

Prayer's Great Problem

Romans 8:26-27

We often hear messages on the **place** of prayer in our lives or the **power** of prayer, but Paul's focus in the text is on a great **problem** we face when we voice our prayers to God.

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

Notice carefully, the problem is not "**how**" we ought to pray, but "**what**" we ought to pray.

I. The Problem Illuminated --- *"we know not what we should pray for as we ought."*

When we begin to pray we usually gravitate to requests that will make our lives far less painful and far more pleasurable. For instance, you probably have never heard anybody pray for a hurricane to sweep away a town, or for a biopsy to come back cancerous, or for Satan to grab hold of a person and shake his world. However, all those things fall under the umbrella of "*God's will.*" Paul has already assumed that Christians are under "*present suffering*" (v.18). We need to remember in suffering ---

(A). The Father is always working . . . (Romans 8:28).

We are going to look at this verse in detail next week, but it must be assumed before you can fully understand the problem of prayer. "*God is more interested in your character than He is your comfort.*" You are His workmanship and He is at work, never wasting one experience, conforming you to His Son's likeness.

(B). The believer is often struggling . . . "*in our weakness(es)*" (v.26).

"If You really loved me, God, you wouldn't let this happen! God, please, if you really want me to love you, heal my father. Lord, I can't go on unless You . . ."

We go to the Lord in prayer but we don't ask "*according to His will.*"

(C). The Spirit is continually groaning. . . "*interceding by unspoken words*" (v.26).

(1). The Spirit knows God's purpose . . .

"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will He heareth us" (I John 5:14). This is real prayer.

(2). The Spirit brings God's peace . . .

Christ prayed in the garden, "*Nevertheless, Thy will be done*" (Matt. 26:39).

The removal of suffering is often not what we ought to pray for!

II. The Principle Illustrated --- Jesus said to Simon, "*I have prayed for thee*" (Lk. 22:32).

In Luke 22 we have the dialogue of the disciples in the Upper Room recorded for us.

Jesus makes a pointed statement regarding Simon after the Last Supper (vs. 31-32).

(A). Satan requested permission to sift Peter . . .

God allowed Satan to '*make Peter look like chaff,*' or '*to bounce Peter around in attempt to devour Peter,*' or to test Peter's commitment to God.

(B). Jesus did not pray for the removal of the sifting . . .

He prayed for Peter's faith and that when it was over he would strengthen others.

(C) God used the sifting and Peter's sin for ultimate good.

Peter renounced Christ with an oath to the little girl who accused him of being a follower of Christ, but Peter never ultimately lost faith, and even was stronger.

"God whispers to us in health and prosperity, but, being hard of hearing, we fail to hear God's voice in both. God then turns up the amplifier by means of suffering. Then His loving voice booms and we hear Him for our good" C.S. Lewis.