

Romans 8:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities (Hōsaútōs dè kai tò pneûma sunantilambanétai tē asthenéia hēmōn)—Sunantilambanétai is compound: sun ("with") + anti ("against") + lambanō ("take hold")—the Spirit takes hold with us against our weakness. Asthenéia ("infirmities") is comprehensive weakness, including spiritual inability to pray rightly. The Spirit doesn't replace our praying but empowers it, bearing us up when we don't know how or what to pray.

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 (tò gàr tí proseukcómetha kathò deî ouk oídamen, allà autò tò pneûma huperentugchánei stenagmoîs alalétois)—We don't know kathò deî ("according to what is necessary")—we lack wisdom to pray rightly for what truly serves God's purposes. The Spirit's huperentugchánei ("makes intercession") fills this gap. Stenagmoîs alalétois ("groanings unutterable") are the Spirit's own intercession, too deep for human words.

Historical Context

Medieval mysticism sometimes emphasized wordless prayer as superior to verbal petition. Paul's point is different: the Spirit intercedes when we cannot,

supplementing our weak prayers with His perfect advocacy. This isn't technique to learn but grace to receive—the Spirit prays for us when we don't know how.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does knowing the Spirit intercedes for you change how you approach prayer when you don't know what to pray?
2. What does the Spirit's "groanings" reveal about His empathy and involvement in our struggles?
3. How do you balance disciplined, thoughtful prayer with dependence on the Spirit's help?

Interlinear Text

Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται ταῖς
Likewise G5615 **also** G1161 G2532 **the Spirit** G3588 G4151 **helpeth** G4878 G3588

ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξώμεθα καθὼς
infirmities G769 **our** G2257 **for** G3588 G1063 **what** G5101 **we should pray for** G4336 **as** G2526

δεῖ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα
we ought G1163 **not** G3756 **we know** G1492 **but** G235 **itself** G846 G3588 **the Spirit** G4151

ὑπερεντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις·
maketh intercession G5241 **for** G5228 **our** G2257 **with groanings** G4726 **which cannot be uttered** G215

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 10:20 (Spirit): For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

Ephesians 6:18 (Spirit): Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Galatians 4:6 (Spirit): And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

John 14:16 (Prayer): And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

Ephesians 2:18 (Spirit): For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Romans 8:15 (Spirit): 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.

Psalms 6:9 (Prayer): The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

Hebrews 4:15 (Parallel theme): For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

James 4:3 (Parallel theme): Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Romans 15:1 (Parallel theme): We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.