
EXPERIENCE THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER

WHAT DOES “PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT” REALLY MEAN?

*“For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. **Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.** Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”* (Romans 8:24–28, NKJV)

Many have taken this verse to be speaking about “Praying in the Spirit”. The Pentecostal teaching on this verse says, “*Praying in the Spirit*” is the Christian *groaning* or praying with utterances or tongues. But the Bible teaches that not everyone has the gift of speaking in tongues. (1 Cor 12:30) So when God commands us to “Pray in the Spirit”, it must be an experience that every non-tongue speaking Christian is equipped for.

*“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and **praying in the Holy Spirit,**”* Jude 20

*“...praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit,** being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—”* (Ephesians 6:18, NKJV)

“WHAT THEY SAID”

In view of the verses in Romans 8:20-28, It was noted by some present at the Bible Study on this Topic that “Praying in the Spirit” was possibly:

- “Unintelligible utterances/praying in tongues.”
- “The Holy Spirit helping us to pray on particular topics *when we don’t know what to pray.*”
- “The Holy Spirit “correcting” what we are praying *when we don’t know what to pray.*”
- The Holy Spirit striving within us to help us pray on target and with power.

THREE GROANS IN THE TEXT

1. **Nature Groans-** *that is, everything in nature is groaning: earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, famines, pestilence...prevails until Christ restores perfection.* Romans 8:22
2. **We Groan**—we groan in our physical bodies with: *illness, aging, weakening...until Christ glorifies our bodies.* Romans 8:23
3. **The Spirit Groans-***this is in the context of prayer.* Romans 8:26-27)

Is there a picture of this groaning in the Bible? Is there a life that can illustrate what it looks like that might help us to understand what “*Praying in the Spirit*” is?

FIRSTLY, WHAT DOES THE WORD GROAN MEAN?

Groan: *embrimaomai* ἐμβριμάομαι: to have an intense, strong feeling of concern, often with the implication of indignation—‘to feel strongly, and/or to be indignant (righteously angry)

- **To sigh, feel strongly**
- **Insist sternly**
- **Scold or rebuke**

We can all understand, personally, the first bullet point on what a groan means. It is associated with pain, or with longing. The second and third bullet points may seem a little foreign to what groaning means to us. But biblically they are very much relevant and practical in the Christian life.

JESUS CHRIST IS A PICTURE OF THE GROANING MAN OF PRAYER

“Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.” (John 11:33, NKJV)

- Before he raised Lazarus from the dead, he was deeply moved inside. He was troubled for his friend and the sisters who were so close to him. We may also see a peek of Jesus feelings toward death. He is righteously moved with an indignant heart. He does raise his voice and sternly insist, *“with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth!”*
- We see Jesus with the same kind of groan or inward insistence or even *scolding* when he:
 - He rebuked a fever. Luke 4:39
 - He rebuked winds and sea. Mt 8
 - He rebuked demons. Matthew 17:18

THE CLEAREST PICTURE OF JESUS PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.” And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.” He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”” (Matthew 26:36–46, NKJV)

Praying in the Spirit, according to Romans 8:20-17 in conjunction with Jesus examples of deep, intense feeling and groaning prayer—helps us to see what it means to pray in the Spirit

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT IS:

- **A battle with the flesh!** Let us be reverent and accurate here. Jesus always lived, acted and prayed rightly! Even as he queried that there might be another way, he always concluded with “Father, your will be done.” But we clearly see the Son of man in the struggle. Not only was He was facing crucifixion, he was facing the weight of the sins of the world would be placed upon him and for the first time in eternity—*he would be separated from his Father*.
- **The Spirit striving with our spirit to pray on target.**
- **The Spirit helping us to know WHAT to pray.**
- **Building your faith up in the Spirit and putting your flesh down. Jude 20**
- **Travail, groaning, suffering that leads to VICTORY.**

PROVOCATIVE QUESTIONS?

- **What if God would have answered the first part of his prayer?**
- **What if God answered some of our prayers?**
- **What does it mean, “The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”?** .

“THE INDEPENDENT SOUL MUST BE BROKEN FROM INDEPENDENCE. IT MUST BECOME A VESSEL FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT” WATCHMEN NEE

Before we are Christians, we are living completely by our own wills. We are doing what we want to do, when we want to do it. When we are regenerated, we have new desires to live not by our *spirit*, (*small s*) but by the *Holy Spirit* (*big S*).

Our spirit becomes the source of witness with the Holy Spirit that we are a child of God

“For you did not receive the *spirit* of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the *Spirit* of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The *Spirit* himself bears witness with our *spirit* that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (Romans 8:15–17, ESV)

Our spirit is the place where the Holy Spirit speaks to us and prays with us.

“God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24, ESV)

JESUS' PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT WAS NOT ISOLATED TO GETHSAMENE:

“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.” (Hebrews 5:7, ESV)

- He was a man of sorrows. Isaiah 53
- He wept over Jerusalem. Luke 19
- He was moved, wept and groaned at the grave of Lazarus. John 11

Ultimately, Jesus is able to sympathize with us because of his experience in giving the Holy Spirit ascendancy over the flesh.

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15, ESV)

SUCH PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT ACCOMPLISHES SOMETHING!

"When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins." (Isaiah 53:11, NLT)

MUST WE ALWAYS AGONIZE WHEN PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT?

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:44, ESV)

JOHN HYDE OF INDIA: "I read recently the biography of '**Praying Hyde**'. Some of you may have heard this story before. Praying Hyde was on the mission field and he stayed on the mission field until he could do no more, through health. He was sent back home and he was sent to the doctors. When he went into the doctors, the doctor examined him, sent him away, and then he came back to get the results of what was wrong with him. The doctor sat him down and he said, 'Mr Hyde, do you have any pains in your chest?' He said 'Yes I do'. He says, '**Mr Hyde, your heart has displaced itself, Your heart ought to be here, but it has moved over in the cavity of your chest, and that can only happen through one thing, AGONY.**' He was called the apostle of prayer and his prayers led to thousands being taken into the kingdom of God, into the church of Jesus Christ in the land of India. But he was a man that travailed. He was a man that lost his health for God." Are you willing to hear the voice of God and share the burden of God? This type of praying is for those that have not counted their life's dear to them.

HAVE YOU PRAYED UNTIL YOUR KNEES ARE AS CAMEL KNEES?

Edward Payson, better known as Praying Payson Portland, was another great prayer warrior. He used to kneel at the side of his bed and pray and pray and pray. When they washed his body for burial, they found great big pads on his knees like a camel has. **Tradition says that James had camel's knees but it's a living fact that Payson had them.** When they were washing him, somebody said, "What abnormal knees. They're heavy with callouses." That's because he used to pray at the side of his bed with energy - and he wore two grooves about six or seven inches long into that hard floor where he used to pray and make intercession."

COULD YOUR PRAYER MELT SNOW?

David Brainerd in his diary stated: "I got up this morning and the Indians were still committing adultery and drinking and beating their tom-toms and shouting like hell itself. I prayed from a half hour after sunrise to a half hour before sunset. There was nowhere to pray in the Indian camp. I went into the woods and knelt in the snow. It was up to my chin. I wrestled in prayer until a half hour before sunset, and I could only touch the snow with the tips of my fingers. The heat of my body had melted the snow."

SO MUST I AGONIZE?

These testimonies hint that we must all follow in this train. Do not let any such thought distress you. Most of us do not have the gifting or could physically bear a life such as David Brainerd or praying Hyde. Some dear Christians are so giving of their lives for little ones and others that they cannot find long hours in such practice.

JUST BE WILLING TO DO WHAT HE WILL HAVE YOU DO, WHAT HE LEADS YOU TO DO.

- If you have a burden, spiritual longing for something, even a rebuke against injustice—pray it through! You are praying in the Spirit.
- If you have a joy, this is not a burden or a place of agony.—give thanks!
- Jesus didn't always agonize. Often, prayer was very spontaneous and expressive of joy, or thanksgiving. We see no groans, intense longings or scolding when he put his head back and said things like: "At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." Matthew 11:25

Prayer is not given us as burden to be born or a duty to fulfill. It is a joy and power to which there is no limit. It is given that we might:

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16, ESV)