

**"The Holy Spirit Unites Us to Jesus"** (series #1 of 5 on the Spirit)  
Catechism: Q. 53. Scripture: John 16:12-15; Acts 2:4, 16-18, 33-38.

**Introduction:** The most important work of the Holy Spirit is not for himself or about himself.

Rather, the Spirit's most important work is for Jesus Christ and about Jesus Christ. [Repeat. Many well-meaning Christians have it completely wrong. Particularly those who focus on the Spirit. They claim to be baptized (受洗) in the Spirit, to prophecy (说预言) in the Spirit, to pray in the Spirit. For them the Spirit is always in the foreground; and Jesus is in the background. According to the Bible, that is completely wrong. The Bible teaches that Jesus is always to be in the foreground. Look at what Jesus himself says, about the Spirit, in John 16:14. [Read.

"He [the Spirit] will bring glory to me [to Jesus]."

The Spirit always must bring glory, honour, emphasis, **TO JESUS**.

In summarizing the work of the Holy Spirit our Catechism (教理问答) right says this:

"he [the Spirit] makes me [the believer] share in Christ and all his blessings."

**So our main point this morning** is this: The Holy Spirit **UNITES US to Jesus**.

Uniting us to Jesus, so that we share in all of Jesus' blessings.

Now, this is not the first reference to the Holy Spirit in our Catechism.

The very first reference to the Spirit is way back in Q & A 8. The question asks: "Are we,

in Adam, totally unable to do any good [any spiritual good] and inclined toward all evil?"

The answer: "Yes we are. **Unless** we are born again **by the Spirit of God.**"

The biblical reference is to John chapter 3. There, you remember, Jesus is talking with Nicodemus, that Jewish teacher. And Jesus tells Nicodemus that it is not enough for him to have one birth, his natural, biological birth. No, Nicodemus needs to be "born again" or "born from above." And when Nicodemus doesn't understand, Jesus explains that this is a birth, a new birth, by the Holy Spirit.

**So it is, for each of us, today.** Each of us enters this world in a condition of spiritual death.

We are dead, spiritually dead, in our natural sins and trespasses (过犯). That's Ephesians 2:1.

In our natural condition, we do not even desire the true God. We are spiritually dead.

We do not even perceive that...we think we are wise in our own eyes. We think that we can sort of figure out who God is, with our own minds. But we cannot. We are spiritually dead.

God has to work His work in us, giving us new life. Theologically (从神学角度), we call that being "born again"

or, with the more technical term, "regeneration." (重生) We have new life, implanted in us by God.

And God gives us new life, **by sending His Holy Spirit into our souls**, our hearts, our minds.

Just as the Spirit gave natural life to the original creation, so the Spirit gives spiritual life to us.

-Usually, the first indication that God may be regenerating us, causing us to be spiritually alive, is

that we start to have a genuine interest in the things of God, the true God. For example, we start to hunger to learn from the Bible, God's Word to us. As we read, and as the Spirit applies those truths of the Bible to us, we then become overwhelmed by our own sinfulness. We start to sense that we do many wrong things. Yes. But, more importantly, we really start to understand **that we have had no true love for the true God**. We become convicted of ( 知罪 ) our lack of love for God, the true God. Also, we become convicted that we lack true love for other people. We start to see how selfish and self-centered we are, by nature. And, from God's Word, with the Spirit applying that Word to us, we understand that God, must punish our lack of love. In God's perfect justice ( 公义 ), he must even condemn ( 定罪 ) us, and, ultimately send us to hell.

**Appl:** Let me ask: has the HS been at work in your heart, convicting you of your sin? You lack of love for God and for people? Has the HS ( 圣灵 ) convicted you of your need to be forgiven by God? Or, do you only feel a bit guilty, and then shrug your shoulders and say: "well, I guess this is just the way I am. I guess we are all imperfect. I just can't help it." To merely feel a little guilty about your sin...well, unbeliever can feel that way? They can even cry over some of their sins, feeling very guilty at times. But it stops there, with them. For us, who have the Spirit, not only does the Spirit convict us of our sin...but then, by the Spirit, we are turned towards Jesus. Being born again, we have a hunger and a thirst for Jesus. To learn more about him from His Word. ... Oh, maybe that be each of us, this morning... +

Then, let us also assured, by the Spirit, that Jesus has paid the price for our sin, by dying on the

cross... substituting ( 使代替 ) himself for us. And, more than that...that all of Jesus righteousness ( 公义 ), his perfect obedience to God the Father, is credited to us. Justified ( 使称义 ) .

This is part of what Jesus means when He says the Spirit will bring glory to Him, to Jesus.

By the Spirit, we are born again, and we are given the gift of faith, trusting in Jesus.

And by the Spirit, we are assured that Jesus is our Saviour ( 救主 ) . That we are fully forgiven of all our sin. And that we are credited with the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

**Now, this is a main emphasis of our beloved theologian ( 神学家 ) of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, John Calvin.**

He writes this at the beginning of Book 3 of his major work, *The Institutes* ( 基督教要义 ). [Quote] "We must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has ...done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. [So]...we must examine... the .... energy [the power] of the [Holy] Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits." "... The Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually **unites us to himself**." (Inst, 3.1.1., p. 537, p. 538).

In accordance with biblical teaching, Calvin emphasizes how it is the Holy Spirit which unites us to

Jesus...or connects us to Jesus. That's why the biblical focus is much more upon Jesus, than upon the Spirit.

**Illustration:** To use a homey illustration, the Spirit is like the electrical cord (电源线) which connects your refrigerator to the wall socket (插座), to the hydro (发电厂). You see the big refrigerator, that large appliance (家用电器), in your kitchen. You open the door of the refrigerator several times a day. **But you don't even see the electrical cord—it is hidden from sight**, on the back of the unit, and low on the floor. That cord is essential, but it is hidden. / So it is with the Spirit. He is hidden, mostly from sight.

But his main work is essential: to connect us to the source of our life, our salvation—to Jesus! We can only be connected to Jesus, plugged into him, so to speak, by the Spirit. Calvin says it clearly: if it were not for the Spirit, everything Jesus accomplished for us would be absolutely of no value to us. But, as with the electrical cord to your refrigerator, the work of the Spirit is mostly out of sight, often not seen, or even thought about. Yes, so very, very crucial.

Jesus is in the foreground, and the Spirit is mostly in the background. We see this illustrated in

Acts chapter 2, about the Day of Pentecost (五旬节). That was the day when the ascended (升天的) Lord Jesus poured out (浇灌) His Spirit on his people, his church. When Peter stands up to preach his famous sermon he quotes from the OT prophet Joel about the how in the last days God would pour out his Spirit on his servants. (vss. 17-18). But, the focus of Peter's sermon is not about the Spirit. **Rather, his focus is on Jesus.**

Peter concludes his Pentecost Day sermon with the main point, in vs. 36. "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified (钉死), both Lord and Christ." And the people are cut to the heart. They ask Peter: "What shall we do?" ...Does Peter say: "Oh, make sure you have the Spirit"? No! Instead, Peter says, vs. 38: "Repent (悔改) and be baptized every one of you, **in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin.**"

You see, even on the Day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit, it is first and foremost about Jesus. To be forgiven of our sins by Jesus! And, yes, then Peter adds: "you also will receive the gift of the Spirit." Indeed, the only way to come to Jesus, to trust in Jesus, to repent of your sins, is by the work of the Spirit. The Spirit applies the work of Jesus to us. He unites us, connects us to Jesus.// Again, let me ask: Are you connected to Jesus? +.... //

**Now...here's a good question: how are we assured, how do we become confident, that Jesus truly is in us?** That we are truly united to him, and therefore, are forgiven of all our sin?

Well, that assurance comes to us, first of all, by the Word of God. The Bible. As we read the Bible, as we listen intently to sermons from the Bible, as we meditate on verses in the Bible....and apply them to ourselves. Over time, we become more and more assured that we truly are united to Jesus. We gain more confidence that we are forgiven of all our sin, by the work of Jesus.

So, in our theology, we refer to hearing the Word of God the **primary means of God's grace** to us.

The primary way in which more of God's grace comes to us. Not merely the Word alone, the pages of the Bible. But, the Holy Spirit must apply that Word to us.

But, we also we speak **of a “secondary means” of God’s grace to us**. Those are the sacraments ( 圣礼 ) .

The sacraments of baptism ( 洗礼 ) and the Lord’s Supper ( 圣餐 ) are also instruments of God’s grace to us. Making our connection to Jesus, our union with Jesus, more real.

That we are more assured that Jesus truly is our Saviour; that we are really forgiven of all our sin, and are really credited with the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

**So, this morning, we are partaking of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.**

In connection with the Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, something very, very important happens in the Lord’s Supper. No, we are not going to find specific Bible verses about how the Spirit works in the Lord’s Supper. But, reflect for a moment.

If it is the Spirit who unites us to Jesus, and applies the work of Jesus to us.

It is the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper which does exactly the same thing.

By the working of the Holy Spirit, the ordinary elements of bread and wine, become true nourishment ( 营养 ) for our souls. To strengthen us in Jesus. To strengthen our faith in Jesus.

To strengthen our assurance ( 确据 ) that Jesus truly is our Saviour.

Listen again to these helpful words from John Calvin:

“Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ’s flesh [his body], separated from us by such a great distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the ...power of the Holy Spirit towers above all our [physical] senses, and how foolish it is to ...measure his immeasurableness ( 无可限量 ) by our measure/ ...**the [Holy] Spirit truly unites things separated in space**. ...[so] Christ pours his life into us, as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow ( 骨髓 ) ... [this] he also ...seals in the [Lord’s] Supper—not by presenting ...[an] empty sign [empty bread and wine], but by manifesting there the **effectiveness of His Spirit** to fulfill what he promises. ... [So the apostle Paul says] ‘The bread which we break is **a participation** in the body of Christ; the cup....is **a participation** in his blood’” (Inst. 3.17.10).

**...add**

**Do you need more confidence that Jesus is real?** Do you want **more assurance** that Jesus really,

truly, died for your sins? Do you want to experience **a greater joy** of your salvation?

Then, by the working of the Holy Spirit, be lifted up today.

Let the Spirit transport you, in a biblical sense, away from the things of this earth.

And by the Spirit, be brought closer to Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father.

The Spirit **UNITES US, CONNECTS US**, always to Jesus./ AMEN.