

Every day is a school day - Praying in the Holy Spirit

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Nice to see everybody this morning. I was doing my reading this morning and I'm sure some of you were doing the same reading as me UCB's word for today and it was talking about being thankful.

And I just thought it spoke very much to me and I thought that it would be good today if people here today, not now but maybe when you go home, could just give thanks for a couple of things in your lives.

Give thanks to God for one thing in your life and give thanks to somebody that you're with today for something else in your life. It's an amazing thing just to be thankful for so many things that we have here.

You know, we see so much on the news and hear so much and we can be brought down and made to feel heavy by all of that.

But there's a lot, an awful lot in our lives to be very thankful for. You know, I give thanks this morning for Josh for having the skill to put up the words on the PowerPoint that I'm going to be talking about this morning.

[1 : 11] And I give thanks every day for another day beyond my three score years and ten. That's something that I'm very grateful for. So today I'm just going to encourage you when you go home or when you're talking afterwards, just to give thanks to God for one thing in your life and just to give thanks to somebody that you're with for another.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 34] Thank you. God the Son is Jesus Christ.

He's our way to God. He made the bridge on the cross to God between us and God. He died for our sins to provide salvation for us.

If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins and provide that way to God. He is the only way to God. He is the only way to God. No one comes to the Father except through me, says Christ.

He was raised from the dead. He died. He conquered death. He went and he conquered death. He went and he conquered death and then was raised from the dead. He went and he conquered death and then was raised from the dead. And that's Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity.

And then God the Holy Spirit giving us, the power to live out our salvation and to glorify God. Next slide please, Josh. The coming of the Holy Spirit fulfills the prophecy of Joel in the Old Testament.

[5 : 02] In Acts 2 verses 16 and 17 and 21 it says, This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. If you're here this morning and you're not sure whether you have a place in heaven allotted to you, call out on the name of the Lord.

Ask Jesus to forgive you, to come into your heart and to live within you. And your place in heaven is guaranteed. Call on the name of the Lord.

Next slide, Josh. Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit in John chapter 14 and verses 15 to 17. It says, If you love me, you will obey what I command.

I will ask the Father and he will give you another counselor, the Holy Spirit, to be with you forever. The Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him.

[6 : 11] But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you. And Jesus promised us the power of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1 and verse 8 it says, But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. We can't do that on our own.

We can't be witnesses throughout the world or in our town or in our village or in our home without the power of the Holy Spirit that is promised to us by Jesus.

When we become Christians, we receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Next slide, please, Josh. And the Holy Spirit came demonstrating his power.

When the day of Pentecost came, it says in Acts chapter 2, they were all together, that's the disciples, in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind.

[7 : 15] Well, it was pretty violent yesterday at times, wasn't it? The wind. So there, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. That's the power of the Holy Spirit.

It's not something that just suddenly appeared. It came with power. He came with power like tongues of fire, like a violent wind.

And people spoke in other languages. Now, I'm not going to spend the sermon talking about speaking in tongues. But that is one example of how the power of the Holy Spirit and praying in the Spirit can affect some people.

They're given a heavenly language. It's not a foreign language. It's a heavenly language that God gives to that person at that time. You may have heard somebody near you in church when they're praising God, speaking in a language that you think, what is that?

[8 : 27] It's a language that has been given to them by God for them to praise God, to edify themselves and to edify God. It's not the same as prophecy, the Bible says.

The prophecy is to edify and build up the church. Speaking in tongues usually is to edify the individual. Although occasionally somebody may speak out loud in tongues.

And if somebody is there to interpret it, that can then build up the church through that. Next slide, please, Josh. So there we are.

That sets a little bit of context about the Holy Spirit, who the Holy Spirit was. He was promised to us how he was going to come to us and how he came to us in power.

Christians are called not only to pray in the Spirit, but were also taught, put to death the deeds of the body in the Spirit. In Romans, confess Jesus as Lord in the Spirit.

- [9 : 24] In 1 Corinthians. Again in 1 Corinthians, give thanks in the Spirit. In Galatians it says, live or walk in the Spirit.
- Every day, walk with the Holy Spirit with you. The Holy Spirit is there. Walk with him. Walk alongside him. Walk with him inside you. Every day.
- Restore a wayward brother in the Spirit. In the power of the Holy Spirit. And worship in the Spirit, it says in Philippians. It's clear, very clear, that we are to use in our lives the power of the Holy Spirit, which is given to us when we become Christians.
- How powerful is this, this Holy Spirit? Well, I was reading, when I was preparing this, I happened to be reading Ezekiel, and about the valley of dry bones.
- And the story there is, God took Ezekiel, the prophet, into a valley, and there were the dry bones of a dead army lying there.
- [10 : 29] Dead, flesh had gone, everything had gone, just a pile of rattly bones. And God said to Ezekiel, can these bones live? I'm paraphrasing here, but can these bones live?
- And Ezekiel said, well, only you know that, God. Only you know that. So God said to Ezekiel, prophesy over these bones. And he prophesied over the bones.
- And it says in the Amplified Version, when the bones had been put together, the bones came together, the tendons, the flesh, the muscles, the nerves, everything, there was no life in them.
- But God said, breathe the breath and spirit, it says in the Amplified Version, into the army, into those bones.
- And those bones came alive again. That's the power of the Holy Spirit. Can you imagine that? You know, rattling dead bones, rattling about in the wind, and suddenly, God has asked Ezekiel to prophesy, and God has put, through the Holy Spirit, put those bones together, and breathed life into them.
- [11 : 39] That's the power of the Holy Spirit that's in us. I mean, I find that difficult to comprehend, that I have that same power inside me, that was demonstrated by God through Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones.
- But that's the power we have to live our lives for God through the Holy Spirit. Next slide, please, Josh. So if we have the power of the Holy Spirit within us, which we clearly do, the Spirit of Truth lives with you and will be in you, why wouldn't we want to pray in that power?
- Why wouldn't we want to pray in the Holy Spirit? As John Piper, the theologian, says, praying in the Spirit means that our prayers are moved and guided by the Holy Spirit.
- Why wouldn't we want to pray with our prayers being moved and guided by the Holy Spirit? If the Holy Spirit has that much power and is living in our lives, why wouldn't we want to pray in that way?
- Next slide, Josh. We can all pray. Sometimes, and certainly before I was a Christian, in times of real stress and trouble, you might just say, oh, God help me.
- [12 : 55] It may be the only time that some of us have prayed. But we can all pray. But are our prayers by rote? Are they feeling uninspired?
- Are they spoken into the air with no sense of God's presence or power? Or are our prayers guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit? Are they aligned with God's will and God's word?
- Are they prompted by his prompting, reflecting his character rather than our own earthly desires? And if I can just go back a sentence or two there, are they aligned with God's will and word?

There's something important about praying scripture. You know, taking a piece of scripture and saying, God, your word says, when a believing person prays, great things happen, for example.

Align your prayers with God's scripture. There's something important about aligning our prayers with scripture. Because it's, in a sense, it's reminding God and saying, you said this, God.

[14 : 00] You can do this. I'm asking you, please, fulfill your word. Glorify your name. Do this for me in this situation or for whom I'm praying for in this situation or for the circumstance I'm praying for in this situation?

Very powerful and very important about praying with scripture, using scripture in our prayers. Do we feel an inability to fully express our own needs, but feeling guided by a deeper prompting, a sense of boldness and assurance that our prayers, do we feel that our prayers are aligned with scripture and its promises?

Do we feel that sense of boldness and assurance? Assurance that when we're praying in the spirit, that we know that assurance that God is with us in our prayers, that he's hearing us, that it's not just prayers into the air, but that God is hearing our prayers.

Next slide, please, Josh. Thomas Brooks came across this great quote. Thomas Brooks, a 17th century Puritan preacher and author. There's a description of a person for you, isn't it?

He said, As painted fire is no fire, and dead man is no man, so a cold prayer is no prayer. Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings.

[15 : 32] They pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers do always freeze before they reach heaven.

There's two things I just want to say here. First of all, when we pray, it's important to praise God. There's an acronym, I've talked about this before, an acronym, ACTS, A-C-T-S.

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. And that gives us a good guide, I find anyway, a good guide. First of all, adoration. We praise God to get us into that place that we feel the Holy Spirit is with us in our prayers.

Give adoration to God. Confess our sins. Give thanksgiving for what God has done for you and continues to do for us. And then, bring your supplication, bring your prayers, your requests.

And the Holy Spirit will be there inside you and hearing you along with God. It's a bit like, I was trying to think, in another example, what the Holy Spirit is like.

[16 : 47] A lamp came to mind, a table lamp. You know, we buy a lamp, don't we, because it looks good. You know, it's nice. Oh, that'll go nicely in the corner there or on the table there in our room.

And that's why we buy a lamp. And we sit it there and it looks very nice, doesn't it? Nice, brand new lamp. But it's not doing any good, is it? Until it's plugged in and switched on.

So the Holy Spirit is there, but until we plug in to the Holy Spirit, it's not really, we're not really allowing the Holy Spirit to do what the Holy Spirit is there to do.

Just the same as if we don't plug that lamp in and switch it on, and the lamp isn't doing what it's supposed to do. And the lamp can show up, the lamp can bring light into the darkness, but it can also show up things that we need to pray to God about and perhaps ask for forgiveness.

Just as a lamp can show all the crumbs on the floor that I dropped from my toast the other morning. So the light of the Holy Spirit can show up things in our lives that we may not be very proud of and that we might want to come to God and say, please forgive me, please cleanse me of that, please help me to repent, to turn away from my sin and back towards you.

[18 : 05] Thank you, Josh. Next slide. When we pray in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, He can help us in our prayers. What does He do?

He brings us into the presence of God the Father. He actually brings us, we've got that connection with God through Jesus and now the Holy Spirit brings us into the presence of God when we're praying.

That's where we're coming. We're coming into the presence of God, into the presence of the King. He gives us a desire to pray. Let's be honest, we don't always have the desire to pray.

Sometimes it's difficult to pray. We really feel, sometimes, I know I do, feel as though it's a struggle. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and give you that desire to pray.

Allows us a sense of airship, air to the King. We're heirs to the Kingdom. And the Holy Spirit allows us that sense of airship and acceptance in the presence of an understanding and loving Father.

[19 : 14] helps us in the weakness of our humanity. We're all weak in our humanity, but the Holy Spirit can help us to overcome that weakness.

Inspires confidence and faith in a loving Father. Lays upon us special burdens of prayer and the strength to persevere until an answer comes. Really important.

Persevering in prayer. Perseverance has become perhaps not a very popular concept now. You know, oh, I can't be bothered to, I'll just not bother with that, you know, whatever it might be.

Sadly, marriages sometimes. People don't persevere sometimes now with marriage. And in prayer, it can be the same. We need to persevere until the answer comes.

And I think it's particularly the case, many of us will know, with family, and friends, where sometimes we really feel, you know, I just, I can't go on with this, but ask God for extra strength through His Holy Spirit to persevere, to keep going, to pray for that person in your family that you really have the burden about, or the friend, or the situation, or the circumstance, or the country, whatever it is, if you have particular burdens of prayer, please do persevere.

[20 : 39] Keep going until the answer comes. Our prayers are imperfect. Our words are not perfect. But the Holy Spirit blends them with our faith and our desire to serve Jesus and makes them acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

next slide, Josh, please. Ephesians 6, verses 10 to 18, talks about putting on the full armor of God.

Finally, be strong in the Lord, it says, and in His mighty power. put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

And I think sometimes, for me, it's good to pray this prayer each morning to put on the full armor of God when you start the day.

Before you do anything else, ask God to help you. Put on the full armor of God so you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[21 : 53] Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything, to stand.

Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 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. Next slide, Josh. Hebrews says, Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Well, let's be sure and certain that although we cannot see it, a war rages in the heavenly realms and impacts our world and our lives.

[23 : 13] We don't have to look far to see what the things that are going on in our world that are influenced through battles in the heavenly realms.

that Satan, that what Satan is imposing on our culture, on our world, on our nation, on our town, some of the things that are being battled over in the heavenly realms.

So it may not be a war like the terrible war that we see in Gaza or in Sudan, but it's a war nevertheless going on, a war that we can be sure and certain, as sure and certain as our faith that is going on in the heavenly realms.

And it's something we need to be aware of when we pray. Satan's not going to be happy when we pray. Don't think for a moment. It's important then to be prepared when we pray in the Spirit to remember that we are in a spiritual war.

We will face opposition. We will find Satan wanting to make us ineffective in our prayers, in our Christian walk.

[24 : 25] Satan will want to make us ineffective. That's what it's all, that's what he wants to do. He doesn't want us to be effective. He wants us to be ineffective.

He wants, we could find it difficult to pray. When I was preparing, I was talking to Anne about this and said, I just want to find some illustration.

I can remember once I went upstairs. I thought, I'm going to go upstairs into the bedroom and pray. Just kneel beside the bed and pray. And so I did.

I lay down, put my head on the bed, put my hands out, started to pray. Next thing I know, Anne's there going, do you know how long you've been up here? And I'd fallen asleep.

I'd just gone completely to sleep. And that may have been Satan making it difficult for me to pray.

[25 : 23] Now, Psalm 4 and verse 8 is the one I then like to claim, which says, I will lie down and sleep in peace for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

So that gives me the excuse of falling asleep. But no, it may have been Satan just trying to make my prayers ineffective, trying to make it difficult to pray.

And we don't, we want to try not to make our prayers be dry and by rote and uninspired. And this has been, I tell you, this has been a huge challenge for me as I've prepared this.

It really has. You know, it's making me look at my prayer life afresh. Because I know that sometimes my prayers are dry, my prayers are by rote, my prayers are uninspired.

And so it's really made me just sit back and think, goodness me, yeah, I need to, I need to really look at this. This is, this is, this is important stuff. So, yeah, it really has.

[26 : 30] Next slide, Josh, please. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who was a preacher and minister and speaker and writer, talked about praying in the flesh and praying in the spirit.

And praying in the flesh is if we feel that we're walking uphill. He talks about cycling uphill. But I prefer walking because I try and walk every day. And any of us who certainly who live in Whitby know what it's like walking around Whitby.

There are hills everywhere. You can't turn very far without finding a hill. and sometimes, you know, if you're praying in what we call the flesh, you're not praying in the spirit, you're struggling to pray, it can feel as though you're walking uphill.

And we know what that's like. You know, imagine walking from Golden Lion Bank at the bottom of the hill there up Flowergate and along to Skinner Street. It's a hell uphill all the way.

And it's hard work and it's difficult and that's what it can be like. We rely on our own ability to, as Martin Lord John says, carry the prayer forward.

[27 : 40] We're relying on ourselves sometimes when we're praying, when we aren't praying in the spirit, when we haven't asked the Holy Spirit to come into us and help us and equip us in our prayers.

We try to make our prayers sometimes effective by more words, make them longer and longer. We think, oh, yeah, yeah, more time, more words, just keep on and God will hear me.

Or the right language, these and thousands and that and whatever. You know, we think we have to use the right language. It's about being, as I think it was Mike last week said, about being authentic, using the language you use every day.

Next slide, Josh. We need to ask God to help us to pray in the spirit and then he will help us through the Holy Spirit by bringing our prayers to life and empowering them by making us realize that we are in God's presence, by moving our hearts, by granting us freedom in our prayers, by helping us in our weakness, spoken about all this a few slides ago, and by giving us the feeling that we're walking on the flat or even downhill.

That's that feeling, isn't it? When if you're walking and then you start to walk downhill, you suddenly feel, wow, this is great. Especially if you've walked uphill first and you get to that point, you walk on the flat and you think, oh, this is nice, this is good.

[29 : 12] And then you get downhill and you think, this is great. It's not a burden anymore. It's not a problem, is it? You're just walking down the hill. It's great. And that's what we need in our prayer lives.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us, to give us that feeling that we're walking downhill, that God is at our backs, helping us and leading us.

Praying in the Spirit is when the Holy Spirit takes our prayers to God in the name of Jesus. Praying in the Spirit is when the Holy Spirit takes our prayers to God, the Father, in the name of Jesus.

And I think there's something important there that when we pray, we commit our prayers in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Because that's the name that we take those prayers in the Holy Spirit to Father God. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

[30 : 19] Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.