

“Praying in the Spirit”
Ephesians 6:18
(Preached at Trinity, April 24, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We've spent much time with our hearts and minds fixed upon Paul's instruction on the spiritual warfare of the Christian. It captivates our attention. Each of us as Christians know well the raging battle that has been going all every day since the day we were brought into the Kingdom of our Lord.
Paul admonishes us:
Ephesians 6:11 NAU - "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."
 2. He describes our armor and our powerful weapon, a mighty two-edged sword which is the Word of God.
 3. But none of our armor is of any use without the power of God.
This is why prayer is an essential to the life of the Christian soldier. Paul adds this essential element in **Verses 18-21**.
Ephesians 6:18 NAU - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints"
 4. Paul uses the word "all" four times. We must pray with "all prayer" at "all times" with "all perseverance" for "all the saints." We've given attention to each of these four elements in the prayer life of the Christian warrior.
In this verse Paul gives us another important aspect of Christian prayer. We must pray with "all prayer" at "all times" with "all perseverance" for "all the saints."
But Paul also adds we must pray "in the Spirit."
- I. Most men pray in some form
 - A. It is true that religion is at the heart of the human existence
 1. All men have a knowledge of the Creator. This is consistent with the testimony of Scripture.
 2. As our Creator God has left an indelible mark of Himself on us
Some have referred to this as a "God shaped hole." A vacuum that can only be filled by God
 3. All men have this awareness of a Creator although they suppress it to their condemnation. Since all men have an awareness of their Creator they try to bridge the gap caused by sin. This is the nature of human religion. They seek Him through Allah, Buddha, Krishna, and an endless menagerie of religions. Paul even found some Athenian philosophers who were giving homage to "an unknown god."

- B. In all of these religions men pray.
1. Even men who pray seldom will cry out during great times of distress They may find comfort in their prayer but it is the prayer of vanity. It is empty, hopeless prayer. Jesus declared,
John 14:6 NAU - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
 2. It isn't just any prayer that finds its way before the throne of God. We must pray through Christ.
 3. But we must also pray in the Holy Spirit
- II. All Christians have the blessing of the Holy Spirit
- A. He indwells the Christian at the time of their conversion
1. Paul describes the Holy Spirit as the substance of God's promise of our redemption. He is the pledge of our inheritance
Ephesians 1:13-14 NAU - "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."
 2. In this sense He is called the Holy Spirit of promise
 3. It is His presence that proves our faith to be genuine
Spurgeon – "Never be content, my dear hearers, unless you are sure, by the inward witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost, that you have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."
- B. The Holy Spirit is the power of God working in us.
1. He helps us in our spiritual weakness. Paul prayed:
Ephesians 3:14-16 NAU - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"
 2. We also have the physical weakness of the flesh. We have limitations of the mind. We also have spiritual weakness.
Matthew 26:40-41 NAU - "And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? ⁴¹ "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
 3. We are also greatly assaulted by Satan
- C. The Holy Spirit fills us with His presence and power
1. The Bible describes it as being "filled" with the Holy Spirit
It is the duty of every Christian to be filled with the Holy Spirit
Ephesians 5:18 NAU - " And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit"
 2. As we've seen this speaks of the Holy Spirit's great influence in our lives
He sets our minds above this world. We see Christ as King. He gives us great boldness and confidence.

III. The Holy Spirit helps us in our prayer battle – It is a battle!

A. Satan is continually seeking to discourage us

1. He accuses us and seeks to convince us that we are paupers in rags outside the door of the King instead of children sitting at the King's table
2. The Holy Spirit testifies that we are Christians. He is one of the sure marks of grace within us.

Romans 8:16 NAU - "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God"

3. Our confidence of adoption and our assurance of our future hope are both a part of the Holy Spirit's work within us. He is continuing to bear witness in us that we are God's own children.
4. It is the Holy Spirit who teaches and convinces us of the love of God in Christ.

Do you see why we must pray in the Spirit?

B. The Holy Spirit directs our hearts and minds in prayer

Romans 8:26-27 NAU - " In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

1. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us in a Godly sorrow for sin and confession and repentance.
2. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us a love for holiness and a desire to honor Christ.
3. It is the Holy Spirit who stirs our hearts in praise and adoration.
4. It is the Holy Spirit who stirs our hearts to pray for our fellow Christians. It is the Holy Spirit who stirs our hearts to pray for the advance of the Gospel
5. In our weakness we don't know how to pray as we ought but the wonder is through the Holy Spirit we *can* know.

1 Corinthians 2:9-11 NAS - "but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him." ¹⁰ For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."

- a. This is speaking of spiritual discernment.
- b. Paul is commanding us to pray for "all the saints." The Holy Spirit leads us in the ministry of intercession.
- c. The Holy Spirit stirs our hearts to pray. Sometimes He brings specific persons or situations to mind.

- C. Paul calls the Holy Spirit our intercessor?
Romans 8:26-27 NAS - "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."
1. How is it that the Holy Spirit is our Intercessor?
 2. We know that in His great priestly office Jesus Christ is our Intercessor
 - a. Jesus is ever before the throne of God making intercession
Hebrews 7:25 NAS - "Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."
 - b. Jesus is our Advocate - παράκλητος – Literally “one called alongside to help.”
1 John 2:1 NAS - " My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;"
 3. The office of the Holy Spirit also includes that of intercession
 Jesus referred to Him as *another* Advocate
John 14:16-17 NAS - "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you."
 παράκλητος
 4. The Holy Spirit does for us what an advocate or attorney does for his clients – he tells his clients how they should speak, how they should present their case.
 - a. We don't know how to pray but the Holy Spirit teaches us.
 - c. Charles Hodge: “All true prayer is due to the influence of the Spirit, who not only guides us in the selection of the objects for which to pray, but also gives us the appropriate desires, and works within us that faith without which our prayers are of no avail.”
- D. So what does it mean to pray in the Spirit?
1. It means recognizing our absolute dependence upon His leadership in prayer.
 2. It means praying in a manner that conforms to the will and purpose of the Holy Spirit.
 It means to humble ourselves before Him as we pray.
 3. This is what Paul meant when he charged us in **Chapter 5**
Ephesians 5:18 NAU - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit"

Conclusion:

1. The Holy Spirit stirs us to pray as we ought – to pray according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit leads us in the way of Holiness. He helps us to resist the temptations of Satan. He stirs our hearts in love towards Christ which render's Satan's arrows powerless. Thomas Chalmers called it "the expulsive power of a new affection."
2. Paul encouraged these Ephesian Christians to engage the enemy praying in the Spirit for the success of the Gospel.
Ephesians 6:18-19 NAU - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel"
3. This is our great comfort. We pray always without ceasing as the Holy Spirit stirs our hearts to pray. He helps us overcome fear. He increases our faith, strengthens our assurance, affirms the love of Christ in our hearts.
Although we face powerful opposition, we have not been left alone. Christ, through His Spirit, dwells in us enflaming our hope and stirring us to prayer.