

## Sermon Soup

*A Chance To Savor the Experience*

### Soup Starter:

We have our first ingredient for a soup. This person writes:

You talk about the Holy Spirit as a person, but our definition of a "person" is a physical being. You talk about the Spirit coming inside us, but a person can't do that. A "spirit" I could see, but either you have to redefine person, or... I don't get it."

### Simmer & Serve:

Well, couldn't we have started out with something easy, like how many apostles were at the Last Supper or something???

Okay, let's start with definitions. Merriam Webster Online Dictionary defines person as follows:

- 1 : **HUMAN, INDIVIDUAL** —sometimes used in combination especially by those who prefer to avoid *man* in compounds applicable to both sexes <spokesperson>
- 2 : a character or part in or as if in a play
- 3 **a** : one of the three modes of being in the Trinitarian Godhead as understood by Christians **b** : the unitary personality of Christ that unites the divine and human natures
- 4 **a** *archaic* : bodily appearance **b** : the **body** of a human being; *also* : the body and clothing <unlawful search of the person>
- 5 : the personality of a human being : **SELF**

Notice a couple of things. Person is used to describe an individual. Yes, Webster specifies human, but we won't hold that against them. They make up for it in # 3, anyway. And notice that #4 specifically says that limiting the concept of personhood to physical human existence is "archaic", or outdated. #5 is perhaps the most useful for this discussion; the personality of a human being. If it is true that we are made in God's image, then that personality is a reflection of the person-hood and personality of God.

Now, let's look at spirit, again from Merriam Webster:

- 1 : an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms
- 4 : the immaterial intelligent or sentient part of a person

I especially like #4 (the 2 in the middle were not very helpful, so I skipped them!). If we think of spirit as the sentient part of a person, or that which makes a being "a person", that sounds a lot like the definition of person, and we already share that spirit existence with God. It was, in fact, God who created that spirit in us, again as a reflection of God's own Spirit. So, since we are spiritual beings in physical bodies, created by a spiritual Being unlimited by physical existence, we are more like God than we usually perceive. The concept of God's Spirit being able to commune with ours doesn't seem that big of a stretch, after all.

It is our fallen-ness, not our physical existence, that gets in the way of communing with God's Spirit. Before sin entered our world, human beings were in such a relationship with our creator that we could "walk in the cool of the day" together. Sin is what caused the break in that relationship. Sin separated our personalities from the Person of God. And that is where the presence of the Holy Spirit in our own being is so important.

Through sin, our spirits, as well as our physical existence, are twisted almost beyond recognition. In Wesleyan terminology, the image of God created in us was almost crushed beyond any possibility of survival. If not for the grace of God it would have been, but God's Prevenient Grace sustained just enough of the "*imago Dei*" within us that we are able to respond to God's calling our name. Just enough so that we can realize our need and say yes to God's invitation to intimate relationship. And from that moment on, the connection between our spirit and God's Spirit is restored, so that it is the Spirit of God "bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Romans 8:16).

So, we are born with God's Spirit already having a foothold in us; when we accept Christ as our Lord & Savior, we allow God to expand that foothold and begin the process of filling us with his presence. It is the absence of the fullness of God in our lives that is "un-natural", at least according to God's original plan for us. Being filled with the Spirit is what we were made for!

Please write back if you want to continue this conversation, or begin a new one!