

OPEN THE DOOR IN PRAYER
by
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The Word of God sets before the believing community a choice. That choice determines the quality of life that we receive as we move along in the paths to which we are called in this life. What exercises the most significant influence in your life – the Spirit of the living God or the desires of the flesh?

Let us pray.

Spirit of the God who lives eternally, draw near now to illumine our minds, to renew our spirits and to grant us strength that will empower us to walk in the paths of righteousness for the glory and praise of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Hear us in Christ's Name. Amen.

As we gather today under the umbrella of the North-Eastern Prayer Conference, we are called to examine our lives and to determine in this season of Lent what it is that encourages us to think as we do, to speak as we do and to act as we do.

In the text that was read earlier from the letter to the Galatians at chapter five (5), from verse sixteen (16) to verse twenty-five (25), we listened to the apostle Paul inform the church at Galatia that they needed to choose between two major influences operating among them. On the one hand was the Spirit of the living God while on the other was what he termed "the flesh."

In verse seventeen (17) he stated: “the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.” Here is the great struggle that the Christian believer must face. The apostle went on to observe that “They are in conflict with each other.” The flesh, as the apostle referred to it, has no interest in the restraint or direction of the Spirit. Likewise the Spirit cannot entertain the interests of the flesh. The flesh persists in leading the Christian soul away from the presence of the eternal God. Prayer is not the kind of discipline that it has any intention of encouraging in the life of the Christian believer. Deepening one’s communication with God and becoming more aware of the direction of the Lord Jesus in one’s life have no place on the agenda of the flesh.

Verses nineteen (19) to twenty-one (21) puts before the believer exactly what is on the agenda of the flesh. Hear what the apostle wrote to the Galatians: “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.” This is what the flesh is interested in developing in the life of the believer. It is an agenda that is entirely opposite to that of the Spirit of the living God.

What is influencing your life? Are you embracing sexual immorality? Do you entertain impure thoughts as your eyes view what is before you? Is your motto for living “if it feels good forget about all appropriate standards of conduct and just do it”? Do you believe in worshipping only that which will allow you to do what you want? Do you believe that manipulating others to get what you want is the best way to live? Does hatred fill your mind? Do you think that the best way to live is to create confusion? Do you consistently fail to respond to the needs of others? Do you live life like a mad bull in a china shop? Do you think only of how

you can get ahead while denying the value of others? Do you like to see people get on each others nerves? Are you only satisfied when division reigns? Are you always thinking that you must have what those around you possess in order to be satisfied? Do you believe that heaven is to be found at the bottom of a bottle of alcohol and you intend to continue to search diligently for it no matter what is the cost? Do you believe that life is only worth living when it involves an all-inclusive party with no holds barred? Does the flesh determine what happens next in your life?

As a Christian believer you can open the door in prayer to leave behind such a lifestyle. Galatians chapter five (5) and verse twenty-four (24) asserts: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." The door to a different lifestyle in which there is freedom from the controlling influences of the flesh can be opened if one is prepared to engage in the discipline of prayer. It is prayer that allows us to cultivate the relationship with the Spirit of the living God that brings His influence into our experiences of living.

We need prayer that ensures that we belong to Christ for it is only when we belong to Him that the crucifixion of the flesh with its passions and desires takes place. Have we so opened our beings and lives to Christ that the attractions of the flesh have been losing their power over us? This prayer is one that can be based on the information available to us from the Galatians passage that we have been thinking about. We can choose to agree that what the flesh has offered us is not what we need. We can turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and ask that His presence come to us in the power of the Spirit of the living God so that the acts of the flesh with which we have been acquainted can be put to death. Our prayer can sound

like this: “Lord Jesus Christ, I agree with the truth of your Word that I have been hearing. Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like are opposed to what your Spirit desires to bring to life in me. I want to belong to you to the extent that the flesh with its passions and desires is crucified in my life. Lord Jesus Christ, be the Saviour I need from these things. Cause your Spirit to live in me for I open my spirit, my soul and my body to your presence even now. In your Name, Lord Jesus, let sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like in me now be crucified. In your Name Lord Jesus let your Spirit now be at work in me and throughout my being to grant me the life that you want me to have. Thank you for hearing this prayer. Amen.”

Galatians chapter five (5) and verse sixteen (16) counsels us: “walk by the Spirit.” As we heed this instruction there shall be transformation in our lives for we will be cultivating our relationship with the Spirit of the living God and what the Spirit brings to the life of the Christian believer is set before us in verses twenty-two (22) and twenty-three (23): “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Do you need the capacity to love once again after the traumas and disturbances that have arisen in your life? Do you want to experience joy in your soul no matter what circumstances may exist in your life externally? Do you want peace that refuses to be disturbed by what you are going through? Do you want the capacity to be patient with those around you? Do you want to be kind to those in need? Do you want wholeness in your life that renews the lives of others? Do you want

faithfulness to prevail in your life? Do you want the ability to be gentle when dealing with others? Do you want the capacity to exercise self-control in the face of the pressures of daily living? Do you want the Spirit of the living God to enable you to live as God intended?

We need prayer that will allow the Spirit of the living God to do His work in us. We need to be in the atmosphere of prayer that brings us into encounter with the Spirit of the living God. We need to open the door of our beings to the Spirit of the living God in prayer so that He may have the freedom to bring to life the various expressions of His presence with us. Much can be accomplished in us if we are prepared to pray in words such as these: "Spirit of the living God, through whose action I have come to belong to Christ, empower me to turn away from the desires of the flesh and to live by your continued presence with me. It is written in Galatians chapter five (5) and verse twenty-five (25) "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Grant me the strength to keep in step with you as you seek to guide me along in life's journey. Develop in me the love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control that are the evidence of your presence at work in me. Cause me to open the door in prayer frequently to you that you may more deeply transform me into all that the Lord Jesus Christ wants me to be for the glory and praise of the heavenly Father. Hear and receive this prayer, in Christ's Name. Amen."

The door can be opened in prayer to the way out of the conflict that we face between the influence of the flesh and the influence of the Spirit of the living God in our lives. We must give heed to the advice given in Galatians chapter five (5) and verse sixteen (16) which reminds us: "walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Let us choose this day to open the door in prayer

to the Spirit of the living God who is able to empower us to belong to Christ and to bring forth the manifestation of His presence with us.