

## **Introduction**

I begin today with a question. Who is the greatest intercessor ever? By intercessor I mean one who prays for others, who asks God to give or do things for others. So, who is the greatest intercessor ever?

Martin Luther believed that prayer is the lifeline of ministry and spent three hours a day praying. Adoniram Judson thought prayer so essential to life that he withdrew from business and company seven times a day to pray. John Hyde made prayer the defining aspect of his life and became so identified with it that he was nicknamed "Praying Hyde." And finally George Mueller kept a complete record of his prayers that covered 3,000 pages, contained nearly a million words, and chronicled over 50,000 specific answers to prayer.

But as great as all of those intercessors, and others, were, none of them is the greatest ever. Who is? It's the Holy Spirit. We see that in Romans 8:27-30, which teaches us the seventh and eighth ways that He helps us. Turn there in your Bibles please and let's examine those.

## **The Holy Spirit Converses with Father God**

I start with verse 27 and a fascinating insight that Paul gives us about life in the Trinity. God the Father **"knows what the mind of the Spirit is."** In 1 Corinthians 2:11, Paul states it from the Spirit's perspective, **"Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."** What a profound revelation. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit communicate with each other "mind to mind." To communicate with the Son and Spirit, the Father merely thinks it and they know, and it's the same way with them communicating with each other and Him. Their communication is immediate, intimate, and full.

But what is it that they converse about? The first phrase in verse 27, by implication, tells us. It reveals that God is **"He who searches the hearts."** Psalm 139:1-6 elaborates on that. He knows everything there is to know about every person, including what he or she is thinking

and feeling. And that “everything” about every person is a primary topic of conversation between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A Christian told me that she’d love to have a dog but her landlord doesn’t allow it. At one time or another, you can be sure, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have conversed about that unfulfilled desire of hers.

You get my point. The three persons of the God converse constantly about you and me and the details of our persons and lives, big and small.

### **The Holy Spirit Intercedes for the Saints**

Paul goes on in verse 27 to reveal a specific function or ministry of the Holy Spirit in that regard. He **“intercedes for the saints.”**

The Greek word translated “saint” connotes one who is consecrated to something. Verse 28 discloses what that something is. It’s loving God. Let me ask you a question. If you could wish for one thing and it would be granted, for what would you wish? What is the single greatest desire of your heart in other words? Your honest answer to that question would tell volumes about you. My honest answer is this, **“to love God as much as I’m capable of loving Him.”** The fact is that I don’t love Him as much as I could. But my deepest desire is to love him that way and I’ve consecrated my person and life to doing so. I’ve learned what the central activities are for growing in my love for Him. And I’m carrying them out. That’s what a saint is. It’s someone who’s consecrated to loving God as much as he or she can possibly love Him.

Now, notice what the Holy Spirit does for saints. He intercedes for them. He is aware of and attentive to all the details of their lives, big and small. And in His mind-to-mind conversations with Father God, He actually asks Him to give or do specific things for them. He is their ultimate intercessor who prays unceasingly, night and day, for them.

How many of you are familiar with the Peter Principle? According to Peter, every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence. I once talked with a saint who had been promoted in his engineering firm. He was excited about it but anxious at the same time. He had concerns

about the Peter Principle and how well he'd be able to do his new job. Verse 27 teaches us two things. First, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit conversed about his promotion and concern. And second, the Holy Spirit asked Father God to give or do specific things in, to, through, or for him.

There's no doubt about it. There have been many outstanding intercessors down through the centuries. But none can compare to the Holy Spirit. He is the ultimate intercessor the saints.

## **The Result**

That brings us to verse 28, which reveals the outcome of the His intercession. Father God causes all things to work together for good to His saints. Remember that the Holy Spirit is the contact point between God and man, between heaven and earth. So, it's actually through Him that Father God does that. That then is the eighth way that the Holy Spirit helps us. He causes all things to work together for our good.

"All things" refers to all the bad things, big and small, that happen to us. Marjorie Cooper was a devoted follower of Jesus who is in *The Guinness Book of World Records*. In 1948, Marjorie was stricken with polio. As a result, from 1948 until her death in 1988, she was totally paralyzed from the neck down. During that time, she spent every minute of her life in an iron lung in the living room of her home. Imagine that, lying on your back in your living room for 40 years. And that's why she's in *The Guinness Book of World Records* – as the world's longest surviving iron lung patient. Anyway, the "all things" of verse 28 includes that and every other bad thing, big or small, that happens to us.

But notice what the Holy Spirit does. He causes those bad things to work together for our good if we're saints. When something bad happens He works to transform it into something good. He works to transform what is ugly into what is beautiful, what is wrong into what is right.

How many of you are old enough to remember *The Tonight Show* hosted by Jack Parr? The music director of the show was Jose Mellis, an extraordinary musician whose versatility on the piano was astonishing.

He'd do this in fact to show it. Parr would randomly strike keys that sounded awful and say to Mellis, **"Ok, Jose, let's see what you can do with that."** Mellis would then play the discordant notes struck by Parr and blend them into a beautiful piece of music. He not only started with them but came back to them again and again, making them an integral part of the music. While America listened, Mellis took something that was ugly and bad and transformed it into something beautiful and good.

That is just like what the Holy Spirit does. Bad things happen and discordant notes are struck. But then the Holy Spirit puts His fingers on the keys, takes those notes, and blends them into a beautiful symphony. He puts His hand on all the ugly and bad things that occur in our lives and turns them into something beautiful and good.

The lady in the iron lung, Marjorie Cooper, understood that as well as anyone ever has. For 40 years, she believed that Father God was taking her illness and working it out for good. Her daughter explained it this way: **"She believed God was her Father who was taking the tiny strands that made up her life, and weaving a cloth whose beautiful pattern only He knew."** Father God did that for her and does it for us. If we love Him, the Holy Spirit takes all the strands of our lives, even the ugly and bad ones, and weaves them into a beautiful pattern.

Do you realize what that means? Irredeemable harm never befalls us. We live beyond harm in the Holy Spirit's hands. Or to say it another way, **"All's well that ends well."** That's the eighth way that the Holy Spirit helps us. He works bad things out and makes them end well for us.

### **Identification with God's Will**

But if that's true, why do we get so fretful or afraid? I once counseled a Christian who lost his high paying but all consuming job. He was terribly upset by it to the point of despair. But why was he? If the Holy Spirit was interceding for Him and working things out for his good, he didn't have any reason to be upset. So why was he?

Two phrases help us answer that, **"according to the will of**

**God**" in verse 27 and **"according to His purpose"** in verse 28. The words **"will"** and **"purpose"** refer to what Father God wants. Well, what He always wants, in every circumstance, is what is best for us.

Now, since He always wants and knows what is best for us, that's what the word **"good"** in verse 28 refers to. So the promise is this. When bad things happen to us, the Holy Spirit intercedes and acts to achieve what Father God wants, which is always what is best for us. Most of us believe that.

But we sometimes don't want what He wants and that's precisely the problem. We live on the edge of the bad thing that's happening to us and wonder, **"Will God do what I want."** We're certain that He'll do what He wants. But we want what we want instead, which the promise of verse 28 doesn't encompass. And because it's doesn't, we have something to fret or fear and do. Take the Christian I mentioned before. He knew as we talked what God wanted – for him to simplify his life, get his priorities straight, and be the disciple, husband, and father he should be. But he wanted a high paying job and prestige instead. And not knowing if he'd get that, he fretted

That shows us what we have to do to get peace? We have to identify our will with God's. We have to want what He wants. Think about it. Verses 28 promises that the Holy Spirit will work bad things out to achieve what Father God wants for me. I believe that and since I want what He wants, I have no reason to fret or fear and don't. I'm at peace instead. I'm free of striving, both inwardly and outwardly. That then is the secret to having peace. It's identifying our will with God's.

All of us can identify our will with God's by doing two things.

First, recognize God's supremacy. Realize that He is what no one else is – utterly great and good. We realize that by doing what I've preached about many times before. Build a purposeful, objective, and thorough vision of Him by studying the Bible and the created world. Then use that vision to practice His presence. Doing that, over time, creates a recognition of His supremacy in us.

Second, concede to His supremacy in practice. That simply means do what He wants. We learn what He wants by studying the Bible and listening to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit and our conscience. We then try and train the best we can to do what we've learned. We may not like doing that and in the beginning of our efforts may even complain and grumble about it but still we do it.

If we, as followers of Jesus, do those two things, the Holy Spirit brings a transforming grace and power into our lives. That grace and power slowly but surely align our will more and more with God's until finally ours becomes completely identified with His. At that point, what we honestly and truly want the most is what He wants.

That in turn dictates our experience and response when bad things happen to us. Believing that the Holy Spirit will work bad things out to achieve what Father God wants for us - and wanting what He wants - we have no reason to fret or fear and don't. We're at peace. We're free of striving, both inwardly and outwardly.

## **Conclusion**

Verses 29-30 close out Paul's discussion of the Holy Spirit's work in Romans 8. They teach that you and I are Father God's personal project. His aim is to glorify us, verse 30, by making us like Jesus, verse 29. That's His project and He carries it out through the Holy Spirit and the eight ways He helps us. With that in mind, listen to a prayer of the great John Baillie: **"Holy Spirit of God, visit now this soul of mine, and tarry within it. Inspire all my thoughts. Pervade all my imaginations. Suggest all my decisions. Lodge in my soul's most inward citadel, and order all my doings. Be with me in silence and in my speech, in my haste and in my leisure, in company and in solitude, in the freshness of the morning and the weariness of evening. Give me grace at all times to rejoice in Thy mysterious companionship."** Make that prayer of Baillie's sincerely yours. The Holy Spirit will help you and complete Father God's project if you do.