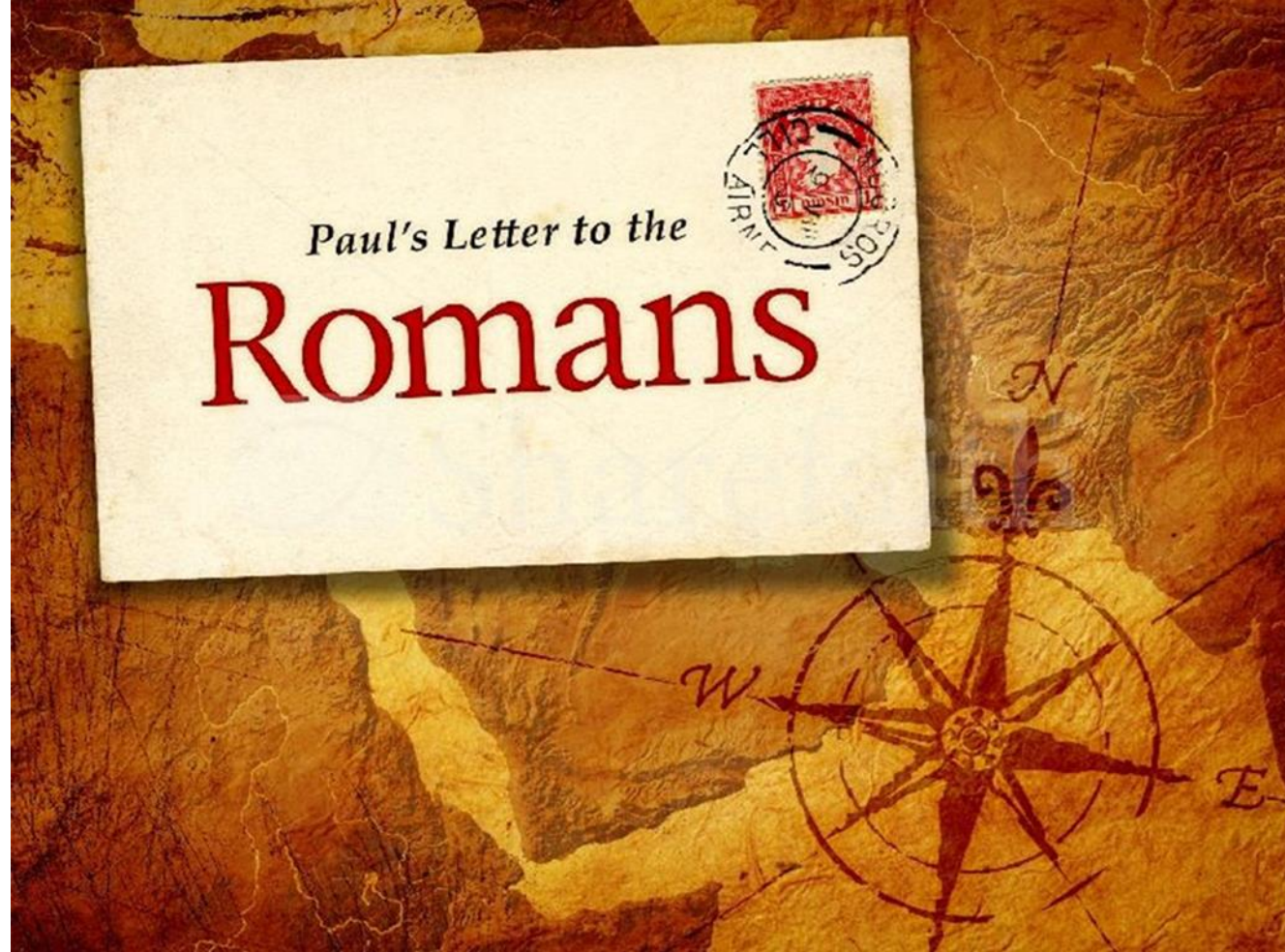


This Week's Passage:

Romans 8:26-27

Romans 8:26-27

- 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.
- ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.



**The Holy Spirit and Prayer
(Romans 8:26-27)**

Introduction

- Praying compares to singing
 - Knowing the melody and the lyrics
 - Knowing only the melody
 - Being swept away by the music

I. Praying with Words

A. Reflects Our Obedience

- **Paul to the Philippians: Pray!**
- ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

I. Praying with Words

A. Reflects Our Obedience

- **Jesus models a set prayer:**
- **⁹ Pray then like this:**
- “Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. (Matthew 6:9-13 ESV)

I. Praying with Words

B. When Words Clarify Thoughts

- **Praying Scripture (a semi-set prayer):**
- ⁸ It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

(Deuteronomy 31:8)

I. Praying with Words

B. When Words Clarify Thoughts

- The first principle is **using writing to clarify your own thinking**. This principle holds that it is often difficult to establish what we think before we have put it down in words. In many cases, we simply do not know what we want to say until we have tried to say it.. . .
- For most of us, the best way out of this dilemma is to write.
- As a practical matter, this principle translates into a simple call to write more.
- --Rachael Cayley, blog: *Explorations of Style*
- *Example: the written prayers on the back of our bulletin*

I. Praying with Words

C. We Act

- Using set prayers
- Praying Scripture
- Using writing to discover what to pray
- Spontaneously spoken prayers
- “**Humility and Sincerity**: God cares more about your heart than your eloquence. Fancy words or public displays aren't necessary. Pray authentically, humbly, and from the heart.” (from *Bible Study Tools*)

II. Praying without Words

A. Reveals Our Limitations

- ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought (Romans 8:26)
- "*The Spirit helps us in our weakness* (26a), that is, in the ambiguity and frailty of our 'already-not yet' existence." (John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, p. 244)
- ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

II. Praying without Words

B. When Words Cannot be Found

- **“Mentalese”:**
- “Think about it. We have all had the experience of uttering or writing a sentence, then stopping and realizing that it wasn’t exactly what we meant to say. To have that feeling, there has to be a “what we meant to say” that is different from what we said. Sometimes it is not easy to find *any* words that properly convey a thought.”

Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, p. 47)

When Experience is Too Intense for Words

- **When in Anguish:**
- ⁹ Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and body with grief.
¹⁰ My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak. (Psalm 31:9-10)
- **When Ecstatic:**
- “Words can’t describe what I’m feeling right now”
- “Wow!”

II. Praying without Words

C. We Wait

- ¹¹ The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”
- Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.
- Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

(I Kings 19:11-13)

II. Praying without Words

C. We Wait

- Some ways of waiting:
 - Slow down
 - Find a quiet, stress-free place (such as in nature)
 - Remember the Lord's past faithfulness
 - Wander through Scripture
 - Listen for the Lord's silent voice

III. Praying in the Spirit

A. Requires Our Surrender

- ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ **Do not quench the Spirit.** ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. (I Thessalonians 5:16-21)

III. Praying in the Spirit

B. When Words are Pointless

- “but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with **groanings too deep for words.**” (Romans 8:26b)
- The groanings of the Holy Spirit are within us, yet beyond our usual way of logical understanding; however, similar to “intuition,” we can nevertheless understand the meaning of these groanings.

What are these “groanings”?

- **The Holy Spirit empathizes with the groanings of creation and humanity:** “God’s creation and God’s children groan because of their present state of imperfection, and there is nothing imperfect about the Holy Spirit. It must be, therefore, that the Holy Spirit identifies with our groans, with the pain of the world and the church, and shares in the longing for the final freedom of both. We and he groan together” (John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, p. 245).
- Or maybe . . .
- **The Holy Spirit helps us:** “Difficulties can cloud the mind. In deep travail it is difficult even to pray. In such extreme circumstances, the Holy Spirit . . . undertakes to pray for us. What a gift to know that God the Holy Spirit prays when we are too weak to do so” (David Seemuth, *Romans*, p. 146).
- Or maybe . . .
- **They are somehow connected to “speaking in tongues”**

What is “Speaking in Tongues”?

- **Glossolalia:** “A compound Greek word meaning ‘to speak in tongues’ (from *laleo*, ‘to speak’ and *glossa*, ‘tongue’).
- Glossolalia, the supernatural ability to speak in languages not previously learned, is first recorded in Scripture as happening on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
- The apostle Paul later makes reference to glossolalia as a special gift of the Spirit given to some Christians and to be practiced for the edification of the church.
- Throughout church history there has been ongoing debate as to whether genuine glossolalia ceased after the passing of the apostles or if it is a legitimate gift [of the Spirit] to be practiced today.” (*Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*)

What is “Speaking in Tongues”?

- One of the “Gifts of the Spirit”:
- ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of **wisdom**, and to another the utterance of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the **working of miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another the ability to **distinguish between spirits**, to another various kinds of **tongues**, to another the **interpretation of tongues**. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11 ESV)
- [More Gifts of the Spirit are listed in Romans 12:3-8, including: **service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, and mercy**]
- Speaking in tongues is not an indication that a Christian is more religious or righteous than someone who does not have the gift of tongues. It is simply one of many gifts that the Lord gives to build up His Church.
- Speaking in tongues is often referred to as having a “prayer language”

Are these “groanings” = speaking in tongues?

- “It is possible that the groaning of the Spirit becomes audible through speaking in tongues, although one cannot be sure about this point. The encouragement is not that we speak in tongues, but that God’s own intercession is made for believers.” (Dave Seemuth, *Romans*, p. 146)

III. Praying in the Spirit

C. We Get Swept Away

- ²I know a man in Christ [Paul himself] who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. (2 Corinthians 12:2 ESV)
- A Metaphor: Praying in the Spirit is like being “in the zone” in sports: you are praying, yet you simultaneously feel as if you are being carried along by the Lord’s holy power, that something is going on besides your own thoughts and efforts.

Takeaways:

A. Prayer proves effective ("Testing")

- The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16b KJV)
- The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16b NIV)

Takeaways:

B. Prayer requires humility ("Coram Deo")

- "Coram Deo": In the presence of, or before the face of, God
- ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:12-13 NIV)

Takeaways:

C. Prayer provides peace ("Shalom")

- ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ **And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

Takeaways:

D. Prayer connects us to God and to others ("Community")

- and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16a NIV)
- **⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

“A Night of Prayer and Worship”

- **Thursday 8 August, 6:30-7:30pm.** at Randolph Christian School.
- New Life Fellowship will host this opportunity to hunker down in prayer. We will sing several praise songs as well.



Let Us Pray

A photograph of two hands raised in prayer, holding a glowing white cross. The hands are silhouetted against a bright, orange, and yellow sunset sky. The sun is visible through the cross, creating a lens flare effect. The background shows a body of water reflecting the sunset colors.