
The Unity of the Spirit

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"In the Bond of Peace"

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Dear Fellow-believers,

The biblical doctrine of justification by faith is a fundamental truth of God's Word that should be understood by every Christian believer. The word "justification" is a legal term that means that a person is forgiven of one's sins, declared "not guilty" in God's sight and given the legal status of righteousness - or being "in the right" with God. Biblically, the *ground* for a believer's justification is the sacrificial death and then resurrection of Christ by which he paid the price for the sins of all mankind. The *means* by which a person receives this justification is personal faith in Jesus Christ. The Book of Romans sets forth these truths clearly:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe. There is no difference,

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished -

He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26).

To be justified in God's sight means that the verdict of the final judgment has *already* taken place for the believer in Christ. Why? Because when someone believes in Christ he receives the gift of God's Spirit and is at that moment incorporated into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12-13). As a result, the believer is said to be "in Christ" and thus identifies in all that Christ accomplished for the believer by means of his sacrificial death, resurrection, etc. In short, through the Spirit the believer is "created in Christ Jesus" and receives by grace the spiritual benefits of this new relationship with God. Look at I Corinthians:

It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption (I Cor. 1:30).

The Bible clearly teaches that man's relationship with God is entered into and maintained by faith. Biblically, faith is not a meritorious work but a humble acceptance and dependence on the words of God. This is made clear in Romans:

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness (Rom. 4:4-5)

Biblically, faith always takes place in the heart. Since God is a God who "looks on the heart" he cannot be fooled. Thus the humble acceptance of Christ by any individual always results in God's acceptance and the cleansing power and witness of his Spirit. Look at the following verses:

'Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith' (Acts 15:7-9).

Faith, of course, is not simply mental assent but is a commitment of mind or heart to the truth of a statement or to a being, such as God. In short, it is a *decision* to humbly accept something as being true and then to hold to it within one's life. Because of this, *true* faith conditions a person's understanding, outlook and actions. The following New Testament examples illustrate this:

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe (I Thess. 2:13).

But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love (Gal. 5:5-6).

These verses are important in regards to understanding God's gift of salvation and man's proper response to it. Justification and, therefore, salvation is a gift from God to man made possible by God's gracious action in Christ for the redemption of mankind. Through faith in Christ a person receives God's gift of the Spirit and is thus acquitted from all sin, declared "not guilty" in God's sight and brought into a right relationship with God. As a result, the justified believer has "peace with God" and is able to bring forth the spiritual fruit of that relationship with

God in his daily life. Again, the Book of Romans makes this clear:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:1-2).

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the Law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4).

The New Testament stresses these same truths throughout. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. The gift of the Spirit is the "firstfruits" of this salvation imparting God's own nature into the heart and life of an individual. The result is a new creation of God's own making which is then manifested to the world through a life of good works. As Paul states:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:8-10).

Richie Temple

Holy Transformation

by Chuck LaMattina

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Romans 10:9-10 state that if we confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives, and if we believe that God has raised him from the dead, then we are saved, we are born again. By God's grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are redeemed from the penalty and the power, or influence of sin. We receive the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit, by which we become partakers of the divine nature.

By God's grace we are saved. By His grace we are cared for in the present. And by His grace we shall ultimately be glorified. Salvation from start to finish is not of our own works, so that no one should boast. But we must never think that salvation by grace gives us a license to sin, to go on living as we did before we were saved. The apostle Paul responds to this kind of thinking in Romans chapter six [All scripture quotations are from the NKJV]:

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Grace is not a license to sin: it is a strong encouragement to live righteously. In the gospel of John, Jesus Christ has a woman brought before him accused of adultery. The hypocritical religious leaders want to know if Christ would have her stoned. The Lord suggests that those without any sin cast the first stone. One by one, they left. Alone with the woman, Jesus Christ said,

John 8:10-11

... "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

In an act full of grace, Jesus Christ forgave the woman. But then he commanded her to "go and sin no more." Forgiveness is not a license to go on sinning, but an opportunity to change for the better.

As Christians, born again of God's Spirit, we have been given the tremendous power and ability to sin no more. Yet, all too often I have found that when Christians talk about the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they tend to emphasize the seemingly spectacular: the revelations, speaking in tongues, the miracles. While all of these are very important aspects of the power of the Spirit in our lives, they are not the most vital. These manifestations of the power of the Spirit are not ends in themselves, but rather means to an end. They are for the edification and good of the church. The primary purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit is the reproduction of the very graciousness and holiness of our Father God in our own lives!

What the gift of the Holy Spirit does in the new birth is not just make you a Christian in spite of any evidence. Rather it enables you to put forth real evidence of transformation. Look at how the apostle Paul pictures the change in the lives of the believers in the city of Corinth:

I Corinthians: 6:9-11

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,

nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Some of the members of the church of Corinth had come from "the bottom of the barrel," so to speak. But Paul said that they were now different. What happened to effect the change? They were washed, they were sanctified and they were justified in the name of the Lord and by the power of God's Spirit

within them. Because of their relationship to Christ and the Spirit of God within, they were made new.

II Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The power of God can do what no therapist can do, what no government program can do, what no amount of money can do. It delivers people from the destructive power of the old sin nature and transforms lives for the better. The goal of the gospel is that we become more and more like the image of God in Christ that is within us.

II Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

With the Spirit of the Lord within us we are liberated from the dominion of sin in our lives. As we look into the Word of God, taking in the image of all God says we are and can do, just as we would take in our physical image in a mirror, we are then able to radiate back the image we see in the Word. The Spirit within us enables us to be transformed more and more into the image of God, in Christ, in us. With the Word in our minds and the Spirit within our being, we can manifest the new man, which was created in righteousness and true holiness.

Ephesians 4:17-24

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles [i.e. the unbelievers] walk, in the futility of their mind,

having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned

Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit [or, life] of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Since we have been washed, justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the power of God's Spirit, we should live differently. We have been redeemed from a futile existence. We have been given a new life, a new nature and this new nature within, is capable of righteous and holy living.

Ephesians 4:25-30

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

These are all simple and direct commands. We are not to see a therapist about our lying, or our stealing, we are simply to stop! We are to control our anger and control our mouths. We are not to "grieve" the Spirit within. To "grieve" the Spirit is to place a heavy burden upon it. It is to bury it under the desires and actions of the "old man" nature. We are not to do this. Rather we need to give our new nature room to grow.

Ephesians 4:31-32

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another,

tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

The Christian is to put off the "old man" and grow up into all he is in Christ, and we grow up by imitating our Father. Sure! How do children learn what is acceptable behavior in life? They learn from their parents. In the same way, we learn what holy living is all about by imitating the actions of our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

To imitate God would be an incredible command, were it not for the fact that we have the gift of the Holy Spirit within us, our new nature. The natural man cannot imitate God, it is beyond his natural abilities. All of us as Christians are called to live a life so morally pure and so full of blazing love, that it could come from no other source than the gift of Holy Spirit. This is how we become witnesses for Christ. As Christ said in Acts 1,

Acts 1:8

"... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This verse doesn't say that we would do witnessing after we received the Holy Spirit, but that we would be witnesses! You can try to convince someone that a brick is really a tomato, but if it doesn't look like one, or taste like one, if it doesn't have all the characteristics of a tomato, then it isn't one. We can say that the gospel is the power of God to change lives, we can say that we are believers. But if we don't look like one and act like one, if we do not manifest the characteristics of a believer, then our testimony will never convince anyone! And our life-style will bring disgrace upon the God of all grace and our Lord Jesus Christ. This is why we are told to stop living like the unredeemed.

Ephesians 5:3-10

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let not one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out [or, proving] what is acceptable to the Lord.

The Spirit within us enables us to live lives full of goodness and righteousness, and truth. It enables us to live a life honoring God. Walking as children of light means revealing God's light, making known the truth of His Word in all we say and do. The believer has no business whatsoever living in darkness! When Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too were raised with him, to awake out of the spiritual death of sin and to walk in newness of life.

Ephesians 5:14-18

Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit. [my emphasis].

"Be filled with the Spirit" is God's command and He expects us to obey. But some might ask, "I thought we were already filled?" All of us have the Spirit of God dwelling within us, but we are not all filled.

The word "filled" is the Greek word pleroo and it means filled to capacity and thus having great influence upon that which it fills. The word is used in secular Greek for the wind which fills the sails of a ship causing it to move. Being filled with the Spirit means allowing the Spirit, the new nature, to inspire and motivate, and move us.

In verse 18, being filled with the Spirit is contrasted and compared to being drunk with wine. As a comparison, being drunk means being under the influence of alcohol. Being filled with the Spirit means being under the influence of the new nature. But being drunk is dissipation, leaving you out of control, while being filled with the Spirit actually gives you control of your life (Galatians 5:23 - "self-control"; II Timothy 1:7 - "sound mind").

When we are filled with the Spirit, when it permeates our personalities, we produce the fruit of the Spirit, rather than the works of the fallen flesh.

Galatians 5:16-23

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

idolatry, sorcery, hatred contentions jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law [my emphasis].

When we walk in the Spirit, when we are filled with the Spirit, we will produce the fruit of our new nature. And we walk in the Spirit, or we allow ourselves to be filled with the Spirit, when we have our minds full of the Word of God. The mind full of the Word of God is the key to unleashing the power of the Spirit which transforms us (Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 3:17-18).

The primary goal of God in giving us His Spirit is our holy transformation. He desires for us to manifest the qualities of our new nature for His glory and our own good. The victorious Christian life is a life no longer bound to the destructive influences of sin. The victorious Christian life is a transformed life where we live righteously, encouraging one another, loving one another (Ephesians 5:19ff), and bearing the beautiful fruit of the Spirit.

[This article is excerpted from a new book by Chuck LaMattina entitled *The Power of the Holy Spirit*. Information about this and other books, tapes, etc. by Chuck may be obtained by writing to: Grace Ministry USA, 7359 N. Hoyne, Chicago, IL. 60645].

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Who Is the Holy Spirit?

by Wanda Shirk

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I. Problems with the "orthodox" view - i.e. the view that "God the Holy Spirit" is "the Third Person of the Trinity," a person different from God the Father.

1. God and Jesus have personal names. The Holy Spirit has no personal name. This witnesses against the Spirit being a distinct person.
2. The Holy Spirit is not a distinctly different person from God in scripture, but Jesus is a distinctly different person.
3. The Holy Spirit is never addressed or prayed to.
4. The Spirit never has a will distinct from God the Father, as Jesus did (Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:42; John 6:38), nor does the Spirit have any other personal traits that establish the Spirit as a separate "person."
5. All the epistles of the scriptures open with reference to "God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." No Separate mention is made of the Holy Spirit. This would be a great slight to the Holy Spirit if the Spirit were indeed a separate and distinct "person" of the "trinity."
6. If Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is a different person than the Father, then "the Father" is not "the Father" in the trinity, for the Holy Spirit is the Father! *The answer to this dilemma is simply to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is actually the Spirit of the Father Himself.*

II. The Holy Spirit is the same person as God. It is God's own Spirit

1. I Cor. 2:11 - "Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" [Scripture quotes from NASB]. It is evident that as the spirit of a man is the man himself, so the Spirit of God is God Himself, not a separate person.

2. A person's spirit is his qualities, nature, and capabilities. The spirit of Elijah is not a separate person from Elijah, but the composite qualities, nature, and abilities of Elijah. Your spirit is the real you - your qualities, nature, and capabilities. Why would the Spirit of God be a "person" different from God Himself rather than God's own qualities, nature, and capabilities?

3. Matt. 10:20 - "For it is not you who speaks, but it is the Spirit of your Father [Luke 12:12 - "the Holy Spirit"] who speaks in you." The synoptic parallel shows that the Holy Spirit is the same as the Spirit of the Father.

4. Matt. 12:28 - "For if I cast out demons by the Spirit [Luke 11:20 - "finger"] of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." Obviously, the "finger of God" does not refer to a person separate from God, so "Spirit of God" should be understood similarly as another way of referring to God's own person.

5. The Spirit of God is equated with the presence of God in Hebrew parallelism:

Psalm 51:11 - "Do not cast me away from Thy presence, and do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me."

Psalm 139:7 - "Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?"

The Spirit of God = the presence of God. There is no separate person here.

6. The presence of the Holy Spirit is equated with the presence of God in the New Testament:

Acts 5:3,4 - In the story of Ananias and Sapphira, to lie to the Holy Spirit is equated with lying to God. They are the same person, not two different persons.

Acts 10:38 - "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him."

Conclusion: It is as much nonsense to make God into a Trinity on the basis that the Spirit of God is a "person" separate from God as to make you and me into two persons each because we each have spirit.

III. The Holy Spirit is the self-expressive, creative force, power, or energy of God. Just as a man's spirit is the man's self-expression, creativity, and energy. Some have called the Spirit an "impersonal force," but as God is a person, we might better describe the Spirit as the *personal force or power through which God's activities are undertaken.*

1. Creativity. As God is infinitely creative, so His Spirit imparts creativity. For example,

Ex. 35: 30-35 - "The Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri ... and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship to make designs for working in gold and silver and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work. He has also put in his heart to teach, both he and Ohliab ... He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer ... and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs."

2. Inspiration. The Spirit of God gives ability to speak and write God's thoughts.

II Sam. 23:2 - "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."

Luke 12:12 - "The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what ... to say."

Acts 1:16 - "the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David ..."

II Peter 1:21 - "... men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

3. Power. The Spirit of God is equated with the power of God.

Luke 1:35 - "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you ..."

Luke 4:14 - "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit."

Acts 1:8 - "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."

Acts 10:38 - "God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power ..."

4. Spiritual Abilities. God's Spirit does tasks that are beyond human capabilities and provides wisdom and knowledge beyond human wisdom and knowledge.

I Cor. 12:7-11 - "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit ... the word of wisdom ... the word of knowledge ... faith ... gifts of healing ... the effecting of miracles ... prophecy ... the distinguishing of spirits ... various kinds of tongues ... the interpretation of tongues. One and the same Spirit works all these, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."

5. Godly Qualities. The Spirit of God produces fruit that is representative of the nature of God.

Gal. 5:22-23 - "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentl

IV. "The Holy Spirit" or "[a] holy spirit"?

It is important to note that 46 of the 83 uses of the term pneuma hagion, holy spirit, in the Greek scriptures, do not have the definite article the. Almost all translations render all 83 uses as "the Holy Spirit," adding the and the capitalization, which is somewhat a matter of interpretation. For example, Stephen was "full of faith and (a) holy spirit" (Acts 6:5). Paul wrote of "righteousness and peace and joy in [a] holy spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Jude actually wrote about "praying in [a] holy spirit" rather than "praying in the Holy Spirit," (Jude 20), if we wish to translate more literally. The term "the Holy Spirit" is certainly valid in many places, but since the article the is used only 45% of the time, we should be careful about building a doctrine based on translators' suppositions in defining "holy spirit" in all contexts.

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Understanding the Bible

Bible Translations

The central truths of the Bible are simple and easy to understand. They are summarized in what we call the "gospel" as set forth in verses such as John 3:16. The first step in gaining a more detailed knowledge of the Bible is to simply read, read and read the Bible itself so as to build an overall "scope" of the Bible as a whole. The details will then fit within this overall understanding. Since few of us have the ability to read in the original languages of the biblical writers we must use the next best alternative - Bible translations or versions. To avoid confusion

and to help with memorization it is probably a good idea to use one particular version as one's basic text for reading and study (this is a matter of choice since they all have their good and bad points), but it is also helpful at times to use different versions for *comparative* purposes. In this way one gets the benefit of the understanding of different translators. Some versions are meant to be more literal while others are meant to be more "free." In between the two is a sort of golden mean - "dynamic equivalence." The following chart illustrates graphically many modern versions. Each version has its own particular translation goal and should be read in that light.

Literal (word for word)	Dynamic Equivalence										Free (Meaning for meaning)	
Interlinear	NASB	KJV	RSV	NAB	NIV	NEB	GNB	JB Phillips	LB	NKJV	NRSV	REB

[Revised from Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*, 2nd ed. p.36, Zondervan]

Compare the Versions

Titus 3:4-7

KJV

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done , but according to his mercy he saved saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to hope of eternal life.

GNB

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior was revealed, he saved us. It was not because of any good deeds that we ourselves had done, but because of his own mercy that he saved us, through the Holy Spirit, who gives us new birth and new life by washing us. God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so

that by his grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.

NRSV

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

REB

But when the kindness and generosity of God our Savior dawned upon the world, then, not for any good deeds of our own, but because he was merciful, he saved us through the water of rebirth and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, which he lavished upon us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, justified by his grace, we might in hope become heirs to eternal life.

NAB

But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

Phillips

But when the kindness and love of God our savior dawned upon us, he saved us in his mercy - not by virtue of any moral achievement of ours, but by the cleansing power of a new birth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he poured upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. The result is that we are acquitted by his grace and can look forward in hope to inheriting life eternal.

NIV

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

The Unvarnished NT

But then the kindliness of our savior God appeared, His love for us humans. Not because of any redeeming deeds we did ourselves but of his own mercy he saved us. Through the washing that bestowed new life, the renewal brought by the holy spirit, which God poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our savior, that we might be acquitted by means of his grace and be heirs to the hope of everlasting life.

Books in Review

Bible Dictionaries

The quest for a proper understanding of the Bible must always begin by searching out the *original* intent and meaning of the biblical text itself. Usually, this can be gathered from the 'plain sense' of the words themselves in the light of their context and historical setting. Comparing different versions can be helpful in this regard. But when background help is needed there are few more useful tools than a good Bible dictionary. My personal choice for the best single volume work is the *New Bible Dictionary* edited by J.D. Douglas, et al. and published by Tyndale. This Bible dictionary is simply loaded with useful articles on almost any subject of biblical interest - each written by scholars in different fields of biblical study.

As in any field of study it is always good to check more than one source when studying a topic in-depth. Bias is simply unavoidable in any research work, translation, etc. But this is no reason to not check out what the "experts" say. Instead, it is a reason to *compare* what they say while reserving for oneself the right to final conclusions. In this light there are several other one volume works that can be consulted as well as two good multi-volume Bible dictionaries: *The International Standard Bible Dictionary* and *The Interpreter's Bible Dictionary*. Each of these is four volumes, loaded with information and representative of a different theological perspective. Personally though, I would question the need for many people to own these considering their cost and the fact that the most important information can be obtained from the single volume works in a much more concise format. If you're studying an especially 'controversial' issue you can check the others in a library.

In the *New Bible Dictionary* I especially recommend the following articles to start with: "Life" by E.E. Ellis; "Eschatology" by R.J. Bauckham; "Spirit, Holy Spirit" and "Baptism" by J.D.G. Dunn; "Justification" by J.I. Packer and "Bible" by F.F. Bruce. Also, just flip through it and read. It's a great way to learn.

Books in Review

Bible Commentaries

In addition to a good Bible dictionary it is also helpful to have access to good Bible commentaries when one is contemplating the meaning of a particular verse, section or even an entire book of the Bible. There are many good commentary series available ranging from the fairly simple to the highly technical - all have their own bias and their own strengths and weaknesses. For a good sampling of some of these in one volume (including the O.T. and the N.T.) I would recommend the *New Bible Commentary* published by Eerdmans. In this commentary each book of the Bible is handled by a different scholar most of whom have written major single volume works on the same books.

Some of the good multi-volume commentaries include: *The Daily Study Bible* by Barclay; the *Tyndale Commentary* series; the *New International Biblical Commentary*; the *New International Commentary on the Bible*; and *The Word Biblical Commentary*. These are listed in order of increasing

technicality. You are probably better off buying individual volumes from these rather than a whole series. Usually each individual volume is written by a different scholar and they can vary widely in quality.

Commentaries should always be used with caution and, generally at least, only after one has read a section of scripture many times for oneself and contemplated its meaning. The best way to check out whether you feel a commentary, Bible dictionary or any other research work would be useful for you and worth the cost is to borrow one from a friend or simply skim through a few at a Bible bookstore. For many people a good study Bible such as the *NIV Study Bible* may be sufficient. A word of warning, however: it is perilous to think that one can 'freely' interpret the Bible as one wishes or that one has discovered an important new hidden truth without regard to the many, many others who have studied the same text and whose knowledge of biblical languages, history or culture may far exceed one's own. The Bible means what it *originally* meant, not whatever we may decide we want it to mean.

Notes & Quotes on the Bible

The Protestant Reformation

by Richie Temple
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On October 31, 1517 an Augustinian Monk named Martin Luther nailed a list of 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in the city of Wittenburg in present day Germany. The central idea behind these "propositions for debate" was the biblical doctrine of justification by faith over against the Roman Catholic religious system of his day. Luther had some months earlier "re-discovered" this truth for himself while teaching a course as Professor of Biblical Theology at the University of Wittenburg. This re-discovery and the ramifications of the Protestant Reformation that followed radically changed the world of that day and continue to be felt today any time a man, woman or child picks up a Bible in his own native language and begins to read for him or herself the liberating truths of the gospel message.

As F. F. Bruce states in the Introduction of his commentary on the Book of Romans in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, the story of Luther's realization of this truth is best told in his own words:

I had greatly longed to understand Paul's letter to the Romans, and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, "the righteousness of God", because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and acts righteously in punishing the unrighteous ... Night and day I pondered until ... I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of scripture took on new meaning, and whereas before "the righteousness of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway into heaven' (p.57).

The Protestant Reformation that was sparked by this initial insight by Luther set off an explosion in biblical studies, translations and understanding that

has continued, with various ebbs and flows, down to our own time. Thousands upon thousands of men and women of that day risked their lives or their livelihoods to break the monolithic hold that the Roman Catholicism of that day held over the minds of an entire continent of people. The results of this struggle were not neat and orderly - as is always the case in such struggles - nor were they without gross mistakes in judgment or action by the leaders of the various reforming movements. But it is undeniable by any honest assessment of the historical situation that in the fight for truth tremendous strides were made - strides that have had a direct bearing on the rich and unprecedented availability of biblical knowledge, political freedom and social equality that is available to so many of us today.

Justification by Faith

Luther never saw his "rediscovery" of the biblical truth of justification by faith as anything other than just that. He never maintained that it was a new doctrine but rather the same doctrine that Paul and the other leaders of the first century church preached. But as in any age it was the bondage of his own circumstances and the flagrant hypocrisy of the religious life of his own day that caused his mind to be confronted with the truth that salvation was the free gift of God, received only through faith, rather than a reward received on the basis of human goodness or on the basis of the religious rituals, indulgences or pilgrimages of his day.

For Luther, as for us, the key sections in Romans for understanding the biblical truth of justification by faith were: 1:16-17; 3:19-26; 4:1-25, 5:1-5:21 and 8:1-3, 31-39. Perhaps the most important of these sections is 3:19-26. To begin our study here we will look at a very simple and clear definition of the words 'justify' and 'justification' as given in a note on Rom. 3:24 in the *NIV Study Bible* (p. 1710):

The term describes what happens when someone believes in Christ as his Savior: From the negative viewpoint, God declares the person to be not guilty; from the positive viewpoint, he declares him to be righteous. He cancels the guilt of the person's sin and credits righteousness to him ... The central thought in justification is that, although man clearly and totally deserves to be declared guilty, because of his trust in Christ God declares him righteous.

Simple enough except for one question: how can a righteous and holy God declare sinful man to be righteous solely on the basis of faith and still be a righteous and holy God? After all, the Old Testament makes it clear that it is the responsibility of the judge to acquit the innocent and condemn the guilty (Deut. 25:10) - not to let the guilty off free! "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

It is precisely at this point that we come face to face with the wondrous truth of the gospel of the grace of God. For "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15). He who "knew no sin became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). Or, in the words of Romans, "he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Simply put, Christ died for us - 'on our behalf' or 'in our place' - and took our sin upon himself. He was the "ransom sacrifice" which took away the sin of the world.

To more fully understand the biblical concept of justification and its corresponding idea of righteousness I will first quote from the late G.E. Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*:

The Pauline doctrine of justification can be understood only against an Old Testament background. Among the Greeks, righteousness was an innate human quality. Plato designated *dikaioσύνη* as one of the four cardinal virtues: justice, wisdom, temperance, and courage or fortitude. These virtues were emphasized by the Stoics and sometimes found their way into Hellenistic Judaism. However, in the Old Testament righteousness is a distinctly religious doctrine ...

Righteousness in the Old Testament is not primarily an ethical quality. The basic meaning of the word is "that norm in the affairs of the world to which men and things should conform, and by which they can be measured." One who is righteous is one who conforms to the given norm. The verb "to be righteous" means to conform to the given norm, and in certain forms ... it means "to declare righteous" or "to justify."

... Basically, "righteousness" is a concept of *relationship*. A person is righteous who has fulfilled the demands laid upon him or her by the relationship in which that person stands. It is not a word designating personal ethical character, but faithfulness to a relationship.

As such, righteousness becomes a word of great theological significance. Righteousness is the standard

God has decreed for human conduct. The righteous person is the one who in God's judgment meets the divine standard and thus stands in a right relationship with God. The norm of righteousness depends entirely on the nature of God. Ultimately it is only God who can decide if a person has met the norm that he decreed for human righteousness. The back-ground of righteousness and justification is ... the concept of God as the ruler, lawgiver, and judge of the world.

The idea of righteousness is often understood in a forensic [law court] context: the righteous person is the one whom the judge declares to be free from guilt. It is the business of the judge to acquit the innocent and condemn the guilty (Deut. 25:1; see also I Kings 8:32). God is often pictured as the judge of human beings (Psalm 9:4; 33:5; Jer. 11:20). The verb appears almost exclusively in the forensic sense. An individual is righteous who is judged to be in the right (Exod. 23:7; Deut. 25:1), i.e., who in judgment through acquittal stands in a right relationship with God.

... The striking - indeed to a Jew, the shocking - thing about Paul's use of the word is his affirmation that in Christ God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). If the ungodly were treated as they deserve, they would be condemned. A judge in Old Testament times who justified or acquitted the wicked would prove to be an unrighteous judge. Righteousness means upholding the norms of right conduct - the acquittal of the innocent and the condemnation of the guilty. Paul asserts that in the very act of justifying the ungodly, God has shown himself to be righteous (Rom. 3:26). Furthermore, this acquittal comes entirely apart from the works of the Law (Gal. 2:16; 3:11) - by faith alone (2:16) (pp. 480-482).

... The shedding of Christ's blood, i.e., his sacrificial death, provides the means of propitiation on the ground of which acquittal or justification can be bestowed upon humanity as a free gift ... Thus the death of Christ is a demonstration in the present time that God is both righteous and that he declares righteous those who have faith in Jesus ... and we can only conclude that this act of righteousness consisted in visiting upon Christ, who was ethically sinless, the guilt and doom that sin deserves, namely, death ... It is because God manifested both his righteousness and his love by visiting upon Jesus the guilt and the doom of sin that he can now in perfect righteousness bestow the vindication of acquittal upon the sinner (pp. 489-490).

... There are several points at which the Pauline teaching is radically different from the Jewish concept; and one of the essential differences is that the future eschatological justification *has already taken place*. "Since therefore we

have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (Rom. 5:9).

"Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). "You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 6:11). In these instances the verb is in the aorist tense, expressing an act that has been accomplished. Through faith in Christ, on the ground of his shed blood, people have been justified, acquitted of the guilt of sin, and therefore are delivered from condemnation ... An essential element in the salvation of the future age is the divine acquittal and the pronouncement of righteousness; this acquittal, justification, which consists of the divine absolution of sin has already been effected by the death of Christ and may be received by faith here and now (pp. 482-484).

The Firstfruits of the Spirit

The key element in effecting, or bringing to pass, this justification of the believer is God's gift of his Spirit. This "firstfruits of the Spirit" is the "first-installment" of God's gift of salvation that will be received in all of its fullness at Christ's return. It is through the agency of his own Spirit that God imparts his righteousness into the life of the believer so as to make a new creation "in Christ." The believer can then bring forth the fruits of that righteousness and be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

But it should be emphasized that for the believers of the 1st century Church these were not simply dry theological dogmas contained in theological textbooks but vivid realities made real by the visible presence of the Spirit in their lives. They had been "washed, sanctified and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11). And when questions arose as to the proper status of Gentile believers within the newly constituted 'people of God' Paul's response was to appeal to their initial, evidential and continued experience of the Spirit which they had received at the time they believed the gospel message (Gal. 3:1-5; cp. Eph. 1:13-14; Rom. 8:16; Titus 3:4-7). They had received the Spirit, they had manifested the Spirit and now they were to continue to "walk in the Spirit" so as to bring forth its fruits in their lives (Gal. 5:16-25).

Justification by faith then is simply one aspect of the entire biblical concept of 'salvation' - a salvation that for the believer in Christ has already begun with the

reception of the Spirit. F.F. Bruce speaks directly to this issue:

Paul's doctrine of justification, together with his other doctrines, is set in the context of the new creation that has come into being with and in Christ. That the acquittal of the day of judgment is pronounced in advance here and now on those who believe in Jesus is part and parcel of the truth that for them 'the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun' (2 Cor. 5:17, NEB) - a truth made real in their present experience by the advent and activity of the Spirit (*Romans*, p. 39).

Gordon Fee in his massive work, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) echoes the same thoughts in more detail:

Probably the one feature that distances the New Testament church most from its contemporary counterpart is its thoroughly eschatological perspective of all of life. In contrast to most of us, eschatology - a unique understanding of the time of the End - conditioned the early believers existence in every way. The first clue to this outlook came from Jesus' own proclamation of the kingdom - as a present reality in his ministry, although still a future event. But it was the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the promised (eschatological) Spirit that completely altered the primitive church's perspective, both about Jesus and about themselves. In place of the totally future eschatology of their Jewish roots, with its hope of a coming Messiah and the resurrection of the dead, the early church recognized that the future had *already* been set in motion. The resurrection of Christ marked the beginning of the End, the turning of the ages. However, the End had only *begun*; they still awaited the final event, the (now second) coming of their Messiah Jesus, at which time they too would experience the resurrection/transformation of the body. They lived "between the times"; *already* the future had begun, *not yet* had it been consummated. From the New Testament perspective the whole of Christian existence - and theology - has this eschatological "tension" as its basic framework

This changed eschatological perspective absolutely determines Paul's theological outlook: how he talks about Christ, salvation, the church, ethics, the present, and the future. This is reflected both in his language and in many of the presuppositions that determine how he expresses himself. "We are those," he reminds the Corinthians, "upon whom the ends of the ages *have come*" (I Cor. 10:11). Christ's death and resurrection ... have already passed sentence on the present age (2 Cor. 5:14-15), which is thus "passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31). With the

coming of Christ the new order has begun; all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

For Paul, therefore, salvation in Christ is a thoroughly eschatological reality, meaning first of all that God's final (eschatological) saving of his people has already been effected by Christ. The future condemnation which we all richly deserve has been transferred from the future into the past, having been borne by Christ (Rom. 8:1-3). Thus we "have been saved" (Eph. 2:8). But since our final salvation has not yet been fully realized, he can likewise speak of salvation as something presently in process ("we are being saved," I Cor. 1:18) and as yet to be consummated ("we shall be saved," Rom. 5:9). "Redemption" is both "already" (Eph. 1:7) and "not yet" (Eph. 4:30), as is our "adoption" (Rom. 8:15 and 23) and "justification" (= the gift of righteousness; Rom. 5:1 and Gal. 5:5). It is this understanding of salvation, as both "already" and "not yet," that keeps Paul from being a triumphalist. Because we are "already," we presently experience the power of Christ's resurrection; but because we are "not yet" we also presently participate in his sufferings (Phil. 3:10).

This essential framework likewise conditions Paul's understanding that the church is an eschatological community, whose members live in the present as those stamped with eternity. We live as expatriates on earth; our true citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). Ethical life, therefore, does not consist of rules to live by. Rather, empowered by the Spirit, we now live the life of the future in the present age, the life that characterizes God himself ...

For Paul this "changed eschatological perspective" derives from two experienced realities, both of which took place at the very beginning of his life in Christ: his encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus Road ("I have seen the Lord," he avows to the Corinthians) and the subsequent gift of the eschatological Spirit. In Paul's own prior understanding of things, the resurrection of the dead and the gift of the Spirit were the two primary events that marked the end of the ages. Both of these have now been set in motion.

First, the resurrection of the dead is for Paul the final event on God's eschatological calendar, the unmistakable evidence that the End has fully arrived. For Paul *the* resurrection has already taken place when Christ was raised from the dead, thus setting in motion the final doom of death and thereby guaranteeing our resurrection ... Believers therefore live "between the times" with regard to the two resurrections. We have *already* been "raised with Christ," which guarantees our *future* bodily resurrection (Rom. 6:4-5; 8:10-11).

Second, ... I have above regularly referred to the Spirit as the "eschatological Spirit." That is because apart from the eschatological dimension of "promise and fulfillment" and "already but not yet," neither Paul's own experience of the Spirit nor his perception of that experience are intelligible. From his Jewish heritage he well understood that the Spirit was part of the promise for the future. The promises of the new covenant had been put into an eschatological frame by Jeremiah [Jer. 31:31-34] and Ezekial [Ez. 36:36-37:14] and had become thoroughgoing in later Jewish expectations on the basis of Joel 2:28-30. This is why the Spirit is so crucial to Paul's understanding of Christian existence. The gift of the out-poured Spirit meant that the messianic age had already arrived. The Spirit is thus the central element in this altered perspective, the key to which is Paul's firm conviction that the Spirit was both the *certain evidence* that the future had dawned, and the *absolute guarantee* of its final consummation (pp. 803-806).

[For excellent studies dealing with many aspects of this topic and others related to it I highly recommend *Romans* by F.F. Bruce in the *Tyndale NT Commentary* series (be sure to read its Introduction); *A Theology of the NT* by G.E. Ladd; *The Epistle to the Galatians* by Ronald Y.K. Fung in the *New International Commentary of the NT* series; and, despite its ardent trinitarianism, Gordon Fee's *God's Empowering Presence* or the shorter adapted version *The Holy Spirit in Paul*].

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