**Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 20-21**

Introduction

I. There are many forces working against us having a rich prayer life

A. Our fast-paced life

In our busyness, we do not find time to pray

B. Our self-reliant culture

In our confidence in our own ability to accomplish and achieve with our own resources, we forget to stop and acknowledge our dependence on God

II. Prayer is one of the greatest gifts God has given us

The Passages (Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 20-21)

I. Looking at prayer in general

A. The context of prayer

1. Ephesians (6:10-20): We are in a spiritual battle against a spiritual enemy and prayer is one of our great spiritual weapons

2. Jude (v. 4, 17-19): There was a specific battle where godless men had crept into the church community

3. So, the context of our prayers is the spiritual battle we are engaged in

Therefore, prayer is an absolute necessity; we are in a battle and should feel that it would be impossible to live a Christian life without prayer

Anne Lamott: “The two best prayers I know are ‘help, help, help’ and ‘thank you, thank you, thank you.’”

B. The purpose of prayer

The main purpose of prayer (in these passages) is protection

1. Prayer protects us who are praying

a. Jude 20-21: prayer is one of the ways we “keep ourselves in God’s love”

1) The theme of Jude = being kept in the faith, not straying from it

-Notice the word “kept” in v. 1 and v. 24

-Examples of those who have wandered from faith (v. 5-7)

Kept = not wandering from the faith, not being led astray, staying close to God

b. Prayer keeps us in God’s love

When we pray, we connect with God and are reminded of his love, character, and promises, and our faith is strengthened

c. Paul’s example of how prayer guards/keeps us when we’re anxious (Phil 4:6-7)

d. C.S. Lewis: “I don’t pray because it changes God; I pray because it changes me.”

2. Prayer protects those we are praying for

a. Ephesians 6: Paul’s assumption is that the Ephesians’ prayers will help all the saints in their struggle in faith and will also help him as he shares the gospel

b. The assumption of the Biblical writers is that prayer actually does something

James 5:16: “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”

c. Sovereignty and prayer

God in his sovereignty has chosen to use our prayers as the very thing that moves his heart to act in certain ways and do certain things in history, so that if we had not prayed, they would not have happened.

II. Looking at the Holy Spirit’s role in prayer

He is our helper and advocate who comes alongside/inside us to help in our prayers

A. The Holy Spirit prompts our prayers

1. He prompts our prayers in a general sense

a. Romans 8:15-16: He gives us that deep assurance that we are God’s loved children which encourages us to come to God often in prayer with confidence that he hears and cares

2. He prompts our prayers in a specific sense

a. He may put a specific person on our hearts to pray for

b. He may prompt us to pray in the midst of a trial

c. “Every true prayer originates with God.  Every true prayer is brought from the heart of God by the Holy Spirit to the heart of man.  Every true prayer, originates with God and conveyed to the heart of man, and carried back to God by the Holy Spirit." —Charles Trumbull

B. The Holy Spirit guides and directs our prayer

1. We come to God with all this stuff on our hearts, but he shapes our hearts in the process and reminds us of God’s character and will, so that we increasingly pray in line with God’s will

Example: we might start by praying to escape a trial, but he guides the prayer so that we pray for perseverance in the midst of the trial

2. Romans 8:26-27: He intercedes for us when we don’t know what to pray for

He is our advocate in prayer just as Jesus is our advocate in heaven

C. The Holy Spirit inspires “All Prayer” (Ephesians 6:18)

1. Pray on all occasions

2. Pray all kinds of prayers and requests

3. Pray with all vigilance/perseverance

4. Pray for all the saints

Conclusion

Here are some possible ways to respond

I. Pray that God would give you a heart for prayer

II. Pray more intentionally for a specific person/situation in your life right now

III. Consider a more intentional structure or rhythm of prayer

e.g. 5 minutes in the morning, turning off radio and pray in the car, take a prayer walk once a week, etc.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What have been the greatest blessings of prayer in your own life? And what have been your biggest challenges regarding prayer?

2. What struck you most about the Holy Spirit’s role in our praying? What was a new idea or an encouraging idea or an idea that you have questions about?

3. How have you dealt with the apparent tension between God’s sovereignty and the effectiveness of prayer? How did you respond to the brief comments made on that on Sunday?

4. As you consider how to respond to this conversation about prayer, what are you most encouraged to do as a result (see the Conclusion above for possible ideas)?