

THAT WE MIGHT BEAR FRUIT FOR GOD

Lesson 9

God's all inclusive provisions for the spiritual well being of human beings. (Romans 8:26-30).

By F. M, Perry

“(26) And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; (27) and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (28) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; (30) and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”
(Romans 8:26-30 NASV).

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God's all inclusive provisions for the spiritual well being of human beings. (Romans 8:26-30).

Questions for study:

1. How does the Holy Spirit assist in the Christian's communication with God the Father? (Romans 8:26).
2. The word "spirit" as used three times in Romans 8:26-27 is capitalized each time in most translations to indicate the translator's opinion that the translation, "Holy Spirit," is intended. However, the word "spirit" is not capitalized in the original Greek language of the New Testament. Only the context can determine whether the word "spirit" means the Holy Spirit of God or the human spirit of man. Considering the fact that the passage in Romans 8:26-27 discusses the communication of human "saints" with God the Father, both the Holy Spirit and the human spirit are involved, are they not? Does the phrase "mind of the Spirit" in Romans 8:27 refer to the mind of the human spirit of saints or to the mind of the Holy Spirit of God?
3. Why is the Holy Spirit's intercession with God the Father guaranteed to be effective? (Romans 8:27).
4. What are the limits of God's influence in the earthly lives of Christians? Can any bad occurrence in the world thwart the purpose of God in the life of a Christian? What influence does the Christian himself have in the fulfillment of God's purpose in his life? (Romans 8:28).
5. What is the tense of the verbs describing the Holy Spirit's actions of "helping," "interceding," and "searching," and God's action of "causing" in Romans 8:26-28? What is the implication of having these verbs in this tense for the lives of Christians past, present, and future?

6. What is the tense of the verbs describing God's actions of "foreknowing," "predestining," "conforming," "calling," "justifying," and "glorifying" in Romans 8: 29-30? What is the implication of having these verbs in this tense for the lives of Christians past, present, and future?

7. Who are the Son's "many brethren?" List the ways in which the "Son" was "firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 5:6; 8:14, 19, 29; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

8. Explain how Jesus became the "firstborn among many brethren" when some of the "brethren" lived and were reckoned as "sons of God" in the patriarchal and Jewish Dispensations before Jesus was born as a human being."

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Questions for study.

1. How does the Holy Spirit assist in the Christian's communication with God the Father? (Romans 8:26).

Concerning prayer as communication with God, Romans 8:26 reminds us that we don't know how to pray as we should. Then the Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit helps our weakness in the matter of prayer by interceding for us with groanings too deep for words.

This statement about the Holy Spirit's assistance to us in prayer is in the context of the Holy Spirit's indwelling of us as a "first fruits" gift from God. (Romans 8:23). The Holy Spirit dwells specifically in the temple of our body and is united with our personal spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:17-20). The Holy Spirit bears witness with our personal spirit that we are children of God. (Romans 8:16). "Thus, we might say that the Holy Spirit validates the authenticity of whom our spirits claim us to be (children of God), and our right to approach God in prayer.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit helps our weakness when we attempt to approach God in prayer. What is our weakness? Specifically mentioned as a weakness is a truth that may come as a surprise revelation to us. That truth is that we don't know how to pray as we should! Specifically, what is it that we don't know?

Are we not precocious indeed to think that we can merely pause in the midst of our mundane worldly activities to address the almighty God and expect Him to hear us? Perhaps we are precocious even to ask the question, what is it that we don't know? Our ability to express subtle thoughts to God is limited by the boundaries of language. And we have no conscious experience whatever in the spiritual realm where God is. Undoubtedly there are a countless number of things that we do not know

and could not understand even if they were revealed to us now.

Do you remember Paul's account of his experience in the spiritual realm? "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows--was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak." (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Indeed, with the limitations on our ability to communicate with God in the spiritual realm, our meager words of prayer become mere heavenward sighs. How thankful we should be that the Holy Spirit can express the real yearnings of our souls in heavenly language to God.

And another thing. Although the Cross of Christ has dealt with all our weaknesses, we are still confined physically in "dead" flesh as members of the "Adam sinner" family. Although God's grace continuously deals with our sins, we still sin. And we almost continuously are "touching the dead bodies" of the worldly activities around us. We must not attempt to actually enter into God's Holy Temple as we are, for we are "unclean."

And there is an "Accuser in the spiritual realm who is "against us," who "brings charges against us" because of our sins. What chance would we have to "get through" to God in our weak and unclean condition? Praise God! When we pray, the Holy Spirit of God's Son and of God the Father "helps our weakness" and "intercedes for us with groaning to deep for words." Indeed, "if God is for us, who can be against us!"

2. The word "spirit" as used three times in Romans 8:26-27 is capitalized each time in most translations to indicate the translator's opinion that the translation, "Holy Spirit," is intended. However, the word "spirit" is not capitalized in the original Greek language of the New Testament. Only the context can determine whether the word "spirit" means the Holy Spirit of God or the human spirit of man. Considering the fact that the passage in Romans 8:26-27 discusses the communication of human "saints" with God the Father, both the Holy

Spirit and the human spirit are involved, are they not? Does the phrase "mind of the Spirit" in Romans 8:27 refer to the mind of the human spirit of saints or to the mind of the Holy Spirit of God?

Most translations of the Bible capitalize the word "spirit" in the phrase "mind of the Spirit," (Romans 8: 27) indicating the decision of the translators that the word "spirit" means the Holy Spirit of God. However, this writer thinks that it is possible that the word "spirit" used in the phrase "mind of the spirit" refers to the human spirit of the saints and not the Holy Spirit.

In verses 26 and 27 Paul wrote primarily of the unique work of the Holy Spirit in His indwelling relationship with saints. There is no question that verses 26 and 27 indicate that it is the Holy Spirit who "helps our weakness" and "intercedes" for us." And it is only reasonable to understand that it is the Holy Spirit "who searches" hearts and "knows" minds. But in the statement "He (the Holy Spirit) ... knows what the mind of the spirit is," to whose "mind of the spirit" does the statement refer? To me it is most reasonable to understand that the reference is to the mind and spirit of the one being assisted, not the mind of the Holy Spirit who is doing the assisting.

Perhaps it might be thought by some that the Holy Spirit of God found it necessary to state at this point that He knows what His own mind is in order to show His knowledge of the "will of God." Or perhaps it might be thought that the Holy Spirit intercedes according to the will of God because He knows what His own mind is. But neither of these possible interpretations of the original language seem reasonable to me.

But it is reasonable to me that the passage be translated, "and He who searches the hearts (of saints) knows what the mind of the spirit (of saints) is, because He intercedes for the saints according the will of God." The context of the passage seems to indicate that we should not capitalize the word "spirit" because it probably refers to the personal spirit of the saints.

If this is the right interpretation of the rather complicated sentence of

verses 26 and 27, then let us note that we have, in one sentence, reference to three parts of a Christian human being: heart, mind, and personal spirit. The usage of these three part in this passage confirms the meanings and functions of the parts as have been revealed to us in other contextual studies of their meanings and functions in other passages of the Bible.

The term "heart" most likely refers to the "inner man" or entire spiritual make up of a Christian, that is, the soul and the spirit of a Christian. We understand then that, when the Holy Spirit of God "searches the hearts," He searches all that pertains to the soul and spirit of a Christian.

The term "spirit" in the phrase "mind of the spirit" reasonably refers to the personal spirit of the Christian. The "spirit" is specifically mentioned because the term "mind" is identified in this case specifically with the "spirit." It is the personal "spirit" of the Christian which is united as one with the indwelling Holy Spirit and has the special function of communicating the Christian's prayer to God's Holy Spirit. Remember the injunction that we are to "pray with the (personal) spirit." (1 Corinthians 14: 15).

In looking up the original meaning of the word "mind" used in verse 27, the Greek word PHRONEMA, which means "inclination," is translated "mind" in the phrase "mind of the spirit" in Romans 8: 27. Another use of the Greek word PHRONEMA is found in Romans 8:7 in the phrase "mind of the flesh."

Paul's use of the Greek word PHRONEMA for "mind" makes it all the more likely that the reference to the "mind of the spirit" refers to the mind of the Christian human being and not the mind of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word PHRONEMA, meaning "inclination," is nowhere else in the New Testament used with reference to Deity (as far as I can determine). References to the mind of Deity, as in "mind of the Lord" and "mind of Christ" (in Romans 11:34 and 1 Corinthians 2:16) use the Greek word NOUS meaning "mind" or "will."

We might question how the Greek word meaning "inclination" has

become associated with the personal spirit of the Christian in verse 21. An answer is that it seems reasonable that in writing verse 21 Paul remembered his use of the word which he had just written in verse 1. In verse 1 Paul meant the mind or "inclination" of the "fleshly body" combined with the "soul." It is the "soul" which might yield to "inclinations" of the flesh and make decisions based on such "inclinations" instead of directions from the Holy Spirit who indwells us. The soul, with its own strong "inclinations," can pass on to the personal spirit whatever it will when a Christian tries to communicate prayers to God the Father. The thought occurs to me as I read verse 27 that my prayers to God often must be fraught with motivations from my fleshly inclinations.

The leading of our fleshly inclinations versus the leading of the Holy Spirit is certainly an important topic being discussed in this part of the Roman letter. The knowledge that Paul used the same word in verse 27, for "mind" associated with personal spirit, as in verse 7, for "mind" associated with flesh, expands the concept of what Paul meant in verses 26 and 27. The expanded concept seems to be that the Holy Spirit searches us when we pray and knows our fleshly inclinations. This is important because our fleshly inclinations are the very things which often prevent our successful communication with God through prayer. In the Holy Spirit's intercession on our behalf, these verses seem to tell us that the Holy Spirit somehow prevents us from "messing up" in our prayers. He does not intercede for the fulfillment of our fleshly inclinations, but only our yearnings "according to the will of God."

We do see clearly that in the communication by prayer of the saints with God the Father, at least these three parts of each saint are involved: heart, mind, and personal spirit.

3. Why is the Holy Spirit's intercession with God the Father guaranteed to be effective? (Romans 8:27).

It is effective because it is always "according to the will of God." Does this mean that God never changes His mind? No. I don't think it means that God never lets our prayers influence His decisions in dealing with

us. There is much evidence in the Bible to the contrary. But the Holy Spirit, being one with God the Father, knows what decisions God may make which will be "according to the will of God." We must remember that often our prayer requests are denied as being against "the will of God." So we pray, no matter what we want, that God's will be done.

4. What are the limits of God's influence in the earthly lives of Christians? Can any bad occurrence in the world thwart the purpose of God in the life of a Christian? What influence does the Christian himself have in the fulfillment of God's purpose in his life? (Romans 8:28).

If a Christian "loves God" and "is called according to His purpose", there is no further limit, other than "loving" and "calling," to that which God causes to work together for good in the life of the Christian. God causes even things which we consider bad to bring about ultimate good in our lives. God's limits are defined by Himself in His will. And it seems that God has placed these limits in the realm of our own human will. For instance, "The Lord is ... not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9). It is the Lord's will that everyone repent and receive salvation. But Jesus reminds us, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). The act of repentance is up to us. If we do not repent we bring to naught God's desire and will to save us. It is up to us to learn to "love God" and answer his "call according to His purpose." God's promise to cause all things to work together for good to us under these conditions is irrevocable. Only we can refuse to receive the promise by refusing His love and His call according to His purpose.

All impediments to the fulfillment of God's purpose in a Christian's life have been removed by the Cross of Christ. If the Christian yields himself to be transformed by the renewing of his mind (Romans 12:1), he will reject all Satan's offers to empower him through his "old man" in Adam. Then the Holy Spirit will empower him to fulfill God's will through his "new man" in Christ.

5. What is the tense of the verbs describing the Holy Spirit's actions of

"helping," "interceding," and "searching," and God's action of "causing" in Romans 8:26-28? What is the implication of having these verbs in this tense for the lives of Christians past, present, and future?

The Holy Spirit's actions recorded by Paul in Romans 8:26-27 are all in the present tense. They were in the present tense 2,000 years ago when Paul recorded them. They were in the present tense when the Christians of the first century read them. They are in the present tense now when we read them and they will still be in the present tense for those who read them after us as long as God allows this earth to stand. The action described in the statement that "God causes all things to work together for good," in verse 28, is also in the present tense.

The implication of these actions being in the present tense is to indicate to us that the Holy Spirit's engagement in these actions is continuous during the Christian age. Christians today receive the benefit of them just as did those Christians who received the original copy of Paul's Roman letter. We Christians today are assured that the Holy Spirit "helps our weakness" in prayer, "interceding," "searching the hearts," and "knowing the mind" of each of us. And we are assured that "God causes all things to work together for good."

6. What is the tense of the verbs describing God's actions of "foreknowing," "predestining," "conforming," "calling," "justifying," and glorifying" in Romans 8:29-30? What is the implication of having these verbs in this tense for the lives of Christians past, present, and future?

God's actions recorded by Paul in Romans 8:29-30 are all in the past tense. The implication of the use of the past tense for these actions is that the actions were completed before Paul wrote the Roman letter. Thus all Christians, past, present, and future, who have read or will read the Roman letter understand that God's actions recorded with these past tense verb forms were completed by God some time before Paul wrote the Roman letter. Actually, the time context of the subject matter of the Roman letter is from the "creation" to the "final judgment." The implication is that God's actions described in verses 29 and 30 were all

completed before the creation!

Paul wrote in verses 29 and 30 from God's perspective of His human followers. These verses give God's outline plan for those He "foreknew." They, the foreknown by God, were to become something which Christ was to become first, then they after Christ. Then they were to be justified and glorified, but their justification and glorification was indicated in the past tense also. Everything is in the past tense except that it is clear that some things happened before others. The One executing these actions was God. God's perspective, then, is clearly outside our human time system. His perspective sees our past, present, and future at once, and puts our future in His past.

Note that Christ was called in verse 29 "the first-born among many brethren." To God's perspective, Christ was first, even though to us, He lived on earth, died on the Cross, was resurrected, and ascended into heaven long after many lived, and long before many lived, of those to whom He became a brother.

7. Who are the Son's "many brethren?" List the ways in which the "Son" was "first born among many brethren." (Romans 5:6; 8:14, 19, 29; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The "many brethren" of God's Son, Jesus Christ, are also "the saved" human beings of all ages of the earth, from the Creation to our present time and even into the future to the end of time. Numerous people since the time of Adam and Eve have been saved through their obedience of faith in the Almighty God. The numerous "men of old" listed in the 11th chapter of Hebrews as having "gained approval" are surely just a few of the people of past ages who have been saved to be resurrected at the last day at the future coming of Christ. However, not a one of these saved of the past, nor of the present and the future, is saved except through the "blood of Christ." With respect to the creation of human beings throughout all time, past, present, and future, "at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5: 6).

As mentioned under comments on question 6 above, the Son was, and

will be, "firstborn among many brethren" in that He was, and will be, the preeminent One among all the saved. He came to be born and to live in the flesh as our second and last "Adam." He lived the perfect life that the first Adam was not able to live. In His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, He is the forerunner for all His saved brethren of all ages.

The Son, as He lived in the flesh, was the first human being to be born of God's Holy Spirit as a Son of God (Romans 8:14) and then to be resurrected after His death into the spiritual realm. He is the firstborn of all human beings into heaven. To any other human being, this birth has not yet actually happened in its totality. He was the first of all His human brethren to be resurrected fully as spirit and soul and body into the spiritual realm since the creation. All the other saved people of all the ages of the earth, past, present, and future, are being preserved, or will be preserved without blame, complete, spirit and soul and body, as they await the second coming of their Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

8. Explain how Jesus became the "firstborn among many brethren" when some of the "brethren" lived and were reckoned as "sons of God" in the Patriarchal and Jewish Dispensations before Jesus was born as a human being.

First of all note that God's perspective is different from our human perspective as we live on earth. God sees our past, present, and future all at once as though all is in His past. Secondly, the Son, Jesus Christ, was the first of the human race to be a worthy "Son of Man" to show us all how to live and to precede us as a forerunner into the spiritual realm which we call heaven. The salvation of all who lived and were saved from the Patriarchal and Jewish ages of mankind was effected by the blood of Jesus as the perfect sacrificial lamb of God. We might say that all those since the creation who have lived their lives in obedience of faith in God to save them are brethren of the Son of God. Jesus Christ became "the firstborn among many brethren."