

Sanctification in Community: Trinitarian Considerations

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I. The Tri-Unity of God and Biblical Sanctification

A. Definitions

1. By **Tri-Unity** is meant that *the divine essence subsists wholly and indivisibly, simultaneously and eternally, in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*
2. Other Terms
 - a. By *essence* is meant the *nature* or *substance* of a thing, that which constitutes it and without which it would cease to be that thing (Grk *ousia*). In finite beings the essence is known by a *form* or *forms* that can be further described. God, who has no form, is as to his essence what his attributes are.
 - b. By *person* is meant a distinct, relational *individual* that has an essence/nature (Grk *hypostaseis*).

B. Biblical Data

1. While the God of the Bible has always been Triune, this fact has not always been known. The Old Testament does not teach the doctrine directly, and while we may in retrospect discover implications of God's Triunity, it is unlikely that the OT saints ever deduced God's Triune nature
 - a. Grammatical pluralities (Gen 1:1; 2:6) likely were understood as "plurals of majesty," not numerical plurals (like the sky/behemoth, etc.).
 - b. Messianic Royal Psalms (e.g., Psalm 110) are difficult to understand apart from plurality in the Godhead. Here King David writes of a conversation between "The LORD" (Yahweh) and "my Lord" (Adonai): "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." This understanding is rendered likely by the application of this passage to Christ in Acts 2:35 and Hebrews 1:13.
 - c. Since the Angel of Yahweh clearly IS God (Gen 16:7; Gen 31:11–13; Exod 3:1–6; Judg 13:13, 15, 16, 19, 22), but also SPEAKS OF/TO God (Exod 23:23; 32:34; Zech 1:12–13), we may likely deduce a plurality in the Godhead.
 - d. Assuming that the prophets sometimes spoke as the Messiah in their writings (as many scholars do), it is possible that we have a fully Trinitarian statement in Isaiah 48:16 (cf. also 42:1; 61:1; 63:9–10; also Zech 2:10–11): "The Sovereign Lord has sent *me*, with his *Spirit*

Conclusion: The emphasis of the OT is the uniqueness and exclusivity of God. This is not to say that God was *not* Triune during this period, only that the emphasis was not Trinitarian. There is no *clear* OT demonstration of God's Tri-Unity.

2. The New Testament Witness

a. The Announcement to Mary

Luke 1:32, 35—The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

b. The Baptism of Christ

Matthew 3:16–17—The *Son* emerges from the water as the *Father* speaks and the *Spirit* descends as a dove.

c. Christ's High-Priestly Prayer

John 14:16–17—The *Son* asks the *Father* to send the *Spirit* (also 15:26).

d. The Baptismal Formula

Matthew 28:19—Baptize them in the name of the *Father* and of the *Son*, and of the *Holy Spirit*.

e. The Apostolic Benediction

2 Corinthians 13:14—May the grace of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God*, and the fellowship of the *Holy Spirit* be with you all.

f. The NT Formula for Prayer

Ephesians 2:18—Through [*Christ*] we have access to the *Father* by one *Spirit*.

g. The Trinitarian Nature of God's Electing Work

1 Peter 1:2—[You] have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the *Father*, through the sanctifying work of the *Spirit*, for obedience to *Jesus Christ* and sprinkling by his blood. See also 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14.

h. The Trinitarian Nature of God's Atoning Work

Heb 9:14—*Christ* through the eternal *Spirit* offered himself unblemished to *God*.

i. The Christian's Trinitarian Confidence

Jude 20–21—As you pray in the *Holy Spirit*, keep yourselves in *God's* love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord *Jesus Christ* to bring you to eternal life.

C. The Nature of the Eternal Relationship of the Three Persons of the Godhead

1. The persons of the Godhead are objective to one another.

Galatians 4:4—God **sent** his Son (so John 3:16).

John 14:26—The Father **sends** the Spirit at the **request** of the Son.

Matthew 4:1—The Spirit **leads** Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted.

John 3:35—The Father **loves** the Son.

Hebrews 1:5ff—The Father **speaks** to the Son.

2. Each person of the Godhead has a consciousness that is distinct from the others: each can say “I” and address the others as “you” without confusion.

John 17:5—Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Hebrews 1:5—You are my Son.

Acts 13:2—The Spirit said, “Set apart from me...”

3. The divine persons are equal in being, power, and glory.
 - a. Each is called God (see above).
 - b. All three are paired together in parallel construction (Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 13:14).
 - c. There is no fixed ordering of the three persons in Scripture.

(1) Father→Son→Spirit (Matt 28:19)

(2) Father→Spirit→Son (2 Thess 2:13–14; 1 Pet 1:2–3; Rev 1:4–5)

(3) Son→Father→Spirit (2 Cor 13:14)

(4) Spirit→Father→Son (Jude 20, 21)

(5) Spirit→Son→Father (Eph 4:4–6; 5:18–20; 1 Cor 12:4–6)

- d. The Father and Son receive prayer and praise equally.

John 5:23—All must honor the Son just as they honor the Father.

4. Economic hierarchy is no impediment to ontological equality.
 - a. In the divine administration, the Father is first, the Son is second, and the Spirit third. Note the pattern of the Father as origin and end; the Son as the mediating vehicle and the Spirit as the assisting agent:

Ephesians 2:18, 22—Through [Christ] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit...and in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Note the pattern of creation (1 Cor 8:6) and redemption/sanctification (Eph 3:15–17; 1 Pet 1:2).
 - b. With respect to the divine “mission,” then,
 - (1) The Father is the “head” of Christ (1 Cor 11:3).
 - (2) The Father is “greater” than the Son (John 12:28) and sends the Son (John 5:23; 1 John 4:14). Christ is working on behalf of the Father (John 4:34; 5:19), and will deliver the Kingdom up to the Father (1 Cor 15:24, 28).
 - (3) Both the Father and the Son send the Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26) so that the Spirit is interchangeably the Spirit of God *and* the Spirit of the Son (Rom 8:9).

5. This interpersonal relationship is eternal.
 - a. The Father eternally exists as Father (see, e.g., Gen 21:33; Ps. 90:2; 1 Cor 8:6).
 - b. The Spirit eternally exists as Spirit (Heb 9:14).
 - c. The Son eternally exists as Son (John 1:1–4; Col 1:16).

D. The Importance of the Doctrine

1. Historically, God’s Tri-Unity is one of the most important distinguishing doctrines of the Christian religion, setting Christianity apart from all non-Christian theistic religions, both monotheistic and polytheistic, and also from liberalism.
2. Without God’s Tri-Unity, essential doctrines such as incarnation and atonement collapse. See, e.g., Ephesians 1:3–14.
3. Without God’s Tri-Unity the richness and specificity of Christian worship and prayer are diminished.

2 Corinthians 13:14—May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Ephesians 2:18, 22—Through him we have access to the Father by one Spirit...and in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
4. Without God’s Tri-Unity the patterns of Christian fellowship and sanctification are lost.

John 17:20–23—My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

2 Corinthians 3:18—We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
5. Without God’s Tri-Unity, ecclesiastical and familial social structuring has no basis and is subject to neglect and abuse.

1 Corinthians 11:3ff—I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

II. Jesus Christ, Incarnate God

A. The Notion of Incarnation

The word “incarnation” comes from the Latin meaning embodiment or enfleshment. In Bible doctrine the incarnation is the enfleshment of God; the act whereby the second person of the Trinity is *permanently* embodied in human nature, flesh and form. The incarnation is a foundational doctrine of Christianity. It goes back to the even more fundamental doctrine of Christianity—the Trinity. There could be no incarnation without the Trinity, and there could be no salvation without the incarnation.

- There had to be a perfect and sinless substitute to pay the penalty of sin and be the savior of mankind.
- That perfect substitute had to be divine to be a proper object of worship and faith.
- That perfect substitute had to be human in order to suitably represent man to God.
- God could not die by virtue of his immortal nature; nor could he “send” his Son into the world apart from a Triunity (or, at the very minimum, a plurality) in the Godhead.

The incarnation must not be confused with the origin or beginning of Christ because he is eternal. It is not as though God the Son was born in Bethlehem, or received his “sonship status” at that time. The incarnation has to do with his coming into the world, his entrance into human life. Many of the biblical descriptions reflect this fact. Note some of these:

1. He *was* (εἶμι) in the beginning, but *became* [γίνομαι] *flesh*—John 1:1, 14.
2. He *came down from heaven*—John 3:13; 6:51.
3. He was *made of the seed of David*—Romans 1:3.
4. He was *sent in the likeness of human flesh*—Romans 8:3.
5. God *sent* his son [to be] made [γίνομαι, “to become”] *of a woman*—Galatians 4:4.
6. He humbled himself and *took the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man*—Phil. 2:7.
7. He was made lower than the angels (ἐλαττώσω, lit. “he was diminished”—Phil 2:9 (cf. 2 Cor 8:9)).
8. He *partook of flesh and blood*—Hebrews 2:14.
9. He was *made like* [ὁμοιόω—implies alteration or, better, addition] *unto his brethren*—Hebrews 2:17.
10. He was *given a body*—Hebrews 10:5.
11. He was *manifested*—1 John 3:5.

B. The Purposes of the Incarnation and Our Sanctification.

1. To provide mankind a visible and everlasting revelation of the invisible God.

John 1:14, 18—No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him.

John 14:9—He who has seen me has seen the Father.

Colossians 1:15—He is the image of the invisible God.

2. To die for sinners and to save from sin.

The sin that binds man consigns him to death, i.e., *human* death. Mankind may suffer this death themselves, or they may be the beneficiaries of a substitutionary death of a sinless *human*. Justice can have it no other way. Since God, being neither human nor even corporeal, could not die, man’s case was grave, in fact, hopeless. Only by God’s accepting enfleshment could mankind hope to live again.

Heb 2:14–17—Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.... For this reason *he had to be made like his brothers* in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

This does not imply that God was forced by external factors to take on flesh—God cannot be “required” by us to do anything. However, once he by his own will chose to redeem us, there was no other option. He had to become a man:

Hebrews 10:4, 5, 8–10—It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.... Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.... We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Other statements of this purpose for incarnation include

Matthew 1:21—Christ came to “save his people from their sins.”

Luke 1:68—He has come to *redeem* his people

Luke 7:16—God has come to help his people.

John 12:27—“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was *for this very reason* I came.”

1 John 3:5—Christ appeared so that he might take away our sins.

3. To give men his own eternal life.

The death of Christ *of himself* is not technically enough for our salvation. His death merely erases our guilt and our obligation to die. But pardon and forgiveness alone do not qualify anyone to receive eternal reward. In fact, the requirement for eternal life is perfect obedience to the law of God (in principle, Eccl. 7:20—“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and *never sins*”). This can only be accomplished by Christ himself, who offers to us his *human* obedience as a gift:

Philippians 3:7–9: I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, *not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

It is on the basis of Christ’s perfect obedience to the Law during his whole lifetime that *merit* accrues to the believer so that he is accepted as righteous and restored to favor with God. This is the “double benefit” of union with Christ in his life and death.

Romans 5:1–2—Justification involves *peace with God* and *access to God*.

Romans 5:18–19—By the single act of obedience we *avoid condemnation* and *receive righteousness unto life*.

Zechariah 3:4–5—Filthy garments are removed and clean ones put on.

Acts 26:18—We receive *forgiveness* and an *inheritance*.

Interestingly, it is not principally Christ's death, however, but his *shared life* that dominates the NT epistles. In it he gave us Luther's "two kinds of righteousness":

- a. Firstly, *alien righteousness* is imputed to us by his perfect life.
- b. Secondly, *proper righteousness* is ours through the bestowal of a new nature.

John 10:10, 11—"I came that [my sheep] may have life, and have it to the full."

4. To know human life from the inside by personal experience and thus to fulfill more perfectly his roles within the Triune Godhead.

- a. Only a human could be a perfect *high priest*.

Hebrews 2:17—He had to be made like his brethren in all things, *so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest* in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

1 Timothy 2:5—There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus.

- b. Only a human could be a perfect *judge*.

John 5:22, 27: The Father gave Jesus authority to judge "because he is [a] *son of man*."

The Greek *son* has no article, and likely stresses not his identity, but rather the quality/essence of his human nature: he is a human being. Because of his human experience, Jesus is the best possible judge of sinners. Also note below the material on the term *son* in the expression "Son of God" to denote nature/essence.

- c. Only a human could be a perfect model and sympathizer of the human condition.

Hebrews 2:18—Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

5. To provide an ideal and perfect example to believers.

- a. An example of what believers should be now

1 John 2:6—"The one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked."

1 Peter 2:21—"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps."

- b. An example of what believers will be hereafter

1 John 3:2—"We know that when he appears, we will be like him."

6. To set in motion the long process of establishing universal rectitude.

Matthew 10:34–36—Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.... This is why I have come (cf. also Luke 12:49, 51)

Luke 2:14— Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace *to men on whom his favor rests*.

John 9:39—"I have come into this world so that the blind will see and those who think that they see will become blind."

Acts 17:30—For a time, God has overlooked such ignorance, but now [i.e., in the aftermath of his incarnation and esp. his resurrection] he commands all people everywhere to repent now. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice (cf. Rom 3:25–26).

C. The Nature of Christ’s Humanity

1. He is called a man.

John 19:5—Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

Acts 2:22—“Jesus of Nazareth was a *man* accredited by God.”

Romans 5:12, 15—Just as sin entered the world through one *man*, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all *men*...if the many died by the trespass of the one *man*, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one *man*, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many? (Note the whole argument of 5:12–19.)

1 Corinthians 15:21—Since death came through a *man*, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a *man*.

1 Timothy 2:5—There is one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus.

2. He possessed attributes of humanity

a. He was born.

Luke 2:5, 12—Mary was pregnant...gave birth...wrapped him...put him in a manger.

There was nothing miraculous about Christ’s birth, *per se*. A miracle occurred nine months earlier at his virginal conception, but his birth was very ordinary.

b. He was constitutionally flesh and blood.

John 1:14—The Word became *flesh*.

Romans 1:3—He was “the seed of David *according to the flesh*.”

Hebrews 2:14—“He partook of *flesh and blood*.”

1 John 4:2, 3—He is “Jesus Christ come in the *flesh*.”

c. He grew and developed both physically and intellectually.

Luke 2:40, 52—He “grew and became strong...increased in stature.”

Luke 2:52—He increased in *wisdom* and *in favor with God and man*.

Hebrews 5:8 (HCSB)—Though he was God’s Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

Note: Christ did not develop *as God*; however, as a human, Jesus experienced normal growth in all areas. Even in the moral realm we may see progress—not from moral deficiency to moral virtue, of course, but from simple to complex ethical awareness and the successful implementation of his ethical suasions.

*Was not our Lord a little child, Taught by degrees to pray,
By father dear and mother mild, Instructed day by day.*

—Quoted in Strong, 625

d. He had a full range of human psychological features.

(1) As an ordinary human, Christ had human appetites.

Matthew 4:2—After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he became hungry.

John 19:28—“I am thirsty.”

Appetites are not evil of themselves; they are basic to human survival. Adam and Eve had appetites prior to the Fall and Satan used them as a circumstance for Temptation in the absence of a sin nature (the fruit was good for *food* and a means to *wisdom*, both human appetites). Unlike our parents, Christ perfectly controlled his appetites, even in the face of extreme want (he had fasted 40 days); still, he had appetites that were normally unknown to God.

(2) Christ had human passions. In response to external stimuli, Christ...

⇒ was moved with compassion when he observed the harassment and helplessness of the crowds (Matt 9:36).

⇒ became both angry and sorrowful in the face of unbelief (Mark 3:5).

⇒ cried at the death of a friend and upon observing the despair of those near him (John 11:35).

⇒ experienced psychological agony as he contemplated the cross (Luke 22:44).

Since Jesus did not have all of the divine prerogatives available to him *in his humanity*, his human experience sometimes included unanticipated events, learned data, and disquiet about the future that resulted in spontaneous surges of feeling—feelings that even featured physical/glandular responses such as tears, sweat-drops of blood, trembling, and the like. At all points Christ controlled and directed these passions perfectly; still, he experienced passions in ways that God never could apart from incarnation.

(3) He cultivated appropriate affections (i.e., inclinations toward what is good and beautiful and true, and aversions toward their opposites).

⇒ He regularly *prayed* and *worshiped*, cultivating his religious affections.

⇒ He exhibited self-sacrificing *love* (John 15:13, etc.).

⇒ He shared his own *joy*, developed in the crucible of obedience and suffering, with his disciples (John 15:11).

⇒ He developed a close *friendship* with John (John 13:23) that he apparently did not share with the other apostles.

e. He possessed the limitations of humanity.

John 4:6—He was wearied from his journey.

Matthew 8:24—He had to sleep.

Luke 22:43—He lacked physical strength in the garden.

Mark 11:13—He looked in a tree for food.

John 19:30—He suffered physically and then died.

- f. Christ also possessed a fully human immaterial.

John 11:33—Jesus was deeply moved in his [human] spirit.

Matthew 26:38—“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” a state that left him in need of companionship (cf. Mark 14:34).

Conclusion: Jesus Christ was fully human in every respect. Any suggestion that he was physically, intellectually, or psychologically different from other people or that he had “advantages” that others lacked (i.e., shortcuts to intellectual development, repressed appetites, freedom from temptation, perfect health and fitness, or other “superhuman” qualities) is ill founded. He was *at all points* like we are, except that he was without a sin nature. As since “he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted” (Heb 2:18) and supplies a quintessential “example for you to follow in his steps” (1 Pet 2:21).

3. The Permanence of the Incarnation

Hebrews 2:17 cf. 7:24—“He had to be made like his brethren in all things, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.... *Jesus...holds his priesthood permanently.*”

1 Timothy 2:5—“There *is* one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus” (cf. Job 9:32–33).

D. The Human Death of Christ and Our Sanctification

1. The Nature of Christ’s Death

Christ’s Death was an act of ***Penal Substitution***: Christ died to satisfy the wrath of God incurred by human sinners by his vicarious death on the cross.

- a. **Satisfaction**: By his death Christ discharged the debt/penalty levied in accordance with God’s legal standard.

Romans 3:25–26—God displayed [Christ] publicly as a *propitiation* in his blood through faith. This was to *demonstrate his righteousness*,...so that he might *be just and the justifier* of the one who has faith in Jesus.

- The holiness of God supplies a constitutional standard to which all must conform.
- The righteousness of God requires that he conform perfectly to his own constitutional standards.
- The justice of God demands the perfect administration of his own righteous standard throughout his whole universe.

- b. **Substitution**: Christ died *in the place of* sinners; also called *vicarious* atonement.

2 Corinthians 5:21—God made him who had no sin to be sin for us.

Galatians 3:13—Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for us.

1 Peter 2:24—He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Seen in the Isaianic Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53):

Verse 5: He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Verse 6: The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Verse 8: For the transgression of my people he was stricken.

Verses 11, 12: He bore the sin of many (2x)

Note also the many texts in which Christ's life/blood/self is given "for" (*uper*) us and "on behalf of" (*anti*) us (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; 14:24; John 6:51; 10:11, 15; Rom 5:6; 14:15; 2 Cor 5:14–15; Gal 1:4; 2:20; 1 Tim 2:6; Heb 2:9; 1 Pet 2:21; 3:18; etc.).

2. Categories of the Atonement (Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 24–50)

a. **Guilt** is met with sacrificial **Expiation**.

John 1:29—Behold the Lamb of God who *takes away* the sin of the world.

Hebrews 9:26—[Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to *do away with* sin by the sacrifice of himself.

(1) *Guilt*, as defined above, is *legal liability to punishment*. The punishment for offending God is life: sin disqualifies a person morally from living (Rom 1:32; 6:23). The only other alternative to individual death of infinite duration is the perfect, sinless, vicarious sacrifice of another human life.

(2) The idea of *Expiation* is derived from the Aramaic/Akkadian root *ka-pa-ru*, which means to "wipe off," "blot out," or "expiate." By it Christ

- *purges* guilt (so Deut 21:7–9 cf. 13:5; 17:7);
- *purifies* the one offering the sacrifice with the result that the offerer is made "clean" and "washed whiter than snow" (Ps 51:7, cf. Jer 18:23).
- *takes away* iniquity (Isa 6:7).
- *removes* sin as far as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12) and *casts it into the depths of the sea*" (Mic 7:19).
- *lifts away* or *clears* guilt (Lev 10:17).
- *blots out* transgressions...and remembers our sins no more (Isa 43:25).

b. **Bondage** is met with **Redemption** or **Ransom**.

Matthew 20:28—The Son of Man [came]...to give his life as a ransom for many.

Ephesians 1:7—"In him we have redemption through his blood."

To *redeem* means to *buy out of slavery* by the payment of a *ransom* price; to release by payment that which has been lost. It is a deliverance at great cost. Apart from the payment of the life of Christ all men live in bondage:

- to the Law (OT) (Gal 3:10, 13; Gal 4:4–5).
- to sin (John 8:34; Gal 3:22; Titus 2:14; 3:3; 1 Pet 1:18).
- to an inability to do *any* good thing (Ps 14:1, 3; 53:1–3; Rom 3:12; 8:7–8)

c. **Wrath** is met with **Propitiation**.

- (1) Because he is perfectly holy, God is righteously and continually angry at sinners. Apart from the satisfaction of his wrath, God will eternally and righteously hate the sinner because of his sin:

Psalm 5:5—You hate all who do wrong.

Psalm 11:5—The Lord hates those who love violence.

John 3:36—The wrath of God abides on the disobedient.

- (2) The theological term for the *appeasement* or *satisfaction of God's wrath* is **propitiation**. By absorbing in himself the whole wrath of God against sin, Jesus quenched God's righteous anger, making love possible (1 John 4:10).

Numbers 16:46–48—“Take your censer and put incense in it, along with fire from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to **make atonement** (קָפַר) for them. *Wrath has come out from the LORD; the plague has started.*” So Aaron...offered incense and **made atonement** (קָפַר) for them. He stood between the living and the dead, and *the plague stopped*.

Romans 3:25–26—God presented [Christ] as a **propitiation** through faith in his blood, to demonstrate his righteousness, because *in his restraint God passed over the sins* previously committed. God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus. [HCSB]

1 John 4:10—Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins. [HCSB]

d. **Enmity** and **Alienation** are met with **Reconciliation**

- (1) Sin produces estrangement and hostility between God and man:

Isaiah 59:2—Your iniquities have *separated* you from your God; your sins have made him *hide his face* from you. [HCSB]

Romans 5:10—We were God's *enemies*.

Ephesians 2:12—Remember that at that time you were *separate from Christ, excluded* from citizenship in Israel and *foreigners* to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 4:18—They are darkened in their understanding and *separated from the life of God*.

Colossians 1:21—Once you were *alienated* from God and were his *enemies*.

- (2) Reconciliation is the theological term for the *removal of hostility* and the restoration of *harmony, goodwill, and favor*. Reconciliation is also the central idea in the concepts of *peace, fellowship, and forgiveness*.

Isaiah 53:5—He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Romans 5:1, 10—Since we have been *justified* (i.e., declared *righteous*) through faith, we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... When we were God's enemies, we were *reconciled* to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been *reconciled*, shall we be saved *through his life*! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received *reconciliation*.

2 Corinthians 5:17–21—if anyone is in Christ, he is *a new creation*; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who *reconciled* us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of *reconciliation*: that God was *reconciling* the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of *reconciliation*. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be *reconciled* to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might *become the righteousness of God*.

3. The Efficacy of the Atonement

What it is in Christ that gives his sacrifice the efficacy to satisfy God's holy demands in the areas of guilt, bondage, wrath, and enmity, i.e., what unifies and gives cohesion to the atonement? The answer is simply his *obedience*.

- a. Passive Obedience (McCune's *penal* obedience; Hoekema's *suffering* obedience): Christ's obedience whereby he suffered at the hands of men and forfeited his life as a *penal satisfaction* for sin. On the basis of this obedience, the penalties of the Law incurred by the individual are paid by Christ. By it the believer is forgiven and pardoned.

Philippians 2:8—He was obedient *to the point of death*.

Hebrews 5:8—He learned obedience *from what he suffered*.

- b. Active Obedience (Hoekema's Law-Keeping Obedience): Pardon and forgiveness alone do not qualify anyone to go to heaven. Mere release from punishment is insufficient; the requirement for access to heaven is perfect obedience to the law of God (in principle, Eccl. 7:20). As noted earlier, one who has been released from the Law's penalty is not on the same plane as the one who has kept the Law perfectly. The imputation of our sins to Christ is insufficient; a reciprocal imputation of positive rectitude is also necessary. It is on the basis of Christ's perfect obedience to the Law during his whole lifetime that *merit* accrues to the believer so that he is accepted as righteous and restored to favor with God.

Philippians 3:9—I am found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith (cf. Rom 1:16–17).

Romans 5:1–2—Justification involves *peace with God* **and** *access to God*.

Romans 5:18–19—By the single act of obedience we *avoid condemnation* **and** *receive righteousness unto life*.

Zechariah 3:4–5—Filthy garments are removed **and** clean ones put on.

Acts 26:18—We receive *forgiveness* **and** *an inheritance*.

E. The Human Resurrection of Christ and Our Sanctification

1. The Resurrection established Christ’s identity and authority to save.

John 2:19–22—Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”... The temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Romans 1:4—Through the Spirit of holiness [Christ] was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. The Resurrection is necessary to our salvation in all of its aspects.

1 Corinthians 15:14–22—If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Western Christianity, with its emphasis on the *forensic* vis-à-vis the *experimental* dimension of Christianity has long tended to place more emphasis on Christ’s *death* than on his *resurrection* as the center of the Bible’s storyline. This is unfortunate. The book of Acts and the epistles discuss Christ’s resurrection much more frequently than they do his death, and more substantially. Our union with Christ in his death, is of course necessary to our release from sin’s penalty; our union with Christ in his resurrection, however, does more. It not only validates all that Christ did in death, it also is the basis for nearly every other soteriological blessing.

a. Resurrection validates the sacrifice of Christ, informing us that Christ’s life and death were accomplished perfectly and to God’s satisfaction. Without resurrection, according to the text above, all men are *yet in Adam, yet in sin*, and, as the text continues, better off *living for the pleasures of this life* (vv. 29–32).

b. Resurrection is thus necessary to our justification.

Romans 4:25—Jesus was “raised for our justification.”

1 Corinthians 15:17—“If Christ has not been raised...you are still in your sins.”

c. Resurrection also makes possible our regeneration and thus our sanctification.

Romans 6:4—We were buried with him through baptism into death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

1 Peter 1:3—In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Corinthians 6:13–18—The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Therefore, your bodies are members of Christ himself.... He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit: Flee from sexual immorality.

Ephesians 2:5–10—[God] made us alive with Christ when we were dead in our transgression.... God raised us up with Christ...and created us to do good works.

Philippians 3:10–14—I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

d. Resurrection guarantees Christ’s present mediation and our preservation.

Romans 8:34–35—Christ Jesus, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

e. Resurrection makes possible final sanctification—the redemption of our bodies, i.e., our own resurrection, glorification, and the completion of our salvation.

Romans 8:11—If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you (cf. vv. 22–23)

1 Corinthians 15:20–22—Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

2 Corinthians 4:14—We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.”

Colossians 3:1–4—Since you have been raised with Christ,... your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

III. The Spirit of Sanctifying Grace

A. The Spirit and Common Grace

We have already discussed the doctrine of common grace above. It behooves us, however, to remember that the agent of common grace is in every case the Holy Spirit. In God's common grace God grants to us means, apart from the Bible proper and even from the hands of unbelievers, to assist one another in mutual sanctification. While never a comprehensive form of spiritual counsel, we should not dismiss the notion that "walking in the spirit" can take the form of a kind word, a shared meal, or the completion of a joint task—ordinary ways whereby we may strengthen the faith and buoy one another's very souls. Mutual soul care very often takes common forms—forms that frequently facilitate the task of speaking truth into one another's lives (cf. in principle 1 Sam 16:23; 1 Kgs 19:3–18; Mark 6:31).

B. The Holy Spirit and Sin

1. Conscience

Romans 2:14–15: For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.

- a. Definition. Conscience (Gr. *suneidesis*, lit., "common knowledge") is the moral awareness of right and wrong shared by all people in God's image. It prompts people to do what is right and rebukes people when they do wrong. It is an aspect of "common grace" shared universally by all people as part of the divine image.
- b. Conscience is not *technically* a work of the Holy Spirit, but rather an innate, providential mechanism that can be "reprogrammed." This is demonstrated by the following two observations:
 - (1) The conscience can become "seared" through habitual disregard (1 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:15).
 - (2) The conscience can become "weakened" or confused so that it sends "false signals" (1 Cor 8:7–12; 10:29).

2. Conviction

John 16:8: When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

- a. Definition: Conviction is a special work of the Holy Spirit, employing the Word of God, that firmly convinces a sinner of his guilt, his need for righteousness, and the reality of impending, divine judgment.

The function of conviction resembles that of conscience, but is self-consistent and specific: it consists of the testimony of God the Holy Spirit, almost always on the lips of a believer (Prov 15:12; Amos 5:10; Matt 18:15; John 3:20; 2 Tim 4:2), from the truth of Scripture.

- b. Conviction includes three factors.
- (1) *Sin*. The Holy Spirit convinces men not of their acts of sin (this is the realm of conscience), but of their state of sinfulness.
 - (2) *Righteousness*. The Holy Spirit's role in conviction is not to urge men to do righteous deeds (again, the realm of conscience), but to convince men of their lack of righteousness (i.e., awareness of God's holiness) and to stress their need for repentance.
 - (3) *Judgment*. The Holy Spirit convinces men of their liability to judgment for sin.
- c. Conviction is exercised by means of the Word of God brought to bear on the vicissitudes of life.

John 3:20: Everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be *exposed*.

2 Timothy 4:2: Preach the word; be ready in season [and] out of season; *reprove*, rebuke, exhort...

Titus 1:9: Hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that you will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to *refute* those who contradict.

- d. Conviction is commonly thought of as a function of the Spirit in unbelievers; in reality, conviction in the Bible more frequently speaks to his work in believers in the everyday life of the church.

Hebrews 12:5–6: My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he *rebukes* you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as a son."

Matthew 18:15–17: If your brother sins against you, go and *show him his fault* (lit. "convict him") just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

See also Titus 1:13; Jas 2:9; 1 Tim 5:20.

C. The Holy Spirit and the Life of Faith

1. Regeneration

- a. We have already looked at length at the role of regeneration in the outworking of sanctification. In the first four weeks of this course we established that the believer's union with Christ consists in two major benefits: **Justification** is the *legal* benefit whereby we exchange our unrighteousness for the righteousness of Jesus Christ and are declared righteous on account of this legal transfer. **Regeneration** is the *experiential* benefit whereby we put off the old man (a.k.a.

definitive sanctification) and put on the new man. It is the latter, we found that provides the engine for sanctification.

- b. Regeneration is more, however, than an objective “animating principle.” When a person comes to life spiritually, the old man is not awakened to perform spiritual functions, instead, the Spirit effects a new *self*, that is, a whole new set of attributes, including new thoughts, inclinations, and affections *in which God himself plays a participatory role*.

Ezekiel 36:26: I will give you a *new heart* and put a *new spirit* within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a *heart of flesh*. **I will put my Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances.

1 Corinthians 2:14–16—The man **without the Spirit** (lit., the ψυχικός, or the unregenerate man) does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are **spiritually** discerned. The spiritual man (lit., the πνευματικός, or the regenerate man) makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment. “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But **we have the mind of Christ**.

2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; *the old has gone, the new has come*.

2 Peter 1:4—Regeneration is here described as “**participating in the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption in the world.”

See also Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22–24; Col 3:9–10, in which Paul describes regeneration as the removal of the “old self” and the receipt of a “new self.”

2. Indwelling

- a. Definition: *Indwelling is the ongoing manifestation and of the Spirit in every believer—it is his continuous sustenance of the new nature* (which we have just seen, involves his very person within us).

(1) Indwelling is not, as the word might possibly suggest, a matter of the Spirit’s *location*. As God, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent. He is no more “inside” a believer than he is “inside” an unbeliever. However, just as God can be more *manifest* in one place over another (i.e., he reveals himself more clearly and more fully in certain places, such as in heaven), so also the Spirit is more *manifest* in a believer than he is in an unbeliever. Indwelling, then, is the **manifestation of the Spirit’s influence in the lives of believers**.

(2) Indwelling, thus, has to do with the Spirit’s *activity*. As we noted above, the effect of regeneration is *union with Christ, participation in the divine nature*, and the birth/growth of the “spirit man”—the πνευματικός. Regeneration is not merely an animating impulse; it is the impartation of the new “self,” complete with thoughts, inclinations, affections, and behaviors that are

progressively in step with the Holy Spirit. Indwelling is not an “additional” work of the Spirit, *per se*, but rather the continuing effects of his regenerating work, effects that make the “fruit of the Spirit” and “walking in newness of life” not only possible but inevitable.

b. Indwelling is universal among believers.

Ezekiel 36:26: The effect of God’s bestowal of a “new heart” is the permanent installment of “my Spirit within you.”

John 14:16–17: I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives *with* you and is *in* you.

Romans 8:9–10: You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is alive because of righteousness.

1 Corinthians 2:14–16—The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man (the man with the Spirit) makes judgments about all things.... We have the mind of Christ.

Jude 19 speaks in principle to two classes of persons: those who “follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit,” and those who have the Spirit and follow him.

3. Assurance

a. Definition: *The assurance of the believer is his personal knowledge and certainty of being in a state of grace and of his final destiny in heaven.*

b. Scriptural Evidence:

Romans 8:14–17: For all who are being *led by the Spirit* of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” *The Spirit himself testifies* with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. [see also Galatians 4:6].

c. Explanation: This passage indicates that the “Spirit himself” communicates the assurance of faith to a believer. How this occurs is a matter of some debate. Some suggest a direct or mystical communication of assurance. Context, however, suggests that assurance is mediated through the manifestation of Spiritual fruit in the lives of all true believers (cf. Gal 5:18, 22ff, where being “led by the Spirit” is tantamount to producing the fruit of the Spirit). Here in Romans 8, the believer derives assurance when he (1) engages in battle against the flesh and cultivates the new nature (vv. 12–14), (2) begins to pray spontaneously (rather than being afraid) in the face of trial (v. 15), and (3) suffers willingly for Christ (vv. 17ff).

4. Illumination (Internal Testimony)

- a. Definition: *Illumination is the work of the Spirit in the hearts of the regenerate whereby he convinces them of the authority of Scripture and makes them favorably inclined to yielding to it.*
- b. Scriptural Evidence:
- 1 Corinthians 2:4–5, 14–16: My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.... The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things... [having] the mind of Christ.
- 1 John 2:20, 21, 27—You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it.... The anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; his anointing teaches you about all things.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:13: For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.
- c. Explanation
- The work of the Spirit in illumination does not (as many falsely imagine) impart new revelation, divulge data hidden to all but the eye of faith, increase the Bible’s clarity, or remove the need to develop the hermeneutical skills. In short, the Spirit is not a source of biblical *meaning*. He *does*, however, assist believers in (1) applying Scripture and (2) welcoming/submitting to Scripture.
- Illumination also removes the hostility of the depraved mind to the Word of God. The hostility of the depraved mind to God and to his Law that leads to the exchange of God’s truth for a lie (Rom 1:18–20, 25, 28) cannot be overcome with the use of evidences (Rom 1) or winsome and persuasive presentation (1 Cor 2). It is only by the Spirit that a believer can “accept” (i.e., *welcome*) the Word of God, “know” the Word of God (i.e., *embrace* it for the truth that it is), and “appraise” the Word of God (i.e., positively appraise, appreciate, and apply it).
5. Sanctification (see sessions 1–4 of this course).