



PRAYER

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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Prayer

SERMON REFERENCE: Romans 8:26-28

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2064

As Christians, prayer is our greatest privilege and service, yet it can be our greatest failure. Too often, we don't have the desire to pray, nor do we know what to pray for. Other times, the enemy interferes to keep us from praying.

Adrian Rogers says, "The devil laughs at our organization and mocks our schemes. He ridicules our good intentions, but he fears our prayers."

Knowing this, God has given us an ally, an asset, and Great Helper: the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26-27 says, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." These are some of the ways the Holy Spirit helps us pray:

- The Spirit activates our will to pray. Our flesh resists prayer, but the Holy Spirit in us recognizes God for who He is and reignites our will to pray.
- The Spirit animates our bodies to pray. When our minds wander and grow weary, we must yield to the Holy Spirit and receive His energy and power.
- The Spirit adapts our requests. Sometimes we're not sure how to pray but, glory to God, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate transformer. Simply pray with a clean heart, and He will adapt our prayers.
- The Spirit administrates our access to God. God has given us the royal invitation to pray, and the Holy Spirit is our guide into the throne room.
- The Spirit articulates our words. The Holy Spirit understands our groans and wordless heartache. Even when we don't have the vocabulary to express our thoughts, God knows our hearts. And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him (see Romans 8:28). His plans are for our holiness, not our happiness.
- The Spirit amplifies our victory. When we pray in the flesh, we are no match for Satan; but when we pray in the Spirit, we remember: if God is for us, who can stand against? (See Romans 8:31.)

LIFE APPLICATION

Prayer is warfare; as you go to the Lord in prayer today, remember that you have a Helper, who intercedes for you.



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SERMON REFERENCE: Romans 8:26-28

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- 1) INTRODUCTION
 - a) The book of Romans is the constitution of Christianity.
 - b) Romans 8:26-28
 - i) There are two words that stand out in this passage:
 - (1) The Spirit.
 - (2) Prayer.
 - c) Today's message will focus on how to pray in the Spirit.
 - d) Most people are not satisfied with their prayer life.
 - e) Prayer is the greatest Christian privilege.
 - f) Prayer is the greatest Christian service.
 - i) We can do more than pray after we've prayed, but we cannot do any more than pray until we've prayed.
 - g) Prayer is also the Christian's greatest failure.
 - i) We fail in our prayer life.
 - h) Why do we fail in our prayer life?
 - i) Indifference.
 - (1) Many times, we just don't have a desire to pray.
 - (2) The flesh doesn't want to pray.
 - ii) Ignorance.
 - (1) We don't know how to pray or what to pray for.
 - iii) Interference.
 - (1) When we go to pray, the devil tries to keep us from praying.
 - (a) The children will get into a fight or fuss, the phone will ring, we will get sleepy, our mind will wander, etc.
 - (2) The devil laughs at our organization, mocks our schemes, ridicules our good intentions, but he fears our prayers.
 - (a) He thinks that if he can keep us from praying, then he will beat us every time.
 - (3) The devil will level all of the artillery of Hell against us to try to keep us from praying.
 - i) The answer to having a satisfied, fulfilling prayer life is to find that God has given us an ally and helper, and He is the Holy Spirit.
 - i) Romans 8:26
 - ii) The Holy Spirit of God helps us, energizes us, enlightens us and empowers us to pray.
 - j) We are told to pray in the Spirit.
 - i) Ephesians 6:18
 - ii) Jude 20
 - iii) To pray in the flesh is to fail; to pray in the Spirit is to succeed.
 - k) The early church advanced on its knees, and today's churches are no greater than the prayer



lives of their members.

- i) Our ministries are no better than our prayer lives.
- l) Today's message will look at some of the ways in which the Holy Spirit of God helps us to pray.

2) THE HOLY SPIRIT ACTIVATES OUR WILLS (romans 8:5-7)

- a) The Holy Spirit of God moves our wills to pray.
- b) The basic reason why we don't pray is because there is a lack of desire to pray.
 - i) We have no will, no appetite and no hunger to pray.
 - ii) People do what they want to do.
 - (1) The reason we don't pray more than we do is because we don't want to.
- c) There is a part of us called the flesh.
 - i) When the Bible speaks of our flesh, it is talking about our old Adamic nature, that predisposition to sin.
 - ii) This is that part of us that doesn't love God.
 - (1) We were born with this.
 - iii) Romans 8:5-6
 - (1) The word "carnally" is another way of saying "fleshly" minded.
 - (2) The death spoken of here is not physical death only, but spiritual death.
 - (a) It is talking about death to goodness, purity, power and prayer.
 - iv) Romans 8:7
 - (1) The word "enmity" means "warfare."
 - (2) We must be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to desire to pray.
- d) Romans 8:15
 - i) There is the spirit of bondage.
 - (1) The devil wants to keep us in bondage and keep us down.
 - (2) This is the spirit that motivates the children of this world.
 - ii) When we get saved, we receive the spirit of adoption.
 - (1) We are born into the family of God spiritually, and we are adopted into the family of God legally.
 - (2) The spirit of adoption means that we are heirs of God.
 - (3) Once we are adopted into the family of God, God puts His Holy Spirit into us.
 - (a) The Holy Spirit in us loves the Father.
 - (i) The Holy Spirit says, "Abba Father."
 - (b) It is normal and natural to pray when we're Spirit-filled.
 - (i) God takes away the spirit of bondage that keeps us from praying and puts His Holy Spirit in our heart and life.
- e) Some people think that they can't pray because they can't speak in poetical phrases.
 - i) Matthew 6:7
 - (1) We're not heard for our much speaking.
 - ii) The most primary speech a child can make is "Abba Father."
 - (1) This is the counterpart of "Daddy Father."
- f) It is as natural for us to pray as it is to speak to our own earthly father when we're filled with



the Spirit.

- g) Romans 8:9
 - i) The Holy Spirit is Christ in the Christian.
- h) Luke 11:1
 - i) When the disciples saw and heard Jesus pray, they asked Him to teach them to pray.
 - (1) The Spirit of Christ is in us.
- i) Romans 8:6-7
 - i) Our old nature doesn't want to pray.
 - (1) If we have no desire to pray, then it's because we're not filled with the Holy Spirit.
- j) Philippians 2:13
 - i) God works in us and activates our will.

3) THE HOLY SPIRIT ANIMATES OUR BODIES (Romans 8:10-11)

- a) He makes our bodies alive.
- b) Romans 8:10-11
 - i) The wages of sin is death.
 - (1) Because Jesus died for us and we died with Him, the old person is crucified.
 - ii) The Holy Spirit who brought Jesus out of the grave is the Holy Spirit who came into us when we were saved.
 - iii) The word "quicken" means "give life, energy, to animate."
 - iv) The Holy Spirit gives us strength to pray.
- c) It takes energy and strength to pray.
 - i) Romans 15:30
 - (1) The Apostle Paul spoke about laboring in prayer.
 - ii) Many of us don't pray because we're lazy.
- d) Matthew 26:41
 - i) In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told the disciples to watch and pray, but He found them sleeping.
 - (1) Had they been filled with the Spirit, then they would have been praying.
- e) Romans 8:11
 - i) There is something about the Holy Spirit that gives us energy.
- f) When the Spirit of God is there, joy is there.
 - i) Nehemiah 8:10
- g) John 4:1-32
 - i) Jesus witnessed to the woman of Samaria, and she came to saving faith.
 - ii) Jesus was tired and hungry because the disciples had gone into town for food.
 - iii) When the disciples came back, Jesus was vibrant.
 - (1) Jesus' actual body had been invigorated by the Holy Spirit of God.
- h) When we are in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God will literally strengthen and animate our body as well as activate our will.

4) THE HOLY SPIRIT ADAPTS OUR REQUESTS (Romans 8:26)



- a) Romans 8:26
 - i) Paul includes himself when he says that the Holy Spirit helps “our” infirmities and that “we” don’t know what we should pray for.
 - (1) We should accept our weaknesses for two reasons:
 - (a) It’s a fact.
 - (b) It’s an asset.
 - (i) The Apostle Paul learned that his weakness was an asset.
 - 1. 2 Corinthians 12:9
 - (ii) Many of us think that we’re too weak, but it may be that we haven’t been weak enough.
 - (2) What God wants to do in prayer is to deliver us from self-sufficiency.
 - (1) He makes us perpetually weak that we might be perpetually powerful as we depend upon Him.
- b) The Holy Spirit of God adapts our requests in prayer.
 - i) He moves in alongside of us.
 - ii) The word “helpeth” in Romans 8:26 is made up of three words which mean “with,” “face to face” and “to take hold of.”
 - (1) The only other time this word is used in the Bible is when Martha was in the kitchen fixing a meal and asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her.
 - (a) Luke 10:38-42
 - (2) When we pray in the Holy Spirit, we are face to face with Him.
 - (a) There is that vital relationship.
 - (b) He with me and I with Him.
 - (3) He takes hold, and I take hold; and together we do it.
 - (4) I cannot do it without Him, and He will not do it without me.
 - iii) Together in prayer, the Holy Spirit of God helps us to pray.
- c) What should we pray for?
 - i) There are many needs in our world.
 - (1) If we pray just according to need, that is like trying to bail out the ocean with a teacup.
 - (a) We’ll become discouraged.
 - (2) If we try to pray for everything, then we’ll end up praying for nothing.
 - ii) Once we know what to pray about, we don’t know how to pray.
 - (1) When we pray for the sick, is it God’s will to heal them, or does God want to take them home?
 - (a) John 17:24
 - (b) Sometimes it is God’s will to extend their lives, and in His mercy, He lets them stay with us.
 - (i) But God has also made us for Heaven.
 - (2) In our prayer meetings at church, how many people are praying for the lost who need to be saved?
 - (a) Most people are praying for the saints to get well, which there is nothing wrong with that.



- (b) But we seem far more interested in keeping the saints out of Heaven than the lost out of Hell.
- d) We must pray with selectivity and specificity in order to pray with power.
 - i) Romans 8:26
 - (1) When we pray, the Holy Spirit will lay prayer burdens on our heart and teach us what to pray for.
- 5) THE HOLY SPIRIT ADMINISTRATES OUR ACCESS (Romans 8:14-15)
 - a) The Holy Spirit will administrate our access to God.
 - b) Romans 8:14-15
 - i) The Holy Spirit energizes us and leads us into the presence of God.
 - c) The Bible teaches that it is the Holy Spirit who ushers us into the throne room of God.
 - i) Ephesians 2:18
 - (1) We pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit.
 - ii) The Lord has invited us to come boldly to the throne of grace, but we need the Holy Spirit to usher us into the throne room.
 - d) When we're filled with the Holy Spirit, He will take us by the hand and lead us right into the presence of God.
- 6) THE HOLY SPIRIT ARTICULATES OUR NEEDS (Romans 8:26)
 - a) Sometimes when we pray, we don't have the vocabulary.
 - i) There are certain things that we cannot put into words.
 - b) Romans 8:26
 - i) This passage is not talking about praying in tongues, which is an utterance.
 - ii) This passage is talking about groanings that cannot be uttered.
 - c) A word is like a vehicle that delivers a thought from one person to another person.
 - i) There are some thoughts that are too heavy for the vehicle.
 - (1) We may have something that we don't know what to ask for, we don't know how to ask it, and we don't know how to articulate it.
 - (2) In Romans 8:26, one translation states, "Sighs that are too deep for words."
 - ii) The word "groanings" is a word that's used for labor pains.
 - (1) It is a groaning that desires to bring forth.
 - (2) It is a form of inarticulate prayer.
 - d) We may not know how to pray or what to pray for, but the Holy Spirit knows.
 - e) Romans 8:27
 - f) The Holy Spirit will take our prayers and transform them and make them adaptable to Heaven.
- 7) CONCLUSION
 - a) To pray in the Spirit, you must first of all be saved.
 - i) You cannot have the Holy Spirit unless you are saved.
 - ii) Romans 8:9



- b) You can be saved and the Holy Spirit be in you, and you still not pray in the Spirit.
 - i) Not only are you to have the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is to have you.
 - ii) You are to be filled with the Spirit.
 - (1) Not only is He to be resident in you, but He needs to be president.
- c) Enthroned the Lord Jesus in your life today.
- d) If you have never truly been saved, ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come into your heart.
- e) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Take your Bibles and find Romans chapter 8. Romans is the constitution of Christianity. We are looking at the foundations of our faith, a solid Word in an unsure age. And we've been right in the heart of this eighth chapter, which is the heart of the book of Romans, which is the heartbeat of all great theology. And today we're going to be talking about prayer. And we're going to retrace some things that we've told you before and re-emphasize these things because they are of such great importance.

Romans chapter 8, and we begin in verse 26 through verse 28, "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered, and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He," that is, the Spirit, "maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Now it's very obvious that there're two words that are standing out here. One is the Spirit, and the other is the word prayer. Now I want to talk to you about how to pray in the Spirit. I don't know a one of us that would say, "I am satisfied with my prayer life." And I think all of those of us who know and love the Lord Jesus want to pray better. Prayer is the greatest Christian privilege. I want to say it is the greatest Christian service. You can do more than pray after you've prayed, but you cannot do any more than pray until you've prayed. It's the greatest privilege, it is the greatest service, but alas, alas, it is the Christian's greatest failure. We fail in our prayer life, and very few of us would say, "I am satisfied with my prayer life."

Now, what are the problems? Well, first of all, there's the problem of indifference. Many times we just don't have a desire to pray. We just don't want to pray, we don't have a longing to pray. We might as well admit it. There's something in every one of us that doesn't want to pray. Now don't look so holy, I'm telling you, there is something in every one of us, it's the flesh, and we're going to see in a moment, it doesn't want to pray. There's the problem of indifference.

And then there's the problem of ignorance. We don't know how to pray or what to pray for. And then not only is there the problem of indifference and the problem of ignorance, but folks, there's the problem of interference. I mean, when you go to pray, the devil moves Heaven and earth and Hell beneath to try to keep you from praying. He really does. The beans will burn, the kids will get in a fight, the telephone will ring, you will get sleepy, your mind will gather wool, you'll think silly thoughts. Has that ever happened to you or just me? All right, when you're trying to pray, there's interference. Do you know why? The devil laughs at our organization. He mocks our schemes. He ridicules our good intentions, he fears our prayers.

One demon, you can imagine the devil talking to his demons and saying to his demons, "There's that Baptist preacher there. Whatever you do, keep him from praying, because, if he prays, he'll beat



us every time. If you can keep him from praying, we can beat him every time.” So when you go to pray, the devil is going to level all of the artillery of Hell against you because he does not want you to pray, and your indifference and your ignorance and his interference sometimes just line up against us and then we just say, “Well, we’re not very good at prayer.” We like to talk about prayer, sing about prayer, but many of us really do not have a satisfying, fulfilling prayer life.

Now what is the answer? The answer is to find that God has given us an ally, an asset, a helper, an encourager, and He is the Holy Spirit. And this passage of Scripture, Romans 8:26, says, “Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” And we’re going to talk about that word help in just a moment and show you how the Holy Spirit of God helps you, energizes you, enlightens you, empowers you to pray. And we’re going to find all of that right here in the eighth chapter of Romans. We’re not going to have to go to any other place; well, we’ll have some ancillary Scriptures, but they will all impinge on Scriptures that we find right here in the eighth chapter of Romans, praying in the Spirit. By the way, this is not the only place we’re told to pray in the Spirit. You might want to put in your margin a couple other verses. For example, Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18, “Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit.” “Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit.” Or Jude verse 20, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.” “Praying in the Holy Ghost.” To pray in the flesh is to fail. To pray in the Spirit is to succeed. The early church advanced on its knees. And our churches would be no greater than the prayer life of her members. My ministry would be no better than my prayer life.

Now, what are some ways that the Holy Spirit of God helps us to pray? Let’s look right here. First of all, the Holy Spirit of God activates our wills in prayer. The Holy Spirit of God, listen, He activates our wills in prayer. That is, the Holy Spirit of God moves your will to pray. We might as well admit it, the reason basically that we don’t pray is, there is a lack of desire. We have no will, we have no appetite, we have no hunger. Come up close, I’m going to tell you something, the reason you don’t pray more than you pray is because you don’t want to. People do what they want to do.

But there’s a part of us called the flesh, now he’s not talking about your hide, your hair, your skin, your bones, the sinew, the flesh, the meat on those bones, that’s not what the Bible means when it says flesh. When the Bible uses the word flesh, in this instance anyway, it’s talking about your old nature, that Adamic nature, that predisposition to sin, that part of you that doesn’t love God. You were born with it. Let’s see how the Bible describes it. Look if you will here in verse 5. You’re in Romans chapter 8, look in verse 5 to verse 7, watch it, “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh.” And some of you right now have already checked me out on this sermon. I mean, your mind, right now, you’re thinking about business, you’re thinking about a movie, you’re thinking about sports, you’re thinking about your lawn or something right now. You don’t have an appetite even to hear about prayer. You are in the flesh and you are minding the things of the flesh. “But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded,” the word carnally is just another word of say, way of saying fleshly minded, “to be carnally minded is death.” Now, he’s not talking here about physical death only, he’s talking about spiritual death, he’s talking about death to goodness, purity, power, prayer, it’s death. “But to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Now, you



here today, you have a carnal mind or a spiritual mind. You are hungry to know more or you probably are bored. It all depends on what your mind is set on. Now, look if you will at the explanation of that in verse 7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." Do you know what the word enmity means? It means warfare. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." So, you have to be filled with the Holy Spirit to desire to pray. Because if you're not filled with the Holy Spirit, the flesh in you says, "Hey, I don't care about that, I'm not interested in that, I don't want to know about that." You see, we do what we want to do.

Now, how does the Holy Spirit of God activate our wills? Well, this is beautiful, this is wonderful. You see, look if you will in verse 15 of this same chapter, Romans chapter 8 and verse 15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba Father.'"

Now, there is the spirit of bondage. That's the old devil, he wants to keep you in bondage, he wants to keep you down. That's the spirit that motivates the children of this world. But he's saying, "When you get saved, you have received the spirit of adoption." Now what is adoption? Well, we are born into the family of God spiritually, we're adopted into the family of God legally, and the spirit of adoption means that we are heirs of God, and once we are adopted into the family of God, God puts His Holy Spirit into us and the Holy Spirit in us just loves the Father. The Holy Spirit says, "Abba Father." It's as normal and natural to pray when you're spirit filled. God has taken away the spirit of bondage that keeps you from praying. God puts the Holy Spirit of God in your heart and in your life. And you just say, "Father."

Did you know that you don't have to be a junior sized Shakespeare in order to pray? Sometimes you'll ask a person to pray in public, they say, "Well, I can't pray." What they mean is, "I can't rattle off some poetical phrases." Jesus said in Matthew 6 verse 7, "We're not heard for our much speaking." He says, "Here is Abba Father." That's the most primary speech that a child can make, that's the counterpart of daddy, father.

Suppose when my girls were growing up, one of my teenage daughters would say to me, "Hail, yon imminent pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, diddest thou have a wonderful sojourn down Interstate 40 coming to our domicile? Thy daughter, thy second daughter, Janice, would request of her father that thou wouldest grant to thy daughter Janice a dollar or two that I may sojourn to yonder apothecary and procure some necessities for my cosmological appearance." It'd be a lot better to say, "Daddy, hey, I love you, Papa, good to have you home. Here's a kiss, Daddy. Daddy, I need some things down at the drugstore, you got a couple of bucks?" Wouldn't that be better? It'd be better. Romans 8:15, "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, 'Abba Father.'" It is as natural for you to pray as it would be to speak to your own daddy when you're filled with the Holy Spirit.

Because, you see, look if you will in verse 9 of this same chapter, Romans 8. The Bible calls the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit of Christ." You see that? Look if you will, "But you're not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of His." So, when you're filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is just Christ in the Christian.



Well, what was the prayer life of Jesus like? His prayer life was so wonderful, when the disciples saw Him praying, they said, in Luke 11:1, "Lord, teach us to pray," after they heard Him pray and saw Him pray. Well, the Spirit of Christ is in you. You have the spirit of adoption. It is normal, it is natural, it is easy to pray when you're in the Spirit. But I'm telling you, "To be carnally minded is death." "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Romans 8 verses 6 and 7. There is a part of you that does not want to pray. That is your old nature. Now you know it is true. And friend, if you don't have a desire to pray, it's because you're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, the first thing the Holy Spirit of God does to help us to pray is that the Holy Spirit of God activates our will. And, "For it is God that worketh in you," the Bible says in Philippians 2 verse 13, "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." God works in you, He activates your will. Listen to that verse again, "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure." So, you have to let the Holy Spirit of God come in you and activate your will.

But not only will the Holy Spirit of God activate your will, I'll tell you what else the Holy Spirit of God will do. He will animate your body. It's not only the activation of your will, but the animation of your body. Now what does that mean? He means it makes your body alive. Now look if you will, look in verses 10 and 11 of this same chapter, Romans 8 verses 10 and 11, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin," that is, the wages of sin is death, and because of our sin Jesus died for us, we died with Him, the old person is crucified, "but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you," who was it that brought Jesus out of that grave? Well, according to this verse, it's the Holy Spirit. Now the Holy Spirit that brought Jesus actually, literally, visibly, bodily out of that grave, He's the Holy Spirit that came into you when you got saved. "Now if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." You know what the word quicken means? It means give life, energy, to animate. You see, He not only activates your will, He animates your body. He gives you strength to pray.

Did you know it takes energy to pray? Did you know I had rather preach for an hour than to pray for a half an hour, so far as energy is concerned? It takes great strength to pray. Paul talked about, "Laboring with me in prayer." Romans 15:30. The reason many of us don't pray is, very frankly, we're lazy, and when we go to pray our energy just drains out of us. Do you ever feel that? Get tired, you get sleepy, your head gets full of cobwebs. Part of it's your fault. You get there in a big, overstuffed chair, and put your face down in it, you'll smother. Get your head up and breathe. Sometimes, you know, I'll just go for a walk and pray. That's a wonderful thing to do. And walk and pray and breathe and so forth. But I'm talking on top of that. That a part of the flesh, the old nature, the body, we just don't have the strength to pray.

Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He was praying, and He wanted His disciples to pray, and He said in Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." And He came back and what were they doing? They were sleeping. And what did Jesus say? Listen to this very carefully. He said, "Watch and pray, the Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Had they been filled



with the Spirit, they would've been praying. Many times we're sleeping when we ought to be praying, and the reason we're sleeping when we ought to be praying is we're not praying in the Spirit.

Romans 8 verse 11, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead dwell in you, that Spirit will quicken your mortal bodies." There's something about the Holy Spirit that gives you energy. You know, when the Spirit of God is there, joy is there, and, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8 verse 10. When Jesus was there, you read about it in the fourth chapter of John. Jesus was at Sychar in Samaria, and Jacob's well was there. And Jesus was weary, He was sitting on the rim of that well. I've been there many times, I've drunk water from that same well, it's still there, a deep well. Jesus was sitting on the rim of that well. He was tired, and a woman of Samaria came, and Jesus began to witness to her, and she came to saving faith.

I don't want to digress and get into that too much, many of you know the story, but the interesting thing is that Jesus was tired. He was sitting there and He was hungry, because the disciples had gone into town to get some food. And they come back, and Jesus is vibrant! And they say, "Here's some food." And He says, "Hey, I've got food to eat you don't know anything about. I have food to eat you don't know anything about." Jesus' actual body had been invigorated by the Holy Spirit of God. And when you're in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God will literally strengthen, He will animate your body as well as activate your will. And you can just say, "Lord, I'm weak, I'm fading, I am numb and sleepy and my mind is gathering wool. Come, Holy Spirit of God. My flesh is weak, the Spirit is willing," okay?

Now let me tell you a third thing the Holy Spirit of God will do. Not only is there the activation of your will in prayer, and the animation of our bodies in prayer, but, number three, there is the adaptation of our requests in prayer. Now look at this, it's very interesting. Look if you will in Romans 8 verse 26, "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." Now let's just stop there for a moment and say that Paul includes himself. He didn't say, "Your weaknesses." Now Paul's the greatest Christian who ever lived, and he included himself, he says, "Our infirmities." "For we know not what we should pray for." He didn't say, "You bunch of carnal people don't know what you should pray for." He said, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Now you ought to accept your weakness for two reasons. Reason number one, it's a fact. Paul said, "My infirmity, your infirmity," it's a fact. Number two, it is an asset. You say, "How can my weakness be an asset?" Well, Paul learned that his weakness was an asset. Put this verse down in Second Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 9. Paul had a thorn in the flesh; he asked God to take it away from him and God refused and, beginning in verse 9, "And He said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'" Isn't that great? You see, many of us think we're too weak. Maybe we haven't been weak enough. Maybe we haven't come to the place where we've said, "Lord, I can't." Have you ever done that? "Lord, I just can't." So long as we're struggling, we don't cry out to Him. But when we say, "Lord, I can't and You can," then God says, "All right, now that strength is a fact; it's going to become an asset because, 'My strength will be made perfect in your weakness.'" What God wants to do in prayer is to deliver us from self sufficiency. He



makes us perpetually weak that we might be perpetually dependent, that we might be perpetually powerful as we depend upon Him. And so, “The Spirit helpeth our infirmities.” You see, the Holy Spirit of God adapts our request in prayer. He just moves in alongside of us.

Now, look at the word helpeth. It’s a very interesting word, oh, you’re going to be blessed by this, it has a double prefix. I know you’ve been waiting to hear that. Oh boy, you can carry that home with you. But now listen, a double prefix. All right, it begins with the word sun, we’d say; S U N, sun, or if you want to Anglicize it more, S O O N, soon, which means with. And then another prefix is anti, A N T I; which means face to face. And then the third word is lambano, which means to take hold of. All right, sun anti lambano. That’s the word helpeth. The only other time it’s used in the Bible, I think, is when Martha was in the kitchen, and she came out of the kitchen, she’s mad, because Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, and Martha was in the kitchen fixing a meat loaf and she comes out there and she says, “Jesus, would You tell Mary to come in this kitchen and help me?” Now, think of these words: sun means with, and anti means face to face, and lambano means to take hold of. Now I’m going to tell you how the Holy Spirit, the adaptation of our requests in prayer, that’s what we’re talking about, how He helps our infirmities.

I heard Doctor Herschel Hobbs use this illustration, and it was a great blessing to me. He said, “Suppose here’s a man, he has a wagon, and on that wagon he has a five hundred pound bale of hay. And he’s going over a little bridge, and the back of that wagon tilts, and that bale of hay falls out on the ground, and you come up to this man, and he’s struggling, trying to put that five hundred pound bale of hay back on that wagon, and he just can’t do it. And you say, ‘What are you doing?’ He’ll say, ‘Trying to put this cotton back on this wagon.’ So you say, ‘Well, let me help you.’ So you get on one side and he gets on the other side. Now you’re looking at each other over that bale of hay. You’re anti, face to face. Then you take hold of it with him, he’s on one side, you’re on the other side, that’s sun, with. Anti, face to face, and then you both take hold, that’s lambano, and you both lift that load on that wagon.” Now that’s a good illustration about what this verse is about.

You see, when we pray in the Holy Spirit, we are face to face with Him. There is that vital relationship, face to face with Him. He with me and I with Him, and He takes hold, and I take hold, and together we do it. I cannot do it without Him, He will not do it without me, but together, in prayer, the Holy Spirit of God helps us to pray. And that is so very important, because, friend, this thing of prayer is a mystery, and the Holy Spirit of God has to adapt our prayers.

You know, there’s so many questions about prayer. I mean, what should you pray for? Folks, there’s so many needs in our world today, if you go just to pray according to need, that’s like trying to bail out the ocean with a teacup. You’ll get discouraged. If you try to pray for everything, you’ll end up praying for nothing. I’ve been there. I mean you’ll never get finished. There’re so many people, so many hurts, so many problems, so many nations, so much to pray about, you just don’t know what to pray about.

And once you know what to pray about, you don’t know how to pray about what you know to pray about. Aunt Susie, she’s sick. Is it God’s will to heal her or does God want to take her home? I mean, when you pray for the sick, you know Jesus prayed in John 17 verse 9, “Father, I pray for those



whom Thou hast given Me that they may be with Me where I am." Jesus is saying, "Father, I want them in Heaven." We're praying, "Lord, don't let them go to Heaven," isn't that true?

Now, sometimes it is God's will for people to stay here, and God extends our lives, and God in mercy to us lets them stay with us. But God has made us for Heaven. How do you pray about dear old Aunt Susie who's walked with the Lord for so long? Jesus is up there saying, "Father, let her come." We're down here, "Oh, God, don't let her go." And in most of our prayer meetings in our churches, how many people are praying for the lost that need to be saved? Far more people are praying for the saints to get well. Nothing wrong with that. It's always seemed a little strange to me that we're more interested in keeping the saints out of Heaven than the lost out of Hell. How do you pray about these things?

What do you pray about a troublemaker in the church? "Troublemakers, Pastor, in the church?" Well, I've heard about them in other churches. How do you pray about people like that? Do you pray, "Lord, get them out," or "Lord, get them right?" You may not know how to pray. I know when Saul was making havoc of the church and hauling off Christians to prison and to death, I can just imagine how the church was praying about old Saul. "Oh, God, strike him dead." God struck him alive, God saved him and he became the great apostle Paul.

Hey, folks, it's hard to know how to pray. If you try to pray about everything, rather than being a river, your prayer will become a swamp. You have to pray with selectivity and specificity in order to pray with power. "Well, how are you going to know?" Well, listen, listen to this passage of Scripture. Look if you will again at Romans 8:26, "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Thank God that the Holy Spirit of God when we pray will lay prayer burdens on our heart and teach us what to pray for.

Now, here's something else that the Holy Spirit of God will do. The Holy Spirit of God will administrate your access to God. The administration of our access in prayer. Look if you will again in Romans 8 verses 14 and 15. We've already looked at this, but look at it again in chapter 8 verse 14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you've not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, 'Abba Father.'" Now what the Holy Spirit of God does, He energizes you and leads you into the presence of God.

Question, have you ever tried to pray and just seemed like the Heavens are brass? I mean, that your prayers hit the ceiling and bounced back off, and you just can't seem to get through? And God seems thousands of light years away. You just can't seem to get through. Well, the Bible teaches that it is the Holy Spirit that ushers us into the throne room. I want to give you a verse that you put down in your margin because it refers again to Romans 8 verses 14 and 15, and it's Ephesians 2 verse 18, "For through Him," through Jesus, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Now listen carefully. We pray to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. To the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. "For by Him," Jesus, "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Now, yes, the Lord has invited us to come boldly to the throne of grace, but you need the Holy Spirit of God to usher you into the throne room. When I was first elected president of the Southern



Baptist Convention back in 1979, the ensuing year, 1980, President Jimmy Carter was elected, and he's a Southern Baptist, and I'm a Southern Baptist, and so he was my president and I was his president. He invited me to the Oval Office. I went to the Oval Office. Well, how do you go into the Oval Office? Well, I'll tell you what you don't do. You don't catch a cab, go to the front gate, and go sauntering in, and go knock on the door of the Oval Office. You just don't do that.

What you do, you go to a particular room, and you wait there and there is an envoy for the President who will come and get you and usher you into that office. Even if you've been invited you need that person to bring you in.

Now friend, the Holy Spirit is that person who'll bring you in to the throne room. You say, "I'll never get invited to the Oval Office, Pastor." Well, let me tell you something, friend, you're invited into the throne room. Come boldly to the throne of grace. And it's the Holy Spirit of God, when you're filled with the Holy Spirit of God, He'll take you by the hand and bring you right into the Shekinah glory, the presence of God! "For by Him," Jesus, "we have access by one Spirit," the Holy Spirit, "unto the Father." Isn't that great? Not because I said it, it's just great anyway.

You see, it's praying in the Spirit. There is the activation of our will, the animation of our bodies. Friend, there's the adaptation of our requests. We don't know what to pray for as we ought. Then there's the administration of our access, as we're brought right in.

Now, I must close this, but one other thing the Holy Spirit will do. There's the articulation of our needs. You know, sometimes also when we pray, we don't have the vocabulary. There're certain things that we cannot put into words. Look again at this passage of Scripture in Romans chapter 8. Now, go back over here. Watch this, Romans 8 verse 26, "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He's not talking about praying in tongues here; that's an utterance. He's talking about groanings that can't be uttered.

Do you know what a word is? A word is like a truck, a word is like a vehicle that delivers a thought from one person to another person. My words are the trucks, the vehicles that are getting my thoughts to you. But sometimes, you know, there're some thoughts that are too heavy for the truck. I mean, we might have a four ton problem and a two ton truck. We may have something that we don't know what to ask for, we don't know how to ask it, we don't know how to articulate it, and there're just things, friend, that we don't know what to do. And the Bible says, "The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." One translation gives it, "Sighs that are too deep for words." This word groanings is a word that's used for labor pains. You ever been there? I've been there. Well, I've never had them, but I mean, I had those sympathetic labor pains, but you know, there's that groaning that sometimes that mother about to bring forth, she's not making a speech, she's just in agony. But it is a groaning, that desires to bring forth. There is a need, something that needs to be delivered to happen, and the Holy Spirit of God, "Makes groanings that cannot be uttered." It's a form of inarticulate prayer.

I've been there. Some years ago there was a problem in our family. It broke my heart. I stained Heaven with my prayers. And there came a time when I would just say, "Oh, God," that's it, not



know how to pray, what to pray for. Just, "Oh, God." And you know what? The Holy Spirit was saying, "Father, Adrian doesn't know what to ask for, but I know." "He that searcheth the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, and He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Romans 8 verse 27. And you know, sometimes we don't know how to pray, what to pray for, but when you're in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit of God is helping you and praying, that's so wonderful.

You know, if you'll go down the street, you look up here on these poles, and you'll see something called a transformer, it's a big box. And that heavy voltage comes into that transformer, and then it comes out of that transformer. Those wires that come down to your house, comes into your toaster that you toasted that bagel in this morning; or it comes down to your refrigerator that kept your orange juice cold and came down to your hair dryer that enabled you to blow and fluff your hair; or it came down to those light bulbs and so forth. But you know if you just took that energy as it comes into that transformer and put it just right into your hair blower, you would, probably wouldn't have any hair or a hair blower, you know. Or put it into your toaster, you wouldn't have a bagel, you wouldn't have a toaster. Now, it's the same energy, but it goes through a transformer. The Holy Spirit of God will take your prayers sometimes and put them in the divine transformer and make them adaptable to Heaven.

Sometimes I'll be back in my study and I'll say, "Well, we're going out," thus and such a person, "Will you pray for me before we have the service?" And that person, maybe be a friend, a preacher friend, and he'll pray something like this, "And God, bless Adrian as he preaches tonight." And I have a guest preacher. He doesn't know that. I'm not going to preach. But he's saying, "Lord, bless Adrian as he preaches tonight." Will that prayer be answered? Sure. Since it's a sincere prayer. The Holy Spirit says, "Father, he doesn't know Adrian's not going to preach tonight. A guest preacher is going to preach tonight. And so, Lord, just take that prayer and apply it to the guest preacher." That's the way the Holy Spirit does. Isn't that neat? Isn't that wonderful? "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us," sometimes "with groanings that cannot be uttered."

Now, to pray in the Spirit, how do you get started? First of all, you've got to get saved. You can't have the Holy Spirit unless you're saved. Romans 8 verse 9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's not of His."

Now friend, without being saved you cannot have the Holy Spirit. But now, wait a minute. You can be saved and the Holy Spirit of God can be in you and still not pray in the Spirit. Because not only are you to have the Holy Spirit, He is to have you. You are to be filled with the Spirit. Not only is He to be resident, but He needs to be president.

Well let's just bow our heads right now, every head bowed, right now. Why don't you, why don't you pray, "Oh, God, I admit that the problem in my prayer life is that I'm just carnally minded. I don't want to pray. And it's because I've been walking according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit. Lord, I take myself off the throne and I enthrone the Lord Jesus. Just fill me with the Spirit.



Right now, Holy Spirit, I yield anew and afresh my heart, my life to You. Fill me, Spirit of God. Fill me, Spirit of God. Take control of my life.”

And those of you who’ve never truly been saved, let me lead you in a prayer. Right now you can pray and ask Jesus Christ into your heart. Now you may already be a church member, but I’m talking about being truly saved. Let me help you to pray. Would you pray like this, “Dear God, I know that You love me and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. Thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood on the cross. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus.” Friend, tell Him that, tell Him that right now. “I trust You, Jesus, I really do. Come into my heart; forgive my sin, save me, Jesus.” Pray it. Friend, pray it right now, right now, “Save me, Jesus. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. And Lord Jesus, I thank You for saving me.” Just pray that by faith. “I thank You for saving me. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make this public. In Your name I pray, Amen.”



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