

Groaning in Prayer

(Rom 8:26-27)

- Remember the context is the assurance of justification by faith

I. “Our infirmity” (to review)

- A) Paul has shown that in our current condition, the saint is limited in their capacity to see things as we ought
 1. This is mainly due to our inability to see God’s eternal plan and workings
 2. This infirmity shows itself most in our prayer life
 - i. Since we do not know God’s will in all things, we are often left not knowing what to prayer for in certain situations
- B) This infirmity is not sin in an of itself, but is the result of Adam’s sin
- C) This infirmity is not related to doubt, but to limitations and inability on our part
 1. But Satan will very well use it to attack us with doubts
 2. But we must remember the context, and that we are dealing with the assurances provided for us by the Holy Spirit, and this intercession is one of them
 - i. V.26- Thus the “Spirit Himself” (one of his works as Comforter)

II. Terms

- A) “Helpeth”- Combination of 3 Greek words: ¹Together + ²Over against or alongside + ³Take up
 1. It means to come alongside someone and take up part of their load (2x’sin N/T)
 - i. Luke 10:40- Martha wanted Mary to “help” her
 - a) Matt 11:28-30- Doctrinal example of Christ’s yoke
 - 1) 2 Pull easier than one
 - 2) The Holy Spirit doesn’t do it for us, He “helpeth” us
- B) “Maketh intercession”- To come to the rescue of, the plead the case of
 1. This “making intercession” is the “help”
- C) “Groanings”- Comes from a word meaning to “be in a strait”
 1. To sigh under a burden, to be speechless under helplessness (2x’s in N/T)
 2. Acts 7:34- As Israel groaned under oppression in Egypt
- D) “Cannot be uttered”- Without words, not expressed in speech
 1. This is not the same word as “unspeakable” in:
 - i. 2 Cor 9:15, 12:4, 1 Pet 1:8
 - ii. This means cannot be put into words, not possible to do so
 2. The word Paul uses in Rom 8:26 means “wordless”

E) “For the saints”- And only the saints

1. The Holy Spirit doesn't make intercession for the lost, nor are their prayers received of God
 - i. John 17:9- “I pray not for the world”
 - ii. John 9:31- “God heareth not sinners”
 - a) Today's national calls to prayer, and “thoughts and prayers” are not scriptural, and lead to heresy such as Universalism

F) “According to the will of God”- This doesn't mean only the prayers according to His will are answered

1. This refers to the Holy Spirit being sent of God to do this work
2. This is the plan of God, the Spirit's intercession is according to His plan
 - i. This is part of sanctification
 - ii. God approves of these “groanings”

III. Doctrine

A) Who is it that groans?

1. Many teach this to be a special prayer language, or “tongues” of a sort
 - i. But this is completely against the terms used
 - ii. Neither can it be that God can only receive prayer in a “special language”
 - iii. Jesus taught the disciples to pray specifically
 - iv. Hos 14:1-3- Bring words with you!
2. It is us who are made to groan:
 - i. Rom 8:15 & Gal 4:6- We cry Abba Father (not the Spirit)
3. The Holy Spirit finds us in trouble in prayer, and He comes alongside us and takes up our load with us, he “helps” us to pray, He doesn't pray for us
 - i. He is our Advocate, as with an attorney
 - a) Intercessor comes between and represents, He doesn't replace
 - b) A lawyer will not only ask the questions, but he will prepare us beforehand what to reply
 - 1) This can sometimes lead to the charge of “leading the witness” in court
 - c) Christ sits at the right hand and advocates for us with the Father (8:34) and the Holy Spirit advocates within us, all according to His will
 - 1) Think of the way the lawyer speaks to both the judge for us, and then also to us
 - 2) Phil 2:12-13- “To will and to do”
 - (a) This doesn't mean “sit back, God does it all,” we are commanded to act
 - (b) God wills this in us by the Holy Spirit

(c) Something is moving us to act and we aren't always exactly sure what

(d) Rom 8:15-16- Spirit working with our spirit

B) Does God hear this "groaning?"

1. Notice "He that searcheth the hearts" knoweth
 - i. God knows our every groan, desire and need
 - ii. "Searcheth the hearts" is added to ensure God hears, knows and understands
 - a) Jer 17:9-10- God knows the hearts fully
 - b) Heb 4:12-13- Even the thoughts and intents of heart
 - 1) God is not dependent upon our using proper words and phrases
 - 2) He is the discernor of the heart, including its prompted groanings!
 - c) 1 Cor 2:10-15- Mind of the Father known of the Spirit and manifested

C) This doesn't refer to our every prayer, nor even the majority of them

1. The Holy Spirit often prompts us what to pray for, who to pray for, and is specific
 - i. What we are dealing with in Rom 8:26-27 has to do with the assurance of the Spirit when we are suffering or weary under a load or doubt
 - a) The devil comes to us when we are perplexed in prayer and says "you're not God's child, moaning like a stranger"
 - b) But Paul teaches us here that we can answer, "No, God not only approves of this, but sent His Holy Spirit to cause it"

D) This doesn't suggest that "groaning" is the highest form of prayer

1. The Lord Jesus Christ certainly brought "words" with Him in prayer
 - i. This is simply referring to a form of suffering that the saint can find himself in when it comes to prayer and his infirmity
2. Scripture is full of "wordy" prayers

E) Example

1. Compare a young child trying to communicate to a parent what ails them
2. Our "groanings" have to do with our infirmity which sometimes results in our inability to even put into words what we need, or even to communicate with our Father
3. What seems like a horrible weakness, is actually a strength and assurance
 - i. 2 Cor 12:1-10- Paul rejoiced in this weakness
4. We have the 1st fruits of the Spirit, and not yet the fullness, but God has made provision for even this at our present stage of salvation
 - i. Phil 2:12-13- God planned it this way
 - ii. Rom 8:28- Then it is good for us

5. Compare the leadership of the cloud in the wilderness, and the Israelite's complete dependence upon God

IV. Mysterious nature of prayer

A) God commands us to pray

1. Yet He prompts us to do so by His Spirit
2. Prayer is to be “according to His will” or what He has “willed”
3. He knows what we need before we ask, and sees the depth of our heart
 - i. So then, this all being true, why pray at all?
 - a) Because God commands us to
 - b) Because the Lord Jesus Christ prayed
 - c) Because the apostles prayed
 - d) Because while God ordained the final outcome, He also ordained the means by which it is to be accomplished, and this includes prayer!

B) Prayer is a tool of God in our sanctification

1. It is a constant reminder of God’s holiness and our infirmity
 - i. Job 9:33- “Oh for a Daysman...”
2. It is a reminder of what it took to make fellowship with the father possible
 - i. Heb 10:19-22- The death and resurrection of our Savior
 - ii. Rom 8- The ministry of the Holy Spirit
 - iii. Eph 2:18- The whole Godhead is glorified in prayer

C) When we find our self in doubt in prayer, we can always start with:

1. Glorify God and thank Him
2. Ask for the things He has instructed us to ask for:
 - i. His Kingdom
 - ii. His will
 - iii. His people
 - iv. His honor
 - v. Our holiness and sanctification
 - vi. Our daily needs
3. We can always plea for His promises, even quote Him
4. Don’t leave without peace
 - i. Peace not possible until we submit to His will, therefore our rebellion will rob us of it, and be a sign we are not fully submitted to His will