

“INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

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Scripture Texts: Romans 8:26-27

Introduction.

Here in chapter 8 of Romans the Apostle Paul has been describing the great sanctifying activity of the Spirit. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ then you have His Spirit in you and His Spirit is a work in you.

- (1) The Spirit has set us free in Christ from the law of sin and death (v. 2).
- (2) The Spirit enables us to walk or live in righteousness (v. 4).
- (3) We live according to the Spirit and set our minds on the things of the Spirit (v. 5).
- (4) The Spirit brings life and peace to those who have trusted Jesus (v. 6).
- (5) We are in the Spirit (v. 9).
- (6) The Spirit is in us (v. 9).
- (7) To have the Spirit is to belong to Christ (v. 9).
- (8) The Spirit brings us life because of the righteousness of Christ (v. 10).
- (9) Since the Spirit raised Christ from the dead, He will also raise us up (v. 11).
- (10) It is by the power of the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the body (v. 13).
- (11) The Spirit leads us (v. 14).
- (12) The Spirit is responsible for our adoption as the children of God (v. 15).
- (13) The Spirit enables us to know our adoption and enables us to cry, Abba! Father!
(v. 15).
- (14) The Spirit bears witness to our spirits that we are the children of God and heirs
(v. 16).
- (15) The Spirit is the firstfruits in our lives of the promised coming redemption and glory
(v. 23).

Romans 8:26

Now Paul comes to the last activity of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness in prayer.

Likewise what? Paul has been saying to us he wants us to have a solid foundation under our feet and under our faith to understand suffering and how our sufferings are important in preparing us for glory. But the good news is the sufferings are nothing compared to the glory.

Paul showed us the groanings of creation are not the groanings of death throes but birth pangs anticipating the freedom from the struggle in glory. Likewise we groan in our present bodies as we wait for the redemption of our bodies and the revealing of the new heavens and new earth. Yes, it's hard, yes, you feel weak, but don't give up. Likewise the Holy Spirit helps us in our groaning. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness when we don't know how to pray in the midst of our suffering.

Our weakness.

What is our weakness? Do you feel any weakness when it comes to prayer? As one old saint said, if you want to humble a Christian, just ask about his prayer life.

How is your prayer life? Would you like it to be different? Does it need help?

Prayer is a challenge for all of us. First, there is the challenge to make time for it, and then there is the challenge of what to pray, or how to pray. Our hearts are often cold, our words seem weak or repetitive, our minds wander.

It is clear we need help, we are weak and foolish. All prayer is an admission of weakness. First, because it is acknowledging our dependence on someone else and not on ourselves. And second, because we don't know what to do or what to ask. Our weakness is our ignorance and our uncertainty.

Not only can't we bring about on our own the things we are asking for, but we have trouble even asking, finding the right words.

We are groaning Christians set in a groaning creation subjected to futility and corruption and we are perplexed, we don't know what we ought to pray. But don't be too hard on yourself.

Even the Apostle Paul had trouble in his prayer life. Remember the time Paul prayed three times for the removal of a thorn in the flesh, but God didn't do it. God had a different purpose.

There was another time Paul didn't know what to pray:

Philippians 1:22-24 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

Consider Paul's request of the Christians in Rome where he asked them "to strive together" with him in their prayers, "so that by God's will I may come to you with joy

and be refreshed in your company” (Rom. 15:32). Paul doesn’t know what God’s “will” is in this case. He wants to visit Rome, but he also knows that God may will otherwise.

No one should complain of not knowing what to pray. It is when we are weak, that the Spirit helps us. In all our weaknesses, in all our infirmities and inadequacies, the hand of the living God by the Spirit strengthens us and supports us and helps us according to our need.

God does not bring burdens and griefs and anxieties and suffering into our life, just to show us how weak and dependent we are. He brings them so that we will turn to Him in prayer, and exercise our faith in His Spirit praying within us.

The Spirit’s help.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Our minds are finite, small, limited. We cannot begin to grasp God’s ways, God’s eternal and infinite plans and purposes.

We want our ways to be above His ways, our will above His will. We want to be the clay telling the potter how to shape and fashion us and for what purpose (Isaiah 64:8).

But what if the Spirit is praying something quite different from what we would pray or want to pray? Have you ever prayed and gotten the opposite of what you prayed for?

If we pray earnestly for something and not only don’t we get it, but we get the opposite, what conclusion should we come to? That God is mean, that God is evil?

What if you are praying, you are asking God for something for yourself, for your marriage, your kids, your school or job situation, for some health or financial or personal issue and while you are praying the Holy Spirit is in the background saying:

“Father, don’t pay attention to his words. I know he says this and that and something else, but he doesn’t see the bigger picture, and if he did then he wouldn’t be asking for what he is asking, he would be asking for such and such. He is weak and I am here to help him in his weakness. His understanding is very limited, he can’t see what’s ahead, so Father don’t answer his prayer, instead hear me as I pray for him according to your best will for him.”

God is most concerned about us reflecting His character, about being holy, about being sanctified, about becoming more Christ-like, about Him bringing to completion the good work He has begun in us.

So if God is more concerned about our character and about our killing sin, dying to sin, about holiness how might he answer our prayers.

Marriage is one of those places God uses to refine us, a furnace for purifying us, helping us die to ourselves, and put others above ourselves, a place to kill selfishness and to humble us.

God gives us children to further sanctify us and make us holy, again humbling us, exposing our sin in front of others so we can grow, mature, become more Christ like.

God is out for our holiness not our happiness, about our true joy that comes from conformity to Him and His Word and His will.

If we pray for healing but he gives us suffering, what is that about? It is God caring less about our feeling good, and more about our faith and trust in Him, and wanting Him more than what he might give us.

Now I don't like this anymore than you do. I am human, I am flesh, I am selfish, and I especially don't like being humbled. It's humbling.

God is our Father, we are His children. Just as we who are parents refuse certain requests of our children because we know what is best or right or not harmful, so God refuses some of our requests.

Matthew 7:9-11 Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

We can't see the future, even an hour from now. And we don't know what is best. And because we cannot see, we have a weakness we need help with, and the Holy Spirit helps us with our weakness.

Romans 8:27

God searches hearts.

1 Kings 8:39 ...for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind.

1 Chronicles 28:9 ... for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought.

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 grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Jesus searches our hearts and He knows the mind of the Spirit and so as the Spirit groans in intercession so also Jesus joins in constant intercession for us and between the two of them they are causing everything to line up, everything to fall into place, everything to be moving toward a completion, a glory yet to be revealed.

Jesus taught us to pray, thy will be done. This is the key to effective prayer, that we seek not our will but His will. What conforms to His will, is agreeable to His will.

Why does the Spirit pray for us?

The Spirit prays for us because of our weakness which is that we do not know what to pray for as we ought. The Spirit's prayer is effective because God knows the mind of the Spirit and because the Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God.

When the Christian groans in prayer (How long, O Lord?), the Spirit joins in the prayer; the Spirit perfects and energizes the prayer, making it conform to God's will. At the precise point of our great weakness and uncertainty, we are met by the Spirit's power.

God never denies or turns down a request from the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit intercedes, it is God praying to God. When God prays to God for God's children, it is a prayer so deep it needs no words. Deep calls to deep.

Take this to heart, you are never alone in your suffering, in your need. The Spirit is with you always and He is always interceding for you. And Jesus is on the throne interceding for you. The divine in us is praying to the divine above us for us.

Implications and application.

When you feel spiritually weak, confused, or overwhelmed, trust that the Holy Spirit is your helper. You don't have to have the perfect words or feel strong in your prayers. The Spirit intercedes with "groanings too deep for words" on your behalf. This truth invites you to pray even when you feel inadequate or unsure of what to say.

In times of suffering, hardship, or when you are faced with difficult decisions, remember that the Holy Spirit is working behind the scenes to align your prayers with God's perfect

will. This gives you confidence that even in your confusion or pain, God is at work for your good.

God understands prayers that are said as well as prayers that are sighed.

Your groanings are proof you are a child of God, unbelievers don't groan in prayer.

You are being understood. God is not limited by what you know or don't know.

You don't have to know all the will of God.

God is praying for you, not against you.

God does not reject the prayers of God.

Your weaknesses, shortcomings, inadequacies don't keep your prayers from coming before the throne of God's grace by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Never give up praying, even when it seems futile. "Pray without ceasing" (1Thess. 5:17).

If the heavens seem silent, keep praying. If month after month your prayer appears to have had no answer, continue to draw close to the Lord. Do not abandon the mercy seat for any reason. Pray, weep, plead, wrestle, agonize, wait, pray some more until God answers.

When Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" He was teaching us to acknowledge every day that we are dependent on Him for everything, every breath, every bite.

If your heart is cold, do not wait until your heart warms. Pray your soul into warmth with the help of the Holy Spirit, who helps in our weakness.

Never stop praying for any reason. Resolve to be obedient to the divine will. "Pray without ceasing." Never, never, never give up the habit of prayer or your confidence in its power and your trust in the Holy Spirit.

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve.

I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health, that I might do greater things.

I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy.

I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of others.

I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.

I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

I am among all men, most richly blessed. Henry Viscardi.