

## **What Does It Mean to Pray in the Holy Spirit?**

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“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 1:20).

“Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

Prayer is a multifaceted dynamic given to us that we might touch God, enter into His presence, and receive those things which we need from Him. How important is prayer? The verses above reveal to us not only the need to pray, but also the manner in which we ought to pray. Without a doubt, prayer is our lifeline; it keeps us connected with the Lord. While it is one of the most important aspects of the Christian life, it may also be the most difficult to do.

### **Our Approach to Prayer**

Prayer is the thing we forget to do; it is the thing we neglect to do; it is the thing we intend to do, and it is the thing we put off doing. And yet, it is the thing we need to do the most. When we fail to engage in it, we are overlooking the sheer magnificence of it. Think of it: being able to spend time in the presence of the Creator of the universe! And He invites me to do so! Shouldn't we be running to Him?

Because of the nature of prayer, it is important that we understand several things about it that should cause us to desire to do it biblically. First we should know that prayer is a portal. It is a gateway into the supernatural. Second, we should understand that prayer is a privilege. It is through prayer that we are given the unique opportunity to communicate personally with the God of the universe. This is an honor that we should not take lightly. Finally, when approached properly, as we will discuss, prayer is full of possibilities. This comes through faith, and praying in the Spirit.

You have probably heard the phrase, “prayer changes things.” This familiar and often repeated statement has long since reached cliché status. But make no mistake: the words are no less true. However, should we look at prayer itself as a sort of “magical cure all”? I think not. What is it that makes prayer so powerful? It is the God in whom we trust that makes prayer so powerful. Understanding this simple truth, we should look at the kind of prayer that changes things.

### **What Does it Mean to Pray in the Spirit?**

Our verses above state emphatically that we should “pray in the Spirit.” But what does it actually mean to pray in the Spirit? Before we explain what it means, let us first make clear what it does not mean.

Many believe and conclude that praying in the Spirit means to pray in tongues, or in a “prayer language.” But what about the prayers of those who do not adhere to this belief? Are their prayers any less meaningful because they do not meet this specific criterion? And while this writer believes that speaking in tongues can be a viable part of the Christian life, it is not universal. And it is because of this that the aforementioned interpretation cannot bear up under scrutiny. It is true the Spirit intercedes for us when we pray, but does this have anything to do with speaking in tongues? We read from the apostle Paul:

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now

He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27).

This rather is the Holy Spirit operating in His intercessory ministry; the disciples and others were never said to be “groaning” in tongues, they spoke in tongues. The word “groanings” here refers to sighing (especially brought on by circumstances creating great pressure). How many times have we found ourselves in situations where we simply did not know what or how to pray?

This verse begins to show us just what praying in the Spirit actually means. At its core, praying in the Spirit means to pray with the mind of the Spirit. When we pray this way, we are praying according to the will of God. Praying according to the will of God not only assures us that He hears our prayers, but also that He will answer them in His own way in His own time. We read:

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15).

### **Two Examples of Praying in the Spirit**

I would like to cite two individuals from scripture who help us to further understand and even appreciate the concept of being in the Spirit. Though it is not stated emphatically that they were praying at the time, the definite possibility exists that they may have been. Let us first look at the example of the apostle John. He writes:

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet” (Revelation 1:10).

The very fact that John was able to receive this great vision tells us something more about being in the Spirit: it enables us to hear from God. It caused him to be “Revelation ready,” meaning that his spirit was open to whatever the Lord needed to communicate to him. The second example I’d like to cite comes from the apostle Paul:

“It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).

Much like the apostle John, Paul was granted the privilege to see things that no one else had seen. This helps to give us insight into the depth of writings. Of course we know that the Spirit carried him along as he wrote (2 Timothy 3:16), but because of the things that he saw, we can understand the urgency and power with which he wrote.

His being caught up (this is the same phrase used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to describe the rapture of the saints), to the third heaven, was all due to the fact, I believe, that he was in the Spirit; a vessel ready to hear and receive from the Lord.

### **The Necessity of Praying in the Spirit**

Why is it necessary to pray in the spirit? There are three most important things to remember.

First, prayer is an excursion into the supernatural. This is true from the smallest and shortest prayer, to the more grandiose prayer. Whether you're just saying, "Thank you Jesus," or a plea for help, or even intercession, all prayer brings you out of the world that is seen, and into the world that is unseen, from the natural to the supernatural.

We should next remember that prayer is warfare. When entering into the spirit world through prayer, you can expect to encounter unseen forces. This is true because the Enemy and all his minions know that prayer will catapult you into the presence of God, causing you to give glory and praise to the Him.

Finally, as should be obvious, we need to pray in the Spirit because Satan seeks to hinder our prayers. He is more interested in our prayers than we realize because he desires to halt and frustrate our intimate fellowship with the Lord. Whatever he can do within his limited sphere of power to derail and obstruct our prayers, he will do. These three factors make it incumbent upon us to pray in such a way that will gain us an advantage over the wiles of the devil.

So as we strive to pray in the Spirit, let us be mindful that prayer is not a monologue. As we pray, we should expect the Lord in turn, to speak back to us; making prayer a dialogue. We should anticipate hearing from Him because we have prayed in the Spirit.