lawlor - Praying in the Holy Spirit is not speaking in tongues, but is "praying out of hearts and souls that are indwelt, illuminated, and filled with the Holy Spirit."

IN THE SPHERE OF THE SPIRIT

In the Spirit means in the sphere of the Spirit. Or picture it as "in the atmosphere of the Spirit." So just as a fish in a bowl of water functions best when he is in the sphere ("atmosphere") of the water, so too a follower of Jesus functions best in the sphere of the Spirit. In fact, the only way a believer can function "supernaturally" is when he or she is "in the (sphere of the) Spirit." The Spirit of Christ is the energizing Source of our supernatural spiritual life, including our (supernatural) prayer life. God is a Trinity and so it follows that prayer involves all three members of the the Godhead. We speak to the Father, through the Son and by the Spirit's enabling power. As **John Owen** wrote "Everything God does He does as the triune God. Each Person of the Trinity is involved in every action of God. Yet at the same time each Person has a special role to fulfill in that work." ([Pneumatologia](#) - Owen's Summa Bonum on The Holy Spirit)

**The Bible formula is that we pray to the Father,
through the Son, and in the Spirit.**

-- Warren Wiersbe

Kenneth Wuest explains that **in the Holy Spirit** is what is described in Greek as "locative of sphere." That is, all true prayer is exercised in the sphere of the Holy Spirit, motivated and empowered by Him. That means that if the saint expects to really pray, he must be Spirit-filled or Spirit-controlled (Eph 5:18-note). The fullness of the Holy Spirit is the prerequisite to effectual praying. The Spirit, when yielded to, leads us in our petitions and generates within us the faith necessary to acceptable and answered prayer. The expression "praying in the Holy Spirit" is also instrumental of means. We pray by means of the Holy Spirit, in dependence upon Him."

Paul frequently describes believers as [in Christ](#), which is also "locative of sphere." Pastor **Alan Carr** helps us understand the picture Paul is trying to convey to his readers when he says we are "[in Christ](#)." **Carr** explains "In the Greek, this phrase (**Ed**: *in Christ*) is known as a "**locative of sphere**." A "**locative**" tells us where something is. The "**sphere**" speaks of a thing's location in relationship to other things. So, when the Bible says that we are "**in Christ**," it means that we live *within the sphere of Christ*. In other words, Jesus Christ is that which "surrounds us." No matter where we go, we cannot step out of Jesus. You can step out of a circle, but you cannot step out of a sphere (**Ed**: but see following discussion of "in the Spirit"). A sphere surrounds all that is within it. In like manner, Jesus Christ totally surrounds all those who are in Him. When you consider our location with regards to the area of our security, we are eternally safe because we cannot step out of the sphere of Christ. No matter where we run we still within His sphere and we cannot escape from Him. When we consider our position within the sphere of Christ with regards to our daily walk, it reminds us that every step occurs within the sphere of our relationship to Jesus Christ. Every action, every thought, every deed should be considered in the light of who we are, Who's we are and where we are. Because we are "in Christ," that is, ever within the sphere of His presence, His influence and His will, we (should strive to) conform every area of our lives to His will. Simply stated, because we are "in Him," we should live like we are "in Him."

Now, **Carr's** analogy breaks down somewhat in regard to the Spirit, because while a believer can never NOT be "in Christ," it is possible for a believer to not be "in the Spirit." What do I mean? While nothing can break our **covenant** with the Spirit, we can grieve and/or quench the Spirit which breaks our **communion** with Him. When we sin, we in effect "[short circuit](#)" His supernatural power supply including His leading and guiding and enabling us to pray in the will of the Father and in a manner which is pleasing to Him. So in that sense we can take ourselves out of the "sphere" of the Spirit's influence. The remedy of course is sincere confession and sure repentance (1John 1:9-[note](#), Proverbs 28:13-[note](#)).

Tony Evans explains it this way - IF YOU have ever seen a fish out of water, you know that it just flops around, wiggling and jumping all over the place. If it's out of water, it's also out of where it's supposed to be. It's out of its intended environment. The fish is

trying to move but it can't go anywhere because it's not in the environment it was made to be in. So it flops and twists and flips, absolutely going nowhere. Why? Because it's trying to be fishy in a nonwater environment and it wasn't created for that. So no matter how much flipping and flopping it does, all it's doing is running out of breath. The fish will die because it is not in its home. A lot of Christians are flipping and flopping, trying to do better, but we are running out of breath and getting tired because we are not doing it in the right environment. The environment for living our Christian lives has to be the Spirit.

William Barclay on praying in the Spirit - "Let the Spirit be the atmosphere in which you pray." The reference is clearly not to our spirit (cf "spirit of the mind" Ep 4:23-[note](#)) as if the prayer were initiated by some inward devoutness on our part. Instead Paul calls for spiritual warfare praying (Eph 6:18) (and all praying for that matter) to be in the sphere of influence of the Holy Spirit, which in context would be seen in the one who is filled with or controlled by the Spirit, continually being strengthened by the Spirit, Who enables such prayer to proceed forth and Who Alone truly inspires such heaven sent prayer. If we are continually in a state of resisting, grieving, quenching or lying to the Holy Spirit, we should not be surprised that we seldom are stimulated to pray at moments notice. For example, someone may be describing an affliction, trial or some other spiritual attack and feel compelled to offer to pray and petition God on their behalf, whether you're on the sideline of the soccer field, in the hall between services at church, on the telephone, etc. How often do you find yourself led to pray for others when they are clearly describing assaults from the enemy?

Be alert like a good soldier of Christ Jesus for those **kairos** **opportunities** for once they have passed, they cannot be relived. But if you are **filled with the Spirit, walking in the Spirit**, speaking to others in psalms and hymns, etc, you will be in a sensitive state, and when the Spirit broadcast His **"SOS"** on the **FM Band**, you immediately receive because of you are spiritually ready. These kinds of alert prayers are undoubtedly some of the contents on the golden altar before the Lord in heaven, John reminding us that one day in the future the following scene will transpire...

And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to **the prayers of all the saints** (**Ed**: prayers offered "in the Spirit") upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with **the prayers of the saints**, went up before God out of the angel's hand. (Re 8:3, 4-see [notes Re 8:3; 8:4](#))

John MacArthur explains that "To **pray in the Spirit** is to pray in the name of Christ, to pray consistent with His nature and will. To pray in the Spirit is to pray in concert with the Spirit, who "helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Ro 8:26, 27-[notes](#)). As the "Spirit of grace and of supplication" (Zech. 12:10), the Holy Spirit continually prays for us; and for us to pray rightly is to pray as He prays, to join our petitions to His and our will to His. It is to line up our minds and desires with His mind and desires, which are consistent with the will of the Father and the Son. To be "filled with the Spirit" (Ep 5:18-[note](#)) and to walk in His leading and power is to be made able to pray in the Spirit, because our prayer will then be in harmony with His. As we submit to the Holy Spirit, obeying His Word and relying on His leading and strength, we will be drawn into close and deep fellowship with the Father and the Son. (Ephesians - MacArthur Commentary)

Although there is some repetition, here is another quote from MacArthur on praying in the Spirit - Praying in the Spirit has nothing to do with speaking in tongues. Some people have tried to make that claim, but you cannot introduce speaking in tongues into this verse. Jude 20 refers to "praying in the Holy Spirit." Praying in the Spirit is the same as praying in the name of Christ—praying in a manner consistent with who He is and what His will is. Learn to pray in concert with the Spirit. Make your prayers a duet with the One who intercedes for you. Romans 8:26–27 says, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he [God] that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." He hears and answers. While you live the Christian life, the Spirit of God within you prays on your behalf. He always prays the right prayer and receives the right answer. That's why verse 28 says, "All things work together for good." That's not an accident. Praying in the Spirit is simply making your own prayers consistent with the mind and the will of the Spirit. **The method - How do you make your prayers consistent with the Spirit?** By walking in the fullness of the Spirit. As your life is filled with the Spirit, as you walk in obedience to the Spirit, and as you are constantly communing with God, the Spirit of God will govern your thoughts so that your prayers will be in harmony with Him. What a tremendous thing it is to know that I can join my prayers with the Spirit of God and can cry Abba Father from the depths of my heart and know that He hears and answers: The one pervasive goal of our prayer life should be to pray in the Spirit. Zechariah 12:10 calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of grace and of supplications." That's no different than praying in Jesus' name. In Galatians 4:6 the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of his [the Father's] Son." Our lives are to be an open communion with God. (The Believer's Armor - Ephesians 6:10-24).

Related Resources - See Dr MacArthur's sermons "[Praying at All Times](#)" and "[The Armour of God: Praying At All Times](#)")

Let me give you a real time illustration of **achurch praying in the Spirit** from the **Global Prayer Digest**, July 31, 2015 - "China is

now poised to send missionaries cross-culturally. God is calling individuals to “go to the ends of the earth.” The church in China has a keen awareness of dependence upon God and a willingness to suffer, both valuable assets in their global missions effort. **They are also a praying church; in fact more than 10 times more people use this Global Prayer Digest in Mandarin than in English.** - See more at ([Global Prayer Digest](#)). I pray you are as convicted (in a motivating, not condemning sense) as I am! Spirit filled churches are radical churches, continually praying in the Holy Spirit!

Oswald Chambers - The prayer of the feeblest saint on earth **who lives in the Spirit** and keeps right with God is a terror to Satan. The very powers of darkness are paralyzed by prayer; no spiritual séance can succeed in the presence of a humble praying saint. No wonder Satan tries to keep our minds fussy in active work till we cannot think in prayer.

Wesley L Duewel - Prayers **prayed in the Spirit** never die until they accomplish God's intended purpose. His answer may not be what we expected, or when we expected it, but God often provides much more abundantly than we could think or ask. He interprets our intent and either answers or stores up our prayers. Sincere prayers are never lost. Energy, time, love, and longing can be endowments that will never be wasted or go unrewarded.

Spurgeon - What a God is he thus to hear the prayers of those who come to him when they have pressing wants, but neglect him when they have received a mercy; who approach him when they are forced to come, but who almost forget to address him when mercies are plentiful and sorrows are few. Let his gracious kindness in hearing such prayers touch our hearts, so that we may henceforth be found “Praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**” ([Complete Devotional](#))

Spurgeon - It is in or through God that we are able to praise. We praise as well as pray in the Spirit.

Spurgeon - In the black country of England, you who have traveled will have observed fires which never in your recollection have been quenched. I believe there are some which have been kept burning for more than fifty years, both night and day, every day in the year. They are never allowed to go out, because, we are informed that the manufacturers would find it amazingly expensive again to get the furnace to its needed red heat. Indeed, the blast furnace, I suppose would all but ruin the proprietor if it were allowed to go out once every week, he would probably never get it up to its right heat until the time came for letting the fire out again. Now, as with these tremendous furnaces which must burn every day, or else they will be useless, they must be kept burning or else. **It will be hard to get them up to the proper heat, so ought it to be in all the Churches of God, they should be as flaming fires both night and day, chaldron after chaldron of the coal of earnestness should be put to the furnace, all the fuel of earnestness which can be gathered from the hearts of men should be cast upon the burning pile. The heavens should be always red with the glorious illumination, and then, then might you expect to see the Church prospering in her divine business, and hard hearts melted before the fire of the Spirit. Continue, then, in prayer. Never let your fire go out.** But why? Why should the Church always be in prayer? Understand, we do not mean by this that men ought to leave their business, forsake their shops and neglect their household, to be always supplicating. There were some fanatics in the early Church who gave up everything that they might be always praying; we know what the apostle would have said to them for did he not say, “If any man will not work, neither let him eat?” “There are some lazy people who like praying better than working, let them learn that the Lord accepteth not this at their hands. Did not the Master, even when he was on earth, after he had preached a sermon in Simon Peter’s boat — did he not as soon, as ever he was done, say to Peter, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught?” to show that work, hard work, the hardest of work is quite in keeping with the hearing and the preaching of the Word and that no man has any right to forsake his calling to which God has appointed him in his providence, under pretense of seeking the Lord. Never stain one duty with the blood of another. It is quite possible that you may continue in your labor and yet continue in prayer. You may not always be in the exercise but you may always be in the spirit of prayer. **If there shall not always be iron in the furnace to melt, yet let there always be the fire to melt it, if not always shooting the arrow up to heaven, yet always keep the bow well stringed, so shall you always be archers, though not always shooting; so shall you always be men of prayer, though not always in the exercise of praying.** (Excerpt from his ["A Sermon for the Week of Prayer"](#) on Colossians 4:2)

Kent Hughes - The essence of prayer is the heart drawing near to God (James 4:8). Prayer is the soul’s desire to come to Him, to receive His love, to feel His power as we conform to His will. This is exactly what Paul’s soldier in spiritual armor does. Every piece is in place. The spiritual forces of wickedness approach, and there will be lethal battle. But first the soldier falls to his knees and **prays in the Spirit with all kinds of prayers** (cf. Ephesians 6:18). There is only one view more welcome than the backside of the Devil—and that is the face of God!—[Preaching the Word: James](#)

Stephen Olford - There is never a moment in our lives when we are not in urgent danger. The devil is ever ready to attack when we stop praying. Without prayer we are utterly defenseless.....“Put on the whole armor of God.... Praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph. 6:11, 18). Oh, that God would write on our hearts those two little words **constancy** and **urgency** in prayer!

Spurgeon - The second most needful defensive principle in the church is devotion. “Praying in the Holy Ghost” is the weapon with which the hosts of the Lord will put to rout the armies of the alien. The prayers of saints are the mighty artillery with which the walls

of our Jerusalem are protected. Supplication is a cannon which throws tremendous bolts against the advancing foe, as Sennacherib knew when Hezekiah pleaded with God. The prayers, however, must be deeply spiritual, written on the heart by the Holy Ghost, and presented with energy of his creating. Formal, lifeless petitions are but a Chinese painted fortress, but praying in the Holy Ghost is an impregnable castle. Those "groanings which cannot be uttered" are pieces of ordnance which make the gates of hell to tremble. We must put our hearts under the influence of the blessed Spirit of God, and then lift them up in continued intercession before God, and there can be no fear about the preservation of our minds from the error of the wicked. A praying church soon tries the spirits of false prophets, and casts them forth as evil. I have far more faith in prayer than in controversy. Keep the prayer meetings right, maintain private prayer with earnestness, and we may laugh to scorn all the sophisms of unbelievers and deceivers. ([A Weighty Charge - Jude 1:21](#))

Jamieson - The Holy Spirit teaches what we are to pray for, and how. None can pray aright save by being in the Spirit, that is, in the element of His influence. ([Jude - Commentary Critical and Explanatory](#))

Hiebert explains that "In the Holy Spirit marks the sphere of the praying, "as if immersed in the Holy Spirit and shut off from the world's evil." The picture is parallel to Ro 8:26-27-note where Paul portrays the Holy Spirit as prompting, purifying, and directing prayer in harmony with the will of God. It is not a mere ritual but "praying out of hearts and souls that are indwelt, illuminated, and filled by the Holy Spirit." ([Second Peter-Jude: An Expositional Commentary](#))

Wuest adds that this phrase shows "how the saints are to build themselves up on their most holy faith. That is, prayer is the vital factor in the Christian life which activates all the other departments of the Christian experience."

Moffatt - The real experience and possession of the Holy Spirit inspires prayer, not any proud sense of superiority to others or any false independence towards God.

Spurgeon emphasizes the importance of our dependence on and guidance by the Holy Spirit in spiritual matters - you and I must see to it that **every act of worship which we perform is done in the Spirit** We must pray **in the Spirit**, sing **in the Spirit**, and preach **in the Spirit**. When I have sometimes heard the clerk say "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God," I have wondered whether it was not far more to the praise and glory of the organ or of the singing-pew, and when this is the case what a mockery it is! Only that music is sweet in God's ear which comes from the heart, and only that praise is accepted which is the work of his Spirit in the soul." (George Fox)

Blaikie on in the Spirit - True prayer is spiritual, and it is not true prayer unless by the Holy Spirit the heart is filled with heavenward longings and aspirations, changing our prayer from cold form to heartfelt realities. The ordinary habit of the soul should be prayerful, realizing the presence of God and looking for his grace and guidance. (Pulpit Commentary)

A C Gaebelein quips "we pray in the Spirit not for the Spirit."

G G Findlay - Christian prayer is always "**in the Spirit**," -- being offered in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, Who is the element of the believer's life in Christ, Who helps our infirmities and, virtually, intercedes for us (Ro 8:26-27-note)" ([The Epistle to the Ephesians](#))

Clarke - The prayer that is not sent up through the influence of the Holy Ghost is never likely to reach heaven. ([Jude Commentary](#))

Rob Morgan - We are praying **in the Spirit** when we sincerely bring before God those requests the Holy Spirit leads us to pray about with the earnestness and faith that the Holy Spirit gives.

Wiersbe - The Word of God and prayer certainly go together (Acts 6:4). Evangelist Billy Sunday used to give his converts three rules for success in the Christian life. Each day they were to read the Bible and let God talk to them. They were to pray; in other words, they were to talk to God. And they were to witness and talk to others about God. It would be difficult to improve on those rules. ([Be Alert 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude- Beware of the Religious Impostors](#))

Paul gives a similar instruction to the saints at Ephesus - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Eph 6:18-note)

For an interesting study, observe the NT uses of the phrase "**in the Holy Spirit**" which is found 8x in Scripture (in NAS) - Mk 12:36; Lk 10:21; Jn 1:33; Ro 9:1; 14:17; 2Cor 6:6; 1Th 1:5; Jude 1:20. The synonymous phrase "in the Spirit" is found 20x (in NAS - Amplified may be translated different) - Mt 22:43; Lk 1:17; 2:27; Acts 19:21; Ro 8:9; 1Cor 6:11; 14:16; Eph 2:22; 3:5; 4:23; 6:18; Phil 3:3; Col 1:8; 1Ti 3:16; 1Pet 3:18; 4:6; Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10

John Calvin has a good word on praying **in the Holy Spirit** - In the Spirit; as though he had said, that such is our sloth (disinclination to action, sluggishness; laziness; spiritual apathy and inactivity), and that such is the coldness of our flesh (Ed: **Beloved, cannot we all identify with Calvin's description!!!**), that no one can pray aright except he be roused by the Spirit of God; and

that we are also so inclined to diffidence (quality of being hesitant in acting or speaking through lack of self-confidence) and trembling, that no one dares to call God his Father, except through the teaching of the same Spirit; for from Him is solicitude (attentive care and protectiveness), from Him is ardor and vehemence (marked by intense emotion), from Him is alacrity (a cheerful readiness), from Him is confidence in obtaining what we ask (1Jn 5:14-15); in short, from Him are those unutterable groanings mentioned by Paul (Romans 8:26.) It is not, then, without reason that Jude teaches us, that no one can pray as he ought without having the Spirit as his guide. ([Jude 1 Calvin's Commentaries](#))

Spurgeon on in the Holy Spirit- Mark the grand characteristic of true prayer-"**In the Holy Spirit.**" The seed of acceptable devotion must come from heaven's storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. We must shoot the Lord's arrows back to Him. That desire which He writes upon our heart will move His heart and bring down a blessing, but the desires of the flesh have no power with Him. Praying in the Holy Ghost is praying in **fergency**. Cold prayers ask the Lord not to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency, plead not at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire as of lukewarm prayer-it is essential that it be red hot. It is praying **perseveringly**. The true suppliant gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent when God delays to answer. The longer the gate is closed, the more vehemently does he use the knocker, and the longer the angel lingers the more resolved is he that he will never let him go without the blessing. Beautiful in God's sight is tearful, agonizing, unconquerable importunity. It means praying **humbly**, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. It is His office to convince of sin, and so to bow us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We shall never sing *Gloria in excelsis* except we pray to *God De profundis*: out of the depths must we cry, or we shall never behold glory in the highest. It is **loving** prayer. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love-love to our fellow saints, and love to Christ. Moreover, it must be a prayer **full of faith**. A man prevails only as he believes. The Holy Spirit is the author of faith, and strengthens it, so that we pray believing God's promise. O that this blessed combination of excellent graces, priceless and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts (Ro 5:5-note)! **Most blessed Comforter, exert thy mighty power within us, helping our infirmities in prayer.** Amen (See below for his superb full sermon on "[Praying in the Holy Spirit](#)" - it will not be a waste of your time if you seek to learn to "pray in the Spirit!")

John Calvin - And as we commonly pray in a formal manner, he adds, **In the Spirit**; as though he had said, that such is our sloth, and that such is the coldness of our flesh, that no one can pray aright except he be roused by the Spirit of God...no one can pray as he ought without having the Spirit as his guide. ([Calvin's Commentary](#))

Matthew Henry commenting on Jude 20 - Prayer is the nurse of faith; the way to build up ourselves in our most holy faith is to continue instant in prayer, Ro 12:12. Our prayers are then most likely to prevail when we **pray in the Holy Ghost**, that is, under His guidance and influence, according to the rule of His word, with faith, fervency, and constant persevering importunity; this is **praying in the Holy Ghost**, whether it be done by or without a set prescribed form.

Adrian Rogers addresses some items that are clearly [impediments](#) to **praying in the Spirit**- The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight. Proverbs 15:8 - Sometimes prayer is not answered because we are not praying to God as a Father. We have never been saved. Sometimes prayer is not answered because we are not praying in the will of God (cp 1 John 5:14,15). We're saying, "My kingdom come. My will be done." (contrast Mt 6:10) Sometimes prayer is not answered because we have unconfessed, unrepented sin in our lives (Psalm 66:18). And sometimes prayer is not answered because we just don't pray. Change these things about your praying, and you'll see a big difference.

Illustration of Not Praying in the Spirit - After moving to a rural area, I discovered that my fax machine would transmit messages but could not receive them. Every incoming message was cut off and labeled with the frustrating words: "Communication Error. Line disconnected during reception." "Too much resistance and noise on your telephone line," the repairman said. After 2 hours of searching, splicing, and tightening connections, he had solved the problem. I have continued to ponder this situation as an illustration of my communication with God. It's easy to transmit my requests to Him, but much more difficult to receive His messages to me. My natural focus is on what I want to say rather than what I need to hear. If I allow the "resistance" of sin and the "noise" of the cares of life to build up, they disrupt my attention as I read the Bible, hear a sermon, or remain silent in prayer. When Jesus told a story about listening and responding to God's Word, He emphasized His point by saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mk. 4:9). Today is a fresh opportunity to clean up the line of communication with God. Let's give Him our undivided attention and listen carefully to Him in His Word. --DCM

Communication with the Lord
Involves much more than prayer,
For we must also read His Word
And listen to Him there. --Sper

Worldly static disrupts our communication with God.

Disciples Study Bible on in the Holy Spirit - Pray submissive to, filled with, attentive to, and utilizing the power of the Holy Spirit. Jude had just described people devoid of the Spirit. See on Ro 8:26-27-note.

Praying (**proseuchomai** from **pros** = toward, facing, before [emphasizing the direct approach of the one who prays in seeking God's face] + **euchomai** = originally to speak out, utter aloud, express a wish, then to pray or to vow. Greek technical term for invoking a deity) in the NT is always used of prayer addressed to God and means to speak consciously (with or without vocalization) to Him, with a definite aim (See study of noun **proseuche**). This verb also conveys an attitude of reverence when praying to Him. **Wuest** adds that the prefixed preposition **pros** "gives it the idea of definiteness and directness in prayer, with the consciousness on the part of the one praying that he is talking face to face with God...(thus proseuchomai) speaks also of the consciousness on the part of the one who prays, of the fact of God's presence and His listening ear."

Proseuchomai is in the **present tense** which calls praying without ceasing, at all times and all places (cf 1Th 5:17-note). Beloved, do not attempt to do this in your own power or out of a sense of legalism, for you are destined to fail. Spiritual praying ultimately can only be stirred and enabled by the Spirit Who lives within us. We must rely on Him for the spiritual energy to pray "present tense!" As an important aside, praying continually in the Spirit is tangible evidence of one's dependence on God.

Thomas Manton, the great Puritan expositor, has **twenty-three pages of commentary** on Jude 1:20,21-[see commentary](#).

Prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven but is getting God's will done on earth (cf 1Jn 5:14-15).

John Phillips - Praying in the Spirit does not mean going into a trance or speaking an ecstatic utterance. The Holy Spirit does not overpower our mental faculties. He directs, but He does not dominate. He never acts despotically. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Corinthians 14:32). The direction of the Holy Spirit is the ultimate solution to wandering, wicked, and worldly thoughts. He gently inclines our thoughts through channels He has in mind. He brings to our minds those passages of Scripture that are most appropriate to the moment. He brings to us the gentle assurance that our prayers are heard and that He controls all the factors of space and time that are involved in the answers to our prayers. Meeting up with the Holy Spirit, the ranks of the enemy melt away as smoke dissipates in the wind. They flee in terror, for they are desperately afraid of the Holy Spirit of God. (Exploring Ephesians)

Henry Blackaby - Praying in the Spirit - We are weak and do not know how we ought to pray. There is, however, some good news: "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit has an advantage over us — He already knows the will of God. When He prays for us, He is praying absolutely in agreement with the will of God. He then helps us know the will of God as we pray. For his sixth birthday, my oldest son Richard was old enough to have a bicycle. I looked all around for a bicycle. I found a blue Schwinn™. I bought it and hid it in the garage. Then I had a task — to convince Richard that he needed a blue Schwinn bike. For the next little while, we began to work with Richard. Richard decided that what he really wanted for his birthday was a blue Schwinn bike. Do you know what Richard got? Well, the bike was already in the garage. I just had to convince him to ask for it. He asked for it, and he got it!

What happens when you pray? The Holy Spirit knows what God has "in the garage." It is already there. The Holy Spirit's task is to get you to want it — to get you to ask for it. What will happen when you ask for things God already wants to give or do? You will always receive it. Why? Because you have asked according to the will of God. When God answers your prayer, He gets the glory and your faith is increased.

Is it important to know when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you? Yes! How do you know what the Holy Spirit is saying? I cannot give you a formula. I can tell you that you will know His voice when He speaks (John 10:4). You must decide that you only want His will. You must dismiss any selfish or fleshly desires of your own. Then, as you start to pray, the Spirit of God starts to touch your heart and cause you to pray in the direction of God's will. "It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

The Holy Spirit "will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13). When you pray, anticipate that the Holy Spirit already knows what God has ready for your life. He does not guide you on His own initiative; He tells you only what He hears from the Father. He guides you when you pray.

I always write down what God is saying to me when I pray and as I read His Word. I write down what I sense He is leading me to pray. As I begin to see what God is telling me about Himself, His purposes, and His ways, I often see a pattern begin to develop. As I watch the direction the Spirit is leading me to pray, I begin to get a clear indication of what God is saying to me. This process calls for spiritual concentration!

You may be asking the question: "But how do I know that the directions I am praying are the Spirit's leading and not my own selfish desires?" Do you remember what George Mueller said he does first in seeking God's directions? He said he tries to reach the point where he has no will of his own. (Experiencing God)

Spurgeon - Sunday-school teachers, your work requires you to begin with God: do not dare to go to the class even once without fervent **prayer in the Spirit**. When you have given the lesson, go straightway and ask God's blessing on it. Do not omit this even

once.

Spurgeon - I have already reminded you that the Holy Spirit has been given to teach us how to pray. Now the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God, and therefore he never moves us to pray for anything which God does not intend to give us. Prayer is often the shadow of God's coming blessing. Ere the divine decrees are fulfilled, they often cast their blessed shadow across the believer's heart by the **power of the Holy Spirit**, so that, **when the believer prays in the Spirit, he is only asking God to do what he has from all eternity determined to do.** If we came to the throne of grace with petitions which we had ourselves prepared, we might well tremble, but when we come with a **Spirit-written petition**, we may well "come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Geoff Thomas - [Praying in the Spirit](#)

Ray Pritchard - **Effective prayer requires sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.**

Paul says we are to pray "in the Spirit." That means "under the influence of the Holy Spirit." It helps me to think about it this way. Praying in the Spirit means following the Spirit's guidance as to when to pray. Because prayer itself is the language of heaven, the impulse to pray comes from the Holy Spirit. He not only invites us to pray, he also incites us to pray. Sometimes you will think, "I should pray about that." Don't ever brush that thought away. Do it. Go ahead and pray right then. Sometimes people may say, "I wish we could pray about that." Take that as a message from the Holy Spirit and go ahead and pray. These impulses to pray may come at any time . . .

- When we are on the phone . . .
- When we are talking with a friend . . .
- When we are listening to the radio . . .
- When we are sitting in church . . .
- When we are taking a deposition . . .
- When we are having a sleepless night . . .
- When we are getting ready for surgery . . .

If you think about praying, go ahead and pray. You don't have to pray out loud. You can pray to the Lord without speaking any words at all, and the Lord will hear you from heaven. When the Lord speaks to you and says, "Pray," don't say "No." Go ahead and pray.

When the Lord speaks to you and says, "Pray," don't say "No." Go ahead and pray.

And pray about the things the Lord lays on your heart. Don't be ashamed or worried that you won't say the right thing. The Holy Spirit knows your heart and intercedes for us with wordless groaning (Romans 8:26-27). He comes alongside to help us when we pray so that our feeble prayers rise with power and enter the courts of heaven to be carried to the Throne of Grace. As an old gospel song says, sometimes we just need to "have a little talk with Jesus." That song along says, "When you feel a little prayer wheel turning." It's hard to explain exactly what that means, but I know what that's like. You can be sure that the Lord is turning the "prayer wheel" in your heart and moving you to pray.

So let's not make this mysterious. Whenever you feel an inner urge to pray, do it! We would all pray a lot more every day if we became sensitive to the impulse of the Spirit in our lives. (Full message ["What If" - Ephesians 6:18-20](#))

RELATED RESOURCES ON PRAYER

- [Colossians 1:9 Commentary](#)
- [Colossians 4:12 Commentary](#)
- [Devotional on Prayer](#)
- [Guide to Praying for Missionaries](#)
- [Pithy Prayer Phrases](#)
- [Prayer - Greek Words for Prayer](#)
- [Prayer Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Prayer Hymns and Poems](#)
- [Prayer Quotes](#)
- [Spurgeon's Gems on Prayer](#)

James Rosscup - Praying, the central focus of the three phrases linked with keeping in God's love, is relevant to the others, as they are pertinent to genuine prayer. Praying is a prime factor in spiritual growth, and all fruitfulness in relation to God, as in love and joy (John 15:7-12). Peter has linked prayer closely with love (1Pet. 4:7-8). It is a spiritual reflex to pray for strength or guidance to wait

trustfully on God, as the psalmist reflects (Ps 119:43, 49, 74, 81-82). (An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God)

Example of How George Muller prepared himself to "pray in the Spirit" - When asked how much time he spent in prayer, [George Mueller's](#) reply was, "*Hours every day. But I live in the spirit of prayer. I pray as I walk and when I lie down and when I arise. And the answers are always coming. There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.*" [Mueller](#) once wrote in his diary...

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, the benefit of which I have not lost for more than fourteen years. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was **not** how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished....

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as a habitual thing, to give myself to prayer after having dressed myself in the morning. Now, I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed....

The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching as it were into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to supplication; so that, though I did not, as it were, give myself to prayer, but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less into prayer. When thus I have been for a while making confession or intercession or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it....

By breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart.

Praying in the Will of God - It is important for Christians to know the Word of God, for there we discover the will of God. We must never separate prayer and the Word (John 15:7). During my ministry, I have seen professing Christians disobey God and defend themselves by saying, "I prayed about it and God said it was all right!" This includes a girl who married an unsaved man (2 Cor. 6:14-18), a fellow living with a girl who was not his wife (1 Thes. 4:1-8), and a preacher who started his own church because all the other churches were wrong and only he had true "spiritual insight" (Phil. 2:1-16). Once we are secure in our relationship with God and His will, then we can bring our requests to Him (Luke 11:3-4). We can ask Him to provide our needs (not our greeds!) for today, to forgive us for what we have done yesterday, and to lead us in the future. All of our needs may be included in these three requests: material and physical provision, moral and spiritual perfection, and divine protection and direction. If we pray this way, we can be sure of praying in God's will.—[Warren Wiersbe - Bible Exposition Commentary](#)

Gotquestions - What is praying in the Spirit? (He also addresses the question of whether this phrase refers to **praying in tongues**)

Praying in the Spirit is mentioned three times in Scripture. First Corinthians 14:15 says, "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind." Ephesians 6:18 says, "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." Jude 20 says, "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit." So, what exactly does it mean to pray in the Spirit?

The Greek word translated "pray in" can have several different meanings. It can mean "by means of," "with the help of," "in the sphere of," and "in connection to." Praying in the Spirit does not refer to the words we are saying. Rather, it refers to *how* we are praying. Praying in the Spirit is praying *according to the Spirit's leading*. It is praying for things the Spirit leads us to pray for. Romans 8:26 tells us, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

Some, based on 1 Corinthians 14:15, equate praying in the Spirit with praying in tongues. Discussing the gift of tongues, Paul mentions "pray with my spirit." First Corinthians 14:14 states that when a person prays in tongues, he does not know what he is saying, since it is spoken in a language he does not know. Further, no one else can understand what is being said, unless there is an interpreter (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). In Ephesians 6:18, Paul instructs us to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of

prayers and requests.” How are we to pray with all kinds of prayers and requests and pray for the saints, if no one, including the person praying, understands what is being said? Therefore, **praying in the Spirit should be understood as praying in the power of the Spirit, by the leading of the Spirit, and according to His will, not as praying in tongues.** ([Reference](#))

What Is “Praying in the Spirit?”

John Piper

The best brief statement I have found of what it means to pray in the Holy Spirit goes like this: It means “so to pray that the Holy Spirit is the moving and guiding power.” The key words there are “moving” and “guiding.” In other words, when you pray in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God is “moving” you to pray. That is, he is the one who motivates and enables and energizes your prayer. And when you pray in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God is “guiding” how you pray and what you pray for. So, to pray in the Holy Spirit is to be moved and guided by the Holy Spirit in prayer. We pray by his power and according to his direction.

The Power of the Spirit

Let’s see where this interpretation of praying in the Holy Spirit comes from in the Bible. The first thing to notice is the very close parallel passage in Ephesians 6:18, where Paul says, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit.” The reason this is important is that it shows that “praying in the Spirit” is not a special form of prayer—like speaking in tongues. We can tell this is so because Paul says in Ephesians 6:18 that we should pray “at all times” in the Spirit. In other words, all prayer should be “in the Spirit.” Praying in the Holy Spirit is not one form among several. It is the way all prayer is to be offered.

The second thing to see is the parallel in Romans 8:26 where Paul says, “The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” Here it is plain that one thing the Holy Spirit does for us is help our weakness when we need to pray but can’t the way we should. So it is natural to take “praying in the Holy Spirit” to mean praying with the help of the Holy Spirit—with the strength and enablement of the Spirit to make up for our weakness.

A third parallel would be Romans 8:15–16 where Paul says, “You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.” The point here is that the Spirit of God helps us have assurance that we are children of God by causing us to cry out from the heart (to pray!), “Abba, Father.” In other words, the Spirit moves our prayers. He motivates, enables and energizes our prayers. That’s a key part of what “praying in the Holy Spirit” means.

The Guidance of the Spirit

The other part of what it means to pray in the Holy Spirit is that when we do so, our prayers are not only “moved” by the Spirit, but also “guided” by the Spirit. This is no surprise, because if the Holy Spirit is prompting and enabling and energizing our prayers, it would natural to think that he does so in a way that accords with his nature and his Word. We would not want to say, The Spirit moves our prayers, but they are not according to God’s will. If the Spirit is moving us to pray, then he would move us according to his will and Word.

So praying in the Holy Spirit would mean not only experiencing the power of the Spirit to help us pray when we are weak, but also experiencing the guidance of the Spirit to help us when we are foolish or confused or selfish. For example, James 4:3 says, “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” That would not be praying “in the Holy Spirit.” That would be praying “in the flesh” or in your own sinful nature.

How Do I Pray in the Holy Spirit?

So now the question is the practical one: How do you pray in the Holy Spirit? Don’t fail to see how utterly unusual it is to be told to do something by the power and guidance of another. It is God telling me to do it—pray! And yet telling me that it is a work of the Holy Spirit when I do it. It is just like other things in the Christian life: Galatians 5:16, “Walk by the Spirit.” Romans 8:13, “Put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:3, “Say Jesus is Lord by the Spirit.” Philippians 3:3, “Worship by the Spirit.” In all these things we are supposed to do something. But we are to do them in a way that it is the Spirit who is doing them through us.

This is the way human life is, since God is sovereign and we are responsible. We act. We are responsible to act. But God is the decisive actor. Our action is dependent. So when we are told to “walk” (Galatians 5:16), or fight sin (Romans 8:16), or confess the Lordship of Jesus (1 Corinthians 12:3), or worship (Philippians 3:3), or pray (Jude 1:20), we are told to do it “in the Holy Spirit.” You do it so that it is the Holy Spirit who is doing it in and through you.

So how do I pray so that it is really the Holy Spirit prompting and guiding the prayer?

Trusting God to Give His Spirit

I think there are two basic answers. The first is faith. We pray “in the Holy Spirit” when we take our stand on the cross of Christ (which purchased all divine help) and trust God for his help by the Spirit. In other words, when you admit that without the help of the Spirit you cannot pray as you ought, and then you consciously depend on the Spirit to help you pray, then you are praying “in the Holy Spirit.” So the first answer to the question, How?, is by faith—by trusting God to give you the Holy Spirit to help you pray.

You can see this from the New Testament in several ways (see, for example, Galatians 3:1–5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). One is that in Philippians 3:3 it says, “We worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.” Here, worshipping “in the Spirit of God” is explained by “put no confidence in the flesh.” I think that means, instead we put confidence in the Spirit, that is, in God’s blood-bought mercy to help us worship as we ought by his Spirit. So I take it that the way to “pray in the Holy Spirit” is the same as the way to worship “in the Spirit of God,” namely, by not putting any confidence in what we can do in our own nature, but instead looking away from our own resources and trusting in the mercy of God to help us pray by his Spirit.

That is what we should do this year in all our praying. Trust God for the help we need to pray. When you are too weak or too confused or too depressed or too angry or too dull to pray, at that moment do not assume that you can’t pray. Instead, consciously look away from yourself to Christ and to the mercy of God in Christ, and trust him to help you—even if it is only to produce groanings too deep for words (Romans 8:26). Learn to distrust yourself and to trust God in prayer. Learn that without him you can do nothing and cast yourself on him at all times for all you need in order to pray.

Let Your Prayers Be Shaped by God’s Word

The other answer to the question of how to pray “in the Holy Spirit” is to bring all your praying into conformity to the Word of God which the Spirit inspired (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16–17). Right here is where God’s call to be in the Word every day and his call to pray at all times in the Spirit become intertwined. If you live in the Word of God, meditating on it day and night by reading it every day and memorizing portions to carry with you all day and savoring them hour by hour, then your prayers will be shaped by the Word. Which means they will be shaped by the Spirit. And that is what it means to pray “in the Holy Spirit.” Not only to be moved by the Spirit in prayer, but to be guided by the Spirit in prayer. And since this is something we are called to do (“pray in the Holy Spirit”), our role is to take what we know about the Spirit’s will from the Word and saturate our prayers with it. (**Full message - [Learning to Pray in the Spirit](#)**)

Prayer and the Holy Spirit

[Lehman Strauss](#)

It does not make sense to pray if we do not pray in the Spirit:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit (Eph 6:18-[note](#)).

Prayer and the Holy Spirit are vitally linked together. This is a truth taught in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Jehovah said to His prophet,

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the [Spirit of grace and of supplications (Zec 12:10)].

I have spelled the word Spirit with a capital S because I believe the reference is to the Holy Spirit. Possibly this verse has reference to the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel. He is called the "Spirit of supplications" because it is He who awakens us to the desire and need to pray. He quickens the believer to pray now as He will in the day of Israel's spiritual awakening.

In the little epistle of Jude, we have an exhortation like that in Ephesians:

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude 20).

In these two phrases, "praying in the Spirit" and "praying in the Holy Ghost," we have one of the truly great secrets of prayer. If anyone were to ask me, what was the first great secret of a successful prayer life, I believe I would answer, "Praying in the Holy Spirit."

But what does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit? The superhuman task of praying according to the will of God demands more than mere human reasoning. It needs the wisdom and power which only the Holy Spirit can supply. Human wisdom and human desires

can achieve human results, but praying in the Spirit produces divine results. In praying in the Holy Spirit, the child of God has the power and wisdom of God to offset the power and wisdom of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Real prayer is a spiritual warfare.

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 (Eph 6:12-[note](#)).

Here the praying Christian is between God on the one hand and the devil on the other. He is engaged in prayer warfare, and in his own strength he is no match for the enemy. Satan is a strong man, mightily armed (Mt 12:28-29), and only as we pray in the Spirit can we overcome him. The power to be victorious in prayer was promised by our Lord when He said,

Behold, I give unto you power . . . over all the power of the enemy (Lk 10: 19).

We Christians are in a conflict, and prayer is our mighty weapon. But we must view prayer not as a ritual but as a relationship with the Holy Spirit. The spiritual weakness that plagues most of us grows out of our failure to enter into that experience which Paul called "the communion of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. 13:14). Effective prayer is found only in the experiential knowledge of this blessed communion.

When we are praying in the Holy Spirit, we will not be trying to talk God into doing something He does not want to do, but rather we will be yielding to the Holy Spirit, who knows what is best for us. If we are not praying in the Spirit, we must be praying in the flesh. All spiritual prayers have their source in the Spirit. It does not make sense to pray if my prayers originate with me and not with the Spirit.

There are some things to remember if we are to pray in the Spirit:

(1) There are times when we Christians do not know how to pray or for what we should pray.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself [Himself] maketh intercession for us . . . according to the will of God (Ro 8:26-27-[note](#)).

Here we are told that we have an infirmity which arises from our ignorance. We do not know what is best for us. It is right here that we need guidance, the guidance of the only Person who always and at all times prays "according to the will of God." The Holy Spirit assists us in our praying by giving to us the right desire and direction. Some of our prayers do not correspond to our needs. This is the infirmity that He "helpeth."

The word for helpeth occurs here and only one other time in the New Testament (Lk 10:40), where Martha requests help in the kitchen. What we need is the practical kind of help Martha was asking for.

(2) We need to know and be aware of the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Cor. 3:16).

There are some professing Christians who claim to be saved but who say they have not yet received the Holy Spirit. If such persons have been saved, they have the Holy Spirit. It is not possible for one to be saved and not have the Holy Spirit.

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His (Ro 8:9-[note](#)).

It will not be possible to enlist the Spirit's help in prayer if we do not have Him, or if we have Him and are not aware of His presence. It is common to hear someone pray, "Lord, send Thy Holy Spirit among us to bless us in this meeting." Such a request does not make sense. The Holy Spirit is here. Christian, He is in you. You can know Him and experience and enjoy His teaching and leading ministry. Do not treat this truth lightly. It is a mighty and holy truth to know. Your body is His temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19-20-[note](#)). The more closely we associate our praying with the Holy Spirit, the better will be our praying.

(3) To "pray in the Spirit," we must be careful that we do not grieve Him.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God (Eph 4:30-[note](#)).

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit? Look at the context of Ephesians 4:30. We grieve Him through lying, anger, stealing, dirty and useless conversation, malice, unkindness. These sins are repulsive to His holy nature and thus grieve and offend Him.

In all of our praying, we need the Holy Spirit's help. But if we have offended Him and our sins remain unconfessed and unforgiven,

we cut ourselves off from the Spirit's help, which is necessary for effective praying.

(4) In order to pray in the Spirit, we must be filled with the Spirit.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-note).

To be filled with the Spirit means to be controlled by the Spirit. When we are praying in the Spirit the mind and the will are subjected to His control. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Ro 8:14-note) and in no area of our lives do we need His leading more than in prayer.

I am not a master in the important business of praying. The difficulties I encounter are so insurmountable that I need the great Teacher. At times the work of prayer becomes burdensome, and it is then that I am keenly aware that I must look to the Holy Spirit to seek His help. At other times prayer is a hard and bitter struggle, and my prayers are empty. Then I thank Him for His indwelling presence. I search my heart for any sin that might have caused Him grief, and I ask Him to take control of my prayers and my praying.

If we cultivate praying in the Spirit, it will bring about a change in our prayer life which we hardly thought possible. Prayer will no longer be a tedious and tiresome experience.

It does make sense to avail ourselves of the privilege of praying in the Spirit.

Dr. Strauss taught Old Testament history for eight years at Philadelphia Bible Institute, and served as pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church, Bristol, Pennsylvania, from 1939 to 1957. He was pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church (Highland Park, Michigan) until the end of 1963 when he resigned to devote full time to an itinerant Bible conference and evangelistic ministry both in the States and abroad. Dr. Strauss was residing in Florida and writing his 19th book at age 86 when the Lord called him home in June 1997.

In Dr Strauss' comments on Ephesians 6:18 he wrote:

we are directed to pray "in the Spirit." The opposite to praying in the Spirit is praying in the flesh, the latter being a form of prayer without power. We saw earlier in our study that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Even our prayers must be guided by the Spirit of God, "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26). There are times when we cannot collect our thoughts or express ourselves in words, and yet we desire to pray. Thank God, we may be assured that the Holy Spirit sees the battlefield and knows the position of the enemy, and He will pray for us. If we are not praying "in the Spirit," we had better not pray at all. To pray in the Spirit one must be born of the Spirit and led by the Spirit. There is a lot of spirited praying that is not praying in the Spirit. Those who pray in the Spirit never pray selfishly but always in the will of God; therefore, they get answers to their prayers and they know the blessings of victory over the foe. Praying in the Spirit glorifies God, and where God is glorified victory is assured.

Praying in the Spirit

Steven Cole

Fight for God by praying in the Spirit.

What does it mean to "pray in the Spirit" (see also, Jude 20)? First, we need to clarify what it does not mean:

A. Praying in the Spirit does not refer to praying in tongues or to praying emotionally.

The early church experienced the gift of speaking and praying in tongues (1 Cor. 14:14). While there is debate about whether that gift is still given, I am convinced that most of what goes under that banner today is illegitimate. Genuine speaking or praying in tongues is to speak or pray in a translatable foreign language, not to speak or pray in nonsense syllables. (See my sermon, "Testing Tongues," on the church web site.) That criterion alone eliminates most of what is claimed to be tongues today. But in our text, Paul is talking about making definite petitions to God, not praying in an unknown tongue.

Also, while it is right to involve our emotions in prayer as we sense our desperate need, this is not what Paul means by praying in the Spirit. It is possible to pray emotionally in the Holy Spirit or to pray calmly in the Spirit. It is also possible to pray emotionally in the flesh, getting all worked up for reasons far removed from the Holy Spirit. So, what does it mean to pray in the Spirit?

B. Praying in the Spirit is to pray in dependence on the Spirit, in accordance with God's Word.

Three comments on praying in the Spirit:

(1) I cannot pray in the Spirit if I have unconfessed sin in my life.

Psalm 66:18 states, "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." If I think that I can come before God's holy throne in the power of His Holy Spirit, while at the same time holding on to sin in my life, I am greatly deceived. That's why Peter tells husbands that if they do not treat their wives properly, honoring them as fellow heirs of the grace of life, their prayers will be hindered (1 Pet. 3:7).

God knows our hearts. We can't play games, thinking that we can disobey Him and then come and sweet talk Him into giving us what we want. You can't pray in the Spirit, "Lord, bless my business," while you're being dishonest and corrupt. You can't pray, "Lord, bless my family," while you're secretly enslaved to pornography. You've got to repent of all known sin and do the deeds appropriate to repentance before you can pray in the Holy Spirit.

(2) Praying in the Spirit is to pray according to God's will as revealed in His Word.

Paul has just told us to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (6:17). God's written Word reveals to us His moral will for our lives (1 Thess. 4:3) and His eternal will of summing up everything in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:9-10). The Spirit will never lead us to pray contrary to the will of God as revealed in the Word of God. You cannot pray in the Spirit, "Lord, bless me as I enter into marriage with this unbeliever."

One way of praying in the Spirit is to use the prayers in Scripture to direct your own requests. We've studied two of Paul's prayers in Ephesians (Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21). There are many other prayers in the Bible. In addition, all of God's commandments in Scripture should be turned into prayer for holiness in the lives of God's people, including your own life. To pray in the Spirit is to pray according to God's revealed will in His Word.

(3) Praying in the Spirit is to pray in dependence on the Spirit, under His direction and power.

Although it doesn't happen very often, I have had times where I was struggling to pray, finding it difficult to concentrate, and not sensing the Lord's presence. Then, suddenly the Spirit prompts me to pray something and He directs my thoughts and words, giving me power and freedom in prayer that I was lacking moments before. The Spirit is moving me along in prayer that originates with Him.

Also, at times the Spirit puts the same request on my heart frequently and with an intensity that I formerly lacked. Maybe it's on my prayer list and I mechanically went through the list. But then one item comes home to me with unusual force. I believe that this is, in part, what it means to pray in the Spirit. We should keep praying, even when we don't feel this unction of the Spirit. But we also should ask the Spirit for His direction and power as we pray.

So, fight for God by praying with all kinds of prayer, at all times, and in the Spirit. (See full sermon [Ephesians 6:18-20 How to Fight for God](#))

Prayer and the Holy Spirit

Herbert Lockyer

The Supplication of the Spirit

It is to be feared that the majority of Christians fail to realize how dependent they are upon the varied ministry of God's Spirit. The Scriptures, for example, teach that He is the Spirit of supplications (Zechariah 12:10) and, therefore, the One who becomes at once the Sphere and Atmosphere of all true prayer.

When the Spirit takes possession of a soul, He becomes essentially the Spirit of intercession. Yearning for heart-communion with God, yet unable to express ourselves aright, the Spirit is at hand to help us in such an infirmity. He is our aid in prayer, and inspires every outgoing of the mind toward God whether in the nature of supplication, confession, thanksgiving or intercession.

Without the Holy Spirit our prayers are as lifeless as a body without a soul, as ineffective as an arrow without a bow. In his most illuminating and helpful book, His in a Life of Prayer, Dr. Norman B. Harrison writes,

As the telephone is dead and impotent without the electric current, so is prayer apart from the Spirit. He supplies the sending power, He secures the access; He forms the contact, He molds the pray-er into the mind and will of God. The Spirit is at once the Guide of prayer and the Guarantor of its success.

Martin Luther once confessed, "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning the devil gets the victory through the day."

Luther's motto was, "He that has prayed well, has studied well." From this we learn it is only by the Spirit that we can pray and live effectually.

As we approach the outstanding features of the mystic truth of "Prayer in the Spirit," it may be found helpful to group together the different passages associated with such a theme.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26, 27).

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).

"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Ephesians 6:18).

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit,... and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3).

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20).

The Spirit is the Inspirer of All True Prayer

Responsive prayer is impossible except as we are enabled to pray, and this ability is conferred upon us by the divine Spirit. First of all, He brings the soul into right relationship with God. Being born of God, we have the privilege of sons and as sons we can pray (Galatians 4:6). Spiritual sonship, then, is the true starting point of all access to God. Fear, with its enslaving influence, is driven out, and spiritual adoption takes its place. Contact with God rests upon the basis of regeneration. Prayers are not accepted and are not acceptable unless the praying one is truly saved. The Holy Spirit is not able to pray in and through a life He does not possess, and which has not been adopted into the family of God. It is the Holy Spirit who becomes the filial Spirit, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

There are three elements associated with all mighty praying.

(1) Prayer is impossible without an act of memory.

There must be the recall of all we desire to present to God. Whether it be God's mercies, our sins or needs, or the needs of others, the Spirit must bring to our remembrance all we desire to pray about.

(2) Prayer is impossible without an act of mind.

As the Spirit of wisdom, He can cause us to use acceptable words as we express our adoration, supplication and petitions. And it is only by His power that we can be delivered from distractions and develop that necessary concentration prayer demands.

(3) Prayer is impossible without an act of love.

As the Spirit of love, shedding abroad in our hearts the love of God, He is able to lead us to present, sympathetically, the needs of others. Intercession, whether divine or human, rises on the wings of love.

It is the Spirit, then, who quickens the mind and the emotions, and imparts the ability to continue in prayer. This mighty, heavenly Intercessor prepares and possesses and prompts our minds. We easily tire, for true prayer is exacting. We ought always to pray and not to faint. Alas, however, we are better at the fainting than the praying. To pray without ceasing comes hard to the flesh (Luke 18:1; I Thessalonians 5:17). But it is here that the Spirit helps such an infirmity. We can only pray always with all prayer and supplications in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). To quote Dr. Norman Harrison again:

Were we left to ourselves and our own effort in prayer, we could not be heard. We would be as impotent as a radio set or a telephone without electric current. As electricity gives carrying power to the human voice, projecting it for thousands of miles, so the Holy Spirit performs a like service in winging our worship, petitions and aspirations "unto the Father." We may be well assured that "praying... in the Spirit," they do not fall short of His throne of Heavenly Grace.... That which enables us to "reach" the Father, giving us "access" to Him, is the Spirit-quality.

2. The Spirit Arouses Within the Soul a Sense of Need

Prayer can never attain true perfection unless it is transacted "in the Spirit." It is only through His illuminating grace and personal promptings that we can come to know the hidden consciousness of our own needs.

It is the Holy Spirit who opens to our spiritual vision a new world of purity and power by revealing the contrast between the old world

of the natural life and the glorious world of victory and spirituality. And, until we are right with Him on the matter of personal and practical sanctification, we cannot expect His help in prayer. Allowing the Spirit to awaken desires to which we have been strangers, and then adjust us to those spiritual desires, we thereby fit ourselves to pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

Further, the Spirit knows what we do not know, and thus works in the heart of the believer, begetting earnest longings and groanings after those things He knows to be good and according to the will of God for us. As Dr. A. R. Fausset expresses it, "God as the Searcher of hearts, watches the surging emotions of them in prayer, and knows perfectly what the Spirit means by the groanings which He draws forth within us, because that blessed Intercessor pleads by them only for what God Himself designs to bestow."

But Paul's thought of the Spirit's intercessory ministry goes down to the depths, and includes more than those ordinary and coherent expressions before God, and those desires and feelings emerging from a clarity of apprehension through the Spirit's illuminating work. Within man there is an unfathomed depth in which there are feelings so vast and mysterious that the human mind cannot give definite form to nor articulate in fitting words.

Deep down within human personality, from which our yearnings come, the Spirit moves with perfect familiarity; and sympathizing with these mysterious longings for which we have no language, but a sigh, and a cry, lays hold of the inarticulate groanings and gives them fitting and definite meaning before God. "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." And as we are constantly beset with imperfection, weakness and ignorance, this peculiar office of the Spirit will be necessary and complimentary until we need to pray no more. It would seem as if the depth and ripeness of our spiritual experience produce a deeper sense of our requirements of the Spirit's aid as Interpreter and Intercessor.

3. The Spirit Intercedes for Us

As God's free Spirit, He mingles with our spirit and makes our prayers His own, or rather creates the prayers we should pray. As the Spirit of Intercession, He exercises His function within us even as Christ exercises His intercessory work in heaven for us. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood" (Hebrews 7:24). The Holy Spirit prays in and with and for us. He is our Paraclete on earth, as Christ is in heaven.

The object of the Spirit's petitions is the laying bare before God all the deep and hidden needs of saints. The glorified Christ intercedes in heaven for us, obtaining thereby the full fruits of His sacrifice for all the needs revealed and voiced by the Spirit.

There are two features of this unheard and mysterious groaning to be observed. Such unutterable groanings are known and understood by the Father. And they are also presented in accordance with the will of God. Human needs and divine requirements are thus harmoniously blended.

Another thought emerging from a full realization of our need of dependence upon the Spirit's ministry in prayer is deliverance from all bondage in praying. Instead of saying prayers, we pray—we follow inward guidance and promptings rather than outward, mechanical forms. And with such a mighty Intercessor there is no reason for prayerlessness.

Pray, always pray, the Holy Spirit pleads;
Within thee all thy daily, hourly needs.

(From All the Doctrines of the Bible)

MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCES AND DEVOTIONALS

James Barker on Praying in the Spirit - THIS INVOLVES PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST (JUDE 1:20).

1. **If we are not praying in the Holy Ghost, then we are praying in the flesh and that is a waste of time.**
2. Romans 8:26 says "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us."
3. Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."
4. This means **effectual prayer**. We pray specifically for a need and we believe God will answer our prayer.
5. This means **fervent prayer** – not cold, lifeless, wishy-washy prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

6. This means **believing prayer**. Our Lord said in Matthew 21:22, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

7. James 1:6, 7 says, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."

8. This means **continual communion with God**. 1Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing."

9. This means **praying according to God's will – not selfish prayer**. James 4:2, 3 says, "ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

10. **When we are led by the Spirit of God, and are filled with the Spirit of God, then we will be "praying in the Holy Spirit"** (Gal 5:18, Eph 5:18, Jude 1:20).

11. **Then we can be confident our prayers will be answered** Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." ([Bible Baptist Church - Lesson 9 - Book of Jude](#))

Spurgeon's Sermon - [Praying in the Holy Spirit - Jude 1:20](#)

Praying in the Spirit

1. Without the Spirit there is no praying.
 2. How excellent and honorable a work is that of prayer! The whole Trinity has a work in this holy exercise.
 3. As without the Spirit there is no prayer, so without prayer a man evidently shows himself to have nothing of the Spirit.
 4. Needs must the prayers of the saints be acceptable. They are by the Holy Ghost.
 5. How good is God to His poor saints! He not only grants, but makes, their prayers.
 6. It is our greatest wisdom to get and keep the Spirit.
 7. How happy are saints in all straits! They have the Spirit to help them to pray. (W. Jenkyn, M. A.)
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INSTINCTIVELY WRONG - Saul Gellerman, in his book *How People Work*, says, "Solving tough organizational problems may require counter-intuitive strategies." In business, counter-intuitive is a fancy way of referring to ideas that go against common sense.

Consultants who advocate such thinking are simply reinforcing the advice of Jesus. Over and over, He urged His followers to do what God said was right, not what desire, instinct, and intuition told them to do.

Desire says, "I want it." Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Instinct says, "Me first." Jesus said, "The last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16).

Intuition says, "I'll feel better if I get revenge." Jesus said, "Do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27).

Wanting something doesn't make it good. Achieving something doesn't make it valuable. And having strong feelings about something doesn't make it right. As Jude wrote, those who follow their own desires and instincts lead others into conflict and division (Jude 1:18-19).

The alternative is to be spiritual, which means doing what does not come naturally. In fact, it requires supernatural strength that only God can give. - [Julie Ackerman Link](#)

More about Jesus would I know,
More of His grace to others show,
More of His saving fullness see,
More of His love who died for me.
—Hewitt

You can trust your instincts when you are trusting Christ.

"Praying in the Spirit"

I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding.—1 CORINTHIANS 14:15

What does it mean to pray "in the Spirit"? Here again, there is a good deal of misunderstanding among Christians as to the true meaning of this phrase.

There are times when one feels deeply affected emotionally as one prays, but this is not the meaning of the phrase "praying in the Spirit." It has no relationship to the emotions that we feel in prayer. I am not saying that feelings are unimportant in prayer; I am simply saying that I do not believe this is what Paul had in mind when he used the phrase "praying in the Spirit."

The "spirit" spoken of here is not the human spirit but the Holy Spirit. Some believe that "praying in the Spirit" takes place when we pray in other tongues, and although it can include that, I believe it is much more than that.

Prayer that is "in the Spirit" is prayer that is prompted and guided by the Spirit. One commentator puts it this way: "It means that the Holy Spirit directs the prayer, creates the prayer within us, and empowers us to offer it and to pray it."

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones calls praying in the Spirit "the secret of true prayer" and goes on to say: "If we do not pray in the Spirit, we do not really pray." I would hesitate to make such a sweeping statement myself, but I would go so far as to say that if we do not know what it means to pray in the Spirit, our prayers will have little impact upon Satan and his forces. (Selwyn Lewis - Everyday With Jesus)

Spirit-Aided Praying

The Spirit is the One who gives life.—John 6:63

The more I consider "**praying in the Spirit**," the more convinced I am that the majority of Christians do not know what it means to pray in this particular way. Many are content to recite prayers and know nothing of the thrill of entering a dimension of prayer in which the Holy Spirit has full control.

Not that there is anything wrong with liturgical or written prayers—they can be a wonderful primer for one's spiritual pump. Many people tell me that the prayers I frame at the end of each devotion in Every Day with Jesus have sometimes helped them more than the actual notes I have written. Using written prayers can be helpful, but we must heed the apostle's exhortation to move on into that dimension which he calls "praying in the Spirit." The best description of this I have ever heard is that given by some of the old Welsh preachers, like Daniel Rowlands, Christmas Evans, and others. They describe it as "praying with unusual liberty and freedom."

There is hardly anything more wonderful in the Christian life than to experience this "liberty and freedom" in prayer. I can remember the minister and elders of the church in which I was converted in South Wales saying after a prayer meeting in which there had been great liberty and power: "Tonight we have prayed in the Spirit."

Have you not experienced moments when, after struggling and halting in prayer, you were suddenly taken out of yourself and words just poured out of you? At that moment, you were "praying in the Spirit." (Selwyn Lewis - Everyday With Jesus)

First Principles

Put out into deep water.—LUKE 5:4

I find myself compelled to discuss Paul's pregnant phrase: "Pray in the Spirit."

There are times in my own life, as I am sure there are in yours, when I struggle in prayer and find it difficult to concentrate, only to discover that suddenly I am taken out of myself and given a freedom that transforms my prayer time from that point on. When this happens, I know I have been praying in the Spirit. This is the kind of thing about which the apostle Paul is exhorting us in Ephesians 6:18. Formal prayer is fine and has its place, but oh, how we need to experience more times of praying in the Spirit.

But how do we attain these times? Is it the Spirit's responsibility to bring us there, or do we have some responsibility in the matter, too? I believe we can learn to pray in the Spirit.

Some first principles are these: (1) Come to God in an attitude of dependence. This means recognizing that your greatest need in prayer is not an ability to put words together or form fine phrases, but the Holy Spirit's empowerment. (2) Yield yourself totally to the Spirit, letting Him guide and direct your praying. Be continually aware that He wants to have the bigger part in your prayer life. Start with these two principles, learning to depend less and less on your own experience or ability and more and more on the Spirit's enabling. Once you experience what it means to pray in the Spirit, you will long to experience it more and more.

Prayer - O Father, my appetite is being whetted. Help me "launch out into the deep" and give myself to You in the way that You are willing to give Yourself to me. In Christ's name I ask it. Amen. (Selwyn Lewis - Everyday With Jesus)

THE HOLY GHOST AND PRAYER (Eph. 6:18) - Robert Neighbour - Living Waters Commentary

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." None of us know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession within us. We need to pray "in the Holy Ghost," as much as we need to preach in the Holy Ghost. Preaching, unvitalized by the Spirit, is a useless sound of words; prayer, unvitalized by the Spirit, is just as unavailing. Preaching in the Spirit opens the heart of men; praying in the Spirit opens the doors of Heaven.

Praying in the Spirit is praying in the will of God. Praying in the will of God is getting things from God. Praying in the Spirit is not praying in the flesh. It is not seeking our own, but His. It is praying and saying, "Thy will be done."

If we do not love to walk with the Spirit in the life of prayer, we will not be prepared to work with the Spirit in the life of service.

Prayer in the Spirit, and praise in the Spirit, are indissolubly linked. Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises at the same time and in

the same prison. In truth, the Spirit of prayer is the Spirit of praise.

The Spirit delights to draw us away from the things of earth and the companionship of men into the solitude of Christ's presence. We read, "When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples." The Lord, Himself, went up into a mountain apart to pray; "and when the evening was come, He was there alone."

Alone with Christ the blessed Lord, alone,
Alone, where He delights to meet His own;
Alone, from ev'ry vexing care set free,
In quietude to rest, alone, with Thee.

'Tis there, alone, we learn to know His face,
'Tis there, alone, we revel in His grace;
Alone with Him, what comradeship Divine,
Alone with Him, what joy to talk, and dine.

Alone, yet not alone, when He is there;
Alone with Him, His glory do we share,
Alone, in solitude, transformed like Thee,
Alone, in stillness, Thou canst speak to me.

GOD'S MERCY AND OURS - There's a legend about a rabbi who welcomed a weary traveler into his home for a night of rest. After learning that his guest was almost a hundred years old, the rabbi asked about his religious beliefs. The man replied, "I'm an atheist." Infuriated, the rabbi ordered the man out, saying, "I cannot keep an atheist in my house." Without a word, the elderly man hobbled out into the darkness.

The rabbi was reading the Scriptures when he heard a voice, "Son, why did you throw that old man out?"

"Because he is an atheist, and I cannot endure him overnight!"

The voice replied, "I have endured him for almost a hundred years." The rabbi rushed out, brought the old man back, and treated him with kindness.

When we treat unbelievers with contempt, we're not serving God. He wants us to love them as He has loved us. Jude said, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, . . . but others save with fear, . . . hating even the garment defiled by the flesh" (vv.21-23). We can still love sinners while hating their sin.

God's abundant mercy to us is the motivation for us to be merciful to others. [Our Daily Bread](#)

For Further Study

In Luke 6:27-31, Jesus presents God's perfect standard of love for others. Ask Him to help you strive for that standard today.

It's better to give others a piece of your heart than a piece of your mind.

THE STRENGTH OF OUR BRIDGE - As he aged, Dabney began to worry about his impending death, and he expressed his fears in a letter to a former student and theologian, C. R. Vaughan. Dabney wondered about his ability to die honorably and to hold on to his Christian faith.

Vaughan replied: "Dear friend, let me advise you now as you often have me. If you were about to cross a deep chasm, and there were a bridge over it, would you stand there looking in at yourself, wondering if you trusted enough in bridges to be able to cross? Or would you not rather go and examine the beams and timbers of the bridge and the quality of its construction, and determine whether the bridge were trustworthy, and then pass over it in confidence? Our faith is in Christ; spend yourself focusing on Him and His sufficiency, rather than on yourself."

Do you have doubts about dying? Remember, God "is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory" (Jude 1:24-25). - [Our Daily Bread](#)

We who love Jesus are walking by faith,
Not seeing one step that's ahead;
Not doubting one moment what our lot may be,
But looking to Jesus instead.

—Fields

Faith focuses on God instead of the problem.

PRAYER AND LEADERSHIP

J Oswald Sanders

From [Spiritual Leadership](#) - highly recommended reading for ALL spiritual leaders!

I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone....1 Timothy 2:1

The spiritual leader should outpace the rest of the church, above all, in prayer. And yet the most advanced leader is conscious of the possibility of endless development in his prayer life. Nor does he ever feel that he has "already attained." Dean C. J. Vaughan once said: "If I wished to humble anyone, I should question him about his prayers. I know nothing to compare with this topic for its sorrowful self-confessions."

Prayer is the most ancient, most universal, and most intensive expression of the religious instinct. It includes the simplest speech of infant lips, and the sublime entreaties of older age. All reach the Majesty on high. Prayer is indeed the Christian's vital breath and native air.

But, strange paradox, most of us find it hard to pray. We do not naturally delight in drawing near to God. We sometimes pay lip service to the delight and power of prayer. We call it indispensable; we know the Scriptures call for it. Yet we often fail to pray.

Let us take encouragement from the lives of saintly leaders who overcame this natural reluctance and became mighty in prayer. Of Samuel Chadwick it was said:

He was essentially a man of prayer. Every morning he would be astir shortly after six o'clock, and he kept a little room which was his private sanctum for his quiet hour before breakfast. He was mighty in public prayer because he was constant in private devotion.... When he prayed he expected God to do something. "I wish I had prayed more," he wrote toward the end of his life, "even if I had worked less; and from the bottom of my heart I wish I had prayed better."

"When I go to prayer," confessed an eminent Christian, "I find my heart so loath to go to God, and when it is with Him, so loath to stay." Then he pointed to the need for self-discipline. "When you feel most indisposed to pray, yield not to it," he counseled, "but strive and endeavor to pray, even when you think you cannot."

Mastering the art of prayer, like anything else, takes time. The time we give it will be a true measure of its importance to us. We always find the time for important things. The most common excuse for little time spent in prayer is the list of "to-dos" that crowd our day—all our many duties. To Martin Luther, an extra load of duties was reason enough to pray more, not less. Hear his plans for the next day's work:

"Work, work from early till late. In fact I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."

If Luther was busy, and prayed, so can we.

Try to explain exactly how prayer works and you will quickly run against some very difficult puzzles. But people who are skeptical of prayer's validity and power are usually those who do not practice it seriously or fail to obey when God reveals His will. We cannot learn about prayer except by praying. No philosophy has ever taught a soul to pray. The intellectual problems associated with prayer are met in the joy of answered prayer and closer fellowship with God.

The Christian leader who seeks an example to follow does well to turn to the life of Jesus Himself. Our belief in the necessity of prayer comes from observing His life. Surely if anyone could have sustained life without prayer, it would be the very Son of God Himself. If prayer is silly or unnecessary, Jesus would not have wasted His time at it. But wait! Prayer was the dominant feature of His life and a recurring part of His teaching. Prayer kept His moral vision sharp and clear. Prayer gave Him courage to endure the perfect but painful will of His Father. Prayer paved the way for transfiguration. To Jesus, prayer was not a hasty add-on, but a joyous necessity.

In Luke 5:16 we have a general statement which throws a vivid light on the daily practice of the Lord. "And He withdrew Himself in the deserts and prayed." It is not of one occasion but of many that the evangelist speaks in this place. It was our Lord's habit to seek retirement for prayer. When He withdrew Himself from men, He was accustomed to press far into the uninhabited country—He was in the deserts. The surprise of the onlookers lay in this, that one so mighty, so richly endowed with spiritual power, should find it

necessary for Himself to repair to the source of strength, that there He might refresh His weary spirit. To us, the wonder is still greater, that He, the prince of Life, the Eternal word, the Only-begotten of the Father, should prostrate Himself in meekness before the throne of God, making entreaty for grace to help in time of need.

Christ spent full nights in prayer (Luke 6:12). He often rose before dawn to have unbroken communion with His Father (Mark 1:35). The great crises of His life and ministry began with periods of special prayer, as in Luke 5:16: "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed"—a statement that indicates a regular habit. By word and example He instructed His disciples on the importance of solitude in prayer (Mark 6:46, following the feeding of the five thousand; Luke 9:28, preceding the Transfiguration). To the person on whom devolves the responsibility for selecting personnel for specific spiritual responsibilities, the example of the Lord's spending the night in prayer before making His choice of apostles (Luke 6:12) is luminous.

Both our Lord and His bond slave Paul made clear that true prayer is not dreamy reverie. "All vital praying makes a drain on a man's vitality. True intercession is a sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice," wrote J. H. Jowett. Jesus performed miracles without a sign of outward strain, but "he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears" (Hebrews 5:7).

Sometimes our prayers are pale and weak compared to those of Paul or Epaphras. "Epaphras ... is always wrestling in prayer for you," wrote Paul in Colossians 4:12. And to the same group: "I want you to know how much I am struggling for you" (Colossians 2:1). The Greek word used for "struggle" here is the root for our words "agony" and "agonize." It is used to describe a person struggling at work until utterly weary (Colossians 1:29) or competing in the arena for an athletic prize (1 Corinthians 9:25). It describes a soldier battling for his life (1 Timothy 6:12), or a man struggling to deliver his friends from danger (John 18:36). True prayer is a strenuous spiritual exercise that demands the utmost mental discipline and concentration.

We are encouraged to note that Paul, probably the greatest human champion of prayer, confessed, "We do not know what we ought to pray for." And then he hastened to add, "The Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26–28). The Spirit joins us in prayer and pours His supplications into our own.

Pray in the Spirit

All Christians need more teaching in the art of prayer, and the Holy Spirit is the master teacher. The Spirit's help in prayer is mentioned in the Bible more frequently than any other help He gives us. All true praying comes from the Spirit's activity in our souls. Both Paul and Jude teach that effective prayer is "praying in the Spirit." That phrase means that we pray along the same lines, about the same things, in the same name, as the Holy Spirit. True prayer rises in the spirit of the Christian from the Spirit who indwells us.

To pray in the Spirit is important for two reasons.

First, we are to pray in the realm of the Spirit, for the Holy Spirit is the sphere and atmosphere of the Christian's life. In this we often fail. Much praying is physical rather than spiritual, in the realm of the mind alone, the product of our own thinking and not of the Spirit's teaching. But real prayer is deeper. It uses the body, requires the cooperation of the mind, and moves in the supernatural realm of the Spirit. Such praying transacts its business in the heavenly realm.

Second, we are to pray in the power and energy of the Spirit. "Give yourselves wholly to prayer and entreaty; pray on every occasion in the power of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18 NEB). For its superhuman task, prayer demands more than human power. We have the Spirit of power as well as the Spirit of prayer. All the human energy of heart, mind, and will can achieve great human results, but praying in the Holy Spirit releases supernatural resources.

The Spirit delights to help us pray. In each of our three chief handicaps, we can count on the Spirit's help. Sometimes we are kept from prayer by sin in our heart. As we grow in trust and submission, the Holy Spirit leads us to the blood of Christ, which cleanses every stain.

Sometimes the ignorance of our minds hinders our prayers. But the Spirit knows the mind of God and shares that knowledge with us as we wait and listen. The Spirit does this by giving us a clear conviction that a particular prayer request is part of God's will for us, or not.

Sometimes we are earthbound because of the infirmity of the body. We get sick, we feel ill, we are weak. The Spirit will quicken our bodies and enable us to rise above weaknesses, even those imposed by sultry tropical climates.

Then, as if these three conditions were not enough, the spiritual leader must oppose Satan in prayer. Satan will try to depress, to create doubt and discouragement, to keep a leader from communion with God. In the Holy Spirit, we have a heavenly ally against this supernatural foe.

Spiritual leaders should know the experience of praying in the Spirit as part of their daily walk. Do we ever try to live independently of the Spirit? Do we fail to see full answers to prayer? We can read all day about prayer, and experience little of its power, and so stunt

our service.

The Bible often explains prayer as spiritual warfare. “For our struggle is ... against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). In this struggle phase of prayer, three personalities are engaged. Between God and the devil stands the Christian at prayer. Though weak alone, the Christian plays a strategic role in the struggle between the dragon and the Lamb. The praying Christian wields no personal power, but power nonetheless delegated by the victorious Christ to whom that faithful believer is united by faith. Faith is like a reticulating system through which the victory won on Calvary reaches the devil’s captives and delivers them from darkness into light.

Jesus was not so much concerned over wicked people and their deeds as with the forces of evil that caused those people to sin. Behind Peter’s denial and Judas’s betrayal was the sinister hand of Satan. “Get thee behind me, Satan,” was the Lord’s response to Peter’s presumptuous rebuke. All around us are people bound in sin, captives to the devil. Our prayers should ascend not only for them but against Satan who holds them as his prize. Satan must be compelled to relax his grip, and this can only be achieved by Christ’s victory on the cross.

As Jesus dealt with sin’s cause rather than effect, so the spiritual leader should adopt the same method in prayer. And the leader must know how to help those under his charge who are also involved in that same spiritual warfare.

In a telling illustration, Jesus compared Satan to a strong man, fully armed. Before anyone can enter such a man’s house and set captives free, the man must first be bound. Only then can a rescue succeed (Matthew 12:29). What could it mean to “tie up the strong man” except to neutralize his might through the overcoming power of Christ who came “to destroy (nullify, render inoperative) the works of the devil”? And how can that happen except by the prayer of faith that lays hold of the victory of Calvary and claims it for the problem at hand? We cannot hope to effect a rescue from Satan’s den without first disarming the adversary. God makes available His divine authority through prayer, and we can confidently claim it. Jesus promised His disciples: “I have given you authority ... to overcome all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19).

The spiritual leader will be alert to the most effective way to influence people. Hudson Taylor is well known for his expression, “It is possible to move men, through God, by prayer alone.” During his missionary career he demonstrated the truth of his claim a thousand times.

Practice

It is one thing to believe such power is available in prayer, but another thing to practice it. People are difficult to move; it is much easier to pray for things or provisions than to deal with the stubbornness of the human heart. But in just these intricate situations, the leader must use God’s power to move human hearts in the direction he believes to be the will of God. Through prayer the leader has the key to that complicated lock.

It is the supreme dignity and glory of the human creature to be able to say yes or no to God. Humans have been given free will. But this poses a problem. If by prayer we can influence the conduct of others, does such power encroach on free will? Will God temper one person’s freedom to answer another person’s prayer? It seems difficult to imagine. And yet, if prayers cannot influence the course of events, why pray?

The first point to make is that God is consistent with Himself always. God does not contradict Himself. When God promises to answer prayer, the answer will come—always in a manner consistent with divine nature, for “he cannot disown himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). No word or action from God will contradict any other word or action of God.

The second point in resolving these questions is that prayer is a divine ordinance. God has commanded prayer, and we can be confident that as we meet revealed conditions for prayer, answers will be granted. God sees no contradiction between human free will and divine response to prayer. When God commands us to pray “for kings and those in authority,” there is implied power to influence the course of men and events. If not, why pray? Our obligation to pray stands above any dilemma concerning the effects of prayer.

Third, we can know the will of God concerning the prayer we raise. Our capacity to know God’s will is the basis for all prayers of faith. God can speak to us clearly through our mind and heart. The Bible instructs us directly concerning the will of God on all matters of principle. In our hearts the Holy Spirit ministers to instruct us in the will of God (Romans 8:26–27). As we patiently seek the will of God concerning our petition, the Spirit will impress our minds and convince our hearts. Such God-given conviction leads us beyond the prayer of hope to the prayer of faith.

When God lays a burden on our hearts and thus keeps us praying, He obviously intends to grant the answer. George Mueller was asked if he really believed that two men would be converted, men for whom Mueller had prayed for over fifty years. Mueller replied:

“Do you think God would have kept me praying all these years if He did not intend to save them?” In fact, both men were converted, one shortly after Mueller’s death.

In prayer we deal directly with God and only in a secondary sense other people. The goal of prayer is the ear of God. Prayer moves others through God’s influence on them. It is not our prayer that moves people, but the God to whom we pray.

Prayer moves the arm
That moves the world
To bring deliverance down.
--Author unknown

To move people, the leader must be able to move God, for God has made it clear that He moves people in response to prayer. If a scheming Jacob was given “power with God and with men,” then surely any leader who follows God’s prayer principles can enjoy the same power (Genesis 32:28).

Prevailing prayer that moves people is the outcome of a right relationship with God. The Bible is very clear on the reasons why prayers go unanswered, and every reason centers on the believer’s relationship with God. God will not cooperate with prayers of mere self-interest, or prayers that come from impure motives. The Christian who clings to sin closes the ear of God. Least of all will God tolerate unbelief, the chief of sins. “Anyone who comes to him must believe” (Hebrews 11:6). In all our prayers the paramount motive is the glory of God.

Great leaders of the Bible were great at prayer. “They were not leaders because of brilliancy of thought, because they were exhaustless in resources, because of their magnificent culture or native endowment, but because, by the power of prayer, they could command the power of God.”

FOR REFLECTION

- A. The school of prayer begins with a kindergarten understanding of communion with God and proceeds beyond graduate studies—in what grade is your prayer life? What progress have you made recently?
- B. Who are your prayer models? How well do you understand the way they practice prayer?
- C. What helpful thoughts or insights on prayer will you remember from this chapter?

Pneumatologia or A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit John Owen

Note: Owen is one of those Puritan writers who is difficult to read but is filled with sound doctrine.

Chapter VII. -The nature of prayer in general, with respect unto forms of prayer and vocal prayer — Eph. 6:18 opened and vindicated.

The duty I am endeavoring to express is that enjoined in Eph. 6:18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Some have made bold to advance a fond imagination (as what will not enmity unto the holy ways of God put men upon?) that “praying in the Spirit” intends only praying by virtue of an extraordinary and miraculous gift; but the use of it is here enjoined unto all believers, none excepted, men and women, who yet, I suppose, had not all and every one of them that extraordinary, miraculous gift which they fancy to be intended in that expression. And the performance of this duty is enjoined them, in the manner prescribed, *ν παντ καιρ*, — “always,” say we, “in every season;” that is, such just and due seasons of prayer as duty and our occasions call for. But the apostle expressly confines the exercise of extraordinary gifts unto some certain seasons, when, under some circumstances, they may be needful or useful unto edification, 1 Cor. xiv. There is, therefore, “a praying in the Spirit,” which is the constant duty of all believers; and it is a great reproach unto the profession of Christianity where that name itself is a matter of contempt. If there be any thing in it that is “foolish, conceited, fanatical,” the holy apostle must answer for it, yea, He by whom he was inspired. But if this be the expression of God himself of that duty which he requireth of us, I would not willingly be among the number of them by whom it is derided, let their pretences be what they please. Besides, in the text, all believers are said thus “to pray in the Spirit at all seasons,” *δι πάσης προσευχης κα δεήσεως*, and *ν πάσ προσευχ κα δεήσει*, “with all prayer and supplication;” that is, with all manner of prayer, according as our own occasions and necessities do require. A man, certainly, by virtue of this rule, can scarce judge himself obliged to confine his performance of this duty unto a prescript form of words: for a variety in our prayers, commensurate unto the various occasions of ourselves and of the church of God, being here enjoined us, how we can comply therewith in the constant use of any one form I know not; those who do are left unto their liberty. And this we are obliged unto, *εσ ατ το το γρυπινο ντες*, “diligently watching unto

this very end," that our prayers may be suited unto our occasions. He who can divide this text, or cut it out into a garment to clothe set forms of prayer with, will discover an admirable dexterity in the using and disposal of a text of Scripture.

But yet neither do I conclude from hence that all such forms are unlawful; only, that another way of praying is here enjoined us is, I suppose, unquestionable unto all impartial searchers after truth; and, doubtless, they are not to be blamed who endeavour a compliance therewith. And if persons are able, in the daily, constant reading of any book whatever, merely of a human composition, to rise up in answer to this duty of "praying always with all manner of prayer and supplication in the Spirit," or the exercise of the aid and assistance received from him, and his holy acting of them as a Spirit of grace and supplication, endeavouring, labouring, and watching thereunto, I shall say no more but that they have attained what I cannot understand.

The sole inquiry remaining is, how they are enabled to pray in whose minds the Holy Ghost doth thus work as a Spirit of grace and supplication. And I do say, in answer thereunto, that those who are thus affected by him do never want a gracious ability of making their addresses unto God in vocal prayer, so far as is needful unto them in their circumstances, callings, states, and conditions. And this is that which is called the gift of prayer. I speak of ordinary cases; for there may be such interpositions of temptations and desertions as that the soul, being overwhelmed with them, may for the present be able only to "mourn as a dove," or to "chatter as a crane," — that is, not to express the sense of their minds clearly and distinctly, but only as it were to mourn and groan before the Lord in brokenness of spirit and expressions. But this also is sufficient for their acceptance in that condition; and hereof there are few believers but at one time or other they have more or less experience. And as for those whose devotion dischargeth itself in a formal course of the same words, as it must needs be in the Papacy, wherein for the most part they understand not the signification of the words which they make use of, they are strangers unto the true nature of prayer, at least unto the work of the Spirit therein. And such supplications as are not variously influenced by the variety of the spiritual conditions of them that make them, according to the variety of our spiritual exercises, are like one constant tone or noise, which hath no harmony nor music in it.

I say, therefore, —

1. That the things insisted on are in some degree and measure necessary unto all acceptable prayer. The Scripture assigns them thereunto, and believers find them so by their own experience. For we discourse not about prayer as it is the working of nature in its straits and difficulties towards the God of nature, expressing thereby its dependence on him, with an acknowledgment of his power, in which sense all flesh, in one way or other, under one notion or other, come to God; nor yet upon those cries which legal convictions will wrest from them that fall under their power: but we treat only of prayer as it is required of believers under the gospel, as they have an "access through Christ by one Spirit unto the Father." And,

2. That those in whom this work is wrought by the Holy Spirit in any degree do not, in ordinary cases, want an ability to express themselves in this duty, so far as is needful for them. It is acknowledged that an ability herein will be greatly increased and improved by exercise, and that not only because the exercise of all moral faculties is the genuine way of their strengthening and improvement, but principally because it is instituted, appointed, and commanded of God unto that end. God hath designed the exercise of grace for the means of its growth, and giveth his blessing in answer to his institution. But the nature of the thing itself requires a performance of the duty suitably unto the condition of him that is called unto it; and if men grow not up unto farther degrees in that ability by exercise in the duty itself, by stirring up the gifts and graces of God in them, it is their sin and folly. And hence it follows,

3. That although set forms of prayer may be lawful unto some, as is pretended, yet are they necessary unto none, that is, unto no true believers, as unto acceptable, evangelical prayer; but whoever is made partaker of the work of the Spirit of God herein, which he doth infallibly effect in every one who through him is enabled to cry, "Abba, Father," as every child of God is, he will be able to pray according to the mind and will of God, if he neglect not the aid and assistance offered unto him for that purpose. Wherefore, to plead for the necessity of forms of prayer unto believers, beyond what may be doctrinal or instructive in them, is a fruit of inclination unto parties, or of ignorance, or of the want of a due attendance unto their own experience.

Of what use forms of prayer may be unto those that are not regenerate, and have not, therefore, received the Spirit of adoption, belongs not directly unto our disquisition; yet I must say that I understand not clearly the advantage of them unto them, unless a contrivance to relieve them in that condition, without a due endeavor after a deliverance from it, may be so esteemed. For these persons are of two sorts:—

- (1.) Such as are openly under the power of sin, their minds being not effectually influenced by any convictions. These seldom pray, unless it be under dangers, fears, troubles, pains, or other distresses. When they are smitten they will cry, "even to the Lord they will cry," and not else; and their design is to treat about their especial occasions, and the present sense which they have thereof. And how can any man conceive that they should be supplied with forms of prayer expressing their sense, conceptions, and affections, in their particular cases? And how ridiculously they may mistake themselves in reading those prayers which are no way suited unto their condition, is easily supposed. A form to such persons may prove little better than a charm, and their minds be diverged by it from such a performance of duty as the light of nature would direct to. Jonah's mariners in the storm "cried every one unto his god," and called on him also to do so too, Jonah 1:5, 6. The substance of their prayer was, that God would "think upon them, that they

might not perish." And men in such condition, if not diverted by this pretended relief, which indeed is none, will not want words to express their minds, so far as there is any thing of prayer in what they do; and beyond that, whatever words they are supplied withal, they are of no use or advantage unto them. And it is possible when they are left to work naturally towards God, however unskilled and rude their expressions may be, a deep sense may be left upon their minds, with a reverence of God, and remembrance of their own error, which may be of use to them. But the bounding and directing of the workings of natural religion by a form of words, perhaps little suited unto their occasions and not at all to their affections, tends only to stifle the operation of an awakened conscience, and to give them up unto their former security.

(2.) Others there are, such as by education and the power of convictions from the word, by one means or other, are so far brought under a sense of the authority of God and their own duty as conscientiously, according unto their light, to attend unto prayer, as unto other duties also. Now, the case of these men will be more fully determined afterward, when the whole use of the forms of prayer will be spoken unto. For the present I shall only say, that I cannot believe, until farther conviction, that any one whose duty it is to pray is not able to express his requests and petitions in words, so far as he is affected with the matter of them in his mind; and what he doth by any advantage beyond that belongeth not to prayer. Men may, by sloth, and other vicious distempers of mind, especially by a negligence in getting their hearts and consciences duly affected with the matter and object of prayer, keep themselves under a real or supposed disability in this matter; but whereas prayer in this sort of persons is an effect of common illumination and grace, which are also from the Spirit of God, if persons do really and sincerely endeavor a due sense of what they pray for and about, he will not be wanting to help them to express themselves so far as is necessary for them, either privately or in their families. But those who will never enter the water but with flags or bladders under them will scarce ever learn to swim; and it cannot be denied but that the constant and unvaried use of set forms of prayer may become a great occasion of quenching the Spirit, and hindering all progress or growth in gifts or graces. When every one hath done what he can, it is his best, and will be accepted of him, it being according unto what he hath, before that which is none of his.

How to Pray in the Spirit

By Adrian Rogers

James 4:5

Introduction

And, we say "Amen" to that song. Come on down Lord Jesus and come soon. Turn to the book of James, would you please for just a moment, the book of James 4, and you will remember this morning we were preaching on triumphant prayer. Prayer that prevails, and we gave you some principles of prayer that cannot be denied. And, among those principles was a very vital principle that we call sensitivity to the Spirit. Look in James 4:5. James 4:5: "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (James 4:5).

Now, while that verse is somewhat hard to interpret, what it really means is this: I'm convinced, that the Holy Spirit within us is very, very jealous for the cause of Christ. And, the Scripture says that over and over again, that God has given the Holy Spirit to us and the Holy Spirit within us is there to glorify Christ and to promote the cause of Christ. And, it is absolutely essential that you understand this if you are to pray vitally, because this is what we call praying in the Spirit. And, so that's what we're going to be talking about tonight, "How to Pray in the Spirit."

And, tonight I want us to think about the Holy Spirit's ministry, first of all to us, and then secondly the Holy Spirit's ministry through us, as we're talking about praying in the Spirit.

Incidentally, I would like you to check these three other verses of Scripture before we get into the message. You might write it down there in the margin by James, or you might just want to turn to it. But, look please in Ephesians. Ephesians 6:18. Ephesians 6:18. There the Bible gives us this admonition, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit..." (Ephesians 6:18). Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.

I. The Holy Spirit's Ministry

All right now, I want you to jot down this verse. In Jude 20. There's no chapter because there's only one chapter in Jude, so we don't give you a chapter designation, just the book and the verse. Listen to it. Jude, next to the last book in the Bible. Jude verse 20: "But ye beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 1:20). Praying in the Holy Spirit. Again, prayer in the Spirit is mentioned.

Now, the third Scripture that I want you to notice in conjunction with the Scripture in James is found in Romans 8, beginning in verse 25—excuse me, verse 26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but

the Spirit itself"—and may I pause here to say that itself is a poor translation, it could be and should be interpreted, "but the Spirit Himself"—"maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he"—the Spirit—"maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27).

A. Prayer is our Greatest Christian Privilege

May I say ladies and gentlemen, that prayer is the greatest Christian privilege that we have? Of all of the privileges that God has given us, beyond a shadow of any doubt and without any peradventure or argument, prayer is our greatest Christian privilege. And, the need of the hour is for loving prayer, laboring prayer, lingering prayer, listening prayer.

B. Prayer is our Greatest Christian Service

But, not only is prayer our greatest Christian privilege. Prayer is also our greatest Christian service. Too many times we think of prayer as the means of getting ready to serve God rather than as the means of serving God. So many times we think if we pray, then we can serve God better. But, my friend, may I tell you that you are serving God when you pray. And, those of you who are bound, and shut in, and can't do other things, you say, "I can't serve the Lord." You can pray can't you? And, if you pray, you're serving the Lord.

C. Prayer is our Greatest Christian Failure

All right, but may I say that not only is prayer the greatest Christian privilege, and not only is prayer the greatest Christian service, but alas, prayer so frequently is the greatest Christian failure. We pray but our prayers are not answered.

Isaiah 1:15. God spoke to Isaiah's generation, and said, "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear..." (Isaiah 1:15). Now, this is strange, for God wants to answer our prayers. And, yet God says they're certain situations in which He turns His face away. And, God says in spite of the palpation of our prayers, He will not hear.

Now, why is that? I'm convinced that one of the greatest reasons our prayers are so fruitless, and so powerless, and one of the reasons that our prayers do not reach Heaven is that we do not pray in the Holy Spirit.

Praying in the Spirit will change prayer from a weary grudge to a delightful privilege.

II. The Holy Spirit's Ministry Through Us

Now, let me speak therefore, about the Spirit's ministry through us. What does the Holy Spirit do through us? Well, He gives us strength where we do not have strength to pray. Look again please, if you will, in Romans 8. We're still in Romans 8. If you're still in the neighborhood and haven't driven out yet. In Romans 8, I want you to notice a significant series of verses beginning in verse 5. In Romans 8 he says, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh..." Romans 8:5 "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh..." (Romans 8:5).

Now, when the Bible uses the term flesh, the Bible does not mean the skin and bones. But, the Bible means a principle, a way of life that we inherited from Adam. Actually, when the Bible uses the word flesh, it means our old unredeemed nature. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded"—or fleshly minded—"is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace"—and, then put a star by verse 7—"Because the carnal mind"—that is the fleshly mind—"is enmity against God"—now, that word enmity means warfare—"for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:5-7).

Now, you have within you a spiritual nature. But, you also have a fleshly nature and there's a civil war that goes on within you. For the Bible says, "The spirit lusteth against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit: and these two are contrary, the one to the other" (Galatians 5:17). And, when you go to pray a battle begins between your spiritual nature and your fleshly carnal nature. And, your carnal nature does not want to pray. Your carnal nature is set against prayer. Look again at verse 7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God..." (Romans 8:7).

Have you ever wondered why it's so hard to pray? Now, let me just ask you a question. Be honest. Is it hard for you to pray at least some of the time? Lift your hand. And, sometimes you say, "What on earth is wrong with me? I love God, I believe in prayer, I know I ought to pray and I want to pray, but sometimes it's the hardest thing in the world for me to pray." Can you agree to that? Can you bear witness to that? Well, why is it? Because there is something in you that is at warfare with God. There is a nature in you that is not subject to the law of God, "neither indeed can be."

And, you find yourself, sometimes when you go to pray, with absolutely no desire to pray. You will find yourself with wandering

thoughts. Your mind will gather wool. You will find yourself with unbelief crowding in upon you. You will find yourself with no knowledge of God's will. You will find yourself, when you pray, with no sense whatever of God's presence. It seems like God is ten billion miles away, and yet you love God. And, you know you ought to pray, and you want to pray, but there is a principle in you that we call the carnal mind.

It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Indeed it is at warfare with God. And, we make an extra start, we resolve we're going to do better. We hear someone preach a sermon on prayer and tell us why we ought to pray and we say, "I'm going to pray," and then we fall flat on our face in our prayer efforts. Why is it? Well, dear friend, there's something in you that has no stomach for prayer any more than my dog has for the opera, or me either for that matter. And, it is a carnal mind that is not subject to the law of God.

A. There is Weakness in Us

Now, this carnal mind, and this flesh nature, is a form of weakness in us. And, the sooner we admit it the better off we will be. Notice, again if you would please, the weakness that is in us, and we need to accept this weakness. For the Bible says here, in verse 26 of this same chapter of Romans 8: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities..." (Romans 8:26).

Now, you know one of the hardest things for a Christian to admit is that he's infirm, that he's weak. We go around always denying that we're weak, trying to demonstrate that we're not weak, when indeed we are weak. And, let me tell you that you might as well bow your head and accept your weakness. Don't deny it, accept it, for two reasons. Number one: the Bible declares it. You haven't got an inferiority complex. You're inferior. Just accept it. The Bible speaks of our weakness, the weakness of our flesh and the Spirit helps our infirmities.

B. Your Weakness is an Asset

But, now notice, not only should accept it because the Bible teaches it, but believe it or not because your weakness is really an asset. Your weakness is really an asset. Why does God allow you to continue to have that weakness? I'll tell you why. To keep you from independence in your prayers—to keep you depending upon him, to keep you weak—because in the Bible the secret of strength is understanding your weakness, and therefore no longer depending upon yourself.

Listen to this passage in 2 Corinthians 12:9. God is speaking to the Apostle Paul—a man that we would think was a strong man—but God said to Paul, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..." (2 Corinthians 12:9). Do you hear that? God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. Paul said, "... for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). The Spirit of God helps us in our weakness. And, many of us say the reason that I don't pray any better than I do is that I'm too weak, but the truth of the matter is you may not be weak enough. You may not have really understood just how weak you are so that you no longer struggle to pray in the flesh, but you begin to pray in the Spirit.

You see, there are two ways to pray. One is for the ol' flesh to try to pray, and that's the reason why it's so much work. The other way to pray is to pray the way the Bible teaches us to pray, admitting our weakness, casting ourselves upon God, no longer having a self-sufficiency in prayer, but praying in the Spirit.

SIX ENEMIES THAT KEEP US FROM PRAYING

You see, God allows us to stay perpetually weak that we might be perpetually dependant upon the Holy Spirit of God. There are six enemies that keep us from praying. And, I want you to see how praying the Spirit is the answer to each of these six enemies.

1. Indifference

Now, first of all, there is the enemy of indifference—indifference—where we just don't feel like praying. We have a spiritual lethargy. We have no real desire to pray. It's sort of a spirit of bondage where we are just lethargic about the spiritual thing. Somebody said, "The greatest problem in America is apathy, but who cares."

Now, I think that's the way we feel about this matter prayer, sometimes we're just really indifferent to pray. Do you want me to tell you why you don't pray more than you do pray? Is you don't want to? We find time to do what we really want to do. It's not that we don't have time to pray. There is just an indifference about us. The truth is that our flesh has no appetite for prayer whatever, because the carnal mind is enmity against God. For it indeed is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So quit trying to cover it up. Admit that the reason that you don't pray is that you don't want to. Just go ahead and admit it.

There's something in you that doesn't want to pray. That's hard to say, isn't it? 'Cause we all try to impress each other with our spirituality. But, I'll be honest, there's something in me that doesn't want to pray. There's something in me that absolutely rebels at going to the place of prayer. You say, "What? And, you're a preacher." Yes. And, you're the same way. There's something in you that

doesn't want to pray. There's something in you that is indifferent to the matter of prayer. It's that ol' carnal nature.

Well, how does praying in the Holy Spirit help you to want to pray? Well, I want you to look here in Romans 8:15: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). Who is it that's crying, "Abba, Father" in us? It's the Holy Spirit of God. You see, the Spirit of God loves to pray. He wants to pray. And, when you turn that Holy Spirit loose in you, He then gives you the energy and the desire to pray. It is the Spirit of God in you that is crying out, "Abba, Father." Or, right along side that verse just jot down Galatians 4:6. And the Bible says, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). Because I'm a son of God, God put the Spirit of His Son into my heart, and it is the Holy Spirit in me that cries out, "Abba, Father."

And oh, I like that term, "Abba, Father." I wish I had time just to talk about that. It's an Aramaic term—it's not a Greek term—it's a dominionative term. It literally means daddy, father—daddy, father. Have you ever thought of the great God who scooped out the oceans, and heaped up the mountains, and flung out the sun, the moon and the stars as being your daddy? Oh, we thought of Him as the great eternal God, the everlasting Father. But God has sent forth His Spirit into our hearts crying, Abba, Father. Oh, the tender devotion and emotion of the Holy Spirit of God. He is the one who does the praying—if we'll let Him—if we'll turn Him loose in our hearts. And, may I tell you that the problem of indifference to prayer may never be settled until you begin pray in the Spirit. It is the Spirit in you that will give you that to desire to pray that your old carnal nature does not have. So, enemy number one is handled by the Holy Spirit. That enemy I call indifference.

2. Ignorance

Now, there's another enemy and that's the enemy that we call ignorance, ignorance. Look again please, if you will, in Romans 8 and notice verse 26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought..." (Romans 8:26). We don't know. Have you ever gone to the place of prayer and gotten discouraged because you didn't know what to pray for? I do. Sometimes when I go to pray there are so many of you to pray for, and there are so many things to pray for, and so many opportunities to pray that sometimes it gets discouraging. I know I can't get it all done. I know I can't pray for everything, and sometimes if I would let that type of thinking get me down I'd say, "If I can't pray for everything, why pray for anything?" Who knows what to pray for? There is so much to pray for, now isn't there? We don't know what to pray for.

All right, you see, if I tried to pray for every possibility of prayer, my prayer would cease to be the kind of a force that it ought to be. And, no longer would my prayer be a river that is channeled, my prayer would become just like a dismal swamp. If my prayer is to be effective, it just be selective.

Now, how am I going to know for whom to pray? How, on Wednesday night when you get that hospital list there—and of course, theoretically, you could pray for all of those persons—but is there someone that the Holy Spirit especially wants you to intercede for? And, in this church family, and in the leadership, and in our city, and in our nation, and in our world—what about all of the missionaries, what about all of the countries of the world, what about all of the opportunities? No one human being can pray about all of those things at one time, but the Holy Spirit of God knows what you ought to pray for. "... we know not what we should pray for as we ought..." (Romans 8:26)—and the best Christian, in my estimation who ever lived, the Apostle Paul said that, so that makes me feel in pretty good company when I don't know what I ought to pray for. He didn't know what he ought to pray for. And, not only do we know not what we ought to pray for, but we don't know how to pray for what we ought to pray for when we find out what we ought to pray for.

Now, what I mean by that is this. Suppose the Lord—here, suppose there's an elderly man in his seventies, eighties, nineties, and he's sick. And, you go to pray for him. Do you pray, "Lord, heal him?" Or do you pray, "Lord, take him to Heaven?" Huh? Have you ever faced that with an elderly person? Do you remember the night we prayed here that God would take Dr. Robert G. Lee to Heaven, and took him to Heaven that same night? Do you remember that? I felt impressed of the Holy Spirit to pray that prayer, "Lord, take him home, it's time." And, I believe the Holy Spirit of God put that prayer in our hearts. How are we going to know exactly, precisely, what to pray for after we determine who to pray for? What to pray for the person, or what to pray in the incidents. We know not what we should pray for as we ought. Thank God for the blessed Holy Spirit, who not only overcomes our problem of indifference, but the Holy Spirit overcomes our problem of ignorance, and He knows how to pray in the will of God.

Notice verse 27 of this chapter, "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). Hallelujah. This is the confidence that we have in Him. If we ask Him anything according to His will, He heareth us. And, the secret of praying in the will of God is absolutely praying in the Holy Spirit. This is the only way that I can pray in the will of God, and that you can pray in the will of God. Thank God the Holy Spirit knows what to pray for.

I love that description of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2. The Bible describes him with these words: "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the

LORD" (Isaiah 11:2). Do you know? Do you need wisdom, understanding, counsel? Then you must pray in the Holy Spirit so you'll know what to pray for.

3. Impotence

All right, there is another problem that we have that the Holy Spirit helps us with. And, it's not only the problem of indifference, and the problem of ignorance, but it is the problem of impotence—impotence—or just simply our weakness, our inability. Have you ever tried to pray when you get a dull headache? Have you ever tried to pray when you get sleepy? Have you ever tried to pray, when you just want to pray—"... the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak..."—do you remember how Simon Peter, and James, and John fell asleep there in the garden when Jesus said, "... watch and pray..." (Matthew 26:41). They did not have the physical power, the physical stamina, the mental alertness, the concentration. There was not enough physical, spiritual, emotional strength to concentrate in prayer. There's just weakness.

Now, the Holy Spirit is the answer to that too. Look in Romans 8:11: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

Now, some people say this refers to the resurrection, and indeed one day we're going to be quickened by the Spirit in the resurrection, but there's nothing here that says this applies only to the resurrection. I want to tell you, there's something about being filled with the Holy Spirit that gives you energy. There's something about being filled with the Holy Spirit that gives concentration. There's something that is about being filled with the Holy Spirit that gives you power when you don't have power to pray, to overcome your impotence. "The Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead will dwell in your mortal bodies and quicken your mortal bodies."

I think a good illustration is this: remember when the Lord Jesus Christ was sitting there on that curbing of the well in Sychar? You remember there at Jacob's well and that Samaritan—I won't say lady—woman came out. You know the one that had been married so many times? If she lived today we'd give her an Academy Award, I suppose. And, Jesus spoke to her. Jesus spoke to her about that water of life. And, do you remember Jesus was so tired? He was so weary. He was famished and His body was hungry. And, the disciples had gone into the city to get provisions and when they came back they found Jesus Christ absolutely invigorated, exhilarated, charged up. And, they said, "Here, you need something to eat." He said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." (John 4:31-32). The Spirit of God had so energized that divine body of the Lord Jesus Christ and given Him strength.

And, I tell you sometimes when your spirit is flagging, sometimes when your mind cannot concentrate, sometimes when you're weak—your will is so weak and you feel so impotent—cast yourself upon the Holy Spirit. Pray in the Spirit, not in the flesh. And, let me just add a word of practicality here, because sometimes we get so spiritual we don't get practical. If you have trouble going to sleep when you pray, don't try to do all your praying in bed. And, don't kneel beside that big ol' overstuffed chair and bury your face in a pillow. You'll smother. That's right. Sometimes when I have difficulty concentrating and praying—and I'm talking about being spiritual—but sometimes friend, I just get up and walk around and pray. Sometimes I can do my best praying in my study, just walking up and down. If you'd seen me, you'd think I was a hyena in a cage, but I'm going to get some blood flowing, get my mind thinking, get some air in my lungs. But, that's a practical thing. But, above that, and beyond that, and beneath that, and through that shall be a dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God.

4. Interference

Now, let me tell you another enemy of our prayers that the Holy Spirit overcomes. And, it's the enemy of interference. And, I'm talking here about devilish, Satanic interference. Remember James not only spoke to us about being sensitive to the Spirit, but James spoke to us about being steadfast against the devil. And, friend when you get on your knees and begin to pray, the devil levels all of the artillery of Hell against you. We said that this morning, I want to say it again. The devil will do anything he can do to keep you from praying. When Sidlow Baxter was here, Sidlow Baxter said something I shall never forget. He said that when a Christian goes to pray, the devil says to his demons, "Boys, stop him whatever you do, because if you stop him we can beat him every time. But, if you don't stop him when he prays he'll beat us every time." And, the devil tries to stop us when we pray.

Well, how are you going to overcome the devil? You're no match for the devil. You don't have the strength to overcome the devil. There's only one way that you're going to overcome the devil and it is to pray in the Spirit.

I want us to leave the book of Romans for just one moment, but however we're going back, so just keep your fingers in there and turn, if you will, to Ephesians 6. Now, here the Bible is speaking about our warfare. And, we are in a war. So the Bible says in Ephesians 6, beginning in verse 11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith,

wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:11-15).

Now, so far you've just been getting ready for the battle. So far you hadn't fought a lick. So far all you've been doing is putting on the armor, now the battle begins. Look in verse 18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18). God tells us of the armor, but God also tells of the warfare. And, I want to tell you that the Christian is in a warfare, and that war is won or lost on our knees, and on our face. And, when we come here on Sunday morning, we're not coming here to do battle. We're coming here just simply to pick up the spoils of the battle—the battle is won or lost by our prayers, by our prayers.

And, how are we going to overcome the devil? How are we going—listen you talk about interference, you try to pray, the phone will ring. You try to pray, the beans will burn. You try to pray, the kids will fight. You try to pray, and you'll get a headache. You try to pray, your mind will be distracted. You try to pray, and a thousand and one things that you never thought of will happen. Amen? You know it's true. Who is it does that?

It's the enemy. He does not want you to pray. And, so you'd better take the whole armor of God and pray in the Spirit. He is no match for the Holy Spirit of God. You cannot pray effectively in the flesh because of the interference of the devil.

5. Inexpressibility

Now, go back to Romans 8 again. And, I'll tell you, not only do we have the problem of indifference. And, not only do we have the problem of ignorance, and not only do we have the problem of impotence, and not only do we have the problem of interference, but we also have the problem of inexpressibility.

There are times when we're not able to say what we ought to say, what we need to say, what we want to say. There's some times when our words just fail. There are times when we just feel damned up, and there are times when our vocabulary seems so inadequate. There are times when we want to praise, there are times when want to plead. There times when we want to come to God with our petition and we seem so unable to do it. Sometimes, within our bosoms there sighs that are too deep for words, and we cannot express what's on our hearts. Thank God praying in the Spirit makes up for that. Look in verse 26: "Likewise"—Romans 8:26—"Likewise the spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought but the Spirit himself maketh intercession with groaning that cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). Ha, the Holy Spirit sometimes just takes my groanings, that I cannot even utter. Some people say, "Oh, praying in the Spirit is praying in tongues." No, that's not what it is. That's not what he's talking about. He's not talking about something that you utter, he's talking about something you can't utter. O God, God sometimes our heart is so full that it almost breaks. Sometimes a mother, a father, yearning over a child cannot even verbalize a prayer. Sometimes a person standing at the bed of a sick loved one, at a gravesite, has within him a force about to explode, and all he can do is just sigh, and cry and groan. Thank God the dear Holy Spirit of God knows how to take that prayer and make it acceptable. Take things that we cannot even utter, groanings that cannot be uttered. Oh, He takes care of our inexpressibility. Oh, who is the one doing the groaning? It's really the Holy Spirit within us who is groaning.

The Bible says, "He groans and He makes intercession for the saints" (Romans 8:26). This word groaning here is a word that expresses sounds that are uttered at childbirth. That's what the etymology of the word is. It speaks of the groanings. Have you ever heard the groanings of a mother about to give birth to a child? The agony, the pain, the groanings—but there's something about that groaning that's unique. There's something about the pain of childbirth that is absolutely unique, because it is pain, but linked with that pain is an intense desire to bring forth. It is pain that is transfigured by hope and expectation, and that's the deepest form of prayer. Pain, transfigured by hope and expectation as the Holy Spirit of God in us prays the prayer of agony. Thank God for the Holy Spirit who helps us to pray.

6. Inaccessibility

And, then not only is there the prayer of inexpressibility—or the problem of inexpressibility—but also there is the problem of inaccessibility. You see, sometimes we just feel that our prayers are not getting through. That somehow when we pray, we don't come right into the throne room.

Now, through the blood of Jesus a way has been made through the veil into the holy of holies, and we have a right to come. But, dear friend, we need more than the right to come. We need also the power to come. The blood supplies the right to come, but the Spirit supplies the power to come. I want you to note this verse, Ephesians 2:18. Ephesians 2:18: "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18)—access, accessibility, how? By the Spirit, it is the dear Holy Spirit of God that takes us by the hand and leads us into the throne room.

Conclusion

Last summer we were in Taiwan, and I was invited to go with several other men to speak to one of the highest officials in the

Taiwanese government. The son of General Kang Sheng, ka shek, (I cannot verify he had a son of this name, or something close) who was in charge of all of the military forces there in the Republic of China. We were very honored to get to go. And, we had an invitation to go. And, then they took our passports and they did a security check on us. That gave us the right to come, but when we came to the gate of that palace there was a man there who escorted us in. We needed more than the right. We needed someone who would take us and lead us in.

The Holy Spirit is the one who escorts us into the divine throne room of Almighty God and gives us that accessibility. Not only do I have a royal invitation, but dear friend, I have a palace attendant, the Holy Spirit to lead me right in to the presence of the one that I love so much. Right on through that iron curtain of sin, right on in to the holy of holies, by the blood of Jesus and by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Now, that's why it's so important to pray in the Spirit, to pray in the spirit. But, now look, not only must we pray in the Spirit. You see, not only does the Holy Spirit have a ministry to us, but the Holy Spirit has a ministry to us in order that the Holy Spirit might have a ministry through us.

Very quickly now, because time is fleeting, I want you to notice this intercession of the Holy Spirit. Look, if you will, in just a moment, in verse 26. Romans 8:26, and if I don't give the chapter from now on just assume it's Romans 8. All right, Romans 8:26, look at it, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us..."—that is on our behalf. (Romans 8:26). But, now I want you to notice in verse 34 of this same chapter, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). The Holy Spirit makes intercession and Christ makes intercession.

But there's a difference. There's a difference into the places of these intercessions. Christ makes intercession at the right hand of the Father. The Holy Spirit makes intercession in us. There's a difference in the purpose of intercession. I am the object of the Savior's intercession. He's interceding for me at the right hand of the Father. But, I am the vehicle of the Spirit's intercession. He is interceding through me on behalf of others. You see, the Holy Spirit not only gives the ministry to me, but He gives a ministry to me so He can give a ministry through me so that the world can be reached. God wants to raise up a Church that knows how to intercede. I want to pastor that Church. A people who know how to pray, who know how to get hold of God, and I want to be that kind of a man so I can show you how to do it. So that the dear Holy Spirit of God will minister to us that He might minister through us, and that this city and this world might feel the impact of a Holy Church in the hands of a mighty God. Let us pray.

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Excerpt from sermon "Prayer - Its Force, Its Course, and Its Source

The Source of Prayer - Now, thirdly and finally, but not immediately, let me speak to you about the source of our prayer. Now, the force of our prayer is God Almighty, who can do anything. And, if the course of my prayer is Jesus Christ, who brings it to the Father, then the source of my prayer must be the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit. Now, you see what prayer is. When a person prays, he prays in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. That is prayer that is powerful, and that is prayer that travails. Now, I suppose that, out of all of these concepts, praying in the Spirit is perhaps, to most of us, the foggiest. But, dear friend, your prayer, again, will not be answered, unless you pray in the Spirit. The Bible says, in Ephesians 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18)—praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. Jude 1:20 says, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 1:20). We ought to pray in the Spirit.

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Excerpt from another message by Dr Rogers - Six Keys to Answered Prayer - John 14:13

Pray in the Spirit

Second thing: Not only do you pray in the name, but number two, you pray in the Spirit. Praying in the name is the first step, but you also pray in the Spirit.

Now, let's look at some scriptures. For example, turn to Ephesians 6:18—Paul tell us to put on the whole armor of God, and then he says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18)—"in the Spirit." Now, when he says, "Praying... in the Spirit," he doesn't mean, "with a lot of razzmatazz." It doesn't mean, "with histrionics." He's not trying to say, "Whip it up," like we have a good football spirit. He's talking about the Holy Spirit. You're praying in the Holy Spirit.

Jude, for example, verse 20, says, "But ye, beloved..."—now, Jude 1:20—"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 1:20). Now, why do we pray in the Spirit? Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer.

Over in the Book of Zechariah, there's a wonderful verse talking about the time when the Jewish people would wholesale come to

Christ. The Lord is talking about the House of David, and He says, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zechariah 12:10). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace. Oh, thank God for that. And, He is the Spirit of supplications. The supplications—that's just a big word for prayer. And so, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer.

And, when you pray in the Spirit, some wonderful things happen that I'm going to talk about in just a moment. Well, let's talk about them, right now. Turn to Romans chapter 8 with me for a moment, and look, if you will, in verse 26—Romans 8:26—one of the great prayers of praying in the Spirit—it says, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself"—and that may be properly translated, "himself"—"maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27). So, that's praying in the Spirit.

And, what does this verse mean? Well, it means that the Holy Spirit inspires; the Holy Spirit guides; the Holy Spirit energizes; the Holy Spirit helps our praying.

Another excerpt from a different sermon on "Six Keys to Answered Prayer" - John 14:6

Pray in the Spirit

Second thing: Not only pray in the name of Jesus, but the second is that you must pray in the Spirit—in the Spirit. This time, turn, if you will please, to Ephesians 6:18. Here, the Apostle Paul is giving us a marvelous lesson on prayer, and he says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"—"in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18). First of all, we pray in the name; and now, we pray in the Spirit.

You see, the Holy Spirit is called, in the Bible, "the Spirit of prayer." Did you know that? In Zechariah 12:10, the Holy Spirit is called, "the spirit of grace and of supplications" (Zechariah 12:10). So, it is so important, therefore, that you not only be saved, but that you be Spirit-filled.

Now, a person can be saved and still not be praying in the Spirit. If you just automatically pray in the Spirit when you're saved, then the Bible would not command us to pray in the Spirit. So, when the Bible commands us to pray in the Spirit, of course, we have to admit the possibility that we could be a Christian and yet not be praying in the Spirit.

And, in the Book of Jude—there's just one chapter, so I'm not going to give you a chapter, just the verse—in Jude 20, the Bible says this: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 1:20). So, the Bible tells us to pray in the Spirit.

Why is it so important to pray in the Spirit—that is, to be yielded to the Holy Spirit? Well, Paul makes it clear.

A. Because of our Weakness

In Romans 8:26, Paul explains why we must pray in the Spirit. And, this is what he says: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities..."—anybody here weak? Anybody here infirm? Well, hallelujah! You have a helper—"the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

Now, this verse is very interesting, because the word help has a double prefix in front of it, or in conjunction with it, and it means, "instead of," and, "together with." It almost sounds contradictory that the Holy Spirit prays instead of us and then the Holy Spirit prays together with us. What does that mean? Well, it's very beautiful, when you think about it. It means that we cannot do it without Him, and it means that He will not do it without us. It is the Holy Spirit that so fills us when we pray—when we're surrendered to Him, when we're in the Spirit—that He molds our prayers and makes our prayers acceptable to the Father.

To help means that He inspires our prayers, He guides our prayers, He energizes our prayers, and He sustains our praying. We're so weak that, without His help, we would not get it done. And, as a matter of fact, the Bible says that He does it "with groanings" (Romans 8:26). That speaks of sounds that are uttered at childbirth. "The pains of childbirth" is literally what that word means, when He "makes intercession for us with groanings." Hallelujah for the Helper!

I tell you, dear friend, prayer is hard work. The devil will attack you when you pray; your mind will get clouded when you pray. And, hallelujah for the Helper! Have you ever tried to pray without the Spirit? If you have, you'll understand how important it is to pray in the Spirit of God.

B. Because of our Ignorance

Pray in the name; pray in the Spirit—not only because of our weakness, but also because of our ignorance. Folks, listen. We don't

know what we should pray for, as we ought. Listen to Romans 8:26 again: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." We can't pray for every possibility.

Just a few moments ago, Paul handed me a slip of paper, and someone said, "Pastor, pray for this particular situation." Well, during the song service, I bowed my head and prayed for that particular situation, lest I forget it. But, I tell you, I cannot pray for everything; you cannot pray for everything. And, I believe that the Holy Spirit of God makes prayer assignments to us.

And, I've said before, and I want to say again—for your prayer to be effective, your prayer must be selective. You can pray in general—"God bless the world." But, dear friend, when you get down to specific praying, the Holy Spirit of God gives you that prayer assignment; and, not only does He tell you who to pray for, but also He tells you how to pray for whom you pray. Or, if He doesn't tell you, then He'll just make groanings for you—words that you can't utter.

For example, there's a sick saint. Let's suppose that your grandmother is 80 years of age, and she's sick; and, you're starting to pray. Well, what are you going to pray? "Lord God, heal her." Or, "Lord God, bring her to Heaven." Huh? That's kind of hard, isn't it, to know what to pray?

Well, God knows what to pray, and you know, many times, it's God's will to take her to Heaven. As a matter of fact, that's the more wonderful thing—if God takes her to Heaven. Have you ever noticed that we get in prayer meetings on Wednesday night, and so many times we spend so much more time praying for the saved who are sick than the unsaved who are lost? We spend more time trying to keep the saints out of Heaven than the lost out of Hell. Do you ever think about it? Because we are just not burdened for the unsaved, many times, as much as we are burdened for the saved.

But, how do we pray? Suppose there's a troublemaker in the church. I mean, let's just suppose that, in this church, somebody just made up his or her mind they were going to cause trouble in the church, and we begin to pray about it. Well, how would we pray? Many of us might be praying, "Lord, remove him." As a matter of fact, some of us might be saying, "Lord, fix his wagon." But, I think about the Apostle Paul, when the Apostle Paul wrought havoc on the church. Those early saints prayed—I suppose some of them might have been saying, "Lord, strike him dead." But, the Lord struck him alive. The Lord just saved him and made a mighty apostle out of old Saul, who later became Paul.

Many times, we don't know what to pray for. But, here's the wonderful thing about the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit takes our prayers—and even sometimes when we ask for the wrong things with the right heart—then He takes the right thing and applies it to the right heart.

He is like a transformer. That electrical energy goes into the transformer on one side, and one cycle, and one voltage; it comes out on the other side in another form so it can be used. If you were to drop that power off those high-tension wires into your toaster, you'd toast more than the bread. But, what happens is this: It goes through the transformer. It is the same power, but it is made acceptable; it is made adaptable; it is made usable. And, many times, our prayer power, our energy, because it comes from a heart that is right with God, the Holy Spirit says to the Father, "Now, Father, this is what he thinks he wants, but this is what he needs." Have you ever thanked God He didn't answer the prayers exactly—that He didn't give you what you wanted? He always gave you something better than you wanted.

PRAYING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

NO. 719 DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 4TH, 1866,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Praying in the Holy Ghost." — Jude 1:20.

THESE words occur in a passage where the apostle is indicating the contrast between the ungodly and the godly. The ungodly are mocking, speaking great swelling words, and walking after their ungodly lusts, while the righteous are building up themselves in their most holy faith, and keeping themselves in the love of God. The ungodly are showing the venom of their hearts by mourning and complaining, while the righteous are manifesting the new principle within them by "praying in the Holy Ghost." The ungodly man bears wormwood in his mouth, while the Christian's lips drop with the virgin honey of devotion. As the spider is said to find poison in the very flowers from which the bees suck honey, so do the wicked abuse to sin the selfsame mercies which the godly use to the glory of God. As far as light is removed from darkness, and life from death, so far does a believer differ from the ungodly. Let us keep this contrast very vivid. While the wicked grow yet more wicked, let us become more holy, more prayerful, and more devout, saying with good old Joshua, "Let others do as they will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Observe, that the text comes in a certain order in the context. The righteous are described, first of all, as building themselves up in their most holy faith. Faith is the first grace, the root of piety, the foundation of holiness, the dawn of godliness; to this must the first care be given. But we must not tarry at the first principles. Onward is our course. What then follows at the heels of faith? What is faith's firstborn child? When the vine of faith becomes vigorous and produces fruit unto holiness, which is the first ripe cluster? Is it not prayer — "praying in the Holy Ghost"? That man has no faith who has no prayer, and the man who abounds in faith will soon abound in supplication. Faith the mother and prayer the child are seldom apart from one another; faith carries prayer in her arms, and prayer draws life from the breast of faith. Edification in faith leads to fervency in supplication. Elijah first manifests his faith before the priests of Baal, and then retires to wrestle with God upon Carmel. Remark our text carefully, and see what follows after "praying in the Holy Ghost." "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Next to prayer comes an abiding sense of the love of God to us and the flowing up of our love towards God. Prayer builds an altar and lays the sacrifice and the wood in order, and then love, like the priest, brings holy fire from heaven and sets the offering in a blaze. Faith is, as we have said, the root of grace, prayer is the lily's stalk, and love is the spotless flower. Faith sees the Savior, prayer follows him into the house, but love breaks the alabaster box of precious ointment and pours it on his head. There is, however, a step beyond even the hallowed enjoyments of love, there remains a topstone to complete the edifice; it is believing expectancy — "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Farseeing hope climbs the staircase which hope has builded, and bowing upon the knees of prayer looks through the window which love has opened, and sees the Lord Jesus Christ coming in his glory and endowing all his people with the eternal life which is to be their portion. See then the value of prayer as indicating the possession of faith, and as foreshadowing and supporting the strength and growth of love.

Coming directly to the text, we remark that the apostle speaks of prayer, but he mentions only one kind of praying. Viewed from a certain point, prayers are of many sorts. I suppose that no two genuine prayers from different men could be precisely alike. Master-artists do not often multiply the same painting; they prefer to give expression to fresh ideas as often as they grasp the pencil, and so the Master-Artist, the Holy Spirit, who is the author of prayer, does not often produce two prayers that shall be precisely the same upon the tablets of his people's hearts. Prayers may be divided into several different orders. There is deprecatory prayer, in which we deprecate the wrath of God, and entreat him to turn away his fierce anger, to withdraw his rod, to sheath his sword. Deprecatory prayers are to be offered in all times when calamity is to be feared, and when sin has provoked the Lord to jealousy. Then there are supplicatory prayers, in which we supplicate blessings and implore mercies from the liberal hand of God, and entreat our heavenly Father to supply our wants out of his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. There are prayers which are personal, in which the suppliant pleads mainly concerning himself, and there are pleadings which are intercessory, in which like Abraham, the petitioner intercedes for Sodom, or entreats that Ishmael might live before God. These prayers for others are to be multiplied as much as prayers for ourselves, lest we make the mercy-seat to become a place for the exhibition of spiritual selfishness. The prayer may be public or private, vocal or mental, protracted or ejaculatory. Prayer may be salted with confession, or perfumed with thanksgiving; it may be sung to music, or wept out with groanings. As many as are the flowers of summer, so many are the varieties of prayer.

But while prayers are of these various orders, there is one respect in which they are all one if they be acceptable with God; — they must be every one of them "in the Holy Ghost." That prayer which is not in the Holy Ghost is in the flesh; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and we are told that they which are in the flesh cannot please God. All that cometh of our corrupt nature is defiled and marred, and cannot be acceptable with the most holy God. If the heavens are not pure in his sight, how shall those prayers which are born of the earth be acceptable with him? The seed of acceptable devotion must come from heaven's storehouse. Only the prayer which comes from God can go to God. The dove will only bear a letter to the cote from which it came, and so will prayer go back to heaven if it came from heaven. We must shoot the Lord's arrows back to him. That desire which he writes upon our heart will move his heart and bring down a blessing, but the desires of the flesh have no power with him.

Desirous to press this great truth upon the minds of my brethren this morning, I shall use the few words of the text in five ways.

I. First we shall use the text as A CRUCIBLE to try our prayers in.

I beseech you examine yourselves with rigorous care. Use the text as a fining pot, a furnace, a touchstone, or a crucible by which to discern whether your prayers have been true or not, for this is the test, have they been in very deed "praying in the Holy Ghost"? Brethren and sisters, we need not judge those who pray unintelligible prayers, prayers in a foreign tongue, prayers which they do not understand: we know without a moment's discussion of the question that the prayer which is not even understood cannot be a prayer in the Spirit, for even the man's own spirit does not enter into it, how then can the Spirit of God be there? The mysterious words or Latin jargon of the priests cannot come up before God with acceptance. Let us, therefore, keep our judgment for ourselves. There may be those present who have been in the habit of using from their infancy a form of prayer. You perhaps would not dare to go out to your day's business without having repeated that form at the bedside; you would be afraid to fall asleep at night without going through the words which you have set yourselves to repeat. My dear friends, may I put the question to you, will you try to answer it honestly, Have you prayed in the Holy Ghost? Has the Holy Spirit had anything to do with that form? Has he really made you to feel it in your heart? Is it not possible that you have mocked God with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue? Is it not

probable that from the random manner in which one comes to repeat a well-known form that there may be no heart whatever in it, and not an atom of sincerity? Does not God abhor the sacrifice where the heart is not found? It would be a melancholy thing if we had increased our sins by our prayers. It would be a very unhappy fact if it should turn out that when we have bowed the knee in what we thought to be the service of God, we were actually insulting the God of heaven by uttering words which could not but be disgusting to him because our hearts did not go with our lips. Let us rest assured that if for seventy years we have punctually performed our devotions by the use of the book, or of the form which we have learnt, we may the whole seventy years never once have prayed at all, and the whole of that period we may have been living in God's esteem an ungodly, prayerless life, because we have never worshipped God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth, and have never prayed in the Holy Ghost. Judge yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged.

But are there not others of us who never did use a written prayer, who from our earliest childhood have eschewed and even abhorred forms of prayer, who nevertheless have good reason to try our prayer just as much as others? We have given forth extemporaneous utterances, and those extemporaneous utterances necessarily required some little exercise of the mind, some little attention, but still we may have been heartless in them. I suppose we are well aware that we can get into such a habit of extemporaneous prayer that it is really very little or no better than if we repeated what we had learnt. There may be such a fluency acquired by practice that one's speech may ripple on for five or ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, and yet the heart may be wandering in vanity or stagnant in indifference. The body may be on its knees, and the soul on its wings far away from the mercy seat.

Let us examine how far our public prayers have been in the Holy Ghost. The preacher standing here begs God to search him in that matter. If he has merely discharged the business of public prayer because it is his official duty to conduct the devotions of the congregation, he has much to account for before God; to lead the devotions of this vast throng without seeking the aid of the Holy Ghost is no light sin. And what shall be said of the prayers at prayer meetings? Are not many of them mere words? It were better if our friends would not speak at all rather than speak in the flesh. I am sure that the only prayer in which the devout hearer can unite, and which is acceptable with God, is that which really is a heart-prayer, a soul-prayer, in fact, a prayer which the Holy Ghost moves us to pray. All else is beating the air, and occupying time in vain. My brethren, I thank God that there are so many of you in connection with this church who are gifted in prayer, and I wish that every member of every Christian church could pray in public. You should all try to do so, and none of you should give it up unless it becomes an absolute impossibility; but oh! my brethren who pray in public, may it not be sometimes with you as with others of us — the exercise of gift and not the outflow of grace? and if so, ask the Lord to forgive you such praying, and enable you to wait upon him in the power of the Holy Ghost.

We may not forget to scrutinise our more private prayers, our supplications at the family altar, and above all, our prayers in that little room which we have dedicated to communion with God. O brethren, we might well be sick of our prayers, if we did but see what poor things they are! There are times when it is a sweet and blessed thing to lay hold of the horns of the altar, and to feel that the blood which sprinkles the altar has sprinkled you, that you have spoken to God and prevailed. Oh it is a blessed thing to grasp the Angel of the covenant, and to wrestle with him even hour after hour, saying, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me;" but I fear me these are not constant things; we may say of them that they are angels' visits, few and far between. Come, my brethren, put your prayers into this crucible of "praying in the Holy Ghost;" you will cast in much metal, but there will come out little of fine gold. Come hither, and lay your prayers upon this threshingfloor, and thresh them with this text, "praying in the Holy Ghost;" and oh, how much of straw and of chaff will there be, and how little of the well-winnowed grain! Come hither and look through this window at the fields of our devotions, overgrown with nettles, and briars, and thistles, a wilderness of merely outward performances; and how small that little spot, enclosed by grace, which God the Holy Spirit himself has cleared, and digged, and planted, from which the fruit of prayer has been brought forth unto perfection! May our heavenly Father teach us to be humble in his presence, as we reflect how little even of our best things will stand the test of his searching eye, and may those of us who are his saints come to him afresh, and ask him to fill us with his Spirit, and to accept us in his Son.

II. We shall next use the text as A CORDIAL.

It is a very delightful reflection to the Christian mind that God observes his people, and does not sit as an indifferent spectator of their conflicts and difficulties. For instance, he closely observes us in our prayers. He knows that prayer while it should be the easiest thing in the world is not so; he knows that we erring ones find it not always easy to approach him in the true spirit of supplication, and he observes this with condescending compassion. That is a precious verse for those hearts which are very weak and broken, "He knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust;" and that other, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He takes notice of our frailties and of our failures in the work of supplication, he sees his child fall as it tries to walk, and marks the tears with which it bemoans its weakness. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."

A sweeter thought remains in the text, namely, that having considered these failures of ours, which are many of them sinful, our Lord is not angry with us on account of them, but instead of being turned to wrath he is moved to pity for us and love towards us.

Instead of saying, "If you cannot pray, you shall not have; if you have not grace enough even to ask aright, I will shut the gates of mercy against you;" he deviseth means by which to bring the lame and the banished into his presence; he teacheth the ignorant how to pray, and strengthens the weak with his own strength. Herein also he doeth wonders, for the means whereby he helpeth our infirmity are exceedingly to be marvelled at. That help is not to be found in a book or in the dictation of certain words in certain consecrated places, but in the condescending assistance of God himself, for who is he that is spoken of in the text but God? The Holy Ghost, the third person of the adorable Trinity, helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. It is a mark of wondrous condescension that God should not only answer our prayers when they are made, but should make our prayers for us. That the King should say to the petitioner, "Bring your case before me, and I will grant your desire," is kindness, but for him to say, "I will be your secretary, I will write out your petition for you, I will put it into proper words and use fitting phrases so that your petition shall be framed acceptably," this is goodness at its utmost stretch; but this is precisely what the Holy Ghost does for us poor, ignorant, wavering, weak sons of men. I am to understand from the expression, "praying in the Holy Ghost," that the Holy Ghost is actually willing to help me to pray, that he will tell me how to pray, and that when I get to a point where I am at a pause and cannot express my desires, he will appear in my extremity and make intercession in me with groanings which cannot be uttered. Jesus in his agony was strengthened by an angel, you are to be succoured by God himself. Aaron and Hur stayed up the hands of Moses, but the Holy Ghost himself helpeth your infirmities. My beloved brethren in Christ, the thought needs no garnishing of oratorical expressions; take it as a wedge of gold of Ophir and value it, it is priceless, beyond all price. God himself the Holy Ghost condescends to assist you when you are on your knees, and if you cannot put two words together in common speech to men, yet he will help you to speak with God; ah! and if at the mercy seat you fail in words, you shall not fail in reality, for your heart shall conquer. God wants not words. He never reads our petitions according to the outward utterance, but according to the inward groaning. He notices the longing, the desiring, the sighing, the crying. Remember that the outward of prayer is but the shell, the inward of prayer is its true kernel and essence. If prayer be wafted to heaven in the song of the multitude, with the swell of glorious music, it is not one whit more acceptable to God than when it is wailed forth in the bitter cry of anguish from a desolate spirit. That cry so discordant to human ear is music to the ear of God.

"To him there's music in a sigh,
And beauty in a tear."

Notice this then, and be comforted.

III. The text may further serve as A CHART to direct us in the way of prayer.

Here I shall need to speak at greater length. Praying how? By the book? Without book? In public? In private? By the way? In the house? On your knees? Standing? Sitting? Kneeling? Nothing is said about these; posture, place, and time are all left open. There is no rubric except one — "in the Holy Ghost. That is indispensable. That granted, nothing else signifies one whit. If it be praying in the Holy Ghost, all else may be as you will. What does praying in the Holy Ghost mean? The word may be translated, "by the Holy Ghost," or "through the Holy Ghost," as well as "in the Holy Ghost;" and the phrase means, first, praying in the Holy Ghost's power. The carnal mind knows nothing about this. I might as well express myself in high Dutch as in English upon this point to an unregenerate man; but regenerate men, who are born of the Spirit, and live in the Spiritworld are cognisant of communications between their spirits and the Holy Spirit who is now resident in the midst of the church of God. We know that the Divine Spirit, without the use of sounds, speaks in our hearts, that without an utterance which the ear can hear he can make our soul know his presence and understand his meaning. He casteth the spiritual shadow of his influence over us, colouring our thoughts and feelings according to his own design and will. It is a great spiritual fact which the Christian knoweth for certain that the Holy Ghost, the Divine Spirit, has frequent dealings with spiritual minds, and imparts to them of his power. Our new-born spirit has a certain degree of power in it, but the power is never fully manifested or drawn out except when the Spirit of God quickeneth our spirit and excites it to activity. Our spirit prays, but it is because it is overshadowed and filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. I cannot just now explain myself, but I mean this, that if I, as a man, could go to the throne of grace and only pray as my fleshly nature would pray, that prayer would be unacceptable; but when I go to the mercy seat and my new nature prays as the Holy Ghost enables me to pray, then my prayer will succeed with God. If I do before God at the throne what flesh and blood can do and no more, I have done nothing, for that which is of the flesh still mounts no higher than flesh; but if, in coming before the throne of the heavenly grace, God's eternal Spirit speaks to my soul and lifts it out of the dead level of fallen humanity, and brings it up to be filled with divine force, if that Spirit is in me a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, if I receive that divine light and power of the Holy Ghost, and if in his power I fervently draw near to God, my prayer must be prevalent with God. **This power may be possessed by every Christian. May God grant it to all of his people now, that they may all pray in the Spirit! That, I think, is one meaning of the text — praying in the power of the Spirit.**

No doubt the principal sense of the text is praying in the Spirit as to matter. We do not know always what to pray for, and, brethren, if we were to refrain from prayer for a few minutes till we did know it would be a good and wise mule. The habit into which we have fallen in extemporaneous praying of always praying directly we are asked, without an instant's pause in which to think of what we are going to ask, is very prejudicial to the spirit of prayer. I would like when I am alone, to take a few minutes to consider what I am

going to ask of God, for otherwise it seems to me to be like seeking an interview with one of the officers of state, to ask for something which might occur to us at the moment. How would you like to have an audience with Lord Derby, and then consider all of a sudden what it was you had come about? Surely common sense would say, Tarry awhile till you have your case mapped out in your own mind, and then when you clearly know yourself what it is you want, you will be able to ask for what you need. Should we not wait upon God in prayer, asking him to reveal to us what those matters are concerning which we should plead with him. Beware of hit-or-miss prayers. Never make hap-hazard work of supplication. Come to the throne of grace intelligently understanding what it is that you require. It is well with us in prayer when the Holy Ghost guides the mind. Are not all spiritual men conscious of this, that they feel themselves shut up to certain matters, and only free in another direction; then let them obey the Holy Spirit and pray as he directs, for he knows what should be our petition. Well, what then? My dear brother, pray for that which God the Spirit moves you to pray for, and be very sensitive of the Holy Spirit's influence. I like a metaphor used by Thomas Shillitoe in his Life, when he says, he wished his own mind to be like a cork upon the water, conscious of every motion of the Spirit of God. It were well to be so sensitive of the Spirit of God, that his faintest breath should cause a ripple upon the sea of our soul, and make it move as the Spirit would have it. We have reached a high state of sanctification when God the Spirit and our own inward spirit are perfectly in accord. May we be led into that unspeakably blessed state! We do not pray aright if we think what it is we want and we wish for, and then ask for it in selfish wilfulness; but we pray aright when we consent to that which is the mind of the Spirit, and speak as he moveth us to speak. We shall be surely enriched with good things when we wait for the very matter of our supplications to have it all from him. Lord, teach us to pray. Put thou the thoughts into our minds, the desires into our hearts, and the very words into our lips, if it be thy will, that so all through it may be praying in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

The main part of praying in the Spirit must lie not merely in the Spirit's power, or in the Spirit's teaching us the matter, but in the Spirit's assisting us in the manner. Observe, brethren, the many ways there are of praying which are obnoxious to God; observe them and avoid them. There is but one manner of praying which the Lord accepts. You know what it is; I will briefly describe its attributes. He that cometh to God must remember that he is "a Spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." The very first essential of prayer is to pray in truth, and we do not pray in truth unless the Spirit of God leads our vain minds into the sincerity and reality of devotion. To pray in truth, is this — it is not to use the empty expression of prayer, but to mean what we say; it is for the heart to agonize with God and heave with strong desires, and where will you obtain such a manner of prayer except in the spiritual man, when moved by the Holy Ghost? The carnal man, if he be foolish enough, can intone a prayer; the carnal man can "read the office," and "do duty" as well as anybody else who can read in a book, but he is not praying; no prayer can come from him. Only the spiritual man can sigh and long, and cry in his inmost heart, and in the chamber of his soul before God, and he will not do it except as the Spirit of truth leadeth him in sincerity into the secret of heart-prayer.

Praying in the Holy Ghost is praying in fervency. Cold prayers, my brethren, ask the Lord not to hear them. Those who do not plead with fervency, plead not at all. As well speak of lukewarm fire as of lukewarm prayer; it is essential that it be red-hot. Real prayer is burnt as with hot iron into a man's soul, and then comes forth from the man's soul like coals of juniper which have a most vehement heat. Such prayers none but the Holy Ghost can give. I have heard from this spot prayers which I never can forget, nor will you ever forget them either. Last January and February there were times when certain of our brethren were helped to pray with such power that we were bowed down in humiliation, and anon upborne as on the wings of eagles in the power of supplication. There is a way of praying with power in which a man seems to get hold of the posts of heaven's gate, as Samson grasped the pillars of the temple, and appears as though he would pull all down upon himself sooner than miss the blessing. It is a brave thing for the heart to vow, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." That is praying in the Holy Ghost. May we be tutored in the art of offering effectual fervent prayer!

Next to that, it is essential in prayer that we should pray perseveringly. Any man can run fast at a spurt, but to keep it up mile after mile, there is the battle. And so, certain hot spirits can pray very fervently once now and then, but to continue in prayer — who shall do this except the Spirit of God sustaineth him? Mortal spirits flag and tire. The course of mere fleshly devotion is as the course of a snail which melts as it crawls. Carnal minds go onward and their devotion grows small by degrees and miserably less, as they cry out, "What a weariness it is!" But when the Holy Ghost fills a man and leads him into prayer, he gathers force as he proceeds, and grows more fervent even when God delays to answer. The longer the gate is closed the more vehemently does he use the knocker, till he thunders in his prayer; and the longer the Angel lingers the more resolved is he that if he grasps him with a death-grip he will never let him go without the blessing. Beautiful in God's sight is tearful and yet unconquerable importunity. Jesus delights to be laid hold of by one who says, "I cannot take No for an answer, this blessing I must have, for thou hast promised it and thou hast taught me to ask for it, and I will not believe that thou canst belie thyself." Surely we must have the Holy Spirit to help us thus to pray.

Praying in the Spirit we shall be sure to pray in a holy frame of mind. Brethren and sisters, do you ever get distracted in your minds? "Ah," say you, "I wonder when I am not." I will venture to say that you have come into this house burdened, and yet on the road you were saying, "This is a blessed Sabbath day, I feel I have God's presence;" some silly gossip met you on the steps, and told you an idle tale which distracted you. You may even get quietly seated here, and then the recollection of a child at home, or the

remembrance of what somebody said about six weeks ago will perplex your mind, so that you cannot pray. But when the Holy Spirit cometh, he takes a scourge of small cords and drives these buyers and sellers out of the temple and leaves it clear for God, and then you can come with a holy, devout frame of mind, fixed and settled in your great object of approach to God. This is to approach him in the Spirit. Oh for more of this blessed, undisturbed devotion!

I could not, however, finish the description of praying in the Spirit if I did not say that it means praying humbly, for the Holy Spirit never puffs us up with pride. He is the Spirit that convinces of sin, and so bows us down in contrition and brokenness of spirit. We must pray before God like the humble publican, or we shall never go forth justified as he was. We shall never sing Gloria in excelsis except we pray to God De profundis; out of the depths must we cry, or we shall never see the glory in the highest.

True prayer must be loving prayer, if it be praying in the Holy Ghost. Prayer should be perfumed with love, saturated with love; love to our fellow saints, and love to Christ. Moreover, it must be a prayer full of faith. The effectual fervent prayer of a man prevails only as he believes in God, and the Holy Spirit is the author of faith in us, and nurtures and strengthens it so that we pray believing God's promise. Oh that this blessed combination of excellent graces, priceless and sweet as the spices of the merchant, might be fragrant within us because the Holy Ghost's power is shed abroad in our hearts! Time fails me, therefore I must dispense with a full description of what praying in the Holy Ghost is, but I hope you will possess it and so understand it.

IV. Fourthly, I shall use the text as A CHERUB to proclaim our success in prayer.

Praying in the Spirit — blessed word! — then with such prayer it is an absolute certainty that I must succeed with God in prayer. If my prayer were my own prayer, I might not be so sure of it, but if the prayer which I utter be God's own prayer written on my soul, God is always one with himself, and what he writes on the heart is only written there because it is written in his purposes. It is said by an old divine, that prayer is the shadow of Omnipotence. Our will, when God the Holy Spirit influences it, is the indicator of God's will. When God's people pray, it is because the blessing is coming, and their prayers are the shadow of the coming blessing. Rest assured of this, brethren, God never did belie himself, he never contradicted in one place what he said in another, You and I may contradict ourselves, not only through untruthfulness, but even through infirmity; we may not be able to stand to our word, and we may forget what we did say, and so in another place may say something that contradicts it, but God is neither infirm as to memory, nor yet changeable as to will; what he promised yesterday he fulfils to-day, and what he said in one place, he declares in another. Then if God saith in my heart, "Pray for So-and-so," it is because he has said it in the book of his decrees. The Spirit of God's writing in the heart always tallies with the writing of destiny in the book of God's eternal purpose. Rest assured that you cannot but succeed when you have laid your soul like a sheet of paper before the Lord, and asked him to write upon it; then it is no more your own prayer merely, but the Spirit making intercession in you according to the will of God. At such time you need not say, "I hope God will answer the prayer;" he will do it — he is pledged to do it. It is a kind of infidelity to say, "I do not know whether the Lord is true to his promise or no, but I hope he is." He is true; let God be true and every man a liar. Oh! if more of you tried him as some of us have been compelled to do, you would have to hold up your hands in astonishment, and say, "Verily, whatever else is not a fact, it is a fact that God who sitteth in the highest heavens listens to the cries of his people, and gives them according to the desire of their hearts." If the Spirit teaches you to pray, it is as certain as that twice two make four, that God will give you what you are seeking for.

V. Then I will use the text in conclusion as A CHARIOT in which to convey our own souls onward in the delightful exercise of prayer.

The exercise allotted to us to-day and to-morrow is that of praying in the Spirit. Brethren and sisters, it is delightful to some of us to believe that the Spirit of God is the author of the great wave of prayer now breaking over the churches to which we belong. It was not of our devising or planning, but it was the motion of God's Holy Spirit upon a few brethren who desired to spend a day in solemn prayer, and found such blessing in it that they could not but tell others of it; that then others spontaneously moved, and without a word of demur or difference of opinion all said, "Amen; let us meet together for prayer also." The spirit of brotherly kindness, unanimity and love was given to our denomination, and then a spirit of earnest desire to bring down a blessing from God. We have known the time when it was not so. We have known the time when a day of fasting and prayer if not despised, at any rate would not have been appreciated as it will be now. We are of one heart in this matter, and I know from communications with many Christian men, that many of God's people already feel as if they were peculiarly in prayer, as if it were no effort now to pray, but as if it were their very breath now to breathe out longing desires for the revival of saints and the ingathering of sinners.

Brethren of this church, you have had God's presence for many years, you have been favored with much of "praying in the Holy Ghost," and seen with your eyes the great things God has done in answer to supplication. Will one of you draw back now? Will there be one man to-day or to-morrow who will not be earnest in prayer? Will one man, or even one child, in union with this church, be lukewarm in prayer? I would say, Sin not against the Lord by abstaining from going up to the mercy-seat with your brethren. Offend not the Lord so that he deprive you of the blessing, because you deprive yourself of joining in the exercise. My dear friends, it was when they were all met together with one accord in one place, that suddenly they heard the sound as of a rushing, mighty wind. We cannot be all in one place, but, at any rate, let us be all with one accord. What, do you say you have nothing to pray for? What! no

children unconverted, no friends unsaved, no neighbors who are still in darkness? What! Live in London and not pray for sinners! Where do you live! Is it in some vast wilderness, amidst "some boundless contiguity of shade," where rumor of sin and of ignorance has never reached your ear? No, you are living in the midst of millions, of ungodly millions, of millions that despise the God who made them, that despise the gospel of Christ — of millions, not thousands — hear that word, and see if you can tell its meaning; millions who are living without God and without hope, and are going down to hell. We have throughout the realm, too, dangerous mischiefs spreading; need I so continually remind you of them; Infidelity wearing the mitre, and Popery usurping the place of Protestantism. You are assailed by the wolf and the lion, the serpent and the bear; all forms of mischief are coming forth to attack the church. Not pray! If you pray not, shall I say, May you smart for your negligence? Nay I dare not in the slightest shade speak as though I imprecated a woe upon you, but the woe will come upon you, depend upon it. If I say it not, yet will God say it at this present hour. "Curse ye Meroz, saith the Lord, because they came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." We are not asking you to contribute of your wealth in this case. If we did the Lord Jesus has a right to it, and you should freely give it; neither are we asking you all this day to preach, if we did some of you might be excused for want of ability; but we claim your prayer, and must not be denied. Not able to pray! then are you graceless, Christless, hopeless, lost, and I will not ask you to join with us, but ask you first to go to God for yourselves. But if you are a Christian you can pray. Poverty does not make you poor in prayer, want of education need not hinder you upon your knees, want of position and rank in society will be no incumbrance to you when you deal with God, who hears the poor man when he cries and answers him with a largess of grace.

Brethren and sisters, if you love Christ, if you ever felt his love shed abroad in your heart, if you have been washed in his blood, if you have been saved from wrath through him, if you are new creatures in him, if you hope to see his face with acceptance at the last, I might put it to you as a demand, but I press it upon you as a brotherly entreaty, join with us in praying in the Holy Ghost. Shall one start back? Take heed then. if you refuse to unite with your brethren in prayer, lest when you choose to cry you should find yourself straitened and shut up in prison. Beware, lest by refusing to pray now that the Spirit of God has come, you afterwards feel yourself deprived of the comfortable presence of the Holy Ghost, and find the sweetness of devotion to have departed from you. The Lord send a blessing. He must send it, our hearts will break if he does not; we feel that it is coming; we have grasped the promise, we have pleaded with Jehovah; we have pleaded the blood of Jesus; we are pleading it now; we mean to continue in such pleading till the blessing comes, and we may rely upon it that the heavenly shower will soon descend. He has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain." Brethren, be hopeful, but do let us unanimously join in praying in the Holy Ghost.

May the Lord bless you, dear friends, in this respect for Jesu's sake.