

**Conceived by the Holy Spirit**  
**Lesson 4**

**Opening Prayer**

**Psalm 104:1-5, 24-35**

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; \*

O LORD my God, how excellent is your greatness!  
you are clothed with majesty and splendor.

**2 You wrap yourself with light as with a cloak \*  
and spread out the heavens like a curtain.**

3 You lay the beams of your chambers in the waters above; \*  
you make the clouds your chariot;  
you ride on the wings of the wind.

**4 You make the winds your messengers \*  
and flames of fire your servants.**

5 You have set the earth upon its foundations, \*  
so that it never shall move at any time.

24 O LORD, how manifold are your works! \*  
in wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

**25 Yonder is the great and wide sea  
with its living things too many to number, \*  
creatures both small and great.**

26 There move the ships,  
and there is that Leviathan, \*  
which you have made for the sport of it.

**27 All of them look to you \*  
to give them their food in due season.**

28 You give it to them; they gather it; \*  
you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

**29 You hide your face, and they are terrified; \*  
you take away their breath,  
and they die and return to their dust.**

30 You send forth your Spirit, and they are created; \*  
and so you renew the face of the earth.

**31 May your glory, O Lord, endure forever; \*  
may you rejoice in all your works.**

32 You look at the earth and it trembles; \*  
you touch the mountains and they smoke.

**33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; \*  
I will praise my God while I have my being.**

34 May these words of mine please you; \*  
I will rejoice in the LORD.

**35 Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, \*  
and the wicked be no more.  
Bless the LORD, O my soul. \*  
Hallelujah!**

God of majesty,  
we are constantly surrounded by your gifts  
and touched by your grace;  
our words of praise do not approach the wonders of your love.  
Send forth your Spirit,  
that our lives may be refreshed  
and the whole world may be renewed,  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Holy Spirit, for whose work the community, and in and with the community the believing Christian, is thankful, is not the spirit of the world, nor is He the spirit of the community, nor is He the spirit of any individual Christian, be He is the spirit of God, God Himself, as He eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son, as He unites the Father and Son in eternal love, as he is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son, because He is of one substance with them.

Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/1, 646

But faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit ... faith itself has no other source than the Spirit.

John Calvin, Institutes III.1.1.

**John 20:21-22 (ESV)** <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

**Genesis 1:1-2 (ESV)** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The Holy Spirit is God's personal and powerful presence in the world, who calls forth faith and unites human beings with what God has done for them in Jesus Christ. In the words of Reformed orthodoxy, the Holy Spirit applies to us the redemption wrought by Christ.

John Leith, Basic Christian Doctrine, 161.

### Who Is the Holy Spirit?

- The human spirit is the power by which a person makes themselves present and known, so the Holy Spirit is that power by which God makes himself present and known to human beings.<sup>1</sup>
- The Holy Spirit is defined by Jesus Christ who is the concrete revelation of God in human history, and it is through Jesus Christ that we know the Father and we know the Holy Spirit.
- *filioque* – “who proceeds from the Father and the Son”
  - Charlemagne in 1012 had German emperor persuaded a German born pope to add the clause to the creed used in the Roman church.
  - Contention between Rome and Constantinople.
- The Holy Spirit is Christ's Spirit in the world and is sent forth by the Father through the Son.
- For by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit, who causes us to contemplate God's face, shines; and that we in turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognize him in his own image, namely the Word.<sup>2</sup>
- Classical Reformed theology is emphatic that the Holy Spirit cannot be separated either from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ or from the Holy Scripture, which is the *written* Word of God.

### The Work of the Holy Spirit

**Acts 1:1-8** <sup>ESV</sup> In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, <sup>2</sup> until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty

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<sup>1</sup> Leith, Basic Christian Doctrine, 162

<sup>2</sup> Institutes, 1.9.3

days and speaking about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." <sup>6</sup> So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- This emphasis on waiting on the Holy Spirit stands in judgment on any notion that salvation and the church are human works.
- The Holy Spirit is the chief agent in the life of the Church.
- Christians pray in the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit prays in them and for them (Romans 8:27-28).
- Christians are bound together in community by the Spirit's power (1 Corinthians 12).
- The Holy Spirit opens the meaning of the Scriptures (! Peter 1:10-13).
- In the NT the Holy Spirit is the presence and the power of God that awakens the human heart and makes Christian believers alive to the presence of God. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to be transformed into the image of Christ and to bear witness to Jesus Christ.
- The Spirit unites us with Jesus Christ (Romans 11:17; Galatians 3:27) – "in-grafted and put on."
  - Calvin insisted that Christ means nothing to us until we grow into one body with him, by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - It is a personal union.
- The Holy Spirit elicits faith from our hearts – "faith itself has no other source than the Spirit" (*Institutes*, III.1.4)
- Calvin's definition of faith: "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit." (*Institutes*, III.2.7.)
- The Holy Spirit works through worship, Scripture, Christian fellowship, the sacraments – "where two or three are gathered in my name."

**G-3.0103** God's redeeming and reconciling activity in the world continues through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who confronts individuals and societies with Christ Lordship of life and calls them to repentance and to obedience to the will of God.

### **Born of a Virgin**

- The emphasis was not on biology but Christ's humanity.
  - Better phrase – "born of Mary, a virgin"
- Jesus Christ was real & his birth was a "datable" event – Pontius Pilate.
- Countered the mythical gods who died and are reborn each year (Orisis and Isis in Egypt; the cycles of the seasons: fall – spring; etc.)
- Theme of barren women in the Scriptures (Hannah, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Elizabeth; a virgin Mary)
- God intervened to accomplish his purpose – God is the God of history as well as theology.
- For the early Christian, it was not about biology – the virgin birth was the ultimate culmination of the ancient theme of barren women who conceive according to God's plan and purpose. It is plain that just as in times past God raised leaders for Israel out of barren women who conceive by divine intervention, now a barren woman par excellence – a virgin – conceives by divine intervention. The child she bears is not just exceptional but unequalled – the Son of the Most High, whose kingdom will have no end.

### **The Brief Statement of Faith (on the Holy Spirit)**

52 We trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
53 everywhere the giver and renewer of life.  
54 The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,  
55 sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and  
neighbor,  
56 and binds us together with all believers  
57 in the one body of Christ, the Church.  
58 The same Spirit  
59 who inspired the prophets and apostles  
60 rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,  
61 engages us through the Word proclaimed,  
62 claims us in the waters of baptism,

63 feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,  
 64 and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.  
 65 In a broken and fearful world  
 66 the Spirit gives us courage  
 67 to pray without ceasing,  
 68 to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,  
 69 to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,  
 70 to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,  
 71 and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.  
 72 In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,  
 73 we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks  
 74 and to live holy and joyful lives,  
 75 even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,  
 76 praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

### **Lines 52–76**

**52–53 Scripture** Gen 1:1–2; Ps 23; 139:1–12; Ezek 37:1–14; Lk 1:26–35; Jn 3:1–15; Acts 2:1–21; 10; Rom 8:1–11; 2 Cor 3.

**Confessions** NC, 3rd art.; AC, 3rd art; SC, XII; HC, q 53; WCF, XX, XXXIV; WLC, qq 58, 89, 182.

54–57 Scripture

**Line 54** Gen 15:1–6; Hab 2:4; Rom 1:16–17; 3:21–28 (24–25); 4:1–5; 5:1–2; Gal 3:1–14; Eph 2:8–9; Tit 3:3–7.  
 Lines 55–57 Lev 19:18; Deut 6:4–5; Mk 12:28–34; Lk 10:25–37; Jn 3:1–15; Rom 8:26–27; 12; 13:8–10; 1 Cor 12:1–31 (esp. 13, 27); 13; 2 Cor 3:17–4:2; Gal 5; 6:1–10; Eph 2:11–22; 4:1–6; Phil 4:1–7; Col 1:24; 3:12–17; 1 Pet 4:8–11; 1 Jn 4:19–5:5.

**Confessions** SC, XVI–XX; HC, qq 1, 21, 54, 55, 86, 87; SHC, XV–XVII; WCF, XI, XX, XXV, XXVI, XXXIV, XXXV; WSC, qq 29–36; WLC, qq 63–66, 70–73; BD, II, 1–3; C67, IC1.

### **58–61 Scripture**

**Lines 58–59** Num 11:24–30; Deut 18:15–22; 2 Chron 20:13–19; 24:20–22; Ezek 3:22–27; 8:1–4; 11:5–12; 13:3; Mic 3:5–8; Mk 12:35–37; Jn 20:19–23; Acts 1:1–9; 2:1–4; 9:17–19a; 1 Pet 1:10–11; 2 Pet 1:20–21.

**Lines 60–61** 2 Kings 22:8–13; 23:1–3; Ps 119:1–16; Zech 7:11–12; Mt 5:17; Mk 13:9–11; Lk 24:13–27, 44; Jn 5:30–47; 16:13; Acts 2:14–36; 4:13–20; 8:4–8; 9:17–22; 10:34–44; 13:4–5; 17:1–4; Rom 15:17–21; Eph 2:19–3:6; 2 Tim 1:11–14; 3:14–17; Heb 1:1–4; 3:7–11; 1 Pet 1:12; 2 Pet 1:16–19; 3:1–2; Rev 3:22.

**Confessions** SC, XIX, XX; HC, qq 19–21; SHC, I, II; WCF, I, XXXIV, 2; WSC, qq 2, 3; WLC, qq 2–6, 108; BD, I, II, 1; C67, IC2, IIB1.

### **62–64 Scripture**

**Line 62** Mk 1:1–12; 6:30–52; Jn 1:19–34; 3:5; 7:37–39; Acts 2:38–42; 8:26–39; 9:10–19; 10:44–11:18; Rom 6:1–4; 1 Cor 12:12–13; Gal 3:27–28; Eph 1:13–14; Col 2:8–15; Tit 3:3–7; 1 Jn 5:6–8.

**Line 63** *Ps 116*:12–14 (13); Mt 26:17–29; Mk 14:22–25; Lk 22:14–20; 24:13–35; *Jn 6*:22–59 (35, 48); Acts 2:41–42; 1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:17–34; Heb 9:11–28.

**Line 64** Gen 1:26–27; Ex 15:1–21; Judg 4:4–10; 2 Kings 22:8–20; Joel 2:28–32; Lk 1:46–55; 2:25–38; 8:1–3; 10:38–42; Jn 4:7–42; 20; Acts 1:12–2:47; 13:1–4; 16:1–15; 18:24–28; Rom 16:1–16; 1 Cor 12:4–7; 2 Cor 4–5; Gal 3:27–29; Eph 4:7–16; Phil 4:1–3; 1 Pet 2:9–10.

**Confessions** SC, XVIII, XXI–XXIII; HC, qq 65–85; SHC, XVIII–XXVIII; WCF, XXVI–XXXI; WSC, qq 88–98; WLC, qq 157, 158, 164–177; BD, II, 1, 3–6; C67, IIA1–2, IIB.

### **65–71 Scripture**

**Lines 65–66** Gen 15:1; Ps 23:1–4; 27:1–6; 46:1–3; Is 41:8–10; Hag 2:4–5; Acts 4:13–31; Phil 1:19–20; 2 Cor 1:18–22.

**Line 67** Gen 18:16–33; 2 Sam 7:18–29; Dan 6; Mt 6:5–15; Mk 14:32–42; Lk 18:1–8; Jn 17; Rom 12:12; Eph 6:18–20; Col 1:3–14; 4:2; *1 Thess 5*:16–18 (17); Jas 5:13–18; Jude 20–21.

**Line 68** Is 60:1–3; Mt 28:19–20; Lk 24:45–47; Acts 1:8; 9:27–29; 23:11; Rom 1:1–6; 1 Thess 2:1–8; 2 Tim 1:8–14; 4:1–2.

**Line 69** Ex 20:2–6; 1 Kings 18:21–39; Ps 115:1–11; Is 31:1–3; 44:6–20; Jer 7:1–20; Zech 4:6; Mt 6:24; Lk 18:18–23; Acts 19:21–41; 1 Cor 8:1–6; Phil 3:18–19; Col 3:5, 1 Jn 5:20–21.

**Line 70** Gen 41:1–45; Ruth 1–4; 1 Kings 12:1–20; Jer 36; Zeph 3:1–2; Mt 15:21–28; Mk 5:15–20; 9:38–41; 16:9–11; Lk 7:36–50; 10:30–35; Jn 4:27–30, 39; 20:11–18; Acts 24; 1 Cor 14:33b–35; 1 Tim 2:11–12.

**Line 71** Lev 25:25–55; Deut 15:1–11; Ps 34:14; 72:1–4, 12–14; Is 58; Amos 5:11–24; Mic 6:6–8; Mt 5:9; 25:31–46; Rom 14:17–19; Gal 5:13–26; Heb 12:14; 13:1–3, 20–21; Jas 1:22–2:26.

**Confessions** SC, XIII, XIV, XXIV; HC, qq 86–129; SHC, IV, XVII, XXIII, XXX; WCF, IX, XII, XIX–XXIII, XXV, XXXIV, 3, XXXV; WSC, qq 35, 36, 98–107; WLC, qq 75, 76, 91–148; BD, II; C67, IB, IIA1, 3, 4, IIB2.

## 72–76 Scripture

**Lines 72–74** Lev 19:1–4; Neh 7:73b–8:12; Ps 68:32–35; 96; 100; Mt 13:44; Lk 9:23; 24:44–53; Jn 15:10–11; Acts 1:8; 13:52; Rom 7:4–6; 12:1–3, 9–21; 15:13; 1 Cor 3:16–17; 13; 2 Cor 1:12; Eph 1:3–2:21; 1 Thess 1:4–8; 5:16–18; 1 Pet 1:13–16.

**Lines 75–76** Is 65:17; 66:22–23; Mt 24:42–44; 25:1–13; Mk 13:32–37; Lk 14:15–24; 1 Cor 15:51–58; 16:21–24; 2 Pet 3; Rev 21:1–22:5; 22:20.

**Confessions** HC, qq 31, 32, 86 and all of Part III; SHC, XIV, XVI, XXIX; WCF, VII, 5, XIII–XVI, XIX, XXI–XXIV, XXXIV; WSC, qq 39–82; WLC, qq 56, 175; BD, II, 2; C67, IB, IC1, IIA, III.

## Application

1. Line 54 in The Brief Statement reads "*The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith*": look up the Bible passages noted above; what does this line mean to you?
2. Line 67: pray without ceasing – how can we do this?
3. Does this poem help you to contemplate the mysteries of the faith? If so, how?

*You Are There*  
By Erica Jong

You are there.  
You have always been  
there.  
Even when you thought  
you were climbing  
you had already arrived.  
Even when you were  
breathing hard,  
you were at rest.  
Even then it was clear  
you were there.

Not in our nature  
to know what  
is journey and what  
arrival.  
Even if we knew  
we would not admit.  
Even if we lived  
we would think  
we were just  
germinating.

To live is to be  
uncertain.  
Certainty comes  
at the end.

4. Pray this prayer, "*Lord teach me to pray. Amen.*"

### **Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism**

The Reformation was not a singular movement. Soon after Luther posted his ninety-five theses, reform movements sprang up throughout Europe. As Lutheran thought moved down the Neckar River, Reformed thought traveled up the Rhine from Switzerland. They met at Heidelberg, seat of the oldest university in Germany and capital of the province known as the Palatinate. Tension between Lutherans and Reformed Christians was intense. Because the Reformed did not believe in the real, bodily presence of Christ in bread and wine, Lutherans believed that they were desecrating the Lord's Supper.

Acting to end the controversy, Frederick the Elector, ruler of the Palatinate, asked two young men of Heidelberg—Zacharias Ursinus, professor of theology, and Kaspar Olevianus, preacher to the city—to prepare a catechism acceptable to both sides. They revised an earlier catechism that Ursinus had written, using its outline and some ninety of its questions and answers. Completed in 1562, the Heidelberg Catechism was published in January of the following year.

The Heidelberg Catechism opens with two questions concerning our comfort in life and death. The knowledge that our only comfort is Jesus Christ frames the remainder of the catechism. Each of its three parts corresponds to a line of Romans 7:24–25 (NRSV), where Paul cries: “Wretched man that I am; Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord;” Thus, questions 3–11 deal with our sin and guilt, questions 12–85 with the way in which God in Jesus Christ frees us, and questions 86–129 with the manner in which we express gratitude to God for redemption.

Each question of the catechism is personal, addressed to “you.” Each answer draws as much as possible on biblical language. The catechism’s tone is irenic, showing nothing of the controversy that called it forth. Its theology is both catholic, universal in appeal, and evangelical, setting forth the gospel of Jesus Christ. Providing a basis for peaceful coexistence between Lutheran and Reformed Christians, the catechism denied that the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ but affirmed that “by this visible sign and pledge . . . we come to share in his true body and blood through the working of the Holy Spirit . . .” (paragraph 4.079).

The influence of the Heidelberg Catechism in the church’s preaching and teaching continues to be felt in Germany, Austria, Holland, Hungary, parts of Eastern Europe, Scotland, Canada, and the United States.

### **Concerning the Holy Spirit – belief and work**

#### **Q. 53. What do you believe concerning “the Holy Spirit”?**

A. First, that, with the Father and the Son, he is equally eternal God; second, that God’s Spirit is also given to me, preparing me through a true faith to share in Christ and all his benefits, that he comforts me and will abide with me forever.

**Q. 54. What do you believe concerning “the Holy Catholic Church”?**

A. I believe that, from the beginning to the end of the world, and from among the whole human race, the Son of God, by his Spirit and his Word, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself, in the unity of the true faith, a congregation chosen for eternal life. Moreover, I believe that I am and forever will remain a living member of it.

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See footnotes for specific references