

Prayer – Understanding the Realm of the Spirit/spirit

Prayer, when properly understood, inevitably brings us into the realm of the Spirit/spirit, for the simple reason that we are communicating with our invisible God. Paul alerts us to this reality through his encouragement to his young protégé Timothy:

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. (1Tim 6:15-16)

This, of course, is part of the whole reason why Jesus, the Son of God, had to come into our world in human flesh in order to make the invisible God a visible reality that we could relate to in our current reality of time and space.

So, this realm of Spirit/spirit is one of the most misunderstood and daunting, yet dynamically necessary aspects of Christian living, because it includes both the Holy Spirit and human spirit.

Misunderstood, because it challenges our natural thinking, and *daunting*, because it challenges us to move into the invisible areas of faith and discernment. But it is also dynamic and necessary, because without the insights and power of the 'God-factor', we are left with nothing but rituals in a natural world. This is particularly relevant to our participation in prayer!

1. What do we mean by Spirit/spirit?

Spirit, with a big 'S', refers to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, whereas spirit with a little 's', is referring to our human spirit, which is that unique part of our makeup that makes it possible for God to get our attention.

And I say unique to humans because it is inherent within the human status of being image-reflectors of God. And for Adam and Eve prior to the fall, their connection with God was wide open and fully functional, but with the fall they lost that open line of communication through disobedience, now requiring a 're-boot' to the system, called redemption or new birth.

The word, spirit, is a translation of the Greek *pneuma* and the Hebrew *ruach*, and both words have the same range of meaning, either spirit, wind, or breathe, depending on context. Spirit relates to that mysterious element surrounding 'life' – at creation, *God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living being* – so it involves 'inspiration' – the breathe of life; but also 'aspiration' – those things that we long for, which God has planted within us.

So, the human spirit refers to that capacity we have as humans to receive intelligible and understandable information from God – a couple of scriptures to support that thought:

¹¹For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1Cor 2:11)

¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. (Rom 8:15-16)

And our human spirit is also that part of us that is capable of receiving those 'flashes of insight' that we all get from time to time –

- those 'aha' moments that come out of the blue and provide the answer to a problem we were wrestling through.

It is very helpful to understand our God-given make-up as spirit, soul, and body –

- As born-again believers filled with the Holy Spirit, our human spirit is God-aware, making us able to communicate with God
- Our soul is both self-aware and aware of others around us – involving our mind, will, and emotions
- Our body is physically-aware of the natural world around us through our physical senses

2. What does the Bible say about the realm of the Holy Spirit?

- This is God's realm
 - God is Spirit; his worshippers do so in spirit and truth Jn 4:24
 - Born into God's domain of spirit and eternity Jn 3:3-5
 - Our present participation in the coming age. 2Cor 1:21-22
- It involves intimate friendship with the Holy Spirit 2Cor 13:14
 - He intercedes for us Holland freeway Rom 8:26-27
 - He counsels and coaches us What makes Me different? Jn 14:16-17
 - He leads and directs us Melbourne Jn 16:12-13
 - He reveals the Father to us Harvest of righteousness Jn 16:14-15

3. Our challenge is that we live in two different realms simultaneously

This is the part we sometimes find difficult to recognise. We are regenerated spiritual beings in Christ, *new creations*, who are, however, still living in the *old creation* of the physical world.

- Outward and inward – 2Cor 4:16
- Visible and invisible – Col 1:15-18; 2Ki 6:16-17
- Natural and spiritual – 1Cor 15:42-58
- Temporal and eternal – 2Cor 4:17-18

So, to 'be in the Spirit'; to 'walk in the Spirit'; to 'live by the Spirit'; to 'pray in the Spirit' – is simply to be in tune with God's realm, which is spiritual and eternal.

It is not about geography but about awareness.

As born-again children of God, we already have the necessary equipment we need to be in frequent communication with our Lord and Saviour.

This is the realm of prayer – of our personal communion/communication with our God – It is intended to become a two-way conversation channel, not a one-way ritual.

²⁰ But you, dear friends,

by building yourselves up (present participle active) in your most holy faith and praying (present participle middle) in the Holy Spirit,

²¹ keep yourselves in God's love (aorist imperative active)

as you are waiting for (present participle middle) the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Jude 20-21