

“The Spirit’s Help in Weakness”—Romans 8:26-27

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Spirit’s Help in Weakness”, is Romans 8:26-27 → *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He Who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Weakness comes in all forms: illnesses along with physical challenges and limitations; emotional and mental struggles which strive to disable a person; emotional and spiritual struggles, triggered by disasters and tragedies which intrude on your daily living; temptations to sin which the devil places before you from the world, which work on the weakness of your sinful heart so that you make choices which bring more feelings of guilt-ridden burden to your heart, accompanied by more weakness.

Inevitably weakness will make you feel a need for help of some kind. Unfortunately, even your weakness is not necessarily enough to move you to seek that help. It can leave you in a fetal state, completely

helpless to move, even making you believe the delusion that all is hopeless. Many times it takes such weakness in life to drive one to prayer and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, weakness can cause a person to want to pray and at the same time not be able or know that for which one should pray!

God's Word bursts forth in verse 26 of our text with the promise of His Holy Spirit in the midst of your weakness: *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Never underestimate or overlook the power and work of the Holy Spirit in your life!*

Many times I will ask parents, "Why did you have your children baptized?" While I would hope that it flows from a desire to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ as one way of bringing their children to Jesus in obedience to His command (cf. Mark 10:13-16), there is another very important reason. You want your children to have the Holy Spirit according to His promise as well! (cf. Acts 2:38-39) The Holy Spirit brings you into a relationship with God as your loving Father, helps you continue in that relationship and brings you to your Father eternally on the Last Day.

As we await the goal of the Christian faith we can feel weak with doubts, frustrations and failures as our faith and perseverance are

constantly under attack. Thus, we need the help of the Spirit. The word *helps* in our text literally means “to take up with.” In other words, the Spirit is taking up our weaknesses with us to help us through them. This is actually in accord with Jesus’ teaching to His disciple the night before He died on the cross. In His effort to bring them comfort at the thought of His physical presence no longer being among them, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to us, describing Him as our *Helper*. In connection to His death, resurrection and ascension He said in John 14:16-17 → *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth . . . for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

Jesus did not leave us to try and handle our weaknesses on our own. He knew that every part of our relationship to God as our loving Father and our desire to live in obedience to Him in the midst of our struggle with the presence of sin, death and the devil would be impossible for us to carry out. Thus, He sent us the *Helper*—the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ promise is that this *Helper* will guide us in our daily living of the truth and **always lead us to His Person & Work!** (cf. John 16:13-14) God has given you His Holy Spirit, placing Him into your heart (cf. Galatians 4:6) to help you live in faithfulness to Him!

Many times in our lives we feel so weak from the frustrations, failures and doubts that the devil, the world and our own sinful nature place before us that we need *the Spirit Himself* to intercede *for us*, presenting

prayers and desires on our behalf that are in accordance with God's will.

Not knowing how or that for which to pray happens when worry about the future overtakes us; when striving to decide what direction is best for us to take; when hit with grief and sorrow; amidst the many attacks on our physical and emotional well-being . . . just to name a few.

At these times we simply need to trust the promise of God's Word that the Holy Spirit is at work in and through us and move forward in faith. Paul expressed this process in his life in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. He said *a thorn was given him in the flesh, a messenger of satan to harass him, he believed for the purpose of keeping him from becoming conceited.* His perspective is a good example for us as well. He says: *Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* The Holy Spirit drove Him to prayer about his struggle and Jesus gave him the answer of the sufficiency of His grace. Thus, he was able to embrace his struggle in Christ's grace and move forward in obedience to His heavenly Father. In other words, he embraced his struggles **because he was embraced in Christ's grace!**

You too can embrace the struggle and move forward in the strength, power and working of the Holy Spirit in your heart and life. You can

depend upon the fact that God knows your heart even if you feel you don't know it yourself. Verse 27 of our text reassures us: *He Who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* Instead of giving up the fight of the faith . . . instead of doubting God's presence and power . . . instead of allowing your weaknesses to disable you . . . you can move forward, striving to be faithful to Your heavenly Father, trusting the Spirit to intercede for you according to God's will!

This is actually very freeing for you. It takes the burden of your relationship to your heavenly Father off of you and places it on the Holy Spirit, your Helper! In all the circumstances and vocations of your life you simply trust the Holy Spirit to do His work through you in His time according to God's will. In one sense, it is a matter of letting go of trying to figure out those difficult times or trying to control them or trying to get rid of them and let God lead you through them. It's a matter of asking, "Lord, where do I go from here?" rather than, "Why me, Lord?" In this way you embrace the struggle as a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus so that the Holy Spirit can move you through the struggle!

It is the Spirit Who works all that is spiritual in you. What God has done for your salvation in Christ He *has revealed to you through the Spirit.* (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10) Because you cannot accept God's work of grace for you in Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14) the Holy Spirit has been given

to you so that you *might understand the things freely given you by God.*

(cf. 1 Corinthians 2:12) God's judgments are unsearchable and His ways inscrutable (cf. Romans 11:33). Thus you have received the Holy Spirit because *no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11) Even the prayers you do lift up in worship which you formulate in your mind or read are there as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit! In the final analysis our prayer should be: "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit . . . not my will, but Yours be done." Amen.

Because you are sons,

God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,

crying, "Abba! Father!"

(Galatians 4:6)

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