

I Believe in God, the Holy Spirit

SCOTT HOEZEE

Many of us have known someone who was the ultimate behind-the-scenes kind of person; whenever something in the church needed to be done, Marge was always there to bake the pies, organize the rummage sale, clean up the kitchen, provide transportation for someone without a car. Marge was a holy blur of activity, but always behind the scenes. She never wanted the limelight or any recognition; she just wanted to help everything run smoothly. The Holy Spirit is like that; and today on *Groundwork*, we think about the line from the Apostles' Creed: I believe in the Holy Spirit. Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, we are in a longer, 12-part series on the Apostles' Creed; and we have subdivided this series into the three sections of the Creed, which is Trinitarian: The Father, the Son, and now, in this program, we are turning the corner into the last section of the Creed, which is the Holy Spirit part.

DAVE BAST

Right; and you know, I don't know if this is any big, important thing, or not, but we are doing 12 programs on the Apostles' Creed...you can listen to one of them or none of them or all of them, but this is a transition point, as you said, Scott, because the Creed traits of God the Father then God the Son...and in the last section it goes like this: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting, amen. And at first glance, that kind of looks like a laundry list doesn't it...after the faith in the Holy Spirit?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; what we have been saying is that we treat each Person of the Trinity, and then what that person does. So, it is pretty obvious with the Father, who did the work of creation and providence; obviously, Jesus, the Son...we had a rundown of his life, his death, his resurrection; but now we get to the Holy Spirit, and after that we start talking about the Church, and forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection; and you are tempted to say: Well, what does that have to do with the Holy Spirit? Well, it turns out it has everything to do with the Holy Spirit, because this is the Spirit's work now. In the era of the Church, the Spirit is the one who is the active power to get all of the stuff done in the Church that we are thinking about in this third part of the Creed.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and not only just in the Church, corporately, but in each of us individually. It is the Spirit who is at work within us, bringing, sort of, the work of Christ...applying it to us...bringing it home to us. We believe that the Spirit is the one who gives us faith; and so, that unites us with Christ and all the blessings that flow from that, like forgiveness, and ultimately resurrection and eternal life. So, as you said, Scott, the Spirit is behind the scenes, sort of; but everything in this last part of the Creed is somehow connected directly to the work of the Spirit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in the next three programs, as we close out this series on the Creed, we will be unpacking each of those: The holy catholic church and communion of saints and forgiveness of sins and all the rest; but, as we start this program, we want to think a little bit about how it was that the Church came to recognize that the Holy Spirit is a divine person in his own right, along with the Father and the Son; and the early Church struggled with this. There never was much doubt that Father and Son were distinct persons within the one God whom we worship; because you had Jesus on earth, he was incarnate, he was the Son, and he talked about his Father and he prayed to his Father; and then sometimes, like at Jesus' baptism, the Father spoke about the Son and to the Son...or at the transfiguration...so, Father, Son for sure; but what about that Spirit? Is that a third person within God, or just an emanation of the Father or the Son? The early Church thought about that quite a bit.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and it is not easy; and some teachers argued that the Spirit was less than personal...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

That it was sort of the force or the influence, or even the presence of the Father and the Son; and there is language in the New Testament that implies something like that, that it is in and through the Spirit that Jesus comes to live within us, or that the Father...that God is with us. It is all through the Person and work of the Spirit; but ultimately, the Church agreed that the best way of understanding the data of the New Testament was to see the Spirit as equally personal, equally eternal, equally divine, fully and completely God, just as the Father and the Son were. The chief reason for that...I mean, there are scriptures...there are passages in the New Testament pointing this way; but the other big reason is because the Spirit is depicted in the New Testament as a person, not as a thing...not as an it. Paul says you can grieve the Spirit, or you *shouldn't* grieve the Spirit. Well, you cannot grieve an it or a force; you can only grieve a person.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and, there are certain key texts as well; not as many as there were that make clear that Father and Son are distinct; but there are key texts. I mean, we think of the Great Commission, where Jesus says: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. So, there you go; Jesus...from the lips of Jesus himself...and he would know...puts the Holy Spirit on a par with Son and Father as a separate person; and in another key text in John's Gospel, where Jesus is...the discourse is in the upper room there...the farewell discourse in John...Jesus says:

14:16 "I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—¹⁷the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither receives him nor knows him; but you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

So again, here is Jesus, the Son, referring also to the Father, and now a third who is going to come and live with people.

DAVE BAST

Yes; another...the word there is *paraclete*, which is hard to translate. It is sometimes translated advocate or helper of comforter in the old...I will send you another comforter...I will give you another comforter. The one who comes alongside and gives us strength; that is the Holy Spirit; and Jesus calls the Spirit *another*, meaning another like me [Jesus]...he is going to be just like me. So, if Jesus is a person, so is the Spirit; that is pretty clear, I think, from the evidence of the New Testament.

Speaking of texts, Scott, that mention the Spirit, there is another famous one at the end of 2 Corinthians; sort of the benediction that Paul gives there, which is often used at the end of worship services: ^{13:14} paraphrased The grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion or the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; the fact that the Great Commission was Trinitarian, that a lot of those blessings and benedictions that Paul and others in the New Testament give in the letters are Trinitarian; so, it is clear that this is a person within God, same as Father and Son. You know, sometimes if a famous leader dies, somebody might say: Well, you know, the spirit of Abraham Lincoln is still with us. That is not what we mean with the Holy Spirit. That is just sort of, you know, the memory or the inspiration...no, we mean that a very, very specific Person of God... Don't you know, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6, you are temples of the Holy Spirit. A temple is where God dwells...

DAVE BAST

A dwelling place, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Now, each of us is that...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Because that person in God who just is the Holy Spirit now lives in us; and so we do say that we worship God in Three Persons...

DAVE BAST

Right!

SCOTT HOEZEE

The blessed Trinity.

DAVE BAST

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, amen—that ancient hymn of the Church.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

So, that is the Spirit—a real person, really God, to be worshipped, to be glorified along with the Father and the Son; but who and what exactly is he, and what does he do? We will look at that next.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and this program is part of a longer series on that great...one of the earliest, most ancient confessions of the Church, the Apostles' Creed; and Dave, in this program, we are turning the corner into the final section of three sections in the Creed; the section that begins: I believe in the Holy Spirit. So, we just established how the early Church identified the Holy Spirit as a divine person on a par with the Father and the Son. So, we have a trinity, not a binity—it really *is* a trinity...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We also said that the Spirit is extremely busy; but Dave, the person the New Testament crystallizes for us...all through the Old Testament whenever we referred to God, we just kind of thought of God, but all along it was Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We just didn't know that until the revelation that came in the New Testament. So, that means that the Holy Spirit has been busy throughout the entire Bible, not just when he bursts onto the scene big time at Pentecost.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; so, the Spirit is active. We see him often, really, throughout the Old Testament; and perhaps no more clear a way, or in no more clear a place than in the Spirit's role in inspiring the prophets, and Moses, who gave the Law—David, the psalmist—inspiring them as they spoke God's Word, as they wrote it. You know, you think of the prophets saying: The Spirit of the Lord was upon me. He has anointed me, says Isaiah, to preach good news to the poor. Even what the New Testament says about the writings of the Old Testament, that they were God-breathed...they were inspired by God...Peter says that holy men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote these scriptures; like a wind pushing a sailing vessel...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

So, that is the role of the Spirit in scripture.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Every once in a while you might use a version of the Bible that will have something like in Psalm 51, where David prays: ^{11b}take not your Spirit from me; and in certain Bible translations they capitalize the word Spirit; in other words, to say: That is the Holy Spirit. Now, that is really, kind of translation-wise, not legitimate to do because the people who wrote the Old Testament weren't conscious that there was a separate person in God called the Holy Spirit; but when they do that, they are trying to give the hint the Holy Spirit was active also in the writing of the Psalms and in everything.

As we said at the top of the program, Dave, the Holy Spirit does tend to work behind the scenes. Frederick Dale Bruner, who wrote a classic book on the Holy Spirit in the early 1970s, called the Holy Spirit the shy member of the Trinity, because it is the Spirit's job to highlight Jesus; and then that gets us, a little bit, Dave, at something that...we don't want to get too technical here, but theologians talk about the economic trinity, or the economy of salvation, which doesn't refer to dollars and cents; but economic here refers to: How did God *organize* and distribute among God—the three Persons in God—the work of salvation?

DAVE BAST

Right; the answer is that the Father is sort of in charge of everything. So, the Father is the one whose plan salvation is, and who sends the Son into the world to effect the salvation of the world; and the Son is the one who voluntarily goes. One mistake we really have to avoid is to say that the Father is the angry one who punishes Jesus...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

And Jesus turns the Father's anger into love. No; this is part of the plan from forever, that the Father sends and the Son goes; but the Spirit...his role is to apply all this...to take it and make it real...to fill the Church...empower the Church...to come and fill each believer with faith in Christ.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; so, the Spirit was at work all through the Old Testament. The Spirit was the inspiration behind the words of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The Spirit was the active power behind the miracle of the virgin birth that we looked at earlier in this Apostles' Creed series; but of course, where did the Spirit make the big entrance? Pentecost.

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Acts Chapter 2.

DAVE BAST

When the Day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that, of course, was only the beginning, Dave; and we have looked at the different parts of the books of Acts here on *Groundwork*, and most of us know the book of Acts pretty well. It is almost humorous in the book of Acts because the apostles just cannot keep up with the Holy Spirit. You never knew where the Holy Spirit was going to pop up next: Oh, now all of a sudden he is working in an Ethiopian eunuch in a chariot on the side of the road...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Now he is working in Cornelius's household in Italy*, calling these Gentiles to become... And now the Spirit pops up over here. The Spirit is indeed incessantly on the move in applying the power and the grace of Jesus to more and more people all the time.

DAVE BAST

Yes; and actually, that story of Pentecost is the fulfillment of Jesus' words to them just before he ascended. We looked at this passage recently in our program on the ascension of Christ. He said: Wait until power comes, and then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and to the ends of the earth. That happened at Pentecost; so, it was power especially. The Spirit's key role in the Church is to empower the Church to bear witness to Christ, and you know, sort of propel the Gospel all the way out to the ends of the earth. That is the Spirit's doing, like no other, really.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then, within that ever growing and ever expanding Church, the Spirit is still doing more works at a breathless clip. The Spirit gives gifts, right? So, a famous passage from 1 Corinthians 12: ⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of workings, but in all of them, and in every one it is the same God at work. ⁷Now, to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good... And then Paul goes on to say that the Spirit gives some people wisdom or knowledge and the ability to perform miracles, to prophesy, to preach...it is all the Spirit...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Every gift that gets exercised in the Church comes from the Spirit—the gifts of the Spirit.

DAVE BAST

And they are all for up-building...for the common good, Paul says. They are not meant to be divisive or controversial. They are just meant to, you know, kind of help people be more of what God wants the Church to be; and that, of course, leads to the third great area. So, the Spirit is the one who empowers witness, he is the one who gives gifts, he is also the one who sends fruit into our lives as we become more like Jesus; and that is a famous passage that we have dealt with on *Groundwork*; the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians Chapter 5:

^{22b}Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

That wonderful last phrase: Walk by the Spirit—keep in step—kind of hang in there and pray for his fruit to grow in your life.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We did a series on the fruit of the Spirit a while back, Dave, we said gifts are from the Spirit and they are different for different people; the fruit of the Spirit...all nine of them...are supposed to come to everybody equally. We are not called to just one or two fruit and not the others. No; but it is the Holy Spirit who grows that fruit on the branches or our lives, to extend the metaphor; and again, in and through it all, the Spirit is a selfless servant who's greatest joy is to keep shining the spotlight, not on the Spirit's self, but on Jesus...on Jesus...on Jesus; and on the up-building of the Church to become more and more Christlike; but, before we close the program, Dave, we are going to wonder practically why this belief in the Spirit is important; and wonder a little bit, too, about the Spirit being the shy member of the Trinity. We will think a little bit about some church traditions that talk more about the Spirit than certain others. So, we will ponder all of that in just a moment.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, already in the Protestant Reformation there were some groups of Christians who talked about the Holy Spirit more than other groups did; and really, really were exuberant about the Holy Spirit, which led Martin Luther, who was known to have some colorful turns of phrase...Martin Luther said of these more charismatic groups: Well, it seems like they have swallowed the Holy Spirit, feathers and all! Which was his way of sort of saying: Hmmm, more emphasis there than some; and today, too, we have sisters and brothers in Pentecostal traditions that *do* talk and sing about, and focus on, the Holy Spirit a little bit more than some other traditions do; but, I think what we want to say is there is nothing wrong with that, right?

DAVE BAST

No, nothing wrong; in fact, maybe we should all take a page from the Pentecostal playbook at times, because some of us can be a little too uptight...maybe a little too stuck in our ways and unwilling to loosen up and show some of the exuberance and joy... Actually, Scott, Pentecostalism is by far the fastest growing segment of the Church worldwide...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, it is.

DAVE BAST

And it has just kind of swept...in just a hundred years. It often dates to 1906, to a revival that broke out in California; so, just a little over a hundred years, and now nobody knows exactly the proportion, but perhaps a quarter to a third of all Christians worldwide would identify with this Spiritual...capital S...kind of faith. So, that is a good thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; so, we said the Spirit is the shy member of the Trinity, and that the Spirit's main job is to spotlight Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, that is true; but again, to recognize and to celebrate the fact that everything that happens in the Church is the work of the Spirit is certainly important. I do think, though, Dave, we could offer one little caution, and that is sometimes when we really focus on the Holy Spirit, we start to...we don't mean to do this, but we sort of focus on the more spectacular instances. So, someone speaks in tongues, right? Or, there was that church near the Toronto airport years ago, which was purported that there was some really unusual manifestations of the Spirit. People would get slain in the Spirit. They would faint dead away, or they would bark like dogs, or they would have laughing fits; and certainly there are manifestations of the Spirit, but in our focus on those more spectacular instances, we don't want to forget that everything that happens positively in the Church is the Spirit, including far quieter things that happen, kind of out of the limelight, off in the corner somewhere, when a volunteer is lovingly tutoring someone in English as their second language. It is not flashy, but it is the Spirit.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; and you know, we don't really have the time, and maybe it is not our place, to critique some of the excesses that have come from emphasizing the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, but certainly there are, and there are always people who maybe fake it for whatever reason, perhaps even for personal gain. We know of instances where that has happened. So, yes, it can be abused; but I like your point, Scott, that let's not overlook the quiet work of the Holy Spirit in ordinary lives of ordinary followers of Jesus who, by the Spirit, are overcoming sin...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right...overcoming addiction...

DAVE BAST

They are overcoming addiction, right; they are doing the work of the Church in solid, substantive, ongoing ways; and just because it is incremental and maybe not spectacular does not mean that the Spirit is not at work there.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and every time we utter a prayer, the Spirit brings it to Jesus, who then brings it to the Father. We talked about that in the earlier program on what it means that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. One of the things Jesus is doing there is bringing our petitions before the Father; and the petitions get to Jesus through the Holy Spirit, who is our living connection to Jesus. So, you are driving down the road and you say: Oh, that's right; my son has an algebra test in high school today. Lord, help Jim to do well. The Spirit takes that prayer to Jesus, that is how close the Spirit is...how active the Spirit is. Every time somebody exercises a fruit of the Spirit...and it could just be an act of kindness; or hospitality....you have some people who are struggling, you have them over for pizza, and it is an exercise in hospitality, which Paul says that is the Spirit! Hospitality is the Spirit.

DAVE BAST

And you know, speaking of prayer, Scott, sometimes the Spirit can help us pray even when we don't have the words...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DAVE BAST

There is a famous verse in Romans 8 that the Spirit himself intercedes with sighs and groans too deep for words; so, when you are really up against it, or you are in the depths and you just don't even know...you don't think you can even pray, you don't have the words...know then that the Spirit will be in you and through you and will bring those unspoken feelings to God, and you will benefit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is wonderful to know that when we pray, the Spirit brings it to God, but when we cannot pray, the Spirit is still praying. What a wonderful image.

You know, we looked at 1 Thessalonians a while back on *Groundwork*, and right off the bat in 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul says:

⁴We know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that God has chosen you, ⁵because our Gospel came to you, not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction. (He goes on to say) ⁶You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering, with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

So, the Holy Spirit brings the Gospel, the Holy Spirit brings power, the Holy Spirit brings joy. What a thing!

DAVE BAST

Yes, the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ, the Holy Spirit gives us gifts, the Holy Spirit leads us on, step by step, all the way through our lives to the end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, we say with the Apostles' Creed; and what a blessing it is to know this precious Spirit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Amen. Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast. Please join us next time as we continue our study of the Apostles' Creed, and wonder what it means when we say that we believe in the holy catholic church and the communion of saints. Go to our website, groundworkonline.com, and tell us what *Groundwork* means to you, and give suggestions for future *Groundwork* programs.

***Correction:** In the audio of this episode, host Scott Hoezee misspeaks and says "Cornelius's household in Italy." According to Acts 10:1, Cornelius was centurion in the *Italian* regiment, but his household was actually located in Caesarea.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/i-believe-in-god-the-holy-spirit>

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