

## **Study 7            *We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, ... who proceeds from the Father (and the Son), and with the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.***

**Prayer by Herman Bavinck (1954-1921)**

“I believe in the mysterious someone  
who is close to me,  
who is within me,  
who sees my pitiful struggling and wrestling, and  
who then quietly holds me and unseeingly  
renews me again with inner strength.

I experienced it many times in my life  
when I sink and get swept away  
by the streams of life  
which draw me under.

But I have also in definitive moments in my life  
experienced that I am picked up  
and carried high above the water.

There were times when I opened my Bible  
and each word sounded dull and boring.  
But I also experienced moments  
when the words jumped out to me,  
glistening and filling my life.

And every time I am convinced again  
that Someone must be inside me  
Someone that holds me,  
Someone who enfolds me, softly yet firmly

I believe in the Holy Spirit.” Amen.

**(JH Bavinck – loosely translated)**

### **Videos:**

Although it is not necessary to watch the short video it gives a short introduction to the context of the study. It is available at: <https://ourcommonlife.org.au/31-august-2020/>. The message on **Sunday 16 August** was also specifically about the Holy Trinity, based on the test 1 Thessalonians 1. It is also available on this link.

### **Opening Reflections:**

- What images do you have of God?
- What images do you have of the Father?
- What images do you have of the Son?
- What images do you have of the Holy Spirit
- How do you understand the Trinity?

## **Introduction:**

The Holy Trinity remains a mystery. But it is not a mystery to be uncomfortable with, but one to celebrate.

**Gregory of Nanzianus** once wrote:

“I cannot think on the one  
without quickly being encircled  
by the splendour of the three;  
nor can I discern the three  
without being straightway carried back to the one”

We confess that we believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and Son is worshiped and glorified. The question arises: *how* do we worship the Holy Spirit, with the Father and the Son?

We worship, the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son, *with our lips, our hearts, and our deeds*:

### **With our lips**

We worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit with our mouths, our lips, our words. With our lips we confess, we worship, we acknowledge, we praise, we glorify, we honour. This is the summation of the Christian life. Karl Barth, after a long-life of deep theology, pondered all and came to the conclusion that the summary of Christian Life is to “*call upon God*” (Psalm 50 vs 15. “*Call upon me* in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, *and you will honour me*”).

This is the Christian life: to call upon God and to worship and glorify God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

One of the regular places where we worship the Holy Trinity is the worship service – through our prayers of approach, confession, thanksgiving and intercession; our songs of praise and worship, of wonder and thanksgiving; the sacraments of Holy Communion and baptism; the confession of the creeds; the hearing of the Word; our commitment to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Karl Barth also said that the worship service is the most important, the most incredible, the most wonderful event that can possibly take place on earth – because in the worship service, each and every time, the Holy Trinity - the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified.

### **With our hearts:**

Martin Luther said: “*ubi spes est, ibi cultus est*” – “where there is hope, there is worship”. Remarkable. We would expect it the other way round– “where there is worship, there is hope”. Both are true.

Where there is worship, there is hope. Where we worship God, where we meet God, we where call upon God there we also hope upon God. This is true – in the worship service, in our singing in our prayers.

Yet, Luther reminds us that this may not necessarily be the case – we can worship, sing and pray with our lips, but without our hearts, without true conviction. Our lips may be worshipping and glorifying God, but our hearts are far away from God.

We can confess that the **Holy Spirit**,–

- **is Lord and the Giver of Life**, without believing that he can truly do so. We do not truly reckon, that the Holy Spirit can free us from our deadly lives and give us life.
- is **the Spirit of Truth**, without being convinced that he can enlighten our hearts and through the powerful Word grant us new understanding and peace.
- **is the Spirit of Love**, without believing that the Holy Spirit can free us from the deadly bonds of loneliness, self-centredness and make us part of a new koinonia, a new fellowship, a new unity.
- is the **Spirit of Love** without truly expecting that he can renew a church, and create a new congregation, a new world.
- is the **Spirit of Faith**, without believing Spirit can free us from the enslavement of the guilt and sin in our hearts; and give us the conviction that we are saved; and the consequent joy and peace that surpasses all understanding.
- **is the Spirit of Faith** without truly believing that we are no longer under the power of sin, the natural tendency to do evil; without being convinced we are free from the consequences of sin.
- **Is the Spirit of Hope**, without trusting that the Spirit can uplift us from despair and despondency, from apathy, without believing the Spirit of Hope can give us a future a life of expectation and enthusiasm, and abundance.
- **Is the Spirit of Hope** without believing that the Holy Spirit can open our eyes, and keep our eyes open to the streams of blessing so that we can live with gratitude and joy.

“*ubi spes est, ibi cultus est*”.

It is only when we not only confess and worship with our lips, but truly *reckon* and be convinced in our hearts that everything the church has confessed over the ages through the Nicene Creed about the Holy Spirit is indeed true: The Holy Spirit is Lord, is the Giver of Life who creates and renews; is the Spirit of Truth, the one who leads and teaches; is the Spirit of Love who gifts us community; is the Spirit of Faith that personally convinces us that we are children and heirs of God; is the Spirit of Hope, who grants us a future and sighs with us for complete redemption.

That is when we worship the Holy Spirit with our lips and our hearts. But there is yet more. We also worship the Holy Spirit with our deeds

### **With our deeds**

Martin Luther also said: *Tota nostra operatio, confessio* –all our deeds is confession. We confess, worship through our deeds, our hands and our feet. This is our true testimony – how the world perceives whether we worship the Holy Trinity – through our daily lives – what we say and do at home, in the office, in the street, in the market place, in the pub.

**Scripture: Colossians 1:3-14; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10; Romans 15:5-7, 13.**

The authors of the Bible did not write theological creeds, as did the church at Nicea three centuries later. However, the existence of the Trinity is clear in Biblical passages, as it is in Colossians 1, 1 Thessalonians 1 and Romans 15. (The message on the second video clip is about 1 Thessalonians).

The texts in **Colossians 1 vs 1-14 and 1 Thessalonians 1**, is a greeting followed by a prayer of thanksgiving in which the God - the Father of Jesus Christ, the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned interchangeably.

Read through the passages several times and highlight the references and adjectives used when mentioning:

God

The Father,

Jesus Christ (the Son),

the Spirit/Holy Spirit

### **Closing Reflections:**

The Holy Trinity remains a profound wonderful mystery – in the doxology of Romans 11 vs 33-36 (NIV):

<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,  
and his paths beyond tracing out!

<sup>34</sup> “Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?”

<sup>35</sup> “Who has ever given to God,  
that God should repay them?”

<sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things.  
to him be the glory forever! Amen

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, ... who proceeds from the Father (and the Son), and with the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.*

- **Closing prayer:**