

“Spiritual Warfare 8: Praying In The Spirit”

Text: Ephesians 6:18

"And *pray* in the *Spirit* on all occasions with all kinds of *prayers* and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on *praying* for all the saints."

Paul says "pray in the Spirit." Now when he mentions that at the end of the list of the armor that is not to say that this is kind of an add-on that you put on after all the other armor. Some would say that Paul is just kind of concluding and he talks about praying. That is not it at all!

A part of our armor, a part of our weaponry, if we're going to do battle with the forces of evil, if we are going to be able to stand in that day when satan attacks you there is something else we must do. In addition to putting on those other pieces of armor, in addition to using the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, we as believers have to be able to pray in the Spirit. It is a powerful thing!

To begin with, I want you to notice that Paul doesn't say "pray on all occasions." He says, "pray in the Spirit ..." He says "pray" in verse 19 and in verse 20.

"*Pray* also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. *Pray* that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Read: Romans 15:31

" Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there ..."

Read: Colossians 4:2-4

"Devote yourselves to *prayer*, being watchful and thankful. And *pray* for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. *Pray* that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should."

Read: I Thessalonians 5:17,25

"pray continually ... Brothers, pray for us."

There are times when Paul talks about ordinary prayer. But in Ephesians 6:18 he is not just talking about prayer that is Spirit motivated in the sense if you just sense the presence of God so you pray. Paul is talking about a specific kind of prayer. He is talking about praying in the Spirit.

Question: What does "praying in the spirit" mean?

It's probably best to let the apostle Paul answer that question. It is that time when a believer prays in a language other than their own natural/native tongue and they pray to God in that moment. It is more than being in tune with the Spirit of God and praying in English. Praying in the Spirit happens *after* you have been filled with the Holy Spirit.

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We find out what he means because he uses the same type of terminology in talking about a specific kind of prayer. He is giving the Corinthians instructions on the use of speaking in tongues in the framework of a public setting and he is saying that if a tongue in a public worship setting catches the attention of everyone then it should be interpreted.

Read: I Corinthians 14:13-15

"For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind."

There is a difference between the Spirit of God coming **inside** of you (salvation) and the Spirit of God coming **upon** you (infilling).

Read: Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes **on** you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Read: Acts 2:4

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit **enabled** them."

Read: Acts 8:15,16

"When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come **upon** any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus."

Read: Romans 8:9

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And *if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*"

There is a second work that takes place in the believer's life but we're not going to take time to show you all of that tonight. We do that in Christianity 101 so I'd invite you to attend that class if you're curious about learning more about the Infilling of the Holy Spirit. What concerns me is the mindset that the infilling of the Holy Spirit is optional and not that critical for believers today. You don't have to have it to be saved but every believer needs to be filled with the Spirit.

Without the infilling it is impossible to pray in the Spirit which means when it comes to doing spiritual battle you are handicapped somewhat. Please hear me tonight! I'm not saying you can't do spiritual battle. I am just saying that there is something you can have through the infilling of the Holy Spirit that will help you to stand more effectively and more powerfully against the forces of darkness. It is critical that the Christian be filled with the Holy Spirit.

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Tonight what I want you to see is how praying in the Spirit comes into play in our warfare. When the Holy Spirit moves you to pray in a language you don't know, what does that do in our battle with the enemy?

There is a difference between the public gift of speaking tongues and the interpretation of tongues and the private prayer language. The public gift is for the good of the body.

Read: I Corinthians 12:30

"Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" (No!)

Read: I Corinthians 12:7-11

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, *to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.* All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

I want to talk to you tonight about four things that speaking in tongues will do for you ...

I. Praying In The Spirit Gives You Direct Access To God In A Unique Way

In those moments when we don't know how to pray or what to pray for we can still talk to God using our prayer language. When we're tired and weak and discouraged or too broken to talk to Him in English praying in the Spirit will help us continue to fight. We must not pray only in the Spirit because we could become apathetic and lazy in our prayer life.

Read: I Corinthians 14:2,15

"For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God ... So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind."

Question: How can the Spirit of God praying through us help us?

- 1) He helps us when we are weak.
- 2) He helps us when we don't know how or what to pray for.
- 3) He helps us pray God's Will.

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Read: Romans 8:26,27 (Not talking about tongues but rather the Spirit interceding on our behalf.)

"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our *weakness*. We do not know *what* we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with *God's will*."

II. Praying In The Spirit Results In Spiritual Discernment

Read: I Corinthians 14:2

"... Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit."

Now when most people think of a mystery they think of some big, unknown secret. Something that is unknowable, something that we can never know. But the word "mystery" is used several times in the New Testament and when it is used it speaks of things not that are unknown but it speaks of things that were previously unknown but have now been revealed to you and I. It's a former secret that now we know.

Mysteries Of The New Testament:

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| 1) Mystery of <u>Kingdom</u> of God | Matthew 13 |
| 2) Mystery of Israel's Gladness | Romans 11:25 |
| 3) Mystery of the <u>Rapture</u> | I Corinthians 15 |
| 4) Mystery of <u>Lawlessness</u> | II Thessalonians 2:7 |
| 5) Mystery of <u>Jews & Gentiles</u> Becoming One People | Ephesians 3:3-6 |
| 6) Mystery of <u>Christ</u> In You | Colossians 1:26,27 |
| 7) Mystery of <u>God's Will</u> | Ephesians 1:9,10 |
| 8) Mystery of <u>Godliness</u> | I Timothy 3:16 |

Read: I Corinthians 13:2

"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries ..."

He is saying there that we can understand what was previously unknown. Notice that he relates it to a context of prophecy and tongues and functioning in those gifts. He is saying that we can have divine spiritual understanding.

Read: I Corinthians 14:2

"... Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit." (NIV - *by the Spirit*)

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What it is saying here is this ... **When we are praying in the Spirit, God reveals things to you and I.** He's not going to reveal things to you outside of His Word and He's not going to give you new revelation so you can write a new book of the Bible. Rather, He's going to give you insight into ...

- Situations in your life
- Situations in other's lives
- Resolution to problems, trials, and difficulties
- Conviction regarding an area of your life
- Insight into the enemy's attack - where, when, and how he will attack

III. Praying In The Spirit Strengthens The Believer Spiritually

Read: Ephesians 6:10

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."

Read: I Corinthians 14:4

"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself ..."

It is necessary for us to focus on getting ourselves strong when we have our personal devotional times. That is the key to victory. We have to build ourselves up. It is not selfish to build ourselves up by praying in tongues in private. There is value to praying in the Spirit. Paul knew that - it built him up. Praying in the Spirit strengthens us in our fight.

Read: I Corinthians 14:18

"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you."

Read: Jude 20

"But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit."

IV. Praying In The Spirit Is Effective Against The Powers Of Darkness

We must put on the armor ...

- Belt of Truth
- Breastplate of Righteousness
- Feet Fitted
- Shield of Faith
- Helmet of Salvation
- Sword of the Spirit

and pray in the Spirit, after you have done EVERYTHING to stand, you will stand firm then!

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Praying in the Spirit is a part of the battle. It will strengthen your life and will help you defeat your foe. The Holy Spirit knows where the battle is the fiercest and where our prayers are needed the most. We are doing battle on behalf of ...

Ourselves

Our spouses, children, families, friends, neighbors, coworkers

Church - pastors, leaders, ministries

Missionaries - home and abroad

I believe the following story illustrates perfectly how effective praying in the Spirit is against the enemy ...

Illustration: Evelyn Thompson (The Beauty of Spiritual Language by Jack Hayford)

Evelyn Thompson and her husband were missionaries to the Philippines. They were on a trek one day to reach a new village when they heard about a woman who was completely out of her mind. The villagers had not known what to do with her at all so they built a house on stilts 12 feet high. Evelyn and her husband were taken up to the house with several other people to pray for the woman who was chained to the bamboo floor. She relates the story as follows ...

"As soon as we walked into that room, we realized what was happening, as the Holy Spirit made known to us the demonic nature of the problem with her. As we came in and began to pray for her, the woman began to rant and rave ... I began to pray and as I did, out of my mouth - like a ball of fire from the middle of my stomach - came another language that I had never spoken before in the Spirit; certainly a language that I had never learned, nor had I ever heard it before. But as it came out of my mouth, I saw that there was a change in the expression on the face of the woman we were praying for. I saw that her eyes were listening, and at one I began to understand that I was speaking her language.

As this change came over her, I saw the muscles in her face begin to relax, the trembling stopped, and her hands ceased the wild beating of the air as though she were trying to hit me. She had been writhing almost like a slithering snake, and this too, ceased as well as her constant laughing over her shoulder in a hysterical way. Then a most wonderful thing happened.

I not only could see that she understood me, but suddenly I was enabled to understand what I was saying; I was able to think as well as to speak in a language which I had never learned and never heard before! In the following minutes I explained the story of Jesus Christ, with a perfect awareness of every word I was speaking. I led her to the Lord Jesus Christ with full understanding of that language at that time. She was totally delivered and today she still lives. Now these many years later, she knows the Lord and has raised her children accordingly.

I did not know that language after that one instance. I later heard it spoken by others but could not understand it and I certainly could not speak it. How blessed to be filled with His Holy Spirit and to have faith that He knows His way when we don't. He will lead and guide us!

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Question: When should we pray in the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:18)?

Anywhere, anytime, anyplace, all the time and on all occasions!

Conclusion:

It was during the Vietnam War in the late 1960's. Master Sergeant John Mackelhannon knew his friend George was different from most of the other men in his company. Some of the other marines professed Christianity but George lived it. John saw in George a man to be respected and admired and they soon became good friends. To while away the time John sometimes tried to teach George some of his native Navaho language but his friend seemed unable to grasp it.

One day the Vietcong attacked their position and to John's dismay he saw George fall - critically wounded. Rushing over to his friend John encouraged him, "You're going to be all right, save your strength." But George was not all right. Moments later he was gone. However, before he died he summoned enough strength to say a few words to John. He said, "John, you need God."

The sergeant's eyes widened. George's last words spoken by the power of the Holy Spirit were in flawless Navaho. The words haunted John Mackelhannon. Later after being wounded in action he came back to the U.S. to recuperate. As he lay in the hospital he couldn't forget the words, "John, you need God." He determined to find that faith that George knew. At first his search seemed in vain as he tried several churches first in San Francisco and then in Fresno, CA. He failed to find the truth he was searching for.

Then just before leaving Fresno he picked up a phone directory and found the name of Bethel Temple that leaped out of the pages. A phone call to the pastor led him to a Saturday night young people's meeting and he soon found that these youth knew George's God. John unburdened his heart and his new friends explained to him that it was the Holy Spirit that had enabled George to speak to him in the Navaho language even though he had never learned it and the young marine soon put his faith in Jesus Christ.

I believe that there are several different kinds of people here tonight. There are some of you that have been seeking the infilling of the Spirit and it's never happened to you before and you've given up thinking that it must not be for you. Can I encourage you tonight that it is for you. Even in the book of Acts there were some who received immediately and others that had to wait for 10 days in the upper room before they were filled. I can't explain it. I'm not the baptizer but He is and I believe that Jesus is here tonight to fill some of you with the Holy Spirit.

Read: Acts 2:38,39

"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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call."

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There are others of you here tonight and you've been filled in the past but haven't been actively using the gift regularly and you want to be refilled again tonight. The Scriptures admonish us to be continually filled with the Spirit. It's a daily seeking after the Spirit's empowerment for life.

There are still others of you here tonight that don't know what to think about this whole issue of praying in the Spirit and that's understandable. Let me share with you that I was once in the same place where you find yourself tonight. Let me encourage you to consider what we've talked about and begin to search for yourself to see what the Scriptures say.

I want everyone to understand that you're not a second class Christian because you don't pray in the Spirit. In fact, I have wrestled with teaching this lesson because I don't want anyone to feel like you are looked down upon by me or anyone else because you don't speak in tongues. Rather, it is my heart to give you the whole counsel of God and I see this as a tremendous aid in Spiritual Warfare. If all I have done this evening is to get you to think about your need to be filled with the Holy Spirit then I'll consider it a victory because the enemy doesn't want to fight against Spirit-filled believers.

Tonight I'm going to open up this altar and give you an opportunity to respond to the Lord. You will notice that I've included a sample prayer in your notes tonight for you to use as a guide when asking for the filling of the Holy Spirit. It's from Jack Hayford's book, "The Beauty of Spiritual Language."

It's not a magic formula and you don't need to use it but it's there for those who would like to have something to help you. The important thing is the attitude and motives of your heart. Don't seek the gift, seek the giver of the gift. Don't seek tongues, seek the Lord and ask Him to fill you.

We're not going to rush through this time so if you have to go I understand. I just want to make the altar available to those who want to seek the Lord tonight. Won't you consider being filled?

A Prayer For Inviting The Lord To Fill You With The Holy Spirit

Dear Lord Jesus, I thank You and praise You for Your great love and faithfulness to me. My heart is filled with joy whenever I think of the great gift of salvation You have so freely give to me, and I humbly glorify You, Lord Jesus, for You have forgiven me all my sins and brought me to the Father. Now I come in obedience to Your call. I want to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I do not come because I am worthy myself, but because You have invited me to come. Because You have washed me from my sins, I thank You that You have made the vessel of my life a worthy one to be filled with the Spirit of God. I want to be overflowed with Your life, Your love and Your power, Lord Jesus. I want to show forth Your grace, Your words, Your goodness, and Your gifts to everyone I can. And so with simple, childlike faith, I ask You, Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit. I open all of myself to You, to receive all of Yourself in me. I love You, Lord, and I lift my voice in praise to You. I welcome Your might and Your miracles to be manifested in me for Your glory and unto Your praise.

Next Week: Ways To Resist The Devil