

Praying in the Spirit

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What if you woke up tomorrow and found all the Bible teaches about prayer and the Holy Spirit was removed. Would it make a difference to your life? What if you woke up tomorrow and embraced everything the Bible teaches about prayer and the Holy Spirit? What then? Prayer *in* the Spirit? *What* is praying in the Spirit, *why* to do it, and *how* to do it. Prayer in the Spirit? What is it? Why do it? How's it done?

What?

What is praying in the Spirit? Paul models it when he prays, *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* (16-18). What's he praying? *First, praying in the Spirit is praying in the presence of the Trinity.* Notice he calls upon the *Father*, in the *Son* (LJC), for the *Spirit*. He does a similar thing in Ephesians 4: *I bow my knees before the Father, with power through his Spirit, so Christ dwells in your hearts.* To pray to God is to pray in the presence of three persons, each fully divine and fully personal. I didn't learn to pray this way. I learned to pray to the Father in Jesus' name, but over and over again we find the Spirit included in prayers and benedictions like, *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all*" (2 Cor 13:14). To pray in the Spirit, then, is to fellowship with all three persons, *especially the person of the Spirit.* A dear professor in seminary taught me to make a point of talking to each person throughout the day: morning (Father), afternoon (Spirit), evening (Son). As he grew older, he found himself praying to Jesus until he fell asleep. Just imagine how refreshed we would be if we fell asleep to Jesus not Netflix or work. How do we pray to the Spirit? Begin as you would any relationship, call him by name. When you pray, say Holy Spirit, Helper, Comforter. Call him by name. Then, discover the character that goes with that name. Read the Bible with Holy Spirit lenses on, and each time you come across him, jot down what he does. Appreciate him, marvel at him, and relate to him based on his character. Spirit, guide me, change me, comfort me. *To pray in the Spirit is to pray in the presence of the Trinity, with special attention to the Spirit.* Notice this is precisely what Paul asks God for *may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him* (18). Now this wisdom and revelation isn't beyond the Bible; its understanding more of the Bible's revelation *in the knowledge of him.* How do we get that? *The Spirit enlightening the eyes of your hearts.* That's an odd way to speak. Hearts don't have eyes. Why say it like this? Because God doesn't want to just enlighten our minds; he wants open the blinds on our hearts. He wants the Spirit to illuminate and warm affection for God. So he prays for it. *Prays they wouldn't just recognize God but they'd relish him.* You can know how great 512 Pecan Porter shake is if I describe its smooth creamy taste, chocolatey body, hint of pecan, but you don't *really know* until you taste it, until you lick the glass and relish it. Praying in the Spirit isn't just knowing; it's tasting. So Paul asks: Spirit give them a taste of the sweetness of Christ, of the glory of the Father, of fellowship with Spirit. Are you *asking* for a taste? Praying in the Spirit?

Why?

Why should we do it? Notice his prayer for this heart-inebriating knowledge has two results: *to know the hope of your calling and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe* (18-19). I'd like us to linger on the second result: *the immeasurable greatness of his power*. What is it? Next phrase, says it is *according to the working of his great might* that raised Jesus from the dead and seated him over all powers and authorities. Praying in the Spirit is praying in power. Why would we need that? Flip over to Ephesians 6, and we see the same phrase reappears, *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil*. The same three words power- denoting reappear: strong (power), strength, might. It's an *inclusio*, a literary device bookends terms to make a point. What's the point? Why the power? *We need the Spirit-given, heart-inebriating knowledge of God to empower us for war*. We aren't saved just for devotional time; we're redeemed for war time. We don't pray just to recognize, or even to relish, but to wrestle against the powers. Say I don't know about "the powers." Let me tell you. Behind that condemning voice is a *power: the accuser of the brethren* (Rev 12:10). Behind that strong lurking temptation is a *tempter: I sent to learn about you for fear the tempter had tempted you* (1 Ths 3:5). Behind timidity and spiritual laziness is a deceitful spirit: *some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits* (1 Ti 4:1). Do you think they walked eyes wide open into this deceit? No, that's the nature of deceit. You don't know it; the eyes of your heart are closed. Yet *another* reason to pray the Spirit would enlighten the eyes of our hearts *to know the immeasurable greatness of his power over the powers*. But to experience his power we have to pray, to ask, seek, strap in to the armor of God and contend in his power. We pray in the Spirit, because in the flesh we are weak, easily deceived, powerless. But in the Spirit we have the very victory of God. This armor, in Isaiah 40 is worn by God himself. Prayer puts you in the armor of God, clothes you in the power of Christ, *who was raised from the dead, ascended to the Father, and rules over all authorities and powers!* Paul prays in the Spirit for the Spirit to awaken us to the immeasurable greatness of his power over the powers. Do you face temptation, pray. Do you face condemnation, pray. Do you face laziness, pray. Do you lack affection for God, pray. We step into the strength of the Lord, *when we pray*.

How?

But how do we pray in the Spirit? Ephesians 6:18-20 gives us five ways: 1) *Praying at all times in the Spirit*. We pray in the Spirit, in part, by praying at all times. This doesn't mean kneeling all day. Even Jesus didn't do that. What Jesus did to was persistently depend on the Spirit. He had an awareness of his presence and power. Praying at all times means not being so occupied with present that we forget the transcendent. It means not assuming our presence and our power is enough. This would look like pausing to ask the Spirit for help when hit an obstacle at work. It would mean praying as you go into a difficult meeting that you would exude the kindness and gentleness of Christ. It would mean some of your breaks, some of your commute time, some of your stoplights wouldn't be stuffed with information or entertainment, but opened up to hear from the living God. Praying to each person of the Trinity throughout the day. 2) Its *using the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* (17). Praying in the Spirit isn't just praying our feelings; it's praying God's Word. Praying things you know are true. It's turning Scripture into prayer, memorizing Scripture so it's at hand in battle. In the film *The Kid Who Would be King*, a young boy who

is frequently picked on discovers Excalibur in construction site. When he pulls it from the stone, he wields great power, but without it he is an ordinary kid, easily defeated. When he uses the sword, he sees and defeats the evil sorceress and her minions. When we use the Word, we wield the power, not of *a* king, but *the* King. It is living and active. Pray the Word.

3) [making supplication for all the saints \(18\)](#). Praying in the Spirit is praying for others *by name*. For people we like and people we don't like. It's praying for children and adults. It's taking five minutes a day to pray through the issues that come up at City Group. It's praying for people as they come to mind.

4) [keeping alert with all perseverance](#). It's not giving up. George Muller prayed for twenty-five years for the salvation of five friends. The fifth turned to Jesus the day after his death. For thirteen years, I have prayed for an associate pastor, a downtown building for our church, and salvation in our city. Some I have seen, some I have not, but like the widow who continually pleaded with the Judge in Jesus's parable, we must continue to pray. Persevere in prayer.

5) Finally, St. Paul asked the church to pray he would be given words to [boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel](#). Pray for bold words to proclaim the gospel at home, at work, in the neighborhood. Join us in praying for our city for 40 Days. Download the app. Get the booklet and pray that God would give us boldness in gospel witness. When we pray in the Spirit we pray all the time for all the saints with all perseverance using and proclaiming the Word of God. When we pray in the Spirit we step into the armor of God, wield the power of God, in the victory of Christ over the powers. Let's act like everything in the Bible about praying in the Holy Spirit is true.