



Sunday November 21, 2021
Laboring in Birth
Travailing Intercessory Prayer

We will begin by reading three Scripture texts:

Galatians 4:19

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,

Isaiah 66:7-9

7 "Before she was in labor, she gave birth; Before her pain came, She delivered a male child.

8 Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? **For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children.**

9 Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?" says the LORD. "Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?" says your God.

Romans 8:26-27

26 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.

27 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.

Some quick definitions:

Travail has to do with labor pains. In Scripture, travail or labor pains is used as a metaphor in the context of spiritual birthing (Isaiah 26:18; Isaiah 37:3; Micah 4:10; Galatians 4:19).

Intercession really means to go in between.

- Go in between man and God.
- Go in between man and the powers of darkness, e.g. Jesus thwarting satan's plans to sift Peter (Luke 22:33).
- Go in between man and situations on earth, e.g. Jesus calming a storm at sea, Jesus paying off a tax debt for Peter and Himself; Paul appealing to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.



Zion refers to the people of God. In the Old Testament it refers to Israel as the people of God. Zion in the New Testament refers to the Church, as the people of God (1 Peter 2:4-6; Hebrews 12:22-23).

In Galatians 4:19 the apostle Paul mentions laboring in birth again until Christ is formed in them, the believers at Galatia. We understand the scenario. Paul had initially led these people to faith in Christ. To do this, he labored in birth the first time. These new believers turned back to living under the Law. So now Paul had to labor in birth again, to see Christ formed in them, and until they matured on in their faith in Jesus Christ. The saving of souls into the Kingdom is often compared/referred to as spiritual birthing (1 Corinthians 4:15; Philemon 1:10). The apostle Paul went through a spiritual birthing process to see these people brought into the Kingdom. He personally experienced spiritual labor pains (travail) to see these souls brought into God's Kingdom. And now, for a second time, he is going through spiritual labor pains to see Christ fully formed in them.

In Isaiah 66:7-9, the "she" that is being spoken of is "Zion". Zion refers to the people of God. As we mentioned Old Testament Zion can be compared to the New Testament Church. Zion travailed, she went into labor pains, and then she brought forth her children. So, when the Church goes through her spiritual labor pains (travail) she will bring forth – she will bring forth children (souls saved into God's Kingdom), she will bring forth the purposes of God, she will bring forth what God wants to release through her here on earth.

In Romans 8:26-27, we learn that the Holy Spirit joins us or takes hold of together with us in prayer against our weaknesses. This intercession happens with groanings. The sighs, the expressions of inner spiritual labor pains, so to speak. So, we see here a connection between prayer and intercession with groaning, or labor pains.

THE WOMB OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

It is important to observe in all three passages that we, people, are involved.

Paul for the people at Galatia.

The Church to bring forth children.

The believer praying and interceding with groanings empowered by the Spirit.

So, in essence, we, God's people are heaven's womb on earth.

God releases His purposes, through us, on earth. This understanding is consistent with the very first commission in Genesis (which we often refer to as the Genesis



Commission). God created everything on the earth and then put the man and woman in charge to take of matters here on earth (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 115:16). The man and woman were God's representatives and through them, God would carry out His Kingdom purpose on earth.

THE PROCESS OF BIRTHING

We are familiar with the natural birthing process. First conception takes place. The woman then carries the baby in her womb for about nine months. During this time the baby is formed and developed in her womb, until the baby is ready to be birthed. And then just before delivery, there is a period, usually a few hours of contractions, and labor (travail) and then the baby is delivered.

The Scriptures use this process metaphorically to describe how God's people birth the purposes of God on the earth. Interestingly, we have seen that **PRAYER, TRAVAILING INTERCESSORY PRAYER, IS CONNECTED TO THIS PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL BIRTHING.**

As believers, we must understand that we must engage in travailing intercessory prayer

- to see souls birthed into God's Kingdom (Isaiah 66:7-9; Galatians 4:19; 1 Corinthians 4:15; Philemon 1:10)
- to see believers mature towards Christlikeness (Galatians 4:19; Colossians 4:12)
- to see the purposes of God released on the earth (1 Kings 18, James 5:13-20 Elijah on Mt. Carmel, Elijah praying for rain)
- to see supernatural demonstrations of God's power (1 Kings 18, James 5:13-20 Elijah on Mt. Carmel, Elijah praying for rain)
- to confront and overthrow the works of darkness (Ephesians 6:12,18)

Our goal in today's sermon is to break this process down, so that we understand it, and we will engage in travailing intercessory prayer, to see the works of God released on the earth, for our personal lives, for our families, for the church, for communities, cities, and nations.

THE SEED OF THE WORD IN THE WOMB OF YOUR HEART

We must first get the seed of the Word inside the womb of our heart (spirit).

We know that the Word of God is the incorruptible seed (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23).

John 7:38



He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

The word 'heart' is the Greek '*koilia*' which simply refers to the inner most part, the insides, and is used in many ways. According to Thayer's Greek Definitions, it is used to **refer to the innermost part of a man**, the soul, heart as the seat of thought, feeling, choice. It is also used to **refer to the womb**, the place where the fetus is conceived and nourished until birth. It is indeed interesting that instead of using Greek words like '*kardia*' or '*psuche*', which are often used to refer to the spirit or soul, the inner person, Jesus chose to use '*koilia*'. This Greek word '*koilia*' is translated 'womb' in many places (Mat 19:12; Luk 1:15, Luk 1:41, Luk 1:42, Luk 1:44; Luk 2:21; Luk 11:27; Luk 23:29; Joh 3:4; Act 3:2; Act 14:8; Gal 1:15). **The implication is, that if the womb is the place from which the flow of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit ('rivers of living water') will take place, then there must be a birthing process involved for this to happen.**

So, the first step is to get the Word of God into your spirit. This can be the written Word of God. It can also be a specific word which the Holy Spirit speaks to you. You let that Word (or word) grow in you. If it is a personal word or a prophetic word, please make sure you test it and are sure God has spoken.

Now, unlike the natural, where we know that it takes about nine months, **there is no fixed time duration for this gestation period, when it comes to spiritual things.**

Examples:

For your future, you take in God's Word, e.g. Jeremiah 29:11

For your family, you take in God's Word, e.g. Psalm 128

For nations, you take God's Word, e.g. Psalm 2:8

Similarly for other areas of life and ministry.

You must let the seed of the Word be conceived and gestate in the womb of your heart. We "*receive with meekness the implanted word*" (James 1:21).

God works in various ways. We are often taught to expect instant healing and miracles. This is true. But there is also this dimension of travailing intercessory prayer that we see in Scripture, which is essential to see breakthrough, miracles, and the fulfilling of God's purposes on earth.

TRAVAILING (GROANING AND LABORING)



And then God brings us to the point of birthing. This is where we engage in travailing intercessory prayer. The Scripture states in Isaiah 66:8 that *"....For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children."* Here again we do not know how long or short this "soon" is. The point is, Zion must go into labor pains. God's people must step into this process of labor pains through travailing intercessory prayer.

God's people must engage in supplications, intercessions (1 Timothy 2:1) and fervent, earnest prayer (James 5:16)

Here are several well-known examples of travailing in prayer, where deep groanings, emotions, and fervency were expressed in the pursuit of God's purposes:

- Hannah travailed for a child in prayer (1 Samuel 1:5-18)
- Daniel travailed in intercessory prayer to understand God's purposes (Daniel 8:27; Daniel 10:8)
- Jesus travailed at Lazarus' tomb, and was likely in prayer over four days for this matter (John 11:32-34)
- Jesus travailed and agonized in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane perhaps for about three hours (Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:24; Hebrews 5:7)

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

As we had mentioned earlier from Romans 8:26-27 that praying in the Spirit (praying in tongues) is one of the major ways we engage in intercessory prayer with deep groanings and sighs, labor pains.

In Romans 8, the apostle Paul uses the metaphor of labor pains in 3 verses:

In verse 8:22, he uses the phrase: *"..groans and labors with birth pangs.."*

In verse 8:23, he uses the phrase: *"..we ourselves groan within ourselves.."*

In verse 8:26, he uses the phrase: *"..with groanings which cannot be uttered"*

Hence the *"groaning which cannot be uttered"* that is mentioned in connection with prayer and intercession, in keeping with the image in apostle Paul's mind, is the groaning of laboring in birth, the labor pains.

Paul who said that he labored in birth again to the Galatians, was a man who prayed a lot in tongues. He stated that he spoke in tongues more than all the others (1 Corinthians 14:18). Hence, we can safely state that part of Paul's laboring in birth again, involved his deep travailing intercessory prayer in the Spirit (in tongues) for God's people.



We are going to make mention of several insights which we do not have time to elaborate but wish to bring our attention, to emphasize this laboring in birth, this travailing intercessory prayer.

ELIJAH PERSISTED

1 Kings 18:1,41-46; James 5:16

In 1 Kings 18, God told Elijah *"Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth."* (1 Kings 18:1). God Himself said He was going to send rain. Yet after Elijah spoke what God wanted him to speak, he went to the top of Mount Carmel and engaged in travailing intercessory prayer (1 Kings 18:41-46; James 5:16).

God had spoken the Word. But a man had to labor in birth, engage in travailing intercessory prayer to see that Word fulfilled here on earth. And James instructs us to pray in the same manner, fervent, earnest prayer.

JACOB WRESTLED

Genesis 32:22-32; Hosea 12:3-4

Perhaps one of the most intriguing passages in the Bible, is where a man (Jacob) wrestled with God (appearing as a Man). How this was possible, is hard to understand. Whether this wrestling was an actual physical engagement or was it entirely spiritual, is hard to tell. The Scriptures seem to indicate that it was both physical and spiritual.

Think about this. The infinite, omnipotent God, came in human form (referred to as theophany), and allowed Himself to be held down, restrained, gripped by a mere, frail, weak human (Jacob). He allowed a man to take a hold of Him and seemingly overpower Him. This is a powerful picture of travailing intercessory prayer. God Himself intentionally and willingly allows us, mere mortals, to take hold of Him and prevail upon Him.

We do know that part of this "wrestling", his struggling and prevailing with God involved, **his weeping and seeking/intreating God's favor** as stated in Hosea 12:4. Hence, we can see in this wrestling with God, the aspects of deep travailing intercessory prayer.

CONTENDING AGAINST POWERS OF DARKNESS

Ephesians 6:12,18



We also learn from Ephesians 6, that part of our wrestling against powers of darkness (Ephesians 6:12) is to engage in all manner of prayer and supplication in the Spirit, which is praying in tongues (Ephesians 6:18).

DELIVERING THE COMPLETED WORK

Colossians 1:24-26

In Colossians 1:24-26 the apostle Paul mentions how he made up for what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ, through the sufferings he endured to take the Gospel to the Gentiles and bring them into the Kingdom. While Christ's suffering is complete and sufficient for salvation – we need to complete the work by bringing or administering His completed work to people – delivering the message of His completed work to people. And to do so, we willingly endure suffering.

For Paul, as he states in 2 Corinthians 11, this included a wide range of persecutions and oppositions. It also included him being "*...in fastings often,...besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*" (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). We can from this and his statement in Galatians 4:19 conclude that his laboring in birth, engaging in travailing intercessory prayer for God's people was part of the sufferings he endured in delivering the message of the completed work of Christ to people to help them become like Christ.

WILL YOU LABOR IN BIRTH? WILL YOU ENGAGE IN TRAVAILING INTERCESSORY PRAYER FOR YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, INDIVIDUALS, CHURCH, COMMUNITIES, CITIES, NATIONS?

There are different kinds of prayer and ways to pray.

Travailing intercessory prayer is one of the powerful ways to pray to see the works of God released in your own life, for your family, for our church, for the Body of Christ, for communities, cities, and nations.

You are priest unto God, and you can and must engage in this kind of prayer.

Start where you are.

A, Put the seed of the Word in the womb of your heart. This can be the written Word, or a word spoken to you by the Holy Spirit about something He desires to birth through you for your own life, for someone else, for the local church, for the Body of Christ, for a community, city or nation.



B, Engage in prayer. Pray in the Spirit (in tongues).

C, As you pray, the Holy Spirit will usher you into spiritual labor pains, this place of groanings, sighs, earnest, passionate, intense, and fervent prayer. You may be moved to offer *"up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears"* (Hebrews 5:7). Yield yourself to the groanings and labor pains to see the work birthed. Stay in this place, until you sense the birth has happened, until delivery has taken place. Sometimes, the laboring in birth, the travailing intercessory prayer may take place over repeated prayer times over many days. Continue in it, until you know in your heart, the work is done. You may accompany this time with fasting, to help focus on the spiritual matter.

PERSONAL EXAMPLES

School days: Saturdays (Grades 8-12)

End of college: May 1990 (3 days)

Prior to returning to India: 1999-2000 (over a one-year period)

Over the last two decades: 2000-2021 (several times 6-8 straight hours)

This past season: 2020-2021 (June 2021, 14 days)

Currently: engaging for specific things

SUMMARY

As believers, we must engage in travailing intercessory prayer

- to see souls birthed into God's Kingdom
- to see believers, mature towards Christlikeness
- to see the purposes of God released on the earth
- to see supernatural demonstrations of God's power
- to confront and overthrow the works of darkness

SALVATION CALL

If you ask, does God love me? We can tell you what the Bible says: John 3:16, Romans 5:8

If you ask, how can I have my sins forgiven? We can tell you what the Bible says: Acts 10:43; 1 John 2:2,12

If you ask, what is the way to God? We can tell you what the Bible says: John 14:6

If you ask, how can I become a child of God? We can tell you what the Bible says: John 1:12

If you ask, where can I find salvation? We can tell you what the Bible says: Acts 4:12

If you ask, what must I do to experience salvation? We can tell you what the Bible says: Acts 16:30-31

As an act of your own free choice, we invite you to make this decision to follow Jesus.



SUPERNATURAL MINISTRY TIME

**Pray for Holy Spirit Baptism for the entire gathering
Then minister as the Spirit leads**



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

**Sunday November 21, 2021
Laboring in Birth
Travailing Intercessory Prayer**

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full-length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at our [sermons page](#) . Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship, and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture passages: *Galatians 4:19; Isaiah 66:7-9; Romans 8:26-27*

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together



Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

1, While there are different kinds of prayer and ways to pray – what are key significant “features” or characteristics of travailing intercessory prayer?

2, Have you personally had moments where you felt deep groaning, deep pain, when engaging in prayer for something? If it is not too confidential, share it with the group, what you experienced and what were the outcome(s).

3, How can we intentionally make time to engage in such kind of prayer?

4, Are there one or two things (situations, people, etc.) you feel that you should engage in travailing intercessory prayer? Outline how you would apply these simple steps we learnt today to that matter: (A)Put the seed of the Word in the womb of your heart (B)Engage in prayer. Pray in the Spirit (in tongues). (C)Yield yourself to the groanings and labor pains (when they come), to see the work birthed.

If time permits, each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share one or two key learning and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Encourage each one to participate and share.

FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey

Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

1, families to be protected and strengthened

2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.



3, for the BUILD TO IMPACT project - for God's hand to guide us through the land search and acquisition process, and for finances to be more than enough to get this project done.

Close by thanking God together.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Watch our online Sunday Church service live stream every Sunday at 10:30am (Indian Time, GMT+5:30). Spirit filled, anointed worship, Word and ministry for healing, miracles, and deliverance.

YOUTUBE: <https://youtube.com/allpeopleschurchbangalore>

WEBSITE: <https://apcwo.org/live>

Our other websites and free resources:

CHURCH: <https://apcwo.org>

FREE SERMONS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/sermons>

FREE BOOKS: <https://apcwo.org/books/english>

DAILY DEVOTIONALS: <https://apcwo.org/resources/daily-devotional>

JESUS CHRIST: <https://examiningjesus.com>

BIBLE COLLEGE: <https://apcbiblecollege.org>

E-LEARNING: <https://apcbiblecollege.org/elearn>

COUNSELING: <https://chrysalislife.org>

MUSIC: <https://apcmusic.org>

MINISTERS FELLOWSHIP: <https://pamfi.org>

CHURCH APP: <https://apcwo.org/app>

CHURCHES: <https://apcwo.org/ministries/churches>

KEYWORDS

Intercessory prayer, travailing in prayer, laboring in prayer, standing in the gap, intercession, interceding, wrestling in prayer.

REFERENCES/CITATIONS

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