


## The Spirit Helps Us in Our Weakness

 **interceding in prayer (v.26)**

 **searching our hearts (v.27)**

In the Name of Christ Jesus our living Hope, dearly redeemed children of God:

Once I asked my daughter-in-law how she liked working in a memory unit with Alzheimer's patients. "I love it, Dad," she replied. "The residents they don't remember me, so it's like meeting new friends every day." Sometimes loss of memory can be a blessing – as long as hope has been planted in your heart. Some of my visits to nursing homes have not been so pleasant. You can see loneliness and hopelessness in the eyes of some residents. A few may not remember their loved ones just visited. Others may be abandoned by family, paying bills and forgetting them. Hope makes all the difference.

"Keep hope alive!" they say, yet we cannot manufacture and maintain hope ourselves. We need hope in times of distress. We need hope when we're not sure of God's will or even what our own hearts desire. Hope is like a candle in the wind. But our gracious God cups His hands over the flame to keep our hope burning. He promises, "**A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.**" (Isaiah 42:3) Cherish this on dark, stormy nights: **The Spirit Helps Us in Our Weakness...**

 **interceding in prayer (v.26)**

Last week we heard how "**our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.**" And it's not just us hoping for heaven's glorious bliss. All "**creation waits in eager expectation,**" like a child standing on tiptoe to see a parade, "**for the sons of God to be revealed.**" Hope of heaven we all need, but also hope that fires up our prayers. Prayer by itself can't do this any more than a plane can make itself fly. But the Good News of God's love for us in Christ is the jet fuel for our prayers. Knowing Christ is our Captain gives us sure and certain hope of safe arrival. Remember verse one of this Great Victory Chapter, Romans 8: "**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**" Guilt can't weigh you down. Jesus jettisoned our guilt on the cross.

We keep hoping for the redemption of our bodies when we're home in heaven safe at last. "**In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.**" This is especially helpful when we can't even get the words out. Sometimes our hearts are so distressed and the pain so intense that we can offer God only groans and sighs. Then the Holy Spirit is a powerful, friendly translator in prayer.

Recall the names Coverdale and Tyndale who lived in very dangerous times. In fact, William Tyndale fled from King Henry VIII of England and spent time in Wittenberg, Germany, with Martin Luther. The King's spies finally arrested Tyndale for smuggling English Bible translations back to England. Burned at the stake in Brussels October 6, 1536, age 42, Tyndale's last words: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." He didn't realize God had already answered his prayer. Tyndale's friend Miles Coverdale, using 70% of Tyndale's work, dedicated a translation to the King. A few years later in 1604, James I approved the King James Version, based 90% on Tyndale. The Holy Spirit was **interceding in prayer**. "**Before they call, I will answer, while they are still speaking I will hear.**" (Isaiah 65:24 NIV84)

Sometimes we groan and sigh closer to home. A woman named Monica prayed fervently for years. Her husband was a pagan and her son wild and disobedient despite many beatings from his father. Brilliant, but foolish, at age eighteen, her son had a son. Monica kept praying. Finally her son wanted to go to Rome for the night life. He tricked his mother and sailed away without her. Monica took a later

boat and caught up with him. They travelled to Milan where Bishop Ambrose was preaching. Razor-sharp sermons finally cut the young man's heart. One day in a friend's garden he heard a child's voice singing, "Take up and read!" He opened the Bible to Romans 13: *"Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."* (vv.13f NIV84) At last Augustine repented and was baptized by Ambrose along with his son. The Holy Spirit **interceding in prayer**, used Scripture to keep Monica's hope alive. Her husband converted to Christ, and a repentant Augustine grew into one of Christianity's church fathers.

### **searching our hearts (v.27)**

Sometimes we don't know what to ask because we're not sure of God's will or what we want. Ever felt this way? You know something's wrong – just aren't sure what? Remember another precious promise: *"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart."* (Psalm 37:4)

The police knew George Mueller because he liked to stay in expensive hotels then sneak out without paying. Finally Jesus Christ caught up with him, cut through his stubborn pride with God's Law and healed his heart with the Gospel. Mueller married and settled down in Bristol, England. There he started an orphanage for wild, ragged street kids. First there were twenty-six in one house, then several houses more were added. But George Mueller was determined not to ask anyone for money, only pray and trust the Lord to provide. Once the children were all seated at the table waiting for breakfast. Cups and bowls were set out, but no food. They said their prayers and waited. A knock at the door opened to the baker. "Mr. Mueller," he said, "I couldn't sleep last night thinking you might not have bread for breakfast. So I got up at 2:00 AM and baked some fresh bread. A few minutes later a second knock. The milkman's wagon broke down right in front of the orphanage. He needed to unload the milk to fix it. Many stories like this surround Mueller's 93 years, housing over 10,000 orphans, praying and receiving millions of dollars, travelling and preaching the Gospel with over 50,000 recorded answers to prayer.<sup>1</sup>

*"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."* Prayer is not a Means of Grace. The Means of Grace are the Gospel in Word and sacraments. But that very Word of God prompts our prayers. And God's promise in the Word keeps our hopes alive so we can keep on praying in all kinds of trouble.

Like two police officers who always prayed before they made an arrest. One time arresting 30 members of a motorcycle gang, they couldn't understand why these otherwise violent men came so peacefully. At the station the gang leader said, "Well, we were outnumbered." "What do you mean?" they asked. "There were cops everywhere in uniform." The Holy Spirit's intercession brought angels.

Likewise a missionary's family in New Guinea was afraid because cannibals were killing and eating missionaries. One night the sound of drums filled the forest, then went silent. In the morning the cannibal chief came to ask forgiveness of Jesus Christ and become a Christian. The missionary later asked, "Why didn't you attack that night of the drums?" "We wanted to," the chief said, "But we found your house surrounded by soldiers all dressed in white. We heard we should turn to your God."

How can we know for sure that **The Spirit Helps Us in Our Weakness**? How can we be hopeful He will keep **interceding in prayer** and **searching our hearts** for what we really want and really need? All because *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."* God's Word keeps our hopes alive. And we respond in faithful, fervent, hopeful prayer. In Jesus' precious Name. Amen

---

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale, Monica, Mueller: Morgan, Robert J. *On This Day*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997) Laridian.