

The Christian's Limitation

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Romans 8:26-27

Preached on: Sunday, January 29, 2012

Will you join me and take your Bibles and turn to Paul's epistle to the Romans? Romans chapter eight and this morning I have entitled my discourse to you, "The Christian's Limitation." And the specific limitation that we will look at, our specific weakness will be that of the weakness in prayer.

Follow along as I read our text this morning, Romans chapter eight beginning in verse 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; 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.¹

Prayer is the first cry of the new birth. It is the first sound of godliness in infancy. But it is a sound that will grow as we grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ. Prayer, I believe, is the greatest measure of spiritual maturity. If you are weak in the habit of prayer, you will be weak in your faith. You will be weak in power. You will be weak in character. You will be weak in service. You will be weak in evangelism. And on it goes.

In Psalm 32 verse six, David, a man after God's own heart implores us to prayer saying:

"...let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not reach him."²

My what a promise. And you would think that where one man has struck gold, many would be inclined to dig. But such is not the case. For many Christians for whatever reason, prayer is simply not a priority. But I would submit to you on the basis of the Word of God that the more godly the man, the more habitual and fervent will be his prayer life. And I would humbly ask you to examine your heart and let your conscience be your judge.'

Throughout Scripture we see the character of godly men and godly women marked by their passion for prayer. Now I am not referring to the casual and occasional prayers that tend to characterize most of us in our lives, but I am speaking of fervent prayers, prayers of faith, not mere words.

Spurgeon put it this way. Quote, "Godly prayer is measured by weight, not by length and breadth." He went on to say, "He is the godliest man who has most power with God in secret pleadings and he who has most power with God in his secret pleadings has it because he abounds in godliness," end quote.

¹ Romans 8:26-27.

² Psalm 32:6.

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Indeed, as James reminds us in James five verse 16:

“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”³

The godly man will be like Christ who often retreated into secret places to pray. The godly man will have communion with God on a constant basis. He will enjoy being in the presence of God. His heart will long for the ever deepening fellowship that he can have with the lover of his soul. And because he spends much time in the presence of God, his face, yea, even his character will be aglow with the glory of God.

I think of the power of the prayers of the great Scottish reformer John Knox. In response to Knox's imprecatory prayers, Mary Queen of Scots is reputed to have said, quote, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe,” end quote.

Dear friends, today we examine the great mystery of prayer and even more specifically our great weakness in it and what the Spirit does in the midst of our weakness. What happens when we pray? Do you realize that we never pray alone? I trust you will never pray the same after the Spirit leads us into these truths this morning.

Now, let's be reminded of the context once again. This is very important when we study the Word of God. You will remember that the great theme of Romans chapter eight is the assurance of the believer and that is based on the opening assertion that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And after describing the character of a Christian, the inspired apostle goes on to remind us, first of all, of the Christian's obligation in verses 12 and 13, that we are debtors to the Spirit, not to the flesh. So therefore it is our joyful obligation to submit to the Spirit of God who empowers us to put to death the deeds of the body.

He moves on from there to remind us of the Christian's confirmation in verses 14 through 17. It is the Spirit who validates the genuineness of our faith. And he does this by illuminating our minds with the truth, by activating our will with desire, by animating our heart with hope and by relieving our fears with the experience of his presence within us.

And then from there he speaks of the Christian's glorification in verses 17 through 18 where the Spirit of God instructs us on how to be triumphant sufferers based upon the glory that awaits us.

And then he speaks of the Christian's lamentation, verses 19 through 25 where like creation we groan within ourselves as believers, grieving over the corruption of sin in our own life and in the world, longing for the glorious return of our Savior. But we do that with a confident hope because we experience the first fruits of the Spirit even within us. Within us he gives us a foretaste of the blessings of God in his work of redemption that

³ James 5:16.

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will one day be brought to its intended climax when we experience the redemption of our bodies.

And now to give us even more assurance of our salvation, he speaks to us about the Christian's limitation in verses 26 and 27, that although we do not know how to pray as we should, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. Absolutely amazing.

What divine condescension to think that the Spirit of God would stoop to assist such pathetic, depraved creatures, that he would dwell within us, that he would make our body his temple. I mean, folks, these are truths that should cause us to be struck with absolute awe.

But then to know that he even helps us in our weakness in prayer and he does this by interceding for us with groanings too deep for words. My goodness, such condescension should cause us to all just fall on our faces in adoring amazement.

This is our subject this morning. My outline is very simple. We are going not answer to questions. Number one: What is the nature of our weakness? And, number two: What is the nature of the Spirit's help?

And I am confident that the answers to each of these questions will prove to be very edifying for each of us. They will give us all additional confidence and comfort pertaining to the assurance of our salvation and it would certainly drive our faces into the dirt with reverential awe for what God has done and is doing in our lives.

Now before we look closely at this, I want you to look at the beginning of this section. He said:

“And in the same way...”⁴

Now Paul is not only reaching back to the description of the collective groaning of creation and the saints as we eagerly await the climax of redemptive glory, but more importantly, I believe that he is reaching back to the confident hope that is inherent in that groaning. I do not believe that the theme here is yet another groaning. The issue is not the groaning. The issue is the hope.

As this hope sustains us, it could be translated, in the same way the Spirit helps our weakness.

As you think about it, our inward groaning would absolutely drive us to despair were it not for the ministry of the indwelling Spirit of God who teaches us through his Word and gives us the assurance of the glory that is to be revealed to us, as he has mentioned already in verse 18.

⁴ Romans 8:26.

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Without the Spirit's presence in our life, we would be like those who are without Christ. They are spiritual cadavers. They are spiritual zombies, if you will, the walking dead, proud, but miserable, because they have no hope. They have no hope. They indulge in the desires of the flesh and of the mind, Paul tells us. By nature they are children of wrath. They are destined to eternal wrath.

You see, the unsaved person groans inwardly, but without hope. We groan in hope, because of the work of the Spirit.

Notice verse 24:

“For in hope we have been saved.”⁵

Verse 25.

“...with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”⁶

Speaking of the redemption of our bodies.

So he says in verse 26:

“And in the same way....”⁷

In other words, as this hope sustains us...

“... the Spirit also helps our weakness.”⁸

So, number one, what is the nature of our weakness? The term actually signifies impotence or limitations of various kinds. And in this context it speaks of the general limitations of our human condition. This isn't necessarily referring to our sin, but the spiritual inability that characterize our unredeemed humanness, weaknesses that can only be overcome by the power of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God.

We all know what these things look like. We are weak in faith. We are weak in service. We are weak in prayer. We are easily discouraged. We are ignorant. At times we lack discernment. We are blind to our sin and we can see everybody else's, but we can't see ours. We struggle with the fear of man. We are vulnerable to all manner of temptations and on and on it goes.

⁵ Romans 8:24.

⁶ Romans 8:25.

⁷ Romans 8:26.

⁸ Ibid.

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But here and specifically he is referring to a weakness that flows out of all of that and that is we really don't know how to pray as we should.

How thankful we can be that God helps us with our weaknesses. It was for this reason that God encouraged Paul, you will recall, in 2 Corinthians 12 verse nine. He said to him:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”⁹

And Paul went on to say:

“Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”¹⁰

We must understand that between the time of our justification and our glorification, we are going to experience all manner of weakness in this human condition, especially weakness in prayer. But notice this stunning promise in verse 26.

“...the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should.”¹¹

This, my friends, is how the Spirit enlarges the hope of our assurance of salvation. He helps us with our prayers. He helps us. Here Paul uses a very uncommon verb and it basically speaks of to help by joining in an activity or an effort, joining with someone to help them, a bearing of a burden along with someone.

For example in Luke five you will recall the story where Jesus asked Peter, “Simon Peter, let down the nets in a certain place.” And he did and they caught all these fish and the nets began to break. And in verse seven we read:

“...and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and [here it is] help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.”¹²

My friends, this is what the Spirit does with our weakness in prayer. He joins with us to help us bear the burden of this weakness, even our weakness in prayer.

I fear that too often we as Christians look for God in dramatic ways, in sensational ways. And it is not to say that he doesn't reveal himself in those ways. We look for him and we see him in the lightning and the thunder and in the storms. And sometimes we look and

⁹ 2 Corinthians 12:9.

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

¹¹ Romans 8:26.

¹² Luke 5:7.

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we see him work in some magnificent way within the church. In many ways you might say we expect to see God on Mount Sinai. We expect to see him in all of his glory and we tremble and we fear and we quake at the things that we see. But to witness his intimate gentleness, to witness him in our innermost being, helping us in our weakness. My friends, is this not an even greater miracle? Can we not see God in that in a way that is absolutely astounding?

I cannot fathom such divine condescension to think that such a loving, intimate, gentle descent from majesty on our behalf occurred that God would save us, that he would redeem us, that he might inhabit us to do all of these glorious things, even helping us in our weakness in prayer.

Beloved, never lose the wonder of that prayer.

So the condition in which we find ourselves as believers is that we don't even know how to pray as we should. Now I might add that the grammar of the phrase indicates that this is not speaking of the manner or the style of prayer. That is not the issue. The issue is the content or the object of prayer. In other words, we really don't know what to pray for. That is the idea.

May I suggest four ways that this weakness in prayer can manifest itself? And certainly here are others, but these are general ways that I think we can all identify with.

Number one, many times we do not know or understand what we need when we pray. We may pray for a specific job or perhaps a promotion, not knowing that the Lord has a much better plan for us than what we are praying for. We may ask God to bring conviction to someone over some disagreement, over some issue that we see in their life, not knowing that we are the ones that need to see our lives more clearly, that we are at fault, not our brother.

Sometimes we may pray for relief thinking that God somehow lacks information and he has got something all wrong. Remember Job? Oh, God, relieve my suffering here.

Job did not know that God had allowed Satan to test him, to prove the unfailing character of saving faith, to teach Job and countless millions since that time the importance of trusting God.

In 2 Corinthians 12 you will recall that the apostle Paul prayed three times for God to rescue him from a messenger from Satan which was a... some false teacher within the church that was persecuting him. It was so bad that he described it as a thorn in the flesh. And he did not know when he was praying, until God later revealed it to him, that God had, in fact, ordained that particular person to persecute him to keep Paul from exalting himself and, thus, prove how the power of Christ can be perfected in weakness.

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There are endless examples of this, but when out of ignorance we pray contrary to the will of God, we must understand that it is the Spirit of God dwelling within us that suddenly comes to our aid in ways that we cannot comprehend, to conform our prayers to the will of God by his own intercession.

Now will you notice, he does not remove our weakness. But rather he comes to our aid in the midst of it, taking us before the throne of grace, working in our hearts, even causing us to add at the end of our prayers, if it be thy will.

In some inscrutable way the Spirit writes that desire upon the renewed mind. It is amazing to know that God knows our needs even when we don't. Didn't Jesus say in Matthew 6:8?

“...your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.”¹³

Another way our weakness can manifest itself, number two, sometimes we need what we cannot express. Have you experienced a trial so overwhelming, a pain so great, a sorrow so deep, a confusion so dark that all you can do is sob? That you can't even speak in your weakness and in your trembling, maybe in your fear. I think of Jeremiah and his lament over the invasion of Judah by the Babylonian horde that was soon to come in and torture and murder thousands and thousands of his countrymen.

In Jeremiah 4:19 he said:

“My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot be silent, Because you have heard, O my soul, The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war.”¹⁴

I think of the psalmist in Psalm 77 verse four when in the anguish of his soul he lamented:

“[God] hast held my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.”¹⁵

He was so overwhelmed that he could not sleep nor could he speak. At times when our heart fails, dear friends, so, too, do our words. Haven't we all been there? Haven't we all come sobbing before the throne of grace and we bow down before our Lord in a time of need, but because of the agitation of our mind and because of the perplexity of our heart, we are speechless? We don't know what to say.

I think of our dear brother William McGott, one of our missionaries in Southern Sudan. We have still not heard word from him. He is hiding somewhere with his dear family in

¹³ Matthew 6:8.

¹⁴ Jeremiah 4:19.

¹⁵ Psalm 77:4.

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the bush trying to survive. His uncle and his aunt have already been murdered. They have burned down his village. We don't know if he is still alive. We pray that he is.

But don't you know that when he comes before the throne of grace, there are times where all he can do is just moan? Oh, child of God, in the season of silent despair, it is the Holy Spirit that rushes to our aid with groanings too deep for words. He understands the supplications of our anguish.

Think of how a mother knows precisely the need of her little infant child who can only wail and writhe and emit what would appear to be meaningless and, at times, perhaps, irritating babble to a stranger. Yet mommy knows exactly what that child needs based upon that cry.

So, too, beloved, the Spirit. He even knows our words before we speak them. According to Psalm 139 verse three:

Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, And art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, Thou dost know it all.¹⁶

May I suggest a third weakness and that is when we lack earnestness in prayer? And along with that, when we pray too little. Most Christians have no habitual prayer life. That is simply not a priority and, of course, if that is you, dear friend, that betrays the level of your spiritual maturity. Yet Jesus prayed constantly. He commanded us to do the same.

In Matthew six verse six he says:

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”¹⁷

I would submit to you that it is the Spirit of God that brings conviction in our heart to do just that. Often when we pray our minds tend to wander. Like little toddlers we are easily distracted. We lack, therefore, earnestness in our prayer. We lack intensity. We lack pleading in our prayer.

Seldom will we like Jacob wrestle with God throughout the night until he gives us the blessing. Seldom will we be like the psalmist in Psalm 27 verse seven who cried out to the Lord:

“Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Psalm 139:3-4.

¹⁷ Matthew 6:6.

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Beloved, I ask you. When was the last time that you fell on your face before the Lord your God and poured out your heart to him over some great issue that would bring him great glory? Not that you would even do it once, but that you would make it the habit of your life. Ask yourself why is this not the habit of your life?

Too often there is no persistence in our prayers. We come before the throne of heaven and we knock a few times, no answer. We turn around and we walk away. But you will recall in Jesus discourse on prayer in Luke 11 remember the parable of the persistent friend? Didn't a man knock repeatedly upon the door of his friend in the middle of the night? He kept knocking until his request was answered.

Beloved, God loves persistent, passionate, urgent, earnest, bold, relentless prayer. It gives him glory. And when you pray in that way, know full well that it is the power of the indwelling Spirit of God that has caused you to do so.

In Luke 11 verse nine Jesus went on to say:

“And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”¹⁹

Grammatically in the original language it literally says, “Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking.”

Dear Christian, it is the Spirit of God that arouses us from the state of spiritual lethargy that is so typical of our lives. It is the Spirit of God that stokes the fire in our belly and somehow heats us up out of our lukewarmness so that we will pray without ceasing. It is the Spirit of God that causes us to prevail in prayer when our weakness would have us do otherwise.

And could I give you yet one more weakness that manifests itself in our prayer life? And that is when we lack faith in prayer.

In Hebrews 10 verse 22 we are told to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. And James one verse six we are told:

“But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”²⁰

Yet how often are our prayers half hearted prayers, thoughtless prayers, perfunctory prayers, prayers that really fail to lay hold of the promises of God with a fixed

¹⁸ Psalm 27:7.

¹⁹ Luke 11:8.

²⁰ James 1:6.

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immovable confidence, with a sense of faith knowing that, God, you could absolutely do what I am asking you to do?

And how often we find our faith decrease when the trial increases? Oh, we have great faith when the sickness is mild, but when it begins to grow terminal, our faith begins to wane, doesn't it?

When the prodigal son stoops to an ever greater level of immorality, when after a series of unforeseen financial setbacks then you lose your job on top of it all, typically when the trials get greater, the faith gets lesser. But, dear Christian, when all seems lost and your weakness, your faith begins to wane, when our being to doubt the goodness of God and the faithfulness of God and the power of God and you think God has abandoned you, it is then that the Spirit of God comes to your aid.

So these are some examples of the nature of our weakness in prayer. But how does the Spirit help us in our weakness in prayer? That is our second question. What is the nature of the Spirit's help?

Again, verse 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.”²¹

Now some charismatic brethren would ascribe these groanings to believers rather than to the Spirit. They would argue that this is speaking of a Spirit induced prayer language, glossalalia, speaking in tongues, some ineffable utterance incapable of being expressed in human language and not even being understood by the one that speaks it.

But I would submit to you that this is a very contrived, even a bizarre interpretation of this text for a number of reasons. Let me give you but a few. Scripture is clear that that gift of tongues was a divinely bestowed supernatural ability for a person to speak in a human language that had not been learned by the one speaking, Acts two. Plus whenever tongues were spoken in the church they were to be interpreted by someone with the gift of interpretation, very clear, so that others might be edified by the God given message. It was never intended to serve as a private prayer language, but, rather, like all spiritual gifts, the Spirit of God empowered certain people to speak in these different languages as a means by which he might serve and edify the body of Christ.

Moreover, is it not clear in Scripture that not everyone had the gift of tongues which would thereby restrict the Spirit's intercession in prayer if it were to only a few believers. But here, clearly we see that he comes to the aid of all believers.

²¹ Romans 8:26.

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Also in 1 Corinthians 13:8 we are told that tongues will cease. The Greek verb indicates that it will cease permanently. So I would submit to you on the evidence of Scripture and history that tongues ceased in the apostolic age.

So the groanings too deep for words, cannot refer to some kind of private prayer life. I would also add that the groans are not the believer's, but the Spirit's. They are attributed to his work of interceding on our behalf.

Beloved, the theme here is not man, but the Spirit. He is the one that is on display here.

So what does this mean? What is the nature of the Spirit's intercession? I must preface by explanation of the Spirit's work on our behalf by saying that this is a divine mystery that no one can fully understand. And even in my feeble attempt to somehow explain this text and rightly divide it, it is going to fall far short of explaining just the ineffable mystery of how he actually operates upon the human mind, how he operates within us on our heart, and certainly how he communicates in that intimate relationship between he and the Father.

So with that said, now I do believe that we can understand the basics of what God has revealed to us in this text. Certainly that is the purpose of the written Word. But beyond the exposition of the text, I dare not travel. For to do so would, frankly, go beyond speculation and enter into the realm of presumption and I can't do that. Such an intrusion beyond the holy veil of these truths, of this mystery would be dishonoring to God. It would be misleading to you, because, in the end, God has simply not revealed to us the inner workings of the triune godhead, nor could we understand it if he did.

Having said that, we can understand the truths that God has given us. Notice the phrase:

“...with groanings too deep for words.”²²

Groanings is a term that means to sigh or to groan as a result of deep concern. And the Greek term, too deep for words, is used only here in biblical Greek. So I cannot take you, as I normally would, to a parallel passage to see how it is used. But we do know that the term carries the idea of wordless, of unspoken, pertaining to what cannot be uttered or expressed in words, which, by the way, would obviously rule out tongues or some prayer language.

Here Paul is making it clear that these groans are not even audible, much less expressed in actual words. So this is some kind of inter trinitarian communication beyond our understanding.

²² Ibid.

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As part of the triune godhead, we know that the Spirit forever stands in intimate communion with the Father and the Son, able to express his thoughts through divine articulations that far exceed mere words. In fact, Paul alluded to this in 1 Corinthians 2:11 where he stated, quote:

“...the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”²³

But also notice how Paul describes the effectiveness of this intercession in verse 27. He says:

“...and He [referring to God the Father] who searches the hearts [referring to hearts of men] knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”²⁴

That is to say, God the Father knows precisely the inner workings of the heart of the man of believers where the indwelling Spirit's intercession takes place. Therefore he also knows what the mind of the Spirit is. Or it could literally be translated: what the Spirit sets his mind on, or what the Spirit intends when he expresses our needs on our behalf to the Father.

He goes on to say:

“...because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”²⁵

This is just a mystery of all mysteries how he does this. And, of course, he can do this because there is perfect harmony within the godhead. The Father knows what the Spirit intends in his intercession. Why? Why would he know that? Because the one who effectively prays to the Father on our behalf is always thinking in perfect harmony with the Father and the Son and therefore always knows how to intercede for the saints in accordance to the will of God. Staggering, absolutely staggering. Oh, such rich and encouraging theology.

Think about it. According to Romans 8:34 we read that it is Christ Jesus, it is the Son of God that intercedes for us in heaven and he is defending us from any charge that can be brought against us and he is personally guaranteeing our salvation until the day of judgment according to verse 34.

But as staggering as that is, when we come here to verses 26 and 27, we are told that we have yet another intercessor. In addition to the Son in heaven, we have the Spirit in our heart who comes to our aid in our weakness sin prayer because we don't know how to pray as we should.

²³ 2 Corinthians 2:11.

²⁴ Romans 8:27.

²⁵ Ibid.

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As an important note, these truths are crucial in understanding the doctrine of justification that Paul has been revealing here. Think about it. We have been declared righteous on the basis of Christ's imputed righteousness on our behalf. We are now hidden in him. And we remain justified and righteous forever. Why? Because of the intercessory work of the Son and the Spirit.

What assurance of salvation. This is why we can never lose our salvation. Such a thought is ridiculous when you understand the theology of salvation. The Son we know continues to be our advocate at God's bar of justice. We see this, for example, in 1 John 2:12, how he continues to make intercession as the believer's high priest. And it says:

"He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."²⁶

And in this high priestly work of the Son in heaven, he is guaranteeing our salvation. And how is going to guarantee it? What is the means that he will use? Why, it is the means of the pledge, the seal of the indwelling Spirit of God working in the hearts of the redeemed.

Do you see how this works together?

John 14:17. We know that he indwells us forever.

Ephesians 4:30 we read that the believer is sealed for the day of redemption.

1 Corinthians 12:13 we read that it is the Spirit who has baptized every believer into union with Christ and into the body of believers.

And here, miracle of miracles, beyond all of that and more, we see that he 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.

Beloved, please understand. If it were not for these supernatural works of intercession on our behalf, our flesh would instantly overpower us and we would instantly fall from grace and be forever separated from God. But thanks be to God, we have been given eternal life and that is secured because of the work of the Son and of the Spirit. In fact, in John 10 verse 28, Jesus gave a promise to the sheep of his pasture and he said:

"I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."²⁷

²⁶ Hebrews 7:25.

²⁷ John 10:28-29.

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How is all of this accomplished? Though the intercessory work of the Son and God the Spirit.

What an encouragement this is to we as believers with all of our limitations. Practically speaking the next time you pray, know that the Spirit of God knows every detail of your thoughts. He knows what you need even when you don't and he is the one who will come to your aid with these groanings to deep for words. This ministry of intercession beyond our understanding, these inarticulate sounds beyond the limits of expression, beyond anything we can comprehend and then to know that in ways that are imperceptible to us, we express it to the Father, the perfect appeals necessary for our welfare, for our sanctification. These are the groanings for which there are no words, inter trinitarian communications that surpass what words could ever communicate.

Inconceivable, isn't it? Oh, what a glorious God we serve. And this is partial fulfillment of the advocacy role of the Spirit that we read about earlier in our Scripture reading that Jesus promised in John 14:16. He says:

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth.”²⁸

And in verse 26:

“He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”²⁹

Beloved, never underestimate the work of God in your life. Never think that somehow you can lose your salvation or that somehow you cannot have assurance of salvation or even more specifically that somehow when you pray you just might as well give up because you don't even know where to begin, because you are not praying by yourself.

Next time you pray in ignorance, not knowing really what God's will is, know full well that the Spirit does. And the Spirit is going to come to your aid in ways that you cannot comprehend. He is going to conform your prayers to the will of God by his own intercession. And he is even going to cause you to be able to say, “Lord, I don't fully know if this is what I need, but, Lord, I think it is and, Lord, whatever is your will, that is what I want for me.”

He will grant you the wisdom, the inward direction to order your petitions before the throne of grace.

Remember this the next time you are so brokenhearted you don't know what to pray and all you do is sob. Know full well that it is the Spirit of God that will come to your aid in the midst of your anguish with groanings to deep for words. Know this. When you lack

²⁸ John 14:16-17.

²⁹ John 14:26.

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earnestness, when you lack faith in prayer, some of you, I am sure are convicted today over your lack of prayer and therefore your spiritual immaturity. It is the Spirit of God that is bringing that conviction and it is the Spirit of God that will work in you when you leave this place today and you begin to change your habit of prayer. He will bring conviction to your heart so you will learn what it means as Hebrews 4:16 says to:

“...come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”³⁰

And since faith is so essential to prevailing in prayer, it is the Spirit that will help increase that. He will bring to your remembrance the words of Jesus in Matthew 21:22 where the Lord says:

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”³¹

May I close by asking you to do three things? Very simple. Number one, examine your prayer life. As I said earlier, the greatest measure of your spiritual maturity is what happens in the secret place of your prayer closet and in your heart before the Lord.

Secondly, will you remember these truths the next time you pray? Be conscious of this miracle, of the Spirit of God interceding on your behalf and just literally pause and bask in the glory of all of that.

And then, finally, will you teach these truths to your children? Parents, will you do that? Will you teach these truths to your children as you are supposed to do? As you are commanded to do? Let them be aware of this miracle, realizing that the Spirit of God conforms those little prayers that sometimes make us laugh. We try not to do it out loud, but sometimes they make us laugh. Know that he is conforming those prayers just as much as he conforms yours.

Oh, what blessed assurance we have in Christ. Amen? Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. I pray that these seeds will grow in our hearts and produce a glorious harvest, a harvest that we can give back to you to the praise of your glory. Speak to those, especially, who know nothing of the Savior. Lord, those who are sitting within the sound of my voice right now who have never been born again, oh God, break their heart over their sin. Cause them to look beyond their hypocrisy and see the wretchedness of their condition, to see the wrath of God abiding upon them that they might cry out to you for your mercy and for your grace. Lord, save them, we pray in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

³⁰ Hebrews 4:16.

³¹ Matthew 21:22.

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