

THE EIGHTH PART OF THE MESSAGE: THE CHRISTIAN'S VIGIL

John Piper: We cannot know what prayer is for until we know that life is war. Life is war...Our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth...It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a **domestic intercom** to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a **wartime walkie-talkie** so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world.

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.

First part: Pray at all times

B. PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

❖ **Ephesians 6:18**, “praying at **ALL times IN THE SPIRIT**”

❖ **Jude 20**, “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and **praying in the Holy Spirit...**”

Charles Spurgeon: Without the Holy Spirit, true prayer will never be presented; the thing offered to God will wear the name and have the form, but the inner life of prayer will be far from it.

A. PRAYING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT—WHAT IT IS NOT?

John Piper: I don't think “praying in the Spirit” refers, by the way, to praying in tongues, in heavenly language. That's what some people think, which is why I mention it here. The reason I don't think that is because Ephesians 6:18 says, “praying at all times in the Spirit.”

Steven Cole: 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...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.

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).

B. PRAYING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT—WHAT IT IS? (Drawing Pneumatological applications from the book of Ephesians)

I. PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT IS PRAYING BY BEING INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

- ❖ **Ephesians 1:13-14**, In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, **were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
- ❖ **Romans 8:9**, "Anyone **who does not have the Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him."

Note: You cannot pray in the Holy Spirit if you are not indwelt by the Spirit.

A MAN WITHOUT THE SPIRIT HAS NO DESIRE TO PRAY.

Oswald Chambers: "A great many people do not pray because they do not feel any sense of need. The sign that the Holy Spirit is in us is that we realise, not that we are full, but that we are empty. There is a sense of absolute need."

C.H. Spurgeon, "True prayer is a sure evidence of spiritual quickening—the Holy Spirit has put spiritual life into the heart of the man who prays, for prayer is the breath of heavenly life."

J. C. Ryle, "Just as the first sign of the life of an infant when born into the world is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women when they are born again is praying."

2. PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT IS PRAYING WITH GOD-CENTERED MINDSET

- ❖ **Ephesians 1:16-20**, "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, **may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the**

knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, **what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints**, and **what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe**, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places...”

John Stott: The reference is likely to be to the Holy Spirit, since Scripture speaks of him as ‘the Spirit of truth’, the agent of revelation, and the teacher of the people of God. Not that we can ask God to ‘give’ the Holy Spirit himself to those who have already received him and been ‘sealed’ with him (verse 13), but rather that we may and should pray for his ministry of illumination.

Note: The Holy Spirit leads you to pray with heavenly mindset

- **Knowing God**
- **Hope of glorious eternal inheritance (in suffering)**
- **The immeasurable power towards us who believe (in weakness)**

Bryan Chappell: What do we seek when praying in the Spirit? Such prayer is not a plea for magical power...it is a prayer for the Spirit to stir up within us (i.e., ourselves and others in the body of Christ) **a greater zeal for God**—an inner stirring to stand for his purposes when the enemy approaches.

Fleshly prayer:

- Focus on “self” rather than on **knowing God**.
- Focus on “earthly, material blessings” than on the **glorious eternal inheritance**.
- Focus on “human weakness or carnal strategies” than on **the immeasurable power towards us who believe**.

Andrew Murray: “God cannot hear the prayers on our lips often because the desires of our heart after the world cry out to Him much more strongly and loudly than our desires for Him.”... “Love of prayer is one of the marks of the Spirit.”

3. PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT IS TO PRAY BY NOT CHERISHING SINS THAT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

❖ **Ephesians 4:1-3**, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain **the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace.

❖ **Ephesians 4:30-32**, And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Peter O'Brien: Paul understands the Spirit in fully personal terms, since only persons can be grieved or feel pain and distress. His injunction is striking, for it refers not to a direct attack on the Spirit but to believers engaging in sinful activities mentioned in the previous verses which destroy relationships within the body and so mar the Spirit's work in building Christ's people (cf. 2:22; 4:3, 4). Anything incompatible with the unity or purity of the church is inconsistent with the Spirit's own nature and therefore grieves him.