

Fellowshipping with the Spirit Abiding Through Ceaseless Prayer

I. Spiritual Warfare: The Battle Over the Testimony of Jesus

1. The glory of the gospel is the victory has already been won – Jesus already did it all. Our charge, though, is **stand by faith in the place that we are – in Christ Jesus:**
given every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Him (*Ephesians 1:3*),
chosen for adoption in Him (*Ephesians 1:4-5*),
holy and without blame in Him (*Ephesians 1:4*),
accepted in Him (*Ephesians 1:6*),
redeemed and forgiven in Him (*Ephesians 1:7*),
guaranteed an inheritance in Him (*Ephesians 1:11-14*),
made alive in Him (*Ephesians 2:5*),
seated in heavenly places in Him (*Ephesians 2:6*),
shown the riches of God's kindness in Him (*Ephesians 2:7*),
created for good works in Him (*Ephesians 2:10*),
brought near to God in Him (*Ephesians 2:13*),
granted access to the Father by the Spirit in Him (*Ephesians 2:18*),
no longer strangers but being built into the dwelling place of God in Him (*Ephesians 2:19-22*),
fellow heirs and partakers of the promise in Him (*Ephesians 3:6*),
given boldness and access with confidence in Him (*Ephesians 3:12*).
And that's just Ephesians... we are also:
justified freely by His grace in Him (*Romans 3:24*),
dead to sin but alive to God in Him (*Romans 6:11*),
free from condemnation in Him (*Romans 8:1*),
free from the law of sin and death in Him (*Romans 8:2*),
inseparable from the love of God in Him (*Romans 8:39*),
sanctified in Him (*1 Corinthians 1:2*),
assured that all the promises of God are yes and amen in Him (*2 Corinthians 1:20*),
always led forth in triumph in Him (*2 Corinthians 2:14*),
a new creation in Him (*2 Corinthians 5:17*),
reconciled to God in Him (*2 Corinthians 5:19*),
the righteousness of God in Him (*2 Corinthians 5:21*),
sons of God in Him (*Galatians 3:26*),
complete in Him (*Colossians 2:10*),
given grace's strength in Him (*2 Timothy 2:1*),
saved into eternal glory in Him (*2 Timothy 2:10*),
lavished with the love of God, called children of God and assured that we shall see Him as He is and be made like Him in Him (*1 John 3:1-3*),
confident we have what we ask in Him (*1 John 5:14*).
2. The battle of this age is not over our victory, but rather for the testimony of Jesus and His victory. Paul urges us to get engaged in that battle rather than wasting our emotional, mental and physical energy fighting the battles of the flesh. Our chief focus has to be on fighting for the testimony of Jesus – taking captive every thought and bringing it into obedience to Christ Jesus.
2 Corinthians 10:3 *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...*

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3. The central arena of the battle of this age is over the Testimony of Jesus: the father of lies competing with the One who is Truth over the affections – the worship – the **faith** – of men. **Real warfare** is taking place in the heavens and on earth over the testimony of Jesus. The enemy doing everything he can to destroy, distract and dishearten those who cling to it (**Revelation 12:17**), and the angelic hosts moving to serve and strengthen them (**Revelation 19:10**).
Revelation 12:10 ...Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

II. Living in the Gospel

1. We have to see the exhortations of Paul in **Ephesians 4-6** in light of the glorious gospel of our salvation **in Christ** in **Ephesians 1-3**. It's the same pattern he follows in Colossians – the glory of what God has done in Christ (**Colossians 1:13-29**), intercession for the church to really see it (**Colossians 1:9-12, 2:1-3**), and then exhortation to **walk in Him** – **this is abiding**.
Colossians 2:6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.
2. Paul turns from proclaiming the gospel to exhorting a gospel-centered (i.e. Christ-centered) approach to life. First, a right view of the Church in light of the gospel – it is God's gift to the world to carry the testimony of Jesus and build men up in the knowledge of the Son of God.
Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children... 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ...
3. Second, a right view of relationships in light of the gospel – the standard being not to love your neighbor as yourself (do unto others), but as Christ loves (love in light of the truth of the gospel).
Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma... 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church...
4. And third, a right view on the spiritual struggle of daily life over our thoughts and emotions and a call to **arm ourselves with the truth and wield it wildly in a life of ceaseless prayer**.
Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your[self]... with truth... righteousness... 15 ...the gospel of peace; 16 ...faith... 17 ...salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...

III. Responding to Life in Prayer

1. The chief charge of God to the saints **in Christ** is to live in ceaseless prayer. It's the one thing that remains to be done now that we are in Him. We **build faith** by getting the truth of God in our hearts by beholding Him and meditating on His Word. We **walk in faith** by drawing the truth of God out from our hearts and bringing it to bear upon life, as we relate with Him in truth and bring our thoughts and emotions into submission to the truth of those conversations with Him. *1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God **in Christ Jesus** for you.*
2. This is perhaps the most critical habit to develop when it comes to abiding in His love. Jesus connects abiding in His love with day-to-day obedience. He's not saying He withdraws His love when we disobey, He's saying when we disobey it's an indicator that we've withdrawn from His love – we've lost sight of the truth in the day-to-day. Sin comes from unbelief – it's totally unappealing when our hearts are connected with the truth of His love. *John 15:9 “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”*
3. **Unbelief gains access through silence.** When we face life without declaring who God is in the midst of it, and turning to Him because He's with us through it all, it leaves room for the accuser to tell us we've been left as orphans to face life alone, and clearly God is not who He says He is. In that place, we're helpless to resist temptation or stand through trials. **We need the truth we're getting in us to be constantly coming out of our lips and fighting unbelief.**
4. Paul charges us with “**being watchful**” to the end of **praying always** armed with the truth. Prayer is our great tool for engaging our spiritual eyes in life and bridging the gap between spiritual realities and physical ones rather than living as though they are somehow disconnected. The habit of **watching and praying** is about bringing life into submission to the truth of God and of the gospel as we actively wield the truth in a life of ceaseless prayer.
5. Watch your own heart. Never let a test go by without inviting God to search your heart (*Psalm 139:23-24*) and asking the Lord to change it. Never let a moment of real love flowing go by without thanking God for what He's doing in your heart. Don't let silence fill in the blanks about how God is responding to your heart in that situation and make Him just a judge and not a shepherd. Interact with Him in the truth of how He shepherds our hearts.
6. Watch (with your spiritual eyes) those you're interacting with. We become far less offendable and far less offensive when we respond in the realm of prayer, praying for eyes to be opened and hearts to be set free rather than defending ourselves. Don't let silence accuse God of not caring about the injustice they commit **or** the bondage they're under, and don't let it accuse Him of responding to it in frustrated powerlessness the way we do.
7. Watch for needs around you. Jesus experienced so much of the kingdom breaking in because He **saw** the multitudes and was moved with compassion (*Matthew 9:36*). We need to get our eyes open and our hearts responding to the great need (both physical and spiritual) around us. Don't let silence declare that God doesn't see or is unwilling or unable to make wrong things right.

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IV. Asking for Our Inheritance

1. There are two distinct sides to a life of ceaseless prayer: the everyday abiding of taking every thought captive to be a prayer and not just a thought as we simply encounter life, and the **persistence of a life of asking as a discipline of keeping alive faith.**
2. Asking is a discipline precisely because God uses it to train us for battle even when we're not in a battle. It's a discipline precisely because it's about the remembrance and keeping of things that aren't necessarily stirring today. God wants us **abiding** in the truth of what we've been freely given in Christ. Practically, asking for our inheritance is one of the quickest things to go if we're not disciplined about having a list of things we're praying for and times we're praying for them.
3. It's about us staying connected with the truth, so Scripture plays a huge role because *“we do not know how to pray as we ought.” (Romans 8:26)* Scripture is full of lists describing our inheritance for us to cling to and contend for. My weekly prayer list consists of a number of them, plus words God's spoken personally to me:
 1. An ongoing reach for a Biblical expression of fullness in the faith built around the Apostolic Prayers recorded in the New Testament. (*Ephesians 1:17-19, Ephesians 3:16-19, Colossians 1:9-12, Philippians 1:9-11, John 17:20-26, 1 Corinthians 1:4-8, Romans 15:13*)
 2. An ongoing reach for the character of Christ to be formed in me in the fruit of the Spirit: **(love, joy/peace, patience, kindness/goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control)**
 3. An ongoing reach for the perspective and heart of Christ found in the Beatitudes: **(poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, love of righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking)**
 4. The ongoing pursuit of the fullness of a love relationship with Jesus using the prayers of Song of Songs: (*Song of Songs 1:2-3, 1:4, 1:7, 2:5, 4:16, 5:8, 8:6-7*)
 5. Prayers specific to my calling and my vision for my life gathered from things the Lord has highlighted to me and prophetic words spoken over me through the years.
 6. Intercessory burdens that God has particularly put strongly on my heart and I want to carry well over the years.

V. Fellowshipping with the Spirit

1. More than anything, though, ceaseless prayer is about our hearts staying connected with **Him in us**. Fellowshipping with the Spirit is simply me talking to God, not because I have a question or concern or it's my devotional time, but **simply because He's there**. It's practicing His presence, giving Him a glance of my eyes, letting Him know that I notice and appreciate that He's with me. It's constant warfare against the lie in silence that God is absent and does not care. *Song of Songs 4:9 You have ravished My heart, My sister, My bride; You have ravished My heart With one glance of your eyes...*
2. More than a presence, though, He's a Person. So beyond just acknowledging He's there, I want to acknowledge that He's there and He's taking things in and thinking and feeling things in response. “Holy Spirit what are You thinking? What are You feeling?” is the source of endless brief little conversations with the Spirit. It's constant warfare against the lie in silence that God is in agreement with what broken hearts (including my own) are saying and doing.
3. So talk to Him about the gospel, about life, about you, about Him, and about you and Him... about cities and nations, people and situations... and the little things: projects you're working on, things that make you laugh, things that make Him laugh, beauty in creation... anything. We just want continual awareness that He's in us and that He's a Person with thoughts, opinions and emotions (and His thoughts are not our thoughts – *Isaiah 55:8-9*).