

Romans: Verse-By-Verse

Romans 8:26-27

Student Notes

- **The Spirit's Work In Our Lives: Romans 8**

1. The Spirit enables us to fulfil God's Law: vv. 2-8
2. The Spirit enables us to subdue our fallen nature: vv. 9-13
3. The Spirit assures us of our adoption into God's family: vv. 14-17
4. The Spirit serves as our foretaste and guarantee of God's inheritance: vv. 18-23

Verses 27-28: A fifth work of the Holy Spirit linked to 1. Spiritual insight 2. Prayer.

- **The Upside-Down Prayer: v. 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."

"In the same way"? What is Paul referring to? The clue: What Paul said about hope in the last passage: "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

Hope is meant to help us in our weaknesses. Our confident expectation of the day in which God resurrects and restores both humanity and earth – helps us in our weaknesses.

Hope helps our weaknesses: So does the Holy Spirit. "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness."

- **Our Limitation: Ignorance of God's Will:**

“We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”

Do you always know what to pray for? What if it's a complicated, messy situation, that could turn out a number of ways?

The Early Church's Quandary: (See Acts 12) James and Peter were both arrested by Herod's soldiers and slated for execution.

“He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also.”

When James was arrested, the Church prayed for his deliverance. He was still executed. When Peter was arrested the Church prayed for his deliverance. He was rescued by an angel and later knocked at the door of the prayer meeting,

Was one prayer better than the other? Not really ... because they didn't even believe it when Rhoda said Peter was at the door.

The point: We don't always know how to pray. Ignorance really is our greatest weakness when it comes to prayer.

- **The Spirit Helps With Our Weakness:**

“The Spirit himself prays for us”. A couple of scholarly views: 1. This refers to what Paul called, “Praying in the Spirit”. 2. This is another way of saying the Spirit helps us with our prayers.

Paul's emphasis: Since we do not know what to pray ... “The Spirit **himself** intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”

It is the inclusion of the word “himself” that tips us off that this is not us praying. It is the Spirit himself who is praying.

The “upside down prayer”: Paul says he “intercedes” for us. Greek word, “intercedes” -- to have a party representing another party. It’s similar to using the word “mediator”.

So, it’s not us praying, it’s the Holy Spirit intervening on our behalf and praying for us.

John Murray: “The children of God have two divine intercessors. Christ is their intercessor in the court of heaven ... while the Holy Spirit is their intercessor in the theatre of their own hearts.”

- **Groans Which Cannot Be Expressed: v. 26**

“ ... But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”

Three groans in Romans 8: Creation, Christians, and the Spirit. All are waiting on the same thing: For God to complete his work and reveal his sons and daughters in their full glory.

The New Testament, beginning with Jesus, teaches us a “Trinitarian” approach to prayer. We pray to the Father, in the Name of the Son, by the Holy Spirit. It’s the Father who give us the right to prayer, the Son who gives us the authority of prayer, and the Spirit who gives us the conduit of prayer.

“... Groans that words cannot express.” Two views: 1. NIV translators: groans cannot be verbalized. 2. The groans are simply not verbalized. (They are silent groans – like a “sigh”).

Tying this to the context of Romans 8: We are waiting for God to finish his work in us – and restore creation. In the meantime, we don’t know what we should pray for – so, at times, the Holy Spirit is doing the praying for us and on our behalf.

John Stott: “It must be, therefore, that the Holy Spirit identifies with our groans, with the pain of the world and the church, and shares in the

longing for the final freedom of both. We and he groan together.”

A Trinitarian Cooperation: v. 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.”

Who is “He who searches our hearts”?

1 Samuel 16:7: “... God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Chronicles 28:9: “... The Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts.”

Verse 27: “And God, who searches our hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”

An exceptional lesson in Trinitarian Cooperation: God searches our hearts, and knows the mind of the Spirit. The Spirit knows the mind of God the Father.

Because of our ignorance about what God wants in some situations, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. He prays for us with groans that are not verbalized. He never gets it wrong because He knows what God wants in every situation and God knows the mind of the Spirit.

Recap:

1. In our weakness do often do not know what to pray for.
2. The indwelling Spirit helps us by interceding for us.
3. God, who searches our hearts knows the Spirit’s mind, and hears the Spirit’s prayers.