

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The phone number for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number changes every week. If you need more information, please contact Mr. Vautour. See the bottom of the bulletin the contact information.

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

The National GCI services will be at 1:00 p.m. today. This will be the last regular National worship Service as all GCI churches across Canada will be transitioning to local Zoom or other platform worship services.

For more information about special activities happening in GCI, please see the international website at [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org). On the left-hand upper side of the screen, you will see 3 short lines. You simply need to click on it. A drop down menu will appear. Click on "PARTICIPATE".

Please note that audio sermons are available and a PDF copy of sermons are available at [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) and video sermons are now available on YouTube – GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL-MONCTON (see link below)

If you have a prayer requests, other events you would like to announce and/or praise to our great God you would like to share, **please try to contact Mr. Vautour by email, text or telephone no later than Saturday, in the morning.**

**For local prayer requests, please see <http://www.worshipim.ca/> and click on **Members Only**.** It is password protected for confidentiality reason. If you do not have the password, please contact Mr. Vautour.

**Voice of the Martyrs** (<https://www.vomcanada.com/ng-2020-06-04b.htm>). Christians continue to be persecuted in many parts of the world. They need our prayers. You can receive a free publication through your email. If you are interested, please visit their website to subscribe.

### **Sought AND Restored**



By Elizabeth  
Mullins



#### **The Parable of the Lost Sheep**

**[Luke 15:1](#) Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine**

**righteous persons who do not need to repent.**

The story of the lost sheep is one of the most beloved of Jesus' parables. How encouraging to hear, as a sinner in need of continual repentance, that God pursued you while you were still lost. Surely, you delight in the thought that God chases after you.

God's movement toward you is profoundly personal. God was delighted to choose you before the creation of the world and embrace you into the life of the Father, Son, and Spirit. And based on this parable, it is correct for you to perceive yourselves as being sought after individually by God. Yet what if your only gaze for this parable is on God's pursuit of

you? Could you be missing part of the beautiful imagery and meaning? What gets lost when you are focused solely on your own salvation?

In the metaphorical language of Luke 15, to be rescued from wandering, to be saved from individual lostness is only the Shepherd's first salvific action. The story is incomplete without the Shepherd restoring the lamb to the other ninety-nine. This is so important! We have all been gathered back, not just back into union with God but back into fellowship with one another. It is within this context of a community, a holy people, that we participate in the mystery of God's renewal and we experience being conformed to Jesus' image.

Dear one, be encouraged that your story does not end at Jesus saving you from your personal sin and private darkness. That was just the beginning! You were made for so much more than to merely be saved from something. You were saved for true life and flourishing in communion with the Triune God and with your sisters and brothers.

**Prayer:** *Father, Son, and Spirit, open our eyes to the wonder and hope that we belong to one another. Plant it in our imaginations, to be expressed in our creativity, and to be lived in our bodies. Thank you for the privilege of participating with your eternal, loving purposes through your Body.*

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### Who is the Spirit? (Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, part 3) (from <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/>)

By Ted Johnston - June 24, 2020

*This post continues a series presenting "The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit" by Dr. Gary Deddo, President of Grace Communion Seminary. For other posts in the series, click <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2020/05/holy-spirit-part-1.html>*

You have probably heard the triune God referred to as *one in three and three in one*. Though that is not an incorrect statement, it's easily misunderstood. Why? Because it can sound as if we are stating that God is both three and one of the exact same thing. But that makes no sense. God is not one being and three beings; nor is God one person and three persons. To avoid misunderstandings, it's better to say that the triune God is ***one in being and three in divine Persons***. Let's explore what this means as we continue this series on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.



*Perichoresis* (source unknown)

Fundamental to the discipline of theology is making sure we don't talk about God as if God was a creature. This way of disciplining our thinking takes some time and effort to catch on to, and that is why GCI takes great care in teaching people to think about God *according to God's nature*. That means, for example, not thinking about God as a big human being in the sky.

#### **God is three divine Persons**

The doctrine of the Trinity asserts that God is *three divine Persons*. What does that mean? We begin by noting that God is not a "person" the way we are. As humans, we are images of God, but God is not an image of us. Because divine Persons are not exactly the same as human persons, we have to distinguish them.

Were God three persons exactly like we are persons, then God would be three beings, since human persons are separate beings. When speaking about God, we're not using the word "person" in exactly the same way we do about ourselves. In speaking of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as divine (not human) Persons, we affirm that these personal names and personal relationships between the three Persons reveal the reality of who God is. God knows himself as Father, Son and Spirit. There are real and eternal relationships in God which Scripture characterizes in several ways including mutual knowing, loving, glorifying, and oneness.

What we think about human persons in living, loving and holy relationship with each other does, to a degree, reflect the truth about God in the sense that God is more like a community of three human persons than like any other created thing. We could switch this around and say that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the original and real Persons, and since we are somewhat like them, we can borrow the term "person" to speak of ourselves as individual human creatures. That said, we must be careful to note that God is not like a single, lonely, isolated individual.

#### **God is one in being**

As individual human persons, we do not, and we cannot have the same kind of unity (oneness) with other persons that the three divine Persons have. Their unity is their being -- *the three divine Persons are one in being*. The sense of unity we experience as human persons cannot match that.

The kind of unity of God revealed in Christ was so unique that the church teachers eventually came up with a unique word to represent that one-of-a-kind unity. That word is ***perichoresis***. It is Greek and often is not translated because it has a unique meaning that can't exactly be translated. It means most literally to *envelope* one another or to *make space* for one another. It has also been translated as *mutually indwelling* each other, or having a *coinherence* in each other, or *in-existing* in one another. This language represents Jesus' teaching that he is "in the Father and the Father is in [him]" (**John 14:11**). It is also just what we see lived out in the Gospels as we watch and hear Jesus in his

dynamic relationship with the Father and the Spirit. This unique unity has also been explained by saying that *the whole of God, all three Persons, are present in each of the Persons*. So, each in being is fully God even though distinct in Person so that there is a real relationship and exchange going on from all eternity between the three divine Persons. As the Athanasian Creed summed it up: the unity of God is a Trinity and the Trinity of God is a Unity. We can try to put this into a single word: God's unity is a *tri-unity*.

Given this tri-unity, everything we can say about the Spirit, we can say about the Father (or the Son), except that the Spirit is not the Father (or the Son). Why? Because the divine Persons mutually indwell one another, and so are equally God -- equally and together God. They have an absolutely unique kind of unity so that they are distinct in divine Person but united in being. Unlike creatures, the unity of being doesn't undo the difference of Person and the distinction of Person doesn't undo the unity of being. Remembering this will help us get our language squared away so that we don't grossly misrepresent who God is.

### **What kind of God is the triune God?**

The doctrine of the Trinity, so far as it goes, faithfully identifies who God is. However, its purpose is to protect the mystery of God's nature, not explain it away. That said, when we add up what the doctrine asserts, we are given significant, biblically accurate understanding about the kind of God that God is. It declares that God has his being by being a fellowship, a communion of divine Persons. The biblical witness then shows us that all the relationships that flow from God's being are forms of love. Begetting, being begotten and proceeding are all relationships of loving exchange. This is why we can say with John that *God is love*. We also can see what Jesus means, and why he says he loves the Father and the Father has loved him from all eternity. It makes sense that Jesus tells us that as the Father has loved him, so he loves us; and that as he has loved us, so we ought to love one another. No wonder then that the ways of the people of God can be comprehensively summed up in the two commands to love God and love neighbor.

The relationships internal and external to God are filled with holy loving. God is a fellowship kind of God -- a communion kind of God. God is not a lonely being floating out there from all eternity "looking for someone to love." God is the fullness of holy love, the fullness of fellowship and communion. Bringing it all together, we can say that the Father and Son have their fellowship and communion in the Holy Spirit.

The triune God who in his being is love, is very different than an isolated individual God who can't love until there is something else outside of God to love. The God that is fullness of fellowship is very different from one who exists with no internal and external relationships, one in whom there is no giving and receiving, in whom there is no exchange of knowing, loving, glorifying of one another. Such a god would be very different from the God we come to know through Jesus Christ, according to Scripture.

To summarize: the Christian God is a fellowship, a communion. This triune God has his being by being in relationships of holy loving. Those relationships are, in particular, eternally begetting, being begotten, and proceeding -- each a unique form of holy, loving exchange. Those are the key words we have in allowing us to point to the amazing reality of who God is. And these are the essentials to remember if we are going to go on and talk about the Holy Spirit.

### **Who is the Holy Spirit?**

If the Holy Spirit first exists in relationship with the Father and the Son, then that is the first thing we need to know, not the Spirit's relationship to us or our relationship to the Spirit. Those come afterwards. There was a time when nothing other than God existed and the Holy Spirit was perfectly happy being the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The Spirit doesn't need us to be the Spirit. There was a time when there was no creation. At that time God was the fullness of fellowship in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In answer to the question, *who is the Holy Spirit?* the simplest answer is that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. That means that whenever we speak of the Father and Son, or hear about them in Scripture, since God is one in being, the Spirit is also involved in some way, whether or not it is explicitly stated. The Spirit *always* has something to do with the Father and Son. It's true that we don't always remember this connection. And we probably should make it more explicit more often. So, when speaking of the Father or the Son we do not exclude the Spirit, because the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Reference to the Son involves the Spirit and the other way around. We can't talk about the Holy Spirit apart from the Son, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son. If we assume we can think of one without the other, we're misrepresenting who the Spirit is because the Spirit has his being, is the Person he is, by being in an essential relationship. We don't always spell this all out, and it would be better if we did see and make all the connections. A full understanding will always seek to grasp all the Persons in their relationships.

The *who*, not *how*, of the Spirit

When seeking further understanding about God, we tend to look for answers to *how?* questions, such as, *how does God operate his providence over all of history and nature and everything else?* It's understandable that we would ask such questions. We want to know the mechanisms, the machinery. We want to know the chain of cause and effect as it pertains to God's acts. The problem is that the *how?* questions tend to take us in a wrong direction. Instead we need to ask the *who?* questions. We need first to identify the agent responsible for what takes place. And when it comes to *who?* questions concerning God, the answer often is the Holy Spirit, who is the agent of God's actions. In short,

our *how?* questions are frequently answered this way: *By the Holy Spirit!* And the reality is this: we can know the *who*, without knowing the *how!*

Consider this: does Jesus tell Nicodemus the mechanism of *how* one becomes born from above? Does Jesus offer Nicodemus a technique? Does he list a bunch of rules that if you do this and that and the other, then bingo, the new birth happens? No. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that, because the Spirit works more like the wind, no such *how?* explanation can be given. The working of the Spirit can't be controlled or predicted by us. That's the nature of *who* the Spirit is, and so *how* the Spirit works!

It's understandable that we have many questions -- especially about the Christian life. But such questions are actually answered simply by identifying the agency of the Holy Spirit. And that's it. But we often want more -- we want an explanation about some mechanism, technique or about steps to take. We feel that there needs to be a combination of conditions that we fill in order to get the Spirit to work. There is quite a bit of teaching in Christian circles that speculates about and even invents techniques and methods that can be used to fill in the gaps between what Scripture tells us, and what we, like Nicodemus, often want to know -- answers to our *how?* questions that would tell us exactly what conditions we need to fill in order to get the Spirit to work, or to work more effectively. However, shouldn't we stop where Scripture stops, rather than succumb to speculation or invention?

Many of the current controversies and differences of emphasis between various teachings and ministries actually have to do with their lining up behind a favorite technique or mechanism, or a particular list of conditions needed to get what we're looking for from the Holy Spirit. The arguments and controversies are most often over which teaching offers the best *how to*. But when we go down that road, we've already forgotten most of who the Spirit is. On that road we easily are tempted to mistakenly assume that God can be divided up, asking such questions as "can you have the Spirit without having the Son?" or "can you have the Son without having the Spirit? Another mistake is to assume that the presence and blessing of the Spirit comes not by grace but by technique or by us fulfilling certain preconditions, leading us to ask "what steps do we need to take before we can effectively have and use the gifts of the Spirit?"

#### ***By the Spirit of the Father and Son answers the how? question***

When we take into account the full testimony of Scripture, the questions and controversies that arise concerning the Spirit can be addressed. This involves accounting for the very nature and character of the Spirit. That means, for example, understanding that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in being, and thus you cannot have one without the other. The unity of the Persons in being and in action is indicated in biblical revelation. For example, we are told that no one truly proclaims Jesus is Lord except by the Spirit (**1 Cor. 12:3**). God doesn't split up, having the Son heading off saying, "Goodbye, Spirit. I hope you catch up later." God is one in being but also one in action. The three divine Persons act and work together.

Many if not most current controversies have forgotten some of the most fundamental things about who God the Spirit is. But, of course, if forgotten, this is what can happen. Our thoughts can head in all directions and we can end up speculating in order to answer misguided questions. We can just grab random Bible verses and try to throw them together to come up with an answer. When that happens, we end up with different groups gravitating around what they regard as key verses to prove their point, but they have left behind the more fundamental teaching and reality of who the Spirit is. The fundamental thing, the answer to the Who? question regarding the Spirit is often forgotten and so the answers promoted are inconsistent with the deeper more central truth of the Spirit who is one in being and one in working with the Father and the Son.

Biblical revelation about the ministry of the Spirit is often presented in connection with mention of at least one other divine Person. So for example, only the Holy Spirit can break into a person's pride and enable them to recognize that Jesus really is their Lord and Savior, come in the flesh, as one of us (**1 John 4:2**). We only have the Spirit because he is sent by the Son from the Father (**John 15:26**). If anyone is convicted by the message of the gospel it is because the Spirit is at work (**1 Thess. 1:3-5**). Jesus sends the Spirit to bring persons to an acknowledgment of sin and the need for judgment and righteousness (**John 16:8**).

As Paul tells us, when the "Spirit of sonship" comes upon us, we cry out "Abba Father" (**Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:60**). Why do we cry out "Abba Father"? If you know who the Spirit is, the answer is obvious. Because God is one in being and one in action. Isn't that amazing? The whole Trinity is involved in that one simple and profound cry of our hearts. When the Spirit acts, he acts in unity with the Father and the Son, bringing our worship all together in the fellowship of the Trinity.

When Jesus says, "Go out and baptize them in the name" (singular) and then gives them the one name: "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," we should not be surprised. The name we're given matches the reality: Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the one name of God. A simple way to say this is that God is the Father-Son-Holy-Spirit-God, as if it is one name instead of three names. It really isn't three separate names, but a threefold name. It is three divine Persons, but we're baptized into one name. Jesus' instruction makes sense if that is who God is, and so how God acts and has his being.

#### **Conclusion**

All our thinking about the Holy Spirit needs to be contained within these Trinitarian boundaries. That will help us interpret Scripture properly, and see more deeply into Scripture so that we come to know the reality ever more profoundly. Rather than taking us away from Scripture, good theology helps us see more clearly how Scripture comes together. Though theology doesn't answer every question we might have, it does answer the questions God most wants us to grasp and proclaim. Thus, our goal is to help one another read and interpret Scripture in a way that brings all the pieces of Scripture together. Good theology helps us attain this important goal.

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**Offerings:** you can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7S1 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.** Thank you for your continued generous giving to God by giving to this part of God's church, his body.

**From Mr. Bill Hall – GCI Canadian Director** *“Our office here in Saskatoon will remain open during regular business hours. I'm self isolating for a couple of weeks, but Kathleen will be available. We will continue to process the donations we receive in Saskatoon. Members are urged to mail them directly to our office for the time-being. They can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using the donate button on our website [www.gcicanada.ca](http://www.gcicanada.ca) We are waving the provision that all donations given via Canada Helps go toward national expenses for the time being. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend.”*

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**GCI principle website and Moncton Websites**—a) [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org) , b) [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) , c) <https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton> ; d) Grace Communion International-Moncton <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKazyWhmKmdZy69vJcFfPg>

*For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email— [evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)*