



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Groaning with Hope

December 1, 2019

Romans 8:26-27

Clint Pressley

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.

(Pastor prays)

Dr. Robert Smith is one of the great African American preachers of our age. He has a style and approach unlike any I have ever seen. He is a brilliant and fascinating man. He wrote a book about 10 years ago entitled "Doctrine that Dances," in which he states that doctrinal preaching is the escorting of the hearers into the presence of God through proper and precise expounding of the word of God and to do so for the purpose of transformation at the cross of Christ.

We are by definition a doctrinal people and one of those primary doctrines for us is the Doctrine of trinity. We are a distinctly trinitarian people. We believe in one God who has revealed Himself in three persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In fact, we are saved by the trinity. God the Father plans our salvation, God the Son accomplished our salvation at the cross and God the Spirit applies our salvation and in Romans Chapter 8, Paul has slowed down the pace to teach us about one person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit.

This whole chapter is about the work of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 2, The Spirit sets us free from the law of sin and death.

Verse 4 says, the spirit enables us to fulfill the just requirements of the law. Verse 6 goes on to say the Spirit gives life and peace.

And verse 11 says by the Spirit we will be raised from the dead.

Verse 13 – The Spirit helps us put to death the deeds of the body.

Verse 14 – Children of God are led by the Spirit.

Verses 15-16 says, the Spirit bears witness that we are children of God.

And finally verse 23 says, The Spirit is the firstfruits and foretaste.

And in our passage this morning we are introduced to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit helping us to pray when we don't know how or what to pray. And this passage is written to give hope to every person here that's ever felt the hollow sadness or dull ache or the throbbing numbness of depression during the holidays or despair over a death or the confusion of being in a sin you're not sure how to get out of. This passage is for you. This is the "Doctrine that Dances" and today you can come out of that hole because there is hope in Christ.

God the Spirit gives us hope.

We have hope because the Spirit helps us in our weakness

Let me show you what I mean. Verse 26 starts with the word likewise. The hope that was discussed in verse 24 & 25 is brought forward to verse 26. Just like we have hope that saves us, we have hope in our weakness. The Spirit helps us in our weakness.

Let's break that phrase up even further. The Spirit helps us. You see that little word "help"? That is an uncommon word in the New Testament. You only see it one other time and when you run up on a word like that, it's good to pause and roll it over in your mind a little bit.

Why did Paul reach over and get this little word that he never uses again? What's so special about this word that describes how the Spirit works? The only other time the word is used is in Luke 10:40 in the story of Martha and Mary where Martha had all she could handle and she said to Jesus, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me!" Not that Martha wanted to stop working but she needs help. It means to come alongside, to prop you up, to be the rock under your feet, to be the door jamb that holds you up. Why? Because according to verse 26, we are weak. Because we are tired or stressed or hurt or vulnerable, weak because we are suspicious and don't trust, weak because of sin or anger or anxiety or just flat-out discouragement.

This text promises that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. But look what the specific weakness is in verse 26. “Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness because we do not know what to pray for as we ought!” That’s our problem. The weakness in verse 26 is the actual content of our prayers. For we do not know what to pray for. The Spirit is helping us. This doesn’t negate our praying; this doesn’t remove our weakness, and it doesn’t take away our responsibility. We still need to be praying, we just don’t know what to pray because we don’t always know what the Lord’s will is for every situation. Or sometimes we don’t even *think* we can pray. Sometimes, because of some embarrassing sin we just avoid praying, forgetting that although your sin is foul, God’s grace at the cross where Jesus died to pay for that sin, that cross is the fountain of God’s love and grace. Judgment is on Jesus; grace and forgiveness and strength and cleansing are for the believer.

Sometimes it’s a profound hurt or sadness or the bewilderment of abuse or the abyss of someone hurting you so deeply that you don’t think you will ever get over it. Listen, all of it, all our prayer is feeble and saturated with our continued weakness. But by God’s grace, we have hope because the Spirit helps us in our weakness. If your prayer never rises beyond, “Lord, have mercy on me the sinner,” you still have hope. Let me show you why. The Spirit helps us.

We have hope because the Spirit intercedes for us

This is an amazing truth. Let’s go back to verse 26 and read it all the way through. 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.* And down in verse 27 because the Holy Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God, I want to talk about three things here that ought to give you hope.

The Holy Spirit in you is interceding.

The Holy Spirit in you is groaning.

The Holy Spirit in you is praying the will of God.

Isn’t it interesting that in this passage the Holy Spirit is described as interceding for us? If you are a student of the Bible, that word “intercessor” should ring a bell. Some of you know the Apostle’s Creed. We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. On the third day He rose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

What is Jesus now doing in Heaven? Hebrews 7:25 says, *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.* In Heaven, God the Son is speaking to God the Father on our behalf. That's one intercessor! And verses 26 & 27 tell us that we not only have an intercessor in Heaven, we have an intercessor on Earth, God the Spirit is here in you praying. If you are a Christian, here is your hope. Here is your security and strength. Here is your source of stamina. God the Father loves you; God the Son in Heaven is right now interceding for you and God the Spirit is now overriding your weakness and interceding.

So, what about groanings? Notice in verse 26 how the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. Remember the context of the passage. The groanings here are related to the creation's groaning in verse 22 and God's children groaning in verse 23. Here, the Holy Spirit takes us beyond language and articulation and verbal communication.

This isn't a prayer language or speaking in tongues. This is the Holy Spirit in you doing what you can't do. Here are the groans of the Holy Spirit identifying with our pain as we live in a fallen world and the Spirit in us shares the longing we have with God the father. That word "groan" is a word of agonized longings.

John Knox, he's a reformer, said "Give me Scotland or I die." Our needs go far beyond the power of our speech to express them. In Ezekiel 20:6, the Lord told Ezekiel, "Groan with a breaking heart and bitter grief." When the problem is too complex and all hope is lost, the Spirit groans for us. When the walls of depression close in and darkness prevails, the Spirit in you, the Holy Spirit, intercedes with groanings that are too wonderful for words.

In Heaven, Jesus pleads His blood on your behalf to be forgiven and accepted. On Earth, the Spirit groans on your behalf and the Father steps in in verse 27. Look at verse 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.* You know what that means? That groaning prayer of the Holy Spirit is infallible and will always be answered because it is being prayed according to the will of God. This is why you can have hope when you don't know *how* to pray or *what* to pray. You aren't left to your own devices or creativity and wording.

We have limited knowledge and are weak. But we can pray at all times in the Spirit with all our prayers and supplications, submitting to the will of God, who loves us as to a father, who purchased us through the Son, and saves us by the Spirit. And because of what Christ has done for us at the cross, the Spirit gives us hope in our weakness and in our groanings. Groanings in the Lord are done in the hope that Christ alone can bring.

(Pastor prays)