

# The Spirit who Helps me Pray

4.27.25

Message 34

Romans Series

## Romans 8:22–30

<sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. <sup>23</sup>Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits—we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>Now in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

*<sup>26</sup>In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

<sup>28</sup>We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup>And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

## Introduction

A. Our bodies groan under the weight of what is and also in anticipation of what's coming.

1. Our spirit groans under the weight of what is and what is coming.

2. Creation does the same.
3. The groaning has an eschatological purpose.
4. A future hope.

B. The hope is that Jesus is returning.

1. At that time, the full adoption and redemption of our bodies will come to pass.
2. When Jesus returns, and the final judgments are laid forth, we will go to either our eternal reward or eternal judgment.
3. This event is the culmination of all of created history.
4. Therefore, all of creation, the believer, and the Spirit groan in anticipation.

C. Paul uses the image of a woman in labor.

1. Because a woman in labor groans not just because of the pain, but in hope and the anticipation of the joy for the child being born.
2. Before the sonogram, the mother was unable to see what was taking place within her.
  - a. Was it a boy or girl?
  - b. Is the baby healthy?
  - c. What will the child become?
3. She groans not only with pain but in hope.
4. Because who hopes for what they can see!

D. Groanings.

1. It would make sense to think of the Creation as groaning and even the believer.
2. But the Apostle Paul says the Spirit groans within us.

3. This ministry is happening within you, even if you don't realize it.

a. If you are in Christ Jesus, then the Spirit is in you.

b. And He is interceding and praying with you and for you.

4. By exploring this intercessory ministry, we can embrace it more fully.

a. With understanding comes opportunity.

b. And I hope that as we explore this ministry of the Holy Spirit, we will embrace more of the opportunity.

5. **This morning I want to share a few moments about Praying in the Spirit.**

a. This is not an exhaustive treatment.

b. There is a strong likelihood that we will go deeper next week.

c. but I do believe we can catch a bit of the Apostle's heart and desire for us as we explore praying in the Spirit.

## 1. Let's Talk about Praying in the Spirit

A. The Apostle Paul commanded the believers in Ephesians to pray in the Spirit.

1. Ephesians 6:18 (CSB)

<sup>18</sup> Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

2. This kind of praying isn't described in detail.

a. Paul could safely assume that they knew what he was talking about because he had taught and modeled this in front of them.

b. And he directly ties praying in the Spirit with our struggle and warfare in the Spirit.

3. Just 6 verses earlier, he wrote, “we wrestle not against flesh and blood.”

a. Part of the wrestling and warfare is always praying in the Spirit.

b. So what does this even mean?

c. Let me introduce some important teaching here:

B. First of all, **Praying in the Spirit can not be restricted to praying in tongues.**

**26** In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. **27** And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26–27, CSB)

1. Notice that Paul does not mention tongues in this passage.

a. If Paul intended to refer only to tongues here, he was very capable of saying it this way.

b. Instead, he refers to “groanings” and the Spirit’s interceding.

2. These groanings must be more than tongues because the word “inexpressible” means “wordless.”

1. Wordless groans.

2. Groans communicate what our mind cannot comprehend or articulate.

3. We groan with pain, with exasperation, and hope.

4. Groans communicate when words won’t do.

5. Praying in the Spirit cannot be limited to praying in tongues.

3. **Praying in tongues is part of praying in the Spirit.**

a. **But it isn't the entirety.**

b. A helpful example for me is the picture of a shoe.

c. Shoes are designed with multiple parts.

a. Shoes have a sole.

1. When I was selling boots, I needed to know what type of work the person did.

2. Especially when dealing with railroad contracts.

3. Different jobs require different types of soles on the boots.

b. They have an upper.

c. They have an insole.

d. And the shoes I prefer have a tongue.

e. All of these pieces together make a boot or shoe.

d. Often in Pentecostal churches, we make the speaking in tongues the critical part.

e. It is an important part, and this shoe would be incomplete without it.

f. But it is not the focus.

5. **We dishonor Holy Spirit when we reduce Him to His parts at the expense of His Personhood.**

C. My friends, if you are seeking the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, don't seek tongues.

1. If you desire to be used more of God, don't make the gifts your sole focus.

2. If you desire to walk in the Spirit, don't make the fruit your purpose for living.

3. Instead, turn your eyes upon Jesus.
  - a. Seek God, and His blessings will follow.
  - b. Seek Jesus and His Spirit will be poured out.
  - c. Seek Holy Spirit and you will receive the Baptism, and be used in the gifts, and produce the fruit.
4. Jesus said seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness...
5. Too often, we pursue God for His gifts; what His hand provides.
6. But our goal, our desire, is to pursue the face of God.
  - a. Not merely what He can give.
  - b. But who He is.

D. Martin Luther spoke of "a special kind of prayer wrought by the Spirit that causes human words to cease"<sup>1</sup>

1. When Paul tells us that the Spirit intercedes with inexpressible groanings and that we are to pray in the Spirit, he has a full and complete picture of prayer.
2. A praying that uses a language we don't understand.
3. A praying that uses the inward groans that communicate without a word being spoken.
4. A praying that lays bare our deepest feelings and emotions, where the Spirit communicates with and through our spirit.
5. Praying in the Spirit is a full person prayer.
  - a. It involves every part of us: our minds, will, and emotions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Karkkainen, 44.

b. It involves all of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

## 2. Why Pray in the Spirit?

A. We pray in the Spirit, because it is available to us all. Romans 8:26

1. First, it says “us,” which is plural and refers to all believers who have the Spirit, which is every believer.

2. Even though I believe the Baptism of the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues is for every believer, and is good and necessary, this praying is for everyone, whether you have spoken in tongues or not.

3. All of God’s people pray in the Spirit.

a. Our awareness of this ministry is different.

b. But it is true.

B. Second, praying in the Spirit means trusting the Spirit because I’m praying in weakness.

1. Trust is yielding to another to provide what you cannot.

2. When we pray in the Spirit, we let the Spirit pray because we lack the words and don’t know God’s will.

a. What Paul is describing is a way to pray that perfectly prays the Will of God.

b. When we let the Spirit within us pray, the Spirit intercedes for us.

c. The word used for this means more than helping but to share the burden along with you.<sup>2</sup>

3. What does it mean to intercede?

---

<sup>2</sup> Osborne Romans, 246

- a. Intercede means to pray on behalf of someone else like it is our own self.
- b. Intercession is serving in the middle and ministering on another's behalf.
- c. It's pleading a case that isn't ours.
- d. It's binding a wound that isn't ours.

4. The Spirit and Jesus intercede for us.

### **Romans 8:34**

<sup>34</sup>Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.

- 1. It appears to me that every believer has the Spirit interceding for us.
- 2. And we have Jesus who is at the right hand of God interceding for us.
- 3. When we pray, we have 2/3rds of the Trinity calling out our needs before the Father.

D. Fourth, the ministry of "praying in the Spirit" involves the whole triune nature of God:

- 1. The Spirit himself intercedes...
- 2. He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit (this has to be Jesus).
- 3. Who are they interceding before, but the Father.
- 4. When we pray in the Spirit, all of the Godhead is ministering in us, through us, and around us.

## 3. How do we pray in the Spirit?

A. Nowhere can I find a how-to guide to praying in the Spirit in Scripture.

1. But there are a few prominent passages like Jude 20 that tell us to pray in the Spirit.

2. Jude 20 (CSB)

<sup>20</sup> But you, dear friends, as you build yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

3. Don't you love how Scripture assumes you will know this?

a. Why does it assume?

b. Because they considered it common knowledge.

B. Where do we start?

1. First, if you are not Baptized with the Spirit, start by asking Him to fill you and empower you.

a. Praying in tongues is an important way to pray.

b. There is something special that takes place when we pray in tongues that is missing when we are praying only with our understanding.

c. **1 Corinthians 14:15** (CSB)

<sup>15</sup> What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing praise with the spirit, and I will also sing praise with my understanding.

d. If you have been seeking the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues, and you haven't received the gift yet, don't panic and don't quit.

2. Second, we start to pray in the Spirit by paying attention to what is hurting us, grieving our Spirit, keeping us up at night, etc.

a. Those thoughts and emotions we try to avoid might actually be the very things we should be bringing before God.

b. You notice your kids struggling:

1. Go pray for them in the Spirit.
2. Knowing what to pray is not a requirement for Spirit-filled believers.
3. To say something controversial: Refusing to pray for someone because you don't know how to pray is not a valid excuse not to pray.
4. Spirit-filled believers should pray, even when we don't know what to say.

c. Maybe things at Work are extra hard right now;

1. Go pray for your workplace and co-workers in the Spirit.
2. When you run out of words, let the Spirit pray through you.

d. Maybe you feel extra angry, and you don't know why; go pray in the Spirit.

e. What does that look like?

3. Third, Get alone with God and take the requests to Him.

a. Be focused less on what to say and more on what is happening deep inside.

b. A negative example of this:

1. Have you ever been working on a project, a car, or putting together Walmart furniture and get so frustrated you let out a groan of frustration and want to throw the tools you have in your hand?
2. Is that not a form of communication where you are communicating your internal frustration outwardly through inexpressible words?

3. A few years ago, Licking was the State Baseball champs.

a. And I watched the dads cry, shout, groan, and communicate with the other dads in a way they never would communicate in church.

b. Though they used few words, what they said was perfectly clear.

c. Why is it commendable for men to cry at a sporting event but cowardly to do so at church?

c. What if we gave ourselves the time and the space to pray in such a way that we allow ourselves to feel what we are praying about?

1. You might shout, you might whisper, you might just groan, or pray in tongues.

2. Don't forget that the God who searches the hearts of man knows the Spirit that is within us and the Spirit intercedes.

3. When we don't know what to say, the Spirit does if we will give Him the chance.

4. Pray with emotion.

a. When I watch men pray at church, I see little emotion.

1. But I watch those same men watching a NASCAR race, hitting a golf ball, or someone scratching their truck, and I see they are fully capable of emotion.

2. When I killed my turkey on Monday, I can assure you there were some emotions.

3. To pray in the Spirit is to pray with emotion and our whole being.

b. If you aren't comfortable praying this way at church or at home, find someplace to pray with emotion.

c. There are times to pray with our words, and there are times to pray in the Spirit.

d. And when we pray in the Spirit, there will be some emotion.

C. Our friend Tim Teague preached this a few weeks ago:

1. Pray
2. Pray about everything.
3. Pray without ceasing.
4. Pray in the Spirit.

## Next Steps: Prayer and Worship

A. The two areas I feel this Church needs to grow is in the areas of prayer and worship.

1. We all love the Bible.
2. We handle strong preaching.
3. But prayer and worship seem to be areas of struggle for many of us.

B. Part of the reason for this might be a fear of the Spirit and of emotion.

1. I'm not encouraging us to be weird or wild.
2. But surely the King of the Universe deserves better from us.
3. More importantly, our struggle with corporate prayer and worship is because of our absence of personal prayer and worship.

C. If you are not in the habit of prayer, then start with simply praying.

1. If you pray but don't know what to pray about, pray about everything.

2. If you are praying about everything, then focus on praying without ceasing.

3. As you regularly pray, and when you run out of words, pray in the Spirit.

a. Sing, pray in tongues, give Him praise, lie on the ground in silence, and many other expressions.

b. But don't stop praying.

c. Pray when you feel like it and pray when you don't.

Response: Prayer and Water Baptism