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## More Than Conquerors

Studies in Romans 8

### Study 6 – When We Don't Know How to Pray

(Romans 8:26-30)

*There are always great challenges during the regular legislative session. This has been particularly true over the last several years as leaders have had to deal with difficult budgets. This year there are obviously the issues of education and PEIA. In the middle of such difficult times, it may often be difficult to even know how to pray. There have been several times during the years of our ministry in the capitol I have shared with leaders, "I am not even sure how to best pray you".*

*The Bible tells us that the life of one who is following Christ can be one of joy, peace, and assurance. So how do you experience joy, peace, and assurance in the middle of such challenging times? This is what Paul's message in Romans chapter 8 is all about. Because we have been made right with God through faith in Christ and His work, the believer can experience joy, peace, and assurance even in the most difficult of times because of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in their life. One of those works is that the Spirit helps believers to pray, even when we do not know how.*

In Romans 8:26-30 we find more wonderful promises that God has given believers to provide peace and assurance in the middle of the suffering and trials of life.

***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 hearts 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; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.***

We should notice a great contrast in verses 26 and 28. In verse 26 Paul writes of *what we do not know*, "**We do not know to pray as we should**". In verse 28 he writes of *what we know*, "**We know that God causes all things to work together for good...**". It is this contrast we want to focus on in this study. In the midst of trials and suffering, there are things we do not know, such as how we should pray. However, there are things we DO know which will give us the assurance and peace the Holy Spirit provides.

### What We Do Not Know

#### In the same way the Spirit helps our weakness –

We must first determine to what the "in the same way" is referring. It may be a further description of the hope we can find in suffering described in the immediate verses. More likely Paul is giving us a new item in the list of all that the Holy Spirit does for the believer which has been the theme of chapter 8. Remember Paul's focus is on the Holy Spirit's work in the believer's life. Consider what we have already seen:

In verse 2 the Holy Spirit sets the believer free from sin and death.

In verse 4 the Spirit helps the believer fulfill the requirements of the law.

In verse 6 the Spirit gives life and peace.

In verse 11 God raises the believer from the dead through the Holy Spirit.

In verse 13 the Holy Spirit helps the believer put to death the deeds of the body (sin).

In verse 14 the children of God are led by the Spirit.

In verses 15-16 the Spirit bears witness that believers are God's children and gives assurance of salvation.

In verse 23, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers is the guarantee of our final redemption and glorification in heaven.

Now we learn in verse 26 that the Holy Spirit helps our weakness. This may include our physical weaknesses. We know how much we struggle when we are ill or tired. We may struggle the most with discouragement and doubt when we or one we love is

seriously ill. This primarily refers to our spiritual weakness. When faced with suffering we do not know or do not understand what God is doing in our lives. Consequently, we come to the place where we do not know how to pray.

### **For we do not know how to pray –**

There come times in our lives when we do not even know how pray. This doesn't mean prayer in general. We know as we pray we should offer up praise to God, confession of our sin, thanksgiving for what He has done for us, and requests for our needs and the needs of others. Paul refers to our prayers in particular – how we pray in specific circumstances. When faced with illness, do we pray for healing or do we pray for strength to endure? When faced with suffering and trials do we pray for God to deliver us or for grace to give us perseverance and for God to use the trials to teach us and bring Him glory?

When we do not know how to pray, Paul tells us “**...The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words**”. This could refer to the Holy Spirit interceding to God for us. But we see that God already knows the mind of the Spirit (vs. 27). Rather, it seems to mean that the Holy Spirit intercedes by helping us to know how we should pray. The Spirit intercedes with literally “wordless groanings”. In ways that may not even be expressed in words, the Spirit works in us to know how we should pray. God knows the mind of the Spirit, and He knows the desires of our own hearts. The Spirit works to show us how we should pray.

The Spirit will use our suffering and weakness to help us in our prayer life. As we enter suffering and begin to recognize our weakness, the Holy Spirit will lead us to dependence on God and to prayer.

We have a great practical illustration of this in the life of Paul. In 2 Corinthians 12 we learn Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh” to keep him humble. Three times he prayed that the Lord would remove this from his life. Instead, God told him, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.**” (vs. 9). We would have to say that in the midst of his trial, Paul was not praying as he should. But the Holy Spirit worked in his life interceding for him to point where he could say, “**I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.**”<sup>10</sup> 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” (vs. 9-10).

This reminds of another promise later in chapter 8. In verse 34 Paul tells us of “**...Christ Jesus...who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.**” So, we have Jesus

Christ interceding for us in heaven, and we have the Holy Spirit interceding in us here on earth.

Even though we often may not know how to pray as we should, consider the assurance we can find in what we do know.

### **What We Do Know**

***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.***

This must be one of the greatest promises found anywhere in the Bible. It is the deepest, strongest foundation for the assurance of our faith in the middle of suffering and trials. It is the promise that God will work everything in our lives, both good and bad, both for the believer's good and for His glory.

We must first note that this promise is only true for those who love God and are called according to His purpose. We have already considered that every person will face trials and suffering because we live in a sinful world. For the unbeliever who has not trusted Christ this is but a sample of the judgment to come because of God's just judgment and punishment for sin.

The only beneficiaries of this promise are those that love God – who have trusted in Him alone for salvation. (This is our response towards God). And it is for those who are called according to His purpose. (This is God's action towards us). God has called all those who trust in Him **according to His purpose**. What is His purpose for us? It is to glorify us, to make us holy, to make us like Christ. This is the good; this is the purpose towards which God is working all things in the life of the believer.

### **The Immediate and the Ultimate**

What this teaches us is that we can be certain about the ultimate, even while we are most uncertain about the immediate. Martyn Lloyd-Jones sum it up well:

*The believer can say, “I do not know which way to turn or to go; I do not understand why these things are happening, and I do not know exactly what to ask for at this moment. But I know this, that in spite of my ignorance, and in spite of everything that is happening to me, this and everything else is working together for my good’. This is the final comfort and consolation for the believer.*

(Lloyd-Jones, Martyn. *Commentary on Romans*. Banner of Truth. Pg. 177.

### **CAPITOL BIBLE STUDIES**

Thursday, February 22

8:00 AM Gov. Org. Conference Room (East Wing)

12:00 Noon Senate President's Conference Room