

FBC Service September 28 2025 Romans 8:26-27_2 When Words Fail the Spirit Speaks

Before we read our Scripture passage, let's pray for God to bless His word.

Prayer: O Lord, as we're about to read your Word, send the light of the Spirit who inspired it to shine its truth into our hearts and minds. **In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**

Romans 8:26-27. *26 "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27 And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will."*

This is God's holy and inerrant Word.

Slide 1 When Words Fail the Spirit Speaks 8:26-27

Intro: Over the past few weeks, we've seen that Romans 8 is the great **"Holy Spirit chapter"** in the New Testament. Today we see how the Spirit takes our prayers before the very throne of heaven.

If there is one area in our Christian life where many of us struggle, it's in the area of prayer.

We understand the importance of prayer. We know the power of prayer.

However, we often struggle with the practice of prayer and feel it is one area of our Christian lives where we fall short.

We often approach prayer with words, requests, and emotions—but what happens when we don't know what to say?

What happens when our hearts are heavy, our minds confused, and our tongues silent?

Slide 2: Romans 8:26–27 Offers A Profound Truth: we are not alone in prayer. Even in our weakness, the Holy Spirit steps in—not just to help, but to intercede with divine groanings that transcend language.

Prayer is one of the most intimate and mysterious aspects of our walk with God. We bow our heads and bring before the Lord our gratitude, our needs, our fears.

Often words flow easily. But sometimes, they don't.

What happens when grief is so heavy that words choke in our throat?

What happens when confusion leaves our minds spinning without direction?

What happens when grief numbs us, or even when joy overwhelms us so deeply that we can't put our prayers into sentences?

Jon Prayer at home: What did I learn from this?

Sometimes we think of prayer as getting God to change His mind.

Let's get that thought out of the way – real quick! God does not change His mind. His way is always perfect and right and good.

We don't have to coerce or cajole Him into answering our prayers. He delights to answer the prayers of His people, just like we delight to meet the requests of our children.

Prayer doesn't change God's mind, but it does change us. Prayer gives us the opportunity to talk things through with the Almighty. It calms our hearts, gives us perspective, and points us in the right direction.

Slide 3: We Are Never Alone in Prayer

Paul tells us something remarkable in Romans 8:26–27: **we are never alone in prayer.**

Even when our words fail, the Spirit of God steps in—not just to help, but to pray on our behalf with groanings too deep for words.

In the book of Romans up to chapter 8, the Spirit is mentioned only once.

Then suddenly here in chapter 8, He's mentioned twenty-two times over. If you want to know about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian, this is a great place to turn to see it.

This is a Holy Spirit chapter.

Today, we're directing our thoughts to verses 26 and 27, to one of the most precious, practical, and intimately personal aspects of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of a Christian.

As we think about the many tensions across our planet, all the issues that divide us, people turning away from God, this ought to drive us to our knees and to plead with God for His help and His grace and His mercy upon us, upon His Church, upon our land, upon our world.

And to do that faithfully we need all the help we can get. These two verses talk to us about the Spirit's help to believers in prayer.

Slide 4: The Holy Spirit our Helper Romans 8:26

What a precious promise to know that the Spirit helps us.

Think about it. We've been born again by the Holy Spirit, given a new life, set free from sin's dominion by the Holy Spirit so that now we can live for God more, and a wonderful assurance that we are God's adopted sons and daughters.

The Spirit never deserts us, never leaves us to ourselves, never backs off, never quits. He is radically committed to us, all our weaknesses notwithstanding. **What good news this is!**

Though we grieve Him, He bears with us patiently in love to help us.

You might be ready to give up. Tired, confused, defeated, ashamed, angry.

You might wonder how you can carry on with the Christian life since you feel you have fallen short of where you feel your life is before the Lord.

“Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.” That’s our heart cry, our confession.

Here’s a great word of hope for you and me. Help when we’re weary of the journey. Fuel to propel us a few more steps down the road. **What is that word of hope?**

The Spirit helps in our weakness. That’s the promise of God. He won’t forsake us.

He doesn’t bring you to saving faith and then stand back and say, “Well, let’s see what she makes of this. Let’s see if she can rise to the occasion. Let’s see if he will keep My commandments and live My way.” **Not at all. No, no.**

Now that I have made him My child, now that she is born again, my adopted daughter, my adopted son, I will never abandon them to their own meagre resources. **Never.**

I’ll never stop helping her, I’ll never stop helping him.” **He will never stop helping you! He will never let up loving you,** lending His strength to your feeble efforts.

That’s what our text is saying. The Spirit helps us in our weakness. **What a precious promise.**

Maybe you have forgotten that you’re not alone, and the measure of your hope is not your feeble strength and flagging stamina, but rather the help of God, the Holy Spirit Himself?

Slide 5: Prayer: One Area of Weakness Romans 8:26

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. we don’t know what God wants us to pray for.”

The word for “help” is a rich word that carries with it the idea of a person who comes alongside another to take part of the heavy load and help him bear it.

God has given us His Holy Spirit to help us in our prayer lives.

The Holy Spirit does not eliminate the need of prayer, **rather He helps us as we pray.**

There are lots of areas where we are weak. We’re weak physically sometimes. We’re exhausted and feel we can’t continue. We’re weakened by the remnants of sin in our life. We’re weak emotionally when we find ourselves overwhelmed.

We have an inability to know what to ask God for in prayer. **Let me give you some examples.**

We don’t know whether to pray for a person’s healing or to pray that God would prepare them (and us) for the journey home. **We know people aren’t meant to live forever.**

We don’t know whether to pray for God to provide for our financial needs or to ask Him to help us live more simply within our resources.

We don’t know whether to pray for a relationship to develop or for to ask God to help us wait for something better.

We face a crossroads in our lives, and we don't know which way to turn.

We face an opportunity, and we don't know whether to pray for God to give us boldness to step out in faith, or the patience to wait on Him.

The reality is that we don't know what to pray because we don't know what the future holds.

But my church family, God sees the big picture, when we don't.

Paul knows that central to our maturing, our growth in the Christian life, an essential weapon in our spiritual warfare with sin is Christian prayer.

We must pray and overcome any hindrances that keep us from praying.

Quote William Cowper – “What various hindrances we meet in coming to the mercy seat! Yet who that knows the worth of prayer but wishes to be often there!

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight; prayer makes the Christian's armour bright; and Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.”

Slide 6: How's Your Prayer Life?

Do you struggle at times to pray? I do! In the mornings as I come before the Lord in prayer, to my chagrin, my mind wanders at times hither and yonder, all over the place. **Has that happened to you?**

You set out to bring some worrisome problem that's been weighing on you and you want to bring it to the Lord, and you start out praying, and then a few minutes you realize you're not praying at all anymore; your mind has drifted somewhere else.

We tell people all the time, “I'll pray for you.” We mean it sincerely, and yet somehow, we forget.

We can hear ourselves pray like that and we know it's weak. Paul hit the nail on the head when he wrote, “*We don't know what to pray for as we ought.*”

Slide 7: Don't Know or Should Know Romans 8:26

Just because this is a universal struggle for Christians doesn't mean it's okay. “*We do not know what to pray for as we ought.*” **We should know.**

We ought to know what to pray for, but so often we don't. Paul includes himself in it – “**We**” – notice that. “**We don't know.**” Even the mighty apostle struggles with this.

Even those who know the Bible well, who are most eloquent in prayer still run out of words. There are sudden circumstances that overwhelm us, that strip us of our ability to find anything to say sometimes.

That's why we need to embrace the incredible encouragement of verse 27.

Slide 8: The Holy Spirit our Intercessor Romans 8:27

“We don’t know what God wants us to pray for, but the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.”

It’s here in this area of weakness in prayer, Paul says, the Holy Spirit really helps us. **How does the Spirit help us?**

“we don’t know what God wants us to pray for, but the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.”

This means the Holy Spirit prays on our behalf, even when we are unable to articulate our needs or fully understand what to ask for.

When we look further in this chapter, we see there are not one but two intercessors.

Slide 9: Think About the Two Intercessors Romans 8:26, 34

There’s the intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts here in verse 26.

Then in verse 34 you see that at the right hand of our Father in heaven there’s another intercessor. **Take a listen!**

“Christ Jesus who died for us and was raised to life, he is sitting in the place of honour at God’s right hand, interceding for us.”

The Spirit intercedes for us while the Lord Jesus also intercedes for us. **Just think about that for a moment.**

What a wow factor we have here! Can you see how invested God is in helping us pray, in hearing our concerns, in responding to our burdens, in answering our needs with His grace?

Slide 10: Not One but Two Prayer Helpers

His Son is constantly interceding in heaven. His Spirit constantly interceding in our hearts.

And these two intercessors agree; their mind is one, their burden the same. There’s no conflict between them in their petitions on our behalf.

The Spirit takes our feeble prayers – *“We don’t know what to pray for as we ought,”* and He re-words them so that they’re heard in heaven as the exact echo of the cries of Christ.

God thinks prayer is so essential that He has invested Himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in the generation and presentation of our prayers before His throne.

What great encouragement we have here to take up with new zeal, the ministry of Christian prayer, privately and together as a church body?

I’ve heard of folks who don’t attend a prayer church meeting, because when they listen to brother so-and-so pray, they feel his prayers are so powerful and profound and full of Scripture and eloquent they think, “I could never pray like that.” I feel my prayers are weak.

If only we grasped the teaching of these two verses better, we would know that the feeblest – **yes – the feeblest cries of the weakest Christian**, are made both beautiful and mighty by the Holy Spirit in the throne room of heaven.

If we can grasp that, we would pray with new boldness, we would pray with more expectation, not because our prayers are special, but because we know we have the help of the Holy Spirit, our intercessor.

How powerful is this - two intercessors praying for us – Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Slide: 11 The Mysterious Groanings of Romans 8:26

“The Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.”

Now there’s mystery if there ever was one?

What can it mean to say, “the Holy Spirit groans”?

He’s not stumped by our circumstances. He has no sense of frustration. He’s not robbed of words ever. He’s not unsure what to say.

Slide 12: When Words Fail the Spirit Speaks

In fact, the text says these are groans *“that cannot be expressed in words.”*

What does Paul mean? Some people have wondered if he’s alluding to speaking in tongues or something like that.

Let me simply say that in the New Testament scriptures, the gift of tongues was the gift of language **that could be interpreted**. It was the gift explicitly of words.

But here, the groanings are without words. None!

What I think Paul is really saying is this. Sometimes in our weakness we don’t know what to pray for. Words fail us.

You want God’s will to be done, but you’re not really sure what that means. In those moments, we mustn’t think we have failed, that our cries and our sighs and our groans and our tears are unnoticed and do not reach the throne of God.

No, instead, understand the intercessory ministry of the Spirit takes those sighs and groans and tears and makes them eloquent in the ears of God.

We can trust that even our poorly articulated prayers are presented to God in a way that aligns with His sovereign will.

In those moments, the Spirit makes our feeblest request to God compelling and powerful and eloquent in His ears.

Brothers and sisters, there is no groan of yours, no tear you can shed, no sigh of longing for God in His grace that does not resound with mighty compelling arguments in the courtroom of heaven.

Slide 13: We are heard. We are heard. Romans 8:27

Notice the enormous encouragement of verse 27.

“The Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.”

He knows what we are like. He knows how puny we are, how our words run out, how our understanding fails.

God is the great searcher of hearts, Paul says. And He knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit’s intercession is always according to the will of God.

In other words – grasp this now – God sees us and hears Him. **He sees us and hears Him.**

And what He hears from the Spirit interceding for us is precisely what the Father has always intended to give us in the first place. **He intercedes for us “according to the will of God.”**

The intercession of the Spirit is the guarantee that our prayers, however feeble, are heard in the throne room of God. The ministry of the Spirit makes prayer mighty.

My brothers and sisters, maybe some of you can’t do much because age or health or circumstances have limited you in all sorts of ways.

But you can pray. You can pray. He has appointed His Son and given His Spirit to make our prayers effective.

May God forgive our neglect of prayer, my neglect of prayer. May He make us determined to pray on till His kingdom comes and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayer: Our Father, how we praise You that You have ordained Your Son to be our intercessor at Your right hand and Your Spirit to be our intercessor in our hearts.

Help us to see, to feel the weight and wonder of these truths, to believe and cling to the promise of the Spirit’s help in our weakness when we don’t know how to pray as we should.

And then instead of running from prayer, or neglecting it, help us, even if all we have is a groan and a cry for help, help us with courage to persevere, knowing that our feeblest prayers are eloquent in your ears. **For we ask it in Jesus’ name, Amen.**