

**The Gospel as it Really Is:  
Romans simply Explained  
The Spirit helps us to pray  
Romans 8:26-27  
October 12th 2025  
Preacher: Pastor Roy Summers**

There are no strong Christians in the world, in themselves, not one. We are all weak, in ourselves. That is *good news* to every believer who feels personal weakness and wonders “is this the normal Christian life?” It is! I shall prove it from Scripture in a moment.

Better news is found in Romans 8 verse 26: *“In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness.”*

In the same way that HOPE helps us in our suffering, so the SPIRIT of God helps us in our weakness. Weakness doesn’t have the last say, writes Paul!

We’ve been making our way through the book of Romans and we’ve arrived at two verses in Romans chapter 8, verses 26 to 27, where Paul talks about our weakness and especially our weakness in prayer. But before we explain his teaching let me show you, from the rest of the Scriptures, that it frailty is normal in this life, that we are only ever strong when in the midst of our weakness, we cry out to God for his, divine help.

Here are some Scriptures

*“Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (Ephesians 6:10)*

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13)*

*And the words of the Lord Jesus himself: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)*

Do you remember the story of Elijah? One moment when facing off against the prophets of Baal, he is a mighty man of power (1 Kings 18) in God’s strength; but in the next moment, not trusting in God’s ability to protect running away from Queen Jezebel? (1 Kings 19) Elijah was so weak in himself, the apostle James calls him, “a man just like us.” (James 5:17)

The apostle Paul was also weak, back to the verses in front of us:

*“In the same way the Spirit help us in our weakness.” (Romans 8:26)*

Notice the word “our.” Paul is including himself—he is saying “I am weak.” “Our weakness.” We are all weak in ourselves.

One of my concerns in the internet era of “celebrity Christians” is that at a distance, whether influencers, preachers, musicians, or whatever, you and I might get the impression—because we don't know them, that is the point, we don't know these people first hand—we might get the impression that these individuals are “strong Christians” and believe there exists a class of super-Christian. Because we're only seeing them suited, booted on a well-lit stage after the make-up artist has smoothed out their wrinkles! When the fact of the case is this: if you or I spent just one single ordinary day with any of these “Christian celebrities,” we'd discover that they were, in themselves, weak, ordinary people. There are no “strong Christian” in and of themselves.

“I'm weak” says Paul. If you or I had belonged to Paul's missionary band of workers we would have witnessed a weak man, in and of himself. Every triumph, every victory, every conversion, every new church planted was solely the work of the Spirit working through him.

In fact, it turns out that God's chosen method is to take weak people—and weak churches! - and through the great things He does through them, to bring glory to himself:

*“We have this treasure (the Gospel) in jars of clay (weak, easily broken vessels, not silver or gold) to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side (weak), but not crushed (divine power) ; perplexed (weakness) , but not in despair (God is upholding him); persecuted, (weak) but not abandoned (God is always with him); struck down (weak!), but not destroyed (fortress).” (2 Corinthians 4:7-9)*

Paul often talks about his weaknesses!

We're all weak because we are creatures, designed to be dependant on outside sources, whether that is water, food, warmth or companionship. (Only God is the fount of his own eternal sustenance. Only God can live without any outside source, the rest of us are dependent creatures.) And then we're all weak because we live in fallen bodies and have our old sinful natures that shadow us every day of our earthly lives.

But Paul says, “The Spirit helps us in our weakness.” The Holy Spirit does not take away our weaknesses, he helps us in the midst of them. Without his abiding power and presence we would be crushed by our frailties. He helps us he comforts us, he empowers us day by day.

But look at what Paul says next, and this is where we are going today. After this general comfort “the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness” Paul homes in on prayer. “We do not know what to pray for.” Paul picks out prayer as a significant area of weakness!! If I were to ask you, “Who feels their prayer life is weak, perhaps even the weakest area of their spiritual life?” I think many hands would rise!

A famous Welsh preacher of the last century, was asked to write a book on prayer, but he refused because he felt his own prayers he felt, were so inadequate, so weak, so poor.

Today's sermon is about how the Holy Spirit helps us in our prayer weakness.

## The Teaching

Notice what kind of prayer Paul is talking about:

*"We do not know what we ought to pray for."*

He's not thinking about prayers of confession, "forgive us our sins", he's not writing about worship prayers, "Hallowed be your name", Paul is thinking about prayers of *petition*. "Lord show me what your will is, show me what to do in this situation, or in that circumstance. I'm puzzled, I don't know what to do. What do you want? Help me."

*"We do not know what we ought to pray for."*

We need to digress for a moment here and talk about the revealed will of God and the secret will of God. Because Paul is not talking about the revealed will of God, he's talking about the secret will of God.

When you and I are seeking to know God's will for our lives, sometimes the answer is plain and simple, it's revealed in the Bible, we call this the revealed will God:

- Should I opt for a career as a bank robber (no, Exodus 20:15, "You shall not steal")
- Should I marry? Clear teaching in 1 Corinthians 7 and elsewhere.
- Should I marry an unbeliever? (No, "Do not be yoked with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- How should I relate to my spouse in my marriage? (Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 7)
- And so on

There are large tracts of our lives which are plainly mapped out for us in the Bible. But there are other large tracts of life that we must work out in prayer,

- Ok, I shouldn't become a bank robber, but what employment, what job should I take—the possibilities are endless
- I see I should marry a believer, rather than an unbeliever, but *which* believer?
- And so on

The secret will of God are the plans he has wisely and lovingly mapped out for us, but we don't know what they are. We wish we knew what lay ahead of us, what his will was, but we don't, and we feel weak and ignorant and impotent in the face of this unknown future. And when we bring these things to God in prayer we may struggle, and agonise, and find ourselves perplexed. What should I pray? What is God's will? Shall I turn to the left or to the right? This is the prayer weakness Paul is talking about here. Perhaps you are in this very situation today. What is God's will for you? You are wrestling with it.

What does Paul say about this prayer problem? How does the Spirit of God help us? He says something most wonderful and comforting.

We might expect Paul to say “When you’re struggling to know what to pray, the Holy Spirit will fill you with eloquent words so that you can pray amazing prayers full of clarity for your future direction!”

But he doesn’t! He says that when we’re praying those seemingly weak prayers, perhaps even wordless groan-prayer—it turns out that the Holy Spirit at that very moment is praying in us to God the Father!

Those deep prayers you are praying in point of fact came from the Spirit in the first place, they are the intercessory prayers of the Holy Spirit, registered in your heart, to let you know that he is praying for you!

*“We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words that cannot express.”*

You thought that your prayers were weak, because they were wordless groans, but Paul says that those deep sighs were in fact the work of the Holy Spirit registering *his prayers* for you in your heart!

In Romans 8:34, we learn that Jesus is praying for us—but we don’t necessarily feel or “know” that he is praying for us.

In Romans 8:26 we learn that when the Holy Spirit prays for us, we do feel his prayers – it’s the very moment we are praying our weak prayers!

The Holy Spirit does not help us in our weakness by giving us a flood of eloquent words, he helps us by coming alongside us, and turning our groans into HIS already-prompted prayers which turn out to be intelligible to God the Father.

Three simple applications will make this teaching clearer:

### **(1) Don’t worry about your weak prayers!**

Don’t worry about praying weak prayers! The Holy Spirit has been given to help you, not by giving you the eloquence of a Shakespearean angel, but by taking your weak prayers and making them heard in heaven.

*Prayer is the soul's sincere desire  
Uttered or unexpressed  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast  
Prayer is the burden of a sigh*

*The falling of a tear  
The upward glancing of an eye  
When none but God is near*

Perhaps some of you shy away from prayer meetings. Or when you go, you don't feel able to pray, because you think your prayers are not good enough! God is not looking for flowery words, he's looking for sincere prayers, no matter how weak. (We should all advance in the school of prayer, of course, but we are not heard in heaven for our eloquence, we're heard for our heart-sincerity.)

## **(2) Don't give up weak prayers—because this is when the Spirit prays for you**

Someone might ask, if the Holy Spirit is interceding for me why do I need to pray? Because if I can put it this way, the Holy Spirit only prays for us when we pray. That is the only human way I can put the teaching of these verses. As you and I pray our weak prayers, those very prayers, are taken up by the Holy Spirit - and in fact turn out to have been initiated by him in the first place!.

## **(3) Don't despair: your weak prayers are powerful in heaven**

*"He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."*

God the Father who searches our hearts when we're praying those weak prayers knows what we are praying, because it the Spirit who is praying in us, and God the Father knows the mind of the Spirit; he knows what the Spirit is praying, and of course the Spirit prays in perfect alignment with God's will!

Our unintelligible weak prayers are turning into prayers that are in perfect alignment with God's will! Prayers that God will always answer - of course! - because they line up perfectly with his divine will!

So weak prayers are powerful prayers! No wonder William Cowper penned these words:

*Satan trembles when he sees  
the weakest saint upon his knees.*