

## RTO™ School of Prayer

### Praying in the Spirit      Ephesians 6:18 (ESV)

“ ....praying at all times in the Spirit”

by Dave Mozdin

In our last School of Prayer lesson, The Prayer of Intercession, we quoted this verse because it contained the words “making supplication for all the saints”. However, this verse also contains an important element to ensure that our prayer is the prayer of a righteous person that has *God’s great power* as it is working (James 5:16). That element is the words in this verse “praying at all times *in the Spirit*.”

Ironically, in my research through at least six commentaries in both my personal library and online, I didn’t find much detail about praying in the Spirit in the context of this verse, so I’ll depend upon God’s answer to my prayer for His wisdom through His word (James 1:5), and the revelation of the Holy Spirit within me to fill up what is lacking. To Him be the glory!

As is our custom in many of our School of Prayer lessons, we’ll begin by defining what praying in the Spirit truly means, as many different meanings of this term are acknowledged along with much confusion surrounding some of them, which can result in unfruitful prayer which God may not hear or answer.

We’ll start by defining what it is **not**. It is not some special type of supernatural mystical ecstatic experience available only to God’s specially gifted people. This type of praying in the Spirit is generally known as speaking or praying in tongues, that is, in a language largely unknown to anyone (including the speaker), but sometimes interpreted by another gifted person who can translate it. This has been an area of sharp disagreement among Christians, as some have what is described as a cessationist view, believing that certain types of spiritual gifts known as sign gifts, like tongues, miracles, miracle healings and predictive prophecy ceased after the last of the original apostles died and the New Testament Scriptures were completed. Others believe these gifts are still very much in operation among certain believers in certain churches to this day. (And yes, we know that with God all things are possible, Matt 19:26.). While we’re not going to argue in favor of one view over another here, suffice to say we will concentrate on what the Bible has to say directly about praying in the Spirit. “The secret things belong

to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deut. 29:29).

Before we move on, we'll make one biblical point about praying in the Spirit by praying in tongues. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:14-17; “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. [15](#)What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. [16](#)Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? [17](#)For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up.” The operative words here are “my mind”, Paul emphasizing praying in the Spirit with the mind to bear fruit in prayer, and through that, to build up outsiders (unbelievers) who could be led to saving faith in Christ to advance His kingdom. Would it not be beneficial to God and to us to pray in the Spirit with the mind so you can be used by God to bring more believers into saving faith along with other works that bear fruit for the building up of His kingdom?

To best understand the concept of praying in the Spirit, we need to know the definition AND the true identity of the Spirit, specifically in this case, the *Holy Spirit*. The Expositor's Greek Testament says, “The reference (to the Spirit in Ephesians 6:18) is not to our spirit as if (it is) equal with inward devoutness or with heart felt pleading nor as opposed to (them), but in the *Holy Spirit*, the Holy Spirit being the sphere or element in which *alone* true prayer of all different kinds can proceed and from which it can draw inspiration.” (Emphasis added). In other words, *we cannot pray at all* apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. We cannot call upon our own spirit, our own strength, our own ability to pray, we *need* the Holy Spirit. The A. R. Fausset Commentary describes praying in the Spirit this way, “To be joined with “praying”, it is He *in us*, as the Spirit of adoption who prays and enables us to pray.” Galatians 4:4-6; “[4](#)But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5](#)to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. [6](#)And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Jude 20; “But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,” to which Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers says, “It means that we pray in His strength and wisdom: He moves our hearts and directs our petitions.” Romans 8:26 (a verse we highlighted in the lesson on The Prayer of Intercession); “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for

words.” Does all this not drive home the point that the Holy Spirit is indispensable for us in the matter of effective God honoring prayer which He will answer?

Going deeper for a fuller more complete description of the Holy Spirit and all the riches of God’s and Christ’s love, mercy, and grace He offers those who are His, and unfortunately, we don’t have the time or space in this relatively short lesson to cover the multitude of important biblical teaching available, we’ll nonetheless ask the following questions:

## **1.) Who is the Holy Spirit?**

The Bible, God’s word, has PLENTY to say about the Holy Spirit. Depending upon the translation, the words “Holy Spirit” appear anywhere from 23 to 142 times in the Bible, the capitalized word Spirit 523, to 612 times. The majority of these are in the New Testament, where the Holy Spirit is more clearly defined and illustrated.

**First, the Holy Spirit is God!** The Holy Spirit is a member of the Trinity, three persons in one God (yes, that is difficult for our small finite minds to grasp, but it is what the Bible teaches). The Holy Spirit is equal in deity, equal in nature and equal in attributes with the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.

The Holy Spirit is omniscient, that is, He knows all things, 1 Corinthians 2:11, “....no one comprehends the things of God except the Spirit of God.” The Holy Spirit is omnipresent, present everywhere, Psalm 139:7, “Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence?” The Holy Spirit is omnipotent, all powerful, Job 33:4, “The Spirit of God has made me,” powerful in creation of a man.

The Holy Spirit was present with God at the beginning of creation (powerful in all creation), Genesis 1:1-2, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth....And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” The Holy Spirit will be present with Christ at the final invitation before the eternal kingdom comes to earth, Revelation 22:17, “The Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come’”. The Holy Spirit was present at the baptism of Christ, Matthew 3:16, “And when Jesus was baptized....He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him.” The Holy Spirit is a part of the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 3:16 and 28:19 are also Bible passages that illustrate the Trinity.)

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, Acts 16:7, "And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of holiness, Romans 1:4, "And was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord". The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and of Christ, Romans 8:9, "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the living God, 2 Corinthians 3:3, "And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God". The Holy Spirit is the life-giving Spirit, 2 Corinthians 3:6, "(God) who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." The Holy Spirit is called Lord, 2 Corinthians 3:18, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to the other. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the eternal Spirit, Hebrews 9:14, "how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God". The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of glory, 1 Peter 4:4, "If you are insulted for the Name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13.

**Second, The Holy Spirit is a person.** In John 14, 15, and 16, Christ Himself refers to the Holy Spirit as "He" thirteen times, and "Him" four times. Similar to any person, the Holy Spirit has a mind, 1 Corinthians 2:11, "So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." The Holy Spirit has a will, 1 Corinthians 12:11. "All these (spiritual gifts) are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills." The Holy Spirit has emotions, Ephesians 4:30. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,".

The Holy Spirit speaks- John 16:13, "for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak," teaches- John 14:26, "He will teach you all things," loves- Romans 5:5, "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit", leads-Romans 8:14 "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God", prays-Romans 8:26-27, "For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes", fellowships-2 Corinthians 13:14, "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.", testifies-1 John 5:6, "And the Spirit is the One who testifies,", preaches-1 Peter 1:12, "...the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven."

**Third, the Holy Spirit is power.** The Old Testament Hebrew word is *ruah*, which, according to Christianity.com means “breath, a wind, or a life force that sustains all living things”. The Greek New Testament word is *pneuma*, from which we derive the English word pneumatic. According to Vine’s Bible dictionary, *pneuma* means “‘the wind’, also ‘breath’; then especially ‘the spirit’, which like the wind, is invisible, immaterial, and powerful.” John 3:8, Jesus says to Nicodemus, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Jesus tells His disciples of the Holy Spirit’s power in witnessing in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Jesus began His ministry in the power of the Spirit, Luke 4:14-15, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee....And He taught in their synagogues....”

The Holy Spirit as power for hope, Romans 15:13, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

The Holy Spirit as God’s power in helping Paul proclaim God’s message, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, “

[4](#)and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5](#)so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

The Holy Spirit as power in giving the gospel, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, “because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.”

## **2.) Do you have the Holy Spirit?**

If yes, how do you know? (This is an appropriate time for you to review your knowledge and awareness of the Holy Spirit.) If you do not believe that you have the Holy Spirit, then how do you receive Him?

First, the Holy Spirit is possessed ONLY by those who are saved believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only by those who have trusted Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and commit to repent of their sins to be saved from God’s wrath forever in hell and instead to be welcomed into His kingdom where you will one day be with Him forever, experiencing the joys of heaven. Only those who are obedient to Romans

10:9, “if you confess with your mouth, that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, then you will be saved.” If you have not yet made that decision, please do so now!

Writing in the commentary for blueletterbible.org, Don Stewart answers the question of when and how one receives the Holy Spirit in a concise biblical way. He writes: “The gift of the Holy Spirit is received by believing in Jesus Christ. On the Day of Pentecost Peter said to the crowd (Acts 2:38); ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Be aware that according to this verse, the Holy Spirit is a *gift*, divinely bestowed by God alone. Stewart affirms this: “the Holy Spirit has been given as a gift to all who believe in Jesus Christ; His presence cannot be earned.” He also writes: “There is something else which needs to be emphasized. The Bible says that a person could not be a believer in Jesus Christ without the Holy Spirit in their life. Paul wrote the following to the Romans about this important truth. (Romans 8:9) ‘You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.’ He (Paul) said anyone who does not have the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) is not a Christian. It is that simple.” Remember we said earlier in this lesson that we cannot pray at all apart from the Holy Spirit? We have now expanded that to say you are not even Christian apart from the Holy Spirit being within you.

### **3.) How does the Holy Spirit work in the life of the believer?**

**The Holy Spirit regenerates.** Regeneration is a spiritual event which we do not discuss in much detail, but it is important to understand as it is the starting point for the believer to know that the Holy Spirit is working within. Regeneration, also known as the new birth, is God’s communication of a new spiritual life within us at the moment of our salvation. According to gotquestions.org, “Just as our physical birth resulted in a new individual entering the earthly realm, our spiritual birth results in a new person entering the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:6). After regeneration, we begin to see and hear and seek after divine things; we begin to live a life of faith and holiness. Now Christ is formed in the hearts; now we are partakers of the divine nature, having been made new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17).” “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is passed away; the new has come.” This is illustrated in Paul’s letter to Titus chapter 3, vv. 3-5; “**3**For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. **4**But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5**he saved us, not

because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” Remember, it is completely a work of God and His mercy.

Regeneration is tied directly to the Holy Spirit and is absolutely required to be a Christian, that is, to be in the kingdom of God. In Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, He says, (v. 3) “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Then, (v. 5) “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. The references to “born of water” and the washing of regeneration in Titus 3:5 refer are, I believe, references to being washed as a part of the process of transformation, i.e. Ephesians 5:26, “that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by washing of water with the word.” Also, Romans 10:17, “So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Please note, some bible scholars and teachers state that the references to water and washing in these passages pertain to baptism, and a case can be made for that, however, I still believe it is more directly applied to hearing God’s word at the point of salvation). To summarize, regeneration gives us a new perspective, seeing the world as **GOD** sees it, according to His word in the Bible.

After regeneration, the Bible also gives us at least fourteen more ways that the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer. Due to time/space restrictions, we will run through them briefly and succinctly. They are:

A.) The Holy Spirit gives life, Romans 8:10-11, “[10](#)But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. [11](#)If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

B.) The Holy Spirit gives us God’s love-lavishly! Romans 5:5, “[5](#)and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

C.) The Holy Spirit gives us unity in the body, 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

D.) The Holy Spirit leads us. Romans 8:14, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

E.) The Holy Spirit seals and secures our guaranteed salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14, “[13](#)In him (Christ) 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, [14](#)who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

F.) The Holy Spirit makes the believer's physical body a temple. In the time of the Old Testament, prior to Christ's first Advent, the temple, the physical structure (the Ark of the Covenant, then the temple built during King Solomon's reign) was the only place where the presence of God was found. The Holy Spirit came *upon* men and women (see Luke 1:35, Mary's conception of Christ) and came predominantly to kings, priests, and prophets to equip them for service to God. In the New Testament, however, we see in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"

G.) The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. John 16:8, "And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment".

H.) The Holy Spirit helps battle the sinful desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:16-17, "...walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17**For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other,".

I.) The Holy Spirit teaches us, helps us to remember. John 14:26, (Jesus) "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." Note here that in this verse Christ calls the Holy Spirit the Helper, in some translations the Advocate or Counselor, sent by the Father, in Christ's Name, that is possessing Christ's character.

J.) The Holy Spirit gives us "attitude" fruit in order to produce "action" fruit. Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23**gentleness, self-control". Examples of action fruit are leading a person to saving faith in Christ, discipling someone, ministering to the sick or those in prison, even praising God, Hebrews 13:15, "let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name."

K.) The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, **11**, " **4**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; **5**and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; **6**and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. **7**To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." " **11**All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills."

L.) The Holy Spirit empowers us for witnessing/evangelism. Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

M.) The Holy Spirit prays for us, intercedes for us. Romans 8:26-27, “ [26](#)Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. [27](#)And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

#### **4.) What does the believer need to do to pray in the Spirit?**

- A.) Confess all known sin. Psalm 66:18 (NKJV), “If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear.” Remember one of the ways the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer is to convict of sin (John 16:8). Psalm 139:23-24 (NKJV), “Search me O God and know my heart; Try me and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”
- B.) Be filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18. “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit”. Drink in the Spirit as a drunk would drink in wine. Drink in Jesus through daily reading and study of God’s word. John 7:37-39, “...Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38](#)Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” [39](#)Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”
- C.) Pray and ask for the Holy Spirit, Luke 11:13, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” That is a prayer God WILL answer!
- D.) Know that the Holy Spirit is the breath of life, of new life, the very breath of God. Genesis 2:7, “then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” And John 20:22, “And when he (Jesus) had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Praying in the Spirit is being in the Spirit as you know the Spirit is within you. The following hymn expresses this so beautifully and brilliantly. Pray it or sing it along with the ending from the Keith Green song during your devotional time.

“Breathe on me Breath of God, fill me with life anew,

That I might love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me Breath of God, until my heart is pure,

Until my will is one with thine, to do and to endure.

Breathe on me Breath of God, till I am wholly thine,

Until this earthly part of me, glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me Breath of God, so I shall never die,

But live with thee the perfect life, of thine eternity.”

(Edwin Hatch)

“Thank you, O my Father

For giving us your Son

And leaving Your Spirit

‘Til the work on earth is done”

(Keith Green)

Amen! Alleluia!

The above content was developed by Dave Mozdin and presented at Radical Time Out™ on August 18, 2022.

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