

ROMANS 8:24-27



HOPE

And

A

PRAYER



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²⁴For in this hope we were saved; however hope being seen, is not hope; for who hopes for what he sees?

²⁵However, if what we see not we hope for, in patience we await. ²⁶Likewise now also, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for the things which we should pray for as it behooves, we know not, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession, with inexpressible groanings. ²⁷Now the [One] searching hearts know what [is] the mindset of the Spirit, because according to God, He intercedes for [the] saints.

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²⁴For in this **hope** we were saved; however **hope** being seen, is not **hope**; for who **hopes** for what he sees?

Paul now returns, again, to speak of hope. In every one of Paul's uses of "**hope**," his meaning is formed around the Hebrew term found throughout the OT: **jf1B2** (**batach** - to trust). Wherein hope is an expectation of good and is closely linked with trust. The expectation is also a yearning, in which the element of patience or fleeing for refuge is emphasized. Additionally, and very importantly, hope is closely aligned with faith as defined in 2 Cor. 5:7 and Hebrews 11:1. Notice that both the fulfillment and the content of what we hope for are "**not yet**" seen.

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²⁴*For in this hope **we were saved**; however hope being seen, is not hope; for who hopes for what he sees?*

At the beginning of this verse, the dominant element is, once again, a Divine passive “we were saved**” (ἐσώθημεν). In this past tense Divine passive, the saving action of God has already taken place; but it would be misleading, if it were not accompanied by some indication that the final effect of God’s action, namely, our salvation still is in the future: “...*for who hopes for what he sees?*” Paul holds both the past and future in eschatological tension (cf. 6:11; 8:10). In other words, we have already been saved in hope-filled assurance of receiving the “*not yet*” on the Great Last Day!**

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²⁵However, if what we see not we hope for, in patience we await.

In the meantime, like creation, “...in patience we await.” Paul’s reference to patience confirms that Paul’s thought is moving along the same lines as we have seen in 5:3-5 (suffering...hope... Spirit): this his theological reflection on the “problem of suffering.”

As we have seen in Romans 5, God moves us through the sufferings of life to “*patience* [patient endurance]”, which then leads to “*tested character*” and, finally, to “*hope!*”

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²⁵However, if what we see not *we hope for*, in *patience* we await.

So, in Romans 8, we are similarly able to endure “*the suffering of the present time*” (v.18) through “*patience*” while eagerly awaiting that for which “*we hope for!*”

Let's review 2 Cor. 4:17-18 which also helps us interpret what Paul is writing here.

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²⁶Likewise now also, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for the things which we should pray for as it behooves, we know not, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession, *with inexpressible groanings*.

Paul begins this verse with an interesting construction that is used as a point of comparison. His connection is the current groaning of all creation and of believers; with the comparison being the Spirit's pleading for us "*with inexpressible groanings*."

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²⁶*Likewise now also, the Spirit joins to help us in our weakness; for the things which we should pray for as it behooves, we know not, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession, with inexpressible groanings.*

Paul, as he has done previously, uses a compound verb to bring his meaning to full force. However, the Greek verb used to express “joins to help” is a double prefix verb: συναντιλαμβάνομαι! By doing this, Paul is creating the image of the Holy Spirit “shouldering” the burden which our weakness imposes on us. And “weakness” is a general, all-inclusive noun. Thus, because of your weakness, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you, is there to assist, to “shoulder” the burden for you.

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²⁶*Likewise now also, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for the things which we should pray for as it behooves, we know not, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession, with inexpressible groanings.*

Why does the Spirit do this for you? The specific reason is given in the middle of v.26: “...for the things which we should pray for as it behooves, we know not....” It is more than you or I having the ability to put our thoughts into appropriate words (or prayers). No, this clause conveys a lack of knowledge about what topics we ought to pray about, as well as ignorance regarding the God-pleasing outcomes toward which our petitions should be directed. In reality, our prayers are not always in accord, “...as it behooves...” to God’s holy will, plan, or purpose!

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²⁶Likewise now also, the Spirit helps us in our **weakness**; for the things which we should pray for as it behooves, we know not, but *the Spirit Himself makes intercession, with inexpressible groanings.*

Therefore, God does not leave us “hanging!” He provides the proper solution since all our praying is conditioned by our continued “**weakness**” and this means that, though there may be rare occasions, our petitions must be qualified as “...*the Spirit Himself makes intercession....*” Be comforted, in the midst of our deficiencies, Paul turns us away from ourselves and to the Holy Spirit! He intercedes for us “**with inexpressible groanings.**”

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²⁶*Likewise now also, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for the things which we should pray for as it behooves, we know not, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession, with inexpressible groanings.*

The Spirit's intercessions are expressed by a wonderful Greek verb:

ὑπερεντυγχάνει (hoop-er-en-toong-khan'-ee), which literally refers to the Holy Spirit interceding in *every* aspect of our lives so we can “*come in line with*” the Lord’s *eternal purpose*. The content of these intercessions goes beyond human language “*with inexpressible groanings,*” and includes bringing sacred mysteries into our daily walk with Christ. The Holy Spirit only does this for God’s children...for you!

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*²⁷Now the [One] searching hearts know what [is] the **mindset** of the Spirit, because according to God, He intercedes for [the] saints.*

Since God is able to search the human heart, how much more, then, does He know the mindset of His own Spirit (cf. v.9); who is now pleading to Him in our behalf! You may recall that “**mindset**” (*φρόνημα*) is used for the human view of things in v.6, but now, it expresses the “**mindset of the Spirit,**” something that God knows full well. And you must know that this intimate mindset goes both ways!

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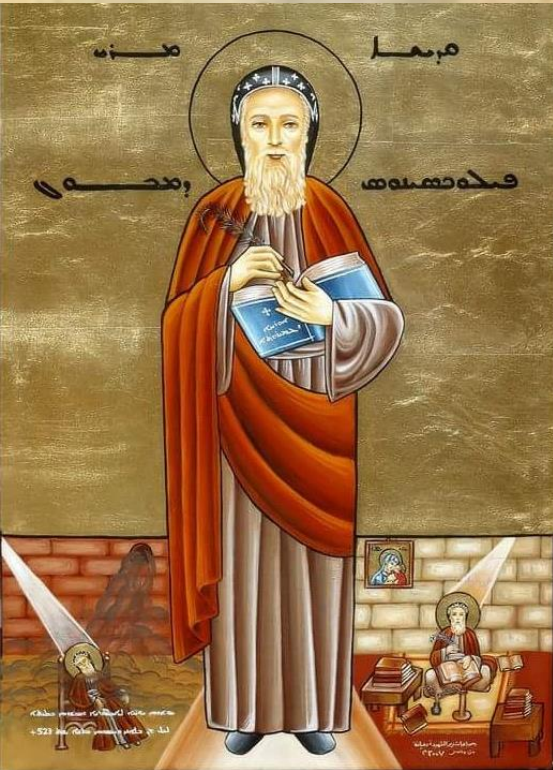
²⁷Now the [One] searching hearts know what [is] the mindset of the Spirit, because according to God, He intercedes **for** [the] saints.

Lastly, Paul uses a preposition that he used in v. 26, (**ὑπέρ**) “**in behalf**” or “**for**” the saints, except he does not join it to the preceding verb.

This is also his second use of the plural of “holy ones, *saints*” (**ἅγιοι**) (also in 1:7) as a general reference to God’s people. They are “holy ones” or “saints” because God has “sanctified” them or “made” them “holy” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11).

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A Church father, that isn't well known, Philoxenus of Mabbug¹, sums up this section for us very nicely:

“You see that all the good promptings which brings us to repentance result from the activity of the Spirit, and pure prayer, which brings all these good promptings to completion, is also stirred up in our soul as the result of the Spirit’s activity. He too, in a hidden way, initially arouses us to groans at the memory of our sins.”²

¹Philoxenus of Mabbug (c. 440-523) was the Bishop of Mabbug (Northern Syria) and a leading thinker in the early Syrian Orthodox Church. His extensive writings in Syriac included a set of thirteen “Discourses on the Christian Life”; several works on the incarnation and a number of exegetical works. Philoxenus is remembered as a scholar, an elegant writer, an exponent of practical Christianity, of faith, simplicity, and the fear of God.

²Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Vol VI. Romans. Bray, Gerald. Ed., Philoxenus of Marburg. “On the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” ACCS, p.224.

Conclusion

**ANY
QUESTIONS?**



ROMANS 8:28-30



**Next
Week:
Part III**

