00:42 One of the things we've been seeing in our studies on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives is that the Lord Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to us to be our helper. And when we were thinking last time about what that means in relationship to putting sin to death, we thought a little at the end about **how much we need his help**. And in that light, it's marvelous to read on; and what Paul says in **Romans chapter 8**. And I want to ask you to turn this time to **verse 18 and we'll read through to the end of verse 27**. "*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay,and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."*

01:48 *"We know that the whole creation has been groaning, as in the pains of childbirth, right up to the present time. Not only so but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly, as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were save;, but hope that is seen as no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 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."*

*1st PRINCIPLE: GROANINGS*

02:46 How is it that the Holy Spirit helps us in living the Christian life? Notice with me that **Paul underlined several principles that are again important for us to understand if we are to appreciate what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives.** The ***first*** of them you'll find in verse 23. We could put it like this, Paul says, "**The *presence of the Spirit* in our lives is the *explanation* for the groanings in our lives.**" I wonder if you noticed, as we read this passage, that it's punctuated by groans. There is **a three-fold groaning** that Paul describes. There is the groaning of ***creation***, there is the groaning of the ***Spirit***, and there is also the groaning of the ***believer***. And notice how Paul puts it. He says "***We who have the Spirit*, groan inwardly, as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons."**

04:00 Paul is speaking here of the presence of the Spirit in our lives as the first fruits of the final harvest of our salvation. And he says a thing that I think is enormously helpful for us. He says, "*The person who has the Spirit as the first fruits of final glory, groans within himself*." The groaning of which Paul speaks here is obviously not the groaning of a backslidden Christian. Sometimes Christians have understood that every time we groan with a sense of dissatisfaction, it must be because we have backslidden; and so they will say to us (perhaps Christians have said this to you),”Iif you only had the Spirit, if you only *really* had the Spirit, then you would be raised above all of these groanings.” But do you see that Paul says these groanings are there because we have the Spirit. They are not the groanings of a backslidden Christian; but the groanings of a Spirit filled Christian. **It's precisely *because* we have the Spirit that there is a measure of dissatisfaction in our lives**. We can never be satisfied until we have reached the final harvest, and that's because we have already tasted the first fruits.

05:37 Notice, in the ***second* place**, that **this groan is not a groan of *despair*, but a groan of *longing***. I love the way the New International Version translates that here. Even the words sound so marvelous. Paul says, "*We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly*." And you sense something of the tension in his language there. We wait eagerly. You see what he's saying? He's saying **the reason for this groaning in our lives is because we have such an eagerness for the final salvation that the Spirit will bring to us; but, we have got to wait for it just now**. It's the Father saying to his son, "Now yes, it's all going to be yours, but you'll just have to wait a minute." And you see the child's sitting down in the chair and the child's scarcely able to keep still, because it's such an anticipation of what's going to happen. Paul says, "That's the way we live the Christian life because of the presence of the Spirit in our lives."

06:53 And you'll notice in **the *third* place** that **this groan is not a groan of *failure*, but a groan that expresses *assurance*.** We groan because the Spirit is in our lives as the first fruits (as Paul puts it elsewhere as the guarantee, as the seal, as the down payment), of the salvation that is finally to be ours. And as long as we have a sense that there is more to come, we are bound to be straining forward, groaning with a certain dissatisfaction that we have not yet entered into the fullness and the richness of final salvation. "There will come a day," Paul says, "when our Lord Jesus Christ will transform us (even our bodies) so that we will be changed from this body of humiliation, to be like the body of his own glory." When we catch a taste of that, we understand that, ***in this world we will always, in a sense, be groaning, not because we lack the Spirit, but because we have the Spirit***. And so Paul's teaching here helps us to understand ourselves and our Christian experience and what will be the result and the effect of the Spirit working in us. "The Spirit,” he says, “is the *explanation* for our groanings."

2nd PRINCIPLE: *THE SPIRIT HELPS US*

08:28 But the second great thing he emphasizes, and this you will find in verse 26, is **that the Spirit makes *provision* for our weakness**. “*In the same way*,” he says, “*the Spirit* ***helps*** *us in our weakness.*” Now the word ***'help'*** is rather an anemic translation for the language that Paul uses. He uses a rather complex word that conveys the idea of somebody helping us by doing something ***for*** us and, in a sense, by taking something ***with*** us. I suppose the best illustration would be something like this. You come across a great log that you want to take home and chop up and put in your fire, and so you go to one end of the log and you say, "I'll take this home." And you pick it up. Of course you're incapable of taking it home. You go to the other end of the log and you pick it up, and you're still incapable. And then someone comes along and says, "You go to that end, I'll go to this end and we'll both carry it home." Now, Paul is saying, "This is how the Spirit works in our lives." When we are too weak to cope with the strains and the pressures of what it means to be a Christian in this world, he comes and helps us in our weakness. Now, how does he do that? It's very important we understand how he does that.

10:07 Let me suggest he does it in two ways; ***first* of all**, he does it because his presence in our lives puts our suffering into perspective.... **His presence in our lives puts our suffering into perspective**. We do suffer as Christians in this world, but what is the Spirit doing with our sufferings? Paul has already hinted in verse 17 he says, "*If we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*" And he goes on, you'll notice, in verse 29 to speak about this, "*Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son."* And although he doesn't directly mention the Holy Spirit either in verse 17 or in verse 29, **it's obviously *by the Spirit* that God makes our sufferings produce *glory* in us.** It's by the Spirit, that the Father conforms us to the image of His own dear Son. And the Spirit uses the materials of our trials, and our afflictions, and our disappointments, and our sorrows like a potter working away with his precious hands, to shape us into the image of Jesus Christ. And when we see that, it puts our difficulties, and indeed even our sufferings into a different perspective altogether.

11:59 But, not only does the Spirit's presence in our lives put our suffering into perspective, **the Spirit's presence in our lives is a great encouragement to us in *perseverance*.** Look at the way Paul puts it here. He says, "*We have the Spirit as the first fruits*." And you notice why he says that. If we have the Spirit as the first fruits, then we already have a taste of the final harvest; and, **having had a taste of the final harvest, we long to persevere until we enjoy that final harvest**.

If any of you go fishing, you may know one of the classic works on fishing is Isaac Walton's book, 'The Complete Angler'. It was written in the 17th century, and there's a kind of fishing parallel to ‘Mrs. Beaton's Cookbook’, I suppose. But Isaac Walton wrote something more important than 'The Complete Angler'; he wrote about a friend who was an outstanding Christian in the 17th century by the name of Richard Sibbes. This is what he wrote, "Of that blessed man, let this just praise be given: *that heaven was in him before he was in heaven*." But you see that's true of all of us, if we have the Spirit. Don't we sometimes sing about this, at least informally, "*Heaven came down and glory filled my soul*?" That's what Paul is saying here. We have the Spirit as the first fruits of the final glory; and, having tasted that final glory already by the Spirit, we are urged on to keep going whatever the obstacles may be, so that, as he says in verse 25, "*We wait eagerly for the final harvest. And our hope (as he has already explained in chapter five, verse five) will not disappoint us because God's love (that love that dominates heaven) is already poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us."* **The Holy Spirit is the presence of heaven touching us now. and encouraging us to go on.**

*3rd PRINCIPLE: HELP IN PRAYER*

14:32 So the Spirit helps us because He is the explanation for our groanings, because He makes provision for our weakness and helps us in our suffering. But then ***thirdly***, notice that Paul says, "**The Spirit comes and helps us, particularly in prayer.”** And you almost sense that he's been building up to this because, after all, *prayer is the greatest* ***expression*** *of our need*. But you notice that Paul says something very striking. “*We recognize that when we pray, we are saying to the Lord, ‘Lord, there is nothing I can do, I need you*.’" And we might think that what Paul is saying is, "That's the way the Spirit helps us." But he's actually saying something more profound than that. He is actually saying, "***When we are expressing our helplessness in prayer, we are actually helpless to express our helplessness***.” Do you notice the way he puts it in verse 27? He says, "*The Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will when (verse 26) we do not know what we ought to pray (or perhaps, how we ought to pray), and then the Spirit himself, prays with groans that words cannot express."* The Father sees us down on our knees and in our helplessness. He also sees that, in our helplessness, there are often times when we are simply silent before him when we don't know how to pray---when we face situations, and we don't know what to pray. It's not just that we are helpless in praying, it's that **in our praying we are absolutely *helpless***. What does the Father do?

16:38 I remember some time ago, I guess, I must've had an evening class in seminary, and I went down to Roy Rogers to catch something to eat, and I couldn't help, at a table I was at, overhearing a conversation between a father and his son. The boy, who was a little on the fat side and, I guess, had been overeating to try and cope with his father. The boy was obviously not shaping up; and the Father was saying to him, "When I was your age... When your sister was your age... If I were you... What you need to do." And I almost sensed the poor little boy shrinking, and shrinking, and shrinking as his Father berated him for being so absolutely helpless at everything he did.

17:27 And as I sat there, besides thinking, "Oh, would that I could go over to that father and say to him, 'My dear friend, that's not the way to help your boy'". I couldn't also, at the same time, stop myself thinking, "How different my heavenly Father has been with me... When I have been helpless.... When I have not shaped up... When I have failed. Instead of berating me, when he sees me on my knees, he doesn't shout with thunders from heaven. ‘Why aren't you praying? Why don't you know what to pray for? Are you so utterly hopeless? You've learned nothing?’” "No," says Paul, "When we don't know how to pray, he sends his Spirit into our hearts to pray for us." Now, none of us understands this. Paul makes that clear. He says, "*The Spirit prays with groans that cannot really be expressed."* But do you see his point? His point is that these inexpressible groans issue from the Spirit. And the Spirit knows the mind and will of the Father. And the Spirit prays in accordance with the will of the Father. And the Father sees into our hearts, and he knows the mind and understands the prayers of the Spirit. **And so the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.**

19:14 It's almost as though the Father sees us as frail and weak family members, but he is determined that the weakest of us, the poorest of us will have a part to play in the fulfillment of his glorious kingdom work. And so as he looks at the weakest, the feeblest of his children, in the poverty of our praying he determines, I will have my child to pray. I will have my child participate in the advance of my kingdom. He sends his Spirit into our hearts and says to the Spirit, "Spirit, pray for those who are unable to express prayer themselves." And in that communion between the Father and the Spirit, the Father understands the Spirit's inexpressible groans; and the Spirit who creates these inexpressible groans, understands the mind and will of the Father, because he searches and knows the deep things of God; so that, in my frail Christian life, mighty prayer issues forth, and God's kingdom is most gloriously advanced.

20:49 When I was a little boy, I used to be taken up to the North of Scotland, where my mother's family came from, and I remember, as a tiny little boy, being frightened as I was introduced to one of my mother's relatives in particular, cousin Johnny. And then, getting over my fright, I became fascinated because my mother's cousin had had a massive stroke when he was a young man, and all he could do (really for the whole of his life) was lift a cup of tea, if it was placed in his hands there, to his lips. He could not articulate a single word in English. He couldn't move. The whole of his life he was helpless in a wheelchair….except for the fact that *he could groan*. And I remember watching mesmerized (when I got over my childish fear), as he groaned, "Uh, uh. Uh, uh, uh. Uh, uh uh." and mesmerized, because his wife would immediately come and *she seemed be able to understand every single groan that issued from his lips*. I suppose it was because of the bond of love, that she interpreted the groanings and gave him what he asked for.

22:18 And Paul is saying exactly the same is true here. **Because of the bond of love between the Father, and the Spirit, and believers, when he sees us in our need, and when the Spirit issues these inexpressible groans, the Father interprets them in his love for us and gives us answers to our prayers.**

22:50 You see, the marvelous thing about the Spirit is that **He works in our lives when we are weakest and poorest; and assures us that we are God's children, and that our heavenly Father will bring us, most marvelously, from the weakness of this world to the glory of the world to come**. **That, at least in part, is what it means *to* *have communion with the Holy Spirit****.*