


When the Spirit Prays

By Mary Kane

My son Scottie had broken his collar bone in an accident earlier this summer. Life for my very active athletic 18- year-old son suddenly became very different, and life for his forty-something very active athletic mother suddenly became very different as well. The initial days of his injury were spent on the couch, in considerable pain unable to do much for himself. Our summer weeks were full of doctor appointments, medical bills, prayer and relearning how to do many everyday activities. We looked forward to each doctor appointment, hoping to see signs of healing.



After several disappointing weeks of no progress, it soon became apparent that something was interfering with the healing process. My husband took the matter in hand and began searching the internet for doctors specializing in this type of injury. By the hand of God, we were led to a wonderful doctor at New Hope Orthopaedics in Carmel, Indiana. In a matter of two days, we spoke with the doctor, picked up Scott's records, scheduled the surgery and drove to Carmel, Indiana for his appointment. Despite the fact that I knew the whole process was unfolding according to God's will, I felt a little out of control—as if I didn't know how to pray correctly due to the rapidly moving time frame. All I could pray was, "Lord, take care of my son." I was very peaceful and calm, however, because I knew dozens of people at our church, school and family were interceding on our behalf. When I didn't know how to pray, our friends had us covered. How like the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When we don't know how to pray, He's got us covered.

Please read Romans 8:18-28.

Please record some key themes from this passage of Scripture:

Probably you wrote down some of the same things that I thought of such as redemption, suffering, creation, adoption, sin and prayer. For most of this study, we will concentrate on verses 26-28.

According to verses 21- 23 all creation is waiting for what?

How does all of creation express this longing to be redeemed (verse 22)?

As Christians we have already experienced the redemption of our souls, but our bodies are still awaiting redemption; therefore, we still experience pain and suffering. All of the pain and suffering we experience in this lifetime is due to our sin. God remembers that we are dust, so He sent His Spirit to help us.

How do our bodies express the longing they have to be redeemed (verse 23)?

Our bodies express longing to be redeemed in the same way that creation does—by groaning. But while we are awaiting our bodily redemption, we are not without hope because...

Verse 26 tells us that the Spirit was sent to help us in our

The original Greek word for *weakness* is *astheneia* which means "infirmity, sick, weakness, sickness, want of strength, disease."

Because Christ took our weaknesses and sin upon himself when He went to the cross, we have victory over them. "The Holy Spirit helps us to bear the infirmity of our body and of our mind; he helps us to bear our cross, whether it be physical pain, or mental depression, or spiritual conflict, or slander, or poverty, or persecution. He helps our infirmity; and with a helper so divinely strong we need not fear for the result. God's grace will be sufficient for us; his strength will be made perfect in weakness.." (BLB). There will be times in our lives as Christians when we will be too tired, sick or spiritually weak to pray effectively, but God has made a provision for us in that the Holy Spirit is already on the job, covering us in prayer.

How does the Spirit help us in our weaknesses (verse 26)?

We already learned that Jesus prayed for us (John 17:20) and continually intercedes for us at the Father's right hand (Romans 8:34). Now we learn according to Romans 8:26 that we have the incredible privilege of the intercession of the Holy Spirit! What kind of *help* does the Holy Spirit give us? What exactly does *intercession* mean? Let's see what we can unearth as we dig into the original language.

The original word for *intercession* is a large Greek word—*huperentugchano*. (Please be patient as we trace this word back to its roots.) Basically, it means to appeal on behalf of someone, to turn to, to plead for someone, in behalf of, for the sake of. *Huperentugchano* comes from another Greek word *entugchano*. *Entugchano* is a very interesting word which means, "to intercede for one, especially to make intercession...to go to or to meet a person for the purpose of conversation, supplication or consultation" (BLB).

Can you just imagine the Holy Spirit making a special appointment with God, to meet with Him, to discuss your personal prayer requests? *Entugchano*, in turn, is derived from yet another Greek word *tugchano*, which when broken into its pieces means "to make ready or bring to pass...to hit or light upon...to attain or obtain an end. It also translates "to hit or reach a mark or object *by discharging a javelin or arrow*" (BLB). I love it that the Holy Spirit's intercessions for me are like weapons against the plans of the enemy. And when He intercedes on my behalf, plans are set in motion to accomplish God's will in my life.

How does the Holy Spirit make these intercessions for us?

God's Word says that He intercedes with "groanings which cannot be uttered." What are these mysterious "groanings" that scripture mentions? The original Greek word for *groanings* used in verse 26 is *stenagmus*; it means "a sigh, a groaning." *Stenagmus* comes from the word *stenazo* which translates "to make groanings, a sigh, with grief, narrow or in straits, to sigh, murmur, pray inaudibly, not uttered with a voice" (BLB). At the very core of this word is the concept of *strait*. Being from Michigan, I've had a few experiences with *straits*. I've sailed through the Straits of Mackinac and the Sault St. Marie Straits of northern Michigan. Straits are very narrow passages or tight places between two large bodies of water. Have you ever felt as if you were in a tight place, as if life was squeezing in on you from all sides?

What's got you between a rock and a hard place right now?

Remember, when you feel hard-pressed, the Holy Spirit is in the middle of it with you, interceding and groaning for you!

Please read verse 26 again and gear up your brain for another jaw breaking Greek word!

The Greek word for *help* used in this verse is a doozy, *sunantilambanoma* which means "to lay hold along with, to strive to obtain with others, help in obtaining, to take hold with another." The idea here is like two people carrying a heavy box or couch in between them. This giant word is made up of many smaller Greek words, one of which is *sun*, which means "beside, with accompany, denoting union." This large word also means "to hold fast to anything, to take a person or thing in order as it were to be held, to embrace." Please rest in the fact that when you need His assistance, the Holy Spirit has you in a holy hug and He is not going to let you go! Among many other things, *sunantilambanoma* also means "to take what is one's own, to take with the hand, of *that which when is taken is not let go*" (BLB emphasis mine).

Please take a moment to reflect upon what *sunantilambanoma* means and respond to what is meaningful to you in the space provided.

Take comfort in the fact that the Holy Spirit is always beside you making intercessions for you in any situation in which you are weak, sick or unable to pray effectively. His intercession combined with our prayers covers the situation *completely* in effective prayer.

Are you carrying a heavy burden right now? If so what is it?

At times when you feel you are the only one carrying the heavy responsibility of caring for a sick parent or child, or that you don't have enough energy to try one more time to make that difficult marriage work, know that the Holy Spirit has His hands on that heavy burden right next to yours. He is with you every step of the way helping you shoulder the burden. Will you choose to believe that He's helping you? Will you trust Him no matter how tough it gets? He's praying that you will.

Please read verses 26 and 27 again.

Do we always know how to pray for the situations that come upon us?

In contrast, how does the Holy Spirit pray for us?

He prays for us according to the perfect will of God. When I was younger in my Christian walk, I ignorantly prayed according to the imperfect will of Mary. I can hardly bear to think of what my life might have become if I was able to manipulate God into giving me everything I asked for. Now, I try not to get in His way by insisting on having my own way. I am thankful that the Holy Spirit prays for me according to the perfect will of God.

Because the Spirit prays according to the will of God we know that (verse 28)...

How blessed we are in that not only do we have the privilege of bringing our requests before God personally, but that the Holy Spirit is joining us in the work of prayer to bring about God's will for all those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

Please name three different groups or persons whom we know pray for us.

We know from scripture that other Christians pray for us, the Holy Spirit prays for us and that Jesus lives to intercede for us. Scripture also tells us that we are called to be imitators of Christ Jesus. How well do we imitate Jesus as far as intercession is concerned? Do you "live to intercede" for others?

How much of your prayer time do you spend on prayer requests that concern you personally?

How much time do you spend praying for others?

We definitely need to spend time in prayer for ourselves asking God to make us into the image of Christ and to work His perfect will in our lives concerning our private requests, but we are also appointed to lift up the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Body of Christ needs you to stand in the gap and make intercession for those in need.

In closing please look up James 5:16 and write it in the space provided:

“The effective fervent prayer of a
righteous man [woman]
avails much.”

Keep praying!

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Mary Kane