

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 gár 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

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

ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξώμεθα καθὸ^{τοῦ}
infirmities our G3588 for what we should pray for as
G769 G2257 G1063 G5101 G4336 G2526

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

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