

Introduction: In our Philippians readings, Paul endured a triple calamity: imprisonment, the near-death illness of his visiting helper, Epaphroditus, had just recovered, and the danger of false teachers causing disruption from without and disunity from within. The reason Paul did not despair was because of the supplies of ongoing grace which the Spirit of God was committed to provide to the Philippians. God always knew just what the Philippians needed, and by His Holy Spirit's supplies as well as the prayers of this church, all "would turn out for Paul's deliverance" (Philippians 1:19).

Of course, God could not provide just the right spiritual supplies for every concern of Paul unless He were able to plumb the depths of every burden in the hearts of His people. But He *is able* to reach down to the deepest level in all of our lives, because God is the Searcher of Hearts, and His Spirit is the one who groans in harmony with our deepest needs. This is the reassuring word we turn to in Romans 8.

### **Monday: Read Romans 8:26-29 and Romans 3:9-19                      Primary Problems**

We begin this week by considering both the Spirit's groans within us (Rom. 8:26) and the Father's knowledge of every need of our hearts (Rom. 8:27). As we reflect on God's ability to read our hearts, my hope is that we will place more reliance on Him as the One who plants His grace and love within our hearts.

What is the primary problem God finds when He searches the hearts of people like us? God's searching knowledge of the human heart finds universal failure: we by nature do not seek or submit to God in our hearts. "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless." (Rom. 3:10-12).

Despite knowledge of our depravity, the Searcher of Hearts sets His love upon us (Romans 8:29) as the undeserving objects of His regard, interest, delight, affection and saving action. Yes, all these verbs can be used to describe *why* God predestines us in the first place – not because of anything within us, but because His love is a "foreknowing" love which must express itself by not only saving, but even desiring us before we were ever born! Amazing love indeed! Let us sing about it in hymn # 455:

*And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

*'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies:  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love divine.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;  
Let angel minds inquire no more*

### **Tuesday: Read Romans 8:27-29 and 1 Kings 8:37-40                      Hearts Searched**

To further remind us that God the Father does not merely love us from a distance, consider again today how Paul describes God the Father in Romans 8:27 as the One who "searches hearts." JB Phillip's translation captures the loving close-up involvement of God with our hearts as follows: "We do not know how to pray

worthily as sons of God, but his Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonizing longings which never find words. And God who knows the heart's secrets understands."

How wonderful that God can lovingly discern every one of our heart's true and secret needs, and that He is constantly scanning even the most imperceptible sighs and groans! One great example of God the Father's "heart-knowledge" is 1 Kings 8:37-40, where Solomon, in his great dedicatory prayer for the temple, prays that, no matter what calamity befalls any of God's own – be it famine, plague, blight or mildew, locusts, grasshoppers, or war – God would "hear from heaven, forgive and act..." But why is Solomon so confident that God will act decisively to help our heart's needs? It is because God sees and searches every man's heart in verse 39!

**Meditate and Pray:** Let us thank God the Father this day for His heart-knowledge of each of His people. Not only does He hear our groans for our immediate needs: He knows intimately all the needs which our hearts and lives will ever have. Sing with the Psalmist of God's loving omniscience of our lives and needs in hymn # 36 in our Trinity Hymnal:

<i>Lord, Thou hast searched me and dost know Where'er I rest, where'er I go; Thou knowest all that I have planned, And all my ways are in Thy hand.</i>	<i>Where can I go apart from Thee, Or whither from Thy presence flee? In Heav'n? It is Thy dwelling fair; In death's abode? Lo, Thou art there.</i>
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<i>My words from Thee I cannot hide, I feel Thy power on every side; O wondrous knowledge, awful might, Unfathomed depth, unmeasured height.</i>	<i>If I the wings of morning take, And far away my dwelling make, The hand that leadeth me is Thine, And my support Thy power divine.</i>
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### **Wednesday: Read Romans 8:28-34 and Romans 5:5    Hearts Filled Full**

The only reason we can have our hearts searched by the Spirit of God, the One who helps us when we don't know how to pray (Romans 8:26-27), is because Christ Jesus in His Ascension to God's right hand (Romans 8:34) has both *asked* God the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit on our behalf, and has *poured out* this Spirit into our hearts as the very love of God (Rom. 5:5). We therefore can say that the Spirit of Christ is the very love of God poured into our hearts!

See the link between Paul's triumphant assertion that "nothing will separate us from God's love" in Romans 8:35-39 and his teaching about the Holy Spirit's internal, heart-work of intercession in Romans 8:27. The very groans of the Spirit in Romans 8:26, coupled with the compassionate heart-reading of God the Father in Romans 8:27 – these are the proofs that nothing shall separate us from God's love (later in Romans 8)!

**Meditate and Pray:** Sing about the commitment of God to have His Spirit of love dwell in your hearts by faith with the help of hymn # 394:

*This day at thy creating Word  
first o'er the earth the light was poured:  
O Lord, this day upon us shine  
and fill our souls with light divine.*

*This day the Lord for sinners slain  
in might victorious rose again:  
O Jesus, may we raised be  
from death of sin to life in thee!*

*This day the Holy Spirit came  
with fiery tongues of cloven flame:  
O Spirit, fill our hearts this day  
with grace to hear and grace to pray.*

*O day of light and life and grace,  
from earthly toil sweet resting place,  
thy hallowed hours, blest gift of love,  
give we again to God above.*

#### **Thursday: Read Romans 8:35-39 and Psalm 136      Magnify His Love**

Amazing blessings God poured forth of old when Israel exalted His saving love. Consider Psalm 136's famous refrain, that "God's love endures forever."

*This most excellent sentence is magnified above all the truths concerning God, not only by the repetition of it here, but by the signal tokens of divine acceptance with which God owned the singing of it.*  
Matthew Henry

Did you catch what Henry says about God's "owning" such singing about His love? Consider these similar examples of such Divine pleasure:

In 2 Chronicles 5:13, Solomon has just finished all the work on the temple of the Lord. He brings in the furnishings, the silver, gold and the Ark of God's Covenant in 2 Chronicles 5:1-10. Then the priestly choirs begin to sing, praising God with that familiar refrain from Psalm 136. And what does God do? He comes down in glory in 2 Chronicles 5:13-14 so that none of the priests can continue their ministrations in God's house! "Lost in wonder, love and praise" would sum up the blessings of God's presence poured out on His people as they magnify His enduring love.

Second, in 2 Chronicles 20:21-27, Jehoshaphat leads Judah in praise and worship when, surrounded by their enemies. And what do they sing? They sing again of God's enduring love: "Give thanks to the Lord for His love endures forever!"

**Meditate and Pray:** What about in our day when we do not have a massive temple to God's glory to literally see His blessing upon us as His people? Don't be discouraged by the humble outward form of our worship and communion with God. For in the New Testament, God confirms His presence with us by dwelling in our hearts. There is nothing more potent in stilling the enemies of Christ's church than to magnify the greatness of God's love "poured out into hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5).

#### **Fri/Sat/Sun: read Romans 8:27-29, 8:35 and Psalm 104:27-32      Full Support**

What a loving team the Holy Spirit and God the Father make when it comes to helping us when we don't know how to pray and when all our hearts can do is groan! The Father reads with perfect, compassionate knowledge exactly what our hearts cannot put into words.

The Spirit adds His voice of infinite understanding to the thoughts and intents of our hearts. The result is that our exact needs are carried to Heaven with groans far more eloquent than volumes of human speech could ever express!

The reason the Spirit can with such perception sum up the groans of our hearts in interceding for us is that He was the same Spirit who created us! Yes, God the Father laid down the blueprint for our humanity and by His decree ordained that we should come into existence. God the Son as the very Word of God gave structure to the Father's decrees and framed all the creation by the Word of His power. But it is the Spirit who gives the final, perfecting master-strokes which complete and beautify what the Father ordained and the Son brought into being.

The Spirit is the Jeweler who places all the jewels of God's grace in our lives in their exact setting. For example, in Psalm 104:30, it is the Spirit who is said to not only create us, but to "renew" the face of the earth: "renew" here is a Hebrew word (chadash) which means originally to "polish" or "cut," as in making a sword look new by polishing. It can also mean to "restore" or "repair." That is what the Holy Spirit does when it comes to lovingly helping us in prayer. He makes our tired, weary ignorant and weak groans into beautiful sounds to God the Father! Observe a delighted set of parents with their little new-born: Every sound that little one makes, is a symphony to the ears of the parents! So the Spirit makes our weak cries into loving and perfect prayers.

**Meditate and Pray:** Sing with joy, knowing how constant God's loving concern for us will be in each unknown future situation – especially because the Spirit who created us will not fail to remind the Father of our every need:

*Through all the changing scenes of life,  
In trouble and in joy,  
The praises of my God shall still  
My heart and tongue employ.*

*O magnify the Lord with me,  
With me exalt His Name;  
When in distress to Him I called,  
He to my rescue came.*

*Of His deliverance I will boast,  
Till all that are distressed  
From my example courage take  
And soothe their griefs to rest.*

*O make but trial of His love;  
Experience will decide  
How blest are they, and only they,  
Who in His truth confide.*

Trinity Hymnal #624