

Engaging with the Spirit in Prayer

Ephesians 6:16-18, Jude 1:17-23

On June 25, 1958, it was sold in a London auction houseⁱ for about \$120. The new owners took their painting across the Atlantic to New Orleans and hung it in Aunt Minnie's house.

When Aunt Minnie (Kuntz) died (1987), her nephew, Basil Clovis Hendryⁱⁱ hung it for 18 years above his staircase in Baton Rouge. When Basil died, it appraised around \$750, eventually landing in the St. Charles Gallery of New Orleans. Appraised again, it was valued somewhere around \$1500. In time, auctioned again, a pair of Old Masters dealers took it for something short of \$10,000.

Experts considered it a work of some student (perhaps) in Giovanni Boltraffio's "School of da Vinci." But the painting, they claimed, didn't "appear to contain the psychological density and detailing that signature a da Vinci's painting."

Still, the new owners sensed something. Enter, a paintings Conservator at New York University who cleaned the canvas and studied it more closely. Could this be one of only 20 original Leonardo da Vinci paintings in existence? More curators consulted and an amazing validation began to be confirmed.

After "Salvator Mundi" was featured in London's National Gallery (2011), a Swiss art advisor (Yves Bouvier, 2013) purchased it for \$80 million dollars. Almost immediately, a Russian billionaire [Dmitry Rybolovlev] snatched it up for \$127 million. Last November, he asked Christie's to auction it.

And when Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince [Mohammed bin Salman] paid \$450,300,000 for "Salvator Mundi," a new record was set rocked the art world. He then made it a diplomatic gift to Abu Dhabi, which is displaying today at *The Louvre* in Paris.

For years, it hung in obscurity, in forgotten hallways, virtually worthless. The original owning family never knew. "We can't believe...such an incredible piece could have been in our family and we never knew," (one granddaughter remarked-Ms. Hendry Tureau, Basil Hendry's daughter) said. "It just sort of brings me alive."ⁱⁱⁱ

Indeed....indeed. Sometimes, what is most valuable in life is so very close that you don't even recognize it.

If you are a Christian today – a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, there is no one closer to you than the Holy Spirit. Jesus said he can flow out of your heart like living streams of water.

But for many, many Christians – perhaps even for you -- the Holy Spirit has hung in a forgotten hallway. Above some little used staircase. No real idea of his value, little appreciation for how much life HE can bring. The "forgotten (person of) God."^{iv}

We are about 30 days into a journey to *Engage the Spirit*. Have you cleaned off your portrait of the Holy Spirit and studied in a fresh way His personal and powerful role in your living? Today, what if we took an even closer look could this wonderful treasure, this Person who lives inside?

Ephesians 6:16-18 (p.979) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, **praying at all times in the Spirit**, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Jude 1:17-23 (p.1027) But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the

Spirit. But you, beloved, **building yourselves up** in your most holy faith **and praying** in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Here's today's question: What does it mean to PRAY **IN** (or "by") THE HOLY SPIRIT? We might ask some questions about this, like:

- Isn't all my praying "in" or "by" the Holy Spirit?
- Is "praying in the Spirit" the same as just regular praying?
- If it is something else, what's different or special about it?

What IS praying in the Spirit? I think we get a clear view by taking a careful look at these Scriptures.

First, these passages are about **THE BATTLE**. "The battle?" Yeah...the battle.

✓ Context of Ephesians 6:10-13

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able **to stand against the schemes of the devil**. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **cosmic powers** over **this present darkness**, against **the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places**. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be **able to withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

✓ Jude's' words have the same tone:

¹⁷But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸They said to you, "In the last time **there will be scoffers**, following their own ungodly passions." ¹⁹It is these who **cause divisions**, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰But you, beloved, **building yourselves up** in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²²And have mercy on **those who doubt**; ²³save others by **snatching them out of the fire**; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the **garment stained by the flesh**.

I read those words, and I hear "battling." I hear danger and attack and standing strong and handling scoffers and having to wrestle with things I can't see but are VERY real and after people – especially God's people – to destroy them.

Look at this sweet young girl. Her name Alexandra Valoras. Just weeks after a family ski vacation, the 17-year-old high school junior, straight-A student, class officer and robotics whiz made her bed, tidied her room and walked to a highway overpass in Grafton, Massachusetts. She jumped off the edge

Alexandra Valoras showed every outward sign of success and promise, a star at school, beloved at home. "There was just so much joy in everything she did, and it doesn't match what was in that journal," her sister Alysia said.. Externally — what she allowed the world to see — Alexandra Valoras was a brilliant, ambitious teenager, an academic star near the top of the junior class at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School in Upton, near her quiet hometown of Grafton.

She built her own robots, dreamed of going to MIT, had lots of friends, a magnet to young kids...Yet for months before her death, Alexandra went home, day after day, and told her journal that what the world saw in her was a lie.

So from where do...200 pages of self-loathing and despair come? She wrote repeatedly "you are broken," "you are a burden," "you are lazy" and "you're a failure."

You are weak, she wrote in giant block letters that took up a full page.

You are a liar.

You are a burden.

She admitted hiding her inner self from her parents, teachers, and her counselor.

for the stronger to judge the weaker.

THE BATTLE. PROTECTION. DIFFERENCES. So if we are observing these verses from the Lord well, what might we conclude about what “*praying In (or by) the Holy Spirit*” is?

Praying in (or by) the Holy Spirit is to responsively pray at His prompting for one another in the battle.

Let’s take this apart and then put it back together again.

Key Idea #1

It’s RESPONSIVE PRAYER at the SPIRIT’S PROMPTING

The old African-American spiritual quietly sung verses like these:

1st verse - I’m gonna sing when the Spirit says sing

3rd verse – I’m gonna moan when the Spirit says moan

4th verse – I’m gonna shout when the Spirit says shout

2nd verse was this

I’m gonna pray when the Spirit says pray

I’m gonna pray when the Spirit says pray

I’m gonna pray when the Spirit says pray

And obey the Spirit of the Lord.

So...when does the Spirit say “Pray!”? (Acts 4 p.912)

Acts 4:23 When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,^{vi}

“Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed”—

²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

- Peter in prison, the church “prayed him out” (Acts 12:5,6-17)

*So Peter was kept in prison, but **earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church** (Acts 12:5)*

- Paul under excessive burden: You also must help us by prayer (2 Cor 1:8-11)

2 Corinthians 1:8-11 (ESV, p.952)

*⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹ **You also must help us by prayer,***

PRAYING responsively, alertly, at the Spirit’s prompting.

Key Idea #2

It’s FOR ONE ANOTHER PRAYING

- Jesus, full of God’s Spirit, understood **his key disciples were under personal attack:**

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, **but I have prayed for you** that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22:31-32)

- Paul, talking to the elder/shepherds of the Christians in Ephesus, understood the **inevitable coming attack**:

Acts 20:8 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure **fierce wolves will come in** among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert... ³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and **prayed with them all**.

The other night...

I midweek to get a look at what was happening with our Middle School kids and our High School kids. I was blown away at the great things God is doing. Especially as I listened to one of our great young ladies – a freshman at ISU -- speak with passion and fire about God’s longing for a relationship with us. Urging the kids just behind her to embrace that their best life is when Jesus Christ is at the center. Your Best Life is “when we give every aspect of our lives to God.”

As I listened to her, I immediately thought, “Wow...if I were Satan, I’d put on target on the back of that young woman. I’d do everything I could to ‘take her off point’. I had come to simply get a look at what was going on; but I quickly heard the Spirit of God in my ear saying, “Start praying...I’m doing something here...and we have an enemy.”

Here’s my question...when you come to worship? When you come to church? Are you coming just to look around...see what’s happening...perhaps get something for yourself? Or are you coming ready to start PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

**to responsively pray at His prompting,
about His concerns arising from attacks**

Key Idea #3
**It’s PRAYING about STRONG
FAITH in the BATTLE(s)**

Virtually every New Testament letter identifies a key threat to your/my walk with God

One day, a cowboy applied for health insurance.

The agent began through a series of questions on

the application, asking if the cowboy had had any accidents during the previous year.

The cowboy replied, “No. But I was bitten by a rattlesnake, and a horse kicked me in the ribs. That laid me up for awhile.” The agent replied, “Weren’t those accidents?” “No,” replied the cowboy, “They did it on purpose.”^{viii}

Much of what comes at the Christian comes at us on purpose. Your faith is at stake.

**Praying in (or by) the Holy Spirit is to responsively
pray at His prompting for one another in the battle**

NT letter	key threats to faith
Galatians	false gospel, legalism, flesh (1:6, 3:3, 5:19-21)
Ephesians	attacks from unseen spiritual world (6:16)
Philippians	disunity over secondary matters (2:12-18)
Colossians	replacing Christ , worshipping other things (2:16-23)
1/2 Thessalonians	disappointment over the Lord’s return delayed (2:1-2)
1/2 Timothy	false teaching , doctrines from demons (1:3-11, 4:1-5)
Titus	refusing the Spirit’s renewal (3:1-8)
Hebrews	spiritual retreat under persecution (10:32-39)
James	a useless faith that doesn’t obey (2:14-17)
1/2 Peter	the discouragement of suffering (5:6-11)
1/2/3 John	loving the world rather than the Father (2:15)
Jude	false teaching, entrapping error (1:3-4)

FINISHING UP...

#1 Are you accountable to others?

A band of brothers, a cadre of sisters, who watch out for you and you for them. A group of trusted fellow-Jesus followers who “share their tough stuff.”

Norman Vincent Peale rightly observed, “The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.”^{ix}

Daniel Webster was once asked “What is the greatest thought that has ever passed through your mind?” He answered, “My accountability to God.”^x

#2 Are you intentionally growing in your faith?

Jude 1:20 *But you, beloved, **building yourselves up** in your most holy faith and **praying in the Holy Spirit,** ²¹ **keep yourselves** in the love of God,*

What does Jude mean by that? He means that unless you are seeking to grow in “your most holy faith,” and intentionally praying for your spiritual companions, you are much more likely to fall away from

Oliver Cromwell
“He who ceases to
be better, ceases
to be good.”

experiencing the fullness of God’s love and blessing.^{xi} So, what are you intentionally doing to better understand your faith, your walk with God...specific, consistent growth steps.

#3 For whom are you/I alertly praying “in the Spirit”?

Great note from someone this week: “We are lifting you up...”

There are people in your connect group, teenagers in our youth groups, Upward coaches and refs and program helpers...there are people sitting right next to, ahead of, or behind you that would be incredibly blessed if you decided to pray for them...and jot them a note.

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ⁱ London’s Sotheby Auctioning firm

ⁱⁱ a sheet metal factory owner

ⁱⁱⁱ Maya Tippett and Lisa Schwartz, “How a \$450 Million da Vinci Got Lost, and Found” in Life & Arts, *The Wall Street Journal*, Thursday, September 20, 2018, A9.

^{iv} Francis Chan book title.

^v <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/06/23/diary/ep6tAOTtMVVLYCByx0o9GJ/story.html> and <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/alexandra-valoras-parents-blindsided-by-daughters-tragic-suicide-hope-her-story-helps-save-others/>

^{vi} From Michael P. Green, ed., *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Baker, 1982, 1985, 1989), 66.

^{vii} Psalm 2:1-2

^{viii} Green, 16.

^{ix} Cited in *1001 Quotations That Connect*, p.286.

^x Roby Zuck, *The Speaker’s Quote Book*, 9.

^{xi} Dick Lucas, “If we want to know what happens to those who do not keep themselves in God’s love, we need look no further than the examples of the Israelites in the desert, the angels who sinned against God, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, and Korah” in *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude* (InterVarsity Press, 1995), 223..