

## Intercession by the Spirit

### Praying for others means wrestling in prayer

I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me...' (Romans 15:30).

*Sunagonidzomai* means 'to agonise together' or 'to strive or wrestle or contend together' like athletes striving together in a team to win a contest.

- This means earnest, fervent, passionate prayer. cf Epaphras in Col 4:12 – 'He is always wrestling in prayer for you...'
- Praying for others means wrestling in prayer
- Praying for others means more than casual involvement.
- This applies particularly to praying for those in ministry of the Word.

### Intercession by the Spirit

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

<sup>27</sup>And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

(Romans 8:26, 27)

### What problems do we face?

- Weakness—We cannot pray properly, no matter how hard we try, without the Spirit's help
- Ignorance—We don't know what to pray for
- Ineffectiveness—We do not pray as we ought

### What does the Spirit do?

#### 1. He helps us

Greek verb = work *together* with someone to help them. Compare Genesis 2:18

Just as Eve was made as a helper for Adam, so the Holy Spirit helps us.

#### 2. He intercedes for us

- *Huperentugchano* = Intercede = strong form of 'plead' ('Hyper-plead')
- Only used of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament
- The Spirit acts as a 'go-between.' In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings that words cannot express.
- 'Groanings' (sighs). Means cries of anguish, pain, misery. See Romans 8:22,23
- These are *our* groanings (from our hearts, 27) generated by the Spirit. The Spirit enables our cries to be heard

### How does the Spirit help us?

## Prayer – Intercession by the Spirit

Inexpressible. Tears? Groans? Sighs? Yearnings? These cries do have meaning (27)  
Not *alalos* (= mute, dumb) but *alaletos* (= inexpressible in the normal way).

- ‘Words cannot express’ (NIV)
- ‘Too deep for words’ (ESV)

Very likely includes glossolalia (ie praying in tongues)

**Praying with Passion**

Never be lacking in zeal, but be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11)

- ‘Fervent’ derives from *zeo* which means to boil or to be intensely hot or to be fervid ie ‘intensely enthusiastic, especially to an excessive degree’
- Either ‘in spirit’ or ‘in the Spirit’
- We need to be Spirit-filled.

**Example of Apollos (Acts 18:24-26)**

- Learned
- Thorough knowledge of Scriptures
- Taught accurately
- Spoke with great fervour (lit. ‘boiling in spirit’)

**Challenge**

People are looking for spiritual experience, but the world has hijacked it and so people turn to spiritism, music, fantasy, sport. Sterile Christianity is being left behind. If we are to pray effectively, we need to open our lives more and more to the Holy Spirit. With his help, we can pray with passion according to the will of God. So let’s pray... in the Spirit... today!

**Read:** Romans 12:11; 15:30; 8:18-27

**SOMETHING TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT**

**Remember:** You don’t have to answer all the questions: choose those that seem most relevant

Biblical

1. Paul asks his readers to join him in his struggle by praying for him (Romans 15:30). What do you think this actually means for us when we pray? *How* can we ‘struggle’ in prayer for someone? What has your own experience been in this area? Share your experiences with the group.
2. Note how Epaphras ‘wrestled’ in prayer for the Colossians. For what things did he particularly pray? Discuss each of them. (You may find different translations helpful here.)
3. What sort of weakness do you think Paul is talking about in Romans 8:26?
4. Why is it important to allow the Holy Spirit to intercede for us? (Find answers in 8:26, 27. There are at least three.)

Prayer – Intercession by the Spirit

5. There are three lots of ‘groaning’ in 8:18-26. Who does it mean in each case and why?
6. What possible forms could the ‘groanings’ of v.26 take? Share from your own experience.
7. Personal and practical
8. What practical ways can you think of to prevent yourself from lacking in zeal and to keep yourself ‘fervent in spirit’? (Romans 12:11).
9. Somebody once said, ‘Attitude is everything’. Do you agree?
10. What has been your experience of ‘wrestling in prayer’?
11. Make a list of a few people who need you to pray for them earnestly. Then plan how you can do it.

## About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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