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Sermon Notes

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## **The Holy Spirit Helps Us Pray**

### **Romans 8:26-27**

#### I. The Promise and Fulfillment of Prayer

##### A. Promise

***Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced"***

1. Holy Spirit promised to Jews, by extension to all believers
2. Here called a "Spirit of grace and supplication"... the Spirit of prayer

##### B. Fulfilled

***vs. 15 you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."***

1. Each Christian receives the Holy Spirit
2. Spirit immediately begins Christians' life of prayer
3. Prayer becomes the daily lifeblood of the Christians' walk with God
4. Born again, we begin to cry to our heavenly Father... the Spirit works it in us!!

##### C. Christ's Commands and Promises

***Matthew 7:7-8 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."***

***John 16:23-24 I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.***

D. Many examples of prayer

1. George Mueller: perseverance in prayer

Mueller prayed daily and specifically for the needs of 10,029 orphans over 64 years

Mueller also prayed daily and specifically for every shilling of money he needed for that orphanage

2. David Brainerd: longing in prayer
3. John Hyde: faith in prayer

By faith he claimed one soul per day in prayer... then two, then three, then four

4. Martin Luther: priority in prayer
5. William Carey: world vision in prayer

E. Paul: Best Example of Constant Prayer

Paul's consistent theme in his letters

***Romans 1:9-10 God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you <sup>10</sup> in my prayers at all times***

***Romans 15:30-32 I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me***

BUT... what is prayer? How does it work Why is it so important? What does Romans 8 have to teach us about prayer?

## II. Our Weakness and Prayer

***vs. 26 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness..."***

A. What Weakness? ASSURANCE CHAPTER

1. Indwelling sin + external temptations
2. Corruption of the body

3. Present sufferings: suffering, groaning, yearning, waiting

**vs. 18** *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

**vs. 22-23** *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

Creation groans... we groan... NOW we learn the Spirit also groans within us

**vs. 26** *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*

The Spirit given to help us in our time of weakness... that is every moment of every day.

Prayer is part of what the Spirit works in us to help us through this world:

**vs. 15** *you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*

B. We Need to Pray, We Need Prayer

1. We need to pray: PRIDE

2. We need prayer: DANGER

C. Our Present Condition

1. Surrounded!! The war without

**Matthew 10:16** *I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.*

2. Divided!! The war within

**Romans 3:10-12** *"There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

**Romans 8:5-8** *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup> The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; <sup>7</sup> the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does*

*not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

3. Personally: not finished yet in salvation

Thus, we need prayer!!

4. Worldwide: not finished yet in salvation

Thus, we need to pray!!

#### D. Our Specific Weakness in Prayer

Jonathan Edwards: Sermon "**Hypocrites deficient in private prayer.**"

YET... even the best of saints are somewhat deficient in private prayer

1. We don't begin to pray

*James 4:2 You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

2. We don't pray for the right things

*James 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

*vs. 26 "We don't know how to pray as we should..."*

3. We don't pray in the right way

- a. not in **faith**
- b. not with **humility**
- c. not with **boldness**
- d. not with **thankfulness**

4. We don't persevere in prayer

That is... we have trouble in the **matter** of prayer—whether to pray at all; what to pray for

We also have trouble in the **manner** of prayer—how to pray & how often to pray

### III. The Holy Spirit Helps Us in Prayer

Spirit's prayer of two types: He helps us by praying FOR us; He helps us in OUR prayers

#### A. Christ Has Not Left Us Orphans

***John 14:16-18 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.<sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.***

#### B. Spirit Prays for Us Constantly

***vs. 26-27 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.<sup>27</sup> And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.***

Intercedes to whom? To the Father, God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth...

#### 1. Perfect intercession

- a. "in accordance with God"... running in the same direction as the will of God
- b. a matter of content and person
- c. everything the Spirit asks for, He gets, because He prays directly according to God's will

***1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.<sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.***

***James 4:2-3 You do not have, because you do not ask God.<sup>3</sup> When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.***

The Holy Spirit does not have this problem... He asks not for Himself but for us, and not according to His own mind or will, but according to God's pre-ordained will, according to what God is doing in us and in the world

And what is that?

**vs. 28-30** *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

The Holy Spirit knows the end goal is the perfection in Christ of all God's elect children. The Holy Spirit also knows the step by step means to that ultimate goal

And He constantly prays for these things for us

Perfect intercession by a perfect intercessor

## 2. Intimate intercession

**vs. 27** *And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will*

- a. God searches our hearts
- b. he knows that there are wicked and evil things in there... but also that our hearts are made new by His work of regeneration
- c. the Spirit's intercession for us is a perfect joining of the minds with the God the Father
- d. the Father "**KNOWS THE MIND OF THE SPIRIT**"... i.e. He knows how the Spirit thinks
- e. the Spirit also knows the Father's thoughts completely

**1 Corinthians 2:10-11** *The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

## 3. Spiritual intercession

**vs. 26** *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*

**1 Corinthians 2:12-13** *We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. <sup>13</sup> This is what we*

***Speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.***

- a. Greek = “mute groans”, or “wordless groans”
- b. direct spiritual communication

Words are slow-motion tools... like a long freight train, with each car carrying freight; each noun, verb, adjective, adverb carries meaning... but the Spirit doesn't need slow-motion words to communicate His truth to God

Direct spiritual intercession

***Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.***

He hovers over and around the mind of God

He hovers over and around our minds as well

- c. “spiritual truths”
- 4. Passionate intercession
  - a. GROANS
  - b. we groan waiting for the work to be done
  - c. the Spirit groans over us and in us and for us as well
  - d. passionate... rejoicing over our advances, grieving over our sins

C. ASIDE: Christ's Intercession

Later, we'll talk about Christ's intercession for us

***Romans 8:34 Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.***

***Hebrews 7:24-25 because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. <sup>25</sup> Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.***

Not only does the Holy Spirit help us by prayer... He also helps in IN our prayers

That is... we have trouble in the **matter** of prayer—whether to pray at all; what to pray for

We also have trouble in the **manner** of prayer—how to pray & how often to pray

#### IV. The Spirit's Help in the Matter of Prayer

Illus. Satellite transmission scrambled; equipment unscrambles it into something intelligible

Our unanointed prayers weak, ignorant, ineffective... Holy Spirit intercedes for us directly Himself

##### A. Instruction

*vs. 26 We do not know what we ought to pray for*

1. Purpose: What God is doing in the world
2. Promises: What God wants to give His children
3. Procedures: Immediate needs and how they relate to God's overall plans
4. Source: Scripture, then direct communication

##### a. Scripture

*1 Corinthians 2:9-14 "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -- <sup>10</sup> but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*

Spirit brings our words to God... Spirit brings God's words to us

He does this primarily through Scripture... He teaches us the **promises!!!**

Christopher Nesse: "Where God has not a mouth to speak, men must not have a tongue to ask."

William Gurnall: "The mightier anyone is in the Word, the mightier he will be in prayer."

##### b. direct communication

*[Antioch] Acts 13:1-4 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*



## B. Inclination

Illus. Black preacher: "Ya gotta have the 'WANT TO'!!!"

***Romans 12:2 you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.***

The Holy Spirit changes our hearts to delight in God's will and to yearn for it

THUS the Spirit helps us in the **matter** of prayer—whether to pray at all; what to pray for

## V. The Spirit's Help in the Manner of Prayer

Not only do we not know what to pray for, and not only are we not inclined to pray at all, but when we pray, our prayers are weak and lifeless... no faith, no zeal

***James 5:16 "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."***

***Luke 22:44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.***

***Hebrews 5:7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.***

### A. Empowerment

1. Our prayers are weak and somewhat lifeless... WHY... WE DON'T BELIEVE GOD

Thomas Watson: "Prayer that is faithless is fruitless."

***James 1:6-8 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.***

2. Spirit works FAITH in us!!!

***Jude 20 But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.***

***James 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well***

B. Endurance

***Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.***

1. BY THE SPIRIT We persevere for hours on a single night
2. BY THE SPIRIT We persevere for years on a single issue

George Mueller: 1864... 19 years, 6 months without single days break!!!

C. Impassioning

Thomas Brooks: "Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven."

1. We pray passionately
2. Like the Spirit, we groan over matters important to God
3. Our hearts are touched deeply by the needs of the world

Illus. Hudson Taylor: "Give me China or I'll die!!!"

D. Integrity

1. God does not listen to the prayers of sinning people

***Psalm 66:18 If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened***

***Isaiah 59:1-2 Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. <sup>2</sup> But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.***

2. The Spirit works in your prayer life by keeping you holy day by day
3. Pray and sin are incompatible

***1 Peter 4:7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.***

John Bunyan: "Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer."

If your prayer life is weak, could it be that you are cherishing some secret sins that are killing your heart from prayer??

## VI. Application

NOTE: Passage does NOT command us to pray... merely teaches about Spirit's role in prayer

- A. Be humbly dependent
- B. Be assured
- C. Be faithful in prayer