

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

(ROMANS 8:26-27)

Too many Christians today think of prayer with a feeling of guilt and reproach. Prayer is looked upon by most as a burden rather than a blessing. Many indulge in prayer only when in desperate need or in times of public worship. Prayerlessness is looked upon as a weakness, rather than a sin, and many excuses are often found to justify this weakness. There are many that secretly conceal an aversion to prayer and hold that many of their prayers have not been answered. This causes them to harbour a secret resentment, even though never uttered, against God. To too many, prayer has been a disappointment, and therefore indulged in less and less. Others continue praying with extreme exertion and constantly force themselves to utter repetitions believing it their duty to God and man. Instead of a joyful communion between two deeply in love, it becomes a means to obtain ones needs or a fuel for the fires of religious egotism.

Prayer means many things to many people. Most people pray in one form or another and many will fervently avow that there is power in prayer.

The reason for most of these erroneous concepts of prayer is the ignorance of the Spirit of prayer. The Holy Spirit is understood more clearly in His seven-fold manifestation. John refers to the seven-fold Holy Spirit in Revelation 5:6, as the seven Spirits of God. "...and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." One of these seven Spirits is, "*the Spirit of grace and Supplication,*" (ZECK 12:10) or the Spirit of prayer. Without the influence of the Holy Spirit, prayer is impossible. "*They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*" (JOHN 4:24) The text says, "*We know not how to pray as we ought.*" (ROM 8:26) The Spirit of prayer is one of the greatest needs in Christendom today.

The coldness and indifference that is prevalent in the Church in general today, is proof of the absence of the Spirit of prayer. In many instances the "church" is begetting children born of the flesh who know nothing by actual experience of the new birth. The present day Church for the most part knows nothing of the "*groanings which cannot be uttered*" (ROM 8:26) or the power of prayer in the Spirit that marked the early church. Without the influence of the Spirit of prayer we cannot expect spiritual fruit nor useful converts in the Kingdom. Have you ever wondered why converts seem so powerless and manifest so little of the Spirit of Christ? It is simple because the Spirit has not had the liberty to fully cleanse and break them in humility before God. The Word is not allowed to come forth in the power of the Spirit and so many gain a hope before they have really fully submitted to the entire will of God. Submission is not pressed and their duty before God is not fully made clear. When the sinner comes into an atmosphere charged with the power of prayer, the secrets of his heart is made known and the Spirit does a complete work in his heart. I have seen a person find Christ in five minutes who had entered a Spirit filled prayer meeting who had attended church regularly for almost forty years and had not found salvation. It is the Holy Spirit that wields the Word until it convicts and convinces of sin. It is the message that is conceived in the upper room of prayer that will transform lives and bring about the new birth. As in the natural there is pain that accompanies a natural birth, so in the spirit, without the travail of the Spirit, there can be little accomplished. Neither positive thinking nor talented programs can take the place of the Spirit of prayer.

The great depth of the ministry of prayer in the life of the Apostle Paul, caused him to become a powerful minister of the Gospel in the conversion of many souls. With conviction he could say, "*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,*" (GAL 4:19)

It is written, "*When Zion travailed, then she brought forth her children.*" (ISA 6:8) The generation that is filling many pews today is a generation born of the bondwomen and of the flesh! "*But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.*" (GAL 4:29) Unless the Holy Spirit guides the message and the minister, flesh will produce flesh, no matter how handsome or cultured it may seem.

The Holy Spirit wields a sword, not a feather to tickle the ears of the hearers!

The Holy Spirit is as a consuming fire, not the air-conditioned spiritual temperature of many of our churches!

The great success of men such as Moody and Finney is attributed largely to the fearlessness of their

preaching and the Spirit of prayer that dwelt upon them. More can be accomplished through the prayer of the Spirit than this world dreams of.

God has no grandchildren, only sons and daughters conceived by the unadulterated Word of God and begotten of the Holy Spirit!

The Church has lost so much of the Spirit of prayer until sin can sit comfortably in the front pew and feel no pangs of conscious. There are many sinners today that hold high positions in the Church, and are respected by their fellow members but who have never once been brought face to face with their sins! The power of prayer that emanated from the upper room on the day of Pentecost caused the Jews of Israel to cry out, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" (ACTS 2:37)

The Holy Spirit grips the conscious until the convicted sinner can almost feel the flames of hell kindling upon his feet and he will wither yield to the claims of God or be lost. When the Spirit of prayer is poured out in the Church, its fire will burn up the dross and perfect holiness and the fear of the Lord.

WHY HAS THE CHURCH LOST THIS SPIRIT OF PRAYER AND HOW CAN SHE REGAIN IT?

The first step toward having the Spirit of prayer is to receive the initial Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Too many have been fooled into thinking they have received the Holy Spirit at conversion, or because they have been told they have, and possess no evidence of it in their daily lives. As previously explained in the first chapter, the evidence of the Baptism is the speaking in a supernatural language as the Spirit gives utterance. Speaking in other tongues TOGETHER with the fruits of a Spirit filled life, is proof of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Tongues alone can be as the tinkling symbol and sounding brass unless the Holy Spirit has indwelt the life and will of the Christian. I have seen the Spirit of Prayer come upon some immediately prior to the infilling with the Holy Spirit, but the general rule is to enjoy His presence following a deep consecration.

Secondly, to enjoy the Spirit of prayer we must spend much time in prayer. Marthas are much more common than Marys. God has many servants that are always seemingly busy working FOR Him, but so few have learned the secret of sitting at His feet. The lessons learned thusly in secret will teach us to work WITH Him, so that each effort will reap a spiritual harvest and not merely expend energy. Prayerlessness is one of the greatest sins of the Church, and because so little time is spent with God, we lack the blessings of His Spirit leading us out in prayer for the lost. We should not confuse praying, with the Spirit of prayer, because they are not the same. We can pray without praying in the Spirit, even though we cannot pray without the influence of the Holy Ghost. Let me try to clarify this statement. Paul states, "*I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*" (1 COR 14:15) Praying in the Spirit is the prayer of the Holy Spirit praying for and in us while our understanding is unfruitful. The reason the Spirit "*helpeth our infirmities*" is because we "*know not how to pray as we ought.*" The Holy Spirit knows what is the mind of God and also understands the existing need and therefore prays through us accordingly. This prayer can be either in unknown tongues, or when very deep, it is expressed in groanings and sighs too deep for words. We are admonished to pray both with the understanding and also in the Spirit. Each is necessary, and when together, create a powerful force that can move men and mountains.

The Holy Spirit's influence also leads our minds at times to pray according to the will of God. If God strongly lays a burden of prayer on your mind and heart, we can reasonably ascertain that it is His will to concede the answer. At such times the understanding is fruitful and we are praying effectually through the influence of the Holy Spirit. We can reasonably conclude that the Spirit of prayer is given because of our human weaknesses to help us to pray according to the will of God: That it may be a prayer in the spirit unknown to the mind; and that both the mind and the spirit may be aware of the need. We are exhorted to, "*Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*" (EPH 6:18)

TO HAVE THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER WE MUST BE SOBER AND GRAVE

The Spirit of Christ is always occupied in the things that pertain to the Kingdom. The spirit of foolishness and levity that characterizes the world should have no place among the children of God. "*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.*" (EPH 5:4) "*Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*" (1PET 4:7) The condition of lost souls is a serious matter and requires serious thought. If our minds are exercised about the heathen and the lost around us, we will be grave and not given to foolish and light chatter. Christians who are very loose in their conversation have little or no concern for the lost, and therefore their minds are far from the mind of Christ. How can the possibly enjoy the spirit's influence or walk together when they are not agreed?

I believe Christ was a man full of joy and yet I cannot picture Him engaging in frivolities nor idle pastimes when the lost were perishing around Him. He was constantly inspired by the Spirit of God that led Him to groan and cry and weep for the lost and dying world. Think a moment of the prophets and you will understand the gravity of the Spirit of God. Come into the prayer closet with Jeremiah and hear him cry, *“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”* (JER 9:1) As in days of old, God is putting a mark upon *“those that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in Jerusalem.”* (EZEK 9:4)

A person with the Spirit of prayer will be infinitely more useful than a hundred cold carnal professors of Christianity without the Spirit. Even though at times you will be burdened and concerned for the great need of the world and the Church, yet you will enjoy the strength of the joy of the Lord in your innermost being. Happiness is subject to circumstances, but joy is a fruit and product of the Holy Spirit.

God is seeking for intercessors that will stand in the gap and avert disaster and judgment. For every soul born into the Kingdom, someone had to pray. If you are wise you will win souls and have an eternal reward. *“They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”* (DAN 12:3) Do not pray only for your friends or relatives but be unselfish in your praying and intercede for those who have never heard the Gospel and you will soon enjoy a burden of intercessory prayer for their salvation. In visiting many churches I cannot help notice the selfishness of many prayers that are so wrapped up in their own personal needs and seldom reach out to the unreached. We cannot have the Spirit of prayer unless we love the lost with a passion. The Comforter is also the Spirit of intercession. He that is the Spirit of truth will also lead you into the prayer of faith. Allow the many fold operation of the Holy Spirit full liberty in your prayers.

Our heavenly High Priest is now seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us. Will you not share this great burden and allow the Holy Spirit to use you in the greatest ministry known to man? You can redeem the lost, you can snatch them from the burning fires of hell, you can avert disaster to our country and upon the heathen! Pray always, pray with understanding, and pray with the Spirit. We are responsible for all the good we are capable of doing. Let us not be found guilty of the blood of the lost because we would not take the time to pray. We can pray without loving, but we cannot love without praying.

In the prayer of the Spirit you will not need to utter many words. Most people do entirely too much talking when they pray. He will pray through you. Yield to His influence, obey His leading, and if you are not hardened or harbour sin in your life, you will soon feel the power of the Spirit rising up within you in search of the lost.

The call of the shepherd for the lost, the groan of the father for the prodigal, the pain of the mother waiting to be delivered; all this and more you will experience in the prayer of the Spirit. The joy of the conqueror in triumph, the joy of mother in her new-born, the satisfaction of the surgeon in saving a life; all this and infinitely more you will feel when you pray through. Amen.