Dear Reader,

I am new to producing reading sermons. So, if you have any suggestions as to how I might improve my format or what I include – please email me at cdanielwilson@gmail.com. **I will warn you, that I do not use short sentences**. I will endeavor to work on this over time, but I don’t naturally write that way. However, you can easily break most of my longer sentences into 2 or 3 smaller ones where I have “…” or “–“ or commas. If you do the work on making it into smaller sentences – feel free to email it to me, and I am happy to share your work with others. I do have some of these available which people have sent me. I will eventually make them available as part of the normal manuscripts.

I have left my sermon manuscript formatted the way I normally write and read my sermons. They are colourful and written in conversational English. If you are a grammar nazi – then you will be frustrated with my punctuation and phrasing. However, once you read it out loud, you will normally be able to tell what I meant to say. SERIOUSLY, READ IT OUTLOUD. You will also see that I use a good bit of bold, italics, underlining and different colours to signal what are the most important things to say, and also to make it easier for my eye to pick up my place in the middle of paragraphs. I would recommend that you keep as many of those things as possible to help you keep your place. However, you will probably want to increase the spacing between lines. I highly encourage you to commit as much of the introduction or children’s illustrations to memory as you can, so that these can be delivered to the congregation with maximum eye contact.

**Where possible, I highly recommend that you listen to the sermon as I preached it at either the Nelson website or the website of North Shore.** I recommend that because that will also help hear the places where I added or skipped over material in the manuscript, and the places where I clarified my meaning. I have edited bits and pieces which I thought most important, but I have not sought to include all the additional material that comes to me while in the pulpit. I would practically have to use a transcription service for that. However, I hope and pray that this sermon will be a blessing to you and to your congregation. To God be the Glory!

Blessings in our Lord, Pastor Daniel Wilson

**My Suggestions for the Order of Service**

Song before the service: #243c

We gather as God’s redeemed Affirming that: ***OUR Help is in ...*** *Receive God’s Greeting…* ***May Grace, Mercy and Peace be yours from God the Father thru Christ His Son.* Amen**

*Let us now Worship our God as we sing a* **Song of Praise** **#98B “Unto God our Savior”**

**Please remain standing to profess faith… *Using the Nicene Creed (Please be seated)***

**Scripture Reading – Lord’s Day #45**

Sing a Song of continued worship: **#253 “Once in Royal David’s City”**

We come now to our time of Congregational prayer, let’s bow our heads, hearts and souls before the Lord**:**

***Scripture Reading:*** *2 Cor. 4:7-18*

**We now have the opportunity to return to the Lord a portion of our FIRST AND BEST – as we bring to God, *His tithes & our additional free will offerings (Deacons)***

*Let us continue to worship as we sing*: **#349 “Breathe on Me Breath of God”**

Scripture Reading/Text: Romans 8:1-39 **Sermon Title: “An Encouragement to Prayer”**

**\* Song of Response: Psalm #351 “Spirit of God, who dwells within my heart”**

***Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be and abide with you all forever more. Amen***

***Doxology*: #531**

# **Evening Sermon: “An Encouragement to Prayer” Heidelberg LD45**

Text: Romans 8:1-39 (26-29) Reading: LD45, 2 Cor.4:7-18

**Introduction: How many of you struggle to pray?** I know amongst my own family – when I say let’s pray – we often have to speak to the children afterwards about playing around, or daydreaming in prayer… It can be very hard to pray as a young person – especially when you don’t know/understand everything that is being prayed. However, it can equally be very hard for adults to pray. There are plenty of times in our lives when we know that we need prayer – we need God’s help – but we struggle and fail to pray. At such times, we need encouragements to prayer – we need to know why it is important, but even more, we need to remember how God helps us in our weakness! And that is what we will be unpacking tonight as we look at an Encouragement for Prayer!

(**Review**) Last week, we saw the extensive application of the 10th commandment! **Coveting is setting your heart or your desire on something to the extent, that if you do not get it, you respond sinfully!** We covet things every day, don’t we?! As we saw, both the first and the 10th commandments act as “catch-all” commandments. Every time you disobey you are breaking at least 2 or 3 commandments: the 1st, the 10th and whatever other commandment you are sinning against! We CANNOT KEEP THIS LAW PERFECTLY! *Which is why we need Christ! We saw how the Law draws us to the Lord Jesus, and we saw how when Christ is our focus, we can change our hearts/desires to grow more godly.* We reflect what we focus on… when we focus on this life, we react sinfully. When we focus on Christ, we reflect Christ to all those around us! Therefore, let us keep Christ as our focus!

This week, we will begin looking at prayer as part of the final section of the Heidelberg on the Lord’s Prayer. We will be looking tonight, particularly at a portion of question 116 – **Why do Christians need to pray?** The Answer is this: *Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also, because God gives HIS grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking Him for them.*

We will be looking particularly at the concept of God giving us grace and His Holy Spirit for Prayer. Although, we will be taking a slightly different angle (off on a tangent from that subject) because I won’t be looking so much at what we need to do – but at what God has already done to encourage/equip us for prayer! ***As we do so, we’ll learn one central lesson/theme: The Spirit helps us in prayer where we are weak!***

 We will explore that under 3 headings:

1. **Prayerful Ignorance**
2. **Prayer empowered by the Spirit**
3. **Prayerful Confidence**

*Let’s begin with:*

# **Prayerful Ignorance (REPEAT)**

**As I mentioned in the introduction, we often struggle to pray.** One of the reasons we might not pray when we know we need to be praying – is because we don’t know what we should pray for!

 Paul highlights that need ***in vs.26 - READ***

 Now, we will dig into the aspect of the Spirit’s intercession and assistance in a moment, but the first thing I want to look at is our need. We don’t know what to pray for as we ought! Have you ever noticed that when we get sick, the first thing we pray for is to get better? *But what if that isn’t what is best for your soul, your family and your faith in Christ?* **Would you be willing to be sick if you knew that God had some greater purpose in it?**

Have you ever heard the old adage, **be careful what you pray for – you just might get it**? I remember my Dad warning people about flippantly praying for patience, because then they would get angry that everything around them was going wrong. ***Be Careful!...*** When you pray for patience, you are praying for what the Bible calls, “Long suffering.” The ability to suffer well for extended periods of time and still retain your faith and joy in the Lord! If you pray for it – God might just give you the suffering to make you grow!

Now, on the one hand – it is right to stop and think about what you pray for – because you don’t want to ask for things flippantly or foolishly. **But then again – it is good to want to be humble, kind, and patient. *You just have to realize what it means when you pray for such things!*** *Praying for humility* is praying for pride-breaking shameful situations. Praying for Kindness most likely will lead to heart-breaking opportunities to give beyond your means. Praying for Patience leads to long testing periods of suffering!

 *We sometimes know what we want to be and where we need to go, but we don’t want what it takes to get us there and change us!!* We want to be like Christ – but without the rejection, the suffering or the cross! But you don’t get to the gain without the pain. There is no painless exercise. There is no painless sanctification. ***Perhaps you actually should be praying for suffering!* You don’t know what you ACTUALLY need… to grow closer to the Lord. *So, how would you know how to pray for it?!*** YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT IS BEST!! IT might be that the VERY best thing for you to pray for – would be the death of a loved one, the failure of a business venture, or a monumental failure which would lead you to reevaluate everything!

 ***This is where it gets interesting***… because some of you will be thinking, *“Wait a moment, I thought this sermon was supposed to encourage me to pray?!* ***Now, I am more scared than ever?! And surely I should never pray for any of those things?!”*** *No… Of course not… my point is that you and I don’t know what is best.*

 **But the Good news is this – GOD *DOES* KNOW WHAT YOU NEED – and How you should pray!**

 Indeed, God has planned your life according to the BEST possible principles to sort out your needs and grow you closer to Christ!

*And HE has provided a help to you that is everything you need for prayer…*

*Which brings us to our SECOND point:*

# **Prayer empowered by the Spirit (REPEAT)**

**This chapter and our text overflows with the blessings of God’s Spirit!**

AT the beginning of the chapter, Paul dismantles any hope of mankind pleasing God. Because apart from the Spirit of God, we cannot hope *to know*, ***let alone do*** the things of the Spirit! ***But then Look back at vs. 8-11 READ*** You may be weak… but God is strong in and through and for you! The Holy Spirit equips you for life as the children of God! Indeed, in vs. 16 – it is the Spirit who bears witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God!

Then in the next section, Paul explains how ALL Creation is groaning under the curse for sin, awaiting the consummation of our salvation, when the heavens and the earth will be set free from the slavery of corruption and the curse. We too, groan inwardly with the suffering of this life – because it isn’t natural. Death and pain are simply parts of the curse – and those of us who are in Christ, know that the day is coming when death will be taken away – when sin and pain will be gone forever. *But that isn’t yet!* We don’t see it yet… **In fact, God still uses the attacks of Satan, sickness and death to train His children in godliness!** And that is the scenario we were just talking about under the first point… *But Paul doesn’t stay there!*

Paul quickly returns to the recurring theme of the chapter – the Provision of the Holy Spirit for believers! Not only does the Spirit help you actually live godly lives. He furthermore helps you in Prayer!

***God knows your weakness and has already provided the DIVINE solution! The Holy Spirit! Look at vs. 26 again***

When you don’t know what to pray for – The Spirit does! And He comes alongside us to help us in our prayer! The word translated “helps us” is a compound word. It means to help by taking the burden with the person who is struggling – the mental image from one commentary was that of a man struggling with a log – and the helper comes alongside and shoulders half the weight – enabling the first man to succeed in carrying the burden. The Spirit KNOWS our weakness, and He is there to help us through it!

***And there is more!*** The language here is emphatic – the Spirit HIMSELF intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words! Now some commentaries want to dig into what that groaning is all about and so on… but I don’t believe that is fruitful – rather, I think Paul is picking up the language of pain from vs.18-25. The Holy Spirit doesn’t just pray in a robot monotone – The Spirit passionately prays for us and within us … *and* those prayers are effective – and that is what matters! ***Look at vs. 27 READ***

So, let’s dig into the progression of the argument… The Spirit knows what you need. He comes alongside you in prayer to help you with that weakness. He does this in prayer to God the Father. *And God knows the mind of the Spirit or the subject of the prayers, because The Spirit is praying for the saints according to the will of God*. Those final words are powerful! The Spirit knows the will of God the Father (what He decreed from before the foundations of the World). **And so, the Holy Spirit, at work for us and within us – prays EXACTLY what is best even while we pray!**

**Picture this**: you are struggling – you need to pray, you are limping along in prayer – praying in the wrong direction. Praying for healing when sickness is what is best. And the Spirit Himself, comes to you in that weakness, and shoulders the burden with you – but He effectively and divinely prays what you should have been praying all along! He repackages your prayers if you will – to make them fitting according to God’s will!

**SO, you don’t know what to pray for… But you know this – that the Holy Spirit HIMSELF is at work in and for you to PRAY for what *is* best - - - You have Nothing to lose! SO … PRAY!** *For it will be translated and presented to the Lord as it should be –*

**AND YET…** *That might be unsettling for some… I mean, we would hate for someone to intercept our mail, rewrite our letters with what they think is best and then send them on****…***

***So, this idea of the Spirit interceding and praying for what is “REALLY” best could be scary for us… except for the next few verses!* READ vs. 28-30**

*And that leads us to our final point:*

# **Prayerful Confidence (REPEAT)**

**The final verses of chapter 8 are tremendously powerful! They overwhelmingly express the hope and confidence that we can have in BOTH, the plans of God and thereby the Prayers of the Spirit.**

 Indeed, What God has started, He has finished! **Not He will finish**, *but in God’s revelation of His eternal plan – those whom He has justified –* ***He has ALSO Glorified!*** As we see in Ephesians, we are NOW seated in the Heavenly Places in Christ Jesus! That is how secure our salvation is!

And if we are as good as glorified now… Should we fear the temporary trials… the “light and momentary afflictions” of this life?! And I hope you remember how Paul used that term elsewhere! In 2 Cor. 4, he mentions that phrase, and in chapter 11 he describes His huge list of suffering which he had experienced. It may have been hard, and yet, his conclusion was that when he was weak – then he was strong! **Why? How?! *Because He was confident and content with God’s power and plan!***

And that brings us back to vs.28 – It has often been used, and it seems too easy to say it in times of trial. But you know what – IT IS TRUE! We too often turn away from the AWESOME comfort of these words, because we say, “That is too easy to say – life isn’t that easy!”

***Which is true… to a point*... But God knows that – and then He sent you this message – Vs.28!**

He knows your weakness. He knows your ignorance. And God has provided a way to overcome that through giving you a helper in Prayer – who knows the end from the beginning! The Spirit knows the master plan, and He prays accordingly – guiding, prodding and leading us closer to godliness all the way!

AND FAR FROM BEING SCARY – THE MASTER PLAN IS AWESOME! AS we have seen again and again, throughout scripture from the life of Joseph, to the Judges, to the exile of Israel to persecution –  **God can use everything for our good.**

**Your success, Your failure, Your godliness and Your sin… EVERYTHING truly does work together for good for those who Love God!**

And THAT seals the deal for encouraging you to prayer!

Because God’s plan is perfect, God’s Spirit is helping you in prayer, and **God’s perfect will … WILL BE DONE!**

So, pray with confidence, and pray with humility… trusting that the Lord will provide what is best!

 BECAUSE HE WILL!

 **AMEN.**