

“How God works in our weakness”

Greeting:

Thank you for inviting me again to share a message of the Bible with you.

Don't you sometimes feel this way, "I am a Christian. So I can surely go to heaven. But I feel I am weak. I cannot expect that God would do something great in my life, here on earth."?

When we feel we are weak, what would God do to help us?

Prayer:

Dear Father, we are together before You to worship You and hear Your Word. Please talk to us, and teach us. So that we know You better and closer. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let me read Romans 8:26-29,34 in ESV

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

1.The Spirit helps us 8:26

Romans 8:26

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

The Bible teaches us that the Spirit of God lives in the bodies of Christians. This is very clear in 1Corinthians 6:19.

1Corinthians 6:19

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

To what kind of Christians is it mentioned? Christians walking closely with God?

In the preceding verse,

1Corinthians 6:18

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

The city of Corinth was infamous for sexual sins. Even among Christians, some people still engaged in this sort of sin. Paul shouts, “Flee from sexual immorality.” Then Paul speaks in verse 19 to those Christians, “¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you.”

So, we can very definitely say, according to the Bible, that every Christian, even if he or she is in a serious sin, still has the Holy Spirit within.

What does the Holy Spirit do in us?

Again, Romans 8:26a

^{26a} Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

Now, what sort of weakness do we have?

Physically, we feel our body is weak especially as we get older. And we get tired easily.

Mentally, our mind, we feel, is weak as well. Don’t we often say, “I know I should do it. But I don’t want to do so.”

Spiritually, the relation between us and God, we might say, “I cannot rely on God to that extent.”

In our weakness, how does the Spirit of God help us?

The word for help here is, in the Greek Bible, “syn-anti-lambanomai.” This is one word. “Syn” means together. “Anti” means facing each other. “Lambanomai” means take or hold. So, the word “help” here means that the Holy Spirit is together with us, watching us, taking and holding what is heavy on us. In other words, the Holy Spirit is saying, “I am with you. I see you face to face and hold and carry your burdens all through life. So don’t worry! Just trust me!”

Verse 26 continues.

Romans 8:26b

^{26b} For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

We sometimes feel that “I don’t know what to pray for.” But still the Holy Spirit prays for us. Even when we cannot pray, we can still rely on the Holy Spirit’s prayer.

Even if we are in the worst time or tough situation, still the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with prayers deep in agony that cannot be expressed in words.

Then, what is the focus of the Spirit’s prayer?

2-1. The Will of God – Focus of the prayer 8:27

Romans 8:27

²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Here, “He who searches hearts” is God, the Father. The Holy Spirit prays perfectly focusing to the will of God, the Father. We pray for various things. Some of our prayers maybe according to the will of God. But we might be rather out of focus. But the Holy Spirit intercedes for us just according to the will of God.

2-2 How does the will of God or purpose fill in our life? 8:28

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Every Christian is called according to God's purpose. This verse states that all things work for the good of every Christian. It assures that anything even beyond our capacity or control work together for good. Because God governs everything in his hands.

Story A

I know a Christian couple who run a waste management or recycling waste items live in our area. Their name is Sasaki-san. They permitted me to share their testimony in the churches. They named their company "Agape Recycle." They want to show God's love through their business. When they started, they rented their house, parking lots for a truck and a vehicle and a storage space for the articles they collected. The rent was expensive, so for years they prayed to purchase their own land and building. They searched for properties and an ideal one was introduced by an agent. They were so glad and they praised God. But in just a few days a person paid a deposit for that property and it was gone. They were disappointed. They prayed, "Dear God, why? We thought that You led us to this ideal property. But it's gone."

Then, another disappointment followed. There was a removal company that worked together with Sasaki-san. Whenever the company had a moving customer, they introduced Sasaki-san for collecting unwanted articles. But the president of the removal company said to Sasaki-san, "we will have to merge with our parent company so we must use the same waste management company that our parent company uses." Flatly, he said. And Sasaki-san lost more than one third of their jobs.

Then the house agent proposed another property. With a larger house, lots of parking space and even a space where they can build a storage house. This was much better than the previous one. They gladly decided to purchase this. They applied for a loan to a bank. But the answer did not come. So they had to apply to another bank. And the loan was approved. So they bought the property. Then, the first bank granted the loan. So they had money enough to build a storage house as well. They were so happy and praised God for they could have the adequate place to do their business. I visited them and together praised God for His wonderful leading.

Then they had to pay back their double loans. But their income did not meet their expenditures. They could not get enough jobs. They prayed "If we cannot pay the loans, we will lose everything. What was it that you gave us to own this very good property. And we praised You. But if we do not have enough jobs to do, they all turn to nothing."

Several days later, a phone call came, from the president of that removal company. He said, "Agape-san, will you please work with us again?" Sasaki-san could not figure out, what brought this change? But their financial problem vanished. God made all things work together for good.

I don't think this is a very special case. This is just an example of what God assures to every one of us.

Story B

Several years ago, a Christian friend of mine phoned me, asking, "Is it true that for Christians, all things work together for good?"

I have known him for many years, even since before I became a pastor. So I said, “This passage does not just say, ‘For Christians, all things work together for good.’ But it says, ‘We know that for Christians, all things work together for good.’ How is it that you say you do not know it?” I did not have to say any more. I think he said to himself, “Oh I should be confident in this.”

2-3. What is the core of the will of God?

Romans 8:29

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God knows every person. God knows, in advance, who believe in Christ and become saved. Those whom God knows to be saved, God predestined not just to be saved but also to be conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus. Here, “conformed to the image of his Son,” means that we Christians are to take the same form with Jesus. How can we, the created beings become same form with Jesus, the Creator?

Then, let’s see, what is the man? How God made us?

Genesis 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Here, God says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” And verse 27, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God.” So, three times, “(God’s) image” and once “(God’s) likeness.”

This repetition means that God created us, humans (four times) very, very, very, very close to God.

So it is quite natural and imperative for God that we, having been saved, should be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus. God does this.

But still this is not God’s purpose. God’s purpose is what follows in verse 29.

Romans 8:29b

^{29b} in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

God’s very purpose is that Jesus and us to fellowship together. For this, the only difference between Jesus and us is, that Jesus is the firstborn of God. Jesus Himself is God. He is from the eternity past to the eternity in future. And Jesus is always together with the Father.

Then, why was it that God made us very close to God, Himself? Because God wanted to have very close fellowship with us, humans.

So, verse 29, “He(Christ) might be the firstborn among many brothers” is the realization of what God planned from the beginning.

In Japan when close friends gather in a tatami room, we sit in a circle on zabuton cushions. Each sits on one cushion, of course. But when someone does something admirable, that person can sit on two zabutons, one on the other, to feel a bit of superiority. Especially when one wins a game. Let me illustrate this way. When

we gather together with Jesus in eternity, we would definitely say, “Jesus, you are different, you are God. So you should, at least, sit on two cushions.” Then Jesus would say, “Just one zabuton is enough for me. I am no different from(than) you. The only difference is that I am from the beginning while you were born somewhere on the way in the course of God’s program. But we are just the same.” Jesus wants us to be same with himself.

This is God’s eternal purpose. For this purpose we are “predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

Lastly,

3.Jesus helps us 8:34

Romans 8:34

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Jesus died on the cross and accomplished our redemption from sin. He does not say, “Now, you do your best to be like me.” Instead, He is at the right hand of God. This is where God does His sovereign dominion. Jesus always prays and is interceding for us. Jesus concentrates on this ministry for us. He does no greater thing.

We may be weak. We are weak. But our weakness does not matter to God. The Holy Spirit always helps us to carry all our burdens together. The Spirit also prays for us with groanings too deep even when we cannot pray. And Jesus also prays for us from God’s right hand.

We shall be so much like Jesus. This is what God predestined for us. God never fails to accomplish this.

Let’s see our brothers and sisters this way, and see ourselves, this way.

Shall we pray?

Dear God, You want us to have intimate fellowship with Jesus. For this, you made us in the image of Yourself. The Holy Spirit and Jesus incessantly prays for us and carries our burdens all through life. Even in our weakness, show Yourself in us, and let the people around us see You in us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.