

The Groanings of Prayer

Scripture Reading — Psalm 86

The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.
Romans 8:26

Do you remember when you first learned to pray? I can still say the prayer my mother taught me when I was three years old. We knelt together next to my bed: "Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me. Bless thy little lamb tonight. Through the darkness be thou near me, keep me safe till morning light." That prayer comforted me because I was afraid of the dark and felt unsafe unless I prayed—and unless Mom left the hall light on until my older sisters came to bed.

Some time later I said my first very own prayer. I prayed it for months after a Sunday school lesson when my teacher told us about our "forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." I was perplexed and worried. I knew the names of only three of our "four fathers" — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So after Mom or Dad went downstairs, I prayed earnestly, "Dear God, please help me learn who the fourth of our forefathers is. Amen."

Maybe I didn't have words to express my thoughts well, but the Spirit of God understood and perfected my prayers before the Father. A few years later I learned that God had given us thousands of forefathers and fore-mothers. They're that "great cloud of witnesses" from Hebrews 12:1, people who have prayed over the span of thousands of years all over God's world, in times and places of fear or suffering, hope or joy.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for your Spirit, who makes our prayed mistakes into meaningful conversation with you. Thank you for the Spirit's assurance that you always hear us. Amen.

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Printed on December 12, 2018

