

Sunday Service

12th November 2023

Topic: Spiritual discipline - Prayer

Text: Ephesians 3:18 - *"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."* (NIV)

INTRODUCTION

We began the series on spiritual discipline last week and the first dimension of teaching we are beholding is Prayer. There is no spirituality or Christianity without prayer. If you cannot pray, you cannot become. It takes prayer to become what God you to be.

Prayer is essential, it is something you cannot do without. In fact, taking away prayer from the life of a believer is synonymous with taking fish out of the water.

"Prayer for a Christian is life as water to a fish."

The more you bend your knees, the more you gather ZOE (the God-kind of life). It is not only when you have trouble that you pray. It is a must.

Let's go back to our text and bring out some very important things about prayer. I will dwell much and explain this verse in this teaching because it will answer some questions I raised in your heart.

➤ "And pray in the Spirit."

I said in the last teaching that many of us when asked to pray in the Spirit, we start speaking in tongues. Praying in the Spirit is not only speaking in tongues. Billy Graham is a person who does not speak in tongues but does that mean he does not pray in the Spirit? There are three dimensions to praying in the Spirit:

1. Intimacy with God

When you don't have intimacy with God, there is no prayer that you that is the Spirit. Intimacy with God is drawing closer to Him daily, where you have a rapport and a relationship.

"When you are a Christian and you don't have a secret place, there is no secret that can be divulged to you."

So when the Bible says, to pray in the Spirit, it is saying to create time to build a solid relationship with God. Many people are born again and tongue-speaking but they don't have a secret place. What makes speaking in tongues carry power is a secret place. The first way of praying in the Spirit is locating a place where you and God meet to commune, two-way communication that brings bonding. When you don't grow to that dimension of experiencing a daily walk with God, I tell you no matter the gymnastic type of prayer you pray, it won't work.

Do you have a place where you meet with God? **Intimacy with YAHWEH is what brings about praying in the Spirit.** Consistency in the place of relationship not only during times of trouble.

2. A connected heart

Your heart becomes one with the Holy Ghost and everywhere you enter you have the opportunity to pray. I have seen men who claim they are praying in tongues but are active on social media; their heart is far away. When your heart is connected to a thing, you become focused on that thing. Hence, that you pray in tongues, does not mean your heart is connected. What brings an answer to prayer is a connected heart. So Billy Graham might not speak in tongues but his heart is connected. Does that mean speaking in tongues is not right? No! It is your birthright but don't over-flood speaking in tongues as above a connected heart.

"When you pray without a heart connected, you are not praying in the Spirit"

When you have a connected heart there are times you don't want to initiate prayer but God does. So you can be on your way to work yet you are praying. Indeed many things on earth can disconnect our hearts when we pray, therefore we must monitor our hearts when we pray to start connected.

3. The ability to speak in tongues.

So speaking in tongues is the last thing in praying in the Spirit. To pray in the Spirit, you must first have a secret place and then a connected heart before you speak in tongues.

➤ "On all occasions"

You must live a life conscious of prayer. Everything about your life warrants prayer. I see ladies plan bridal showers during weddings but all they do is dance some even go to the extent of taking alcohol. Is there anything wrong when your bridal shower becomes a prayer night?

Pray on all occasions! Are you a business owner or an entrepreneur? Pray before you start your day at work. Pray as you render goods or services to customers. Pray!

You can't see people who don't pray and rise. It takes prayer to birth vision.

➤ "With all kinds of prayer."

There are several kinds of prayer a believer must pray. Most of the time, because of doctrines and our growth we believe that there are some prayers we don't need to pray. It's not correct. The Bible says pray with all kinds of prayer. I have summarised all kinds of prayer a believer must pray into 5 :

1. Prayer of Thanksgiving and Adoration -The grateful acknowledgement of benefit or favour

James 1:17

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." (NKJV)

Do you know sitting is a perfect gift? Give thanks! When you live a life of thanksgiving, things begin to happen very fast for you. So deliberately cultivate the habit of giving thanks to God daily.

How many of you will do a favour for someone ungrateful and yet when such a person comes again asking for help, you will still offer it? Some of you might still choose to help, but I know the majority like me won't do so because such a person is not grateful. Learn to be grateful at all times. If you can not thank the humans that you see, how will you thank God?

Psalm 100:4

"You can pass through his open gates with the password of praise. Come right into his presence with thanksgiving. Come bring your thank offering to him and affectionately bless his beautiful name!" (TPT)

It is so unfortunate, that the generation we are raising is becoming ungrateful. Learn to be grateful for everything you receive from God and men.

Psalm 118:1

"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever." (NKJV)

"If you are indifferent to what God is doing for you, there is a repercussion."

Romans 1:21 - *"because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."* (NKJV)

2. Prayer of Confession: This is an acknowledgement and disclosure of sin, a sincere cry.

David was a person after God's heart because one of the things he knew was the power of confession. This is why every time he sinned, he was quick to do the needful and never repeat it. In Psalm 51, David had the same outcry to God after Prophet Nathan told him about his sins.

Confession is not only acknowledging that you are a sinner but you come to Him to disclose your sins. This is why I have problems with our Yoruba prayers because they would not confess their sins in specific but use general terms.

"What you acknowledge but did not disclose can't receive pardon."

Romans 8:1

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."
(NKJV)

After confessing, through acknowledgement and disclosure, immediately God forgives you. This is what is said in 1 John that God is faithful and just to forgive us if we confess our sins.

"When God forgives people, a guilty conscience is a terrible demon you must fight."

See what was stated in Romans 8, there is no condemnation for those that have been forgiven. So don't allow people to look at you with a judgemental stare, forgive yourself, and don't condemn yourself because the Lord has forgiven you. This is why every Christian must understand the principle of "No Guilt." There is a hymn which dwells on the truthfulness of this principle:

"No guilt in life, no fear in death

This is the power of Christ in me

From life's first cry to the final breath

Jesus commands my destiny

No power of hell, no scheme of man

Can ever pluck me from His hand

Till He returns or calls me home

Here in the power of Christ, I'll stand"

You need to forgive yourself. Let the past remain in the past. If you have acknowledged and confessed, don't repeat the act; you have been forgiven. God does not keep records of sin like man. Let it go, just submit yourself to Him and let Him embrace you. Stop blaming yourself for He is a God that faithful and just to forgive your sins. He never condemns. Let's confess this together.

"I am no longer a slave to fear

I am a child of God.

I am no longer a slave to sin

I am a child of God."