

The Spirit Intercedes

Opener: Ever had to go to bat for someone? How were you able to use your influence to help them?

Scripture: We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. ²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. Romans 8:22-27

Do not be like the pagans, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Matthew 6:8

Discussion Questions

1. Before Paul explains how the Holy Spirit intercedes for us he makes the point that all creation “has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” What does that mean? How can creation, which doesn't have feelings or a conscious mind, do that? Romans 8:23 (*See also* Genesis 3 and Romans 8:20-21)
2. “Groaning” is described three times in these verses (Romans 8:22, 23, and 26). What causes the groaning, what/who is doing the groaning, and what's being hoped for? What do they have in common?
3. In the OT, “first fruits” referred to an offering of the first products harvested. It acknowledged that everything came from and belonged to God. It also expressed faith that the rest of the harvest would be coming. With that in mind, what does it mean that we have the “first fruits of the Spirit?” How is that related to our adoption and the redemption of our bodies? Romans 8:23
4. What is and isn't genuine hope? What makes hope so important when we're suffering? How can we wait patiently for something that seems so far away and out of our control? How does waiting grow us up? Examples? Romans 8:24-25
5. What does the Spirit pray for us? How does the Spirit pray for us? Why does the Spirit pray for us? If God knows our needs and the Spirit is praying for us, why do we need to pray? Rom. 8:26-27; Matt. 6:8
6. “Intercede” means to intervene between parties while seeking to reconcile differences. How does that describe what the Holy Spirit does for us? Why can't we pray on our own as we should? How is the Holy Spirit supremely positioned to be an intercessor for us? Romans 8:26-27
7. Have you ever had an experience where you didn't know what or how to pray? If so, did the Spirit help you? How?

Wrap Up: Intercession is something we're all familiar with. We frequently go to bat for those we care about. But for the Holy Spirit to go to bat for us is mind-boggling. In these few verses Paul gives us a glimpse into the Spirit's role in our prayers and into the inner life of the triune God. What this tells us is that when we're confused or suffering, we can trust that the Holy Spirit is praying for us and know that God has a plan that will result in glory and victory in the end that we can't even imagine now. That's what living in the now and not yet of salvation is all about.