

# **The Holy Ghost, His Person and His Work, with Special Emphasis on Sanctification**

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“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.” It seems unlikely what we have anyone here in this gathering who does not recognize those opening words of Luther’s explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed. Surely, all of us have learned them by heart in preparation for Confirmation, heard them quoted frequently while many of us have used them, no doubt, from time to time, in our preaching or teaching.

Have all of us, however, come to appreciate fully the place of great importance which we confess with those words concerning the Holy Spirit’s part in our Salvation? What we are saying in effect is that in spite of the wondrous love of the Heavenly Father, in spite of the gracious work of atonement, accomplished by the Savior, Christ Jesus for you and me, as individuals, there would be no salvation, were it not for the work of the Holy Spirit in us. And that is the truth. Such a thought is surely borne out by St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, 8:9,11: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

In spite of such a fact, however, Luther needed already in his day to say: “In our day the Holy Spirit suffers great ignominy!” That Luther said, we fear, we need to say of our own day. One is nearly inclined to say by way of judgment of our own day that the Holy Ghost is the forgotten person of the Godhead. Let us illustrate our point. Notice the great recognition with which the birthday of Jesus is celebrated at Christmas-time. The same thing is true of His death on Good Friday and His Resurrection on Easter Sunday. But when we come to the festival of His Ascension, of which He said that it was good that He go away so that He might send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Yes, when we come to the Festival of Pentecost, the festival of the outpouring of the Spirit, then we find people, yes, people even within the visible church, showing deplorably little interest. Many church-goers in our own churches would not realize when these festivals are at hand, if their pastors and church literature did not remind them.

One wonders, indeed, why this should be the case. Could it be because people find the part which the Holy Spirit has in their salvation abstract and impractical, as compared with the Father’s creation and preservation for us, and the Son’s atoning death and resurrection in our behalf? Could it be that for that reason they feel that the Holy Ghost is of less importance? Or could it be because the work of the Holy Spirit is entirely unpopular with the thinking of natural man? That thought that we must rely entirely on the help and motivation of the Spirit and lean completely away from our own reason and accomplishments offends natural pride. Or could it be because the training of many in spiritual things has never advanced to the point where they see the tremendous importance and vitality of the Spirit’s part in our Salvation, call it ignorance, if you will?

Many more reasons, we believe, might be added to these attempts at explaining the woeful neglect of our day over against the Holy Spirit, but neither those given nor such we might add will ever justify the neglect. That neglect, wherever it occurs and for whatever reason it does so, is, nonetheless an attempt of the devil to rob believers of their salvation.

Nor is neglect the only way in which the Holy Spirit suffers ignominy in our day. There are those, many in fact, even whole sects and churches, who, though they speak very much of the Holy Spirit, still abuse Him woefully. Some approach Him in an excess of sentimentalism and emotionalism, denying even His use of means when entering the hearts of men. They want us to believe that they are able to determine the moment of His coming, even help prepare the setting for that arrival, and then feel Him as He makes His supposed direct entrance into their hearts. Others think of Him as the author of a legalistic parade of piety which wholly defeats the very purpose of His gracious existence.

From all of this it becomes easy to see that while the Holy Spirit occupies such a key position in the process of our Salvation and performs such a wondrous work of grace in our behalf, He and His work have ever been and remain so today one of the definite targets of the subtlest attacks of Satan. For that reason it is indeed proper that Christians would, when gathering for strengthening and understanding, frequently give prayerful consideration to the Holy Spirit and His precious work. It is in that light that I approach the assignment which

you have given me. It is with a fervent prayer that I do so, a prayer that our study together might add some benefit to your convention and to the joys of faith with which you, at its close, will return to your respective fields of labor.

Let me state as we begin that since the theme which you have assigned takes in the whole field of the Holy Ghost's person and work, and since this convention is a delegate meeting, I am assuming that you are looking for a survey treatment of the whole subject, something of a review of the whole area without in-depth treatment of its many phases with the exception of one, namely, that of sanctification. At any rate that is the procedure you will notice while we make our way through the essay.

Our theme speaks of the *Holy Ghost as a person*, and, indeed, he is such. Today, here at this convention, He is a person with whom we want to renew our acquaintance. We have already intimated that He is a person of great importance to us. Whenever we either make or renew acquaintance with a person of importance to us, we are very concerned about finding out first of all who that person is. So then let us, too, ask: "Who is the Holy Ghost?"

When the pastors among you ask that question of your confirmation class, or you teachers ask it of a class in Catechism, you expect the answer: "The Holy Ghost is the third person of the Triune God, true God with the Father and the Son."

When in communion services we confess our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed, we identify the Holy Ghost as "the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets."

Both identifications are most correct, to be sure, for when our Savior gave His great and basic directive to the Apostles concerning their future work, we hear Him say: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." When the time drew near for our Savior to remove His visible presence from this world and chose to announce His intent to send the Holy Spirit, we hear Him say: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."

One cannot escape noticing, as one hears these passages, the clear references we have here to the Holy Spirit's membership in the Godhead, which is to be preached for man's salvation, and that the Spirit is one of those persons. While we mortals do not find it possible to fathom the wondrous mystery of the Trinity, yet the second passage just quoted states clearly that there are three persons of the Trinity involved in the matter of man's salvation and, again, the Spirit is one of them. While the Father is He from whom the Spirit proceeds, and the Son is the one who sends the Spirit, the Spirit himself has His precious part too, that of testifying of Jesus.

We find further evidence of all this when we read how Peter expressed himself when he found it necessary to rebuke Ananias and Sapphira for their wretched deceit. After he had told them that they had lied to the Holy Ghost, he went on to say: "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Here we certainly cannot fail to note the Apostle's identifying the Spirit as God.

And again, in his very familiar words in I Corinthians 3:16, St. Paul asks: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The matter we want to note here is that the Holy Spirit is indeed God, for His dwelling within us believers makes us God's temple.

Now when we make or renew acquaintance with a person, especially if he happens to be a person of importance, we are careful to learn to know his names and any other ways of identifying him, if there be such. If we approach the matter of our learning to know the Holy Spirit more fully in that way, we find that there are, besides the common names, Holy Spirit and Holy Ghost, a number of very helpful and meaningful titles with which the Scriptures speak of Him. Let us give a moment's attention to them.

In a passage which we quoted a moment ago, we heard the Savior speak of the Holy Ghost with the term, "*Comforter*." From the Greek word for this name we have the English word, "*Paraclete*," which is used on occasion in place of the term "comforter." Though the laymen here may not be entirely at home with that strange word "paraclete," they will undoubtedly recall singing it in one of the Pentecost hymns:

Immortal honor, endless fame,

Attend th' Almighty Father's name;  
 The Savior Son be glorified,  
 Who for lost man's redemption died;  
 And equal adoration be,  
 Eternal Paraclete, to Thee. (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, Hymn 236, v. 4)

What did the Savior mean when He spoke of the Holy Ghost as the Comforter, or Paraclete? Unfortunately, the English word “comforter” does not fully convey the meaning of the term “paraclete.” The latter term is rich in meaning. While the English term “comforter” captures a beautiful part of its meaning, it actually connotes more. It includes the thought of one’s advocate in a court of justice. It refers also to one who remains as an aid at one’s side. We become quite clear what the name wants to tell us when in an earlier passage than the one already quoted we hear our Savior say: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another Comforter*, that he may abide with you forever” (John 14:16). Jesus had been with the disciples. He had revealed God to them. He had led them to God. He had assured them how as their High Priest He would intercede for them. He manifested clearly to them that He was and would be for them just what John would one day refer to when saying: “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (I John 2:1). Now that He was about to depart from this world He tells them He would send them another Comforter, one who, as it were, would take His place. The Spirit would be sent, Jesus explains, “that he may be with them forever.” So then this name points us already to the wondrous blessing which is ours in the Holy Spirit—He is the abiding presence of God enlightening us in the grace that is ours in Him.

In this very same context we come upon another of the names given to the Spirit in Holy Scripture. The passage which we have just quoted is followed in John 14 with the words: “Even the *Spirit of truth*...dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” And let us hear Jesus use the same term again in the first passage which we quoted in this matter: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26). This precious name means more than that the Holy Spirit is truthful, deceiving no one. It tells us that He is the “*Spirit of the truth*.” He is bound up with divine truth, He is the one who brings it, reveals it, and causes it to become effective in and among us. All that becomes clear when we listen to our Lord Jesus further: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide You into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:13-14).

The next name which we use when speaking of the Holy Spirit and which we want to treat here is one not actually used in Scripture. And yet, it is one the justification for which is found throughout the Scriptures. We refer to the name “*Creator*.” True, this name is not used commonly among us, but when it is, it is indeed used correctly. Those of you who are at home in your hymnals know that we sing of the Holy Spirit as “Creator” in two of our Pentecost hymns. Hymn number 233 begins with the words: “Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,” while hymn number 236 opens with the lines: “Creator Spirit by whose aid the world’s foundations first were laid.”

How may we understand this title for the Holy Ghost? There are a number of senses in which we certainly may speak of Him as “Creator.” For one thing, Scripture has a number of references to the Spirit’s part in the actual creation of the world and all that is therein. You are, surely, all familiar with the account of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis and with the fact that that account tells us that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The word “moved” in this context might be translated “brooded upon.” Just as that translation suggests, one may think here of a sitting fowl. The Spirit filled the formless and void earth with all manner of life. Then when God commanded the earth to bring forth grass, etc., the waters to be filled with fish, the air with birds, and the earth with cattle, beasts, and creeping things, everything was ready, prepared by the Spirit.

Completely in keeping with that thought we hear David say in Psalm 33:6: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath (Spirit) of his mouth.” In Job 33:4 Elihu is quoted

as saying even this: “The Spirit of the Lord hath made me, and the breath (Spirit) of the Almighty hath given me life.”

Hand in hand with creation goes preservation. We usually attribute that wondrous task to the Heavenly Father, even as we do Creation, of course. But actually, however, also the Holy Spirit shares in the work of preservation, and, hence, is rightly addressed as “Creator.” David sings of that in Psalm 104:29-30: “O Lord, thou hidest the face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth.”

There is, of course, another sense in which one may think of the Holy Spirit as Creator—it is in the spiritual sense. When He effected our conversion, then indeed He created us anew. But of that significant work of the Spirit let us hear in a later context in this essay.

One Scripture-given name for the Holy Spirit remains for us to mention. We think of the term with which St. Paul speaks of Him in Ephesians 1:13-14: “Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest of our inheritance* until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” What does Paul mean when he calls the Holy Spirit the *earnest* of our inheritance? He uses the term in the sense of a down-payment or guarantee payment—payment given as an assurance that the balance of the full payment is sure to follow. We already have the ransoming through Christ’s blood—that part of our ransoming which consists of the remission of our sins. Now that we have the Holy Spirit and through His indwelling we have faith in that remission, the Spirit is the guarantee that in the end we shall receive the full ransoming from all evil, even our dead bodies still be ransomed for eternal glory.

What a priceless Treasure, indeed, we find the Holy Spirit to be when we review thus the names whereby He is spoken of in Scriptures and what those names mean to tell us!

When we make or renew acquaintance with some person and strive to evaluate the benefit of his companionship, we, as a rule, are interested in his work, especially if that work happens to be rich in benefit for us. The work of the Holy Spirit is, of course, entirely of such a nature. His work, though carried on to the glory of God, has only one objective as far as we are concerned, namely, our Salvation. Let us proceed to a study of *His work*.

When we go about the study of the work of the Holy Spirit, we can, after a moment’s consideration, hardly escape noticing a wonderful pattern and a remarkable fullness which does indeed thoroughly warm the heart of any observing child of God. We find ourselves the focal object of a rich measure of priceless blessings, some from the past, some in process today, and others giving promise for the future. Whoever loses sight of or neglects the work of the Holy Spirit in his behalf forfeits a rare treasure indeed.

Which of His works do we refer to when we say that from Him we receive blessings out of the past? You will recall that we have already mentioned His part in Creation. We shall not enter into that subject again. However, while thinking of the Spirit in the remote past, active even in Creation, we do at once find the answer to a question which is often asked concerning the Spirit. People ask: “Was the Holy Ghost active in the Old Testament?” When we read of things like the Savior’s asking His disciples to wait for the outpouring of the Spirit before venturing forth to the Gentiles with the Gospel, or when we read of that very special outpouring of the Spirit on the first New Testament Pentecost, some people come to the mistaken conclusion that the Spirit belongs only to the New Testament dispensation. Our finding Him active in the Creation points to the error of such a thought, as do also a number of other facts.

Just as you confess in the Nicene Creed: “Who spake by the prophets,” so indeed the Spirit was active throughout the Old Testament, guiding that which was preached and written and then preserving the treasure He had helped prepare. While we cannot go into this matter at length, permit just one clear evidence. When the prophet Isaiah wrote of the rod of Jesse, the Branch that should grow out of his roots, namely, the Savior, in the first verse of his eleventh chapter, then already he was guided to write of the Spirit. He goes on with these words (11:2): “And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.” More than that, in his sixty-first chapter we find Isaiah writing messianically, that is, in the name and person of the coming Savior, and this is what we hear him saying concerning the Spirit (61:1-2): “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the

Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.”

Now if anyone should for a moment be inclined to discount the merit of these words of Isaiah, than let him recall the days some seven-hundred years later, when our Savior arose to read in the synagogue at Nazareth. It was these very lines from Isaiah that He read and then, closing the book, said: “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21).

While referring to the Spirit’s work in the past, particularly of how He “spake by the prophets,” we are, of course, reminded of a tremendously important work of the Spirit, that great volume of treasures which He passed on to us through His inspiration of the Scriptures. The portions of God’s Word which speak clearly to us of the Holy Spirit’s part in that wondrous work are very clear and equally familiar, we trust. It seems likely that we have all learned some of these by heart. In his first letter to the Corinthians, 2:12-13, we hear Paul say: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” And in Ephesians 6:17 St. Paul speaks of the Word as the “Sword of the Spirit.” And to that we add the testimony of St. Peter: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:21).

The Bible is indeed the Book of the Holy Spirit—the work of the Holy Spirit. We can never stress that truth too strongly, for here we find the source of the Scriptures’ supreme authority, of its divine inerrancy.

Less apparent among the precious works of the Holy Spirit is His preservation of the Scriptures. Portions of the Old Testament are 3,500 years old, dating from the early ages of civilization. The latest books of the New Testament have been in circulation for nearly 1900 years. Who watched over this wondrous volume of two canons of books during a period of some 1600 years? Who protected it against costly errors on the part of countless copyists down through the ages? Who stayed the efforts of the wretched unbelievers who might have tampered with its soul-saving lines? Who withheld success from the clubs, the swords, the fires, the armies, the courts of those who sought to destroy the Scriptures and persecute its followers? Who has dulled the subtle edge of the tongue of the modernist or the higher critic even of our day? What is the explanation of this marvelous preservation of the Scriptures? The only reasonable, logical answer is that this was and is the work of the Holy Spirit. To quote from a recent article in *Christianity Today*:

He, as the Third Person of the Trinity, is now active in the world, and by His singular care and providence He has kept His Holy Book trustworthy through the centuries. As He guards the seed of divine grace planted in the soul of every believer till it blossoms into the full fruition of life everlasting, so He guards the seed of the divine Word till it brings forth the full harvest of God’s eternal purpose.

Returning now to the pattern of which we spoke of before in our study of the work of the Holy Spirit we permit its chronology to move us along to the day of the Apostolic and Early Christian Church. If ever there was a time in the history of the church when the hand of the Holy Spirit at work among and for God’s children became evident, it was in this period. He had blessings ready for that day which were designed to be just right for that day, just of the right help for the small, young, and struggling church. In fact, several of His areas of operation in the midst of that church were so definitely suited to the needs of that day, that although we enjoy the lasting results of their use, we believe they are no longer evident in our days nor have been ever since the post-apostolic period.

There is something precious for us to learn from church history just in that respect as we study the work of the Spirit. Never need we fear that our wondrous Paraclete will fail to be at our side, the side of His Church, with exactly such blessings and gifts as will aid it most mightily and effectively, as pleaseth the Heavenly Father, in any day of strife.

What were the gifts of the Spirit which we think of when referring to the apostolic church? Before we enumerate them, let us be sure to point out that when we speak of the “Gifts of the Spirit” we must distinguish between that term and the way a very similar one, “Gift of the Holy Ghost,” is used in one instance. This latter term is used twice in the Book of Acts, 2:28 and 10:45. In the first of these, where in the account of the first great Pentecost we read that Peter assured the crowd that they should receive “the gift of the Holy Ghost,” he was referring only to their receiving the Spirit even as we have received Him through use of the Word in faith. The context makes that clear. In the other instance, however, when at Caesarea in the home of the centurion Cornelius, the Jews marveled that “on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost,” there the context soon reveals that they had received supernatural gifts from the Holy Spirit like those we want now to discuss.

In this connection it might be added as helpful when reading of the Holy Ghost in the Book of Acts that other expressions are used in a similarly double sense, dependent on the context. When Luke tells us that the apostles were “filled with the Holy Ghost,” on the occasion of Pentecost, when he tells us that the believers at Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria so that the new converts might “receive the Holy Ghost,” when he tells us that Agabus stood up at Antioch and “signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world,” when he tells us that Paul, while on the first missionary journey, was “filled with the Holy Ghost” as he predicted the temporary blindness of Bar Jesus in the home of Sergius Paulus, and when he tells us how Paul on that well-known occasion asked some of the believers at Ephesus whether they had “received the Holy Ghost since they believed,” in all of these cases he was speaking of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But now if we thumb our way through the Book of Acts again looking for similar expressions, the context will show us another meaning for some such. When in chapter four we read of how the assembly prayed after hearing of Peter’s and John’s being freed from prison and were “filled with the Holy Ghost,” when we read of the martyr Stephen “being full of the Holy Ghost” as death approached, when we read of Ananias announcing to blind Saul in Damascus that he had come, so that Saul might receive his sight and be “filled with the Holy Ghost,” and when we read of the disciples at Pisidia being “filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost” after having heard Paul preach, in all these instances, though the terms are the same, we find no indication of the Holy Spirit’s doing any more than to bring men to faith as once He did with all of us.

The term “Gifts of the Spirit” must also not be confused with still another expression. Scripture uses the term “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22 and 23, but includes the information that here, just as the term implies, there is reference to the blessings which the Spirit grants in greater or less measure to all of God’s children. These gifts or “fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

We have now cleared the way for our look at the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. And yet, we must begin even that study with a note to the effect that Paul gives us two lists, the first including no supernatural gifts, the other including such. When in his letter to the Romans he enumerates such special gifts he mentions seven. But none of these seven are thought of as being supernatural. This is the list of seven of which we sing in the one Pentecost hymn and are referred to as the “Spirit’s sevenfold blessing”: “Spirit of Adoption / Make us overflow / With Thy sevenfold blessing / And in grace to grow” (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, Hymn 229, v. 6).

When now we examine that list of seven, we find that the gifts mentioned are all such as are possessed and enjoyed in varying degrees among us in the church today. They are *prophecy*, in the sense of expounding and preaching the Word; *ministry*, in the sense of helpful voluntary service in keeping with prophecy and teaching; *teaching*, in the sense of instructing and making things plain, not just on the part of formal teachers, but on the part of parents, elders, or anyone who finds himself in a position to teach; *exhortation*, in the sense of good Christian admonition, as it ought be practiced among God’s children, one toward another; *giving*, ever a treasured behavior in the church, especially when it is practiced in simplicity, as Paul suggests, namely, with proper motive and no show or claim to credit; *ruling*, the kind that falls to anyone who holds a place of leadership in the church; and finally, *showing of mercy*, in the sense of such cheerful deeds of mercy, which become the marks of a true Christian, for the relief of those in distress (Romans 12:6-8).

Paul's other list of the "Gifts of the Spirit" is found in I Corinthians 12:8-10. In this list he includes some obviously supernatural gifts, which, as we stated before, were particularly helpful to the church of that day. Of these supernatural gifts we believe that they have not been found in the church since that post-apostolic day. Here we have a list of nine.

You will all understand, of course, that we cannot treat each of these nine gifts with any thoroughness in an essay with the scope of this one. Most of these nine might be thought of as subjects for studies in themselves, but do let us list them with a few words about each.

Paul begins this list with two gifts which seem to be the same at first hearing. One is the *word of wisdom*, the other the *word of knowledge*. Much has been written in an effort to show a distinction between these two gifts. Letting these two terms find their interpretation in other Scriptural references to them, it seems that the wisdom is not only the gift of knowing the truths of salvation, nor even only the gift of conveying them to others unto their salvation, but it includes also the ability to apply such wisdom in a practical way to our own lives and to the lives of others. In his rather helpful book on this subject, P. Kluepfel suggests that illustrations of this might be the hymns, prayers, devotional books, sermons, etc., of devout and talented men. Knowledge, on the other hands seems to refer to a good store of knowledge, even in detail, of the Gospel truths and then the ability to present the same in good order and clearness to others. Lenski thinks here of the teacher, the apologist, or the theologian and their valuable place in the church.

Next on the list of nine is *faith*. When we find that otherwise common term in this list of special gifts, we conclude that Paul is not referring to the saving faith which all of us possess in one measure or another, but a faith capable of miracles. Here let us hear what Luther has to say:

This is not the common faith in Christ, whereby one is justified before God, and obtains forgiveness of sins, since this must be found in all Christians, even though they have not the particular gift here mentioned; but here he mentions a peculiar virtue or power of the Spirit which He works in the Church, so that some can do great and remarkable things with unwavering courage.

The next two gifts hardly need any further remarks. They are the gift of *healing* and the gift of *miracles*. The first one, healing, you will recognize is actually a gift of miracles, however, in a specific area. The other is the general gift of miracles. Both of these are gifts which we described before as being supernatural and no longer experienced among the members of the church today.

When we find the gift of *prophecy* in this list of special gifts, again we become aware that something more is meant than that which we said concerning the same gift in the list in Romans. This gift does obviously not stop with the ability to communicate the saving will of God to others, the sense in which every true preacher and teacher is a prophet. Here is included also that supernatural power of receiving and communicating direct and specific messages from God, as was true in the case of Agabus.

When we come next to the gift of *discerning spirits*, we might be inclined to think only of the Scriptural admonition that all Christians are to "prove the spirits whether they be of God." Finding this gift listed among the special gifts of the Spirit causes us, however, to see more in it. This gift includes the ability to detect certain difficult cases, unmasking false prophets, and seeing what the devil is planning through this or that false teacher. It refers to the ability to do as Peter was able to do in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

The last two special gifts of the Spirit in Paul's Corinthian list of nine are a related pair, we recognize at ones—the gift of *speaking in tongues* and that of *interpretation of tongues*. Of all the gifts of the Spirit, none has received as much attention, especially in recent years as this pair. In fact, we believe that there are few subjects concerning any part of Scripture which have brought about so much discussion and unfortunate practice. Ever so many questions are asked about these gifts. Just what is the gift of tongues? Was the gift of tongues meant only for the apostolic day? Are there people who really have the gift of tongues today? How we wish we had definite answers to all of these questions! How we wish we knew all about the gift of tongues! Some years ago we could say that only some of the sects, like the Pentecostals, claimed ability to exercise that



gift. Today there are even those in Lutheran circles who claim such ability, and their number seems to be growing!

There are a few things which we do know about the gift of tongues. For one thing, we know that it was prophesied by our Savior that there should be such a gift, as well as other supernatural gifts. In Mark 16:17 we hear Him say: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues."

Furthermore, we seem quite sure that a definite distinction is to be made between the speaking done in tongues at the first great Pentecost and the gift as it was practiced later in Corinth, Caesarea, and a few other named instances. The former was a miraculous speaking. It was a case of the disciples speaking a wide variety of languages known all around the Mediterranean world. We hear the people asking: "How hear we every man in our own tongues wherein we were born?" The people who placed this question had come from at least sixteen widespread parts of the Mediterranean world. These areas or nationalities are then specifically named in a list which you remember well, no doubt, from the Pentecost story.

The gift of speaking in tongues of which we hear later and which occurred particularly in Corinth was quite unlike the incident of the first Pentecost. This was not a case of speaking in existing foreign languages. It was rather an ecstatic address to God, spoken in an exalted frame of mind, which found expression in sounds or words belonging to no human language, intelligible to none but those endowed with the other gift, the interpretation of tongues. Perhaps the best explanation of what the gift of tongues in Corinth actually was has been given by Schlatter in his old commentary on First Corinthians. At any rate, it is the explanation which has stood the test of time and the one to which other commentators continue to return. He assumed that this speaking in tongues was an ecstatic expression of strong emotion that so filled the heart of the speaker that he could not find words to express himself and sounded forth his feelings of joy or praise in whatever sounds bubbled forth out of his heart.

Those of you who are at home with the fourteenth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians know that Paul, while he thanked God that he spoke in tongues more than all the rest, did not think as highly of that gift as he did of prophecy. We hear him say that he would rather speak five words with understanding than ten thousand words with tongues. In the same vein he remarked that he who prophecies edifies the church, but the speaker with tongues edifies only himself.

And yet, speaking with tongues was a gift of the Holy Spirit. It must have had its purpose. But what might that purpose have been? We are given several keys to an answer for that question. Paul tells us that tongues were "for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." In fact, he quoted an Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah as being applicable at this point. Isaiah's prophecy in the first place warned that since Israel of old was not listening to the prophets, God would let the Assyrians invade with their foreign language which would be completely unintelligible to them. Still they would not learn even from such a chastisement. And so Paul quotes that prophecy as being symbolic of the fact that in a community like Corinth there would be those who would attract great attention with the gift of speaking in tongues, but the stubborn unbelievers would not understand—it would be but a sign of their rejection.

We are reminded of the Savior's own explanation of why he spoke in parables. While His parables were beautiful illustrations of divine truth for the believers, yet for the stubborn Jew they produced that oft predicted situation that "seeing they would not see, and hearing they would not understand" (Luke 8:10b). It was in a similar way, it seems, that speaking in tongues was to serve in the early church.

Now the question for which many wish a positive answer is this: "Does a special gift of the Spirit like speaking in tongues continue today?" Surely, no one of us will say that he is positive that the Holy Spirit might not at some given time or particularly in some foreign field deem it wise to revive one or the other of these special gifts, even such as speaking in tongues. Nor do we mean to say that the obvious disappearance of these gifts from the area of recorded fact in church history through the ages is absolute proof that they have never genuinely reoccurred. But if you will permit your essayist his own humble opinion, he would ask, why should such a question linger among us? When we take a positive and grateful look at the full measure of revelation in Word and Sacraments which we possess today, and that in a day of every possible advantage in transportation

and communication with which to speed our way to reach many men everywhere—when we realize, particularly in the case of the gift of tongues, that the Lord’s times, ways, and means for chastising, possibly even rejecting are entirely in His hands, for Him to indicate clearly should He choose to make us His instruments in the process, then the question as to whether such a gift continues today ceases to be a question. What we mean to say is that should He choose to employ such a gift through us, He would do so. It is not for us to concern ourselves as to whether we have the gift, surely not as to whether we might arouse the gift in our midst.

One is particularly discouraged from taking that seriously which is called speaking in tongues in our day. One is particularly unwilling to consider it as genuine when one detects an obvious lack of mental strength, emotional control, social steadiness, or even upright practice on the part of those who claim to have the gift. We sincerely hope that our judgment does not appear cruel. What a pity it is to read of one who shared our long years of education at college and seminary with many of us now advertising his readiness and ability to teach others the gift of tongues and telling the story of such ability at the gift of miracles that he found it possible to restore sight in a glass eye for one of his applicants.

We have now arrived at the point in our essay where we should like to permit the pattern which we observed and the chronology which we allowed ourselves for clarity’s sake to move us along to the work which the Holy Spirit carries on for us today. True, there is no clear division between the blessings which we enjoy from the work of the Holy Spirit which we think of Him as accomplishing in the past and those blessings which He seems to create anew for us in our day. We have, as explained earlier, used such a pattern only for orderly progression in this essay. All the while we spoke of the person, the names, and the earlier works of the Holy Spirit, we were speaking of truths rich in blessing for us today. But let us put it this way, now we want to concentrate on that work of the Holy Spirit which for each of us as individuals in this our day becomes the climax, the purpose, the goal, the very sum and substance of all that we experience at His gracious hand as God’s children. We refer, of course, to the work with the name of which Luther saw fit to head his treatment of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed—that word to which your program committee has asked your essayist to give some special attention. That work of the Spirit is

### **Sanctification.**

As we begin the study of sanctification and think of some of the other terms which we shall be using for such a discussion, I am reminded of an experience I once had while still in the preaching ministry. Telling it may have some point here. While serving as a conference visitor I was approached on one occasion by a delegation from a congregation for the purpose of bringing complaint against their pastor. When the grievances had been aired, it developed that the one they made most of was this. They complained that their pastor used too many big words in his sermons. When asked for a few examples of what they called big words, they explained that he often used five-syllable words like sanctification, justification, and regeneration. That was one complaint concerning which, you may be sure, it was easy to defend the pastor.

Do not misunderstand your essayist as being one who enjoys setting himself up as a giver of advice. Nor does he mean to give the impression of faulting anyone’s diligence. But do let it be said that there are some five-syllable words, the three mentioned a moment ago among them, which a pastor ought strive already in confirmation instructions to make most meaningful for his future communicants, so that each time they hear the terms they find their memories responding with the benefit of their meaning. And let parishioners remember that their pastors find themselves compelled to use these terms. Our English language simply has no synonyms with less syllables for the precious experiences which those terms mean to remind us of. If a pastor is not free to use such terms in context, he should have to add paragraphs of explanation to his line of thought at frequent intervals.

Before we are able to go about the discussion of sanctification with full appreciation for all that it means to us, there are several preliminary, basic facts which we ought to review with one another. For one thing, let no one forget all that we have learned concerning the utter sinfulness of natural man. Ever since the fall of our first

parents into sin every man born into this world has been born and conceived in sin. Permitted to remain in that state, he grows up dead in trespasses and sin, utterly depraved. Nor is there anything he is able to do about his condition. True, man does have a natural knowledge of God. True, too, some men by nature have a strong inclination toward and great ability for living respectable lives, on occasion even leading such exemplary lives that they put Christians to shame. But even all of that cannot change unconverted man's natural state of sinfulness and unbelief.

Another truth, one of an entirely different nature, which we want to keep in mind as we begin our study of sanctification, is this that from eternity our eternally gracious and all-knowing Heavenly Father did something about the unfortunate lot of man. What He promised in the Garden of Eden, namely, that He would send a Savior, was in His eternal thinking and planning from the beginning. And in that Savior He declared all men righteous already from eternity. As most of us know, no doubt, we call this objective justification. We call it that because it was declared for all men, completely regardless of anything about the individual man involved, it was declared by God. In other words it had nothing to do in any way with man, his thinking, intentions, inclinations, abilities, or efforts. It was at once there for all. For reasons like that we refer to God's declaration of objective justification as a forensic act. It was at once perfect and complete. It was, of course, planned and declared in purest grace. The fact that God needed still, many years after the fall, to give the Savior who would achieve the atonement of the world through His suffering, death, and resurrection militates in no way against the truth of that justification from eternity. God is eternal in all of His attributes, in none of them is there any element of time involved in His planning and accomplishment.

So then, where, when, and how does sanctification come into the picture? We shall undoubtedly be able to answer that question with greater understanding if we ask first of all, "What is sanctification?" If I may address myself to the laymen here for a moment, let me remind you of the part of the liturgy on page 26 of your hymnal which you usually use at communion services. It starts "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." At the top of that page you find the Latin title "Sanctus." You find that word there because it means "holy." And the rest of the word "sanctification" comes from another Latin word which means "to make." Notice that you find a form of that same word in the English word "factory." So the term "sanctification" means "to make holy."

Only now, in which sense does it mean that? Actually, when we use that term we may be using it in either of two senses. We often speak of it being used in a wider sense and in a narrower sense. When we use the term "sanctification" in the wider sense, it means or includes everything that God does through His Means of Grace in the heart and life of man in the direction of Salvation, everything from the call to faith to the moment of dying in faith. When the term is used in the narrower sense, sanctification refers only to that which God does in the heart and life of the man who is already a Christian, in other words, leading him to live an increasingly godly life. Let us treat first the earlier steps of sanctification, thinking of it in the wider sense.

Just as you confess when speaking Luther's explanation to the Third Article when you say: "But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel," just so the very first experience in sanctification is the call to faith. That God does issue such a call to faith becomes extremely clear from the Scriptures. The number of passages that state just that are legion. We quote parts of only two of the many. From the pen of St. Paul (I Cor. 1:9) come the words: "God is faithful, by whom ye are called unto the fellowship of the Son Jesus Christ, our Lord." And St. Peter (I Peter 2:9) wrote these familiar words: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

The words which we quote with Luther by way of explanation of the Third Article do not leave us asking *how* the Holy Spirit calls us. We say: "But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel." The truth too is so easily shown to be biblical. When Jesus chose to send His disciples out to win men for Salvation, He told them: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And when Paul spoke of his readiness to come to Rome, the grand imperial city, to win men for Christ, we hear him say: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Romans 1:16). No doubt some of you have been waiting for me to include the most familiar of all passages in this connection, Paul's familiar words: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Before we leave speaking of the call to faith by the Gospel, there are a few other thoughts which ought to be touched on at least briefly. Surely, we all know the Words of Jesus in Matthew 22:14: “Many are called but few are chosen.” And as we observe the masses about us we are inclined in our human judgment to fear that the latter part of the passage just quoted is all too true. That observation nearly overwhelms one when travelling in the Far East and noticing whole nations of many millions living in the pitiful ignorance and superstition of unbelief. One is inclined to ask: “Is there something wrong with the power of the Gospel? Is there any fault with the operation of the Holy Spirit? Is the call possibly inefficacious or even not sincerely meant?”

When we study Scriptures and our Confessions, we find all such thinking completely erroneous. The call is universal, it is never sham, and the Gospel through which it is issued is, indeed, as we heard from Romans a moment ago: “a power unto Salvation for everyone that believeth.” Right there we have come upon the trouble. Many do not believe. Surely, you recall Paul’s words in that familiar Mission Festival reading from Romans 10: “They have not all obeyed the gospel.” So then the fault for the fact that “few are chosen” lies squarely on the side of man. In his freedom of choice in that one direction he in too many cases turns away from the Gospel. There are ever so many references to that truth in Scriptures. Think of your Savior’s sad words in Matthew 23:37: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered my children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”

But now, just in that connection another question arises. Do not the few who are chosen cooperate in some way? Are they chosen because the Lord foresaw their being a bit more ready to believe? Many of you know that that question points us to a view which for many years has been divisive in the Lutheran Church, to say nothing of the Protestant circles generally.

In passing, you will recall, we referred a moment ago to man’s freedom of will in one direction. We implied in that context that that one direction was toward rejection, toward sinning, and rightly so. Every time a child of God seems to reach a decision in favor of Salvation, it is because of the Holy Spirit who is wooing his soul through the precious Means of Grace. Bible passages literally crowd one’s memory where that truth is involved. We think of Paul’s memorable words: “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Cor. 12:3). Or think of how plainly Paul keeps the whole credit for Salvation in the area of grace, without the least possible intermingling of merit when in Romans 11:6 he writes: “And if by grace, then is it no more works: otherwise grace is no more grace.”

Perhaps some of you recall how in a practical way Prof. John P. Meyer used to rivet that thought down securely. He would ask who of us recalled our call to faith—who of us could place his finger on some instance of decision or effort related to our call to faith. Surely, for those of us who received that call in infant Baptism, who then experienced our early training in that direction in the Word, administered to us on a child’s level by loving parents, pastor, and teachers, the thought of any cooperation on our part seems utterly remote.

For some paragraphs now we have been speaking of our being called by the Holy Ghost, and all along we have referred to that call as being to faith. Let us now, as we continue to speak of sanctification in the broader sense, for the sake of clarity, proceed in our discussion as though we could take the various experiences that have to do with sanctification apart, to consider them one by one—as though we could think of them as occurring in a given order and according to a given time schedule. Proceeding that way, and we emphasize, just for clarity’s sake, let us ask what it is then that our call to faith brings about first in us. At this point five terms come to mind with which one might speak of that earliest experience—each suggests a slightly different way of looking at the experience, and yet they are almost synonymous in this way that they refer to the same experience. The five terms are these: repentance, conversion, regeneration, vivification, and illumination. Let us give a moment’s attention to each of these terms, remembering all the while that they all refer actually to the same accomplishment of the Holy Spirit within us.

We all know the term “*repentance*” rather well, no doubt, though it may be that some of us have not had occasion recently to analyze it carefully in its full meaning. When we recall how Luther emphasizes that repentance is to be a daily part of our life, we rejoice at the opportunity to take close look at that wherein it consists.

The term itself means “a complete change.” Be sure to note, a *complete* change, not a slight change or a little improvement. Some people give one the impression that that is all they understand by the term or that is all they would agree to.

The change should be so complete that there should be no similarity whatever between the situation before repentance and that after. And it seems unlikely that any of you here need be told wherein that great change will consist, after hearing earlier of that utterly helpless and wretched state of trespasses and sin on the part of natural man. But what we do need to be reminded of is what a complete change in that case will mean to us.

For one thing, there will be sincere sorrow on our part, sincere regret and remorse. However, let us be careful to note that that sorrow, which we often refer to as contrition, will have a source all of its own. It will not be only a sorrow for ourselves, because of the shame, the ruin, possibly even the punishment we have brought upon ourselves or fear may come upon us. Nor will it be largely a sorrow over the damage and injury which we have caused for those whom we have sinned against. But it will be a sincere sorrow over having sinned against our good and gracious God. After all, at must always be kept in mind, that that is where the true wretchedness of sin lies. Such a sorrow will then show itself in an earnest will and desire to avoid sin in the future, particularly such sins as have brought one low in the sorrows of repentance.

But that is actually only half of repentance. Let us not forget that we are speaking of one whom the Holy Ghost has brought to faith by the Gospel. While it is true that God’s Law has helped him to see and recognize his guilt, it is the Gospel which has effected that sorrow within him. And that Gospel shows him at once the atoning cross of the Savior. So then the other part of repentance is the sinners’ joyful faith in pardon and salvation. That joy brings about gratitude, and gratitude begs for expression. In other words, already here we mark the beginning of good works as a fruit of faith. May we put it this way: the vacuum caused in the life of the repentant sinner, caused by his abhorrence for and refraining from sin, will draw into itself a bounty of positive performance of such deeds as will express his thanksgiving for forgiveness.

At this point we are ready to go on to they next of the five terms with which we speak of this same early experience resulting from the call to faith. We come to the matter of “*conversion*.” Here we may be most brief. While repentance meant a complete change, conversion refers to a definite turning—turning from one thing to another. That from which we turn is the same sinful state of unbelief and spiritual helplessness as that from which we are changed in repentance. And the blessed state of faith into which we are brought by the call through the change of repentance is again the same toward which we are turned in conversion.

Another of the terms with which we speak of that same experience as that of repentance and conversion is “*regeneration*.” This is indeed a meaningful term. Most briefly put, it means “rebirth.” Perhaps you recall when earlier in this essay we spoke of the Holy Spirit’s part in Creation, we remarked that there was another sense in which we might speak of Him as Creator, namely in the spiritual sense. We suggested that a context for speaking of Him in that capacity would follow later. This is it. What happened to us in regeneration, our rebirth, that complete change to which we referred in connection with repentance, the definite turning we spoke of with the term conversion, that may indeed be thought of as a creation. We are reminded of the words of St. Paul: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new” (I Corinthians 5:17). Just so, there was nothing about us that could be used in the new creature, as far as spiritual things are concerned.

For the many of us who have been hearing the Gospel lesson for Trinity Sunday, the story of Nicodemus, year after year, and have even in childhood learned some of the precious passages from that story by heart, it is not necessary that we spend much time with the purpose of showing the complete importance of regeneration or showing that it is the work of the Holy Ghost. Only listen to our Savior say to that mature member of the Sanhedrin, whom the people of his day surely considered a “pillar of the visible church”: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.” And again: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3 and 5).

At this point you will agree it becomes very easy to understand why sometimes we speak of this first area in our sanctification with the term “*vivification*,” meaning to revive life. When we think of that earlier state

of natural man, that death in trespasses and sin, then the complete change of repentance, the turning of conversion, the becoming a new creature in rebirth, surely all of those thoughts, point to a newness of life. And, of course, the term is so easily recognized as being biblical. Hear two statements of St. Paul: “God even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). “Buried with him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God” (Colossians 2:12).

One of the five terms with which we speak of the first result of the call to faith still remains. It is “*illumination.*” Of all the terms, this is the easiest to explain. As soon as we realize that the word illumination means enlightenment, then one remembers the frequency with which the Holy Scriptures speak of our Lord, His Word, and Salvation as Light. All of that is brought into clearest focus when we recall how frequently the opposite concepts, the absence of the Lord and His Word, the ignorance of unbelief, and the wickedness of sin, are all referred to as darkness. And then when we recall the picture we painted before of the sin, depravity, and helplessness in which all of us came into this world, our state before faith, then our referring to that early result of the call to faith as illumination becomes most fitting. We cannot resist at this point quoting once more the last part of one of the same passages with which we illustrated the matter of our call, namely, Peter’s words: “Who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Illumination, indeed!

Earlier in this essay we said that we were going to allow ourselves the privilege for clarity’s sake of taking the process of sanctification apart and speaking of it in steps, even allowing ourselves the thought of chronological order. Proceeding in that way, we come to another comforting thought. It is the one which we confess next when reciting Luther’s explanation for the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed. We continue speaking of the Holy Spirit by saying of Him: “He kept me in the true faith.”

If it has been comforting to us to have opportunity to speak of the precious call of the Spirit for us to faith and of that which that call has effected in us by way of faith and repentance, then certainly it should be equally comforting to consider the fact that the Holy Spirit preserves our faith, keeps us in it. Most of you know, to be sure, and possibly many of you have experienced in one way or another what one of the most basic concerns of a person who possesses a treasure is the fear that somehow, either through loss, theft, or deterioration he might lose the same or its benefit. Since there is that possibility that the precious blessing of sanctification and its blessings could be lost, what a comfort it is indeed to hear that the Holy Ghost desires to preserve it unto us.

It may be that when we come to speak of the Spirit’s needing to preserve us in our faith, our sanctification, that someone might want to ask: “Was there possibly something inferior about the justification which became ours when we were brought to faith? Was there perhaps some flaw in the sanctification itself which we experienced in the call to faith?”

To these questions we, of course, reply with a negative answer. Our justification, planned and declared for all men already in eternity, we heard earlier, was complete beyond the slightest possibility of the tiniest flaw. When our Savior accomplished that justification for us in His atoning suffering and death, His cry on Golgatha, “It is finished,” underscored the same fact. And when our Heavenly Father brought the Savior forth from the grave in victory over sin, Satan, death, and hell—when He received Him into heaven amidst the joys and triumph of Ascension, then His approval of that accomplished justification was manifested all the more clearly.

Nor was there any flaw about the sanctification in itself with which we were brought to faith by the call, through which our objective justification became subjective. That faith, in whatever measure we possess it, is saving faith. Let death approach at any moment and we shall find ourselves clothed in that righteousness with which to stand before the judgment of our God. “There is therefore *now no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me *hath* everlasting life” (John 6:47).

Where then do we find the reason for the need of the Spirit to keep us in the faith, to preserve us in our sanctification? In the same fact which made our sanctification so necessary in the first place—the fact that in spite of the blessings wrought in us through the call to faith, we remain sinners. That is why we need to be warned that unfortunately our sanctification can be lost—the call can be rejected—our repentance, or call it

conversion, regeneration, vivification, or illumination, if you will, can be lost. In fact, although there is no slightest shortcoming about our sanctification in itself, yet because of our sinfulness it will never be complete in us until the battles of life are over. Strong powers fight against the sanctification, the wills of the devil, the world, and our flesh.

How vital, therefore, that the Holy Spirit would keep us in the faith, preserve our sanctification! And how graciously He does exactly that! Though we continue in sin, though we at times even greet His gracious wooing with indifference, He continues to return to us with His precious Means of Grace, Word and Sacraments. It seems unlikely that in a gathering of this kind there would be anyone ready to gainsay such a statement. Personal experience surely manifests its truthfulness for us all. In the same wonderful manner in which these Means worked the miraculous result of the call to faith, so they accomplish a similarly miraculous and most necessary result, that of preserving us in faith.

Before we leave off speaking of the Holy Spirit's call to faith and preservation in faith for each of us as individuals, let us return to Luther's excellent explanation of the Third Article to note another gracious truth. These treasured blessings, which the Holy Ghost had for you and me in our precious call to faith and preservation in the same, He has multiplied as often as the number of Saints who will one day inhabit heaven. When speaking of the work of the Holy Ghost we often refer to Him as the builder of the Holy Christian Church. That is what Luther says of Him in his explanation: "In like manner He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." That, too, surely belongs to the wondrous work of the Holy Spirit.

When we introduced the part of this essay in which we would speak of sanctification, we said that the term is understood in two senses, the wider and the narrower. We said that in the wider sense it refers to everything that the Holy Spirit does for the Christian from the call to eternity. In the narrower sense we use it to refer only to that which the Holy Spirit does for the person who already is a Christian by way of effecting in him the life of a child of God. At this point we quote a helpful sentence from *The Abiding Word*: "Sanctification in the narrower sense expresses the work of God in the heart of one who is already a Christian, whom God is now leading step by step in renewing of life in thought, word, and deed, in holiness of conduct, in emotions, in wishes, in prayers, in devotions, and in charity toward everyone."

We are now ready to treat sanctification in that narrower sense. While we do this, you will note, of course, that we are actually treating something that belongs also to the larger area of sanctification in the wider sense. In fact, we shall still be speaking of that which actually fits under the earlier heading, "the work of the Holy Ghost."

As we noted a moment ago, there are quite a number of ways for speaking of that which constitutes sanctification in the narrower sense: leading a godly life, renewal of life in thought, word, and deed, or holiness of conduct, just to mention a few. To put the whole matter very briefly and simply, one might say that it consists in the Christian's good works. That statement, however, gives rise to a number of questions.

Let us ask in the first place, "Is it truly biblical to say that God looks for good works in the life of the Christian?" One does not read far into almost any part of the Scriptures to find the answer to that question, and a definitely affirmative answer it is. That is particularly true when one reads the letters of the Apostles to congregations and individuals in the apostolic church. Here are just a few of Scriptures' encouragements in that direction, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which *worketh* by love" (Gal. 5:6). In a similar vein, think of James' familiar words: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead" (James 3:17). Surely, you will recall these familiar words of St. Paul: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). We think of the words of John the Baptist to the people who came out to hear him at the Jordan and to be baptized: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). In the Old Testament, too, there are many such exhortations to work. We think of the first Psalm with its well-known description of the child of God as compared with the unbelievers: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season" (Psalm 1:3). And finally there is the word of Paul which sounds as if it were giving us the very purpose of our being Christians:

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). And so one might go on and on, but, surely, these will suffice. It is in this important phase of our Christian existence that as God’s children we find the Holy Spirit at our very side.

Another question which arises at this point, and certainly it is a basic one, is this: “Just what are truly good works?” There are few questions certainly concerning which you will find more people ready to give wrong answers. It was my privilege during a number of the recent summers to offer a course in “Comparative Religions” at our summer school at Doctor Martin Luther College. The longer one works in a field like that the more convinced one becomes that common denominator number one, where false religions are concerned, is the self-righteous or merit approach to what a good work is. In a similar vein permit one more personal experience. When in recent months I had the opportunity to draw out a bit the people of four oriental countries concerning~ their religion, the very first impression given in each case was that there god needed to be appeased with their own efforts.

Examine the moralizing toward which most education leans in our own country for a crutch to discipline today, listen to the thinking of the lodge and scout movements, take a good look at the doctrines declared by the church of the Antichrist, and analyze carefully the doctrines of a great variety of Protestant churches, and you need no further evidence that the point we are making is justified. The pity of it all is that each of us has a Pharisee within himself seeking to embrace the same thought that good works are our efforts to please and win merit in the sight of our God.

Now what is the truth in the matter? Surely, our good works please God, but not because of our efforts involved. They do so because they are spontaneous fruits of our faith—actually accomplishments of the Holy Spirit through us. It is true that our works are so intimately bound up with our faith that one needs to say that there can be no true faith without works, yes, what James told us before is correct” “Faith without works is dead.” And yet, it is not the works which justify, but faith.

At this point we ought even go farther to say that not only do our works not merit anything in God’s sight, but while they please Him as the Spirit’s accomplishment, they are at the some time filthy rags. You are reminded of Isaiah’s words: “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rigs” (Isaiah 64:6). How can that be? All we need remember, in order to find the answer to that question, is that no matter how diligently we may strive to perform such works, they remain imperfect because of the weaknesses of our human nature. No matter how humbly we think we may be going about them, we mar their motivation with fleeting and secret thoughts of pride and merit. No matter how unselfishly we may think we give our effort in their direction, we ruin them by directing them, even if only in the slightest way, toward our own benefit.

So then, what are good works? They are our happy “thank yous” to God, put into thought, word, or deed, expressing our gratitude for a salvation already fully accomplished and fully granted us. They are irresistible expressions of our love for God who first loved us. They are evidences of that precious fact that we are indeed “walking in the Spirit.” Yes, they are “fruits of the Spirit.”

At that point we are reminded of another question. If our works do not merit, are not meant to justify, why does the Lord want such works, why does He so graciously lead us with His Spirit to perform them? There is just one very brief and equally pointed answer to that question in all of Scriptures. He helps us to perform these works so that they might redound to His glory. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink,” says St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, “or whatsoever ye do, do it all to the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31). Remember too the closing words of the passage we have quoted from St. Peter several times now: “That ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9). Even as God created the world, man and all the rest of creation to His glory, even as He planned Salvation for fallen man and accomplished it in His Son to His own glory, even so He would have the lives of all His children lived to His glory.

At first hearing, that answer might encourage the old man in us to ask: “Is that not a bit selfish on God’s part?” The new man quickly replies, however, with a firm: “Never!” When we realize what the end of that desire for glory on the part of our gracious and holy God is for us, namely, eternal bliss, we lose all thought of selfishness on His part And have you not experienced some of the genuine joy which He allows us to have



already in this life when we serve Him in His Kingdom? Think of the rewarding joy and the great comfort you derive from the Means of Grace even while you are busy sharing it with others? Surely, there is no room in the heart of a child of God for thoughts concerning a possible selfishness on God's part. That becomes especially clear and true when in study like this we find that after all is said and done the good deeds which we perform are not our deeds at all, but are the deeds of the Spirit wrought with such blessing for us, through us.

That thought suggests another question. How does the Holy Spirit work the good works in us of which we have been speaking? At this point someone may want to interrupt and say: "Could we not emit that question here? We have already answered it in connection with the matter of sanctification in the broader sense. We said that He accomplished all of that "through the Gospel." Quite true, that is the positive answer to the question. And yet, when we spoke of our being brought to repentance, we pointed out that God shows us the need of such repentance by letting us look into the mirror of the Law. Is there any further use which He would have us make of the Law where our sanctification in the narrower sense is concerned? Here again one might say that one does not read far into almost any part of the Scriptures without finding the answer to that question. Yes, to quote the picture language of our Catechism again, there are two other uses the child of God makes of the Law in this connection. He lets it serve as a curb, to his Old Adam's inclinations toward the worst outbursts of sin, and he is happy to have it as a rule, that it might guide him in the way he should go in serving his Lord and God. What the Psalmist says of the Word surely holds true of the Law contained in that Word: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). And in Proverbs 6:23 we hear a similar thought: "For the Commandment is a lamp; and the Law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life."

It seems unlikely that we could find a page also in the New Testament that does not in several passages point to the helpful guide the child of God has in the Law toward finding the way that he will want to go in his life of love and gratitude toward his God and his fellowman. We think of our gracious Savior's Sermon on the Mount and of the frequent passages of admonition in every one of the Apostles' letters to the congregations and individuals in the early Christian Church.

In saying what we just have we do not mean to militate against the crystal clear teaching of God's Word, particularly the epistles, which say that the Christian is free from the Law and in no way subject to it as far as his salvation is concerned. But the child of God knows and admits, as Luther and our Confessions often stated, that though he is sanctified, yet that sanctification is not complete, he is still a sinner. He realizes the truth in the words of John: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). He confesses with St. Paul: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12). He finds the advice of Luther completely proper when he tells us in his Catechism: "The old Adam in us is to be drowned by daily contrition and repentance and is to die with all sins and evil lusts; and that again a new man should daily come forth and arise who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever." And now in his imperfection and lack of wisdom the child of God is happy at the thought of the Law's guiding him in the matter of finding the way to live in such newness of life. At this point we might quote the Formula of Concord:

So too, this doctrine of the Law is needful for believers, in order that they may not hit upon a holiness and devotion of their own, and under the pretext of the Spirit of God set up a self-chosen worship, without God's Word and command.

For reasons like these the child of God will, when he notices that the Holy Ghost would guide him with the Law, resemble the man whom the Psalmist describes: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2). With a grateful heart he will say with Paul: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22).

Before we stop talking about the work of the Holy Spirit of which we assumed the right to say that it is work He carries on for us at the present, there is one phase of His work that we surely do not want to overlook. It is unfortunately often overlooked, while a great source of comfort is forfeited. We mean to refer to the Holy Spirit's aid to our prayer-life. Let us hear St. Paul on the matter:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the: saints according to the will of God (Romans 8:26-27).

We all know, of course, that we usually think of the Lord Jesus as our Intercessor. As our High Priest He does indeed intercede for us by virtue of His atonement before the throne of the Heavenly Father. But in another sense the Holy Spirit intercedes for us as we pray. Ours is a double blessing, be sure to note for your comfort. When we reflect on our prayers, all of us will need to admit that we are as faulty in our praying as we are in any other part of our religious lives. There are so many reasons for that faultiness in our prayer life: our sinfulness, our lack of faith at times, our disturbed heart in times of trial and hardship, our indifference, our too great interest in earthly desires, and so we might go on and on. Paul puts it very pointedly in the passages just quoted. In our dim vision for that which is truly good and wise, he says we knew not what to pray. How well implies that at times our prayers are little more than unutterable groanings. But at that point the Holy Spirit does a very special kind of interceding for us. He knows our infirmities and steps in, as it were, to perfect our prayers. And the wonderful result! The Heavenly Father who knows the mind of the Spirit finds the prayers He brings for us as intercessor in accord with His will. What a comfort, indeed!

An essay concerning the Holy Ghost would not be quite complete if somewhere within its scope we did not touch on at least briefly the sin against the Holy Ghost, often referred to on the “one unpardonable sin.” We include it at this point. Looking at that sin in the light of the whole beautiful background of all that we have heard by way of blessings resulting from the work of the Holy Spirit, we come closest to understanding why our Savior needed to say what He did about the same. We hear His words: “Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Matthew 12:32b).

In the light of all we have heard concerning the Holy Spirit’s gracious call to faith we also come closest to understanding just what the sin against the Holy Ghost is. It is the sin of one who has been approached by the Spirit with the call to faith and repentance. It is the conscious, intentional sin of one who has deafened his ear against the precious Means of Grace. It is the sin of one who, though he is aware of what he is forfeiting, has closed his heart to repentance. It is a case of locking one’s door, as it were, against Salvation. It is no surprise, therefore, to hear our Savior say that that sin is unpardonable in time and eternity.

One meets people on occasion who are troubled as to whether they ever have or might still commit that sin. When one notices that it is a willful sin against the Means through which the Spirit would work in us, it seems to follow that the person who is concerned about the matter would be the person least likely ever to have any occasion for that sin.

Early in this essay we said that we observe a pattern in the work of the Holy Spirit, a pattern in keeping with which we referred to blessings of the Holy Spirit out of the past, blessings which He provides at the present, and blessings which point us to the future. We have not carried out that last thought as yet. Nor shall we say more about it than to emphasize the assurance which the work of the Holy Spirit gives us concerning our eternal joys. More than that we feel we cannot say. Those blessings which the Holy Spirit has in store for us in the future lie beyond our power to describe. They need to be waited for to be known. But do let us continue for a few more lines in the words which Luther taught us: “In which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers; and will at the last day raise up me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.” And such is indeed the case. The work of the Holy Spirit will be finished on that great day of the Judgment, in fact, for you and me as individuals it will be finished in the moment of our death. But the wondrous results of that work will continue into all eternity.

For one who has found his way through this life with the gracious companionship of the Holy Spirit, in that faith which does indeed mean daily forgiveness of sin, constant righteousness before God, for him eternity can only be an endless existence of perfect joy. We hear that assurance in the statement of St. Paul: “All in whom the Spirit dwells *will have eternal life*” (Rom. 8:11).

As we now bring this essay to a close you will understand, we trust, why at its beginning we deplored the neglect and indifference so commonly shown even within the visible church where the Holy Ghost comes under consideration. Having taken a studied look at His divine person, the blessings for us all implied in His various names, and the treasured benefits that come to us as a result of His manifold and vital works in our behalf, our hearts turn to Him in the fervent prayer that we might not become guilty of such neglect and indifference. May we rather ever with His help recognize Him as the blessing that He truly is, enjoy His gracious indwelling unto a living faith and hope which will one day realize its precious goal and purpose, namely, eternal bliss.

There are such golden opportunities in our Lutheran Church-life for approaching and enjoying the coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. We think surely of our many opportunities to use the Word and Sacraments. We think, too, of the treasured custom of turning to Him also as we open our services in the name of the Triune God. We think of the beautiful hymns of invocation which we have with which is pray His presence in our services. We think of the fact that we hardly ever close a service without asking Him too to go with us with His blessing when we employ the words of one or the other of the benedictions. Let it never be said of us that we permit these golden opportunities to pass without our finding in them deep meaning and spiritual blessing.

Even during these very days there is blessing at hand for us from the Holy Spirit as we attend and participate in this convention. Knowing that you are about the work in which He has such a great part and vital interest, it is with complete justice that you implore His presence. You may indeed be sure of His presence, not only that He might guide you in your deliberations and work, but that He might help you to abound in the strength and joys of faith through the very Means which you employ in your deliberations and work. May you all be aware of that blessing.

As we review the roster of the members in this district assembled here, we note the names of young men, who, it seems, were in school only yesterday and are now embarking on their life's work in the Lord's vineyard. May they particularly be aware of the Spirit's readiness to go with them in their precious calling. May they never lose sight of the rich source of strength and blessings He has in store for them in their work. May that be especially true when they meet with disheartening and dismaying experiences in the discharging of their cherished duties

Thinking now of the Holy Spirit in the rich framework of all that He means to us, as we have done during the course of reading and hearing this essay, let us close with giving careful, prayerful thought to Luther's prayer in song addressed to the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord!  
 Be all Thy graces now outpoured  
 On each believer's mind and heart;  
 Thy fervent love to them impart.  
 Lord, by the brightness of Thy light,  
 Thou in the faith dost men unite  
 Of ev'ry land and ev'ry tongue;  
 This to Thy praise, O Lord, our God be sung.  
 Hallelujah!

Thou holy Light, Guide Divine,  
 Oh, cause the Word of Life to shine!  
 Teach us to know our God aright  
 And call Him Father with delight.  
 From ev'ry error keep us free;  
 Let none but Christ our Master be  
 That we in living faith abide,

In Him, our Lord, with all our might confide.  
Hallelujah!

Thou holy Fire, Comfort true,  
Grant us the will Thy work to do  
And in Thy service to abide;  
Let trials turn us not aside.  
Lord, by Thy pow'r prepare each heart  
And to our weakness strength impart  
That bravely here we may contend,  
Through life and death to Thee, our Lord, ascend.  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

*(The Lutheran Hymnal, Hymn 224)*