

# What and How Should One Pray?

Grace Gospel Church Ministry

The underlining problem is that God's people do not know how to pray properly (Romans 8:26; Luke 11:1). Corroboration of this is found in Mark 10:38, wherein Jesus said to the disciples, James and John (the sons of Zebedee), "You do not know what you are asking." Many times, believers confuse needs with greed. It takes wisdom to know the difference, so we should ask for wisdom to know how to pray aright for what we need. It is presumptuous to request or claim what God has not promised. Humility is formed by the knowledge to ask for what God has commanded and promised in His will and the faith to rely upon it even when one does know what it is. It would be presumptuous to think that God could command His children to ask for what He is committed to give but then is unwilling to bestow it. There are other misconceptions about prayer that are based upon a fundamental misunderstanding about the sovereignty of God.

Note the statement, "God does nothing but in answer to prayer." This is patently false. The truth is, God does everything irrespective of prayer. He governs the universe in all its details with no regard to prayer. How many prayers request that God keep the Earth orbiting around the Sun? Of course not because one does not know enough about the universe to pray that the Lord keep it intact. The same is true in His providence with creation. Did God answer anyone's prayer when He created the world? Moreover, the Lord does all things in the lives of mankind regardless of prayer. He does them in the scope of His grace and mercy for the elect and justice for the non-elect. This is done for instance in the case of unbelievers who never pray and for believers regardless of how they pray.

The context of Romans 8:26-28 speaks to the heart of the question, "**What and how should one pray?**" Romans 8:26 states (from the King James Version), "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And from the Greek Text, "And likewise also the Spirit helps in our weakness; for we do not what we should pray for, even as it is necessary, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unutterable groanings." Note, this verse opens with the Greek adverb **o•sahf•tos** rendered "likewise", "in the same manner" or "in the same way." Here it refers back to the antecedent verses of the text, depicting that which the Holy Spirit has already and is currently accomplishing for believers, i.e., leading (vs.14), the assurance of ones relationship with God (vs.16), and the guarantee of future glorification with Christ (vs.17,23). In the same way, the spirit now helps believers in our weakness.

Note the Greek verb **seen•ahn•dee•lahm•vahn•eh•teh** rendered "helps" is derived from the three words **seen**, **ahn•dee** and **lahm•vahn•o** and basically means to take a place with another person, hence, to help, aid or assist another. Observe that the Spirit is the one who aids believers in their lack of spiritual health, feebleness and weakness. Here the specific weakness that the Apostle Paul has reference to is the inability of God's people to know what they should pray for, which in essence entails how one should pray. The Greek phrase **ook ee•thah•mehn tee pros•ehf•xom•eh•thah** is translated "we do not know what we should pray for." Note the Greek verb **pros•ehf•xom•eh•thah** rendered "pray", is in the present tense and subjunctive mood; implying that we should always be in the prayer-relation-sphere with God. In effect we should abide in the proper communication mode of prayer being a workable part of our lifestyle.

Here we observe that the statement "what we should pray for", is qualified by the phrase **kahth•o thee** rendered "even as it is necessary", as the subordinating conjunction **kahth•o** (even as) expresses the extreme important of the proper forum of prayer; in the factual connotation (indicative mood) of the verb **thee** rendered "necessary", binding and imperative. Thus, according to this phrase, there is a proper and improper way to pray. As finite depraved creatures limited to the physical sphere

of human minds, God's people do not have the ability to mentally perceive what to pray for. The implications of this passage is that "what" one prays for is exceedingly important. In Colossians 9:26, Paul apparently uses the phrase "beating the air"; depicting what one is doing when one fails to pray for that which is proper and necessary.

Accordingly, in view of the elect's weakness and inability to pray as it is necessary, we note the Greek phrase **ahl-lah ahf-to to pnehv-mah eep-ehr-ehn-teeg-khah-nee stehn-ahg-mees ahl-ahl-ee-tees** rendered "the spirit Himself intercedes for us with unutterable groanings." Here the use of the strong adversative conjunction **ahl-lah** rendered "but" plus the reflective pronoun **ahf-to** rendered "Himself" emphasizes the importance of the Spirit's role in ones praying. Thus the Holy Spirit **eep-ehr-ehn-teeg-khah-nee** rendered "intercedes for us", i.e., He pleads our case, and expresses our true needs to God. Now the Spirit does this with **stehn-ahg-mees ahl-ahl-ee-tees** rendered "unutterable groanings", unspoken groanings or mute sighs. Here some have erroneously interpreted this phrase to convey the thought of speaking in tongues but its correct cogitation expresses the Holy Spirit's role in conveying the proper (correct) utterances (communications) with groanings (emphasis) in behalf of the believer because they are incapable of themselves in the performance of this privilege.

Here we consider a probing question, i.e., "why is it necessary for the Holy Spirit to intercede for the elect in petitioning God?" Information in regards to this inquiry is conveyed as we progress in the context with the viewing of Romans 8:27 (from the King James Version), "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh **intercession** for the saints according to *the will of God*." And from the Greek Text, "And the One searching the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because according to God He **intercedes** on behalf of the saints." As we survey the contents of this verse, note the Greek phrase **o theh eh-rahv-non tahs kahr-thee-ahs** rendered "and He (the One) searching the hearts," denotes that God is the One seeking out, tracking down and investigating what is in the hearts of God's people. Here the Greek noun **kahr-thee-ahs** rendered "hearts", as it is structured, conveys the meaning of the mind or reasoning faculties (Romans 10: 9-10; Ephesians 1:18; Hebrews 4:12).

As we move further into the cogitation, it is of note that not only does God search the rational sphere of believer's hearts (minds) but He also **ee-thehn tee to phron-ee-mah too pnehv-mah-tos** rendered "knows what is the mind of the Spirit." This documents that God knows the frame of mind, thought patterns, and cogitation of the Spirit. He thus knows the meaning of the unutterable groanings and the necessary communications that is concomitant to the will of that which belongs to the Spirit, as depicted by the genitive of possession. It now follows that the purpose for which God knows what is the mind of the Spirit is **o-tee kah-tah Theh-on ehv-teeg-khah-nee eep-ehr-ahy-ee-on** rendered "because according to God He intercedes on behalf of the saints." The fact is that the Holy Spirit's intercessory ministry in behalf of the saints is "according to God" (**kah-tah Theh-on**). Now because He is "conforming to" and "in keeping with" God; this forms the basis why God knows the mind of the Spirit.

In order for one to comprehend this conveyance, it is extremely important to embrace not only the essence, but also the unity of the mindset of the Godhead. In other words, there is only one intelligence center or agency in the Godhead. Those who espouse the **Doctrine of the Trinity** use the terminology "three persons", thus giving the impression of three personalities or three independent functions of acumen (discernment or perception). One must reject this cogitation in order to understand the nature of one brain center and one intelligence center that is invested in the Godhead. With this understanding one can perceive the operations of the functions of the Godhead. In this light a unified mindset exists between God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, and because the Holy Spirit's interceding conforms to the mind of God the Father, it solidifies the fact that God knows the mind of the Spirit.

In summary of these two verses, the conveyance of Romans 8:26 basically states that: likewise, the Spirit helps ones weakness. The weakness referred to is ones inability to analyze situations and pray

intelligently about them. In effect, the Spirit is said to plead or intercede with sighs or words that one is incapable or unwilling, because of human depravity, to convey. Sometimes God's people do not pray properly because their words are insufficient to express needs that are in alignment with the will of God. The Holy Spirit's response of sighs too deep for the saint's inadequate words shows how God through His Spirit enters into this experience. In verse 27, God the Father investigates the hearts (of the elect) through the Holy Spirit as He knows what is the mind-set of the Spirit. God knows the total response of the Spirit to any situation or issue. The intercession he makes on behalf of the saints, is in conformity with the being of God. It should be noted that the Greek verb **ehn•teeg•khah•nee** rendered "intercede" and all derivations of it, i.e., "intercession" (cf. 8:34; 11:2; 1 Timothy 2:1; Hebrews 7:25), connotes the inference of "a falling in with", "meeting with" or "coming together with." Thus the Holy Spirit's function of interceding is in the form of "falling in" and "aligning with" the will, plan and purpose of God on behalf of His elect. This information certainly declares that communication of thought and knowledge is centralized in the Godhead and **utilized in the purpose of God for those loving Him (Romans 8:28).**

Now we consider the bottom line question, i.e., "what is **the purpose of God** interceding and intervening through the Holy Spirit in the lives of His elect?" As we continue in this context we view Romans 8:28 (from the King James Version), "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." And from the Greek text, "And we know that to those loving God all things do work together unto good, to those being called according to His purpose." Before moving to the actual exegesis of this verse, we will take the liberty of expressing what we believe is the most direct translation, even though it is probably not the most fluid conveyance in English: "And we have known (and do know) that (He) does work (and is working) together all for good to (for) those loving God according to (His) purpose, the called are." As we note the actual wording of the opening Greek phrase **ee•thah•mehn theh oo•tee**, observe the translated expression, "And we know that."

Here the apostle Paul affirms that we as the elect **have and do know**, not on the basis of experience but through **Divine Revelation** that He (God, the Holy Spirit) **does work** and **is working** all things together unto good. The inference is that the **designed end** of all things is unto **good for those called** (elected) and loving God. Even though it is not specifically stated in this verse, the context as well as the antecedent (prior) content verses, make it clear that **God is the one who caused** all things to work together **unto the end of that which is good**. In this verse Paul is addressing a specific **group of individuals** and thus identifies them two-fold: (1) **those loving God** and (2) **those being called according to his purpose**. As the chronological events transpire, they are arranged in the following three-fold order: first and foremost, the focal point is **God's purpose** and second, the individuals who are being called are **summoned in accordance with** this purpose and third, those **who have been called are caused** to love God (Romans 5:5). Here two questions are raised: (1) **who are those loving God?** (2) **Is this referencing those who have a professed emotional relationship with God, which is exemplified through the flesh?** According to the conveyance that is outlined in the context, this couldn't possibly be the intended expression. It must be thoroughly understood that **natural men in the flesh are completely dead in sin to God**. Thus, the only way for a relationship to exist between God and man is that **God must initiate it** (1 John 4:7-11).

The context before us thoroughly documents that this is exactly what occurred, i.e., God devised His **pro•thah•seen** rendered "**purpose**." This purpose is a **predetermined plan** based upon His love in accordance with which God restores **elect sinners into fellowship with Himself** (Romans 9:11; Ephesians 1:11; II Timothy 1:9). A part of this plan entails **God sovereignly calling chosen ones unto Himself** by means of the Holy Spirit (John 6:44). In this verse (28), Paul refers to these as **klee•tos oo•seen** rendered, "**Being called**" or "**the called ones**" who, having been called, constitute those who are **caused to love** God. Thus having established **to whom, for whom or in whose behalf** does God act, we now examine the action-defining clause, "**All things work together for good**." Note the Greek verb **seen•ehry•eer** rendered "**work together**", is derived from the Greek preposition **seen** prefixed to the verb **ehrg•o**, denoting "to work with", or "to work in conjunction with"

or "cooperate with". It is at this junction that the Greek manuscripts severely differ as to whether the noun **pahn•dah** translated "all" or "all things", should be in the nominative case (denoting it as the subject) or the accusative case (denoting it as an object). In either case, the grammatical construction would be dominated by the general contents, which clearly identify **God** as the one producing the actions in this clause.

Now the questions arise as to what do "all" or "all things" refer to? Does it denote the general meaning, which would include **every detail** in the lives of those whom He calls? Does it entail the seemingly **aversive** and **disappointing occurrences** or the **devastating events** in our lives? Does it entail those things that seem to be **detrimental** unto us? And most importantly, does it entail the element of **Satan and his forces**, in his workings to render **evil** in the lives of believers? (Ephesians 4:27; 6:11; 1Timothy 3:7). The answers to questions of this type can be ascertained only from the realm of the **eternal vantage point** rather than the Earthly **viewpoint of time** or the **temporary state** in which the occurrences transpire. Thus, regardless of whether the **incidents of this life are viewed as intended for good or evil**, we are instructed to be, "Giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God even the Father" (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17). The essence of the matter is that our **understanding** of the **eternal purpose of God** is realized in the Scriptures wherein "all things" involve the workings "all together," which culminate in the **realm of God's purpose**. According to **His purpose**, **He chose us** (the elect) as sinners and **in each occurrence** works together unto good until we are **ultimately glorified with Christ** (Ephesians 1:4; 1Peter 1:20). Accordingly, God's **eternal sovereign purpose** indeed is good, i.e., the **design of transforming** designated, even depraved sinners into glorified saints.