

Ancient Faith Part X

"I believe in the Holy Spirit"



Trinity Baptist Students

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The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to the dead.
On the third day He rose again;
He ascended into Heaven,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
And He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church (the word catholic means "universal")
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

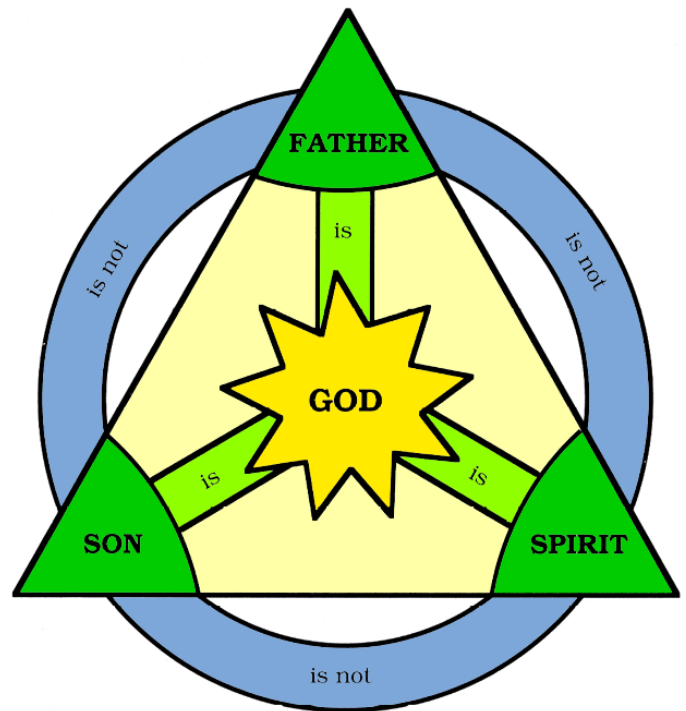
Who Is The Holy Spirit?

We have, earlier in this study discussed the Trinity. And here we need to do so again.

There are things about God that are beyond explaining. This makes sense because if I could explain God completely then He wouldn't be very immense. Simply put, His existence is beyond our understanding.

In Scripture, God reveals Himself to be one God who exists in three persons. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three separate persons who are one being. They are all co-equal and co-eternal. This means that Father, Son, and Spirit are all equal. One is not greater than the other. This also means that the three persons of God have always existed. We see this in Matt. 28:19, John 1:1, 5:18, 8:58, 10:33, 19:7, 12:41+Isa 6, Rom 14:11, 2 Cor13:14, Phil 2:1-2, 9-11, Rev. 22:3, Gen. 1:26 and other places.

I know that this is difficult to understand. We exist in a way that is much different. For us, only one person can exist in our one being, but it is not so with God. We simply struggle to understand how one God can exists in three persons. J.I. Packer, one of the world's leading and most intelligent theologians for over 50 years said it this way,



"How the one eternal God is eternally both singular and plural, how Father, Son, and Spirit are personally distinct yet essentially one (so that tritheism, belief in three gods who are one, and Unitarianism, belief in one God who is not three, are both wrong), is more than we can know, and any attempt to "explain" it—to dispel the mystery by reasoning, as distinct from confessing it from Scripture—is bound to falsify it. Here, as elsewhere, our God is too big for his creature's little minds." - J.I. Packer, *Affirming the Apostles' Creed*, p. 34, 2008

For him to say this should let you know that you are not alone in your struggle to understand.

Explain as best you can, the doctrine of the Trinity.

Who is the First Person of the Trinity? _____

Who is the Second Person of the Trinity? _____

Who is the Third Person of the Trinity? _____

So, the Holy Spirit is God. He is the Third Person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit And The Wind

The work of the Holy Spirit is all around us, yet it is sometimes difficult to see. J.I. Packer put it this way,

The key to understanding the New Testament view of the Spirit's work is to see that the purpose is identical with the Father's—namely, to see glory and praise come to the Son.—J.I. Packer, *Affirming the Apostles' Creed*, pp. 114-115

Read John 16:12-15. What does Jesus say that the Spirit will do when He comes?

Who will God the Holy Spirit glorify?_____

We read less of the working of God the Holy Spirit in Scripture. We know much about what the Holy Spirit does, but we know much more about what God the Son has done. But, doesn't this make sense.

If God the Holy Spirit is making much of Christ doesn't this just make sense.

So, this means that the work that we find God the Holy Spirit doing out in the world and in people will seem less obvious to most people.

Jesus speaks of this less obvious nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in a discussion with Nicodemus (John 3:6-7). In it what does He compare the work of the Holy Spirit to? _____

Why? _____



I remember quite a few times in my life that I have seen the effects of strong winds. I have seen leaves, trash, signs, and trees blow around in the wind. But do you know what I've never actually seen. I've never actually seen wind. I've only seen what it does. The Holy Spirit comes to us in much the same way. I don't see the Holy Spirit working, but I oftentimes see the effects of His Work.

The Holy Spirit and the New Birth

When discussing the work of the Holy Spirit Jesus says that no one can “see the kingdom of God” without “being born again” (John 3:3 NASB). In other words people lack the ability to see the Kingdom of God without the work of the Holy Spirit.

Why would Jesus say this? Well, it is because of the disposition of people.

We read in Scripture that everyone sins and falls short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). But, Paul points out in the previous 2 1/2 chapters that this is all of us. We have all fallen short. We have all lived in sinful rebellion against God.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:14. Is a person able to place their faith in Christ on their own?

This is not a new idea. It is found in the Old Testament as well. In Jeremiah 2:13 it is proclaimed that a leopard is just as likely to change his own spots as a person who is accustomed to do evil begin to do good.

How then does a person place their faith in Christ? Colossians 2:13 and Titus 3:3 hold the answer to this question. Read those passages and describe these believers’ life change. What happened?

Go back to John 3. Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus is enlightening. Read John 3:1-8 and state who it is that provides the miracle of the New Birth. What does a person do when they are “born again”? _____

The Holy Spirit and the Rest of Your Life

The New Birth is a miraculous work of God accomplished by Him and Him alone. But that is not the end of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life. This whole section is concerned with the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

The Holy Spirit is at work in the believer for the rest of their life. He is given to the believer as a surety. The Holy Spirit is a seal given to us as a deposit that guarantees that what God has said that He will do He will do (2 Corinthians 1:22).

And God is at work in the believer conforming us to "the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29) through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Read Philippians 2:13 and tell me who it is that is at work in the believer during their life? _____

As R.C. Sproul put it,

"The work of the Holy Spirit does not end with regeneration. He does not quicken a person and leave the rest of the Christian life to the person's abilities to learn and morally reform. Regeneration is only the beginning. The goal is conformity to the image of Christ. The Christian is called to mature in obedience and righteousness. This maturing process is also accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. The power to grow into holiness, which is what sanctification means, is initiated, sustained, and completed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enters the life of a believer to aid him or her in becoming holy."-- R.C. Sproul, *What We Believe*, p.178

How Does the Spirit Conform Us?

This is the question that we will be concerned with throughout the rest of the study of the Apostles' Creed. That is what the end of the Creed is about. We are conformed to the image of His Son through the work of the Holy Spirit in us as we are a part of the "Church" and "communion of saints". We grow in holiness as we hear God's Word preached to us in church and grow in holiness among God's people.

The Holy Spirit exalts and points us to Christ in our lives. He convicts us of sin and points us again and again to that fount where we found "forgiveness of sins" in Christ. And this will be done in believers until the "Resurrection of the body and the life everlasting".

It seems so ordinary doesn't it.

You see, the work of the new birth is done by God and God alone through the Holy Spirit. But in sanctification, or growth in holiness we are at war with the sin in us. God the Holy Spirit is working with us in our growth in holiness.

There is a conflict between the natural inclination to sin that characterizes the old man and the desire to please God that characterizes the new man."--R.C. Sproul, *What We Believe*, p.178

This is the war that is waged within and in it we are aided by the work of the Holy Spirit.

R. Dwain Minor