

Please Open your Bibles to **Eph 6**. Lets Pray

Yesterday I went over to the back of our house where Joannes parents live and had a visit with her mom & dad (as I enjoy doing each day). Her mom was working on a large and difficult puzzle with more than a thousand small pieces laid out on a table—she told me, “This is a hard one to put together!”

It seems to me that for many...if not most believers...talking about the Holy Spirit and His involvement in the Christians’ life is a bit like trying to put together a difficult jigsaw puzzle.

All the different teachings of Scripture are like the pieces, but we have a hard time putting them together because we lack the picture on the cardboard box that shows us how they all fit together.

I believe that picture we need comes to us objectively and subjectively

First, the life of Christ presents an objective picture to us of how the life of the Spirit intersects with a human life. We read about His life in the gospels, and in OT Scriptures like Isaiah that describe the Holy Spirit’s activity in his life. and we see what a Spirit directed life looks like.

Secondly, our experience provides a subjective picture of the Holy Spirit works in us helping us to make sense of the Scriptural teaching. The Scriptures teach that we can be **led** by the Spirit, **filled** with the Spirit, or negatively we can **quench** the Spirit and **grieve** the Spirit etc etc

Perhaps of all the various truths taught to us in Scripture about our relationship with the Holy Spirit, none is more puzzling to us than the command to “**pray in the Holy Spirit**”. What does that mean?

How is praying in the Spirit different from not praying in the Spirit? How do we know if we are praying in the Spirit or not? Why is praying in the Spirit so important?

I hope our time in the word today will answer some of these questions for you.

One thing is sure—God wants every believer in Christ to pray in the Spirit. If you are a believer this is part of God’s GOOD will for your life.

In order to understand what praying in the Spirit means, and put it into practice in our lives, we are going to need to look at two passages of Scripture in the New Testament that teach us about praying in the Spirit. Since these are the only two passages that use this phrase, they are essential to helping us understand what this means.

The **first part** of this message will focus on explaining the meaning of “praying in the Spirit” and the **second part** will focus on some practical suggestions to help us to live in the good of this vital teaching.

So our outline will be very simple and easy to remember:

1. The Meaning of ***Prayer in the Spirit***
2. The Practice of ***Prayer in the Spirit***

I’m going to try to show you today that ...

Prayer in the Spirit is “Bold Prayer Using Gospel Promises which Secures Us in God’s Love and Releases Us to Share Christ with Others”

I know that's a mouthful so let me slowly explain what I mean by that.

So let's begin by examining the two passages that shed light on what it means to “pray in the Spirit”:

I. The Meaning of Prayer in the Spirit

(I) EPH 6:17-18

Our first text is found in **Ephesians 6:17-18** (read). Last time I spoke to you we explained what the term “the Sword of the Spirit” meant. The Scriptures describe the sword as “the word of God”. We discovered that this phrase in Paul often refers not just to the sacred Scriptures, but more specifically to **the gospel promises** that come to us in Christ.

The main verb in verses 17 & 18 is the word “**take**” and the phrase “praying in the Spirit” is a helper sentence that describes how one takes up the Sword of the Spirit.

In other words, the capacity to effectively use the gospel promises in our outreach to others, begins first with using those gospel promises in our prayers. Evangelism begins with promise saturated prayer.

Prayer in the Spirit in Ephesians is prayer that involves two sides, like two sides of a coin.

On the one side, praying in the Spirit means to fill ones prayers with the promises of the gospel and all that Christ gives us in Himself—which literally involves hundreds of the promises of Scripture.

The Holy Spirit who inspired and spoke the Scriptures through the Biblical writers, inspires us to pray His Scripture promises in our prayers for ourselves and others (**vs 18**).

On the other side of the coin, praying in the Spirit means to be enabled through prayer to speak those gospel promises to the lost world that does not know Christ—this is what we clearly see in **verses 19-20**.

So in Ephesians, praying in the Spirit involves speaking the gospel promises to God in prayer, and through this prayer, speaking the gospel promises to the unbelieving world.

In Ephesians, praying in the Spirit, enables us to offer the gospel promises in our words (prayers) to God, and in our words (evangelism) to those without Christ.

(2) JUDE 1:20-21

Now turn with me to our second text—**Jude 1:20**. Jude is the small one chapter book that appears just before the final book of the Bible—the book of revelation.

The book of Jude warns us about people who gain entance into churches and pervert the grace of God. The main way this manifests in these people is in sexually immoral living (vs 4,7) and in despising authority (vs 8). They make their own rules.

At the end of Jude, He teaches us how to stay clear of their ungodly influence. This instruction is found in **verses 20-21**.

The main thing being commanded here is in **verse 21**—is to “keep ourselves in the love of God”. That is, to both practice **loving God** which is the greatest commandment, and also to continually live in the good of knowing **we are loved by God** with a never failing, extravagant love.

Keeping ourselves in the love of God is to know how much we are loved and to continually practice that love in our relationships with others. It is one of my favorite little sayings in the entire Bible!

Verse 20 gives us the two ways that we accomplish this. The first way is by “Building ourselves up in the most holy faith” which immediately reminds me of Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:

I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up...**Acts 20:32**

Then right after this, the second way taught us on how we keep ourselves in the love of God is by “praying in the Holy Spirit” (vs 20-b).

So praying in the Spirit in this verse in Jude involves the Spirit manifesting God’s love to us and through us by our prayers. I hope that answers our questions on why praying in the Spirit is so important!

So let's briefly review. **In Ephesians**, praying in the Spirit is Spirit enabled prayer where we speak the gospel promises to God...which leads to us speak the gospel promises to those without Christ. We overcome the enemy in spiritual warfare by boldly advancing the gospel.

Then **in Jude**, praying in the Spirit is Spirit guided prayer where we are enabled to live in the good of the gospel—enjoying God's love for us and showing that love to others!

Praying in the Spirit has to do with knowing Christ, enjoying Christ, and sharing Christ with others.

If this is what “praying in the Spirit” means, how can we start to pray this way? I'd like to spend the rest of our time together considering a few practical implications of this teaching.

2. The Practice of Prayer in the Spirit

(I) ***We neglect prayer because we don't really believe the Holy Spirit is essential for our prayers.***

The great Puritan pastor, Thomas Manton, stated this with great clarity and power:

“Prayer is a work too hard for us. We can put words into prayer, but it is the Spirit that puts in the affections, without which it is cold babbling and prayer without heart...it is a work expressed as “striving”— “I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf” (Romans 15:30)— It is a striving with God himself and there is no possibility of wrestling with God but by God's own strength” **Thomas Manton**, Jude p.337, Volume 5

No one here today would say that prayer is easy. But we tend to think the main cause of our weakness or failures in prayer just come down to a lack of personal discipline or desire. That is part of the reason to be sure, but a greater reason is that **we have not realized how essential the Holy Spirit is for the task of prayer.**

An individual...a family...a church not characterized by prayer is a stark testimony to a lack of the Holy Spirit's presence.

(2) ***We pray as we live.***

This is the balancing truth to what I have just said. Even if the Holy Spirit is active in our lives he will not use an unclean vessel to offer holy prayers. Purity of heart is essential for prayer (by purity I mean not only sexual purity but a lack of greed, bitterness & resentment, worldliness, lack of love toward others etc).

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who **call on the Lord from a pure heart.**
2Timothy 2:22

(3) ***The Holy Spirit will not use promises in prayer that we are unfamiliar with.***

He uses what is stored up in the heart. What is memorized. What is studied. What is pondered. The Spirit is the fire but Scripture promises are the wood that keeps the fire burning in prayer. Therefore, we will never pray in the Spirit if we neglect regular reading and meditating on Scripture. The two go together.

(4) *Prayer in the Spirit can be both structured and spontaneous*

Some people associate the Spirit's ministry only with the spontaneous. There is good reason for this—much of the Spirit's activity in the Bible happens suddenly and without warning.

Yet structure is not a killer of the Spirit as some imagine. The Bible says God is a God of order. The world God made has re-occurring seasons, and we experience day and night every 24 hours - that's not spontaneous! The Spirit gives the spiritual gift of administration which helps the church run with structure and organization.

So also, prayer in the Spirit can be both spontaneous (throughout the day in short bursts) and structured (at a set time every morning before work, or at night before going to bed). In other words, a **PLAN** is not a hindrance to the Spirit...but we need to be open to the **PROMPTS** of the Spirit as well.

One way I encourage you to jump start your prayers is by engaging in **slow motion prayers**—what I mean by that is writing out a prayer to God. Try doing this each morning for 10 minutes. Start with a promise from God's word like John 16:24:

Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. **John 16:24**

Use this verse as the guide to your prayer. Lay a particular request before God, taking your time to compose it. It doesn't have to be long. Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you. And then wait for the answers!

(5) ***Finally, let us all be asking for the gift of The Holy Spirit to help us pray.***

We pray in order to be able to pray. God has made it abundantly clear that the Spirit has been given to help us with our prayers:

I will pour out a Spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on the people of Jerusalem. **Zechariah 12:10 NLT**

Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” **Galatians 4:6 NLT**

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. **Romans 8:26 NLT**

Dear brothers and sisters, I urge you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to join in my struggle by praying to God for me. Do this because of your love for me, given to you by the Holy Spirit. **Romans 15:30 NLT**

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere. **Ephesians 6:18 NLT**

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God. **Jude 20-21 ESV**

Would you be willing to ask the Holy Spirit, right where you are sitting, to be part of your prayer life from this day on? A moment of quiet responsive prayer

