

Praying In The Power of The Holy Spirit, Part II – House Cleaning

When I was growing up my parents always made a big deal of the first week of April. Beginning with the 1st Dad would constantly play April fool's jokes on us and it was great fun. On the 2nd I was served pancakes for breakfast with all the syrup any kid could ever want. Special treats daily would continue through the 7th which was my birthday. Life changed very drastically the next day. No longer was it all about me. On the 8th began the annual "Seven Says of Spring Cleaning." Mom and Dad insisted our house be super clean throughout spring, summer, and fall as there was always special guests stopping by to visit. For seven grueling days we cleaned a room a day. Everything out, everything thoroughly scrubbed, and everything put back orderly.

I didn't like the cleaning much, but I had to hand it to Mom and Dad. We had a great looking, fresh and clean smelling house before the week's end. Everything spic and span and in its place. Mom also had daily cleaning chores for my siblings and I. Each month we burned up another Saturday because Mom insisted upon a mini-spring cleaning day every month. Anyone visiting us was treated like royalty in a clean, clean home.

As stated in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*"

This verse contains one of the most powerful statements ever recorded in the Bible, "*God in your body AND God in your spirit, which are God's.*" Since salvation, ownership of our body and our spirit is now God's. We have been purchased at a great, great price. And miraculously, the most important visitor ever in all time has set up residence in you, God the Holy Spirit.

And what's the first task the Holy Spirit has for us upon moving in? You guessed it, Spring Cleaning! The Holy Spirit wants us to examine ourselves, wants us to judge every aspect of our life, our thoughts, our beliefs, our attitudes, our behavior, our morals, our speech. Absolutely everything is to be judged, all sin repented and confessed, and our lives conformed to the will of God. In short, get us all cleaned up.

The Holy Spirit's first step in our spiritual spring cleaning is an intense examination. Self-examination is a critical component of a Christian not only upon the Holy Spirit's residence, but for the rest of our lives.

This is hard because our nature prefers self-deception. Deceiving ourselves is easy and comfortable. We want to believe ourselves better, smarter, and more ethical than the reality. Therefore, careful, Holy Spirit-directed self-examination keeps us honest with ourselves and more importantly, with God.

We need self-examination to combat the spiritual deception rampant in the world. Scripture tells us to confess our sins to God, which can only be accomplished through self-examination. If we can never find any sin to confess, then "*we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*" (1 John

1:8). It is dangerous to lie to ourselves. Second Corinthians 13:5 instructs us to examine ourselves to see if we are truly in Christ.

- *2 Corinthians 13:5, Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.*

One of Satan's favorite traps is to whisper false assurance to an unregenerate heart. Without Spirit-directed self-examination, our enemy's lie is too pleasant, believable, and palatable to challenge on our own. One of the first task of a mentor for a new Christian is teaching the believer to undergo a thorough

First Corinthians 11:28 warns of another way we deceive ourselves. In giving instruction about taking the Lord's Supper (Communion), Paul says that we must first examine ourselves so that we do not take the elements "*in an unworthy manner.*" Are we distracted, angry, or impatient?

- *1 Corinthians 11:26-29 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. (27) Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

When we take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, we harbor willful sin in our lives and refuse to repent of it (see 1 John 1:9).

- *1 John 1: 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

When we examine ourselves before partaking of the Lord's Supper, we have the opportunity to confess our sin, repent, and receive His forgiveness. We can then take the elements in a worthy manner, in fellowship with God and other believers, purified through the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7; Romans 5:8–10).

- *1 John 1:7-8, But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*
- *Romans 5:8-10 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

A big problem with self-examination is that we do not always know our own hearts. In fact, the Holy Spirit must guide our examination who searches the deep things of the heart.

The psalmist admits that he doesn't even know whether his actions and motives are pure. So he invites the Lord, the Righteous Judge, to test him and reveal to him his own sin.

- *Psalm 139:23–24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way”*

Lack of self-examination can lead to ongoing self-deception; however, an over-attention to one's self is also unhealthy. We can become so inwardly focused that we take our eyes off of Jesus and make self-improvement our god. A.W. Tozer, in his classic work *The Pursuit of God*, says,

“The man who has struggled to purify himself and has had nothing but repeated failures will experience real relief when he stops tinkering with his soul and looks away to the perfect One. While he looks at Christ, the very thing he has so long been trying to do will be getting done within him” (p. 85).

We should examine ourselves in light of the truth being revealed to us from Scripture and allow God's Word to convict and change us. At the same time, we must humbly admit our inability to change ourselves and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit within to transform us into the image of Christ

- *Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*
- *2 Corinthians 10:5 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;*
- *Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”*
- *1 Corinthians 2:10–11 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*
- *Psalm 139:23–24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: (24) And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

It's important to bear in mind that sin is the main hindrance to our being able to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our previous article stated we must “abide” in the Lord and this article further declares we must examine every aspect of ourselves and confess all sin to the Lord who is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins.

To Israel God laid the foundation that sin will hinder prayers. *“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: (2) But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”*

Psalm 66:18 declares, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”*

H. A. Ironside wrote,

“Are not solemn words like these often forgotten? Are we so carelessly that we come into the Lord’s presence beseeching Him to undertake for us, only to get no answer from heaven because of our careless ways or our unjudged sin?”

Often backsliders will say they detest narrowness and can see no harm in the things that godly saints shrank from as dishonoring to Christ.

All too often, prayer is casually treated like one of those promotional check we receive in the mail. Every so often I receive an envelope from a business that has a check for \$1,000 or more made out to me. I’m sure you’ve gotten them as well. The very first time I received one, I deposited it and my wife and I were quick to set out and plan how to spend our good fortune. Oh boy! The next day the bank called and said the check was non-negotiable and I ended with nothing. I hadn’t read everything. I jumped to conclusions.

Christians, just as easily, jump to conclusions about what the Bible says regarding prayer. They see the blessings God has promised, but they don’t see the conditions for the blessings.

I have heard so many believers quote *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”* Thinking that God is a house of gifts they erroneously conclude the key to answered prayer is to use Jesus name when asking for anything.

John quotes this prayer principle three times in the book of John, but let’s look closer to see the real truth, the real conditions for answered prayer.

- *Mark 11:23-26 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. (24) Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (25) And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (26) But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*
- *John 14:13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*
- *John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*
- *John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*
- *1 John 3:20-22 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. (21) Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. (22) And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*
- *1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing?*

How many conditions did Jesus note for answered prayer? Count them. Name them one by one.

There are many, many believers who miss the “conditions” for answered prayer and become defeated in their Christian Walk. Don’t feel alone if you happen to be one today.

Now at first glance, we see so many “conditions” we think how can I ever pray and expect God to answer positively? The items listed above are the attributes of all believers (or at least they should be). As we walk in faith, we will have power by praying as the Holy Spirit guides us. Spring cleaning is required to judge sin, correct our walk with God, and “abide” in Him and His Word.

Do you have a condemning heart?

- We need to judge a condemning heart. As noted above in 1 John 3:20-22 obedience is required. But read the rest of Chapter 3:20-24. *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. (21) Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. (22) And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (23) And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. (24) And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

The believer who would pray in confidence when his own needs arises must walk in love and considerations for others and minister to their needs as the believer has opportunity. Otherwise how can that believer go to God with a condemning heart when in distress himself.

- *Proverbs 21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.”*

Do you have an unforgiving spirit? Yes, Jesus did say, as recorded in Mark 11:24, *“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* What a powerful promise, what possibilities it suggests as to a life of faith and prayer. But Jesus did not make so great a promise unqualified. Not everyone can pray with this level of expectation. There may be believers which have hindrances to their faith which renders their prayers impotent. Jesus outlines those qualifications in verse *Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

In the Lord’s prayers, Jesus notes we should pray with this statement *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive everyone that is indebted to us.* Jesus emphasizes that forgiveness and a forgiving spirit is necessary.

Ephesians 4:32 says “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

If born of God, I have been forgiven; therefore, I should forgive. The believer who would make requests with an expectant heart from God Almighty must keep their heart with all diligence – guarding it against malice and harshness when he has been offended or wronged in any way.

Are You Selfish? James 4:2-3 clearly states, “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. (3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

Selfishness will hinder our prayers and thankfully God loves us too well to grant every request of our selfish hearts. I remember talking with a believing sister who was caught up in a ponzi scheme and was seriously believed she would soon be rich beyond dreams and she was even going to tithe double. She was so confident God would answer her petition because James 4:2 said she didn't have riches because she hadn't asked for them. But the purpose of her prayers was selfishness. And to thank God for giving her untold riches, she would pay Him double tithes or 20% of her Ponzi winnings. Her prayers were never answered as she was asking “amiss.”

- *Psalm 37:4 If we delight in the Lord, He declares He will “give us the desires of our hearts.”*

The believer who finds their delight in the Lord will not ask for the gratification of carnal desires. The important thing to realize is that no promise is attached to the prayer of selfishness. If I ask for a million dollars for His glory, this is different. A million dollars is nothing to God. George Muller, who started a Christian orphanage asked and received over \$5,000,000 in fifty years to feed and shelter thousands of orphan children. God honored his faith and gave the means as required. There are countless of stories of believers who put aside their selfishness and boldly approached God with requests that glorified God and advanced His Kingdom. And each of these granted requests God supplied the necessary resources.

When we pray for material things it is well that we search ourselves, examining our motives in the light of His Word, to ensure we are not asking selfishly, but for His glory, in accordance with His will.

The Holy Spirit will have you review your family relationships.

- *1 Peter 3:1-7 says: (1) Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, (2) when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. (3) Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— (4) rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (5) For in this*

manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, (6) as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. (7) Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

H.A. Ironside brilliantly summarized the need for believing husbands and wives to live together in perfect harmony as guided by God.

“When a wife and husband are one in heart, one in purpose, each occupying the place divinely assigned in the home, loving and honoring one another, with what boldness, what holy confidence, can they kneel together before God in prayer, counting on His unfailing grace for their households and every interest of their hearts.

But where it is otherwise, how difficult it is to pray. And if rife and discord rule, prayer together is an impossibility. Formal prayers may yet be uttered by the lips while kneeling at the family altar, but definite answers there will not be.

Surrounded by a growing family, it is well that parents carefully consider whether their own behavior towards one another publicly and privately, is such as to help or hinder prayer. For what can be more important than that those who, under God, are responsible for their little ones should ever live in an atmosphere of trustful prayer, counting on God for the salvation of their households, and so living before them that the impressionable hearts of the boys and girls will recognize the practical power of godliness.”

Do we waver in our faith? Wavering is generally a symptom of something deeper. Wavering is really unbelief, and unbelief is the very opposite to faith, and therefore a prime hindrance to prayer.

- *James 1:6-7 says “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;*
- *Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

If you waiver, than perhaps, as Reverend Bob Harrington, the Chaplin of Bourbon Street in New Orleans often said, “*You need a re-run at Calvary.*” You are either saved or not saved. Reexamine yourself to ensure you have become a Christian, that you are indeed a follower of Christ, and finally close the door to any further doubt and wavering.

The following checklist will guide you in your Spring Cleaning so you can present a fit temple to the Holy Spirit and restore power to your prayer life. It is absolutely impossible to offer the prayer of faith if your temple is cluttered with any of these sins. *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord," Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7.*

SPRING CLEANING CHECKLIST

1. God the Father must be glorified when your prayer is answered. So many TV evangelists confuse believers by ignoring this condition when requesting money. They essentially state, "send us money to support our ministry and God will bless you 10 fold. So if you have money problems, need money, or want money, give to us first then God will honor and bless you." That's just simply not what the Bible says.
2. You must abide in God. This is a life of obedience and seeking God's will for your entire life.
3. You must abide in the Word. The praying believer is constantly listening to God and hiding His Word into his own heart.
4. All things requested must be to the Father in the name of Jesus.
5. We cannot doubt that God hears our prayers and will answer them.
6. We must be obedient to God.
7. We must do the things that are pleasing to God.
8. We can ask anything of our heavenly Father so long as it is according to His will. How do we know God's will. Through reading His Word and studying His law.
9. You must not have a condemning heart
10. You must not have an unforgiving spirit.
11. You must have spiritually healthy family relationships.
12. You must walk by faith, trusting God for all things. You cannot be wavering

I have called the next part of this series, Praying in the Power Of The Holy Spirit, Part 3 – Way Of The Warrior. Now we need bring our prayers, our petitions before the Lord.

One last word. Never train for failure. Champions train to win.