

Romans 8:26-29 Commentary

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Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

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The Resource of the Holy Spirit, Pt 2

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

Romans 8:26 In the [same way](#) the [Spirit also helps](#) our [weakness](#); for we do not know [how](#) to [pray](#) as we [should](#), but the [Spirit Himself intercedes](#) for us with [groanings too deep](#) for [words](#); **27** and He who [searches](#) the [heart](#)s knows [what](#) the [mind](#) of the [Spirit](#) is, [because](#) He [intercedes](#) for the [saints according](#) to the will of [God](#). **28** And we know that [God causes all things](#) to [work together](#) for [good](#) to [those](#) who [love God](#), to [those](#) who are [called according](#) to His [purpose](#). **29** For [those whom](#) He [foreknew](#), He [also predestined](#) to become. [conformed](#) to the [image](#) of His [Son](#), [so](#) that He would be the [firstborn among many brethren](#)

So far we have seen: the Role of the Holy Spirit; the Result of the Holy Spirit; the Rights of the Holy Spirit; the Relationship of the Holy Spirit causes; and the Reward the Holy Spirit guarantees. Last time we began to see the Resource of the Holy Spirit, and that is where we will continue to look this time.

There is a depth to our Christian life that few of us ever realize. God is at work to such a degree that we rarely realize it. Only reluctantly are we willing to bow and accept the fact that God is always in control of our lives. But in the rare moments when we are finally driven to the end of ourselves, we step into this overwhelming spiritual dimension as we cry out for the perfect will of God to be done in our lives. The whole Trinity is involved in the project of conforming us, by the means of our trials, into the image of Christ.

In Romans 8, we get an intimate look at some of what is taking place. Romans 8 has taught us that, because

of the sin of Adam, the *whole* creation, including mankind and all of nature, is suffering daily. In fact, there is a groaning that is going on in nature that is intensifying as we speak.

The word "groan" that we studied last time means to sigh as if in great pain and with a great longing, a longing in the midst of suffering for relief to come. This intensified groaning is declaring a message to all of us.

Romans 8:22 says, "For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." The word for "suffer together with" is *sunodino*. It is the word *sun*, which means together with, and *odino*, which means pain, but particularly when used as a metaphor of a woman in labor. We all know that when a woman is in labor the pains intensify and they become more frequent, announcing a coming event.

You see, all the suffering of nature is intensifying, and the more frequent the suffering is, the closer the event of the coming of our Lord and the glorification of the sons of God gets. Creation groans in pain and suffering and is longing for the event of the revelation of the sons of God.

But, this groaning, this painful longing for the event of the future of the coming of Christ and the glorification of the sons of God is also experienced by the children of God. We too groan!

Romans 8:23: "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." Paul, as we saw last time, identifies us as those having the "firstfruits" of the Spirit.

The very fact that the Holy Spirit lives in us to *empower us for what we cannot do without Him* is proof of the fact that we haven't seen it all yet. One day He won't need to rule in us but we will be changed to rule with Him.

We are by grace in Christ, yes, but we are also living in a fallen body that is filled with sin and is going to die. In this body, we suffer pain and failure as we live in a suffering world, but the Holy Spirit is living in us to use this suffering and pain to shape us into the image of Christ. But, one day, we know from the word of God, we will be changed completely and it is for this day that we *groan and long!*

It is at this point that we stopped last time. The believer, in the midst of his groaning, has a Resource that nothing and no one else has on this earth. The Holy Spirit of God lives in us. He interprets our cries and our longing to the Father.

This is our third point in the message of the Resource of the Holy Spirit. We saw, first, that creation groans, longing for the "revelation of the sons of God"; second, believers groan, longing for the same thing, the realization of all that has been promised them. And third, the Holy Spirit groans.

Romans 8:26

Look again at **Romans 8:26**: "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

The apostle shows us several things very methodically here in **verse 26**.

First he shows us the Spirit's purpose in us: "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness." He is there, in us to help us in our weakness." Notice that "weakness" is singular—which means he is referring to a specific weakness. We are weak, and feeble apart from Him.

"And in the same way," or in "like manner," says that what the Spirit is doing in us corresponds to what precedes. Just as we wait out the time longing for the event that is coming, the Spirit is there to help us through it.

"The Spirit also helps our weakness." The idea is that He lays hold on our weakness, our inability. The word translated here as "helps" is the word *sunantilambano*. *Lambano* means to take, or to hold, but the first two words Greek words give much insight to the word.

Sun, as we have already seen, means a union, or together with. You may remember we used the illustration of making biscuits. Once you have mixed all the ingredients together and then baked them, it is impossible to separate the ingredients again. This is the "union" of the word *sun*. So, along with us He, the Holy Spirit, takes hold of the burden in order to help. We have our part, which is to wait hopefully, choosing to bear up under whatever comes our way (verse 25: "But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it"), and He has his part.

Anti means facing us. Imagine a man struggling to move a heavy log. Along comes another man, who picks up the other end to help. One is on each end of the log, and they face each other as they work together to move the log. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is there with us to do His part in helping us in our weakness.

Second, Paul shows us our problem. Where is the target area of our weakness? Actually, there seems to me to be two things linked together. In verses 18-25, the very need for the Roman church to be exhorted to trust God in suffering and to choose to bear up under whatever comes because God is in control, shows us that evidently they weren't doing so good. Just like us. We know that God is in control, but we would rather blame somebody else and have a "pity party."

And coupled with this weakness is our inability to pray as we should: "for we do not know how to pray as we should." This is where the Holy Spirit takes hold of our situation with us, and does what we cannot do. We say, "God I trust you, but I need your help, I don't even know what to pray." And the Holy Spirit picks up the other end of the log that we cannot carry.

It is not as if we do not pray, but we do not know how to pray or what to pray, because we don't know all that God is doing in a given trial that we are going through. Our prayers, like in James, so often go amiss. We always pray in light of what we think is best for us. But, we don't know how to pray.

So the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to help us, to pick up the end of the log we cannot carry. The problem is that we do not always look at life the way God does and when we pray we don't know how or even what to ask.

But, the power, the ability of the Holy Spirit is that He knows exactly how to pray and what to ask for us: "but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." Oh, this gets good. The Holy Spirit knows exactly what is going on in our lives and knows exactly what to pray, for He is God. The Holy Spirit when He sees we do not know how to pray, immediately steps in and prays for us.

Most of the time, when we are in the midst of suffering, we are inclined to pray for our problem's removal. Waiting and believing God that He is using this for greater purposes seems too difficult. Even the apostle Paul prayed three times that God would remove the thorn in his flesh. The answer he received should have been what he prayed—No. But, the Holy Spirit makes good these deficiencies in our prayers.

"But the Spirit Himself intercedes." The verb is in the present tense. This is at any time, all the time when it is needed. He intercedes "for us." The meaning here is that the Holy Spirit happens upon us and acts in behalf of us. The Holy Spirit works all that is "spiritual" in us, even our praying.

The verse goes on to say "with groanings too deep for words." Oh, the many views on this verse. Some say this is speaking in tongues. But in no way is this some mystical prayer language that a believer says he has. The word "groanings" is that which no language of any kind could ever express. These groanings are the communication between the Spirit and the Father.

Notice the verse says "the Spirit Himself" intercedes. Some say this is when the Holy Spirit takes our groanings and teaches us what to pray because we don't know how. Prayer certainly is initiated by God and therefore the Spirit would be the one to lead us in prayer. All of us have experienced this. But, my problem is that I wonder if what Paul is saying ever reaches our consciousness. This is not us saying anything; this is communication in the Godhead.

What I get out of this is that the context has been speaking about believers going through suffering, pain, and tribulation. It has also stated who it is referring to: "those who walk according to the Spirit." In verse 28, it says to those who "love God and are called according to His purpose." When I go through the deep dark valleys of suffering, when my heart yearns for the will of the Father, then I know that He cares so much for me, that my groanings become His as He takes them and prays the perfect will of God for me when I haven't got a clue what to ask.

Think about a lawyer who prepares a case for court. He must discern if the client truly is telling the truth, then takes all the information given him, and puts it as it should be. Then he takes it to the trial lawyer who presents it to the judge. We have double comfort in the fact that the context of chapter 8 shows us that we have two lawyers. One is the Holy Spirit, and the other is the Lord Jesus. Verse 34: "who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

When I am compelled, through circumstances, to pray, I am suffering and in pain, not knowing how, but

wanting God's will to be done. It is then the Holy Spirit immediately picks up the burden, and takes my properly prepared case to our Lord Jesus who presents it to the Father.

Romans 8:27

The Holy Spirit is God; therefore, He knows what to pray. Verse 27 says, "and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." "He who searches the hearts" refers to God the Father. Look at these verses:

Matthew 6:4: "that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

1 Chronicles 28:9: "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever."

Psalms 7:9: "O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds."

Proverbs 17:3: "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts."

Jeremiah 11:20: "But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously, Who tries the feelings and the heart, Let me see Thy vengeance on them, For to Thee have I committed my cause."

Jeremiah 17:10: "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds."

Jeremiah 20:12: "Yet, O LORD of hosts, Thou who dost test the righteous, Who seest the mind and the heart; Let me see Thy vengeance on them; For to Thee I have set forth my cause."

Acts 1:24: "And they prayed, and said, 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen.'"

1 Thessalonians 2:4: "but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts."

Revelation 2:23: "And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds."

Well, "He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is." In other words, the Holy Spirit and the Father are one. The Spirit doesn't have to ask the Father what His will is. The Holy Spirit is God. He takes our groanings and translates them into prayer which is according to the will of God.

God, the Holy Spirit, picks up the end of the log that we cannot carry, and He takes our groanings and turns them into prayer which asks the very will of God. He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Prayer is His work. We bow our heads, filled with groanings because of our longing for the event that will one day come. As we are bowed over with the pain and the sufferings of this life, unable to pick up the weight of the situation, the Holy Spirit, who is God, who cares for us beyond our understanding, quickly picks up our groanings and interprets them into prayer that is "according to the will of God."

When you fear that your prayers are not heard, or that they are not correct, when your heart only wants to please God, do not be discouraged. The Holy Spirit has already stepped in and translated your prayers according to the perfect will of God.

Oh, the resource of the Holy Spirit of God. And do you know what kind of conclusion we can draw when the answer comes? Romans 8:28-29: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."

I can thank Him for the circumstances. I can thank Him in the circumstances. God the Holy Spirit has been my prayer partner.