

When Life Is Tough - Part 4

Praying Through The Pain

Romans 8:26-27

So I'm reading the paper this week and I come across this story of a lady who gives birth to a baby while driving a car. I'm not kidding. Driving a Chevy, Amanda McBride that's her name and she's cruising down Highway 2 in Minnesota and she said she felt pressure and she goes into labor and her water breaks and the reporter asks her later reflecting on this whole what did you do when you felt all that happening? She said, I quote, I put the car on cruise control, I scooted the seat back as far as it would go and I had the baby, right there on the floor mat going 70. I mean, are you kidding me? It gets worse; her husband was in the passenger seat doing I don't know what, messing with the stereo or something, he obviously of no help as they were cruising through Western Minnesota. I read that story and I thought you know that sounds a lot like some Christians that I know that just are cruising through life at 70 miles an hour desperately needing to attending to something in their lives but just refusing to stop and deal with it, you know. They just are moving on.

You know the pain is a sign in our lives that we need to stop and get some help. I mean that's how the Christian life works and it should just be a natural paradigm for us. As C.S. Lewis said, "God He may whisper to us in our pleasures and He may speak to us in our conscience but He shouts to us in our pain." See and when God is shouting it's time for us to give Him our full attention. We need to be turning to God in sincere and heartfelt communication. Compass Bible Church we have 8 distinctives and these are kind of in addition to our doctrinal convictions and these 8 distinctives are all about what we hope to express as our values as a church. And number 5 on that list is that we are going to seek to be reliant on prayer. We want to be a church filled with Christians that are reliant on prayer. What we mean by that is that any healthy church has got to have Christians in the church that are turning at every opportunity to God as often as possible to speak to God about the issues of the world and the church and their lives. We need to be people of prayer especially when there's pain, difficulty, trials which according to Romans chapter 8 which we've been studying we're going to have plenty of those. That's the forecast between now and eternity we're going to have a life that is filled with trials and difficulties. It is what God has said will be the reality and when that happens we get to verses 26-27 and Paul then turns our attention to prayer. Now what we'll observe about these two verses is it's really not a call to prayer, it is an assumption that Christians will be praying when they have pain. The larger context is the pain and suffering that we experience as Christians that the world that we live in is turned upside down. Things that should be up or down, things that should be considered right, considered wrong and vice-versa and everything is messed up and not until the glorious freedom of the children of God when Christ comes back and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Until that point things are going to be messed up. And not only in the world, we learned also in our own bodies they're going to be messed up. There's going to be this rebellion against our very desires to do right. There will be this bondage to corruption not only in nature but in our own bodies and they'll not do what we want. Not only that they'll be decaying and diseased and eventually die. We're going to live with those kinds of pains and those kinds of difficulties. And as Christians there's lots of things that Romans 8 has already talked to us about that give us strength, and sustenance, and fortitude in our spirit. And in verse number 26-27 the attention goes to prayer because that's kind of obvious Christians should be praying. That's an incredible source of help when things are difficult. But I don't just want to assume that in an Amanda McBride world that we live in, sorry to pick on her, but a lot of us just keep on plowing and we don't pray. So let's look at the passage and I know it's not a call to prayer but we want to start with that and make sure that we are praying and we want to learn some things about our limitations in praying and we want to see the great compensation that God gives us in our praying an advocate that dwells in us the bible tells us. But let's read these two

verses and see what God has to say and how He might challenge our Christian lives this morning.

Romans chapter 8, I trust you've already turned there, verses 26 and 27 he says, likewise, important word look back to the context. Likewise, what, well all this hope, all this inner strength, all this fortitude, all this hupomone, this persevering patience that we get from proper perspective and all of that. Well we're also going to get some help; likewise we'll get help from the Spirit. Likewise the Spirit helps our weakness. Then he explains something about our prayer life. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought. It starts to talk about our limitations in praying. But, good news, the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts, which by the way is a great definition of God and it's used that way throughout the bible, he searches hearts. Well God the Father, He knows what is the mind of the Spirit. Well clearly He should, right? Well in this case because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

So we hear about our limitations and we hear about God's incredible compensation in our praying but let's just start with the assumption that really shouldn't be an assumption for us in 21st century fast paced Christianity. We need to start with some basic things and that relates to number one on your outline, that we need to let the pain prompt more prayer.

1. Let The Pain Prompt More Prayer

Make sure you're praying when you encounter the difficulties in your life. I mean it ought to step our prayer up if you have certain times during the day when you pray it ought to be doubled and tripled when we encounter difficulties. And though I think throughout the bible it's kind of a given that that's going to happen it's not always the case now. Because I find today and it happens even in the bible but people are really quick to talk to each other about their problems. Something bad happens let's pick up the phone let's call our friends let's complain about how work is not going well let's come home and grr grr grr about our day but God would like us when we hit these difficulties to turn to God in prayer. I mean that is an incredible resource in the Christian life that many of us leave on the table and we don't do it and the bible is constantly beckoning the people of God to prayer especially when you're hurting.

Let me give you one classic example from Psalm 34. Turn in your bibles to Psalm 34. We need to let the pain prompt more prayer in our lives and David knew what the pain was about, didn't he? You know something about King David's life it was punctuated with lots of difficulties, suffering, broken dreams and a lot of pain. And yet he says you know there's something about that time with God in prayer. There's something sustaining and uplifting and provides the perseverance and patience in our lives. There's a kind of deliverance even at the most profound deep level in our own lives when we cry out to God in those times. Now I want to read here a little bit starting in verse 15 but before I read it and you read these phrases about deliverance and getting saved out of our problems you need to understand that David is not thinking simplistically or one dimensionally about you know deliverance because here is a king who knew what it was to find to strength in the midst of the struggles when God didn't change the circumstances. You know what I'm talking about? He wrote Psalm 23 the most familiar Psalm of all. When he says things like this, God my Shepard, He's prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies. I'm thinking in my prayers it's going to be wipe the enemies out. But no, David says God didn't do that but He provided a kind of deliverance for me by sustaining me in the midst of my enemies. Or he says things like this, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I'm thinking to myself if I'm walking through that I going to pray I'm going to get off that path real quick get on a different path going in a different direction. He doesn't deliver him from the pathway through the valley of the shadow of death but there's some kind of deliverance as he reaches out to his Shepard, the Lord, where he says I fear no evil for you are with me. You see what I'm saying? There's a kind of deliverance that may not immediately come to mind when you read these kinds of promises. But you need to know David is not throwing out some kind of get out of jail free card. He's trying to say there's a kind of responsiveness of God that though he

doesn't always calm the storm, although sometimes He does wipe out his enemies or take them off the path through the valley of the shadow of death. He will certainly bring some level of deliverance to the life of those who call out to God.

Take a look at it, verse 15, amazing statements here. He says, "The eyes of Yahweh are toward the righteous." And don't miss this because we always read these kinds of statements. God doesn't have eyeballs, you understand that, right? He doesn't have you know, lens and corneas and rods and cones and spears within some think called a skull. He is spirit but those anthropomorphic, that's what we call them, anthropomorphic statements about God we apply human descriptions to some kind of reality about God. That is simply saying what do we do with our eyes? We use our eyes to be attentive and look to something. Here is God being attentive to us. It says His eyes are toward the righteous. Those in the Old Testament case who had by the debit card of the cross, so to speak, had the righteousness of Christ the coming Lamb of God applied to their account. From our perspective as it was taken from the cross we have that righteousness given to us in Christ. Hey if you are a repentant, redeemed child of God here's the promise, His attentiveness is toward you. The eyes of Yahweh are toward the righteous and it gets even better. And His ears toward their cry. That's kind of a heartfelt prayer in the midst of pain that's what the cry is. Think about that, he has no ears, no earlobes, no inner bones rattling around sending impulses to the brain. We're talking about a God though that's attentive and receptive and responsive to our cry, our prayer in the midst of our pain.

The eyes of Yahweh are toward the righteous; his ears are toward their cry. Now the face of the LORD is against those who do evil. They're not redeemed their life isn't changed. To cut off the memory of them from the earth but look at this verse 17, when the righteous cry for help, Yahweh hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. Now does he always change their circumstances, I already quoted Psalms 23, the answer is no. But there is some level of deliverance there's some amazing help, there's some sustenance that comes from prayer in the midst of trouble. And not only that if it's really bad trouble, verse 18, Yahweh is near to the brokenhearted. Think about that. It's as though if He's responsive to children of God and He's ready to hear you pray, as we call our friends or shoot out our e-mail and He's going I want to hear you I'm ready I'm responsive. He's even more responsive, He's leaning forward when the pain is so hard that it's like a heartbreaking crushing event and He's near to the brokenhearted and He's ready to save the crushed in spirit.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Yahweh delivers them out of them all. He keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. But Yahweh redeems the life of his servants, and none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. Ultimately a lot of condemnation thrown at David but the ultimate realities of life David says it is good to have this amazing resource. Jot this reference in the margin if it's not already there or on your notes, Deuteronomy 4:7. This is a great little verse to memorize and it simply says this. What other nation is as great as our nation, Moses said, who has their gods (small g) near them the way our God is near us whenever we call on Him. You can see that kind of chest of privilege pride kind of bumping out on the lives of these Old Testament saints who knew God is there ready to listen.

My question is are we turning to God in prayer when we hit those hard times or our we like so many people that are rushing to a remedy or rushing to vent or rushing to tell our spouse or our friends or call or e-mail someone. Can we turn to God in the midst of our pain? That's just the natural biblical paradigm and in a world where we're so quick to speak to others it's time for me to remind you as your pastor can we drop to our knees and pour out our hearts to God. You got a problem in your life? You've been diagnosed with a sickness? Your job is on the brink? You got relationship problems? You're hurting whatever it is your fatigued you're depressed whatever it is can you run to God in prayer? That's where you need to start. Don't leave that privilege on the table. It's like that old hymn we grew up with in church, "What a Friend I have in Jesus". Remember that one? All my sins and griefs to bear, what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Remember that? The best line is the last line, "Oh what peace we often forfeit, Oh what

needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” Remember that old line? Good for us to remind ourselves of some basic Christian disciplines and that is if you’re hurting can you stop and cry out for help. Don’t just keep on plowing through life. Don’t be stoic drop to your knees and spend some extra time talking to your heavenly father who promises to have his eyes and ears attentive to you. So critical. You know what a battle this is for Christians. I mean if you don’t identify with it yet in your own life you will it will always be attacked.

My brother and I used to play with those little green plastic army men. Remember those? Those are enduring. My kids played with those. My brother and I years and years ago played with those, kind of the blue collar chess set you know. So we’d set those up and we’d go to war against each other. And we had all kinds of ways, we’d flick the guys over, shoot them with rubber bands or whatever to simulate the warfare. Well my older brother I remember he would always go after the little green guy who sat on one knee with a backpack and the little antenna off of him. Remember that guy? And I use to think what, why do you do that? I’ve got guys with guns pointed at you right now. Why are you doing that? I remember one day he explained it to me. He said you know if I take out that guy that’s the communication to the head quarters and if I take him out you can’t call for reinforcements. You can’t grab the bag and grab more guys I guess was the rule. But the point is taking your communications out. That’s what Satan wants to do to you. It’s what he’s done successfully to a lot of you in this room. He did it to a lot of folks in the bible.

How about this guy, King Asa. Remember him? A-S-A King Asa, we’ve been reading about him. We read about him this week in our annual bible reading, if you’ve been reading through the bible with us. Turn to that passage and realize that here’s a guy, this is 2 Chronicles 16 it wasn’t a test I meant to give you the reference, we read about King Asa who by the way was described as a righteous king. I mean he might be described like the Psalm 34 guy here. He’s righteous and God’s eyes and ears were toward him and like you and I he was in that privileged position of having a path of life that seemed to reflect the redeemed regenerate kind of new person who’s following Yahweh and the guy I mean his resume looks really good. But until chapter 16 when Satan was able to take out the communications of King Asa with his God. 2 Chronicles 16 verse number 7 the preacher steps on the scene he’s called a seer that the prophet the guy who’d always speak the eternal truths to these folks. Hannani was his name. Hannani in verse number 7 comes to King Asa and he says this. Hannani the seer came to King Asa of Judah and he said to him, “Because you relied on the king of Syria, and you did not rely on Yahweh your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you.” That battle that foe that you were at temporary peace with is now going to war against you and it’s going to be a problem. Here’s some background, I should have done this first I guess. Baasha the King of the North, twelve tribes in Israel ten to the north two to the south, the Chronicles take the southern focus and look at those kings because that was the line of David and the line of Christ. Asa righteous king in that line. He’s dealing with Baasha the king of the north and he had pulled up troops on the northern border of Judah and he was going to attack the south and Asa was concerned. This was a big work problem, big national political military problem and he was scared and he was in trouble and he was led to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he was surrounded by “enemies”, he was in trouble, he needed to call out to God. But instead he picked up the phone so to speak and he calls the King of Damascus Ben-Hadad and he says to Ben-Hadad, “Hey I’ve just sent some silver and gold over to you and I know you’ve got a peace treaty with the Northern King of Baasha but can you break that treaty and we’ll just kind of go in together and I’ll support you and I’ll be up for you and I’ll kind of support some of your military endeavors and you can go in and attack the Northern tribes? Break the treaty and then don’t go after us.” He turned to fix the problem, he did not turn to call out to God, just painful now because in verse number 8 Hannani the preacher is going to say, “Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hands.” You had success there, why? Because when you were in trouble you called out to God and God gave you solutions and it worked out just the way He wanted it to. But here’s the problem you’re not calling out to God, you’re not relying on God you’re trying to solve the problem

without prayer without looking to God, without crying to God and now you've blown it. And he brings up this truth of Psalm 34 when he says in verse number 9, a verse that's often quoted out of context, here it is. He says, you know for the eyes of Yahweh they run to and fro through out the whole earth. Not that He has eyeballs, his attention, he's constantly looking to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him. The one who is ready to say I trust you, that's the idiom there. But you've done foolish in this. You didn't trust God, He was ready to support you. His eyes and face and ears were toward you but you didn't call out to Him. You made a treaty with Ben-Hadad and you tried to fix this without ever relying on God. You didn't pray about it, you didn't seek God so from now on you're going to have wars. It did not end well for him. And often it doesn't end well for the preacher that brings him the news verse number 10. I hate to read this to you, but Asa was very angry with the seer and put him in stocks and in prison. Got to say that, I'm the preacher and they always blame the preacher for these things.

Sends him a nasty e-mail or whatever he does, but he's mad at the delivery boy who comes and says you didn't trust God. You didn't pray, you didn't seek God. And it wasn't just with the big national issues maybe you're thinking I can't relate to that. You can if you try to make some connections to the problems you face in your life, but I know we can all relate to the last problem of Asa's life it was sickness and disease. Drop down to verse number 12. Same paradigm from one little word here in our English text, look at verse 12. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa, and again remember this guy is described as righteous, he's insync with God, I mean every thing seems to be right problem is he didn't avail himself to this reliance in prayer and turning to God. He was diseased in his feet. Thirty ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet and his disease became severe. Translation it hurt, he was in pain, he was suffering this was hard, yet, there's the word that points back to the Ben-Hadad treaty yet even in his disease, not just his treaties and work problems, but even in his health he did not seek Yahweh but he sought the help of the physicians. And what happened? Asa slept with his fathers, dying in the forty-first year of his reign. Died. Now is God against the physicians? No. Is He against diplomacy with other nations to fix problems when you're having problems with other nations? No, He's not against that. We see him guiding his kings that way and of course he's into physicians, I mean Paul traveled with one, right? Dr. Luke. I mean He's not against any of that He directs Timothy to get medicinal help when he has physical problems but the point is that's all secondary. And for us it's usually primary when we're like Asa. We have a God who saying I'm ready to help you. And we say, "oh quick, you got an ailment let's call the doctor, let's figure this out. Let's try and solve the problem. You know what God wants you to do first? Stop and get some help. What kinds of help? Spiritual help from your heavenly father from a God who says I want to hear your cry. I want to hear your prayer, I'm near to he broken hearted. Can you not pick up the phone call the person, call the doctor, get the remedy, buy the medicine? Can you start by talking to God? I'm all about you doing to the doctor, and I'm all about you solving problems at work with diplomacy but lets seek the Lord first and the pain should be a prompt to prayer. It is through out the scripture.

It's the assumption of our passage in Romans 8 the topic is prayer the context is suffering. When you're suffering you're going to pray. He assumes that but the teaching of the passage is you're prayers are always going to be inadequate. But there is a solution and God has solved the problem. But let's take that in back to verse 26 of Romans 8 can you follow me back there real quickly. Romans 8:26, likewise the Spirit helps our weakness. And one of our weaknesses including all the other problems in our lives and in the world, is that we do not, look at this, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought. And then he talks about how God takes care of that. But let's talk about that for a second. I mean he assumes we're going to be praying and now he's going to teach us you need to know that your praying is always going to be inadequate there are things about your praying specifically you don't always know exactly what you should be praying for and it doesn't even say it with all those qualifiers. It says we don't know what to pray for as we ought. I mean sometimes maybe we get close but we really don't know what we should be praying for. There are a number of blind spots let's put it all under the rubric or the umbrella of this that you and I need to concede or admit, number 2 on your outline, our praying blind spots.

2. Concede Our Praying Blind Spots

You've got some and you need to know that. And the scripture says right here you've got some. You don't know what to pray for as you ought. And you know why you don't know what to pray for as you ought? Because you don't know some very important things in the equation that you need to know if you were going to pray accurately according to the will of God. You don't know those things. You know what we know? I know what you know. Here's what you know for sure when you're hurting. You know how you feel, am I right? You know exactly how you feel. And we usually use that as a prompt for our prayer. Matters of fact we shape our prayer request based on how we feel. And when something hurts what do you do? You pray that God will take the hurt away. That just makes sense. Makes a lot of sense but we have at least 3 blind spots. Let's start with one of them and phrase it in light of verse 27. Verse 27 the solution and we'll look at this in more detail in a minute. But it says, because the Spirit, here's the good news, he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. What ever the Spirit is praying, He's praying according to the will of God. We're praying apparently in verse 26 ah not always. We're praying for things that are not what we ought to be praying for a lot of the time. We do not know what to pray for as we ought. So let's put it this way letter A if you're going to put some sub points down here's one of your blind spots. You don't always see the will of God.

A. You don't always see the will of God

You don't know it. You don't see what it is. No matter how much we want to think we know what the will of God is for our lives specifically we don't always know what it is. We got the general principles and parameters of scripture but when it comes to an issue in your life, let's talk about the painful issues of your life. And you say, well I know what I'm feeling and so I want that to go away and I'm going to pray that it goes away. Here's the reality and it shouldn't be a news flash but new flash because we've been talking about it all through Romans 8. Sometimes the pain is a part of God's will for your life. Sometimes the pain is a part of God's will for your life. Therefore when you ask God to remove the pain you're asking for something that is contrary to the will of God, you see that right? If you say God when I feel pain take it away sometimes, not every time, that pain is there for a very specific reason and you asking for God to take it away is not praying for what you ought to be praying for. And that's why we have one big blind spot in our lives, I don't know if this should go away or should stay and it's going to change the way we pray.

But let me give you one biblical example, 2 Corinthians chapter 12. This is classic some of you already thought of it just by the way I described that scenario and you thought of the Apostle Paul. Here's a guy by the way I'm thinking he writes most of the New Testament, a good part of the New Testament at least, and I'm thinking to myself if there's a guy I want to pray for me, I want Paul to pray for me he's super insightful, God is using him to write down the God breathed words of the new covenant. I'm thinking for myself, hey he'll know what to pray for. Let's go to Pastor Paul and he'll help me. Problem is he doesn't even pray according to the will of God all the time. Here's an example of him praying, Paul the apostle, contrary to the will of God. Until unlike many of us he resigns himself to the will of God which includes pain remaining in his life. Drop down to verse 7, 7 through 10. Let's look at these verses. He's going to explain the reason why he's no longer praying for this pain to go away. So to keep me, he's looking back on this whole incident of praying for things contrary to the will of God. So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, and he just explained how he's getting all kinds of insight that no one else has he says, well I could really sit there big on myself in terms of how great I am. He says there was a thorn given to me in the flesh. Now that's obviously a poetic way to talk about something in his body that hurts because if it's a thorn I'm thinking Timothy can hand him a tweezers and get it out. It's not a thorn. This is some description of some painful physical malady ailment in his life. A messenger of Satan, look at the rest of this phrase, to harass me. Let's just stop right there. If I say to you, hey I got a bad physical problem and you know what its Satan harassing me. Can you pray for me? What are you going to pray? You're going to pray, unless you hate me, you're going to pray what? God take it away, right? That's what you're going to pray. You guys with me? You're going to pray

for that, because that's what I'm going to pray for you. Yeah, take the pain away, especially if it's a satanic harassment in some kind of pain and disease, take it out, take it out. Next verse, I know I'm skipping a phrase but go to verse 8. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. Okay, now he's just told us it's there for a reason. He's told us it's there to govern his attitude. He told us it's there for a very specific purpose and God had willed it to be even though it was a messenger of Satan to harass him in a physical disease that isn't a good thing, it's a bad thing. And I'm thinking to myself, wow you prayed three times for it to go away then you stopped and I'm thinking we pray about 93 times before we ever get the idea that hey maybe this is God's will for my life. But do you recognize the thorn in his flesh was God's will for his life? And the next phrase he says this, that God says he gets this message its clear, my grace is sufficient for you, my power is perfected in weakness therefore I'll boast all the more Paul says more gladly about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest on me. I don't want to lose the privilege of that revelation from God therefore I'm happy to have this if that's a governor and it's God's will and it does something to keep me in check I'm all about it. Therefore, verse 10, for the sake of Christ I am content, there's 3 good words to underline, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities if, context, they're God's will for my life. For when I'm weak, I'm strong. If they're sent by God for a purpose to develop something right in my life or to govern something in my life then I'm happy with that I'll be content with that. Do you see how counter intuitive that is? Do you see where Paul prays for something that all of us would pray for and he gets to a place where he recognizes I'm praying contrary to the will of God about this thing?

I hope we can personalize all of this, I certainly can. I have bad Monday headaches, bad migraine headaches on Mondays. I've suffered with those for years. And every time I mention that in any context and even in this one I'm sure I'll get e-mails. Everyone is going to send me remedies. Here's the remedy, here's what will fix it, don't do this, don't eat that, eat this, don't drink this, take this vitamin. They're going to tell me all these things that'll fix it, I got this injection. I've tried a bunch of that and here's the thing I've turn to God and asked Him to take them away. God I don't want these headaches anymore, but He hasn't. As a matter of fact I'm so absolutely sure I know what exactly causes these headaches. You know what causes these headaches? This, ha ha ha. It does. Now, I know you think I'm gone a lot because I'm on a beach lying around somewhere but I'm usually preaching when I'm not here in the pulpit on Sunday. I'm usually somewhere else preaching but there are a few Sundays out of the year when I don't preach. You can ask my wife about this. Guess what I don't get on Mondays when I don't preach on Sundays? I don't get a headache. The headaches go away. So I know what solves it. I don't need your exercise or your Pilates or your vitamins or your don't eat the food coloring, whatever you're going to tell me to do. I'm telling you I know what causes my migrate headaches and you know what, this may sound really counter intuitive, but I am content with those because I am convinced after asking God 93 times to take them away that they're a part of God's lot for me in my life and that doesn't sit well with most 21st century evangelical people who sit around and think if it hurts God should take it away. And I'm saying No so don't send me your remedies, I don't want them. I won't read those e-mails because I realize this it is God's will for my life. Oh, I want to manage through them I want to keep a good attitude through them but it's just a part of my lot.

Are there things in your life where you've matured past the little griping toddler spirit, you know spiritual toddler who says to God, it hurts take it away, take it away? There comes a point where you're going to have to recognize pain is often a part of God's will for your life and at some point your going to realize your praying needs to adjust because you really don't know how to pray as you ought because number 1 can't see your letter A, you can't always see the will of God. The other thing you can't see, jot this one down, you can't see the spiritual battles that surround your life.

B. You can't see the spiritual battles that surround your life.

This is going to sound freaky but it's very biblical. You can't see the spiritual battles that surround your life. You can't see that. Once you jot that down or something that looks like that, turn to

Luke 22 and let me give you a classic example of this, Luke 22. You've got some blind spots first one is you can't see the will of God. Second one is you can't see the spiritual battles. Here's a great examples of two guys praying for two different things. Peter, drop all the way down to verse 31. Luke 22:31-34 Now I don't know what Peter woke up praying for that day, maybe he was praying for a really cool summer of ministry with Jesus or that he'd have a great round of golf. I don't know praying, he had some prayers and he was praying those I'm sure as a godly young Jewish guy. And the problem is he couldn't see the spiritual battle that Jesus was about to inform him of and here what Jesus was praying for. First He gives him some enlightenment in verse 31, Simon, Simon, that's the other name for Peter, behold Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat. Whatever that means but it doesn't sound good. Sounds painful, sounds like I don't want to have that, I'm not interested in that. Satan wants me?!? And he wants to sift me like wheat? But, verse 32, I have prayed for you, Jesus says, talk about some good intercession that you're going to want. I've been praying very specifically that your faith may not fail and that when you've turned again, assuming He's talking about what He's about to say in verse 34, this whole Caiaphas denial thing. He says, "then strengthen your brothers", which I'm assuming then is the John 21 he goes back takes the reigns of the church at Jerusalem after his restoration and reinstatement in John 21. He goes back and does the thing; he does exactly what Jesus prayed for. Peter says verse 33, I don't know what you're talking about you didn't need to pray for that because Lord I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death it doesn't matter I'm totally locked on. See he's praying I'm sure for a whole different set of things. Jesus is praying I know the spiritual battle you can't see it but you've got the head the arch-rival, arch absolute antithesis of God's goodness. You've got the most evil being in the universe that wants you personally get you kind of back in the back alley and he wants to pummel you. But I've been praying for you that you'll get through this. Jesus says, "I tell you Peter the rooster will not crow this day", verse 34, "till you deny me three times". You're about to go into the grinder but I'm praying for you because you're going to go through this, and I'm going to make sure that in my prayers I'm praying you'll get through it, you get back on track, you get on the beam, you become the senior pastor at the church of Jerusalem and you win a lot of people to Christ. And that's exactly what happens.

I wonder what you're praying for in your life this week. You got a list? Maybe you're praying for a real cool summer of ministry. You're praying for some things in your family. But the good news and I don't want to get too far ahead but the Holy Spirit is praying for the right things because He knows the spiritual battle. It's kind of like Job, what's Job praying for? A great banquet with his sons and daughters and yet there's some thing going on in heaven where there's this whole debate about how they're going to take away his wealth and his health and his family members by death. And Job knows nothing about it. I know who did know about it, the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit was interceding for Job that he might survive. See what I'm saying? Job woke up not praying for any of that. What are you praying for this summer? I'm telling you we don't know how to pray as we ought. And we better be real thankful that we have an intercessor who is praying for us. We're blind to the will of God. We sometimes see it partially, we don't see it perfectly. We're blind to the spiritual battles. Let me give you one more thing you're blind to. You're blind to the future.

C. You're blind to the future.

You can't see it. I don't care if you're Jean Dixon, Nostradamus, you don't know what's going to happen. All you can do is guess. Jot this one down we won't take time to turn there but James 4 verses 13 through 16. James chapter 4 verses 13 through 16. And it says very clearly come now you who say today or tomorrow we'll go to such and such a town we'll spend a year there trade and make a profit yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. For what is your life it's but a vapor. Here today for a little time and then it vanishes instead you ought to say if the Lord wills we will live and do this or that but as it is you boast, boast you're just making plans, you boast you're presumptuous before God. You boast in your arrogance and all such boasting is evil. You recognize when we don't pray conceding and admitting our blind spots even our praying is evil. Think about that. Because we presume upon the will of God, we presume upon the spiritual

safety that we may or may not have at the present time and we presume upon the future. You can't know that. Can your prayers be much more humble when we approach almighty God and say I'm hurting I'm not sure exactly what should happen here but here's what I'm. Let's just ratchet it all back just a notch or two with the kind of presumption I find so often among modern Christians who think they know exactly what's best for their lives, exactly what ought to happen in the future. Talk to any 60, 70 year Christian among us who know what it's like to walk with God for a few decades and talk to the 20 year old Christians in the room who think they got it figured out how God's going to lead their lives. Talk to the 70 year olds and they'll tell you it ain't going to go anyway you think it's going to go. You just can't presume on the future. Very rarely does your life work out the way you think it's going to even as you walk in step with God. You must pray in a whole different way.

Let's go back to our text and see how these truths of the Holy Spirit's intercession might lead is to put some nomenclature some verbiage to this. Romans chapter 8 verse 26. Here's the whole gist of the passage, its good news. The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we don't know how to pray as we ought to pray, we don't know what to pray for as we ought but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words and he who searches hearts, that's God, he knows what the mind of the Spirit is. He knows that because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And while you may be praying for the wrong thing here's the good news in the passage the Holy Spirit is praying for the right thing. That gives me this very bizarre paradoxical set of feelings when I pray. Everything I've said so far about the inadequacy of my praying brings this kind of humility this flexibility this pliability to my life when I pray and the rest of what God says He does for me as I pray, as the Spirit prays in my stead brings a great deal of resilience and confidence and security to my life. So let's put those paradoxical words together, let's pick two, I picked them I'm the preacher and let's write these down if you would. Number 3 let's pray with confident flexibility.

3. Pray With Confident Flexibility

How's that for a paradox? Let us pray from now on with more of a confident flexibility. Let's start with the last word and it's already obvious now but James told us that. James 4, what did it say? You ought to say if the Lord wills. Isn't that how Jesus taught us to pray? Matthew chapter 6, he taught his disciples how to pray. Our Father who art in heaven hallow be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. That's a deference which at the end of the book, Matthew 26, what does he say, he's in the garden and he prays. I would like this cup to pass from me because it's painful that's what my feelings would want because it's bad but not my will but your be done that's how Jesus is laying down a pattern and a template for us that we need to have a deference a humility a flexibility in our praying. Can I give you one example of this please 2 Samuel 15. David knew what it was like to approach God with a great deal of flexibility. It's almost to most of us moderns it's pathetic.

It's like the complaints I've heard before about myself and the other pastors here, people I guess coming from you know more presumptuous you know flocks and pastors it's like your loved one, your family member gets stricken with some disease and you call the church and we come over. One of the pastors come over and we pray at the hospital. And you want us to pray I guess is like, in the name of the Lord Jesus go away illness, God heal them now. That's what you want to hear. Instead you hear this which sounds very pathetic to you. Which is everything we've been teaching on this morning. God we hate sickness, it's a bad thing, we're not sure why you've done this, we're not sure even if you're going to return this person to health or even life. This is where you're going I want my offering back. This is bad pastoring. But God if it's your will we'd like this person to get better. And you're going I need better pastors than this. You need to understand this, that's exactly how we should be praying. I don't know why your spouse has the disease they have. I don't have any insight into that. All I know is that you and I need to recognize that the sovereign giver of life, He may be taking life right now. I don't know. But if He gives and He takes then blessed be the name of the Lord. I'm not sure I would certainly like pain to be relieved and I'm all for pleasure and health over sickness and death but I don't know. I want to be able to

say thy will be done. I want to be able to say, if the Lord wills. I want to be able to say that because that's biblical, that's flexible. And to some people that's pathetic. And some people are going to read this and think well this is pathetic. It's exactly the way godly people ought to always pray in light of the sovereign overarching authority of God almighty.

Take a look at it 2 Samuel 15. David, talk about a painful season of his life, his son Absalom, thanks son, he forced a coup detat on his dad. And it's insidious, it's awful you know the story Sunday school grads. Here he sits at the gate and gets everybody's heart won over. If I were the king, if I were the king, David, I don't know he's too busy for you. And so everybody's heart goes to Absalom. And the foisted coup detat it starts to succeed. No, it seems to be a raging success and David is now he's forced out of Jerusalem, the capital city. And of course he gets his priests together, his cabinet and staff and he starting to leave and they're taking the Ark of the Covenant out thinking well I guess we take the ark. And David realizes the winning team now is Absalom the losing team now is David and he's going oh boy and he turns to Zadok the priest, look at this drop down to verse 25, 2 Samuel 15:25, and King David says to Zadok, "hey, come on now carry the ark of God back into the city. Take it back." He says, "because if I find favor in the eyes of Yahweh He will bring me back and let me see both it and his dwelling place." I'll see the temple and I'll see the ark. But if, this is another if we don't like that seems weak, but if he says, "I have no pleasure in you then behold here I am, on my way out to the desert I'm fine I'm leaving just as it seems I should, then let Him do whatever seems good to Him."

That's a great phrase; let Him do to me whatever seems good to Him. I can hardly find a phrase that seems so far removed from most books I read on prayer today. But that's the place where we need to live and you may be saying well that's about stuff David can't control. I'm all about that I see that here. Absalom has really been successful in the overthrow of David's kingdom but look at the next chapter. Here's something he could control. And because of his deference and his flexibility in the request that he makes to God he does things that just seem like I can't even believe he just did that. Here's the setting, 2 Samuel 16, he's leaving town and a guy named Shimei, a jerk named Shimei, who was related to Saul his predecessor who hated him anyway is throwing rocks and dirt clods and cursing at David as he leaves the city. It's already a bad day for David and now Shimei is chucking rocks at him going you loser and off he goes. Verse 9, then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Why should Shimei be cursing my lord the king? Hey let me go over and take off his head." Got to like that, got to have a guy on your staff like that. That's great. And I'm thinking to myself, why not? Shouldn't be saying that. That's not what King David says, verse 10, but the king said, you've got problems with the sons of Zeruiah they're like the sons of thunder of the Old Testament. "What do I have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because Yahweh has said to him 'Curse David' then who shall say, "Why have you done so?" I mean if this is God is providential smack in the eye to me because God hasn't found pleasure in my leadership and I'm done. Well then who am I to stop that? That's your leader? Yes that's a leader who is deferential and flexible when he brings requests to God because he sees himself submissively under the sovereign authority of the God of the universe. Can we live a little bit more like David and a little less like the name it claim it people in our culture? Time for us to respect that sometimes in our lives the pain is a part of God's plan and we need to be flexible. And let us be sure that when our heart is crying out to pray whatever we're praying we've got the better prayer in our life the Holy Spirit praying the right things for us.

Look at our text again; it's printed on your worksheet. The Spirit is helping our weakness because He's interceding for us; He's praying and asking God with groanings too deep for words. That's a paradigm that's we've seen through out our text. We've seen that creation is groaning, waiting for what? This liberation that is going to come to creation this freedom from bondage and corruption in the kingdom when the curse is removed and the Sons of God are revealed. And then it says we're groaning waiting for that day the redemption of our bodies we want the world that's upside down to be turned right side up and our bodies that are messed up to be made right. And we want God to bring this on at the great eschaton at the end of time. Now he says the Holy Spirit is passionately wanting the same thing. He's groaning. I mean you want to talk about

groaning, no one wants it more than the Spirit. You think creation wants it, you think you want it, the Spirit wants it so badly that He wants to work out in our lives exactly what God wants. And sometimes the path of God's will as it says, He searches God the Father searches the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Clearly it's going to be a longer road than we want it to be. Clearly the path is going to take some left turns we didn't want it to take but He knows the will of God and He is going to pray exactly as He should pray on our behalf with passion because He desperately wants the long term good and the right things for us. Which leads us into the great passage that we'll talk about next week, verse 28, because we know that for those who love God all things work together for the good. Are you recognizing that there's a God who's looking out for you in the third person of the Godhead? If that sounds weird to you and I know it's weird the trinity of God but here the Spirit of God just like Jesus the incarnate God was praying for Peter, the Spirit of God is in you praying to God the Father who knows perfectly the will of God and God knows the request of the Spirit and there's this great advocacy going on for your life right now. So we need to pray with a great deal of confidence, we can rest in that.

With groanings too deep for words and by the way this is a proof text for so many people about the modern misnomer of tongues the whole ecstatic unintelligible utterance. And if you've been brought up in that I added a little thing for you to get mad at me over lunch on. My observations on the biblical gift of tongues verses the modern expression of that. And you can wrestle with that or disagree with it later this afternoon but the point is it's the Spirit. The word groaning is used in the paradigm of this great desire, this eager waiting, this wanting the best, the long term good, too deep for words even if it was groaning that were audible which creation is said to be groaning and we can't hear it. And you groan and often times that's not with sound but if the Spirit himself is doing it, he's doing for the Father and interceding on our behalf. Should be giving us a great deal of confidence. We may feel helpless in our flexible praying because we don't know the will of God but you can be confident that you know that in you is someone who does.

Reminds me of what most of us dads have done at one point of another much to the chagrin of many moms. But when we sit in the driver's seat of our cars, in my case my truck, there's been those times when my kids were little toddlers that you just can't help but slide them into your lap and let them grab the steering wheel, right? We've done that. Moms may do that in the parking space but we dads like to take them out. Not out in the street but in a big parking lots and let them drive. And they love it, don't they? I mean it's just, YEAH!!! And they start doing this you know and they start working that and Moms of course think we're going to crash and burn in a fiery wreck it's going to be awful. But us Dads tell Moms to chill out, why? Because we know, I mean we got the pedals, right? And not only that, the kid doesn't always see this but my hands are on the bottom of the steering wheel, right? They don't get that, matter of fact when they're staring to steer me into my office, I'm pushing the break. I've got full control here. Now my kid feels like he's in control but I'm really taking care of this. And when they start turning into the flower bed my hands are down on the wheel pulling it back. They're not sure why it doesn't all go over there but I'm taking care of things, you getting the picture here? You and I are praying every day, God fix this, do that, we'd like this, don't stop praying and crying out to God just because things don't steer the direction you want them to steer. Just know that there is a sovereign God who's third person of this trinity is in you steering and directing every request to the sovereign God of the universe directing your life. That may sound mind blowing for people that are so focused on the myopic things like our will, our validity, our decisions and all the paradoxes of all that. I get the problems with it all, but the bible is clear that he who began a good work in us will bring it on to completion till the day of Christ Jesus, Philippians 1:6. That God for those who love Him, are working out everything for their good. Ephesians 1, He's doing everything and working out everything after the council of his will. Philippians 2 that He is in us both to work and to will for His good pleasure. Should I go on? I could go on. God is at work in you and He's directing. There's mystery in that, we'll get into that, trust me chapter 9, wait till we get to chapter 9. We're going to get into this mystery but the point is that you and I can be confident and we're not steering this thing by ourselves.

It's good for us to end our time together this morning with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Because in many ways it is just a foundational truth that we respond to the same way we responding to this truth today. Think about this, we are saying according to 1 Corinthians 11 that when we take these elements, we eat the bread we drink the cup, we are proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes. What we're saying is we are trusting in what Christ did. I mean if you talk to a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu talk to whoever you want any world religion they have no mechanism for the salvation of their souls other than their own trying. We're trusting in the death of Christ. My sin on His cross, his righteousness imputed to my account. I am right because He died for me. And we're saying we trust Him. Our transfer of trust in the most foundational, fundamental and important way in all of Christianity is my sins are forgiven because of what He did for us, I'm trusting in Him, that's why faith is such a big word in the bible. I trust Him not myself. Now if that's true for eternity can we see the germane connection to today's topic? Are you trusting Him for your diagnosis? Are you trusting Him for your joblessness? Are you trusting Him for all the things ache your heart and life and make you cry out to God? Can you transfer trust? Can you not be Asa and say well let me solve this one I'll work on this and maybe I'll sprinkle a few prayers along the way. No I'm talking about getting on your knees before God and crying out to the Psalm 34 attentive God. Trust Him. Recognize His governance in your life. If we trust Him for eternity let's trust Him for everything else that's all I'm saying. Now I don't want to assume that everyone here is regenerate because I know there are always people in the church that aren't. And some of you are praying prayers and there's no hands on the bottom steering wheel, know what I'm saying? But those of you who are regenerate the Spirit of God dwells in you, you got to know not only do we have heaven settled because of Christ but the period between here and there we've got the Helper the Paraklatos the one who's going to come and intercede for us every day, every week, every month and every year until we get there. That's a great great picture of the triune God, given to us in the scriptures. God is for us, He paid it all, He's covered it all, He's dealt with it all for entrance into heaven and life here and now. It's a good truth. Of course most critical is our destiny, eternity. And that's why we celebrate the Lord's Supper by remembering the body and the blood of Christ that was spilt on our behalf. As a reminder let us with great thanksgiving eat this bread and drink this cup. Pray with me.

God, it's good for us to remember this amazing truth and that we as sinful fallen creatures worthy of nothing but your judgment, instead have you orchestrate this amazing plan for the second person of the Godhead would come and live among us. Live a righteous life that we didn't live, die the death we should have died and stand right now today as our advocate in heaven. And then send the third person of the Godhead to dwell in each of us who have repented of our sins and put our trust in Christ and we have within us now someone praying and advocating and interceding on our behalf. And because of His sovereign work in our lives we can be sure as we crescendo into that great statement next week for those who love God and are called according to His purpose we have in our lives this confidence that everything is going to work out ultimately for the good that God has planned that ultimate glorification that redemption of our lives that finishing of our adoption in that tapestry of this very mysterious divine mystery of providence and responsibility we're going to stand and look back and see how the Spirit had steered our lives from beginning to end. God we're so thankful for that we pretend to understand every aspect of that mystery but we are grateful God for the security that we find in knowing that our debt has been settled and the pathway through this valley of the shadow of death has been provided for us in the work and ministry and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Thanks for His advocacy, His eagerness to stand as our intercessor. God we love you for this morning it's been a good time for us to recall these biblical truths. Let them enrich our hearts and our lives and I pray it would feed us deep in our soul and that this week we can live for you with a kind of passion and a security that makes us sing lyrics like the one we're about to finish with here with real sincerity, with a heartfelt kind of connection between our head and our mouths. God receive our praise one more time together as a church right here before we leave in Jesus name. Amen.