**Understanding Prayer: Pray In The Spirit**

These are my notes from a teaching by Ted Fellows

Pentecostalism today talks about praying in the Spirit as speaking in tongues and the emotional experiences that go with it. However, praying in the Spirit is very similar to what Paul said back in Ephesians 5:18 about being filled with the Spirit.

There is a series of verses in Paul's epistles that talk about being in the Spirit. In each of these verses, when it talks about being in the spirit, the context is compared with being in the flesh.

* (Romans 8:1 KJV) There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.  
  (Romans 8:4 KJV) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. [***Walk in the Spirit / Walk in flesh***]
* (Romans 8:9 KJV) But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. [***In Adam / In Christ***]
* (Galatians 3:3 KJV) Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? [***Under Grace / Under Law***]
* (Galatians 5:16 KJV) This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.   
  (Galatians 5:25 KJV) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. [***Walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh***]
* (Philippians 3:3 KJV) For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. [***Man's spirit = your mind, mental attitude***]
* (Colossians 2:3 KJV) In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. [***physical presence, present in your mind and heart***]
* (1 Timothy 3:16 KJV) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. [***Justified in Spirit is talking about the mystery of godliness. The way godliness is shown today is different, a mystery, today than what it was in the past. Godliness is being justified in the Spirit and God being manifest in the flesh.***]

**What does it mean to always pray in the Spirit?**

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

To always pray in the Spirit is to be under grace and not under the Law. It is thinking in line with the Spirit of God and not just the human emotions and human tendencies. This means as we pray to God about everything - physical, spiritual, emotional - we are to look at that situation or circumstance the way God the Holy Spirit, looks at it.

How are we filled with the Spirit? We are filled with the Spirit through the word of God.

(Ephesians 6:17-18 KJV) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: {18} Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

The word of God and prayer go together. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is talking about more than just the Scripture; it means Paul's revelation, the gospel of the grace of God. So, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit is that we need to make a conscious choice as we pray to attempt to line our prayer life with what the Spirit of God says about the issues of grace and how we walk as children of God.

Prayer and the word of God go together. It is the Word of God that God the Holy Spirit uses to transform our life.

(2 Corinthians 3:18 KJV) But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

(James 1:22-23 KJV) But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. {23} For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

Glass is defined as the word of God. As we look into the glass (word of God) we are changed.

(Romans 12:1-2 KJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We are transformed by the renewing of our mind. If we want to pray in the Spirit and want God to work in our life then we need to pray. Prayer is us talking to God and Him talking to us with His word; this takes place in our heart. Praying in the Spirit is praying in accordance to the Word of God.

**How the Holy Spirit's ministry works in your life**

(Romans 8:26 KJV) 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.

Notice the words "likewise" and "also". This means there is a parallel as Paul talks about the Holy Spirit's ministry making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered will be like something else . The "likewise" refers to what was written in verse 16:

(Romans 8:16 KJV) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

How does the Spirit of God bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?

(Galatians 3:26-27 KJV) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. {27} For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God by faith, by the word of God, not by our experience.

(Romans 8:26 KJV) Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities...

Our infirmities is our ignorance, we don't know how to pray as we ought in the flesh. The Spirit will help us pray by communicating to us what God desires for a situation. He will do this through the written Word of God.

There is a common understanding of Romans 8:26 that we do not know how to pray and when we do pray the Holy Spirit takes our prayers to God and says, "It really should be this way;" and then the Holy Spirit adjusts our prayer. However, God does not need the Holy Spirit to adjust our prayers. God knows what is best for us. The intercession in verse 26 does not take place in heaven, it takes place inside of us. The Holy Spirit works in our heart and communicates with our spirit according to the will of God, according to what God said.

Did you ever sit down and pray to God about a situation and tell him what's on your heart and verses of Scripture start coming to your mind and give you a clear path as to what you should do and sometimes you cannot verbalize it but you know here is the right thing to do? That is the Holy Spirit taking the word of God and conversing with you.

... but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us

The word "intercession" means to have a conference with. Verse 26 means that God the Holy Spirit conferences with us.

Remember our goal is to pray with understanding. If it were just the Holy Spirit taking our prayers to God and adjusting them it would not help our ignorance. That is not praying with understanding but if it takes place inside of you and God the Holy Spirit, reveals and illuminates to us a course of action through his Word then our ignorance is taken care of.

...with groanings which cannot be uttered.

A lot of times we cannot verbalize what the Holy Spirit is telling us, but we know based on the verse of scripture the Holy Spirit is giving us an illumination, some wisdom, as to what to do in a situation or in a given circumstance.

(Romans 8:27 KJV) And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

God searches the heart and He knows the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit makes intercession according to the will of God. The Spirit of God is always going to talk to us in accordance with God's word. The Spirit of God will never tell us something that is contrary to the Word.

Therefore, praying in the Spirit is us making a conscious choice as we think through a situation; it is for us to think about those things as God thinks about them. Praying in the Spirit is praying from God's viewpoint. As we do that we know that all things will work together for good.

The Holy Spirit's ministry and praying in the Spirit is God the Holy Spirit working and conferring with us and solving the problem of our ignorance. God the Holy Spirit will instruct and enlighten us as to what we should do. *Praying in the Spirit is us aligning our mind with God's written Word*.

(2 Corinthians 10:3-5 KJV) For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: {4} (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) {5} Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

(1 Thessalonians 2:13 KJV) For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Prayer and the word of God go together, we cannot separate the two.

(Ephesians 3:20 KJV) Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

(Philippians 2:12 KJV) Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

God's work in us is through the word of God. We need to believe God's word and that God's word will work. We need to take the Word of God and apply it to our prayer life and God will work in our life to His pleasure and change our desires.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV) All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: {17} That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The word perfect has the idea of completeness. The word of God will equip us to do all the things God wants us to do. The word of God will teach us how to pray in the Spirit and take all our requests and make them known to God.

**Pray as a believer today in the age of grace.**

(Philippians 4:6 KJV) Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Be careful means to be anxious or to worry. Don't be thinking about all the bad things that can happen. Take the situation and begin to apply the word of God to it. Pray always in the Spirit, don't worry, but think things through with the Lord's viewpoint (the word of God).

Be thankful. God's will is for us to be thankful in all things.

(1 Thessalonians 5:18 KJV) In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

How can we be thankful for everything, even the bad things? Doesn't Romans 8:28 say that all things work together for good to those who love God?

(Romans 8:37-39 KJV) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. {38} For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, {39} Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are more than conquerors. So, we can take even the bad things that happen to us and use them for God's glory.

..let your requests be made known unto God.

Let it be made known unto God what it is we want Him to do in a particular situation. We need to let our requests be made known in accordance to the Spirit of God and in accordance to the written Word of God.

Praying always in the Spirit: praying with understanding of a new dispensation, the nature of the age of grace, the nature of our Christian life here on this earth as part of the fallen creation and the ministry of God and the Holy Spirit.

(Philippians 4:7 KJV) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The peace of God is the result of praying in the Spirit. Worrying starts in the heart and mind. The promise of today is the peace of God will fortify and stabilize our mind. God does not want us to react negatively, fall apart and faint in situations and circumstances. He wants us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might to experience victory and be more than conquerors.

The promise of prayer today is not our physical circumstances being changed and being altered. The promise today is that the peace of God will keep our heart and mind through Christ Jesus (Romans 5:8). We know this because God's love is confirmed to us (Romans 5).

(Philippians 4:8 KJV) Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

These are the things to think about - to bring our mind and thoughts captive to Christ. We need to keep our mind focused on the right things.

Praying in the Spirit is looking at things from God's point of view.

(2 Corinthians 4:7-15 KJV) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. {8} We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; {9} Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; {10} Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. {11} For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. {12} So then death worketh in us, but life in you. {13} We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; {14} Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. {15} For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

The number one issue in our life is not our ease, it is not our comfort, not our safety but it is the glory of God. God has fixed it so everything that happens can be for our good and His glory.

(2 Corinthians 4:16-17 KJV) For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. {17} For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

For our light affliction implies that we can carry it. Have we experienced anything close to what Paul experienced? Probably not, yet he called his experiences light. The sufferings of this present time are for a moment but they will work for us.

(2 Corinthians 4:18 KJV) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The sufferings will work for us when we look at things not seen, the eternal things above, where Christ is,

(Colossians 3:1-2 KJV) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. {2} Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

To pray in the Spirit is to take that situation and say the issue is the glory of God and if we, through the power of Jesus Christ working in our life, take this tribulation, suffering and trial in our life and use it as an instrument to bring honor and glory to God and it will be glory to us in eternity, we can then be thankful in our physical suffering and infirmity. Truly all things can work together for good to those who love God and are called to His purpose. This is done by faith and not looking at things seen, but unseen.