

DEPTHS OF PRAYER SERIES

GROANING IN SPIRIT

It is the same power, which God released when He created this planet earth. But when we are in prayer we are in line and in tune with God to allow God's creative force to flow through our lives. God can create without us. He does not need us but we need Him. However God has chosen to do creative work through human lives from the time that He has entrusted this earth to man. He has chosen to release His creative power through human beings. And this came to fullness when the Spirit of God came in this planet earth on the day of Pentecost when God released a new degree and a new measure for his people to move into the realm of groaning prayer.

Prayer has a creative work involved. God does not do anything except that there is a release of that creative power before anything happens. John Wesley and other men of God have discovered that unless there is prayer God will not do anything at all. There can be no action unless there is first a release of His creative power. And there can be no change unless the creative power comes forth.

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Epaphras labors fervently for the Colossians in prayers that they may stand perfect and complete in the will of God. But Colossians 2:10 says, *And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.* They are already completed. But in Colossians 4 v.12 Epaphras is still praying that they may still be completed. Potentially we are already complete in Christ. Jesus' work is a complete work. The work of Jesus' atonement is complete. There is nothing more you can add to what Jesus has done. But for the perfect work to enter

into our lives prayer is the force that must be released. That is why Epaphras prayed. It is not enough to study the Bible in order to grow into this completeness. Bible study and acquiring knowledge has to be mixed with prayer.

Growth in perfection is fundamentally based on prayer life. It is the level and measure of your prayer life that determines true growth. You can't even understand the Word of God unless you pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation. It is only through prayer that you obtain this spirit of wisdom and revelation that enables us to understand the Word of God. Prayer and the Word go together and it is only both of them that is marvelous.

When you lack prayer you begin to falter in your spiritual growth. You cannot depend on others to pray for us all the time. We have to learn to pray ourselves all the time. It is good to have more prayers involved. A part of growth can never come unless you pray. Some people who do not pray or pray very little may be getting more and more knowledge but there is no true growth. Being perfected in Christ can only come in prayer. Prayer is essential.

Galatians 4:19 Paul labors in birth again until Christ is formed in the Galatians. Paul used the word *travail* or the Greek *agonia*. Paul worked for the growth of the Galatians in two ways: he did it through prayer and through the teaching ministry. And both need to go together. Sometimes some people try to reform other people's lives through teaching without prayer, which will never work. It is prayer that determines the effectiveness of the teaching. So both forces need to go together.

In Romans Paul shows us the object of our groaning, that is we groan for our perfection in the fullness of Jesus Christ, we groan for the perfect will of God to be done. And this groaning is a groaning in the spirit. Romans 8: 26 - the Holy Spirit helps us to pray, speaking in utterances and in groanings. Groaning in the spirit touches the creative force of God and it occurs in the realm of the depth of your spirit. It is like your voice box. It can be used within a spectrum. You can bring it down to its lowest level and to its highest level. That is the meaning of using your

voice box to its optimum. In the same way groaning in the spirit reaches to the fullness of that which is within your spirit and brings it forth to the Lord. When you pray in the Spirit you realize that there is something from within which is coming forth. Most of what comes forth is actually in the natural i.e. the air and the sound. There is a movement of your vocal cords and the lips.

Groaning in the spirit is praying in the spirit but at quicker pace than when you pray in tongues or in the spirit. When you pray in tongues or in the spirit you release your burdens a little at a time, slowly. But when you get deeper and deeper in the spirit, you begin to groan and then you release all the burdens at one go. It is like a tiger roaring. Sometimes this groaning is accompanied with tears but the end result is that the burden is entirely released out unto the Lord within a few seconds. The groaning process is involved in a creative process that touches the very basis of God's creative force. That is why we may not be able to reach the groaning straight away. You have to build up yourself to know the burden that the spirit is placing inside you and bring it forth.

It is important to realize this because there is a gradual process whereby you build up your awareness of the burden inside you and it is only when you are fully aware of it, when you really feel its weight pressing down upon you that you have arrived at this stage. The reason why some people still pray in tongues or in the spirit is because they are not fully aware of the weight of the burden that has been placed upon them. And because they do not realize how heavy it is it does not bother them that much. Just like a man who carries a quarter of a ton of bricks. He realizes it is heavy and he may be complaining about it. But it does not really bother him because he has the strength or more than the required strength to carry it. But when he really has to carry twice the weight and finds that he has no strength to do it then he lets out a loud cry for help. It is the same here. There will be a burden but it is not that heavy as yet. It does not depress you so much. You have to let the Spirit move in you and increase your awareness of the heaviness of the burden. Then only will you be able to groan and travail for the release of the creative power of God to bring about what God has planned and purposed.

Some people are foolhardy enough to start of their prayer life as if they are set for the grand prix or a 100 meter dash. They release all their energies at the very

beginning in praying and groaning but half way through they are already weary and do not appear to have the inspiration or the strength to go on. This happens especially when people want to do night watch. Notice how all these marathon runners start off slowly first. They want to conserve their energy build it up first before releasing it fully so they can run the full distance. And it is not beginning of the race. During the race they have their judgment and discretion. There are certain places where they have to go faster. There are places where they can and should slow down. There is a strategy involved.

So also, in our prayer life, we have to start our engines slowly. It is important to employ the right strategies so that we can move properly into the depths of the spirit. As you move into the depths of the spirit there are certain times when it is easier to groan than others. You may want to groan but you just cannot groan. You must then open yourself to the Spirit and allow the Spirit to build up the burden in your life and place the groaning into you. You will definitely arrive at the stage of groaning. Then it is that you have gone into the very depths of the creative process of prayer. The fullness of it is expressed in groaning.

How do I know that I have reached that stage?

Firstly, there will be a prayer burden that comes upon you. The word *labor* in Galatians 4:19 is *agonia*. Paul literally was saying that he was agonizing for the Galatians (*agonia* means to agonize). Think about what it means to groan. To groan implies pain. Nobody groans unless he is in pain. A groan implies discomfort. Spiritual groaning implies that you have reached the point when the Spirit of God begins to place His burden in you. You may sometimes literally feel the agony of the loss, the agony of the situation, the agony of a person's life or a ministry. So the first sign is that there is an agonizing in pain.

Genesis 2:2 On the 7th day God finished all the work that He had done and He rested from all His work. He rested and that tells you that on the 7th day there was a different operation from the preceding six days. God's Spirit when He creates something He brings it forth in the very cradle of creation that is the very fountain of creativity is operating. And something great is involved. When you reach that creative force you enter the realm where it takes something out from you. Groaning

in the spirit is different from worshipping in the spirit. Worshipping in the spirit is something very refreshing. But groaning in the spirit takes from you. You could come out from two three solid hours of groaning and all you want to do is to rest. When you reach that level it can even affect your natural body. The Bible shows us that when Jesus entered into this realm of groaning His body was affected. The very blood that dropped from him in Gethsemane came out in huge great drops. The blood vessels were so affected by what He was going through. He entered into deep groaning because Jesus had to give birth to all of the new creation.

Secondly, there would be tears. There are 2 types of tears - a) tears that are produced by worldly sorrow b) Tears that are produced by godly sorrow. When you reach this stage it becomes easy to weep and cry before God. The groaning affects your whole body and emotional system so much that it is easy to cry and weep before the Lord. Hebrew 3:7 Jesus offered prayer in vehement cries (groaning) and tears to Him who was able to save him from death. There are some men who because they are of the opinion that it is unmanly to cry, they learn to harden their hearts to keep themselves from crying. They may have experienced something that has affected them very deeply and emotionally like death and in order that they may be protected from hurt and in order to maintain their sanity they harden themselves up. But that is not the way God made man. It is unnatural. And the Bible tells us that Jesus Himself cried and wept. When the disciples reported to Jesus that some of the people thought that he was Jeremiah the prophet, the reason they associated Jesus with Jeremiah was because Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet and very probably there were a few occasions when they saw Jesus weep. He knew groaning and crying and tears in the Lord. It is the tears that express the depth of our involvement in what we are praying for when we are deeply and emotionally involved with a person and that person hurts us we cry. When you are involved deeply in something that you are praying about you can cry about it. You may not cry if you are not so deeply involved. The greater your involvement in the creative process of God, the easier it is to cry.

2 Chronicles 32:24-26 In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death and he prayed to the Lord; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign. But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown to him, for his heart was lifted up: therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon

them in the days of Hezekiah.

2 Kings 20:1-5 *In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.' " Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, saying, "Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord.*

It is the same story. Every prophecy of the Lord whether the condition is mentioned or not is subject to the fact of human will. Isaiah the prophet said that the king would die. But every prophecy no matter how authoritative it sounds or commanding or predictive in tone is always subject to how the will responds to it. There are conditions attached and you can change the prophecy if you obey the conditions. Hezekiah turned his face to God and prayed and wept bitterly. And the Lord told Isaiah to revoke the prophecy. This all show that every prophecy is conditional, that it need not happen. When God saw Hezekiah crying, He revoked the penalty. It was not just the prayer but the agonizing tears that moved the Lord to spare him.

1 Kings 21:27 The Lord spared Ahab because of his repentance. Ahab cried and he was the most evil king. But because he wept in repentance the Lord spared him and deferred the disaster to the reign of his son. How powerful are tears when they are brought forth to God in the right atmosphere and rightfully.

Thirdly, there would be an intercessory sensation - where you sense like you are one with Jesus' priestly ministry and where you sense you are one with the object of your prayer. It brings you into a deep level of the consciousness of the Spirit. Romans 8:26-27 *We do not know how to pray but the Spirit makes intercession for*

us with groanings which cannot be uttered. It is the Spirit who intercedes not just your human spirit that prays when you are in tongues (I Cor 14:14.). But when you move into groaning and you are so yielded to God that the Holy Spirit prays through you. The Holy Spirit literally takes over and prays through you. That is very powerful. And here there is a difference between praying in tongues and when the Spirit takes over and intercedes. The Spirit prays with groanings that cannot be uttered. He pours Himself forth in groaning. And He makes intercession for the saints. This is what I mean intercessory sensation, that is a taking over by the Spirit of our prayer life and the Spirit just pours forth and breaks forth and you feel like just an observer, not making any effort but allowing the Spirit to take over. When you pray in the Spirit the Spirit is there praying through you. But now the Spirit is praying for you.

And when these three things are happening and the Holy Spirit takes over the creative power of God begins to flow mightily.

Personally I have felt what it was like when I allow the Holy Spirit to take over. It was like a fresh fire that came down. I found myself praying and sighing and groaning and what surprised me that I had done nothing by myself to get into this area of praying. I was aware I was not praying but the Spirit was praying - through me with my own lips. I had not lost my free will. I would have stopped it if I wanted to but I chose not to stop it. It was different from praying in tongues because in praying in tongues I could feel the effort that was involved. But in groaning the Spirit literally took over my tongue and He just came bursting forth. I experienced the same thing that happened in Acts 2. That was a mighty experience. A takeover happens in your life. You become just a third party; there is no effort involved. There is a time when you have to stir the Spirit and there is also a time when the Spirit is stirring you. He is like a tidal wave.

