

The Spirit Intercedes

by Anton Bosch

The Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God, helping us in our weaknesses and guaranteeing answered prayers.

Scripture: John 11:33, Romans 8:22-31

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Effective Prayer"

Description

Anton Bosch preaches on the struggles we face in prayer, emphasizing the common challenges of not knowing what or how to pray. He reflects on the difficulty of discerning God's will in prayer, especially in times of personal crisis, and the tendency for selfish desires to cloud our prayers. Bosch highlights the vital role of the Holy Spirit in interceding for us according to God's will, ensuring that our prayers are heard and answered. He explains how the Spirit's groanings on our behalf go beyond human language, expressing the depths of our hearts to God in ways we cannot articulate.

Transcript

Often we find that we struggle to pray. There are many reasons for this. Sometimes it is because we try to manage on our own, sometimes we are just lazy and not disciplined in our walk with the Lord. But sometimes it is because we do not know how, or even, what we should pray for. Paul says "we do not know what we should pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26)

This highlights two very real problems that we all struggle with. (Notice that Paul uses the word "we" - so he includes himself with us.) The first problem is that we often do not even know what to pray for. I am sure you have been in situations where all the alternatives seem equally daunting and the pros and cons of each course of action seem to balance each other out. I remember, as yesterday, standing by my mother's bedside after she had been in a terrible motor accident. As I looked at the broken body and face of this person whom I loved and who was not only my mother but close friend, confidante, advisor and spiritual mentor I did not know what to pray. Should I pray for her to be brought out of that coma and to be healed or should I pray for the Lord to take her home and to ease her pain? There were many personal and selfish reasons, but also many good spiritual reasons why both options seemed to be the best. It is times like this that "the Spirit helps in our weaknesses" (Romans 8:26).

Even at the best of times, when we think we know what we should pray for, our prayers are often misguided because of our own selfish desires. The Father's will is often so far removed from what we want and even when we think we are spiritual, our prayers are just filled with selfish desires and motives that

often have very little to do with God's will for us. It is exactly for this reason we need the Spirit's help "because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). Isn't that wonderful! The Spirit will never, no, cannot pray out of the will of God. He will always pray one hundred percent according to the will of God. What a wonderful Helper. Not only is He our Counselor and Advisor but He interprets our prayers into a shape and form that the Father finds acceptable. The Spirit knows our deepest desires and longings because He searches our hearts and knows all things. At the same time the Spirit also knows what the exact will of the Father is, and as our intercessor, takes our desires and places them before the Throne of Grace in a form pleasing to the Father. So at times when we do not even know what we should ask for, He will ask for exactly the right thing.

We often pray prayers that are never answered. One of the main reasons prayers are not answered, is because what we want is contrary to the will of God and He will not change His will to suit us. But the Lord will most surely answer every prayer that is in line with His will. And that is what makes this ministry of the Spirit so wonderful. Every time He interceded on our behalf, it is according to the will of the Father and those prayers are guaranteed to be answered!

But the second problem we have is that even if we know what to pray, we don't know how to pray. Words seem so feeble and just cannot express the depth of our cry. We have all had times when we have felt so excited, happy, depressed or afraid that we just did not have words to express the depth and complexity of our heart. But it is in times like these that "the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:26). Because the Spirit is God Himself, He is not limited by my weak and inexpressive vocabulary. At His disposal are all the riches of God's wisdom and His ability to communicate. He is able to express our heart a million times better than we can ourselves. I have often marveled at David's use of words in the Psalms and longed that I could express myself before the Lord like David could. But, praise God, the Holy Spirit is much better at expressing Himself than the best orator in the world, and He speaks for us!

This is all wonderful but how does it work? Paul says that "the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). These groanings communicate what cannot be expressed in human words, since they reach deeper than human speech. This is not speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues are by definition speaking in languages and these groanings go beyond that which can be expressed through language but in terms that the Father understands. There are a number of examples of this in the Bible. In John 11:33 Jesus "groaned in the spirit and was troubled" when He saw the unbelief of those at Lazarus' tomb. In verse 38 of the same chapter it says "Jesus, again groaning in Himself". The picture I get is of Jesus being so deeply disturbed that groans rose from the depth of His being. Romans 8:22 says "the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now". (Paul uses the same concept in 2Corinthians 5:2 & 4.) A woman in travail will often groan and thus express her pain in terms that cannot be expressed in mere words.

From these verses we get the picture of a sigh or cry that emanates from the depth of our being and that is so deep that it surpasses words. This wonderful ministry of the Holy Spirit has little value when our needs are small enough that we can express them in our mother tongue. But when we are pressed to the point that we no longer even know how or what to pray, the Spirit comes to our aid. The verse says "the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses". The word help conjures the picture of someone who takes the other end of the load and shares the burden. Yes, we still need to carry our end, but He helps and carries His end! Maybe you remember a time when you were in such dire straits that a groan rose from the bottom of your heart? This may well have been the Spirit helping you and interceding for you.

For those who want to turn this into a new mystical practice - this is not something we can do, or make happen. This is a sovereign work and ministry of the Holy Spirit - we cannot "do" groaning. All we can do is thank the Lord that He helps, strengthens and supports us in ways that we often don't even understand and often are not even aware of. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

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