

I Believe in the Holy Spirit

SCOTT HOEZEE

The Christian statement known as the Apostles' Creed traces its origins further back in Church history than any other creed or confession; and it is a Trinitarian creed with one section each for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this new five-part series on Groundwork, we want to think about that Third Person in God, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, even biblically, is known primarily through what the Spirit does, and some of that activity is summed up in the final section of the Apostles' Creed. So, in this program, let's think about the Spirit and what it means each time we recite the Creed to say, "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 beginning a five-part series that is going to study that third and final section of the Apostles' Creed, a creed recited in churches around the world every single week.

DAVE BAST

Today we are joined by a special guest to help us work through this. She is a theologian from Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, Dr. Sue Rozeboom. Sue, welcome.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Thank you. It is a privilege to be with you.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Sue is going to be with us for this set of programs; again, five parts on the last section of the Apostles' Creed, and just to refresh everyone's memory, let's remember how that last part goes. 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.

DAVE BAST

Amen. Sue, maybe just to start us off, tell us a little bit about the Apostles' Creed.

Sue Rozeboom:

The Apostles' Creed is an ancient, ancient creed, and it is understood that its origin is in the baptismal celebrations. It would have been what those who are to be baptized would have been instructed in; helping them understand deeply what it is that Christians believe.

DAVE BAST

And in Latin, I believe is *credo*.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes.

DAVE BAST

That is the first person singular of the Latin verb for to believe, and so, there is our word, creed.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Right. Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As we said, we are thinking about, just in this series, the section which begins with *credo*, Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit. So, I think in this first segment, Sue and Dave, we are just going to talk a little bit about the Spirit. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit in scripture? The Spirit does far more than we are going to be able to tackle in this program or this series, but just talk a little bit about what scripture reveals as the Spirit's work. Maybe we can begin with something that my friend, the Bible commentator, Frederick Dale Bruner observes, and he calls the Spirit the shy member of the Trinity. Maybe we can think a little bit about what would be behind that designation.

DAVE BAST

Yes; in a sense, the Spirit is maybe the most mysterious to us as Christians. We are pretty clear on God the Father, the one God, the God of Israel, the God who is first introduced to us in the Bible; and this notion of Jesus as the Son of God is for every Christian at the heart of our Faith; but the Holy Spirit, a little bit more nebulous, maybe; a little more vague for many people. Why do we believe in Him? What do we believe about Him? Intentionally calling Him, *Him*, and not *It*, because the Spirit is fully personal, as are the Father and the Son.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is interesting, too, that we know the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit are completely equal in their power and in their divinity, and Sue, maybe you can comment on this, too. We sometimes talk about the economic Trinity, or the economy of the Trinity, which talks more about their work than it does their Persons or their divinity.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Right, and yet, we recognize the role of the Spirit is really to point to Christ. Frederick Dale Bruner would illustrate this, apparently, by drawing a stick figure of Jesus on a white board, say near the edge of the white board, and then walk behind the white board and use his finger to simply point at the stick figure from behind the white board.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

SUE ROZEBOOM

And the illustration would be: This is the Spirit, hidden, and yet evident in that the Spirit is always pointing us to Christ, showing us Christ, revealing to us Christ.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right. It is almost as though, and not because the Spirit is any less God than Christ, but it is sort of like when God knew that the project of salvation had to be launched, they had to divvy up the responsibilities. The Son of God, the Second Person, was the one to be made flesh; He became Jesus. The Father directed the whole thing and superintended the whole thing, but now in the era of the Church, after the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus, it is the Spirit's job to keep pointing to Jesus. That is His role in the Church, to keep us connected to Christ. That is His job in salvation.

DAVE BAST

I think it is also interesting to look at the difference between what we are taught about the Spirit of God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament after the Day of Pentecost; which is the great day of the outpouring

of the Spirit, and in the Old Testament the references to the Spirit are more sporadic; they seem to come and almost go at times. The Spirit would suddenly come upon a person, a prophet, say, to do some great thing, but the promises were imbedded, especially in the prophets, that the day would come when God would pour out His Spirit on everyone, and Joel says: Your sons and your daughters will see visions and they will prophesy. That happened at Pentecost, and Peter said, “This is the fulfillment of what God had promised. Now the Spirit is with us always.” So, it was something they lived into, I think, the experience of the Spirit. Why did they believe that the Spirit was fully God? Because in experiencing the Spirit, they knew Jesus was still with them. He was alive. He was present through the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

SUE ROZEBOOM

I am thinking deeply about the Trinity and the early Christian Church; those who were discerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit; that the Holy Spirit is God. They became keen to say things like: The work of One is the work of All. So, even though God the Father might be perceived as primary in the work of creation, John tells us: In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and all things were created through the word. So, even the Son of God, Christ, was active and effective in creation. The same with the Spirit. The Spirit brooded over the waters. So, even though we have a progressive realization of the works of these Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit throughout scripture, the work of One is really the work of All, and we want not to disassociate the work.

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is why the Holy Spirit, too, as our friend Neal Plantinga has often pointed out: The Spirit is now the living connection that we have to Jesus. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, we believe, but He is also in our hearts and He is in our church, and He is in every sermon because the Spirit is constantly active in connecting us to Jesus. The Spirit is the ultimate go-between because that is the living connection we have to Jesus, who is now enthroned at the right hand of the Father, is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, and that is what the Spirit does.

And I think next up we will go to some specific Bible passages that teach us a little bit more about the Holy Spirit, and we will see that when we come back.

BREAK:

DAVE BAST

You are listening to Groundwork, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives; along with Scott Hoezee, and today joining us, Sue Rozeboom, I am Dave Bast, and we are thinking today about what it means to say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” and Sue, before the break you were saying a line that I really liked, where you pointed out that, especially the early Church fathers said, “The work of One is the work of All,” with respect to God. That not only applies to creation, but that also applies, I think, to our salvation, doesn’t it?

SUE ROZEBOOM

Absolutely. In fact, we are going to read three texts from John very shortly here, and as I was reading those texts, I noticed something fresh. In John 14, Jesus says to His disciples that He will pray to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to us. So, there you have evidence, in a sense, of the Three, and yet, the work of One being the work of All. God is the One who is with us, but it is Jesus who will pray to God the Father to send the Spirit, in order that the Spirit might in fact be with us.

DAVE BAST

In fact, just before we get into John 14, I am reminded of something Paul says in Romans 8, where in the space of a couple of verses he calls the Spirit, the Spirit, simply, and the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ. So, we often talk as Christians about the fact that God is with us, or God lives in, or Jesus lives in our hearts, but it is really through the Spirit that all three Persons of the Trinity are present at once. It is a mind-

blowing kind of concept, but it is really important and practical.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is. Let's hear these. John 14:15, 16, as many of listeners perhaps know, is the most concentrated Holy Spirit section in the Bible, really, so let's just hear some snippets. I am going to read John 14:15-18, and then we will hear a couple of others from Dave and Sue. So, let's hear what Jesus is promising. This is the night before Jesus is crucified. He is talking to His disciples, John 14:15:

¹⁵If you love Me, keep My commands, ¹⁶and I will ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to help you and to be with you forever; ¹⁷the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.

DAVE BAST

And then carrying on, here is verse 26 from that same Chapter 14:

^{26a}But the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name. (There they are again, all three. The Father, in the name of Jesus, will send the Spirit, the Advocate.) ^{26b}He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Then we are turning to John 16, beginning with verse 5, following on Jesus saying, "I am going away. I am going to the Father." And Jesus says to the disciples:

^{5b}"None of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' ⁶Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. ⁷Very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸When He comes, He will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment. ⁹About sin because people do not believe in Me. ¹⁰About righteousness because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer. ¹¹And about judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned."

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, there we have it in these three passages from the 14th and 16th chapters of John: Jesus' long discourses in the upper room with the disciples. And again, we see that the Spirit is going to be our – after Jesus goes away – the Spirit is going to be our living connection to Him. We will not be orphans; we will not be abandoned; we will not feel far away.

SUE ROZEBOOM

In a way, it seems to me that baptism is the show-and-tell of Jesus' prayer and its outcome. In baptism, God adopts us in Christ as God's own. Christ Himself is the one who baptizes; in effect, summoning God to send the Spirit so that we are, in fact, not abandoned. We are not alone; and to send the Spirit to illumine our minds that we might know it – know that we are not alone – to feel it with our whole being.

DAVE BAST

So, the first thing, really, to focus on here is the work of the Spirit in the life of a Christian; of a believer. What does He do for us? It is all about linking us to God and being the presence of Jesus living in our hearts; being that living bond or connection.

I think, Scott, you were quoting Neal Plantinga recently and he says that if you think of faith as the cord that connects you to Jesus, the Spirit is the electricity that runs along it and makes that living connection be true.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And brings those waters of baptism, Sue, that you were mentioning, right into our hearts, where they flood into us and cleanse us and clean us up.

SUE ROZEBOOM

We often hear the phrase that the Spirit is the bond of believers in Christ. Calvin is fond of using that phrase, but when we use these metaphors – they are very good; they are good analogies – but it is important to remember, as was said before, that the Spirit is not a what, but a Who. The one who unites us to Christ; the one who makes us share in His ministry. It is not as if the Spirit is sanctified superglue, if you will.

DAVE BAST

Right, right, sure. Because Paul says later on, “Do not grieve the Spirit. Do not quench the Spirit.” He is a person, just like Jesus and the Father, and He has personal feelings.

SCOTT HOEZEE

What is interesting, too, is that the Spirit – we focused a lot so far, talking about how the Holy Spirit is in us and is our living connection – but in that John 16 passage, Sue, that you read, we also see the Spirit is going to help us move out into the world, and without the Spirit – the Spirit is going to be behind our witness – again, to quote the Bible commentator, [Frederick] Dale Bruner, in that 16th Chapter, verses 5-11, the Spirit will tell the world what is wrong, what is right, and who won. It will convict the world of its sin, it will reveal God as the Holy Righteous One, and it will show Jesus as the key to all salvation. In John 16, Jesus says: That is what the Holy Spirit is going to do also to the world as we witness as a Church.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Backing up, if you look at John 14, there is a very important point about the Spirit being the One who will bring these things to your remembrance. The Spirit will remind you of these things. Thinking now of worship, again, this would be why we offer prayers; prayers either to the Holy Spirit or to God for the Holy Spirit before, say, the reading and preaching of the word. Calvin, in his order for the celebration of the Lord’s Day, would instruct the minister to beseech God, to pray earnestly, almost begging God to send the Spirit, to bring precisely these things to our remembrance.

DAVE BAST

Right. Many of our orders of worship would have a prayer that they would call the prayer for illumination...

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes!

DAVE BAST

Or light...

SUE ROZEBOM

Yes!

DAVE BAST

Just before the sermon. I remember the great John Stott, once just before he preached prayed this prayer, which was his habitual prayer before preaching: “Heavenly Father,” he prayed, “we bow in Your presence. May Your word be our rule and Your Spirit our teacher through Jesus Christ our Lord.” So, it is the Spirit who is the real teacher.

I read years ago a little anecdote – I think it was about J. B. Phillips, a great English Bible translator – who said that whenever he stood up and climbed into the pulpit to preach, with every step he would say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit.” Because it is the Spirit who gives any effect that our preaching or witness or teaching has; it all comes from Him. It is not really from our own cleverness or wisdom or power.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right, which is part of the reason why, in scripture, both in terms of the language used, but also in terms of description, the Spirit is often depicted as a wind, as a breath, and as a never-ceasing wind and breath, and as we have been seeing every time we open the Bible, the Spirit is active in bringing us that word. The Spirit never stops. It is just an amazing amount, and I think when we come back in a moment, we will think about some real practical ways this comforts us and comes to us on a daily basis.

BREAK:

DAVE BAST

Along with Scott Hoezee and Sue Rozeboom, I am Dave Bast, and today you are listening to Groundwork, where we are talking about the Holy Spirit, and we said at the beginning that the Spirit's work is really to point to Jesus. It is not so much about Himself or drawing attention to Himself or the spectacular gifts, but it is about His witness to Jesus; about calling to mind the things of Jesus; about being the life of God coming to us, the breath of God, who breathes life into us. That is really His main work, isn't it Sue?

SUE ROZEBOOM

Well, it is certainly one of the primary metaphors that is used throughout scripture with regard to the work of the Spirit. In Hebrew, the word is *ruach*, and it refers to breath. In Greek, *pneuma*; it is breath; even *spiritus*, the Latin, it all refers, if you will, to breath.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Respiration.

SUE ROZEBOOM

Yes. The Spirit is the life.

DAVE BAST

"The Spirit blows where He wills," Jesus says in John.

SUE ROZEBOOM

And then in John Chapter 20, we have John's account of Pentecost. Jesus says to His disciples, His beleaguered disciples to whom He has just appeared, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and then He breathes on them. And the word that is used there in the Greek is the very same word that the Greek version of the Old Testament uses in the account of the creation, where God breathes life into Adam, this human that God has created. So, yes, the work of the Spirit is all about bringing about life.

This brings to mind – this idea of breath – brings to mind an extraordinary scene in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Aslan has been raised from the dead; Lucy and Susan have ridden on his back as he leaps and bounds across Narnia to get to the witch's castle. He leaps into the courtyard, where there are all the statues of the creatures that the White Witch has frozen, and Lucy is amazed. "It's like a museum," and then she says, "Hush, hush, hush. Watch; Aslan is doing something." And indeed, he was. He was breathing on the statues, and each of those statues came to life.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is a beautiful image of the Spirit's work from C. S. Lewis' wonderful imagination and theology; and it happens to us all the time. We have been talking about how the Spirit never stops. It is the wind that never stops blowing. What is one of the main activities of the Church? Bible study: Women's Bible study; men's breakfast Bible study; singles' Bible study; couples' Bible study. Every time we crack open the Bible, we get breathed on by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit inspired the words of scripture, we believe, but now enlivens them. This is one of the most constant things the Spirit does for us every single day when we have devotions or read scripture or listen to someone on the radio read scripture, it is the Breath of God from the Spirit that is winging that word into our hearts; not as a memory of an ancient thing, but as a living word. And that is amazing.

DAVE BAST

I often struggle with the question of how do people come to believe? How do they know? How do you know that the Bible is true, that Jesus is God, that He is Lord, that He rose from the dead. In the course of my work I am often brought into connection with people from other religions and other faiths, and we sometimes spend time talking, and there is always this question of how do you convince? The answer is, we don't. We don't really convince anyone, including ourselves, that is it all true. This is the work of the Spirit...

SUE ROZEBOOM

Indeed.

DAVE BAST

Who witnesses to our hearts. There is a verse – and again, we have mentioned Frederick Dale Bruner's name in the program. We often talk about him; he is one of our gurus. In his commentary on John, he points out something really interesting; back in John Chapter 5:32. Jesus is talking about, in effect, "why should you believe My claims?"

³¹"If I testify about Myself, that is not really legitimate." Nobody has the authority to make claims for themselves and then just be believed; but He says in verse 32, ³²"I have another Who testifies about Me, and His testimony is valid. His testimony is true." Bruner says, "Look at the word *another*, where does He talk about another Advocate, another Helper, and straight to John Chapters 14 and 16, the passages that we read. So, the Spirit is the Testifier Who enables us to believe – the Bible, Jesus, the whole shebang.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, it is where we get our hope. Before this series is finished, we will get to part of the Creed about, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." We Christians often say that while we are standing at an open grave. On what basis can we hope and believe that this dead person whom we love, whom we are burying, is going to be alive again and raised to new life? It is the Holy Spirit applying the balm of the Gospel comfort and hope to us right then and right there.

SUE ROZEBOOM

And isn't that Heidelberg Catechism question and answer one, which is a profoundly baptismal confession: What is your only comfort; what is your only assurance? That I am not my own, but I belong, body and soul. Well, how do you know that you belong? Baptism. But then, that last sentence: And now Christ by His Spirit assures me of eternal life. And makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That has it so right – Christ by His Spirit, right? This has been a key insight of theology all along. Jesus, in the passages we read from John, had to prepare the disciples for His going away. He ascends into heaven and He is not physically present to us anymore, but He is spiritually alive and present to us at gravesides, in the hospital room, when we are worried in the dark watches of the night, because the Holy Spirit is here, breathing life into us.

SUE ROZEBOOM

I wonder if we might bring forward a gift of our African American brothers and sisters in Christ. That wonderful spiritual: Sometimes I feel discouraged. Think all my work's in vain. But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again.

DAVE BAST

Right. There is a balm in Gilead. Well, we are all Pentecostals if we only understand...

SUE ROZEBOOM

Amen!

DAVE BAST

The true Work and Nature of the Holy Spirit.

So, thanks for joining our Groundwork conversation. We are your hosts, Dave Bast and Scott Hoezee, and today our guest has been Sue Rozeboom. We would like to know how we can help you continue digging deeper into scripture. Visit groundworkonline.com to tell us what topics or passages you would like us to dig into next on Groundwork.

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Printed on July 26, 2025