

Partnering with Jesus and the Father by the Spirit

Part 2 - Awakening to the Spirit

(Part 1 – Partnering with Jesus and the Father by the Spirit)

(<https://www.adelphicare.org/documents/065-partnering.pdf>)

In the previous article we explored the idea that Jesus and the Father want to partner individually with us by the Father's Spirit. Now we want to progress this understanding in a practical way. I want you to think about personally asking the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Significantly this is not yet common teaching across our community. One possible reason is that many writers I have accessed from our community have assumed that the gift of the Holy Spirit automatically embraces the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts were evident and active in the first century ecclesia but are considered no longer evident today.

In the first century not every disciple received gifts or even the same Spirit gifts. These gifts were granted for the building up and sustaining of Jesus' first century church and Joel 2:28 opens the idea they will appear mightily again in the last days. What we need to clarify though, is that the gift of the Holy Spirit has a different primary purpose. The purpose extends not just to the first century and the building of that Church then, but to each disciple of every New Covenant generation – to you and to me. It is to awaken within us the spirit God gave Adam and his descendants.

God's new creation

From this awakening we receive a heightened consciousness of the presence of Jesus and the Father partnering personally within us on our salvation journey and we begin to live as God's new creation in Christ Jesus, born again of the Spirit. How God partners with us via this awakening of our spirit is beautifully captured by Paul in Romans 8:16 when he describes the joining of God's Spirit with our spirit. He says: *'The Spirit himself joins with our spirit(s). Together they give witness that we are God's children.'* (NIRV) ¹It is important to realise that Paul is speaking here to believers "in Christ" who no longer need to struggle and fail to overcome sin in their own strength that he describes so graphically in Romans 7:14-27. He is talking to you and me.

To understand this awakening and partnering we need a vital piece of insight about our human makeup that only the scriptures can supply. You and I are comprised of spirit, soul and body. Paul offers this understanding in 1Thess 5:23 when he says: *May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (GNB) It is awesome to realise that our makeup has these three dimensions and the writer to the Hebrews confirms this when he focuses on the power of God's word. *Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* Heb 4:12 (NRSV)

¹ The KJV translates the 'himself' pronoun as 'itself'. Much has been written about various Trinitarian translators' use of the personal pronoun (e.g. himself) rather than the impersonal pronoun (e.g. itself). My suggestion is less complicated. God's Spirit acting in our life as disciples is personal because the Father's Spirit can be grieved (Eph4:30) lied to (Acts5:3-4) and blasphemed (Matt12:31). The Spirit remains the personal presence to us of the Father in action but now under the bestowed direction of Jesus (John 16:14-15). Personal pronouns understood this way do not necessitate a Trinitarian bias.

Life dimensions

Clearly there is a distinction drawn between soul and spirit as life dimensions within us. They are not the same thing. Our soul is our natural person, expressing our unique individuality of mind, emotions and will/conscience. Spirit is first and foremost the life force of every living creature. Yet above all other life forms, humanity's spirit has something extra beyond the fundamental idea of simply being our 'life force'. The 'extra' is that Adam and Eve were uniquely created in the image of God. They and us have been created with an additional moral consciousness of God's existence, his power, presence and moral will. Even further, God has given us freewill to choose to reflect HIS image in our character and life so that we can live in godly harmony with him, now and forever.

Tragically we have missed this mark of being truly godly. You can see this in Genesis 6 when it broke God's heart to see that violence filled the earth and every imagination of man's heart was only evil continually. And the LORD said, "*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh;* (Gen 6:3) NKJV Despite God's love for us as beings created in His image, the majority of humanity apart from exceptions, has repeatedly chosen a different way based on the desires of our natural soul-self (i.e. our flesh) which is irreconcilably hostile to God's image (Rom 8:7) and is at war with his Spirit (Gal 5:17). Until Jesus came. He fully and completely chose God's way. As God's Son, he humbled himself and did not miss the mark of being truly godly. He put to death the power of his natural self so that he could reveal the fullness of God's Spirit which he later received at his baptism.

These insights about spirit, soul and body lead us to a vital question. What happens to the Spirit within us (i.e. our consciousness of God's existence, his love, power, presence and moral will) when our heart is given over entirely to living under the control of our natural, soul-self, our ego? The first century Christians had an answer. They had a saying which Paul repeats in Ephesians. The saying was: "*Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.*" Eph 5:14 NKJV. In this same chapter Paul is talking about the light bearing fruit (v:9) and also being filled with the Spirit (v18). I'm convinced that when we are living in the darkness of a life controlled by our natural self, the spirit dimension is dormant. Our moral consciousness of God's presence, power and will is asleep. Jesus comes to us by God's Spirit to awaken our latent spirit so that together with God's Spirit we can cry out Abba Father! As spiritually adopted children of the Father we can begin now by the Spirit to live in God's image.

ASK

Remember though our journey of spirit, soul and body is a partnership. If Jesus and the Father are willing to come to us, what then is our role in this? Jesus says our role is to **ASK** the Father for the gift of the Spirit. It is both simple and yet powerful and he put it this way: *And so I say to you: Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you... As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*" Luke 11:9,14 (GNB)

ASK the Father for the gift of his Holy Spirit. These words are linked to clear promises of receiving, finding and opening. **ASK** for God's Spirit each day because your natural self, rises too every day! So, my morning prayer is: "Father, I ask for your Holy Spirit to live in me today". These words of Jesus carry the same weight for me as any other commandments of Christ such as offering prayer to the Father in secret and giving to those who ask of you.

And in these verses Jesus is not sitting on the fence. He promises that if you ask you **WILL** receive and if you **SEEK** you will find and if you **KNOCK** the door will be opened. It will happen, yet in the context of his answer to Nicodemus where he compares the awakening of the spirit to wind, we do not know exactly how it will happen individually for us.

Confession...

But I have a confession to make. When, some years ago I realised the significance of Jesus' commandment I was still actually afraid to ask because I needed to work through the following fears:

- A fear there will be nothing there, it is all UNREAL - and it won't work for me
- The fear I will be overtaken by a power outside me that I can't control
- Fear that having God's spirit in this way will interfere with my plans for the future
- A fear I will have to change and give up things I like
- Fear I will fail him and look foolish
- A fear that others in our community will be so intolerant of me doing this that I will have to go this alone

Ultimately, I realised that the answer for each and all of these fears comes down to **TRUST!** I reasoned that either I allow some or all of these fears to so dominate me that I don't ask, or alternatively I **TRUST** the promises Jesus made that I will receive, I will find and the door will be opened. Jesus says that the gift comes from the Father so, yes, I needed to **TRUST** and **ASK**. You might be interested to know how all this unfolded! I plan to share this in the next article and offer some suggestions that could make a difference in the journey you are now taking with Jesus and the Father by the Spirit!

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