

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

By Keith Greer

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” {Romans 8:14-17}

No subject is more misunderstood by the majority of the religious world than the Holy Spirit’s relationship with the true believer. The above passage has been the subject of much wresting and twisting to teach things contrary to the truth revealed in the pages of the sacred text. Please note the statement, **“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit.”** In what manner does our inner spirit share in a conversation with the Holy Spirit? Clearly, the discussion includes both. Let us see if we can make some sense of the misunderstanding of the false teachers of our day.

The Holy Spirit’s Work. *“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” {1 Corinthians 1:10-12}* Man’s spirit could not have known the Divine wisdom from above—it had to be revealed to him. This testimony was God’s part in the conversation with His creation. Yet, if man’s spirit is unwilling to accept the Holy Spirit’s testimony, then it was all in vain. God’s spirit reveals, but man’s spirit must receive. The Holy Spirit testifies of God, and man’s spirit testifies what is within man. Another man cannot read my mind; nor can I read God’s mind. God directs His people through the Holy Spirit’s testimony, and in order to please Him, we must render obedience to that direction.

How the Spirit and Our Spirit Speak. The Spirit has always been associated with God’s revelation. *“Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.” {Nehemiah 9:30}* God’s prophets did not speak their own thoughts and desires. *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” {2 Peter 1:20,21}* Concerning what subjects did they speak? One was salvation: *“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.” {1 Peter 1:10-12}* In His final instructions to them prior to His death on the cross, Jesus promised His apostles a full revelation of His will. Please read very carefully the special promise made to His apostles prior to His betrayal and crucifixion in *John 14-16*. God was going to perform a special work on the apostles to enable them to do the work. He was trying to prepare them to accomplish His will, after He went back to the Father in heaven.

God has never forced mankind to accept what He revealed. We must choose whether to accept or reject it. Please read *1 Peter 3:21; Hebrews 10:22; and Acts 23:1; 24:16*. Only by adhering to this testimony, can we know we are actually walking with God. God never intended or determined that man would not have the “evidence and testimony” needed in order to know His demands on their lives. Each individual is responsible to give this “evidence” a fair hearing and then make a choice whether to receive it or reject it.

In the next article, we see how to make practical application of the phrase, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit.” ***