

The Spirit of Prayer

by Andrew Murray

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Prayer, making intercession for us with unutterable groanings and uniting us with God and bringing us into His presence.

Scripture: Romans 8:26

Topics: "The Role of the Holy Spirit", "Intercessory Prayer"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in prayer, explaining that while we may struggle to articulate our needs, the Spirit intercedes for us with unutterable groanings that align with God's will. He illustrates how the Spirit connects us to the Father and the Son, enabling us to receive divine grace and guidance in our prayers. Murray encourages believers to recognize the Spirit's presence within, fostering a deeper relationship with God through both understanding and spiritual yearning. He highlights the importance of intercessory prayer, urging the church to embrace unity and collective supplication as the Spirit works through each member. Ultimately, he calls for a complete surrender to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to lead and empower our prayer life.

Transcript

In like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity - for we know not how to pray as we ought but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered; and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to God.'Rom. 8:26, 27.

Of the offices of the Holy Spirit, one that leads us most deeply into the understanding of His place in the Divine economy of grace, and into the mystery of the Holy Trinity, is the work He does as the Spirit of prayer. We have the Father to whom we pray, and who hears prayer. We have the Son through whom we pray, and through whom, in union with whom, we receive and really appropriate the answer. And we have the Holy Spirit in whom we pray, who prays in us according to the will of God, with such deeply hidden, unutterable sighings, that God has to search the hearts to know what is the mind of the Spirit. Just as wonderful and real as is the Divine work of God on the Throne, graciously hearing, and, by his,-mighty power, effectually answering prayer; just as Divine as is the work of the Son interceding and securing and transmitting the answer from above, is the work of the Holy Spirit in us in the prayer which waits and obtains the answer. The intercession within is as Divine as the intercession above. Let us try and understand why this should be so, and what it teaches.

In the creation of the world we see how it was the work of the Spirit to put Himself into contact with the dark and lifeless matter of chaos, and by His quickening energy to impart to it the power of life and fruitfulness. It was only after it had been thus vitalized by Him, that the Word of God gave it form, and called forth all the different types of life and beauty we now see. So, too, again in the creation of man it was the Spirit that was breathed into the body that had been formed from the ground, and that thus united itself with what would otherwise be dead matter. Even so, in the person of Jesus it is the Spirit through whose work a body was prepared for Him, through whom His body again was quickened from the grave, as it is through Him that our bodies are the temples of God, and the very members of our body the members of Christ. We think of the Spirit in connection with the spiritual nature of the Divine Being, far removed from the grossness and feebleness of matter; we forget that it is the very work of the Spirit specially to unite Himself with what is material, to lift it up into Its own Spirit nature, and so to develop what will be the highest type of perfection, a spiritual body.

This view of the Spirit's work is essential to the understanding of the place He takes in the Divine work of redemption. In each part of that work there is a special place assigned to each of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. In the Father we have the unseen God, the Author of all. In the Son God revealed, made manifest, and brought nigh, He is the Form of God. In the Spirit of God we have the Indwelling God- the Power of God dwelling in human body and working in it what the Father and the Son have for us. The weakness and humiliation, yea, the very grossness of the flesh is the sphere for the operation of the Holy Spirit. Not only in the individual, but in the Church as a whole, what the Father has purposed, and the Son has procured, can be appropriated and take effect in the members of Christ who are still here in the flesh, only through the continual intervention and active operation of the Holy Spirit.

This is specially true of intercessory prayer. The coming of the kingdom of God, the increase of grace and knowledge and holiness in believers, their growing devotion to God's work and power for that work, the effectual working of God's power on the unconverted through the means of grace,--all this waits to come to us from God through Christ. But it cannot come except as it is looked for and desired, asked and expected, believed and hoped for. And this is now the wonderful position the Holy Ghost occupies, that to Him has been assigned the task of preparing the body of Christ to reach out and receive and hold fast what has been provided in the fulness of Christ the Head. For the communication of the Father's love and blessing, the Son and the Spirit must both work. The Son receives from the Father, reveals and brings nigh, as it were, descends from above; the Spirit from within wakens the soul to come out and meet its Lord. As indispensable as the unceasing intercession of Christ above, asking and receiving from the Father, is the unceasing intercession of the Spirit within, asking and accepting from the Son what the Father gives.

Very wonderful is the light that is cast upon this holy mystery by the words of our text. In the life of faith and prayer there are operations of the Spirit in which the word of God is made clear to our understanding, and our faith knows to express what it needs and asks. But there are also operations of the Spirit, deeper down than thoughts or feelings, where He works desires and yearnings in our spirit, in the secret springs of life and being, which God only can discover and understand. Of this nature is the real thirst for God Himself, the Living God, the longing to know the love 'that passeth knowledge,' and to be 'filled with all the fullness of God,' the hope in 'Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think,' even 'what hath not entered the heart of man to conceive.' When these aspirations indeed take possession of us, we begin to pray for what cannot be expressed, and our only comfort is then that the Spirit prays with His unutterable yearnings in a region and a language which the Heart Searcher alone

knows and understands.

To the Corinthians Paul says, 'I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.' Under the influence of the moving of the Holy Spirit and His miraculous gifts, their danger was to neglect the understanding. Our danger in these latter days is in the opposite direction: to pray with the understanding is easy and universal. We need to be reminded that, with the prayer with the understanding, there must come the prayer with the Spirit, the 'praying in the Holy Spirit' (Jude ver.20; Ephesians 6:18). We need to give its due place to each of the twofold operations of the Spirit. God's Word must dwell in us richly; our faith must seek to hold it clearly and intelligently, and to plead it in prayer. To have the words of Christ abiding in us, filling life and conduct, is one of the secrets of acceptable prayer. And yet we must always remember that in the inner sanctuary of our being, in the region of the unutterable and inconceivable (1 Cor.2:6), the Spirit prays for us what we do not know and cannot express. As we grow in the apprehension of the divinity of that Holy Spirit who dwells within, and the reality of His breathing within us, we shall recognise how infinitely beyond the conceptions of our mind must be that Divine hunger with which He draws us heavenward. We shall feel the need of cultivating not only the activity of faith, which seeks to grasp and obey God's word, and from that to learn to pray, but its deep passivity too. As we pray we shall remember how infinitely above our conception is God and the spirit-world into which by prayer we enter. Let us believe and rejoice that where heart and flesh fail, there God is the strength of our heart, there His Holy Spirit within us in the inmost sanctuary of our spirit, within the veil, does His unceasing work of intercession, and prays according to God within us. As we pray, let us at times worship in holy stillness, and yield ourselves to that Blessed Paraclete, who alone, who truly is, the Spirit of Supplication.'

'Because He maketh intercession for the saints.' Why does the apostle not say for us ; as he had said, 'We know not how to pray as we ought'? The expression, the saints, is a favourite one with Paul, where he thinks of the Church, either in one country or throughout the world. It is the special work of the Spirit, as dwelling in every member, to make the body realize its unity. As selfishness disappears, and the believer becomes more truly spiritual-minded, and he feels himself more identified with the body as a whole, he sees how its health and prosperity will be his own, and he learns what it is to 'pray at all seasons in the Spirit, watching thereunto in all perseverance for all saints.' It is as we give up ourselves to this work, in a large heartedness which takes in all the Church of God, that the Spirit will have free scope and will delight to do His work of intercession for the saints in us. It is specially in intercessory prayer that we may count upon the deep, unutterable, but all-prevailing intercession of the Spirit.

What a privilege ! to be the temple out of which the Holy Spirit cries to the Father His unceasing Abba! and offers His unutterable intercession, too deep for words. What blessedness! that as the Eternal Son dwelt in the flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, and prayed to the Father as man, that even so the Eternal Spirit should dwell in us, sinful flesh, to train us to speak with the Father even -as the Son did. Who would not yield himself to this blessed Spirit, to be made fit to take a share in that mighty Intercession work through which alone the Kingdom of God can be revealed ? The path is open, and invites all. Let the Holy Spirit have complete possession. Let Him fill you. Let Him be your life. Believe in the possibility of His making your very personality and consciousness the seat of His inbeing. Believe in the certainty of His working, and praying in you in a way that no human mind can apprehend. Believe that in the secrecy and apparent weakness and slowness of that work, His Divine Almighty Power is perfecting the Divine purpose and the Divine Oneness with your blessed Lord. And live as one in whom the things that pass all understanding have become Truth and Life, in whom the Intercession of the Spirit is part of your daily life in Christ.

Most Holy God! once more I bow in lowly adoration in Thy Presence, to thank Thee for the precious privilege of prayer. And specially would I thank Thee for the Grace that has not only given us in Thy Son the Intercessor above, but in Thy Spirit the Intercessor within. O my Father! Thou knowest that I can scarce take in the wondrous thought, that Thy Holy Spirit in very deed dwelleth in me, and prays in my feeble prayers. I do beseech Thee, discover to me all that hinders His taking full possession of me, and filling me with the consciousness of His Presence. Let my inmost being and my outer life all be so under His leading, that I may have the spiritual understanding that knows to ask according to Thy will, and the living faith that receives what it asks. And when I know not what or how to pray, O Father, teach me to bow in silent worship, and keep waiting before Thee, knowing that He breathes the wordless prayer which Thou alone canst understand.

Blessed God ! I am a temple of the Holy Spirit. I yield myself for Him to use me as the Spirit of Intercession. May my whole heart be so filled with the longing for Christ's honour, and His love for the lost, that my life may become one unutterable cry for the coming of Thy Kingdom. Amen.

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