**The Holy Spirit Intercedes for Us**

**Romans 8:26-27 (ESV)**

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December 4, 2016

We’re going to be in this letter to the church at Rome and we’re going to be looking particularly at two verses. We want to take a little bit of the context before looking specifically at these two verses. What an encouragement that the Holy Spirit is given to us to help us in our journey right now as we’re struggling along in this world. We’re having to fight against sin. We’re moving toward a future destination when we will stand before God and we will be clothed completely in righteousness. We’ll be transformed in front of Him. Right now, we’re along that road and it is a fight. It is a war. It is a race. But we’re not alone. And today we’re going to learn about one of the graces that God gives to us to help us, guaranteeing that every one of us who begins this race will ultimately persevere all the way to the end. That’s not because of us. It’s not because of our tenacity or our discipline. It’s because of God’s grace just being shed abroad to us. Today, we’re going to think about how the Holy Spirit is given to us to minister to us. And one of the ways He ministers to us is by interceding for us before the Father. That’s an amazing, joyful gift of God that encourages me! I trust it will encourage you as well as you continue to fight the good fight.

*26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

The child of God lives with one purpose in mind. And that is to see, to experience, and to rejoice in the pleasure that is God Himself. We don’t live for earthly pleasures. While we receive God’s good gifts here in this temporal world, we recognize that every earthly pleasure is shallow. It is fleeting compared to the eternal joy of sharing in God’s glory, of becoming more like Him in our character, of communing with Him. We live with a longing to be free of the sins that presently remain, corrupting our hearts. These sins still blind us more from seeing God clearly. We desire to live in such a way that we are becoming more and more like Jesus. In becoming more like Jesus, we are becoming more like Him in the way Jesus thinks, in the way Jesus feels, in the way Jesus behaves, in the way Jesus loves, in the way Jesus serves, in the way Jesus honors the Father. This passion is expressed by the Apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 3. He writes this:

**Philippians 3:8-11** (NLT-SE) Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him… I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

If you are a person who reads that passage and says, “Yes! That is me, too!” then praise God! You’ve been transformed. If you’re a person who reads that passage and says, “I don’t get it at all!” then you have to wonder, “Has God done a miracle in my heart to make me alive to Him?”

For the child of God, God’s glory is our chief end. It is our eagerly awaited vision for our life. The glory of God’s name becomes the passion for which we live. We are a people who pray with Mark Altrogge who wrote this song:

*Give me one pure and holy passion*

*Give me one magnificent obsession*

*Give me one glorious ambition for my life*

*To know and follow hard after you.*

God wrote a book to His children to help us successfully pursue this magnificent obsession of ours, of knowing Christ and becoming like Him. Those who don’t possess this holy passion find this Book often to be unsatisfying. So much of God’s Word only makes sense to people whose blind eyes have been opened to the joy of knowing and seeing God. If we’re still blind to God’s glory, much of the Bible will seem odd, perhaps even abusive. Such is the nature of this passage in front of us today. I want you to look at Romans 8:16-17 with me first.

**Romans 8:16-17** The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

God is teaching us that the path that leads us to His glory is marked with suffering. And to the person who has not been made alive to God, that simply makes no sense. The person who is still blind to the joy that is found in Christ will say, “Well, if the path that leads to God’s glory is one of suffering, you can have it. I’m going to choose another path to walk on in this life. I don’t see that God’s glory is worth the kinds of hurts that I would have to endure through this broken world. So God, if you are going to treat me this way, I don’t think I want You in my life.”

On the other hand, the child of God who knows that all the longings of our heart is bound up with God Himself reads a passage like this and says, “God, I trust You. I trust You that You are purposeful and sovereign even in the sufferings of my life. You’re good, You’re wise and You’re leading me to a path of eternal joy. You have designed these present sufferings to help me know You and experience the power of Your resurrection in my life. And that’s my main purpose for living after all, anyway. That is the goal that I have set before my life because Your Gospel has made me see who You are and how great You are.” Paul says in Romans 8:18:

**Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Paul knows the pain that the brokenness of this world can bring to a heart. He also knows that one day, God will open up a door to His glory and make all those broken pieces whole again. He teaches us that if we are God’s beloved children, then we will see even the sufferings that we endure as purposeful. We will see them as God-ordained, moving us forward to that future glory that has been promised us in Jesus Christ.

Paul is saying, “I don’t deny that my present trials really, really hurt. But I will let my painful trials move me deeper into God and into His promises. I will not let these sufferings tempt me to simply quit my pursuit of God’s glory. I know that God is using my present pains to conform me to the image of Jesus and to lead me to know Him deeper. So when I put the sufferings of this present age on one side of the ledger and the eternal glories that God offers me in Christ on the other side, my sufferings begin to shrink. They seem small, minor and insignificant compared to this glorious future day.

So we ask ourselves the question: Do I want to experience the sanctifying work of God in my life? Do I want the joy of knowing God today and of knowing Him fully on that future day when we’ll stand before Him? Do I desire above all things to share in this inheritance that God offers me in Christ? If we say “Yes!” to those questions, then Romans 8:26-27 will be life changing for us. It’ll bring such encouragement and strength to our soul.

Before we look at those verses, we’re going to look at a couple other truths that are part of the context of Romans 8. If you’re taking notes, the first truth we’re going to consider is that

**I. God’s children long for the freedom of God’s glory.**

That is set in our hearts the moment that we are born again. Paul is going to talk about this in Romans 8:19-23. Let’s read that again together.

**Romans 8:19-23** For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

All creation is moving and longing for that future day. We ourselves long for that day when we will be free from the bondage to corruption. Paul is referencing the corruption that our own sin created in our own soul and in this world. He says, “As a Christian, as a child of God, we long to be free of the corruption of our own sin and the corruption of this world that is moving away from God in deeper rebellion. And instead of that corruption, we long for the freedom that accompanies the glory of God when it is on display fully in all of its brilliance.” That’s who we are as believers. That is our hope.

We acknowledge with the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, just turn back a few verses, verses 23-24, that we have an ongoing, continual fight against this corruption while we are living in this body in this present world.

**Romans 7:23-24** but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

He’s saying, “There’s indwelling sin. It’s fighting the Spirit of God who now also indwells in me. And this indwelling sin is very, very powerful.” He is acknowledging and testifying that sometimes it conquers his soul. And he cries out, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” And the answer of course, is Jesus. There is hope for victory!

Paul is teaching us that Jesus Christ is presently working to free us from the present dominance of sin in our life. Freeing us from its condemnation, but freeing us from its corruption and from its power. And Jesus Christ will one day complete His work so that all that condemnation, all that corruption, all that power of sin will be completely removed away from us. And our hope is for God, through Jesus, to restore our hearts fully to a state of righteousness in Him.

**Galatians 5:5** For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

This is the hope of the Christian. This is what we long for regarding our future. We just simply want to be made clean, practically clean, from all the way to the depths of who we are, to the far reaches of our external world. We desire to be practically clean. And that is our hope. That is what Jesus is going to accomplish in us. That is what Jesus is right now working in us to accomplish. If you are a child of God, that future day when God completes His work of righteousness in your life is not just a possibility. It is an absolute certainty! It is a guarantee!

However, if you are outside of Jesus Christ, then God tells you that you will never experience the joy of being set free from sin’s corruption. You will never know the freedom of being delivered from sin’s condemnation. All of God’s promises to bless us as a people, which He offers to everyone, and all of those promises are available to you. All of His promises are fulfilled through your union or connection to Jesus. That’s the reason why we’re saved by faith in Jesus Christ. All of these promises are a big “yes” to us when we are connected to Jesus. I love 2 Corinthians 1:20.

**2 Corinthians 1:20** For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

Friend, we must believe in Jesus in order to benefit from God’s promises. We acknowledge that we don’t experience the full fulfillment of God’s promises in this present age. We experience some of them. But many of the best promises of God are going to be fulfilled on that future Day when Jesus returns in power and glory. So right now for instance, we can expect to have to battle against temptation and worldly desires. But not on that Day. We’ll be completely free. Right now, we have to confess our sins daily because we still disobey God. Butnot on that Day. We will never have to confess one more sin because we’ll be free of sin. Right now, relationships get broken and conflicts among our relationships in the church or in our families, in our neighborhoods discourage us. But not on that Day. Every relationship will be made whole, permanently. Right now, our bodies get sick and they grow weak and they feel pain and they eventually die. But on that Day, we will never experience any more pain. We will be given a new body, a glorious body that will never ever grow weak or die. Right now, we see God, but we see Him through a glass darkly. But on that Day, we’re going to see Him clearly, face to face. And Beloved, that is our hope.

**Romans 8:24-25** For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

We who are children of God wait for this future hope of glory. And we wait for it with patience. Last week we defined hoping in God this way: Hoping in God means that we confidently, eagerly and patiently await the joyful future that God has secured for His children. So right now, we confidently, eagerly, and patiently are awaiting for God to fulfill the promises that He has given us.

I love those three adjectives behind our hope. It’s a confident hope. We do not wait like a novice baker waits for a soufflé to rise in the oven. No. We are absolutely sure that this is going to happen because it is guaranteed by God’s faithfulness. We wait with eagerness. So, we wait like a bride waits for her wedding day. We wait like a child waits for Christmas morning to open up presents. It is with an eagerness and expectation of that future Day that we’re waiting. We keep it in view and we can’t wait for it to happen. And then we wait with patience. That word “patience” carries the idea of endurance or steadfastness. We wait like a marathon runner waits for the finish line. Just because one small step is such a tiny movement forward, that doesn’t cause us to grow discouraged by that next tiny step and decide, “Well, the finish line is never going to arrive. I’m just going to quit the race. I’m going to sit along the sidelines.” No, a marathon runner is patient in waiting for that finish line, continually moving forward even though it seems like the progress is oh so small.”

This waiting that God calls us to as we embrace our hope of the glory of God is an active kind of waiting. It is not a passive kind of waiting where we affirm it’s going to be true someday, but then we leave it and we neglect thinking about it. We neglect doing anything to pursue it. No, it is an active kind of waiting. So, if this waiting for the future glory of God to be realized in our life is active, what activities or actions do we engage in as we have hope, as we wait for that future Day? Well, one of those activities that is central, that God talks about here, is that we simply pray. As we wait for the future Day of Redemption, we pray. We pray for God to fulfill His promises in our lives today and in our future. We cry out to Him to help us along this journey in our fight in running this race so that we would have strength to endure all the way to the end.

**II. God’s children pursue God’s glory through prayer.**

Again, it’s not just sort of passively pursuing God’s glory, but it’s very active. And our action focuses upon acts of dependence upon God. One of which is prayer.

Prayer is described in Scripture as a foundational means by which the believer participates in our own sanctification. No one grows in Christlikeness without prayer. No one enters deeper into God’s glory and in the fulfillment of His promises apart from dependently calling out to God in prayer. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit has opened a door for us into heaven so that we who are sinners can approach the holy God. The Holy Spirit, along with Jesus Christ doing that initial work of covering our sins and reconciling us to God, now along with the work of the third Person of the Triune God, the Holy Spirit opens that door so that we can talk to God as a child would talk to a father. The Apostle Paul has already addressed that very truth, that very Gospel reality in verses 13-15 of Romans 8. Look at what the Holy Spirit does to open the door for us to prayer.

**Romans 8:13-15** For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

The Christian life is not passive. It is by faith, but it’s an active faith. And it’s a life that continually puts to death the deeds of the flesh. But it’s not using its own personal resources to put those deeds of the flesh to death. It’s dependent upon God’s Spirit. Apart from God’s Spirit working in us, when we would approach a holy God, we would shrink away and say, “I can’t go into God’s presence. I am a sinner. I’m a rebel. I deserve His wrath. I deserve His condemnation. He won’t accept me.” That’s the spirit of slavery. You’ve received the Spirit of adoption. That’s the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit, we who are now children of God through faith in Jesus cry out to God, “Abba! Daddy! Father!” We approach Him as a little child approaches their loving daddy. The Holy Spirit gives us and provides for us access through our adoption to feel the absolute freedom to call the infinitely holy, sovereign, everlasting, infinite God of the universe, “Daddy! Father!”

Jesus taught us how to pray in Matthew chapter 6. The focus of prayer in the New Testament is a focus upon the fulfillment of God’s promise of righteousness. That God would have the central aspect of our prayers being prayers for righteousness. That means for our own hearts and our own lives. “God, I want to become more like Jesus and I am petitioning You as my Father to help me along this journey to fight against temptation, to fight against the corruption that is in my own soul, so that I might see you more clearly, and that I might enjoy you more dearly, and that I might enter into worship of You and communion with You.” That’s the center of the Christian’s prayers. We pray that for ourselves. We pray that for our brothers and sisters. We pray for those who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior that they would enter into this righteousness initially. For those who have entered into God’s righteousness initially through Jesus, we pray for their continuance all the way to the end.

Jesus, in teaching us to pray, showed us that the focal point of the Christian life is the glory of God. This is His outworking of glory in our lives and in our community. This is the way Jesus taught us to pray.

**Matthew 6:9-13** Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

In other words, “Lord, I want what happens here in my life, in my world, in my Christian community, in my church, to result in the honor of Your name. That is the first statement that I want to make to you. It is that I care about Your honor and Your glory. Lord, You’ve told me that Your kingdom is all about righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. I want that kingdom in my heart, ruling and reigning. And then I want that kingdom to be expressed through my relationships with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Your will be done. I don’t want to pursue my will because if I pursued my will, I’d mess up my life. I don’t know the path to joy. You are the path to life and joy. And so Father, I want Your will to be done in my life. Give us this day our daily bread. You’ve given me a body and I need provision for it, or else this body, this instrument You’ve given me to worship You is going to fail.

Father, forgive us our sins.” It’s an acknowledgement that we who are Christians, children of God, are going to continue to sin. Every day we need to go before Him and say, “Forgive me. I need to confess these sins. I need to see my sin like You see my sin. None of these sins that I’m holding onto in my own heart are little or small or there are reasons why they are there that make logical sense. No, Lord! Show me their own wickedness and let me turn from them in repentance, seeking Your mercy and Your grace.

And Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver me from the evil one. This temptation that I face is so strong that left to myself, I will wither under it. And so Father, help me to know the way of escape even from the temptation. And when I face those temptations, Lord, give me strength to be delivered from the evil one and from His assaults against my heart and against my soul.”

Each request in this prayer is one that connects God’s children to the pursuit of God’s glory in our lives. And we often don’t think about prayer that way. But that’s the way God teaches us about prayer. Now we’re going to enter into verse 26 more specifically.

**III. God’s children do not know what specific requests to pray as they pursue God’s glory.**

*26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought…*

What does it mean that we don’t know what to pray for as we ought? Didn’t we just read that Jesus taught us exactly what to pray? I would say, No. Jesus was teaching us *how* to pray. Matthew 6 is a model for a manner of prayer. We pray with God’s glory in view. We pray with a desire for His will to be done. We pray for freedom from the corruption of sin. He is teaching us *how* to pray. But we often do not know *what* specifically to pray for in the detailed situations of our life. And particularly, remember the context. Particularly when we are entering seasons of suffering in our life. I think it’s important for us to remember that verses 26 and 27 are in the context of verses 16 and following, where Paul is talking to us about God’s purposes and ordained plans behind suffering as a means that leads us to glory.

So the question then would be, what do I pray for when I experience a season of suffering? So, it might be a physical disease. It might be suffering as a result of broken relationships. It might be a season in which we lose a job and there’s financial pressures upon us. All sorts of kinds of sufferings we might endure. And here’s the question: What do I pray for? And here’s the answer. Are you ready for it? We do not know. That’s what the text says. We do not know what to pray for. Now, that’s kind of discouraging. If I don’t know what to pray for, well, how am I going to pray? That’s where this truth is so dynamic and so encouraging to us. It tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. What is our weakness? We don’t know what to pray for as we ought. We don’t know what God’s will specifically is in reference to the outcome of our suffering.

Notice in verse 26 that the Apostle Paul says, “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.” Do you notice he is including himself in this weakness? So think of this. This is the Apostle Paul who wrote much of the New Testament. He raises his hand and says, “Here’s my testimony. There are often times in my life, during my times of suffering, that I don’t know what I should pray for. That’s my human weakness.” And that’s the Apostle Paul. Didn’t the Apostle Paul have revelations? Didn’t the Apostle Paul receive inspiration to write Scripture? Yes, yes. He did those things. But here he says, “But I’m a man and there are often times, especially in times of suffering, that I don’t know what to pray for.” Well, give us an illustration! Paul says, “Okay, I will.” And he takes us back to 2 Corinthians chapter 12. This is one illustration. I think there are many. But this is one. It’s perhaps the most profound.

**2 Corinthians 12:7-9** So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

This is some form of suffering, likely physical suffering, that he was enduring every day. It was distracting in every thought, every word, every relationship. It was constantly there. And if you’ve ever experienced that kind of physical pain, you know what I’m talking about. Most of your energy is taken up just trying to keep that pain at bay. And you’re only operating on just a small percentage of your mental focus because the pain is just screaming at you. He calls it a “thorn in the flesh.”

Notice what Paul prayed for. When we don’t know what to pray for, is it okay to still pray for healing? Yes. Paul is not condemned for praying that this thorn in the flesh would leave him. But he did not know what to pray for because that was not God’s will for his life. He was not praying in accordance with God’s will at the time that he prayed for that thorn in the flesh to leave him. How do we know that? Because of what God did.

Again, we ask the question, if Paul didn’t know what to pray for and he prayed for this thorn in the flesh to leave him and it didn’t leave him, and instead, God’s whole purpose behind that physical suffering was to deepen his faith so that he would see that God’s grace is sufficient in all circumstance and he’d be able to enjoy God more and know God more and glorify God more in his life, was Paul’s praying useless? Did it matter at all? He spent all this time praying over this. Was that just wasted time and wasted energy? And the answer to that question is, No! It was not wasted time. It was not wasted energy. Why not? Because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit using Paul’s weakness, that is, his ignorance of knowing what to pray, and yet using that humble cry of prayer unto God. And the Spirit of God taking that prayer and making groanings before the Father from the prayers that the Apostle Paul is requesting. Taking that prayer and setting before the Father groanings that are in accordance with God’s will. So that prayer, rather than availing nothing, availed much. That prayer for God to deliver him from this thorn in the flesh was translated by the Holy Spirit in such a way that the Father listened to the Holy Spirit’s intercession for the Apostle Paul and granted him grace that was sufficient.

The principle we learn is that in seasons of suffering, we don’t know what to pray for as we ought. But we don’t need to be discouraged because we have one who helps us. We have the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us. He listens to our prayers and translates those to the Father in such a way that our prayers become prayers in the will of God when our prayers are in submission to the Spirit of God. It’s amazing, really! God is giving us a little peek behind the scenes. We get a peek into that invisible world of the communication of this Triune God who exists as one God in three Persons, and the communication amongst those Persons. He says, “One of the things that happens is this Holy Spirit that indwells you and that gives you the freedom to call Me Father, when you pray, the Spirit who indwells you is there. And I’m the one who knows what is in the spirit of a man,” he says in verse 27.

*27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

He says, “I know the heart and what is the mind of the Spirit as I search your heart. And then as I search your heart, the Spirit who dwells in you communicates to Me. He intercedes for you. And He intercedes in a way that is in accordance with My will, so I listen and I respond and I bless you.” That’s an amazing, amazing gift! What an amazing encouragement that even in our ignorance, even when we don’t know what to pray for, God Himself is working through His Holy Spirit to cause our prayers to be such that they avail much.

Now let me just give a little side note. I would encourage you to beware of anyone who says that they know exactly what to pray when you enter a season of suffering. Here, the Word of God is very clear that we don’t know exactly what to pray when we ourselves or others enter into a season of suffering. Some people mean well. I’m sympathetic to their motivation, but they often will say things like, “God told me to pray for your healing from terminal illness. He is going to heal you.” I would say, that person cannot possibly know that, because that’s part of the secret things of God. Now someone says, “Well, I heard this person pray for another and say that, and then it happened. So maybe they do have access to the secret world that the Apostle Paul didn’t have access to.” And I would remind you of God’s instruction to us from Deuteronomy 18.

In Deuteronomy 18 (verses 20-22), He tells us that we are to listen to His prophets, but that we should not listen to a prophet who is not from Him. In fact, He says that prophet who is not from Him will be put to death. You might say, “Well, how do you know whether a person is a prophet from God or not from God?” Here’s the test. If the prophet ever says anything that does not come true, that person is a false prophet. So, it’s not whether or not we know a person who 10 times has told us things that seem to be part of the secret realm of God’s secret workings, and they come to be true. That’s not the test. The test is, has there ever been once in all their life where they’ve been wrong? So, it’s not whether they’re right half the time or 75% of the time, or even 99.99% of the time. So, a person might make a statement like, “I know what God is doing in your suffering.” And they might be right 9,999 times in a row. But if on the 10,000th time they miss it, and the person they said was going to get healed doesn’t get healed, guess what? They are a false prophet and God says, “You don’t have to listen to them. In fact, they’re under my judgment. Because I am a God of truth and no one speaks for me and lies.”

So, it’s important for us to humbly come in our sufferings and say, “I don’t know.” It’s still right for me to pray. Paul prayed for his thorn in the flesh to be relieved. It’s okay for me to pray what is on my heart, to make my desires known. And I know that that prayer that is in dependence upon the Holy Spirit will avail much. Why do I know that? Not because of my knowledge, but because of the Holy Spirit’s knowledge. It is a knowledge of the One who resides in me and dwells in me. He’s ministering to me and He helps me in my weakness.

This definition is what I’d give of what prayer is: Prayer is the humble cry of God’s children to our Abba who is able and willing to supply exactly what we need for His glory and for our eternal joy. James is clear that the prayer of a righteous person has great power. (James 5:13-16) It has great, great power. James tells us that we often have not because we ask not. (James 4:2-3) Jesus says, “If you ask, you will receive.” (John 16:24) Prayer is God’s means, it’s God’s instrument by which He unleashes His grace into our lives to bring us along in this path that leads us to future glory. So what’s our application?

1. Let’s devote ourselves to prayer.

We often spend so little time passionately pleading with God over our own soul and the souls of those we love. And let us pray with God’s glory in view. That is the center. That’s the heart. That’s not just along the periphery of our prayers, but it’s the core of our prayers. All the other things are at the periphery. But here is the core. “I desire above all things to know Christ, to know the power of His resurrection, that He would sanctify me and He would sanctify His church and would lead us together to His glory.” I believe the church is weak because we do not pray for spiritual transformation of our souls.

**IV. The Holy Spirit helps God’s children to pray.**

I love verse 26!

*26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.*

God gives us a Helper. He’s the third Person of this Triune God. He is as real of a Person as God the Father. He’s as real of a Person as God the Son. The Holy Spirit is not some impersonal force, but He is a relational Person who relates to us. And He says, “You can call on Me and I will help you in your weakness.” That word “help” is a very long Greek word, actually. It refers to a person who comes alongside another to help him lift some heavy load and then he bears that load for some time, until that load is able to be carried to the place where it needs to be carried, and then dropped. That’s what it means to help. And that’s what the Holy Spirit does in our sufferings. We carry such a big load. We feel like we’re going to be crushed underneath the suffering circumstances. And the Holy Spirit says, “Let me help you.” And He lifts that load through this ministry of intercession. He lifts that load and says, “I am going to carry this for you. This load will not crush you because I am here for you.” It’s remarkable!

This past week, I moved my mom’s bed from her home to Assisted Living. And it’s a mechanical bed, so it weighs a lot. So I called Barry who then called his buddies, Roger and Bill. And they showed up at my house the next day. Isn’t that amazing?! And Roger and Bill did almost all the work. I give the excuse that I’ve had neck surgery and I can’t really lift much. And they carried that. It’s a heavy load. Now, I put a little bit of strength into it on occasion, but they carried this load. They helped me. I would have never been able to get that bed over to where it needed to be with my mom, apart from their help.

And that’s what the Holy Spirit does. We have this big load. We need it moved. It needs to be moved. It is crushing us! We need this objective accomplished, which is our sanctification. The Holy Spirit says, “Here, I’m coming alongside of you and I am going to help you. Beloved, let us walk through seasons of suffering with the Holy Spirit’s help. Let’s invite Him in. Let’s walk with Him and depend upon Him.

**V. The Holy Spirit intercedes for God’s children in harmony with God’s will.**

*26…For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

We shouldn’t get too discouraged by our own ignorance. The Holy Spirit doesn’t come alongside us impassively and coldly and say, “Okay, I’m God. You’re insignificant, and so here, let me help you with your burden and then get you on your way.” No. When the Holy Spirit comes to bear the burdens of our sufferings, He comes with groanings. He enters into our suffering. He is sympathetic. He feels what we feel. So He groans. It’s not our groaning in prayer. It’s the Holy Spirit’s groaning that the Apostle Paul is talking about. Think of that! The third Person of the Triune God who existed for all of eternity past, sees little you and little me. He sees our suffering and He enters into it with such caring, with such concern that He Himself groans as He intercedes for us. That’s amazing! What a sweet Holy Spirit God has given to us.

Two features of the Holy Spirit’s intercession stand out to me.

Feature #1: The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with genuine sympathy and yearning for our joy.

It’s genuine compassion, genuine love. O how loved we are!

Feature #2: The Holy Spirit intercedes for us in accordance with God’s will.

The Holy Spirit knows exactly what will bring the greatest joy to our lives. He takes our prayers and translates them to the Father so that they are in perfect harmony with God’s perfect will, with God’s good and pleasing will. And then God accomplishes that very thing. Prayer avails much!

Let me close with some applications:

1. Let us pray!

Jesus taught us that we should always pray and not give up. We need to be people of prayer. We need to devote ourselves to prayer, both individually and corporately as a church. Let us pray! I challenge you to think about how that one little application might influence your week.

2. Let us pray for spiritual transformation for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters.

More than anything else, we need renewal. We need to be moving closer to that ultimate goal of God’s glory.

3. Let us pray in confidence, knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in harmony with God’s will.

We don’t have to be bashful. “I don’t know if I know what to pray for.” No, we don’t know what to pray for. “Are we going to pray amiss?” Yes, we’re going to pray amiss. But if we’re praying in the Spirit, taught by God’s Word, even in our ignorance, those prayers will avail much. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is going to help us.

4. Let us await with eagerness and patience the day of redemption when we will experience and share in the glory of God!

This is our hope. The best is yet to come!