

# **PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT**

## **EPHESIANS 6:18**

### **LIKE JESUS DID**

We are standing in the freshness of a new year. Have you pondered what would be the best investment of your spiritual capital in 1999? In other words, where are you going to focus your time in pursuit of Christ Jesus this year? To help you with that choice we are going to look at the incredible challenge Paul lays out in Ephesians 6:18

praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints

Praying in the Spirit is what Paul calls us to do after we have checked our armor. The way we make it through the wars of life is by PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT. For the next few weeks that is going to be our study as we learn to pray in the Spirit.

Nw think with me as you turn to Acts 6:4 our text this morning. Here is the scene. There were 12 men who were given the incredible honor of living, eating and walking every day with Jesus.

- ✓ They watched Him all day long.
- ✓ They sat at His feet and listened to Him in every setting: in a boat, on a mountain, in front of crowds.
- ✓ They followed Him to remote places, mountain tops and gardens. Always observing always pondering what it was He was doing.
- ✓ Then they graduated the Christ Academy.
- ✓ In the greatest event of history their teacher died as a substitute for all the sin of the world.
- ✓ They watched from afar as He cried out in greatest agony and as the Sun hid and the earth turned totally black with darkness.
- ✓ Then the earth shook, the ground was torn apart, graves popped open and then it was over. He hung there lifeless.
- ✓ Three days later they were abruptly confronted with their teacher back from death. And what a reunion it was. But it was brief and only to remind them to go everywhere and teach all those who would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ what He had taught them.

So, after three plus years when Jesus was taken back to His Father in Heaven.

- ✓ What did those closest to Him decide was the focus of their lives?

- ✓ What did the group of men who knew Jesus up close and personal decide was what He had taught them?
- ✓ What became the priority of the men who had learned the secrets of their Master?

To answer these vital questions we turn to Acts 6: 4.

Please stand with me as we read those last words of this verse.

## **JESUS WAS A MAN OF PRAYER**

When we think of the apostles, those early leaders of our church, we think of an example of godly living to follow. What did they commend to us as a way of spiritual priority? Turn to Acts 6:4, prayer and the word... (Paul, 1 Tim. 2:1, 4:6)

Why would the priority of these who had lived and walked with Jesus Christ be prayer and the word? Of course, it was because that was the master's life priorities. He was ever in communion with God (prayer) and seeking God's will (the word). So if we seek to be like them following the master, let us start with a priority on prayer.

### **PRAYER IS SO VITAL WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT!**

*"Avail yourself of the greatest privilege this side of heaven. Jesus Christ died to make this communion and communication with the Father possible."  
- Billy Graham*

*"Prayer is a powerful thing,  
for God has bound and tied Himself thereto."  
- Martin Luther*

*"God's acquaintance is not made hurriedly.  
He does not bestow His gifts  
on the casual or hasty comer and goer.  
To be much alone with God is the secret of  
knowing Him and of influence with Him."  
- E. M. Bounds*

There are two spiritual activities which are to be an unceasing, constant part of a believer's life: The study of the Word of God and prayer. These two great pillars hold up the believer in his daily life. The apostles, in Acts 6:4, acknowledged this when they said, *"We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word."* Prayer and studying the Word are the composite interchange between man and God: we speak to God through prayer and God speaks to us through the study of His Word. And so the Bible tells us that we are to be unceasingly involved in both:

The Word is to be a matter of our thoughts and conversation continually (Deut. 6:5-9) Deuteronomy 6:5-9 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

We are to be continually engaged in prayer. The Apostle Paul said, "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. 5:17), "Praying always..." (Eph. 6:18), "...in everything by prayer...with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

These two activities should become the consuming elements of the life of the believer – hearing God as He speaks in His Word and speaking to God in our own prayers. If prayer is something we are to do unceasingly, then we better know how to do it properly! And so, our Lord teaches us to pray. Notice what He doesn't teach us about prayer:

Have you ever wondered how Jesus as a human accomplished so much? "There's nothing more transfiguring<sup>1</sup> than prayer. People often ask, "Why do you insist on prayer so much?" The answer is very simple - because Jesus did. You could change the title of the Gospel according to St. Luke to the Gospel of Prayer. It's the prayer life of Jesus. The other evangelists say that Jesus was in the Jordan and the Spirit descended on Him as a dove - Luke says it was while He was praying that the Spirit descended on Him. The other evangelists say that Jesus chose 12 disciples - Luke says it was after He spent a night in prayer that He chose 12 disciples. The other evangelists say that Jesus died on a cross - Luke says that even when He was dying Jesus was praying for those who persecuted Him. The other evangelists say Jesus went on a mount and He was transfigured - Luke says it was while He was praying that He was transfigured. There's nothing more transfiguring than prayer.

The Scriptures say that the disciples went to bed, but Jesus went to pray - as was His custom. It was His custom to pray. Now Jesus was the Son of God - He was definitely anointed for His ministry. If Jesus needed all that time in prayer; don't you and I need time in prayer? If Jesus needed it in every crisis, don't you and I need it in every crisis?

## **WHY SHOULD WE PRAY? BECAUSE JESUS DID!**

When Jesus came as Hebrews 10 says, He came to totally do God's will. To obey completely His Father there was only one path to follow. The pathway of praying in the Spirit. To chart that path turn back with me to the first book Luke wrote as the Spirit guided him. As we go to the Gospel by Luke we find that Luke records the record of nine occasions when Jesus prayed:

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<sup>1</sup> Leonard Ravenhill, Prayer.

- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD AT HIS BAPTISM** A PRAYER OF CONSECRATION Luke 3:21 When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened.
- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD** after a day of miracles A PRAYER OF STRENGTH Luke 5:15-16 However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.
- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD** before choosing His disciples A PRAYER OF GUIDANCE Luke 6:12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.
- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD** before the first prediction of His death A PRAYER OF ENCOURAGEMENT Luke 9:18 And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"
- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD** on the Mount of Transfiguration A PRAYER OF WORSHIP Luke 9:29 As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.
- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD** before teaching the disciples to pray A PRAYER OF WISDOM Luke 11:1 Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."
- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD** when the seventy returned with their report A PRAYER OF INSIGHT Luke 10:20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."
- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD** in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46); A PRAYER OF VICTORY Luke 22:39-46 Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him.40 When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed,42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.45 When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow.46 Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."
- ✓ **JESUS SOUGHT GOD** on the cross (Luke 23:34, 46). A PRAYER OF OBEDIENCE Luke 23:34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. 23:46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' " Having said this, He breathed His last.

## WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

You might ask, "If God already knows what we need before we ask, why even bother praying?" Scripture makes a very strong case for prayer in the life of the believer.

*#1) Jesus told us to pray.* **PRAYER IS HOW WE OBEY GOD.**

Luke 18:1 says, "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart." We should pray simply because Jesus told us to and emphasized it in His life and teaching. There really is no better reason to pray than this.

*#2) Prayer is God's appointed way of obtaining things.* **PRAYER IS HOW WE RECEIVE FROM GOD.**

James 4:2 says, "You do not have because you do not ask." Do you ever wonder why you never seem to know the will of God for your life, why you never have any opportunities to lead others to the Lord, or why you always seem to be "scraping" by? Maybe you haven't seen answers because you've failed to ask God. God wants us to experience the blessings of seeing our prayers answered—such as the salvation of a loved one, or perhaps a divine healing, or a wonderful provision. But we first have to ask.

*#3) Prayer is the way by which God helps us to overcome our anxiety and worry.* **PRAYER IS HOW WE BECOME CONFIDENT IN GOD.**

Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Returning to Jehoshaphat, after praying to God for deliverance, he sent out singers before the army to sing praises to God. They sang, "Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever" (2 Chronicles 20:21). And their enemies attacked one another. Jehoshaphat understood what it meant to present his petition to God with thanksgiving.

*#4) Prayer is one of the ways we make ourselves ready for the return of Jesus Christ.* **PRAYER IS HOW WE GET READY FOR MEETING GOD.**

Luke 21:34-36 says, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will be as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." As believers living in the last days, our lives should be characterized by watchfulness and prayer (see also Mark 13:32-33).

Whatever concerns you may have at this moment, it is always time to pray! Remember, Scripture tells you to "[cast] all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7)."

