

The Fullness of the Holy Spirit for Life and Work - 7

"But you beloved, praying in the Spirit, build yourselves up your most holy faith" Jude 20

Bibliography:

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Review:

Session 1: On the inside, each of us has become a dwelling place of the Spirit.

Session 2: Distinguishing the functioning difference of body, soul and spirit

Session 3: Led by the Spirit: knowing the character and tone of voice and activity of the Spirit

Session 4: The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Session 5: The 'newness' of the Spirit [as against the 'oldness' of the letter]

Session 6: The Spirit given to the obedient

1. The advocacy of the Son and of the Spirit.

Romans 8 opens to us a glimpse of two intercessions being made for us. Both of which are based on our share in the trinitarian life of God. One is the work of the exalted Son, it requires us to think of ourselves as having an intercession done for us - in our place and in our stead. We may only participate in this intercessory work as, by faith, we see the great benefit of Christ praying for us from the perspective that we are *in Christ Jesus*. He makes us the object of His prayer.

The other of the Spirit, in which we have an intimate share and which is very much our own praying, can only be a participation as we see ourselves, by faith, *in the Spirit*.

[1] The intercession of the resurrected Christ, our great High Priest, for us [Rom 8.31-34].

Recapitulating the message of Romans 1.16 - 5.21, we have learned to take seriously that we are to know ourselves now as those who are **in Christ Jesus**. All that God has done for us and given us is in that God-man.

God is the good God who has good purposes for us in his foreknowing of us as those who are to be shaped to the image of his Son, He has marked us out in advance, called us, justified us, and glorified us in Christ Jesus. [Rom 8.28-30]. In the context of God who is "for us" and freely gives us all things, it is asked, "then who is against us?" Who can condemn us in this life? We learn that, as the elect of God **in Christ Jesus**, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Christ is our advocate. Certainly no charge concerning our sins can separate us from God.

It is just as clear that just as no earthly circumstances, no matter how dire, can separate us from the love of God either [Romans 8.35-39].

[2] The intercession is of the Holy Spirit.

This intercession takes place from the perspective of being **in the Spirit**. This **being in the Spirit** was a matter first introduced to us, when considering the weakness of living a victorious life over sin while being redeemed persons who are still inhabiting an, as yet, unredeemed, mortal fleshly body [Romans 8.9-12]. The Holy Spirit makes us the vehicle of his prayer.

There, about being in the Spirit, we learned that

[a] Being "in the Spirit" is certainly not being in the flesh, it is direct opposition to it.

[b] Its basis is that Christians are subject to the indwelling of the Spirit

[c] For, not to have the Spirit of Christ is not to be His.

[d] To speak of the Spirit within us is also to know that Christ is in us. A corollary of that situation is that while the body is dead through [the power of] sin, nevertheless, in contrast to this bodily state of affairs, the spirit is alive through righteousness.

[e] Consistent with the Trinitarian life, this same Spirit is the Spirit of the Father [who raised Jesus from the dead] who dwells in us [John 14.23].

[f] Then life may be given, by the Spirit of the Father, to our mortal bodies through this indwelling of the Spirit with in us.

This state of affairs is the basis for the exhortation that we don't owe it to the flesh to live according to the flesh, but rather, by the Spirit we are putting to death the [naturally sin-empowered] deeds of the body we shall live as those truly in the Spirit.

Following the finished work of God for us accomplished **in Christ Jesus** as the basis for there being no condemnation accruing to us now [8.1], we now must know ourselves as **in the Spirit**. Concerning this intercession, it is said that

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"in the same way" the Spirit helps our weakness in praying.

'In the same way' refers us back to the way the weakness of the flesh – laid out for us in Romans 7.14-25 – which was our state and yet, through the wonderful 'law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus', we experience a deliverance from this inherent weakness which was given to us through trusting the power of the Spirit to work in us a godly life despite our weakness.

συναντιλαμβάνεται – this verb, συναντιλαμβάνομαι followed by the dative, only occurs in the NT at Luke 10.40, [where Martha asks the Lord that Mary might help her,] and in Romans 8.26 means 'to take hold with at the side' for assistance [LXX Ge 30.8; Ex 18.22, Nu 11.17] and so means 'to take a share in, to help in bearing', so generally 'to help'.

While the first compounding preposition here, σύν, carries the idea of "with"; the second compound, ἀντί, has the idea of 'in the place of'. So the combination suggests a picture of the Spirit alongside, or with us, bearing in our place the burden that this 'weakness' means for us. It is a 'helping' which is given us by the coming alongside of us to assist with this inability that we have.

For, we don't know what we must necessarily pray for

The particular weakness, or inability, that we have is now identified for us by the following clause introduced by γάρ. It is the fact that we are ignorant of what we must necessarily pray. There are things to pray 'just as we must' and we don't know what they are. This tells us that prayer is not only necessary in the Christian life in Spirit, but that this necessary matter is encumbered by a powerful ignorance which is considered a weakness.

It reflects a state of affairs similar to the matter of the weakness of the flesh expounded in Romans 7 and 8. What we must find, as we are presented with there, is the moment-by-moment experience of a victory over the weakness. While our state does not change in the tension where we must live – it is that of living in the flesh but not according to it; so we might say about this present weakness, we must live in the ignorance of knowing what to pray, but not according to that weakness. And the remedy is the same; we must trust the Spirit for the empowerment to pray what we must.

But, the same Spirit petitions for us by groanings unutterable [unspoken groanings].

This same Spirit, as mentioned in Romans 8.13, empowered us in our inability to put to death the deeds of the body – now takes a share in the bearing of this other weakness that we have, the weakness in praying, so as to help us. The help He brings is that He comes alongside to bear the weakness, the ignorance of knowing what to pray about [the content].

The word used ἐντυγχάνω means 'to petition', or 'to make petition for'. It is the picture of an advocate, a paraclete - someone called to the side of a person who must make a case and needs someone to help them make it, to phrase it in the appropriate way.

The help of the Spirit is to make the petition for us, and the instrument He uses here are 'groanings that are unwordable [unspeakable, cannot be spoken]'. "A groaning" translates στεναγμός. It is a groaning noise that registers a feeling that is internal and unexpressed in words. It is a groaning which is appropriate for us, who are not finished, but He comes into us to live His Life in us as we live in the tension of our position.

We have already met this word in Romans 8.18-25, as a way that the creation, which was subjected to internal frustration - not by its own choice - now groans as it waits for the maturity and 'finishing off' of the redeemed humans. We ourselves are also groaners, because we now live, with the firstfruits of the Spirit's work happening in our lives, nevertheless we know ourselves not to be finished yet.

So there is a groaning going on in creation as it waits for us and we inwardly groan as redeemed persons who are engaged in waiting for our full sonship, which is the redemption of our bodies. So we are experiencing the "now" of God's kingdom with the parallel "not yet" also in our experience. This living 'in between the times' of the Lord's ascension and his parousia is the reason for the weakness we have. As to our state we cannot pray because we are not finished. As to our experience, in the Spirit we can pray because He will help us. It is for us, as in all things, a matter of faith.

Now, into this weakness, inherent to our present state in the time of waiting, the Holy Spirit is within us, united to our spirit and He helps us to pray what we ought; He petitions for us, groaning along with us.

The One who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is

The direction of our praying is not to the Spirit but to the Father or the Son. Here we see that God

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is the one who searches the hearts of men and women. This assures us that if our praying is difficult for us because of our weakness, then our heart is known and open to God. He sees what we have at the centre of our interest; he knows our best desires.

This means, amongst other things, that when we pray, even as we are helped by the Spirit, we are not praying to inform God what is on our heart. We can assume that He knows that. He looks into our being and has no need for our prayer to speak our heart to Him. That is not a matter upon which our weakness impinges – for the simple reason that the knowledge of our heart's desires are already searched out and known to our Father.

*Because the mind of the Spirit petitions on behalf of the saints according to God
'according to God'*

Nor do we need to worry that God who searches our hearts would have any difficulties in knowing what the mind of the Spirit is either. That is one matter we can be assured about for, as three Persons they are One.

It is out of the inner Life of the Trinity that the mind of the Spirit is already the mind of God; The Spirit's mind is 'according to God'. It is a function of the Life of God that there is Unity of mind and will. That is, the One who searches our hearts, knows what the mind of the Spirit is because it is His mind – one and the same. It is because the Spirit Himself is God, that we have a paraclete within us Who, shares in the unity of will and mind of God the holy Trinity. It is God addressing God that is happening within us.

'on behalf of the saints'

The petitions of the Spirit are what we are trusting in as we make our prayers to God. Because the weakness we have is that while we 'must pray', we don't know what to pray. This is another way of saying that we don't know how to pray "according to the will of God". Well, the Spirit does exactly that! And as we trust Him to groan with us, and as we open our mouth to speak to God, we will know the experience – still being in our state of weakness – of praying according to the will of God. We shall be praying 'in the Spirit' [Eph 6.18; Jude 20] and not in the flesh.

This has the following implications for the way we pray:

[1] We need to acknowledge our inability to pray what it is we ought to pray - particularly as to content. We must not think that we can do this 'in the flesh' - driven by our own effort. Conversely, we must not kick ourselves that we can't do it - it is a product of the times in which God has called us to live.

[2] Prayer is matter of faith. It is a trust in the Person of God present to us which looks away from ourselves and centres our expectation upon Him; the Spirit of the Father and the Son. We can only be exhorted to pray according to the will of God if we can in faith do so.

[3] We must pray then, 'in the Spirit' always. Which means looking for His help, looking to Him as an indwelling One.

[4] The desire to pray is ours, even though we are open even here, to have our desires affected by the same Spirit. He can and does motivate us. Our part is to accept to know ourselves as people who are now 'in the Spirit'.

[5] In knowing what to pray, we must let the Life of God be the basis of our trust that prayer can be done in the current weakness of the 'groaning times' we live in.

Our gracious Father, You have by your great power raised Jesus our Lord from the dead after He had laid down his holy life for us.

Lord Jesus, in You lies all our treasure; You are our wisdom, sanctification and redemption. By your holy Life, words and works, death and resurrection and in your ascension, You have worked all things for us. We are thankful to be found "in Christ Jesus" to be delivered from all our efforts, self help and pride of life. Our whole hope is founded on You.

Thank You for your prayer to the Father that He would send us a paraclete Who is to us God the live-giving Spirit.

Father, as we live "in the Spirit" knowing and experiencing what You have done for us "in Christ Jesus" - energise us, bear our weakness, as we pray always 'in the Spirit'. Encourage us to build ourselves up in our holy faith in this way. Draw us to have desire to pray, to call upon your Name.

Thank You that you see our hearts, You know the mind of the Spirit, and that we can pray according to the will of God. Keep us in this resolve for we call upon You in Jesus' name. Amen.

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There are Christian ways of thinking.

[1] These include the distinguishing of difference [differentiating] without losing the connected/integrated unity of the reality.

We see this in the use of the homoousios where the Son is differentiated from the Father as to Person, but of one essential Being with the Father. This Christological understanding leads us also to the Trinitarian thinking of the Father Son and Spirit as being differentiated as their Persons, but being one God in Unity.

Similarly the perichoretic relations of the Trinity of the Persons is not stated without the care to guard their Unity of Being.

[2] Avoiding dualisms

This meant that some of the early Christians were careful to not follow the Greek [Plato's and Aristotle's] way of thinking which led to a dualistic way of hardening things that differ.

This form of thinking first made distinctions, but then this led to separations; the things distinguished were often divided from one another.

This was really an arrogant way to think because it made the mind of the thinker as the central matter of any inquiry. It was thinking from a centre from within ourselves. It was a fallen, self referred way to think about a reality outside of ourselves.

It had the effect of dominating the object being considered; and so conceiving it, not in a way that let the nature of the thing [reality] govern how we thought about it, but making the perception of it simply according to the way that we think, based upon what we see to distinguish.

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