



Third Article - Sanctification

The unifying theme of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed is the work of the Holy Spirit. Following the redemptive ministry of Christ, the Holy Spirit is sent by both the Father and the Son in order to enable humanity to come to a trusting faith in the free gift of salvation as offered by and in Jesus Christ.

I believe in the Holy Spirit...

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith...

The challenging reality of our standing before a holy God is captured well by Paul in Romans 5:10 when he states that "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." It is hard to think of ourselves as enemies of God, but without the work of the Holy Spirit to call us to faith in Christ, that is just what we were. Paul further points out in Ephesians 2:8-9 that "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." We have nothing to be proud of. All that we bring to the Great Exchange in our sin. We deserve death rather than life and instead it is life that we receive.

Earlier in Ephesians 1:13, Paul had already informed his readers that "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit," making it clear that it is the work of the Holy Spirit by which we are even able to believe. The Spirit gives us faith and then forms us into the church, which we need in order to support our faith in this hostile world.

Luther states that the work of the Holy Spirit is to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify. This He does both individually and in the context of the Christian church into which God places us.

Thoughts for Reflection

Why is the work of the Holy Spirit giving you faith a further gift of reassurance of God's love?