

Romans (43) **The Assurance of Hope (cont.)**

We are presently in a portion of Romans 8 that is designed to lead believers to see clearly the hope of their future glorification. This is a very important message for us and so it would do us well to read the message once again.

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Through Paul's words God draws our attention as believers in Jesus Christ to the glorious future that awaits us. The greatness of our future is enhanced to us by the personification of the creation that also longs for the day when we will experience all that God has promised us. The creation waits with "eager longing" for the revealing of our full stature and exalted position as children of God. The creation is shown to have a vested interest in our glorification. For then the creation will also experience the realization of God's original purpose for it. It is then that this fallen world will be renovated giving way to the new heavens and earth. The creation is "groaning" for that day. This promise of the future glorification of the children of God should be central to our experience as Christians. Those who have the indwelling Holy Spirit may have assurance that they will one day experience their exaltation. If our desire for and anticipation of that day is vivid and genuine as it should be, then we will be equipped to endure the suffering that comes in this life to all the children of God.

In the next paragraph we read of **the hope we have in the intercessory prayer of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26-30)**. Whereas verse 23 speaks of the *assurance* that the Holy Spirit gives us, verses 26ff speak of the *assistance* that the Holy Spirit gives us.

²⁶Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8:18-30)

The arena in which the apostle assured his readers that the Holy Spirit helps them is prayer, for it is the matter of praying that the believer at times is weakest. We are finite creatures. We are not like God who sees the end from the beginning. We do not know why God does what He does and why He does not do what He does not do. We, therefore, do not always know how to pray to our Father. We desire to pray according to the will of God, for we desire that God's will be done. But "***we do not know what to pray for as we ought.***" We may be assured and comforted that the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf according to

the will of God. He who prays for us cares deeply that we arrive to our appointed destiny, our glorification. His concern is depicted in verse 26b, ***“the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”***

Indeed, there are times when we find ourselves in great weakness with respect to our faith. Our sufferings can be of such a nature and to such a degree that what faith we had seems to be nearly extinguished. But the Holy Spirit helps us in our times of weakness so that our faith fail not. In fact with the Holy Spirit’s help we find ourselves not only strengthened to endure, but we also become more holy as we progress toward our certain and promised destiny.

It would seem that what God is revealing to us in these verses that He is working in us and on our behalf even in those times when we do not see Him doing so. This is a secret working of the Holy Spirit in that He is praying for God’s people even as they are enduring overwhelming trials that have rendered them in a state of “weakness.” They may not sense it, in fact they probably are unaware of His activity, but the Holy Spirit is praying to God the Father for every true Christian in order to strengthen him or her so as to persevere in faith unto their final destiny.

Now most of us are probably familiar with the intercessory work of our Lord Jesus on our behalf. He is our High Priest and He is intervening on behalf of each of us to before the Father as we are in need of grace to help in our time of need. Two examples of our Lord’s intercession may be cited, one of all believers generally and another of one believer specifically. ***First***, John 17 records ***the Lord Jesus praying for all believers***. For example, we read in John 17:9, “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.” We see here that the Lord was praying for God’s elect. He states forthrightly to the Father that He was not praying for the non-elect. A ***second*** example of Jesus’ intercessory prayer illustrates ***how the Lord Jesus may pray for us individually***. He told Peter at the Last Supper, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But *I have prayed for you*, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:31f). We may be encouraged by this, for He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (cf. Heb. 7:25). But not only does the Lord Jesus pray for His own, but we read here in Romans 8:26 that the Holy Spirit also prays for the Lord’s people.

The intercession of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of the Lord Jesus may be distinguished from one another.

Christ performs his intercessory task in heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1); the Holy Spirit, on earth. Christ’s intercession takes place outside of us, the Holy Spirit’s within us; that is, within our very hearts (John 14:16, 17). Christ prays that the merits of his redemptive work may be fully applied to those who trust him. The Holy Spirit prays that the deeply hidden needs of our hearts, needs which we ourselves do not even recognize, may be met.¹

Paul explained precisely how the Holy Spirit helps us by praying for us. He prays for us when we are weak. The assistance that we need when we are suffering must come to us from God the Father. But in our times of need and weakness we do not know what kind of assistance we may or should ask of God. It is then that the Holy Spirit who indwells us prays on our behalf to the Father according to the will of God. The result is that we receive from God the grace we need to sustain us in our suffering and to help us onward to our glorious destiny.

It is our weakness in prayer that is Paul’s focus. Our weakness is not in the manner that we pray (or don’t pray), but our weakness is in ***not knowing what the content of our prayer should be***. The point is that we will face difficulties in life that are beyond our capacity to assess or work through the matter to know what we are to do. Now thankfully, God has given us His Word by which we can receive instruction for whatever we may encounter in life. But sometimes we may find ourselves in situations, which due to our limited perspective, our ignorance of the Word of God, and the nature or the complexity of the problem, we find ourselves “clueless” as to what to do. About all we can do is “groan” toward God. But it is especially at

¹ William Hendriksen, ***Romans***, New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1981), p. 277.

these times that we may take comfort that the Holy Spirit Himself is praying on our behalf to the Father. Moreover, we may be assured that He knows the Father's will and that His praying will be according to that will, so every petition that the Holy Spirit offers to the Father is answered and granted by the Father.

And so, there are times, or there will be times, when we do not know how to voice a prayer to God. Even while you groan within yourself, you may be assured that the Holy Spirit Himself also groans on your behalf, as He prays for you according to the will of God. And so again, thankfully we may read **verses 26 and 27**,

For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The Holy Spirit knows what it is we need and when we need it and so He prays to God the Father on our behalf according to God's will. In this way the Holy Spirit makes up for us in times of our weakness and deficiency and sees us through our hardship so that our faith fail not.

Now there are those who interpret wrongly what is the work of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:26. They claim and teach that when "***the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words***", it is a reference to the experience of ***the Holy Spirit speaking through the believer in unknown tongues***, commonly assumed to be a prayer language. They give the following reasons for their interpretation:

1. The language corresponds with praying with/in the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 14-15 and Ephesians 6:18, and the uttering of mysteries in 1 Corinthians 14:2 corresponds with the unutterable groanings here.
2. Silent prayer is unheard of in the first century; all people prayed out loud.
3. A reference to tongues explains how the Spirit groans and yet we groan as well (cf. Rom. 8:23). A blending and mingling of between our spirits and the Holy Spirit is evident in several texts (Rom. 8:15-16; 1 Cor. 14:14-15; Gal. 4:6), so that the work of the Spirit is expressed in and through our human personality.
4. The term **ἀλαλήτοις** ("unutterable") does not necessarily mean unexpressed or silent, for the term **στεναγμοῖς** ("groanings") is the unambiguous word bearing that meaning. The word **ἀλαλήτοις** in Romans 8:26 may also mean that what is uttered is without words and ineffable.
5. Groaning must involve audibility.
6. We cannot understand the content of prayer, for the text says that only the Holy Spirit understands it.
7. The only experience in the early church that fits this experience is speaking in tongues.²

But these reasons are insufficient to make the case. This passage does not support the Pentecostal teaching respecting speaking in tongues.³ Schreiner rightly wrote:

Despite the appeal of seeing a reference to glossolalia, there are decisive reasons for rejecting this interpretation.

1. The term **ἀλαλήτοις** ("unutterable") could mean that which cannot be uttered in words, but it much more likely means "without speech," the absence of any vocalization at all. This seems to be the most natural way of translating a word that negates a word for speech.
2. The word **στεναγμοῖς** ("groanings") is not necessarily meant literally; that is, the groaning may not be audible. That groaning may be metaphorical is evident from the reference to the groaning of

² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 444.

³ In my opinion no Scripture passage does support their practice. It can be shown that every instance of speaking in an "unknown tongue" in the New Testament was the miraculous ability that the Holy Spirit gave to one enabling him/her to speak in a foreign language although it had never been studied. Speaking in tongues was a temporary gift that the Lord gave to substantiate that His kingdom was expanding throughout the world to the Gentiles.

creation in verse 22. Indeed, the groaning in verse 26 must be metaphorical in some sense because the text says that it is the “Spirit” that groans. Nowhere else in the Bible does the Holy Spirit audibly groan, and thus a literal meaning here is not likely. One might reply that the Holy Spirit’s groaning is expressed through the groaning of believers (cf. Rom. 8:15-16; 1 Cor. 14:14-15). This is probably the case, but even in that case the groaning is not necessarily audible. The point could be that believers have longings that are so deep that they are inexpressible.

3. The most serious objection to a reference to tongues speaking is that Romans 8:26-27 refers to all Christians, while tongues speaking is reserved only to a few. There is no evidence in verses 26-27 that any believers are excluded from the assistance of the Spirit described here. Indeed, it would destroy the entire argument of chapter 8 if any believers were outside the pale of what Paul says.⁴

How, then, does the Holy Spirit pray for the people of God? When we are those situations which are beyond our capability of standing and even of expressing our prayers to God for we do not know what and how to pray, then the Holy Spirit within us and takes those longings before God and articulates them to God the Father according to His will.

Verse 27 assures us of the effectual nature of the Holy Spirit’s intercession for believers. *“And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”* He who searches the hearts is a reference to **God the Father**. We see this ability of God to know the thoughts and motivations of people stated forthrightly in a number of places in Scripture. David once instructed his son, Solomon:

“And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve Him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for *the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought*. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. (1Ch 28:9 ESV)

Later David addressed God directly,

I know, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen Your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to You. (1 Chron. 29:17)

God not only searches the hearts of the righteous, but He also examines the hearts of the wicked.

Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may You establish the righteous-- *You who test the minds and hearts*, O righteous God! (Psa. 7:9)

The Lord Himself declares the fact that He searches all people’s hearts and will judge them accordingly:

“I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.” (Jer. 17:10)

But here in Romans 8:27, it is God the Father who searches the hearts of His people to discover their sins, but in order to discover their longings that they are unable to articulate. He hears the Holy Spirit voicing prayer, the Spirit who indwells the heart of the believer, for from the soul of that one the Spirit articulates a prayer to the Father in accordance to what is best for the believer and for what brings glory to God. And we know that every one of the Holy Spirit’s prayers will be answered. Not only are they effectual because every prayer He offers to the Father is according to the will of God but because of the blessed person of the Spirit Himself is the One who intercedes for God’s people. If you are a believer, despite your weakness, despite your ignorance and inability to voice even a prayer to God, there is one, the Holy Spirit, who will and does pray for you effectually unto the Father.

⁴ Ibid, p, 445.

The next verse, Romans 8:28, is a glorious reality and certainty because of the effectual nature of the omniscient Holy Spirit who prays for us according to the will of God. ***“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.”*** One of my pet peeves is seeing the promises of God that are given and assured to God’s people placed on church marquees as though they were God’s promises to all people indiscriminately. This word of assurance of Romans 8:28 is a promise to God’s people only. Perhaps the reason that this happens is that even among those who profess to know God, they do not understand the special covenant love that God has for His people only. Their failure to distinguish the ***special love*** that God has for His chosen people, over against the ***general love*** that He manifests for the whole world. There is a general assumption that God loves all people alike; consequently, they draw wrong conclusions about how God views people and how they relate to Him. Granted, there is a general love that God manifests for mankind, but there is a special love, a redeeming love, that unbelievers will never know for its objects are God’s people only. It is to them and them only that God gives the promise of Romans 8:28.

Some of you are encountering some issues that are overwhelming. You wonder how it is that you are going to come through this. But be assured, if you are in Christ, then you are the object of God’s loving concern and His careful attention. He is at work on your behalf. And you may not have answers or even a hint of how to proceed, but the blessed Holy Spirit will bear you along even as He petitions the full resources of God the Father to come to your aid and comfort. You may trust in the living God who has good desires and designs for you. You cannot know the indescribable grace and glory that He will bestow on you freely and fully at the coming and appearing of our blessed Lord Jesus!

Now there is a basic matter that we would do well to address and reinforce for us in the light of these few verses that we have reviewed. The apostle Paul sets forth **the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Blessed Holy Trinity**. It is important, even foundational to our faith to keep a Trinitarian understanding of our God always before us. The Three Persons of the Trinity are expressed in our own **Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**.

In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him. (1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Exodus 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:14, 18; John 15:26; Galatians 4:6)

Now, when we say that we believe in the Trinity, we are still affirming the truth that we are ***monotheists***; we believe in one God. We are affirming that there is one God, who exists and manifests Himself to us in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These are not three different gods working in harmony with one another; that is ***tritheism***, the belief in three gods. Nor are we ***modalists***, claiming that there is one Person in the godhead and that there are simply three different roles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is a non-Trinitarian position. We have said in the past and warn us once again that one of the most popular television preachers in the country is not Trinitarian, but embraces this teaching of ***modalism***. It is the belief and teaching of two denominations, the **United Apostolic Churches** and the **United Pentecostal** denomination, of which **T. D. Jakes** is their most known preacher. Jakes is a modalist. Modalists believe and teach that God is one person who has revealed himself in three forms, or ***modes***. They do not believe or teach that God is One Being eternally existing in three persons. According to the false teaching of Modalism, in Old Testament times God manifested Himself as God the Father, but during our Lord’s earthly ministry God was showing Himself as Jesus, and at Pentecost, God began to show Himself in the role of the Holy Spirit. And so, modalism teaches that God is one person and has only manifested himself in these three modes at various times. They accuse Trinitarians of teaching that there are

three gods. That is a false charge and reveals their ignorance about the biblical teaching of the Blessed Holy Trinity. Modalism denies the basic distinctiveness and coexistence of the three persons of the Trinity. Modalism is not Christian.

Now let us lay a biblical case for the teaching of the personhood of the blessed Holy Trinity. We would acknowledge at the outset that there is no place in the Bible where the word “trinity” is employed. Some anti-Trinitarians argue against the biblical teaching of the trinity on this fact. I have had **Jehovah’s Witnesses** commonly attempt to challenge me at the door regarding my Trinitarian belief by arguing, “The Word trinity is no where found in the Bible.” I usually respond by acknowledging what they say, but then point out that the word Bible is never used in the Bible either, are they not therefore to believe in the Bible? No, the word “Trinity” is not in the Bible, but the idea of the Trinity is manifest throughout the Bible.

Understanding the biblical teaching of the Blessed Holy Trinity is essential to true Christianity. One cannot know the true God unless one understands the true God is one God in three persons. But sometimes even those who believe in the trinity do not have the three persons of the trinity held in equal esteem. We are to give equal regard to each of the persons of the Holy Trinity, including the Holy Spirit. Again I will quote **Thomas Watson** from his book, *A Body of Divinity*. He wrote concerning this matter:

If there be one God subsisting in three persons, then let us give equal reverence to all the persons in the Trinity. There is not more or less in the Trinity; the Father is not more God than the Son and Holy Ghost. There is an order in the Godhead, but no degrees; one person has not a majority or supereminence above another, therefore we must give equal worship to all the persons. “That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father” (John 5:23). Adore Unity in Trinity.

And then he wrote with respect to obedience to God:

Obey all the persons in the blessed Trinity; for all of them are God. Obey God the Father. Christ himself, as man, obeyed God the Father, John 4:34, much more must we. Deut. 27:10.

Obey God the Son. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry”, Psa. 2:12. Kiss him with a kiss of obedience. Christ’s commands are not grievous, 1 John 5:3. Whatever he commands is for our interest and benefit. Oh then kiss the Son! Why do the elders throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ, and fall down before the Lamb? Rev. 4:10, 11. To testify their subjection, and to profess their readiness to serve and obey him.

Obey God the Holy Ghost. Our souls are breathed into us by the glorious Spirit. “The Spirit of God has made me”, Job 33:4. Our souls are adorned by the blessed Spirit. Every grace is a divine spark lighted in the soul by the Holy Ghost. Nay, more, the Spirit of God sanctified Christ’s human nature; he united it with the divine, and fitted the man Christ to be our Mediator. Well then does this third person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, deserve to be obeyed; for he is God, and this tribute of homage and obedience is due to him from us.

Amen to those words of **Thomas Watson**.

Now let us consider the following conclusions that we may draw from Scripture regarding the Holy Spirit that *the Holy Spirit is indeed a person*. Some, like the Jehovah Witnesses, believe the Holy Spirit to be merely the force or power of God, just as the Jews’ religion teaches today. But there are attributes of personhood attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit *speaks* in Mark 11:13; Acts 13:2; 21:11; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:7; 10:15. The Holy Spirit *reveals* in Luke 2:26 and 1 Peter 1:11. The Holy Spirit *guides* into all truth in John 16:13. He *teaches* in Luke 12:12 and John 14:26. The Holy Spirit *provides comfort*, He *counsels, helps, and loves* the believer in John 14:6, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Rom. 15:30; and James 4:5. The Holy Spirit *encourages* others in Acts 9:31 and *warns* people in 1 Timothy 4:1. The Holy Spirit *appoints* people to spiritual office in Acts 13:2 and 20:28. The Holy Spirit *may be grieved* in Isaiah 63:10 and Ephesians 4:30. He *may be lied to* in Acts 5:3. The Holy Spirit may be *resisted* in Acts 7:31 and He

may even be *blasphemed* as we read in our Lord's words in Matthew 12:31 and 32. All of these actions betray the personhood of the Holy Spirit.

Other personal qualities are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. He has *understanding* or *wisdom*. He exercises His *will*. He exercises *power*. We see these attributes or qualities of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; John 3:8; Micah 3:8, Acts 10:38; Rom. 15:13; Eph. 3:16. And again, we just multiply the scriptural evidence of these things.

On occasion when the Holy Spirit was speaking, He used personal pronouns to describe Himself, thereby showing His personhood. We read in Acts 10:19-20: "While Peter thought about the vision, *the Spirit said to him*, 'Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for *I* have sent them.'" And so, the Holy Spirit used the first person singular pronoun to describe Himself; only a person can do that. And then in Acts 13:2 we read of the Holy Spirit *calling* and *separating* Christian missionaries to their work. "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate *to Me* Barnabas and Saul for the work to which *I have called them*." Again, we see the personhood, the personality, by the use of that first person singular pronoun.

That *the Holy Spirit is God* is also amply clear from Scripture, not only is He a person, but He is God. There are a number of ways we can show forth the divinity of the Holy Spirit. First, consider the many names of the Holy Spirit that closely associate, we would say, identify the Holy Spirit with God: He is the Old Testament identified as:

- "Spirit of God" (Gen. 1:2, *et. al.*)
- "the Spirit of Yahweh" (we generally use the English word, Jehovah) (Judges 3:10 *et. al.*),
- "The Spirit of the Lord God" (Isa. 61:1)
- God's "good Spirit" (Neh. 9:20)
- God's "Holy Spirit" (Psa. 51:11)
- Yahweh's "Holy Spirit" (Isa. 63:10f)
- "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding" (Isa. 11:2)
- "the Spirit of counsel and of power" (Isa. 11:2)
- "the Spirit of the knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. 11:2)
- "the Spirit of grace and supplication" (Zec. 12:10)

When we turn to the New Testament, we see the Holy Spirit called by a variety of names, again, all associating the Holy Spirit with God Himself.

- "the Spirit of God" (Matt. 3:16 *et. al.*)
- "the Spirit of the Living God" (2 Cor. 3:3)
- "the seven-fold Spirit of God" (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
- "the Spirit of your Father" (Matt. 10:20)
- "the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom. 8:11)
- "the Spirit of [God's] Son" (Gal. 4:6)
- "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11);
- "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19)
- "the Holy Spirit" (Luke 11:13);
- "the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13);
- "the eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14);
- "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13)
- "the Spirit of sonship (or adoption)" (Rom. 8:15)
- "the Spirit of life" (Rev. 11:11)
- "The Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29)
- "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Eph. 1:17)
- "the Spirit of the glory and of God" (1 Pet. 4:4)

-- “the Counselor [or Comforter]” (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). (Of course the Lord Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as another Comforter, one like unto Himself.)

All of these descriptions and titles so associate the Holy Spirit with God or the attributes of God that one would conclude that they are strong evidence of the deity of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is set alongside God the Father and God the Son in a manner that shows His separateness from them as a person, but His equality with them in the one essence of the godhead. And so, He is indeed God. And so, we might cite these verses:

Matthew 3:16. “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.”

1 Corinthians 12:4. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.”

It seems there the Trinity is expressed all with view to the spiritual gifts given to Christians. “Diversities” attributed to the Spirit, the “differences” of outworkings, attributed to the Lord Jesus, and then activities themselves, God the Father working all in all.

2 Corinthians 13:14. “The grace of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God* (i.e. Father), and the communion of the *Holy Spirit* be with you all. Amen.”

Ephesians 2:18. “For through *Him* (Jesus) we both have access by one *Spirit* to the *Father*.”

Ephesians 4:4-6. “There is one body and one *Spirit*, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵one *Lord*, one faith, one baptism; ⁶*one God and Father* of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

1 Peter 1:2. “Elect according to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*, in sanctification of *the Spirit*, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of *Jesus Christ*: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.”

Perhaps one of the clearest statements in Scripture of both the personhood and the divinity of the Holy Spirit is the baptismal formula that the Lord Jesus declared should be observed when baptizing disciples. The Lord Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as placed into the singular “name” of God. We read:

Matthew 28:19. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name (singular name, not names) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” There we see the personhood of the Holy Spirit, alongside the Father and the Son, and we see an equality of the persons within the godhead.

In addition, when the Holy Spirit is described in the Bible, He is shown to have attributes that can only belong to God. We read that:

(1) The Holy Spirit is *eternal* in these verses:

Hebrews 9:14. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through *the eternal Spirit* offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

John 14:16. “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you *forever*”

(2) The Holy Spirit is *omnipresent* as seen in:

Psalm 139:7-10. “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell (Sheol), behold, You are there. ⁹If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.”

(3) The Holy Spirit is *omnipotent*, all powerful, as revealed in these passages:

Psalm 104:30. “You (God) send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.” The Holy Spirit is doing the creating, as sent forth by God.

Romans 15:19. “In mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.” The power of the Holy Spirit is taking salvation to the peoples of the world.

(4) And then we see that the Holy Spirit is *omniscient*, that is, all-knowing, as seen in:

Isaiah 40:13f. “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or *as* His counsellor has taught Him? ¹⁴With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?” The rhetorical questions demand the answer, “No one.” Why? Because the Holy Spirit is omniscient-- all knowing.

1 Corinthians 2:10f. “But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” How can that be? He is omniscient.

(5) Lastly, we see the Holy Spirit as *sovereign* in His authority in:

John 3:8. “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” And so, we see the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in bringing about the new birth in the people whom the Father has chosen to be recipients of salvation.

And so, these attributes of His eternal nature, His omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and sovereignty, are those that can only belong to God. The Holy Spirit is God.

But perhaps one of the clearest and most certain assertions of the Holy Scriptures is in the book of Acts. Peter directly identified the Holy Spirit as God when he confronted Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, for lying to the Holy Spirit. We read in Acts 5:1-5:

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ²And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. ³But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to *the Holy Spirit* and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? *You have not lied to men but to God.*’ ⁵Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.”

And so, Peter first declared that satan had filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. And then Peter said, “You have not lied to men but God.” Clearly in this context Peter was declaring that the Holy Spirit is God.

Next Lord's Day, Lord willing, we will consider the glorious promise of Romans 8:28 and then "the footsteps of grace" that are recounted for us in verses 29 and 30.

²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8:18-30)

May our Lord comfort and encourage us who know Him with these blessed assurances.

Let me close with a word to those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. You have no one to pray on your behalf unless there is a Christian relative or friend that God has moved to have pity upon you. You are on your own in a darkened sinful world and you are rushing along to God's just judgment and the revelation of His wrath upon sinners at the coming of Jesus Christ. If you are in unbelief (and you are not one of the elect), the Lord Jesus is not praying for you. He voiced to His Father, "I pray for them", meaning His people, "I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours" (John 17:9). And you do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you that He is praying on your behalf. You are alone and without God in a world rushing to its just judgment. You should realize your perilous position that you are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). But there is hope for the sinner in the Blessed Savior, Jesus Christ. He receives sinners who come to Him humbly, in repentance and faith. Get alone with God. Get on your knees and beg God the Father to have mercy upon you for Jesus' sake. Embrace Him as your Savior and Lord. Come to Him. Trust in Him. May He give you grace to do so. Amen.

Benediction:

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24f)