

Are You at a Lost for Words?

Scripture: Romans 8:26-30

Introduction

We are back in “The Great Eight”. The last time we were here we read about Paul’s encouragement to Christians who are suffering. Even when we suffer, we can know that God has not left us alone and has prepared for us something far better than whatever we have here. This means that no matter how bad things are now, it will not compare with what God has prepared for us. Also, no matter how good things are now, they will be so much better when we reach our home in Heaven. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, your future is certain and it is glorious because God has promised great things for you. We have real hope in Jesus Christ and this hope is not some wishful thinking. It is a sure thing based upon the trustworthiness of God Who has promised His children a glorious inheritance in Jesus Christ.

What about the present, though? What are we to do during this present time when the world has so much suffering? Earlier in this chapter, Paul wrote that all of creation was subjected to futility. All of creation, including us, is groaning together like a woman in labor. Now, that is painful, but it is a pain that expects something even greater to come. It is a great pain that is accompanied by an even greater joy. Those who follow Jesus Christ have a *great hope*. You have something that no one else on the planet has, at least those who do not know Christ. What are we do with this hope when we face those difficult times of pain, suffering and depression now? Where do you go in times of need? Maybe you believe you need something more than hope. Maybe you need someone to be there with you. If that is you, then I have good news for you!

The Holy Spirit’s Role

One of the mysteries of our faith is that God is one but He exists in three Persons. God is the Father. God is the Son. God is also the Holy Spirit. All three are distinct Persons and yet, somehow, God is still one. This is one of the truths of our Christian faith that has uniquely separated us from other religions. I do not understand it, but I believe it. One of the unfortunate things in our Christian life is that we minimize or overlook the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We may believe in the Holy Spirit but we tend to push Him aside and focus on other important things of our faith. This is unfortunate as the Holy Spirit is also God and He is a gift to us for believing in Jesus Christ. If you have trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior, God has given Himself to you right now. Paul referred to the Holy Spirit over twenty times in chapter eight writing about the Spirit’s role in our Christian lives. Look at a few of these verses below.

Romans 8:2² *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*

Romans 8:9⁹ *You...are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

Romans 8:16 ¹⁶ *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...*

We see that freedom in Christ is somehow based upon the Spirit of God. Those who are in Christ, who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior, are free from the legal demands of the Law of God. They also belong to God as they are adopted into God's family. We are His children and we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Jesus Christ. Do not miss the Spirit's role in all of this. If you know Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit comes to live within you. He makes His home in you and dwells with you and in you. The Holy Spirit is God Himself coming to live within you so that you do not have to live alone.

A Helper in Time of Need

Life sometimes contains very difficult circumstances that are oftentimes overwhelming. No one wants to admit that they are weak, but oftentimes, we are. I am the kind of person who wants to do things myself. I sometimes hate to ask for help. I do not want to appear weak, but I am. We all are. We get beat up by other people, or by suffering, or by sin. We are weakened and weary by it. Sometimes we do not know what to do next. God is there to help you and He sent the greatest Helper to help you in those times of weakness. Paul opened this passage with these encouraging words:

Romans 8:26 ²⁶ *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

When we are weak, we have the Holy Spirit living within us Who helps us. Notice, this is a real Person. It is not like saying, "My spirit is comforted by you." It is not like saying, "You have a sweet spirit about you." The Holy Spirit is a real Person Who helps you. This verse reads, "The Spirit Himself." This is the same Person Paul mentioned earlier Who "dwells within you." If you know Jesus Christ then you have the Holy Spirit living within you. You have the very power of God dwelling within you. That should be some comfort to you when you face difficult situations. You can know that not only has God promised to make you His very own child by adopting you into His family, not only has Jesus promised to not ever leave you or forsake you, not only do you have the greatest hope in the world, but you also have God the Holy Spirit living within you.

A Helper to Pray for You (and with You)

The weakness Paul was mentioning in this passage was primarily our not knowing what to pray. Prayer is one of the great mysteries of our spiritual life and also one of the great essentials of our Christian life. We are told to pray without ceasing. We are told to pray for one another. We understand that God listens to our prayers, but sometimes we need help to pray. How many times have you struggled to pray for something not knowing what or how to pray? How many times have you struggled to pray for a specific need? How many times have you faced a difficult decision and desperately wanted to know God's will to make that decision? Maybe you have been so burdened or grieved that

you just did not have the words to say. The good news is that not only does the Holy Spirit help us, He also intercedes for us. The Holy Spirit prays for us and with us, and the good news is that the Holy Spirit always prays in accord with God's will. This might sound strange, but the Holy Spirit, Who is God, prays on our behalf to God.

This raises an interesting issue. Have you faced situations in life that you prayed and prayed and prayed some more and still did not know what God wanted you to do? I sometimes do not know what God wants me to do. Do you sometimes beat yourself up not knowing what the will of God is for your life? There are some people who will say that you can know God's will all the time if you have enough faith. Some will say that you do not know God's will because of some sin in your life. I do not dispute that, because you might have some sin in your life that is hindering your prayers. Sometimes, God feels like a million miles away because we are sinning and have not repented of it. You also might not be trusting God enough that it hinders your prayers. If you are being disobedient to God or have some unrepentant sin in your life, then it will hinder your relationship with Him and it will hinder your prayers. Some of you need to repent of some sin so that you can be right with God and have your prayers answered.

But that is not the situation this passage describes. There are times in your life when you will not know what to pray or how to pray and it is no fault of your own. Sometimes you will face situations that you will not know what to do and you will not have a clear answer from God about how to proceed. In those times, you will need help. The good news is that this passage is meant to encourage you and comfort you during those times. This passage is not condemning. It is comforting. God has given you the Holy Spirit Who is there to help you in those times. As it is hope that carries us through our times of suffering, like verses twenty-four and twenty-five state, so it is the Holy Spirit Who carries us through when we are unable to pray as we ought. The Holy Spirit comes along side you and prays for you and with you.

A Helper to Groan with You

It might seem strange that Paul mentioned the Holy Spirit "groans" but that is what he wrote. This is like an expression (sigh) of great concern. Look at verse twenty-six again.

Romans 8:26 ²⁶ *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*

What is this groaning? Why does the Holy Spirit need to groan? Can you imagine the Holy Spirit wrestling with understanding the mind of God or suffering because He does not know the will of God or frustrated because of some situation in your life? What I think this means is that when we are so burdened that we do not know how to pray, when we are at a loss for words, our groans, mentioned in verse twenty-three, become His (v. 26) as He intercedes on our behalf. God is the one Who has complete access to our heart. He searches our hearts and He also knows the desires of the Spirit as the Spirit intercedes for us. This should provide great encouragement for prayer. The Holy

Spirit comes to our aid and takes our concerns to God. We groan in our weakness and the Spirit helps us and groans with us when we do not know what to pray.

We are going to face trouble in life. There are going to be things, people, or situations in life that you cannot control. There are going to be times when you do not know what to do, how to respond, or how to pray. What are you going to do in those circumstances? What will be your source of comfort? When you are weak, what will be your source of strength? One of the great truths of our spiritual life is that we are *forever* dependent upon God. Maybe your groaning shows your dependence on God. Maybe it shows your limitations and God's unlimited glory. I am becoming more and more aware of my limitations and how I am utterly dependent upon God. Things that some of you think a pastor ought to be able to do are oftentimes in the hands of God. We need to pray like we really need God. That is a truth I need to remember.

A Helper Who Works for the Good

Lastly, we can know that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives to ensure that good things happen. When you are in the midst of trouble or patiently waiting for an answer to prayer, you may question what good God is doing. Know this, the Holy Spirit is always working to bring about the best in your life. Look at verse twenty-eight.

Romans 8:28 ²⁸ *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

This does not mean that your life will be trouble free. This does not mean that you will get that job promotion. This does not mean you will win a million dollars. This also does not mean that you will get the answer to your prayers that you desire. What it does mean is that God is working to bring about the best in your life, even if you do not know it. The Holy Spirit is interceding for you and working for you so that you become what God wants you to be, that is, to become more like Christ. God wants all of His adopted children to become like His only begotten Son, Jesus. That is the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit working in your life. We will look at this more closely next week.

Conclusion

In closing, what will you do when you are at a lost for words? Will you give up? Will you stop praying? Will you pray even harder? I encourage you to trust in the promises of God. He wants what is best for you. I encourage you to remember that you have a Helper, an Advocate with the Father, and that is the Holy Spirit. He is praying for you and with you. God is with you. I also encourage you to remember that when you do not know what to pray and you do not know the answer or the right decision, that may be exactly where you ought to be. It may be one of those Romans 8:26 moments in your life that shows your dependence on God. Remember, God loves you and has given you His best — His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit to be with you. You are not alone. Trust in Him. You also have His Church to come along side you, to love you, to pray for you and with you, and to care for you. This is good news. Thanks be to God. Amen!