

The Book of Ephesians Ephesians 6:18-20

Session 87: Notetaker

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| Fig. 1 | Prayer that is “in the Spirit” |
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Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

This week we have prepared ourselves by reading and praying your word here in Ephesians 6. Like our apostle prayed for us, we pray that the eyes of our understanding will be enlightened. We pray to be conformed to the image of Your Son as we put this doctrine into practice. We now give our full attention to the study before us. As an assembly, may we encourage one another to live the doctrine. Amen.

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:18-20

Session 87: Prayer and Armor of God, Part 4

Last week we talked about what prayer “in the Spirit” is not. Today, we will talk about what it is.

Ephesians 6:18 **Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit**, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

As we do this, I want to approach the definition of what it means to pray “in the Spirit” from two standpoints. First of all, if you are relatively new to our studies, then the first part of the study today is for you. It will be a good reminder for those who have been with us since our study in Romans.

Secondly, if you are already praying with these things in mind, I want to take you beyond the basics to the “breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of praying in the Spirit. So, the second part of the study today will help us see the apostle Paul’s prayer for us (the saints) actualized.

Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ **May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;** ¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Paul has several requests in this passage. The one I am after is in verse 18. The obvious question of verse 18 is: “The breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of what? Paul doesn’t say because he wants us to fill in the blank, so to speak; to know the fullness of every doctrine which is meant to work in us. Prayer would certainly be among those. So, in the more advanced section of the lesson, we are going to talk about the breadth, length, depth and height of prayer that is “in the Spirit.”

So, let's start with the fundamentals of prayer that is "in the Spirit." Praying in the Spirit is prayer with a **godly motive**.

Ask yourself what is driving you to pray the way you are praying. Why are we asking God for...whatever we are asking for? Is it out of our love for God? Is it out of love for others? Is it out of obedience to the doctrine? Is this to bring glory to God? Is this to exalt the Lord Jesus? If our motive is found in more worldly motivations, then we consider if these are true issues of prayer.

Very closely related to this is our purpose. Prayer which is "in the Spirit" has a godly goal/purpose.

We ask ourselves if our prayer is for the accomplishment of our will or God's will. Is this for my own spiritual benefit and edification? Does this build my inner man? Am I obeying the doctrine? Is my prayer for the spiritual benefit of others? Will the accomplishment of my prayer be in line with God's revealed will? This means, can I find it in the scriptures. Don't conjecture, "I think it is God's will for me to...whatever;" can you find it in the scriptures which apply to you?

Again, if our purpose is the accomplishment of worldly ambitions, this would not be prayer which is "in the Spirit." But, if it is for the spiritual benefit of some other member of the body of Christ (BoC), or for ourselves, then this would be prayer which is "in the Spirit."

Sometimes believers attempt to legitimize their worldly ambitions by praying for God to bless them, which is code for "give me what I want." We can't disguise our self-centered pursuits with religious language and think that God won't notice. If our desires are truly God's desires, then we can find them in His word.

As we look at the doctrine in Paul's epistles to discover what God wants and then we talk with our Father about our involvement in bringing that to pass, then we are praying in the Spirit. In the Christian culture of today, this is often not the way prayer happens.

For example, the prayer, "Lord, bless my business" actually means, "Lord, make me prosperous." Instead, how about prayer that is about how our business can reflect God's purposes in work, "Father, I pray that my business will manifest a

picture of, and prepare me for, the labor I will engage in with You, in eternity. May I conduct this business in such a way, that those who work here will develop a servant's heart toward You and to each other. I pray that we will all glorify You as we learn to work as "unto the Lord."

This is praying in the Spirit about our work because it recognizes what God wants to do. But, it is not enough to simply pray the prayer. There also has to be a plan of what you will do to bring this request to pass, and that should be a part of your continued prayer.

Prayer that is "in the Spirit" is only personal in the sense of edification and to effect the doctrine into our daily living.

A prayer which is "in the Spirit" is a prayer that is oriented to this **dispensation of grace** (and not God's prophetic program with Israel). That means that it pertains to the members of the body of Christ, (and not to national Israel). That means that it is according to grace, (and not the Law). Prayer that is dispensational is in line with the doctrines contained in Paul's epistles.

Just because a prayer is in the Bible does not mean that it is a prayer for us today. If it is a prayer which is dispensational, then it is a prayer for God to do spiritual work in our inner man, (and not for physical things). A dispensational prayer will pertain to the things of the mystery of Christ.

A prayer which is "in the Spirit," is a prayer that, depending upon the kind of prayer it is, meets the biblical requirements for that prayer to **be effectual**.

And now we are getting into the second, more advanced part of our study. When I say that prayer that is "in the Spirit" is effectual, I mean that the whole process of prayer is transforming us. When I say "the whole process," I mean every part, from forming and assembling our prayer consistent with the doctrine, to framing our requests so they are in line with God's revealed will, to actually praying the prayer, to engaging in bringing our request to fulfillment.

Before we go any further, I would like to warn us of a danger and then encourage us as to our advancement in the doctrine.

First, the warning: There is a natural tendency in this culture to seek for instant results. This is no secret, we have heard it before. But when it comes to prayer, there is no special formula we must follow and no spiritual shortcut we can take. We want to pray without building the relationship with our Father. We want to pray even though we are not too interested in knowing and obeying the doctrine that transforms us. Not because prayer is works based, but because prayer and the doctrine are connected. We pray, not knowing what God's revealed will is and wonder why our prayers are not answered. We want God to do things for us without surrendering our will. We want to pray without preparing and investing the time in learning how to pray.

Prayer is a part of sonship and it is a process, not an event.

We must learn to pray. Simply "winging it" is not good enough. The learning of how to pray takes time and effort and in the midst of that process, we are being transformed. Prayer that does not work to transform us spiritually is not effectual, and therefore is not "in the Spirit."

Now the good news of our advancement in the doctrine: Back in Romans 8 we were told that we do not know what we should pray for – which is why we needed to learn to pray.

Romans 8:26 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.

There is a time, as we get oriented to this dispensation of grace (DoG) we are living in, when we do not know what we should pray for. We may think we do, but we don't. It is true for everyone, not just the saints at Rome. The fact that Paul says, "as we ought" indicates that this lack of knowledge is not meant to be a permanent condition. We ought to know what to pray for. Until that time, the Spirit "helpeth our infirmities" by "making intercession for us."

But, by the time we get to Ephesians 6, we ought to be praying "in the Spirit." In other words, we ought to be praying in perfect accordance with how the Spirit would pray. And when we do, we no longer need Him to make intercession for us,

for we can now pray “as we ought.” What I am saying is that praying “in the Spirit” is a marker of our progression in prayer.

This is what I mean when I say that our prayer is to be effectual. I mean that not only have we learned to pray like the Spirit, but engaging in prayer is resulting in Christ being formed in us.

I have given examples of this back in Ephesians, sessions 83 and 84, for how a prayer of thanksgiving becomes effectual. For example, while you can say thank you for anything God has done for you, by a simple “thank you for...” the effectual working of that prayer really takes place when we specifically identify the work that Christ had to perform in order to obtain that for us, and by thinking about the necessity of us having that, and the value that it holds to us for God to have provided that particular thing (to name a few).

In other words, the effectual working of any kind of prayer is found in the details, not so much in the generalities. It is found in the time invested in the prayer, not in the length of the prayer itself. It is found in the process of creating our own prayer from God’s word, rightly divided. The more we know, the more we can appreciate and the more grateful we are, which in turn affects our relationship with God, making it more real and practical, while at the same time, increasing our love for God.

A prayer which is “in the Spirit” is a prayer that we construct with our mind by ordering our thoughts, and thinking through our petitions, with the **doctrine in mind**. This provides the **framework** of our prayers, and once we become familiar with this framework, the easier it is to attach the rest of prayer onto the frame and apply it to many situations.

In other words, there is a framework for a prayer of thanksgiving, another framework for responding to the doctrine for our own edification, another framework for praying for others, another framework for intercessory prayer, another framework for prayers in connection with ministry endeavors, etc. While I see the major elements of each framework in the scripture, and especially in Paul’s prayers, there is plenty of room for you to make your prayer yours.

Okay, this is what it means to pray “in the Spirit.” Now, let’s move down to the remainder of the verse.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,
and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

We have now arrived at Paul’s final exhortation. What is remarkable, though not surprising, is that after all the doctrine of this epistle, all the teaching in Ephesians, all the individual and whole church instructions given herein, Paul’s final word is about prayer. Many people do not anticipate this, and even when they see it, they don’t recognize the importance or necessity of it.

So, let’s examine this exhortation to pray. Firstly, it concerns prayer for ourselves, which we just looked at in verse 18a. Because of the context, Paul is talking to people who are engaged in the battle and have the armor of God in place. We are told to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We are told to stand against the devil, and to withstand in the evil day. We are told that our fight is against principalities and powers and even though we may be engaged in the battle, we can be renewed day by day in our inward man. And our prayers for ourselves should reflect these truths.

But now, in the last half of the verse, it is prayer for the saints, for they too will be involved in this fight. We face a common foe, and therefore we are subject to the same problems and difficulties. This is one of the reasons that meeting together as a church is important; to demonstrate that we are not alone in this conflict.

Generally, I think Paul means for us to pray for all the saints by the many forms of prayer which are available to us (all prayer), but more specifically, for the saints who are engaged in spiritual warfare and suffering the attacks of the policy of evil.

It is important that we take this seriously because, if we are “members one of another” as Paul says we are, then the failure of any of us has some effect on the whole body. Therefore, we must always think of ourselves in terms of being the church. We are not just individuals, but we are members of the church which is

the body of Christ. We have seen Paul talk about this three different times in this epistle.

Whether we know it or not, we are mutually interdependent. Nothing can happen to one of our fellow members without all of us being involved. If one of us fails, we all suffer because we are members of the same body.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and **watching thereunto with all perseverance** and supplication for all saints;

The watching is in reference to the other members of the body, especially in relation to the spiritual battle we are involved in. We are watching with all perseverance as we constantly take our fellow saints into consideration and pray for them. A few weeks back I asked you to pray for me, and some of you responded to that and sent me your prayer. Thank you for that.

Even the great apostle Paul requested the prayers of the Ephesians. It is in the next verse.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; ¹⁹ **And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,** ²⁰ For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein **I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

Paul, for all that he knows and for all he has done, is asking the Ephesians (who don't know what he knows, and have not gone through what he has gone through) to pray for him. He is not playing games with them; he really does need their prayers. And he is not generally asking them to pray, he is telling them exactly what to pray for him about. He is being specific. This is where we get the principle that when you are praying for someone, be specific and tell them what you are praying for.

Paul asked them to pray that he would open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel. It is for making known the mystery that Paul has landed in

prison. Even so, Paul does not ask for them to pray that he be set free from prison. Many think that Paul was sick at this time, but if he was, he does not ask for them to pray for his healing. He is asking for them to pray that he would speak the mystery boldly, as he ought to speak.

It may at first appear to be, but Paul's request is not for himself; it is for the propagation of the message of the mystery of Christ. Paul's request is not subjective. He is interested in one thing, the message of the mystery, or, as verse 19 says, "the gospel of the mystery." He has already explained this back in chapter 3 of this book.

Ephesians 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, ² If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: ³ **How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;** (as I wrote afore in few words, ⁴ Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) ⁵ Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶ **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:** ⁷ Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

The Mystery has now been revealed. The mystery of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the unsearchable riches of Christ; these are things which matter to Paul. The bold proclamation of these things is what Paul is asking the saints to pray for him about.

Paul is asking for them to pray for him that when an opportunity to proclaim the gospel of the mystery arises, that he will take advantage of that opportunity by declaring the message boldly. We should be praying this way for each other.

And it does take some courage to declare the whole counsel of God to people, just as Paul did in Acts 20.

Acts 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Now, let me give us one final qualification for this, which Paul talked about back in chapter 4.

Ephesians 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵ **But speaking the truth in love**, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: ¹⁶ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, **maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.**

Paul's complete prayer would be that while he would boldly proclaim the truth, he would speak the truth in love, resulting in the body's edifying of itself in love.

We pray to speak the truth; to speak it boldly, and to be motivated by love for those to whom we speak.

These last verses again demonstrate that Paul is not so concerned with himself as he is for others.

Ephesians 6:21 But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, **Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister** in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: ²² Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.

The scriptures mention Tychicus five times. He first appears at the end of Paul's work in Ephesus, so we surmise that he must have been a convert of Paul, while Paul was in Ephesus. Later, when Paul returned to Jerusalem where he would be arrested, Tychicus was one of the seven who accompanied Paul as traveling companions. Like Luke, Tychicus stayed with Paul through his journey to Rome, including his arrest and imprisonment in Cæsarea, his voyage and shipwreck on the way to Rome and his house arrest in Rome awaiting trial.

We believe that Tychicus was the scribe to which Paul dictated the letter to the Ephesians. Only here, at the end of the letter does Paul take the pen and write his

benedictions. The first one is about Tychicus. What Paul says about Tychicus in verse 21 tells us everything we need to know about this man. Paul says he is a “beloved brother.” Paul really loved this guy and that is no small thing. Then Paul goes on to say that Tychicus is a “faithful minister in the Lord.”

This is the man to whom Paul has given two duties: 1) to deliver the letter to the Ephesians along with letters to the Colossians, Philemon and a mysterious lost letter to the Laodiceans.

Colossians 4:16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and **that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.**

...and 2) to relay to the churches in Asia about Paul’s situation and how he was doing.

Paul second benediction is found in verses 23-24.

Ephesians 6:23 Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. WRITTEN FROM ROME UNTO THE EPHESIANS BY TYCHICUS.

In this final benediction, Paul has four final wishes for the church, which are, by extension, wishes for us all. We often do not realize it, but what we wish for others reveals a lot about us. What do we wish for our children or our close friends?

If these wishes can be categorized under headings like: education, profession or possessions, we are not thinking like Paul. Paul’s desires for the church center around four words which occur in an unusual order: peace, love, faith and grace.

Ephesians 6:23 Peace *be* to the brethren...

This “peace” comes in two flavors (so to speak), peace with God (Ephesians 2:14) through the Lord Jesus Christ (our initial reconciliation with God), and peace between the members of the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:15).

The second thing Paul wants for the body of Christ is love.

Ephesians 6:23 Peace *be* to the brethren, **and love...**

Love shows up 14 times in the book of Ephesians, with 7 of those times talking about the love the members of the BoC have for each other.

An article in March 1978 Reader's Digest, submitted by a Sunday School teacher: "For St. Patrick's Day, I asked the 5-year-olds in my Sunday School class to bring something green that you love. The next Sunday they brought the usual green hats, green sweaters and green books. But one boy entered with an especially big grin. Behind him, wearing a green dress came his 4-year-old sister."

This is the primary lesson that we learned in Romans 12; about how to value and esteem one another as fellow members of the body of Christ; "Here is someone that I love."

And that was the testimony of the Ephesian church.

Ephesians 1:15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, **and love unto all the saints,**¹⁶ Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Everything is in place for us to love the brethren. Peace has been made in Christ and the doctrine makes it possible to do.

The third part of this benediction is the word "faith." And notice, it is directly connected to our previous word, love.

Ephesians 6:23 Peace *be* to the brethren, and love **with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

This word appears seven times in Ephesians, where Paul describes both saving faith, and practical day-to-day faith. Biblical faith has two elements: 1) Belief, and 2) Trust.

Faith requires that we believe what we read in the scriptures about both God and us. But belief alone is not faith. There must also be active trust. In other words, we must believe God's word, and then trust it to work in the details of our lives as we put it into practice.

The last word is “grace.”

Ephesians 6:24 **Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.** Amen. WRITTEN FROM ROME UNTO THE EPHESIANS BY TYCHICUS.

Grace starts the book of Ephesians and now it ends the book. It occurs twelve times in the epistle. Since we mostly remember the stories, let me emphasize grace with a story; one that is not perfect but I think serves the purpose. You’ll see.

“A man appeared at heaven’s gate and was met there by an angel who told him, “It will take 1,000 points to get in. Tell me about yourself so I will know how many points to give you.” The man smiled and said, “Well, I have been going to church almost every Sunday of my life.” “Excellent,” said the angel, “that will give you 3 points. What else?” The man was shocked. “Only 3 points? Well, I was a Sunday School superintendent for a while, and I tithed and I tried to be a good neighbor.” “Very good,” the angel said, “that will bring you up to 10 points.” The man gasped and said, “At this rate, I will never get in but by the grace of God!”

And that’s the point about grace. While the story makes the point, the truth is, all of our works could not get us even 10 points, only zero! The condition of grace is faith. It is totally the gift of God. And notice the condition placed at the end of verse 24.

Ephesians 6:24 **Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.** Amen. WRITTEN FROM ROME UNTO THE EPHESIANS BY TYCHICUS.

In sincerity; no hidden agendas, but honestly and genuinely love the Lord Jesus. So, the questions are: Do we love Christ? Is our love for Him alive and growing? Do we delight in Him? Is grace growing deeper and wider in our lives?

What wonderful benedictions!

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The Most Important Decision

Closing Prayer

*Heavenly Father,
While we have learned many things about prayer, we pray to continue to learn,
and to pray "in the Spirit." Thank you that we can learn to pray in accord with the
Spirit. Recognizing that prayer is a part of how we are transformed, and that it is
integral to our relationship with You, we commit ourselves to the process of
prayer. We love you Father and we are thankful for the book of Ephesians. We
pray that it will continue to renew our minds as we remember the doctrine each
day. Amen.*