

BIBLICAL PRAYER (64)

QUESTION #16 – How does prayer relate to the Holy Spirit?

Samuel M. Zwemer wrote: “**True prayer is God the Holy Spirit talking to God the Father in the name of God the Son, and the believer’s heart is the prayer-room**” (J. Oswald Sanders, *Prayer Power Unlimited*, p. 77).

There is no age in all of Scripture that features the ministry of the Holy Spirit such as this present Church Age. While Jesus Christ was on earth, He specifically spoke of the day when the Spirit of God would have a very unique ministry with individual believers - **John 14:15-17; 15:26-27; 16:7-15**. The initial day when the Spirit of God was poured out to individuals occurred on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem as recorded in **Acts 2**.

During this present dispensation of Church Age Grace, the Holy Spirit is involved in seven distinct ministries:

Spirit Ministry #1 - The Holy Spirit restrains . **II Thessalonians 2:7**

Undoubtedly without this present ministry, evil would rise to an unprecedented level.

Spirit Ministry #2 - The Holy Spirit convicts . **John 16:8**

It is the Spirit of God that enlightens a lost person’s mind to the fact that he is a sinner in need of a righteousness that surpasses his own and he is heading to judgment. The Bible is clear that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (**I Cor. 2:14**) and, in fact, has a mind that is blinded by Satan and his forces (**II Cor. 4:3-4**). The Bible is also clear that man does not understand the things of God, nor will he seek God (**Romans 3:11**). In understanding these points, we can certainly begin to understand why the Holy Spirit must have a convicting ministry; for if He doesn’t, all men would perish.

Although there are applications for the Spirit’s restraining and convicting ministries for the believer, primarily these two ministries are geared at the unbelieving world in keeping a restraining control on sin and bringing sinners to salvation.

Spirit Ministry #3 - The Holy Spirit regenerates . **John 3:5**

Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit in creating a new, spiritual, eternal life in those who are dead in their trespasses and sins. Regeneration is referred to as being “born again.” As Dr. Chafer says: “The new birth, then, is not a mere remedy for human failures: it is a creation by divine generation, a constituting of believers inherent, innate, legitimate sons of God” (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 6, p. 104).

It is God who regenerates a person (**John 1:13**). He does this according to His will (**James 1:18**). He does this through the Holy Spirit (**John 3:5**). He does this through the Word of God (**I Peter 1:23**). Regeneration begins when a person believes (**John 1:12**).

BIBLICAL PRAYER (65)

Regeneration in itself is not an experience; it is more a judicial work of God. Although certain evidences ought to be seen in one who has been regenerated, the regenerative process is not a practical experience, it is a Divine accomplishment.

Spirit Ministry #4 - The Holy Spirit indwells. **John 7:37-39; 14:17; Romans 5:5; I John 2:27a**

This is the work of the Holy Spirit in which all believers are indwelt, in the sense that the Spirit of God actually takes up permanent residency in the believer and the believer's body actually becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit (**I Cor. 6:19**).

Spirit Ministry #5 - The Holy Spirit baptizes. **I Corinthians 12:13**

We know from clear statements of the Word of God that Spirit baptism is a special operation of the Holy Spirit peculiar to this Church Age. In fact, Jesus Christ, Himself, said that the baptism of the Spirit would occur when the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 1:5**).

I Corinthians 12:13 clearly states that all believers have been baptized with the Spirit of God and when we consider that Paul said this to the believers in Corinth who were known for their carnality, it is quite obvious that **spirituality has nothing to do with Spirit baptism.**

There is no place in Scripture where anyone is exhorted to be baptized by the Holy Spirit. This would certainly lead us to conclude that Spirit baptism occurs the moment one believes which is clearly supported by a passage like **Ephesians 4:5**.

Spirit baptism is the work of the Holy Spirit in which the believer is actually joined to and identified with Jesus Christ and His family. It is this very work that connects the believer to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (**Romans 6:1-10; Colossians 2:12**). It is this very work that identifies one as a member in God's family (**I Cor. 12:13**), and it is this work that becomes the basis for family unity (**Ephesians 4:5**).

As it relates to prayer, it is the baptism of the Holy Spirit that so identifies us as a family member that it entitles us, through Jesus Christ, to come "boldly to the Throne of God."

Spirit Ministry #6 - The Holy Spirit seals. **II Cor. 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30**

The sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit means that we are God's forever. He owns us, has authority over us and we are absolutely secure forever. This particular work guarantees that every believer will receive Divine sonship blessings in the future. This sealing ministry is actually a down payment on future things and guarantees that the believer will receive all that he is entitled to receive. This sealing ministry takes place the moment a person believes.

BIBLICAL PRAYER (66)

Spirit Ministry #7 - The Holy Spirit fills. **Ephesians 5:18**

This is the work of the Holy Spirit in which He brings one to a level of spirituality and maturity in direct proportion to the believer's willingness to obey the Word of God and will of God. It is this very filling that allows spiritual gifts to be fully developed and used, and it is this filling that produces the fruit of the Spirit that leads one to pray (**Eph. 6:18**).

The more a believer yields to the Spirit of God's influence to conform to the Word, the more spiritual one will become as a work of the Holy Spirit. **It seems that every believer may . potentially experience a powerful spiritual life (Acts 13:52), but it also seems that not every believer will experience a powerful spiritual life (Acts 6:3).**

Dr. Charles Ryrie writes: "If filling relates to the control of the Spirit in one's life, then filling is related to yielding. When I am willing to allow the Spirit to do what He wishes, it is up to Him to do or not to do with me whatever is His pleasure. I can check my willingness but I cannot manipulate His activities. As one matures, his knowledge and perspectives will deepen and broaden. New areas that need to be yielded will come to light. Therefore, filled people need to be filled as they continue to mature in the Lord. But no believer can afford not to be filled at every stage of his or her spiritual growth" (*Basic Theology*, p. 378).

As prayer relates to the Holy Spirit, there are three specific passages that must be examined because they are directly related to a believer.

(Passage #1) - Romans 8:26 .

This text specifically states that the Spirit prays in our behalf.

(Passage #2) - Ephesians 6:18 .

This text specifically states that prayer "in the Spirit" is a key to defeating spiritual enemies.

(Passage #3) - Jude 20 .

This text specifically states that praying in the Holy Spirit is connected to keeping one in the love of God and not walking or living as a worldly-minded person.

There are two assumptions we may make from these three passages:

Assumption #1 - There are times when the Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we have reached a point in which we no longer know what to pray (**Romans 8:26**).

This kind of prayer would be made automatically without our knowledge and without any words that we could even utter. This would be very similar to Christ's intercessory prayer work on our behalf (**Romans 8:34**).

BIBLICAL PRAYER (67)

Since we do not know the precise moment when Christ intercedes on our behalf, it is certainly logical that there would be times when we would not know the Spirit is interceding on our behalf.

This Biblical truth should be a great encouragement for the believer. When Christ was on earth, He promised to send a Comforter (**John 16:7**). Part of the ministry that the Holy Spirit has is one of representing the believer in prayer at times when the believer does not know what to pray.

Assumption #2 - In order for prayer to be impacting, it must be made “in the Spirit.”

This would naturally mean that it must be made by one who is not continually grieving the Spirit (**Ephesians 4:30**), and by one who is continually walking in the Spirit (**Galatians 5:25**). When a believer is yielding himself to the Spirit of God, he does have effectual/supernatural power in prayer. God the Spirit works in conjunction with the prayer being made, because he knows the one making the prayer is conforming his life to revealed truth.

Praying “in the Spirit” is closely connected to being filled with the Spirit. J. Oswald Sanders writes:

“The foregoing considerations would lead us to conclude that to be able to pray prevailing, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are never really men of prayer in the best sense, until we are filled with the Holy Spirit. This necessity is emphasized by J. Stuart Holden - Here is the secret of prevailing prayer, to pray under a direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, whose petitions for us and through us are always according to the Divine purpose, and hence certain of answer. ‘Praying in the Holy Spirit’ is but cooperating with the will of God, and such prayer is always victorious. How many Christians there are who cannot pray, and who seek by effort, resolve, joining prayer circles, etc., to cultivate in themselves ‘the holy art of intercession,’ and all to no purpose. Here for them and for all is the only secret of a real prayer life - ‘Be filled with the Spirit,’ who is ‘the Spirit of grace and supplication’ (*Prayer Power Unlimited*, pp. 82-83).

Prayer is an important ministry of the Spirit of God in the life of a believer. There are times when the Spirit prays on our behalf even when we are not aware of it. When we pray it should always be out of a heart that is yielded to the Spirit of God, for this makes our prayers and our lives more spiritually powerful.

Now the Spirit of God helps our prayers lives in three distinct ways:

Helpful Way #1 - The Spirit helps us in our ignorance. **Romans 8:26**

Helpful Way #2 - The Spirit helps us in our access. **Ephesians 2:18**

Helpful Way #3 - The Spirit helps us in our sonship. **Galatians 4:6**

It is very clear from these passages that the Spirit of God is actively involved in our prayer life. As Dr. Ryrie said, “While we wait for our full redemption we need guidance in the particulars of prayer” (*Basic Theology*, p. 382).