

Praying in the Power of the Holy Spirit

Prayer Requires Practice (Exercise)

Prayer is the most essential aspect in the preparation for the work of serving God. Those preparing for the work of making known the gospel of Christ must realize the necessity of prayer and incorporate prayer in their studies, in their activities, and most importantly in their daily living. People emphasize study and knowledge. For instance, to prepare for taking the gospel to the world, people will prepare by studying language, (Hebrew, Greek, foreign language), logic, science, humanities, literature, mathematics, culture, history, and more. They will study music and theology and anything that will help them in the work of the ministry or in service of the gospel. Of course, they will spend much time studying the Bible and memorizing scriptures. Yet, too often students forget the most essential aspect of preparing for God's work; that is the practice or exercise of prayer! Do we appreciate that prayer is an art, actually a spiritual art, that requires study and practice just as any other discipline? No one becomes proficient in anything without a great deal of exercise and practice. Whether a person is learning to play a musical instrument, a sport, a role in the theater, or learning a new job, trade, or profession, they need to spend much time, even hours a day, to perfect their skills, understanding, and performance. Likewise, it is not possible to learn the art of prayer without a great deal of exercise and practice.

Prayer is Spiritual Breathing

Prayer should motivate and drive every spiritual activity and is the most vital function in our daily lives because prayer is our spiritual breathing! The word "Spirit" means "breath" and in Ephesians 6:17-18 we are exhorted to **receive the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God by means of all prayer**. Can you see the association between the Spirit (breath) and prayer? We handle the Spirit by means of all prayer and this prayer should be unceasing. Just as we breathe physically throughout each day, we also must learn to breathe spiritually by praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). It is amazing how many Christians talk about prayer, but do not pray as they should. People set aside time for prayer as in a weekly prayer meeting, and they may even set aside a daily prayer time, but do they see prayer as spiritual breathing? We should be praying in the Spirit all day long, every day. Then, as we meditate and enter into our spiritual work, prayer will already be incorporated.

It is common for saints to pray before they minister the word, before they visit people, before they teach their Bible class, and before they perform a so-called spiritual activity. This has some value, but the real value of prayer is only gained when we pray all the time without ceasing. This means that we always breathe in the Spirit in everything we think, say, and do. Prayer is not just an activity we set aside time for, but is the vital life function in the spiritual realm: breathing. Imagine life without breathing! It is not possible. Why then, do we not pray without ceasing in the Spirit? We cannot sustain our spiritual life without prayer!

Prayer Shows Our Dependence on God

In terms of our service to God, on one hand, we have a responsibility to be filled in Spirit and follow the Lord's speaking to plant and water spiritual seed. On the other hand, we must see that God is solely responsible for the harvest that we sow. Prayer is the spiritual life-line we enjoy with God in order to know what He desires and to wait for His leading and will. In 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 Paul said, **"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the increase."** Prayer makes us fully dependent on God because **"It is God Who operates in us both the willing and the working of His good pleasure"** (Philippians 2:13). He infuses His will into our will so that we **deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him** (Matthew 16:24), and He alone gives the increase that is well-pleasing to Him. No amount of self-effort, no degree of talent and capability on our part, and no grandiose strategies originating from ourselves will produce anything that is well-pleasing to God, even if what we accomplish seems successful. Romans 12:1 says that we are living sacrifices, meaning we give up all of our rights, all of our efforts, and all of our intentions, desires, and goals in order to seek God with all of our heart so that He is well-pleased.

In the human realm, a farmer knows more than anyone the need to learn to trust God. They must know their land, what kind of crops will grow best, when to plant, how to plant and cultivate, and when to harvest. They can sow their crop, irrigate it, and cultivate it, but they must wait on God to give sunshine or rain for growth and increase (Matthew 5:45; Deuteronomy 28:8-12). Without God and His kindness, a farmer will have no crop, no harvest, and therefore, no income to sustain his family. The farmer can work as hard as possible and as long as possible, but it is still God who gives the increase. Spiritually speaking, our planting, watering, and cultivating are fully dependent on God giving the increase. The hardest worker, the wisest cultivator, cannot bring the crop to harvest without God's hand and God's blessing. It is God who gives the increase, and God gives the increase in answer to prayer.

Reasons for Prayer

We should be men and women of prayer for two reasons: (1) for our own spiritual life, (2) for the sake of those among whom we work (intercession). First, if the Holy Spirit is to live in our life so that we are filled in Spirit it must come by prayer. Second, if the Holy Spirit is to work in those we bring the Word to, it must also come by prayer. Do not think that prayer only comes based on need. No, prayer sustains our very life and living first, and then we pray for the needs that arise. It is common that saints who become ministers, missionaries, serving ones, or teachers pray as they feel the need, but often prayer is not part of their daily life and existence. Needs always arise and we frequently put off indispensable prayer until later when we have finished a particular project. What happened to breathing the Spirit throughout the project? It is more than likely that the Lord will come to us in the height of our busy-ness so that we will take a break and spend time with Him alone. Realize that if you cannot find time to pray right now, and all day long for the Spirit's sustaining and leading in your daily life, then you will not recognize His sustaining and leading when the needs arise. Why do we mainly pray based on the need? Because we get trapped by the busy-ness of life and the occupation with activities in order to

accomplish something. We have so many things to prepare for and so much time is necessary for study or to take care of various tasks. Therefore, prayer becomes a lower priority. Oh! beware. Remember that Satan, God's enemy, crouches near our self-life, waiting as a roaring lion to pounce on us (1 Peter 5:8). He loves us getting preoccupied with anything besides Christ Himself. Prayer is our breathing and intimate union with Jesus, so, the devil schemes to deceive you into thinking that activity and getting things done is more important than unceasing prayer in the Spirit. Romans 12:1 says that we are **to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, which is our reasonable service or spiritual worship**. We must be ready to lay down our soul life each and every minute as a sacrifice to God as we serve Him. Otherwise, this same devil will have an even easier time in three years when your work is much more demanding. The devil will constantly remind you that you have so much to do and will urge you to pray later.

Among the unbelievers, many put off conversion thinking that it is too hard or inconvenient today, but will be easier tomorrow. Likewise, Christians hesitate or postpone Spirit-filled prayer due to busy schedules and apparent urgent matters. They say or think, "When this or that is completed we will set aside time to pray properly." However, the future will not change who you are ... a person too busy for prayer today, too busy to sustain life in the Spirit by breathing moment by moment, will always put prayer on the back burner. They will find that establishing a prayer life may even be harder in the future. I knew a dear, well-respected, leading brother who always spoke of prayer, but rarely prayed except in the designated times of prayer (weekly prayer meeting, etc.) or when convenient. A large renovation project came up that would allow the church to proceed in a new way, but the physical workload was immense. Once the project began, this brother put down his prayer mantle and picked up a trowel. He rarely, if ever, set aside time to pray to the Lord directly or with the brothers unless it was part of the formal church meetings. He was exhausted all the time, he gave up many healthy habits (diet, exercise, taking time to fellowship with brothers, etc.). His view was that this was a particular work of God that required sacrifice for a period of time. Unfortunately, vital and unceasing Spirit-filled prayer was one of the greatest sacrifices until the project was completed. He also lost relationships with brothers, and did not cultivate an atmosphere of prayer, fellowship, and companionship among those he served with. Instead of praying for the Lord to send workers and younger brothers to train up, he worked day and night to complete the project. What a tragedy to see the enemy so easily side-track even the best intentions. Why is it that 5% of a church's congregation does 90% of the work? One reason is the lack of spiritual prayer. We "do" instead of wait in the Lord's presence.

The Need for Practice and Exercise in Prayer

All believers and especially those pursuing a ministry of the gospel for Christ's work should ask God to teach them how to pray. This requires frequent time set aside every day. George Mueller used prayer to support the purchase, maintenance, and operation of orphan houses in the 1800s. By the end of his life, he was responsible for more than 10,000 orphans' lives. He relied solely on prayer for all income and provisions, trusting God fully for his needs. He purposely refused to ask anyone for financial help, but rather trusted God in prayer. He did this as an experiment to prove to believers that God is faithful. Not only did he believe in prayer, but he practiced it

throughout his daily living even during times of financial recession and hardship. One particular time in his life, he became increasingly preoccupied and busy with practical matters. It would have been easy to reduce his prayer and fellowship with the Lord for a time in order to accomplish what needed done. On the contrary, his life principle was to rise early every morning for an hour of solitary prayer, but when his schedule became too demanding, he rose an hour earlier to spend 2 hours in prayer! He truly experienced that prayer is spiritual breathing.

We will not learn to pray simply by reading a book, listening to lectures, and talking about it. We will gain nothing without exercise, without practice. You may listen to a professor of music for a year playing the most beautiful music, but that will not teach you to play. You would need to practice and exercise your gift to learn how to play beautifully. Beware of meditating on beautiful thoughts about prayer, taking care to have beautiful Scriptural truths about prayer, and speaking to others about the need and value of prayer. Do you manifest a life of prayer in the Spirit? Do you practice actually praying without ceasing and increase prayer during the times of more rigorous and challenging activity?

Romans 8:22-26 lay a solid foundation for learning how to pray, **“For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.”** Paul says throughout creation there is a groan of suffering and crying for deliverance to God and not only this creation is groaning but **“We ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of the body.”** Then, verses 26-27 unveil four precious thoughts about prayer.

1. We are ignorant and do not know how to pray.
2. The Holy Spirit is our helper in prayer.
3. The Holy Spirit prays for us not always in words or thoughts that we can understand, but with unutterable groanings and longings that cannot be expressed.
4. God, who searches the heart, finds out what the mind of the Spirit is who always prays according to God's will and God gives us the answer.

²⁶In 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 words that cannot be uttered (wordless groans). ²⁷And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people according to the will of God.

1. We are Ignorant and Do Not Know How to Pray.

Ignorance is an overused rationale to excuse improper or unacceptable behavior. Sometimes, ignorance is based on insufficient knowledge and growth in life, but often it is due to our hardness of heart and our disobedience to the Lord (Hebrews 3-4). Many Christians avoid confrontation and change because they choose to be ignorant. God's word was written to remove our ignorance and leave us without excuse when we fall short of His glory. Throughout the Bible the phrase, "**Do not be ignorant**" or "**I do not want you to be ignorant**" is used (Romans 11:25; 1 Corinthians 12:1; 2 Corinthians 1:8, 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). It is important to recognize our ignorance, confess it, and repent to the Lord and to each other for it. The first step in effectual prayer is to know our ignorance.

Pride in Prayer

Many Christians have the idea that they know how to pray. This is a natural, self-centered thought. They claim that their parents taught them to pray, their minister taught them to pray, or another influential person taught them to pray. They most likely think that everyone else who is a Christian can pray also. The Pharisee in Luke 18:12-14 thought he was a godly man of prayer. Yet, it was the sinner, the tax collector, who beat his breast and wouldn't even look to heaven because of his humiliation and shame, who asked God to have mercy on him. Jesus said that the Pharisee was self-justified, but the humble, ignorant sinner was justified before God. 1 Corinthians 8:1-2 tells us that **knowledge puffs up, ... and if we think we know anything**, in this case we think we know how to pray, **we have not yet come to know as we ought to know**. What is worse is the false thought that our prayer has been effective all of the past years. Combine 1 Corinthians 8:2 with Galatians 6:3 and Romans 12:3 and you will find that God says, "**If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.**" "**We should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but think so as to be sober minded as God has apportioned a measure of faith to each one.**" There is nothing that we can think, say, or do that is well-pleasing to God in ourselves. Apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:4-5). It is a natural, fleshly thought that we know how to pray just because we accepted Jesus into our heart.

How do you assess whether your prayer is effective or not in God's eyes? The first thing about spiritual prayer is a deep sense of ignorance, repentance, and seeking before the Lord. If you have not fallen on your face before God in prayer, then you do not know how to pray. Without the realization that we cannot pray as we ought, we do not know what prayer is, we cannot comprehend the privilege to boldly walk into the presence of a Holy and Righteous God nor to know what His will is, then, we have not begun to learn how to pray in the Spirit. We should ask ourselves, Do I know how to take hold of God and hold Him fast? Do I know how to take hold of His strength? Do I know what full fellowship and communion with God is? These questions need to be answered in the Lord's presence. Therefore, it requires us to sit still until we sense His holy presence. At that juncture, we

will quickly sense how unprepared we are to pray and how we have gone our own way until that moment. The Lord's light is bright and shines without regard to our petty feelings and strong self-life.

Most people, not just Christians, pray. Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and even atheists pray. Almost everyone prays when they have a need that is bigger than their own ability to satisfy it. People pray for many things, but do they know what they need most? Believers can begin with the proper thought — Lord, deliver me from pride and self-will — yet, they are ignorant that the Lord wants to remove their pride and will use suffering as the agent (Hebrews 12:4-11). In the past, I prayed for God to deliver me from pride, which is always a good prayer. Yet, rarely did I see myself as God sees me in my self-life. Therefore, I was never truly convicted of my pride and did not experience overcoming victory. Others could see my lack of love and Christ-like graces.

Praying in Faith Versus Presumption

Prayer is not a matter of a list of items, wishes, or demands we compiled, but prayer is a deep consciousness of our ignorance. If we ourselves know how to pray and for what to pray, why do we need the Spirit? What a wonderful blessing to come to the Lord in ignorance, seeking the Holy Spirit's help in prayer. This blessed ignorance is one of the most remarkable elements of faith. Abraham left his country and relatives not knowing where he was sent by God. It was a beautiful ignorance, and it was designed to teach him to trust God. Two of the Lord's disciples came to ask Jesus to allow them to sit at His right hand of the throne of God in His kingdom. The Lord responded, "**You do not know what you are asking.**" (Matthew 20:22) The disciples' prayer was foolish and presumptuous and the Lord immediately told them that they did not know what they were asking, implying that they had no business asking for such a thing. How often do we ask the Lord Jesus for things which are far from His will? Too often.

Another example of presumptuous prayer is when we ask to follow the Lord wholeheartedly, or to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or some other grandiose prayer of consecration, yet, we have no idea what we are praying for. Immediately the Lord sends trials, difficulties, and all kinds of hardships to answer our prayer, and we end up murmuring and shrinking back (Matthew 7:24-27; Hebrews 10:39). Saints, it is of the utmost importance that we know what we are praying for in the light of the Lord's presence. All of our prayers must begin with a sense of deep ignorance. Paul said, "**No man knows the things of God but the Spirit of God**" (1 Corinthians 2:11). No one knows what is in God's heart or what God is thinking about any more than we know what is in another person's heart. We cannot tell what is in the mind of God, only the Spirit of God knows. Therefore, do not follow a prayer manual or a prayer book with prayers for all occasions, but learn by spending time in the Lord's presence. Allow yourself to be taught by the Spirit of God to pray as He wants you to pray, becoming in harmony with the will of God (Ephesians 5:17). The Holy Spirit cannot teach you until all your self-conceit and self-confidence is purged away and you get broken down into a lowly state in which you cry, "Lord, I know nothing. I ask You to teach me to have a meek and quiet spirit before You first, and then before others. I am ignorant of Your will and wait for You to enlighten me."

2. The Holy Spirit is Our Helper in Prayer

Prayer Comes Out of the Triune God

What a blessed thought that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, and that He prays in us. We are believers in the Holy Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father — sits upon the throne as God Almighty, Omniscient, and Omnipresent — He is the source of all eternal things. The Son — sits on the Father’s right hand as Mediator and Intercessor — He lives always to pray (Hebrews 7:25). The Son in His glory, on one hand, is seated at the Father’s right hand, meaning that His work of redemption on the cross is complete. On the other hand, the Son of God stands and walks among the lampstands interceding, praying as His most important work on our behalf (Revelation 1:12-20). His purpose in standing in the presence of God as the Lamb that was slain is to pray unceasingly, and that is the reason He can save to the uttermost because **“He lives always to intercede for us, to pray for us.”** Christ is the King in glory, but His highest work is prayer, and His prayer is an incense (Psalms 141:2; Revelation 8:4) that continually goes up to the Father as a stream of intercession. The Son of God prays unceasingly, so, it makes sense that when we are one with Him, we will also pray unceasingly (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18).

It is the role of the Holy Spirit — who proceeds out from the Father — to guide us into reality (John 16:13). In other words, the Spirit is in the heart of the believer to teach them how to abide in Christ (1 John 2:20, 27) firstly through revelation, then, through repentance, confession, and obedience, and onto transformation and conformation to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). The Spirit is the conduit of the Triune God. The Father on the throne gives, the Son at His right hand accomplished all and now prays without ceasing for us to receive and assimilate all the Father gives, and the Spirit operates in our heart to dispense and impart all that the Son is and does into us, primarily teaching us to pray in perfect harmony with God and Christ. The Lord prayed in the garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion, **“That they (His disciples) may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us.”** (John 17:21) This describes organic prayer in which we are always in Him and He in us in all we think, say, and do!

Denying the Self in Prayer

What a wonderful existence in the Triune God (John 14:20; 17:21)! Yet, we fall so short of experiencing it. Why? The greatest enemy or hindrance to prayer is the self-life, bringing with it a self-will, self-confidence, and self-satisfaction based on pride. We imagine in our self that we know how to pray. Therefore, we do not wait for the Holy Spirit to teach us and bring us into the reality of all that Christ is and all that the Father desires; and we lose or diminish all the wonderful gifts He could reveal to us. The self does not believe in Jesus Christ in faith so it does not sense our ignorance, which should drive us to fall on our face before our

loving Father in the name of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Instead, we eventually realize in the self that we do not know how to pray and that our prayer is ineffective in relation to God's will. We become discouraged and basically stop praying because we are defeated. One example is of a brother whose mother had cancer. He prayed and prayed for her to live, but eventually she passed away. His prayer life after that dwindled to almost non-existent. Saints, when the self is discouraged and defeated, that is the very best time to go to a private place and pray. When the self prays so superficially and easily, there is an abundance of human feeling and human words, but a great lack in the power of the Holy Spirit. Can we learn to deny the self, take up our cross, and follow the Lord (Matthew 16:24) in relation to prayer? When you feel you cannot pray, that is the optimal time to deny the self and sit before God and pray. We take the cross to quiet the self and wait for the Lord to come and abide with us. We will not know how to pray, but the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and prays in us. By faith we believe in the Spirit's operation. This is the beginning of allowing the Holy Spirit to take charge of our whole life and dwell in our hearts (Romans 8:9-11).

Learning Silence Before the Lord

The Spirit works effectively and was sent as our helper. However, we must get out of the way, we must allow the self to be set aside or crossed out. The self does not acknowledge that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. Practically speaking, then, how can we begin the spiritual process of prayer? We begin by finding a solitary place to pray alone and we must learn to always silence the self, allowing plenty of silent time to wait on the Lord's prompting or speaking. It is a solemn matter to exercise power on earth to ask for heavenly blessings upon myself and others (Matthew 6:9-10). Therefore, we must learn silence before God. The Psalmist said it best, "**Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.**" (Psalm 46:10) The self does not hesitate to "barge into God's presence" because it always seeks to exalt itself, asserting its rights. True prayer is a humbling experience in which we realize that it is God who is the exalted One and He is to be praised. We must humbly seek His face in order for faith to initiate in our spirit so we can hear the Lord in order to obey Him. Without faith, there is no pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6) especially in prayer. Consider what prayer really is: it is an engagement with the Three-One God Who Created all good things, the One Who knows all, and the One Who is all and in all! (Colossians 3:11) As we deny the self, we will learn to be quiet, lowly, and meek (Matthew 11:28-30), allowing the Holy Spirit to pray in us. The Holy Spirit will do it. The Father has given His Spirit for this purpose: to pray in us.

The Psalmist often ended a poem or verse with the term, "Selah." "Selah" means to measure or weigh in the balance, to consider, to take a breath (as in playing an instrument), and to pause with a view of praise. Prayer should include many "Selahs" or "breath-taking" pauses with a view to praise. We wait in silence and get some feeling from the Spirit and then pray. Once we pray what the Spirit imparted into our hearts, we are quiet again, allowing our heart to calm down and be subdued by the Spirit until we enter into the faith that the Holy Spirit is imparting into us. The Holy Spirit is our teacher and helper in prayer. When we feel ignorant and helpless, we are willing to pray in this way.

Recognizing How the Self Hinders Prayer

We tend to ask others for help in prayer. Many have lost the joy of prayer because they do not sense the Spirit's working in them and praying in them. The ultimate self-effort cannot conjure this up. The process of life in the Spirit has never changed from the time prior to believing in the Lord to after we are regenerated. We still need to trust in Jesus by faith. We need to pray in faith. When we have no inclination to pray, when our heart is very cold, when we feel so defeated, or when we feel we have too little time or heart to pray, that is the ideal time to look away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). It is the best opportunity to confess to the Lord that our heart is cold, distant, or preoccupied. We come forward to Him by faith and in His blood to touch His heart of love, and to lay down our feeble self-life. As we abide in His presence He will meet us, and the Spirit will teach us to trust and to pray. The Holy Spirit is given to help our weakness!

The self-life is so easily deceived especially by emotions. People may "feel" that when the Holy Spirit comes and teaches them to pray there will be a great, burning rush of "feeling" and they will pray such beautiful prayers in some rapturous state. Feelings may indeed stir and help you, but more times than not, feelings are superficial and leave us discouraged and lacking the Lord's presence. Remember, people get emotionally stirred up at athletic events to the point that they make fools of themselves, yet feel it is "normal." We can seek to do the same thing in prayer and it has little value. Whether we "feel it or not", "**The Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered!**" And the Spirit loves to do this. When we come to the Lord in our ignorance, denying the self so we remain silent before Him, our mind cannot run away and occupy itself with all kinds of thoughts that hinder the Holy Spirit's working in us. He, then, can go deeper than our thoughts and minds into our heart and He prays there with groanings, with longings, that cannot be expressed in words. He gives us a deep, inexpressible yearning, a deep thirst for God and for God's glory.

The self cherishes our minds, our intellects, and our thoughts. It wants to understand everything, and to know everything. It is common for people to listen to a sermon or some profound truth and appreciate it to the point of telling others and meditating on it. But the self must be denied or the truth cannot dwell in our heart and there is no evidence of a life change or manifestation of that truth in our daily lives. It is like a blind man who was taught about the sun, about light, and about color. He may become so knowledgeable and may be able to accurately lecture others on these things. But even the most ignorant man who has seen the sun knows more because his knowledge is reality based on actual experience. Too many people know a great deal about prayer, but it does not help them to pray spiritually. We need our hearts filled with the Holy Spirit so He can bring us into the life of Spirit-filled prayer.

What a Spirit!

If we truly believe that the Holy Spirit alone can teach us to pray, we will constantly confess that we pray in the flesh (self) and propagate vain prayers, which can be considered babblings or the multiplicity of words (Matthew 6:1-18). We will gladly run to the Lord as the Spirit, our Blessed Teacher, seeking Him to live and breathe in us that we may know how to pray according to God. We will begin to know the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of prayer just as we are learning that He dwells in us as the Spirit of holiness (Romans 1:4), as the Spirit of power for work, as the Spirit of love, as the Spirit that brings to us all the exceedingly great and precious promises of God (2 Peter 1:4), as the Spirit of fellowship (Philippians 2:1; 2 Corinthians 13:14) that grants us access to God, and as the Spirit of intercession Who gives us boldness and power to know God's heart and will.

3. The Holy Spirit prays for us not always in words or thoughts that we can understand, but with unutterable groanings and longings that cannot be expressed.

The Holy Spirit intercedes within us. He prays within us and for us in words and feelings that are as unutterable groanings. After Paul speaks of Him as the Spirit of intercession for all saints, he says He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:27). Previously, in 8:23, **“For the whole creation groans,”** meaning that the animals and plants throughout the world, the millions of organisms around us, are all groaning for a different state of things, namely freedom from corruption and death. And not only so, but **“We ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of the body.”** (8:24) Paul says, believers should look forward to the full redemption of their bodies, when the body shall be redeemed and made like Christ's glorious body, and all believers are gathered into one. Creation groans for its universal redemption, the Spirit groans not only for the individual but also for the united redemption of all saints. There is a great groaning in creation and a great groaning by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, and these are things we cannot pray for as we ought, but God hears the unutterable groanings of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit makes intercession in us for all saints. Spirit-filled prayer is most often directed away from ourselves to others. It is our highest privilege as priests of God to be intercessors (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; John 14:12-14). Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another, and so fulfill the law of Christ completely (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13). Bearing others includes intercession, and this is precious in the sight of God (James 5:16-20)! Consider the importance or impotence of our prayer life. Do we really think praying for people in our neighborhood, at work, at school, in China, Africa, or England, can actually stir the Almighty Everlasting God into action by our prayer that He would not have done if we had not prayed? When we pray according to self, God is not obligated to answer or move, but when we allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, causing us to deny the self, then His prayer in us is from God and God will answer. There are many verses in the New Testament that show a direct relationship between our prayer and God answering us:

¹⁹Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father Who is in the heavens. (Matthew 18:19)

²²And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.” (Matthew 21:22)

²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. (Mark 11:24)

¹³Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:13)

⁷If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it will be done for you. ... You did not choose Me, but I chose you and I set you that you should go forth and bear much fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. (John 15:7, 16)

²³... Truly, truly, I say to you, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:23-24)

How is it that we pray and pray and pray without the realization that we pray improperly before the Lord? You ask, “How can you say such a thing!?” That is the wrong question to ask. The proper question to ask is, “Does God answer your prayers?” If not, then, you have not learned how to pray before Him in a way that moves Him to action. You have not yielded yourself up to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of intercession, but have prayed according to the self. On the side of faith, think about the unfathomable impact of all believers in Christ denying the self and interceding for the church of God with the promise that whatever we ask in His name He will do! Wouldn’t we change the world? This shows how little we deny the self, how little we accept the responsibility God has placed on us for prayer, and how easy it is to sustain improper and impotent, non-effective prayer! Too often we pray according to mere formality or because it is the right thing to do or because it is our custom. God tells us to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and to persevere in prayer (Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2). Yet, Some Christians deny our ability to move God’s hand through prayer. They claim that God is sovereign and does not need us. That thought is the self. On the contrary, God has placed the responsibility of praying and taking hold of Him on all of His children. He has told us not to let Him go (Luke 18:1-8) and has given us wonderful promises to sustain us (2 Peter 1:4). Deny the self to sit quietly before the Lord, waiting and listening, in order to pray according to the Spirit’s leading and according to the heart of God. If we will give ourselves to intercession in the Spirit according to the mind and heart of God, God will bless. Pray for the church of Christ in your neighborhood, in your town, in your country, and around the world.

We need to intercede for God's people to live daily according to the Spirit. Paul says to the Ephesians (6:18-19), **“Praying always with all prayer and petition in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and petition for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me.”** The Holy Spirit is not a selfish Spirit. Surely, we will pray for the one Spirit and one body the Lord desires (Ephesians 4:1-6). You complain about the degradation of the world, or about how someone has wronged you at work, but do you go to God and cry, “Lord, build your church and gain my heart to love other people?” The fruit of the Spirit is love which produces one Spirit and one body. The more we pray in the Spirit, the more we will love and pray for others. May God make all of us men and women of intercession filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, for this our highest and holiest work: to intercede for all saints.

4. God, who searches the heart, finds out what the mind of the Spirit is Who always prays according to God's will and God gives us the answer.

Romans 8:27 unveils a wonderful promise, **“He that searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”** What does this verse mean? First, it is God Who searches our heart. Second, God the Father and God the Spirit are one, sharing the same mind, the same understanding, the same intentions. Third, the Spirit intercedes for us according to God's will. It is possible that you never realized how much God is actively involved in your life especially related to prayer. God searches our hearts and knows all things (1 John 3:20; Hebrews 4:13; Psalms 139). We, on the other hand, are limited in our knowledge of ourselves and everything (1 Corinthians 13:12; Matthew 19:26; Mark 13:32;). Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:11, **“For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God.”**

The Human Spirit

The human spirit is our innermost organ for us to contact God, receive God, contain God, and assimilate God into our entire being as our life and our everything. It is **“the lamp of God, searching all the inward parts.”** (Proverbs 20:27) Man has three major parts, a body (physical), a soul (mind, will, emotion), and a spirit (conscience, intuition, fellowship), and all three, the spirit, the soul, and the body are mentioned as needing sanctification and preservation by God Himself (1 Thessalonians 5:23). **“God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and reality”** or truth (John 4:24). In other words, in order to sense God, recognize God, interact with God, and work for God, we must use our human spirit. John also said, **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”** (3:6). Spiritual matters involve our spirit. Paul wrote a blessing in 2 Timothy 4:22, **“The Lord be with your spirit.”** The term ‘spirit,’ *pneuma* in Greek, means breath, and **God breathed the “breath of life”** into man (Genesis 2:7). This was the creation of the human spirit.

Allowing God to Search

Few people, even among Christians, acknowledge or utilize their spirit in relation to God. This means that few people contact God, receive God, contain God, and assimilate God in reality. Without the spirit, we cannot possibly discern anything spiritual or of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). This is why we spent so much time discussing the self in previous messages, because when we do not interact with God using our spirit, then, by default, our self-life is leading us. All people must be enlightened by the Spirit, repent for living according to self, confess before God and man, and seek out the Holy Spirit by means of their human spirit. Those of us who have acknowledged our spirit, must allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse our spirit (Hebrews 9:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Psalms 51:10; 1 John 1:7-10; 1 Peter 3:21) so it can be pure before the Lord. There are many Bible verses that indicate the need to have a good or pure conscience, our conscience being the leading part of our human spirit (1 Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9; 1 Peter 3:16; Acts 24:16; 2 Timothy 1:3). Without the Spirit's sanctifying work, our spirit will be influenced by and most often overruled by the self.

We mentioned Proverbs 20:27, the spirit is **“the lamp of God, searching all the inward parts.”** God as the Spirit searches our hearts as a beacon or lamp to expose, unveil, uncover, discover, and brighten. Without this light from God, we cannot know what is deep within our being. Paul alludes to “veils” that cover and block our hearts from understanding, from perceiving, from pursuing God's interest and will (2 Corinthians 3:16-18). Therefore, the vast majority of words and thoughts that we have do not and cannot truly or fully know what God's will is or even what is hidden at the bottom of our heart. Our spirit is always operational, however, even when we are apart from the Lord. Solomon wrote a profound statement in Ecclesiastes 3:11, **“God has set eternity in the heart of man.”** This means that God reaches out to all men through their spirit, the deepest part of their heart. This explains why even unbelievers can sense God or sense “a supreme being” or sense right and wrong in certain situations. God as the Spirit is sanctifying people, moving in their heart to bring them to Himself (1 Peter 1:2). People need to decide what to do about this and unfortunately, most deny the Lord (John 3:17-21).

Believers, sons of God, should have the exercise and practice to repent, confess, and follow the Lord whenever He prompts or leads us (2 Corinthians 10:5c; Romans 8:14; 1 John 1:7-10). And this applies to our prayer life as well. God goes deep into our heart and knows what the Holy Spirit is praying. The mind of the Spirit always prays according to the will of God. When we touch the mind of the Spirit, we touch the will of God (Ephesians 5:17). When we pray according to the will of God, He will answer! (Matthew 18:19; Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; John 14:13; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24)

My beloved friends, it is a solemn thing to pray. Let us all set aside much time to practice prayer in the Spirit, and every time focus on yielding ourselves up to the Holy Spirit, saying to Him that we set the very depths of our heart open to Him. As we allow Him to open our inmost being, to humble us and produce a patient, waiting, quiet heart, we can be made subject to Him. Then, and only

then, can the Lord transform us into a **vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared unto every good work** (2 Timothy 2:21). The greatest work of God in our lives is prayer, intercession, according to His will, in which He lives and works Himself into our being, making His desires our desires and His will our will, and He works in others based on our prayer! We pray in the Spirit and the Spirit prays in us. We are one (John 17:21). May all of us learn the blessed privilege of intercession in the power of the Holy Spirit. May all of us know the joy of having God search our hearts and answer us abundantly according to what the Spirit is uttering. May all of us know what it is to cry to God with unutterable and unceasing longings “for all saints,” that He might indeed visit and revive His people.