

Living In Resurrection Power
(Week 18)
Ephesians 6:18-20; Matthew 6:5-11
“Praying In The Spirit”

Introduction

“Pray at all times in The Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. Pray also for me, that the message may be given me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should.”
Ephesians 6:18-20

When Paul comes to the end of his letter to the church at Ephesus, he appropriately closes with a call to prayer. He encourages the fledgling church to always be praying, not in their own strength, but to pray in The Spirit of God. For you see, the only way that we can ever hope to stand our ground against the devil and his schemes is to put on our armor in the power of The Spirit. This can only be done by prayer in The Spirit. I am reminded here of the words of the old hymn “Stand Up For Jesus”:

*“Put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer.
Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.”*

(Stand Up For Jesus, by George Duffield Jr. 1858)

So you see, it is by praying in The Spirit of God that we are able to wield the armor of God. Prayer is the Believer’s course to ultimate success in this spiritual battle. Sadly, a recent study on the prayer time of the average Christian yielded that most people who claim to be believers, actually pray less than ten minutes per day! Now, ten minutes out of a twenty-four hour day seems incredibly dangerous when you consider the forces that are arrayed against us. But that is what most of the believers in the survey actually admitted. We certainly have a lot to do when it comes to prayer, wouldn’t you agree?

Paul admonishes us not only to pray, but to pray “In The Spirit”. Now, what exactly does that mean? Many would-be scholars have weighed in on such matters. Some would say that the believer needs to attain some “second level blessing” in order to pray in this matter. Others would say that this requires one to pray in the “speaking of angelic tongues”, which is a phenomenon made popular at the beginning of the twentieth century by The Assemblies of God. But I am a firm believer that scripture teaches us that God doesn’t put the things we need on some “higher shelf”, so that His children cannot get to them. No, in fact, God has promised to supply our every need according to His riches in glory (**Philippians 4:19**). God doesn’t make us go through some “spiritual obstacle course” in order to be receive all that He has for us. He has already empowered us with The Spirit, as soon as we surrender our lives to Christ. The same power that rose Jesus from the dead... lives within us! All we must do is give ourselves over to the power of The Spirit, and we can pray in The Spirit!

So, exactly what must we do to pray in The Spirit and what exactly does this look like? Well, for starters, we must align our will with the will of God in order to pray according to The Spirit. Simply put, when we want what God wants, the answer to our prayers will always be yes. So, how do we find the will of God, you ask? We can know the will of God by submersing ourselves in The Word of God. Knowing The Word (belt of truth) will reveal to us what God’s will is for us. Apart from The Word, we simply drift from place to place, asking God for the things that WE want, rather than for what HE wants.

In addition, so that we can know how to pray in The Spirit, it would be very helpful for us to actually have an example of what this looks like. Fortunately for us, Christ gave us such an example in a prayer, which is designed to teach us how to pray according to The Spirit of The Living God. We call it, “The LORD’S Prayer”. It was not given as an example of “what to pray” as many assume, by reciting it in some sort of ritualistic fashion. But rather, it is meant to be an illustration of “**how** to pray”. If we learn to pray like Jesus, then we will most definitely be praying in The Spirit, wouldn’t you agree? The LORD’S Prayer is actually made up of six different components, God’s Paternity, Purity, Purpose, Provision, Pardon and Protection. This week we shall concentrate on the first three, as we learn together how to “Pray in The Spirit.

"Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." **Matthew 6:9b-10**

God's Paternity (Our Father)

In *The Old Testament*, God is referred to as Father only sixteen times, and not once in a prayer. In *The New Testament*, however, the reference occurs over sixty times. We have, as Believers in Christ, been adopted into the family of God, and He is most definitely "Our Heavenly Father". Or, as Paul reminded the Ephesians:

"He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He lavished on us in the Beloved One." **Ephesians 1:5-6**

I find it fascinating that Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount, tells His followers that when they pray, they don't need to "strike some spiritual pose" or "babble like the heathen do" (We could preach an entire sermon just on those two phrases). You see, it's not about trying to impress God with your prayers, it's about talking to your Father! Again, God does not place things on a high shelf that His children cannot reach. Just humble yourself, and He will lift you up.

I once heard about a young man, who was known for his lengthy prayers filled with dramatic and inspirational sounding phrases. People would hear him pray and immediately feel inadequate, for they simply did not have the wherewithal to speak with this man's eloquence and flair. One day he was called upon to pray, and as usual, he did not disappoint. His prayer began with such flourish and astounding vocabulary, that the people around him were once again amazed at how poetic he sounded. Rather than praying "with him", they were caught up in listening "to him". That is, except for one older gentleman in the crowd who instantly looked past all the young man's flowery speech and realized that he truly wasn't saying a whole lot. This fancy "prayer" sounded more to him like the empty words of a politician rather than a petition to God. The old man interrupted the young man's prayer and said, "Son, just call Him Father and ask Him for something!"

Now **that**, my friends, is wisdom. When we pray, we do not need try to impress God with our prayers, but rather, we should call Him Father and ask Him for what we need. Don't try and make this complicated. The example that Christ gave us to pray is actually quite simple. God loves you. He is for you. He just wants you to come to Him in prayer and tell Him what's on your mind! And it all begins by remembering that He is your Father, and that He loves you with an everlasting love.

Another thing to notice in the LORD'S Prayer is that you will not find one single personal pronoun. Instead, you will see phrases like "Our Father", "give us", and "lead us". The Child of God would do well to remember that prayer offered in The Spirit will not only concern our own needs, but those of The Body of Christ. This is why Paul reminds the church at Ephesus to persevere in prayer for "the saints", as well as himself, that he might be a bold ambassador for Christ.

There is an old Jewish prayer that petitioned God not to heed "the prayers of the traveler". Now on the surface that seems to be ill intentioned. But think about it for a moment. The "traveler" might pray for sunny weather in which to enjoy the comfort of his journey, while the people of the land might be in desperate need of rain. Meaning, we should never pray in selfishness, but rather, in consideration for all of God's people. He is, after all, "**Our** Father". (You should all remind me of this truth when winter comes, and I am praying for snow!) We, as a part of the Body of Christ, need to look to the needs of our brothers and sisters around us when we pray! He is their Father too.

God's Purity (Holy is Your Name)

Never forget Who He is. When we pray, we are talking to The Awesome Holy One. His perfection is infinite. His eyes are too pure to look upon evil, and He cannot tolerate wrongdoing (**Habakkuk 1:13**). So, we would do well to remember that He is not only our Father, but our HOLY Father. Our request should be made knowing full well that He cannot and will not honor a prayer request that is begotten from any kind of impurity. This is what James means when he says:

“You desire and you do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and you don’t receive because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulterous people! Don’t you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God.” **James 4:2-4**

Do not expect a Holy God to grant an unholy request! Remember Who you are talking to. It is His holiness that keeps us from sin. And He requires us to be holy as well.

“Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness — without it no one will see The LORD.” **Hebrews 12:14**

When we remember His holiness, then we are compelled to ask for things according to His will, rather than our own. It is His holiness that reveals to us our own sinfulness.

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw The LORD seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of His robe filled the temple. Seraphim were standing above Him; they had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another: Holy, holy holy, is The LORD of Armies; His glory fills the whole earth. The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke. Then I said: Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of armies. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said: Now that this has touched your lips, your iniquity is removed and your sin is atoned for. Then I heard the voice of The LORD asking: Whom should I send? Who will go for Us? I said: Here I am. Send me.” **Isaiah 6:1-8**

This is The God of the Universe to Whom you are speaking when you pray. Do not ever forget that.

God’s Purpose (Your will be done)

And now, we come to it. This is what it means to “pray in The Spirit”. It is to align our will to the will of God. In other words, we want what He wants, more than we want what we want. When our wants do not align with God’s will, then we must surrender our will to His. I would rather have God’s will be done than to have all of my selfish desires met. Remember what we talked about last week? The devil tempted Christ in the wilderness to put His own desires above His Father’s will. To pray in The Spirit is to do the exact opposite. Jesus always submitted to the will of His Father. So much so, that He instructed us to pray:

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” **Matthew 6:10**

Now, consider this thought for a moment. In heaven, the will of God is all that counts. No one in heaven has a desire for anything, other than the will of God. Oh, Satan tried to rebel against it and look where it got him. In heaven, no one stands against the will of God. The child of God longs for God’s perfect will to be accomplished here on earth, just as it always is in heaven. This is why the Apostle Paul could be chained between two prison guards and still ask the Ephesians:

“Pray also for me, that the message given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough to speak about it as I should.” **Ephesians 6:19-20**

Now stop and consider what Paul is saying. Had he been selfish in his prayer request, he would have asked the Ephesians to pray that he be released from that awful place of confinement. But instead, he had accepted his circumstance as God's will, so accordingly, he requested prayer for boldness in incarceration, rather than for his own personal freedom. Paul had forsaken his own selfish desires in order to align his will to the will of his God. That, my friends, is the very essence of Praying in The Spirit.

"Take delight in The LORD, and He will give you the your hearts desires."

Psalm 37:4

When taken out of context, this verse seems to say that if we love The LORD, He will give us everything that we desire. But taken in context with the rest of The Scriptures, it simply means if your heart's desire is set upon doing the will of God, then He will grant your heart's desire. This is also what Jesus meant when He said:

"Whatever you ask in My Name, I will do it so that The Father may be glorified in The Son."

John 14:13

So we pray, to The Father, through Jesus, in The Spirit, seeking first for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, while purging ourselves of our own selfishness, and the answer will always be a resounding... YES! Are your prayers being answered? Is this the way that you pray? Remember, this is the formula given to us by Christ Himself.

So there you have it. The first three components of praying in The Spirit. First recognize that God is your Father, and that He wants you to have everything that He has for you. He loves you and has put nothing out of the reach of His children. Second, always keep in mind when we pray that He is holy, and therefore, will only respond to a prayer that corresponds with His holy nature. And Thirdly, a prayer prayed in The Spirit will always be centered upon God's plans and purposes and not our own. We must ever be mindful that God is all-knowing, and thereby, far more qualified to decide what needs to happen. This is what I believe the *Book of Revelation* is referencing when it speaks of "the prayers or the saints" (**Revelation 5:8**):

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Matthew 6:10 (KJV)

The more that we see just how wicked this world has become, the more that the saints of God will pray those very words! We need our King to come back and take what is rightfully His. His will is the only thing that can ever resolve this mess. But take heart, those of you who are becoming discouraged. Jesus is coming soon. So, keep your armor on and continue to pray to The Father, In The Spirit, and through Jesus Christ our LORD.

God has empowered you to pray, so do it without ceasing (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**). Take your stand for the kingdom.

And let the soldiers of Christ take their stand and say... TRUTH!!!