

Series: Romans
Title: The Spirit our Helper
Text: Romans 8: 26-28
Date: February 10, 2019
Place: SGBC, NJ

Romans 8: 26: Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27: And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” Paul has been declaring things the Holy Spirit of God does for God’s elect.

He began the chapter declaring how in regeneration, through the gospel, the Holy Spirit frees us from the law of sin and death—*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death...so then there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom 8: 1-2).*

He declared the good news that *“ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you...And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom 8: 9-10).*

Then Paul declared that in the warfare between our old sinful man and the new holy man within us, the Spirit of God quickens us, mortifying the deeds of our flesh, so that we never depend upon our flesh for anything, *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live (Rom 8: 13).*

The Spirit of God strengthens us by bearing witness with our new spirit that we are the children of God—*“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Ro 8:14-16).*

Paul said the Holy Spirit teaches us to suffer with Christ that we might be glorified together with Christ, he gives us the *“firstfruits of the Spirit,”* increasing patience and hope for Christ’s return.

Then we come to our text: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” (Rom 8: 26-27).*

Every believer in whom the Spirit of God abides prays to God. Christ has given us welcome access to God by his blood. By our Substitute shedding his precious blood for his people, every believer has a new and living way into the very holiest of holies—into God’s very presence—through prayer through Christ our High Priest. We no longer need an earthly high priest to represent us. Christ has made his people priests unto God. We have Christ as our High Priest in the presence of God, the true holy of holies. No child of God needs an earthly priest to represent us to God.

But we have a problem, our infirmities. Often, due to our sinful flesh, we cannot pray. Or we know not what to pray. We know we have access. We know we are welcome by God so that we can have boldness to enter. We know we are his elect chosen and precious. But due to our sins and infirmities, we simply cannot

approach God in prayer except the Holy Spirit make us to pray as we ought. Have you ever been there believer? If you are God's child then you know what our text speaks of. At times our spirit is under such a heavy load that we simply cannot pray nor do we know what to pray.

Subject: The Spirit our Helper

Proposition: The Spirit of God helps his people to pray by making intercession for us according to the will of God.

Divisions: 1) Help which the Holy Spirit gives 2) Prayer he puts in our heart 3) The end of true prayer

HELP

Romans 8: 26: Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

"Infirmities" are our physical and spiritual weaknesses due to our sinful nature. All God's regenerated people are full of infirmities due to our sinful flesh. In ourselves we are without strength. Due to sin, we have physical sicknesses, pain, mental sicknesses, and spiritual conflicts. We suffer slander, poverty, and persecution and more. These are infirmities.

The apostle Paul spoke of his infirmities as *"reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake."* Due to our infirmities, we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.

Another example of sinful infirmities is that some believers are weak in faith. (Rom 14: 1-23; 15: 1-4) Paul said some think themselves better or stronger than their brethren because they physically observe certain laws which were required under the old covenant. Their brethren do not observe these laws. But these are laws that are unnecessary such as observing certain days or abstaining from certain meats. These are not required of believers under grace. Though they think themselves stronger in faith they are actually weak in faith. Paul said to the stronger brethren—those who know we are free from the law because Christ has freed us— *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations"* (Rom 14: 1). We struggle with self-righteousness the same as they did. In that state we are weak in the faith. When we look at things we do and think our brethren do, we judge our brethren while exalting ourselves. It is self-righteousness. The sin of self-righteousness is one of the worst infirmities we deal with.

These are just a few examples. But due to our infirmities, we know not what to pray for as we ought. It is not only in times of trouble that we know not what to pray for as we ought. Our sins, the total weakness of our flesh, makes this the case at all times. Apart from the Holy Spirit we NEVER know what to pray for as we ought.

But especially, when a believer is weak due to trouble, we know not what to pray for as we ought. We ask God amiss. In times of trouble we are prone to ask God to remove the trouble. God gives us trouble to accomplish his purpose for our good. For example, Paul had a thorn in the flesh. But God had given Paul great revelations. So God gave Paul great trouble in his flesh for Paul's good.

2 Corinthians 12: 7: And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8: For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

But Paul prayed amiss. God gave Paul the thorn to humble Paul, lest he be exalted above measure. The thorn was given to teach Paul to depend on the Lord and not on himself.

Yet, in the midst of all our sinful infirmities, Christ knows we are dust. He was and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Our Substitute bore our sicknesses and infirmities when he bore the sins that cause them. And he put our sins away. He made intercession for us. Even now, he everliveth to make intercession for us. And Christ our High Priest has sent the Spirit to be our Comforter to make us overcome our infirmities.

Hebrews 4: 14: Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. 15: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. 16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

WHAT TO PRAY

Romans 8: 26...the Holy Spirit helpeth our infirmities...the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

The Holy Spirit helps his people by teaching us what we should pray. He helps our infirmities by bringing to remembrance our God and his sovereign power over all so that our hearts are settled. God the Holy Spirit applies the precious promises of the gospel to us. He reminds us that Christ shed his blood for his elect, for us personally. We are redeemed by him. All for whom Christ died are his purchased possession. He will not let us go. Therefore, the Spirit of God sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, comforting us and strengthening us despite our infirmities. We only pray aright by the Spirit putting prayer in our new man.

In our text, when Paul says "*the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us.*" It means he teaches us what to pray. Remember, when the Lord Jesus sent out his preachers? He warned they would be delivered up to the councils to be tried due to them preaching Christ. He said,

Matthew 10: 19: But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20: For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Likewise, it is the Holy Spirit that puts the words in our hearts so that we pray aright. He sprinkles our heart from an evil conscience. God the Spirit turns us from praying simply "*to consume it upon our lusts.*" He shows us our need and stirs us up and makes us pray aright. The Spirit puts the right words in our hearts. They are not even words that are spoken audibly but "*groanings that cannot be uttered.*"

Brethren, Christ taught us it is our "*importunity*" that will cause God to hear our prayer. Importunate prayer is heart prayer. It is groanings that cannot be put into words. The prayer the Holy Spirit puts on the hearts by which we pray importunately, without ceasing, is a desperately need for God's help.

God heard Hannah's prayer. Yet, she never spoke a word audibly (1 Samuel 1:13).

Paul tells us when he prayed amiss, the Holy Spirit taught him to pray aright. It was the Spirit of God teaching Paul not to pray for God to remove the thorn but to depend upon God's grace to bear it and to thank God that the power of Christ rested upon him.

2 Corinthians 12: 9: And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10: Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong

Brethren, never copy the religious world's version of prayer. The world "says a prayer." False religionists make a show in the flesh by their prayer. Christ said,

Matthew 6:5: And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6: But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 7: But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8: Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him

Be sure to get this! Prayer is God teaching us to submit to him and his will. True prayer is not us getting God to do our will but God making us submit to his. Therefore, more important than words and posture is praying *by the Spirit and in the Spirit*. He teaches us to pray for what we ought to pray.

Psalm 10:17: LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

Romans 8:15: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Jude 1:20: But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

Ephesians 2:18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL

Romans 8: 27: And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

God hears us because the Spirit teaches us to pray according to God's will. God knows the hearts. This is why Christ said, "*Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him*" (Mt 6:8). God knows the groaning that the Holy Spirit puts in our heart.

Psalm 38:9: Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

God *knows the mind of the Spirit*. When the Spirit of God puts a groan in our hearts, God knows that groan. He knows it not merely because God is omniscient and knows everything. But he regards it, and approves of it, and attends to it, and gives answer to it.

When our son was a baby, he would cry for something but no one could understand what he was saying. But his older sister, two years older than he, knew what he was saying. She would say, "He wants milk." Sometimes she sounded like a translator. He would speak a sentence no one could understand. She would say, "*He wants to eat. Then he wants to go outside.*"

Our Father in heaven knows the mind of the Spirit. Though our prayer is mere baby talk—even groans that cannot be uttered—the Father knows what the Spirit has put in our heart before we ask.

Here is the reason he hears “*because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*” The Spirit only does this for *the saints*. A saint is sinner who has been sanctified by God the Father setting us apart and declaring us holy in Christ. Christ sanctified his people by fulfilling the will of God on our behalf, perfecting us forever by his one offering on the cross. And the Spirit of God sanctifies us when he comes into our hearts, quickens us and sets us apart from the world through God-given faith and repentance. For his saints, the Holy Spirit puts in our hearts *a groan*. It is unintelligible to man and unheard by men. But though it is *a groan that cannot be uttered*, it is *a groan according to the will of God*. God knows it and approves of it and does as he will for his saints.

Moses prayed that he might enter Canaan. But the Spirit taught him it was God’s will for Joshua to lead the children of Israel into Canaan. The man that Christ healed asked our Lord that he might be with Him. But he received the answer,” Go home to your friends.” We ask amiss. But the Spirit of God puts the will of God on our hearts. Paul desired to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow him. He made Paul hear the cry from Macedonia that he come help. The mind of the Holy Spirit is the mind of the Father and the mind of the Son! The mind of God is one harmonious mind! Therefore, the Holy Spirit puts prayer in our hearts according to God’s will. He never makes us pray anything but what is the will of God.

A carnal man says if God ordained all things that come to pass then we need not pray. Faith knows that God who ordained it, has also ordained that we shall ask him to do these things for us. God told Israel what he would do for them. He told them beforehand. There was no way anything would come to pass except that which God foreordained that he would bring to pass. But then we read, “*Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them*” (Eze 36:37).

Therefore, faith obeys. Due to the Spirit of God interceding and putting prayer in the hearts of his saints according to the will of God, Spurgeon said, “A believer’s prayers are the indicators of the movement of the wheels of Providence! Believing supplications are forecasts of the future!” It is because true prayer is by the Holy Spirit making us pray according to God’s will.

Amen!