

**Romans 8:26-27**  
**9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011**  
**Pastor Joel T. Sauer**  
**Year A**

**Help!!**

In the name of the Father, Son † and Holy Spirit! Amen.

Scripture's lesson for our meditation this morning is taken from the second lesson that was read for today, from St. Paul's letter to the congregation at Rome, chapter 8 verses 26 and 27. We read:

26 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.  
27 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.

This is the Word of God!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

How was your week? Was it a hard, a stressful, a hectic week? Did you have a tough time at work, trouble in the family, the doctor give you some unfavorable news? Maybe your week wasn't that hectic, but we've all encountered those weeks when it seems just about everything is falling apart, right? We've all experienced those weeks when we struggle with sin and guilt or battle with trials and suffering. At those times, only one word seems to rise to our lips – "Help!"

And it is our gracious Lord who gives us such help. He has given us the Holy Spirit! As we take a look at this lesson before us this morning we see the great Helper – the Holy Spirit, helping us in our weakness and also bringing our needs before the throne of God! So with that in mind, let's get right to our lesson.

**"the Spirit helps us in our weakness."**

Have you ever stubbed your toe? Even though your toe is a small part of your body, when you stub it, what happens to the rest of your body, what do you think about? Everything is focused on that toe as the pain shoots throughout your body! The same thing happens when we are filled with guilt over sin or go through suffering - our whole being is focused on that guilt or suffering. It eats us up from inside. We can't see past it, we can't see through it, we wonder how in the world we are ever going to get over it.

When you experience guilt over a sin you have committed – God's promise of forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ, seems almost impossible to believe doesn't it? How can that be, we might say, when we find ourselves committing the same sin again and again! Whether suffering physically or from mental anguish, it's hard to cling to

God's promise that all things, even the bad, will work out for our good. It just doesn't seem possible.

It doesn't seem possible because we are sinful human beings. We are blinded by our sinful nature, which seeks to put a barrier between us and God. Think of it like a wall. The sinful nature wants to put up a wall between you and God so that you can't see Him, touch Him, hear His promises. So what happens? God comes to you. He is the One who **"helps us in our weakness."** He sent to you, poured out upon you at our Baptism – One who will comfort you with Christ's forgiveness and with God the Father's continuing care – the Holy Spirit, your great Helper.

**"The Spirit helps us in our weakness."**

Every Sunday, you come and hear God's Word, God's promises. And through that Word, the Holy Spirit is active. He is the One who lifts you up so that you can see over that wall of your sinful nature and then He points you to Christ, Christ who died on that splintered wooden cross to take away your sin and guilt, even that sin you find yourself committing again and again. Through His Word, the Spirit also leads you to grasp onto God's promise that He will care for you, even during suffering, working out all things for your good.

When you partake of the Lord's Supper – it is the Holy Spirit who is working in you, strengthening your faith in Jesus. He is there to help you, leading you to believe the incredible blessings given you in the Supper. You receive into your hands and mouth the very body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins, the very body and blood which nourishes you and sustains you as you struggle with sin or deal with the troubles and pains of life.

Through these Means of Grace, God's Word and Sacraments, the Holy Spirit is there to **"help us in our weakness."** He is there by your side as you walk over the road of suffering in this life. He is there by your side, holding you up by pointing you to Christ's forgiveness and God's promise to sustain and care for you.

We cry out for help throughout our lives at various times – and help is indeed given, help found through the Holy Spirit working through God's Word and Sacrament! But the Spirit also helps us in another way and that's what we want to take a look at next.

**"We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."**

There are times, aren't there, when we simply don't know what to say to God. You may have found yourself so overwhelmed with grief, sorrow, or pain that you just didn't know what to pray for or how. There may have been other times when you have prayed and prayed for a certain suffering to go away and finally, when the suffering persists, you end up saying, "Lord, I don't know what to say to You anymore!" Even during those times, the great Helper is by your side to help you in your weakness. He does not leave you alone to fend by yourself. Not at all. You are God's child – you are a saint in God's eyes, covered with Jesus' holiness at your baptism. And so when you are weak in not knowing what necessarily to pray for – the Spirit steps in. He prays on your behalf with groans that words cannot express. When you can't find the words – the Holy Spirit speaks for you!

And who better to have as our helper than the Holy Spirit! St. Paul writes in verse 27, **“He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit.”** God the Father knows the mind of the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit knows the mind of the Father because they are One - one God! They both know your deepest needs, know what is best for you, better than you yourself, and will see that God’s will be done in your life!

**“the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”**

The Holy Spirit is not only there when we don’t know what words to say when we pray, but also when we say those familiar, everyday prayers. There are times when our minds wander when we pray, not so? We say the Lord’s Prayer or the Common table prayer at the beginning and end of meals so often that our minds might start thinking of other things when we pray. Or when we lie down to sleep at night and say our prayers, we may fall asleep even before we finish!

Now I am not telling you that you shouldn’t strive to be focused in your prayer life, but what I want to emphasize here is not to load yourself up with guilt when these things happen. Remember – **“The Spirit helps us in our weakness.”** The Holy Spirit speaks on our behalf and always prays **“in accordance with God’s will.”** When we question, because our minds wandered or we fell asleep, if our needs were communicated to God in prayer, we are assured that the Holy Spirit is our Helper before the throne of God! He intercedes for the saints of God, for you and for me.

St. Paul once wrote, **“For Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”** (2 Cor. 12:10) Why could St. Paul rejoice even when undergoing suffering and trial? Because when he was weak, when he felt the guilt of his sin, when he did not know what to pray for, when he suffered, it was then that the Lord’s strength was revealed and the Spirit helped him in his weakness pointing him to the Christ whose strength was His by faith. In Jesus, he was strong. With the Holy Spirit, He was strong. Blessed by the Father, He was strong. And the same is with you. When you weak, when the only word that you can utter is “help!” – it is then that you are strong in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Take that to heart, dear Christian. When you are weak, you are strong as the Spirit helps you in your weakness. He is by your side, reassuring you with Christ’s forgiveness and the Father’s continuing care. He is interceding on your behalf, as your great Helper, knowing your deepest needs and bringing them before the heavenly throne. Even before you say the word, the great Helper is there!

Thanks be to God!

Amen.

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