

A Spirit-Inspired Prayer Key to Birthing Your Destiny

When it comes to spiritual warfare—and intercession—many times we don't know how to pray as we ought. We sense spiritual oppression trying to discourage us, demons harassing people we love, or principalities settling over our city like a dark rain cloud—but we don't always have revelation about the enemy we're fighting.

When that happens, I always do one thing: pray in the Spirit—and I don't stop praying in the Spirit until that oppression lifts or until I have a Spirit-inspired strategy to wrestle against what's wrestling against me. I wrestle from a place of victory, but I don't wrestle presumptuously. I need the Holy Spirit to show me how to pray—and sometimes that prayer includes travail. This is scriptural:

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:26-27).

What Are These Groanings?

Notice that Paul wrote about “groanings which cannot be uttered.” Here he's talking about one manifestation of travailing prayer. The Greek word for “groanings” in that Scripture is “*stenagmos*,” which simply means a groaning or a sigh.

Of course, the Holy Spirit is doing the groaning through us. We can't work up this type of prayer by our will. It's a spiritual response to a prayer burden. Travail has to be

Spirit-led, or it's just soulish or fleshly. Nevertheless, travail is a genuine form of prayer that can break through when nothing else does. The Greek word "travail" is found several times in the New Testament (and many more times in the Old).

When Jesus talked about the pregnant woman who had sorrow in travail (see John 16:21), He was referring to "*tikto*," which means "to bring forth, bear, produce (fruit from the seed); of a woman giving birth; of the earth bringing forth its fruits." But when Paul was talking about interceding for the Thessalonians (see 1 Thess. 2:9), the Greek word for travail is "*mochthos*," which means a hard and difficult labor, toil, travail, hardship, distress.

Hebrew words for travail include "*yalad*," which also brings in the connotation of helping: "to cause or help to bring forth; to assist or tend to as a midwife" (See Gen. 38:27); "*t@la'ah*," which implies seeking deliverance from toil, hardship, distress, weariness (see Ex. 18:8); "*'inyan*," which refers to an occupation, task, job (see Eccl. 1:13); "*'amal*" which refers to toil, trouble, labor (see Is. 23:4); and "*challah*," which means to be or become grieved, be or become sorry (see Is. 53:11).

Travail That Brings Deliverance

Most of the time, travailing prayer is a birthing prayer—it births something you've been carrying in your heart that God wants to deliver. But it can also be a deliverance prayer. In this verse, travail is used in a deliverance context: "And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them" (Ex. 18:8).

Sometimes, when the enemy gets an advantage on us (see 2 Cor. 2:11), another person, or even a region, the Spirit of

God will lead you into travailing prayer. You'll serve as a midwife and toil in prayer to help bring forth God's purposes—to birth His will in the earth—which may also mean deliverance from the kingdom of darkness.

Many times before travailing prayer comes upon you, you'll feel grieved, heavy or otherwise burdened. Less experienced intercessors may believe they are under spiritual attack—and they may be—but it's often the Holy Spirit moving on your spirit to engage in travail with Him. Notice I say “with Him.” Again, you can't stir up travail in your soul or your flesh. It is Spirit-inspired. The important thing to know is that when you sense this coming on you, you need to yield to the Holy Spirit to birth His purposes.

Travail is not prayer led by emotions, though you may appear emotional as you enter travail with weeping and wailing and groaning like a woman birthing a child. Because of its intensity, some churches have relegated intercession to a back room in the church and essentially thrown the baby out with the breakthrough bathwater. But it's vital that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit when He wants to use us as a midwife to birth or deliver, even if you have to excuse yourself from the prayer meeting to avoid confusing those who are not familiar with this type of intercession.

Letting the Holy Spirit Pray Through You

With all this in mind, let's look at Romans 8 again: “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

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The will of God is to birth His purposes. The will of God is to deliver people from the bonds of Satan. The will of God is that we cooperate with His Holy Spirit, laboring in all manner of prayer to prevail in the wrestling match against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (see Eph. 6:12). Sometimes all manner of prayer includes travail. Amen.

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