

PRAYING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

Seeking to learn how to pray. Aware of importance of prayer & reasons for doing it better. Tried to get a feel for breadth of parts that make up prayer, and how we furnish our prayers with content we desire by taking time, by meditation & by being organised & disciplined. This week: praying in the Holy Spirit - something that is clearly expected of us: Eph 6:18, Jude 20, Phil 3:3, Rom 8:15,26. Question: **What does it mean to pray in the Holy Spirit?** Not just speaking about feelings & emotions. For all!

1. TO PRAY AS A CHRISTIAN

Let us remind ourselves what a Christian is: person who has come to know God through Jesus Christ. For that to happen a dramatic change must take place, person must be 'born again', made new by God, have heart changed. This change is beyond us to do ourselves, and must be done by God. Can also be 'born from above'. Through this change that we come to a knowledge of God, brought back to God. Prayer is language of that relationship - a relationship that only exists because of Holy Spirit's work. Eph 2:18, Rom 8:9-11. There are 2 important implications of this truth that must be spelt out clearly:

a) Only true born again Christians can pray in the Holy Spirit. If you have not been converted, come to Jesus Christ in repentance & faith you cannot pray in the Holy Spirit. It is possible for you to taste something of Holy Spirit's work (Heb 6:4) pressing in upon your soul, but to actually pray yourself to God in Holy Spirit requires Holy Spirit to be resident in your life. Result of regeneration.

b) All true born again Christians can pray in the Holy Spirit. As praying in the Spirit is connected with our conversion - anyone who is converted can pray in Holy Spirit. This is not some gift that is reserved for the super spiritual. It should be joy & experience of all God's children. Lk 11:13, Jude 20. Apply: When we come to pray, must never forget privilege & right that is ours as sons of God - grace.

2. TO PRAY SPIRITUALLY

Just because we can pray in the Holy Spirit does not mean that we do! Why would NT specifically tell us to pray in the Holy Spirit if all our prayers as Christians were automatically in Holy Spirit? Need to recognise that prayer is a spiritual activity - done with our hearts as well as our heads and lips. At the most basic level this means we must be sincere in what we pray for - actually mean it.

Opposite of praying spiritually is to pray according to flesh: Contrast between Jude 19 & 20. The thing that demands our prayers be 'spiritual' is the fact that God is a Spirit. Our prayers just like rest of our worship must be suitable for a God who is spirit - John 4:21-24. This has following implications:

a) God may not be prayed to with idols or images. Anything that seeks to represent God is an insult to God. Far from being a help, idols & images are a hindrance, distraction and unspiritual.

b) God may be prayed to at anytime or in any place. There are not some buildings that are more holy than others. Don't need to go to a church building to pray more effectively. God is a spirit.

c) Vain repetition of words is not praying. Repeating prayers mechanically - whether from a liturgy

or from memory. Just a form of words we say morning & evening. Praying in Spirit is opposite of relying upon forms & ritual. Matt 6:5-7. Always got to watch we don't become formal & mechanical.

d) Focus of our praying is to be what is going on in our souls. Interior rather than exterior. True spiritual prayer is hardest thing in world - because must come from our hearts. It reflects on state of our souls - our spiritual earnestness - Heb 11:6. God blesses us by faith. He want us to come with words that reflect spiritual state & concerns of our heart - that requires a living & genuine faith. It is a battle: Eph 6:10-18. Devil will do everything he can to stop us praying like this. We can & must.

e) It is not separate from how we are living the rest of our lives. Interesting the number of activities that the NT says are to be done 'in the Holy Spirit'. i) Possible just to be 'in the Spirit' - Rev 1:10. ii) Rejoice in HS - Lk 10:21, iii) resolve / decide something in HS - Acts 19:21, iv) conscience bear witness to HS - Rom 9:1, v) love in HS - Col 1:8. Apply: We must not imagine that we will be able to pray in Holy Spirit, if we are not seeking to be godly & spiritual people through rest of lives.

3. TO PRAY DEPENDENTLY

If you are beginning to feel that this true spiritual prayer is beyond you - that is exactly right. It is only possible to pray spiritually in total dependence upon the Holy Spirit - Eph 6:18 - ref Eph 6:10. All true prayer is petition - praying as a dependent sinner - acknowledging our need of God's help. To pray dependently is recognition that we need help in very act of praying, not just for requests we make.

Apply: We should feel a certain vulnerability when we pray - setting out to try & do something that in of ourselves we cannot do - speak to living God in a manner that is appropriate to his character & will result in God in some way being more favourably disposed towards us. We can only do this if He helps us: i) inclining our hearts to pray. ii) guiding us in what to pray for. iii) helping us to arrange our requests and thanksgiving in a suitable form. iv) giving us proper expressions for our prayers.

Apply: We must come to prayer trusting that God's Spirit will speak to our souls, & fill it with divine power, so that out of our hearts will flow rivers of living water (Jn 7:38). We must come laying hold of God that He would give us the fervency, perseverance & holy frame of mind we need to pray. Grace.

4. TO PRAY EFFECTIVELY

Praying in Spirit - then with such prayer it is an absolute certainty that I must succeed with God in prayer. Spurgeon: *"If my prayer were my own prayer, I might not be sure of it, but if the prayer which I utter be God's own prayer written in my soul, God is always one with himself, and what he writes on the heart is only written there because it is written in his purposes."* This is what we all desire.

Apply: This is not beyond any of us. It is something we are commanded to do. When God commands us to do something he provides where with all to do it. He knows we cannot pray properly on our own, so he gives us Holy Spirit to enable us to do so. Not only a command, but also a promise - he will help

CONCLUSION

Some answers to what it means to pray in the Holy Spirit. This is entirely consistent with what we said last week about our preparation, meditation & discipline. God on the one hand lays responsibilities upon us - which must never neglect. On other hand he does everything. It is Phil 2:12-13 principle.