

THE INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

TEXT: ROMANS 8:26, 27

INTRODUCTION:

1. I want to speak tonight on the intercession of the Holy Spirit (cf. 8:26).
2. Verses 26 and 27 deal with the subject of prayer. God commands us to "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17), but oftentimes we feel like we are unable to do that -- "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (8:26).
3. The good news is we have the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He "helpeth our infirmities" (weaknesses) -- Romans 8:26.
4. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray as we should and to plead our cause.
5. "Likewise" in Romans 8:26 refers back to the groans of verses 22 and 23. Here in verse 26 the apostle Paul refers to the "groanings" of the Holy Spirit.
6. The present "help" (8:26) of the Holy Spirit is another guarantee of the glory that will follow our present day suffering (cf. 8:18).

I. HIS DIVINE ENABLING

II. HIS DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT

III. HIS DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT

I. HIS DIVINE ENABLING

1. Our "infirmities" (our weaknesses) hinder us from praying as we should. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray as we ought (8:26).
2. The old hymn says, "I am weak, but Thou art strong..."
3. Paul refers to Christians suffering in verses 18-25; therefore the "infirmities" would include physical as well as spiritual weakness.
4. Frederic Godet said "infirmities" here (8:26) refers to "the fainting condition with which the believer is sometimes overtaken under the weight of present suffering" (*Romans*).
5. We cannot pray without this Divine enabling. Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).
6. I cannot preach without the Spirit's enabling. We cannot win souls without the Spirit's enabling.
7. And we cannot effectively pray without the Spirit's enabling. He "helpeth our infirmities" (8:26).
8. Regarding the neuter pronoun "itself" (8:26), we see the same thing in Romans 8:16. Some modern translations say "Himself."
9. The KJV says "itself" because the Greek word "spirit" (*pneuma*) is neuter in gender. According to the rules of Greek grammar, the personal pronoun

must agree with its antecedent in gender, therefore, the translation "itself" is correct grammatically.

10. But since the Holy Spirit is a Person, the pronoun "Himself" is correct theologically.

II. HIS DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT

1. The Holy Spirit not only deals with our weaknesses (infirmities); He also deals with our ignorance -- "for we know not what we should pray for as we ought..." (8:26).
2. Albert Barnes said Christians "are to a great extent ignorant of the character of God, the reason of his dealings, the principles of his government, and their own real wants. They are often in real, deep perplexity. They are encompassed with trials, exposed to temptations, feeble by disease, and subject to calamities. In these circumstances, if left alone, they would neither be able to bear their trials, nor know what to ask at the hand of God. 'But the Spirit itself maketh intercession...'"
3. The Holy Spirit's intercession is "according to the will of God" (8:27b). Therefore, the Holy Spirit helps us to pray properly.
4. We want our prayers to be in accordance to the will of God (cf. I John 5:14, 15).
5. William Newell wrote that the Holy Spirit maketh intercession "according to His nature (of which we are partakers); according to our needs, which He discerns; according to our dangers, which He foresees -- according to all the desires He has toward us" (*Romans*).

III. HIS DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT

1. "But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (8:26b). The Holy Spirit not only deals with our weaknesses ("infirmities") and our ignorance ("for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" -- 8:26; He also deals with our insufficiency and our inadequacy.
2. We cannot pray properly without the Holy Spirit's help. Prayer is initiated by God, and the Holy Spirit leads us and encourages us in prayer.
3. "With groanings" (8:26) -- this is the third reference of groanings in Romans 8 (cf. 8:22, 23).
4. James Stifler said, "groanings which cannot be uttered" are "yearnings whose depth is beyond the power of words to convey" (*Romans*).
5. By the way, these groanings have absolutely nothing to do with speaking in tongues. Tongues are not mentioned here or anywhere else in this epistle.

CONCLUSION:

1. Isaiah 38:1 says, "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live."
2. "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD" (Isaiah 38:2).
3. King Hezekiah vividly described his infirmities (38:11-14).
4. This is a good illustration of the Holy Spirit making intercession -- "O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me."