



The Work of the Holy Spirit as a counselor and a guide to live  
a Christian life

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**Opphavsrettigheter**

Forfatteren har opphavsrettighetene til oppgaven.  
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## **Summary/abstract**

How to be sure that we keep our faith in Christ, and how do we know the will of God? The Holy Spirit will lead Christians to faith and will preserve their faith in Christ. Based on Martin Luther's writings, this project is about how the Holy Spirit guides Christians to live according to God's will.

**Key Words: Holy Spirit, Christian's life, Martin Luther, Righteousness, Freedom, Sanctification.**

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Sylviane Jacques Denis

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# 1 Project description

## 1.1 Aim of thesis

Lutherans believe in the trinity: Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. In this thesis, I am going to write about the work of the Holy Spirit based on pneumatology in Martin Luther's writings. We can distinguish between communal work of the Holy Spirit in the church, spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit and work of the Spirit in an individual Christian's life. In my research, I will focus on the individual Christian's life aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit.

## 1.2 Motivation and research question

Our knowledge is limited, even when we learn about life and study the Word of God. It is therefore essential to have the Holy Spirit to help us understand the real meaning of the Word of God and to believe in God that is revealed in Scripture as it is written in 1Cor. 12:3b: "and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit guides us also in our daily life to know what we have to do as written in Matthew 10:19 "But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time, you will be given what to say,"<sup>2</sup> My motivation in choosing this thesis is to learn more about what the Scripture says about the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our everyday life in every situation.

My question is how can Christians be sure that the Holy Spirit communicate with them and guide them to live a holy life, and what does Scripture say about that? Being a sinner and weighed by accusations of the law, it can be difficult to be sure of one's salvation, and to believe that one has the guidance of the Spirit of God.

Martin Luther is teaching about the Holy Spirit in his writings, and I will base my research on them, to know more about the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual believer's life. I want also to understand what Scripture says about how the Holy Spirit guides believers to live a Christian life, according to God's will. For it is important for a Christian to follow God's will.

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<sup>1</sup> *New International Version Student Bible*, Notes by Philip Yancey and Tim Stafford, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 1319.

<sup>2</sup> *NIV STUDENT BIBLE*, 1090.

### 1.3 Sources and method

I am going to write this thesis as a Luther study. I will write about Luther's teaching on pneumatology and will emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit as a counselor in an individual believer's life. I choose to base my research on Martin Luther's writings because I am a Lutheran and Lutheranism identifies with the theology of Martin Luther which is based on the truths of God's Word, summarized in *The book of Concord* (1580). Martin Luther is a German monk in the 16<sup>th</sup> century who has launched the Protestant reformation.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, I chose his writings because of his understanding and clear presentation of the certainty of justification by faith and the assurance of salvation that Christians have in Christ. He exposes the difference between Gospel and law and explains in his writings the meaning of Romans 8:1 "(...) there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Besides he puts into words the struggles conscience may face when realizing one's shortcomings in succeeding to obey God and exposes ways to deal with that from the Scripture summarized in this sentence: "Christ relieves the conscience of the law,"<sup>4</sup> and he clearly states the freedom of conscience in faith.<sup>5</sup>

In this thesis, I will explore the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding Christians to live a life that pleases God. Martin Luther does not always explicitly state the work of the Holy Spirit in his writings, but his theology is based on faith alone; and he explicitly states in his explication of the third article of creed and *Sermons of the gospel of St. John* that it is the Holy Spirit who works and preserves faith in believers. One can understand from his writings that faith in Christ alone justifies a sinner, and without faith, we cannot have Christ, which implies that justification and salvation are connected with the work of the Holy Spirit. He also conveys that the Holy Spirit guides Christians daily towards Christ.

My primary sources will be materials from the work of Martin Luther such as :

Luther, Martin. *A commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids:

Zondervan, 1939. Translated by Theodore Graebner.

Luther, Martin. *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 1-4 in Luther's Works*, vol. 22.

Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and translated by Martin H. Bertram. St. Louis, Missouri:

Concordia Publishing House, 1957.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://snl.no/Martin\\_Luther](https://snl.no/Martin_Luther) downloaded 12.05.2022.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1939), translated by Theodore Graebner, 81.

<sup>5</sup> Luther, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 104.



Luther, Martin. *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 14-16 in Luther's Works*, vol. 24.

Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1961.

Luther, Martin. "A treatise on Christian Liberty." Pages 225-254 in *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 2. Albany: The Ages Digital Library Collection, 1997. Translated and edited by W. A. Lambert.

Mæland, Jens Olav (RED.). *Konkordieboken: Den evangelisk-lutherske kirkes bekjennelsesskrifter*. 3. opplag. Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 2006.

Moreover, I will use as second literatures other scholarly literatures and some extra commentaries, discussing the work of the Holy Spirit as a counselor and guide to lead people to Christ and guide them to live a Christian life:

Elwell, Walter A. (ed.). *Evangelical dictionary of theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000.

Koehler, Edward W.A. *A summary of Christian doctrine: A popular presentation of the teachings of the Bible*, 2. revised edition. St. Louis: CPH, 1952.

Kärkäinen, Veli-Matti. *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in ecumenical, international, and contextual perspective*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002.

Luther, Martin. *Lectures on Romans in Luther's Works*, vol. 25. Edited by Hilton C. Oswald. Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1972.

Lull, Timothy F. and William Russell R. (ed.). *Martin Luther's basic theological writings*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012.

Luther, Martin. "Commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7", in *Luther's Work*, vol. 28. Edited by Hilton C. Oswald & translated by Jaroslav Pelikan. Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1973.

Mueller, John Theodore. *Christian Dogmatics: A handbook of doctrinal theology for Pastors, teachers, and laymen*. St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1934.

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. *Spirituality of the Cross: The way of the first evangelicals*. Revised edition. St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 2010.

Zahl, Simeon. *The Holy Spirit and Christian experience*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020.

For Bible verses, I will use the *New International Version*. Both online on <https://www.biblegateway.com>, and a paper version: *New International Version Student Bible*. Notes by Philip Yancey and Tim Stafford. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011.

Besides this introduction, I will have three other chapters:

*Chapter 2:* Canonical pneumatology and chronological development of Martin Luther's theology. Here, I will first summarize the main understanding of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testament and after that, I will chronologically summarize Martin Luther's pneumatology of the chosen writings.

*Chapter 3:* The work of the Holy Spirit in justification and our salvation. This chapter focuses mainly about the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to Christ and the means to receive the Holy Spirit.

*Chapter 4:* The work of the Holy Spirit in Sanctification and Discipleship (The Holy Spirit's work as a counselor to live a Christian life: Live by faith in Christ, walk in the Spirit and rest daily in God's grace). This chapter is mainly about the guidance the Holy Spirit gives Christians to live according to God's will.

## 2 Canonical pneumatology and chronological development of Martin Luther's pneumatology

### 2.1 Canonical understanding of the Holy Spirit

#### 2.1.1 Etymology of the Holy Spirit

The term spirit is originated from the Hebrew word “rûah” and appears 378 times in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, referring to “breath,” “wind,” “soul” or “Spirit”.<sup>6</sup> It is also derived from the Greek word “to pneuma” which signifies “breath,” “wind,” “spirit,” or “Spirit” as “rûah” in Hebrew.<sup>7</sup>

On the one hand, “rûah yhw̄h”, “the Spirit of God/Lord” is an expression of God's power; different extension of himself that carries out God's activity as we can see in Judges 14:6 where the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and gave him power to tear apart a lion that came roaring toward him or in 1 Sam. 11:6 where the Spirit of God came powerfully upon king Saul.<sup>8</sup> Expression like “the hand of God” in Psalm 19:1, “Word of God” in Psalm 147:18 or “Wisdom of God” in Exodus 28:3 are examples of different extensions of God that carry out his deeds narrated in the Scripture.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the phrase “Holy Spirit” is used only in two contexts in the Old Testament; namely in Psalm 51:11 and Isaiah 63:10-11, 14. In both contexts, the phrase Holy Spirit is used to refer to God's Spirit or God's Holy Spirit which implies that the referent is God Himself and not the Holy Spirit as a person.<sup>10</sup>

#### 2.1.2 Understanding of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

God's Spirit in the Old Testament empowered sporadically and for a brief time specific people to perform certain tasks on the behalf of God. Specific people like the prophets, judges and some leaders were filled with God's Spirit in order to carry out God's deeds, to reveal his Word and will or other special services. For example, the main task of the judges is to lead the people in ancient Israel to maintain a good relationship with Yahweh and to lead or help their tribes in defeating their enemies and oppressors like Gideon in Judges 6:34, Jephthah in

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<sup>6</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, & Charles A. Briggs, *BDB complete: A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Dania beach, Florida USA: Scribe), 924.

<sup>7</sup> Fredrick William Danker (ed.), *BDAG: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 833.

<sup>8</sup> Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical dictionary of theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 521; *NIV Student Bible*, 317 and 287.

<sup>9</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical dictionary of theology*, 521.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 521.

Judges 11: 29 and Samson in Judges 14: 19 to mention some, where the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, guiding and empowering them in overcoming their enemies. Joshua was empowered by God's Spirit with leadership skills and wisdom ( Num. 27:18 ; Deut. 34:9) and David was empowered by the Spirit of the Lord to fulfill the task of kingship ( 1 Sam. 16:13).<sup>11</sup>

One of the primary functions of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament is prophecy or Spirit of prophecy, meaning that it is the Spirit of God who inspires the prophets to prophesy.<sup>12</sup> To prophesy is to predict or foretell a future event or to utter prediction, and in the Scripture, prophecy is related to God's revelation.<sup>13</sup> Examples of the Holy Spirit revealing God's Word to prophets in the Old Testament can be seen in Num. 24:2, Ezek. 11:5 and Zech. 7:12 to mention just some, where the Spirit of God came upon the prophets to empower them to convey God's message and talk to people on God's behalf.<sup>14</sup> And the prophets are sometimes called "men of God" (1Sam. 2:27) or "men of the Spirit" (Hosea 9:7).<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned above, the Spirit's of God was poured only on certain people for special service in the Old Testament, but the prophets like Joel (Joel 2:28ff) , Ezekiel ( Eze. 36:14ff) and Isaiah (Isa. 11:2ff) anticipate a time where the Holy Spirit of God will be poured out on all people and not only on special chosen ones so that they too will become holy.<sup>16</sup> Besides, prophets of the Old Testament anticipate a time where the Holy Spirit will anoint Servant-Messiah and will rest upon him ( Isa. 11:2-3, 43:1) ; the coming of this Servant-Messiah and the pouring out of God's Spirit on all people will inaugurate the time of salvation or the time of the Lord's favor as prophesied in Isaiah 61:1-2, and prophet Jeremiah also prophesied that in the time of the new covenant, the law of God will be written in people's heart ( Jer. 31:31-34).

### ***2.1.3 Understanding of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament***

In the Old Testament, prophet Isaiah anticipates a time where God will anoint a Servant-Messiah; the anointing of this Servant-Messiah and the coming of the Holy Spirit will

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<sup>11</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), 650.

<sup>12</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical dictionary of theology*, 521.

<sup>13</sup> <https://snl.no/profetere> downloaded 27.03.2022.

<sup>14</sup> Grudem, *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine*, 654.

<sup>15</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical dictionary of theology*, 521.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 521.

mark the Lord's year or the coming of the kingdom of God. First, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus at his baptism where he received the confirmation of his sonship and anointment for his messianic mission; the Holy Spirit descended like a dove on him and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love: with him I am well pleased." (Matt. 3: 16-17) Mark 1.11 and Luke 3:22 have the same reference. Then the Holy Spirit empowers Jesus in his ministry. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, he was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted (Luke 4: 1), and after the temptation, he began his ministry "in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). He cast out demons "by the finger of God (Luke 4:36, 11:20), knowing that "the finger of God" is another way to express the power of God and he also healed all who came or were brought to him (Luke 4: 40-41) to mention just some. Moreover, Jesus declared in the synagogue of Nazareth after reading a scroll of Isaiah, that the prophesy of Isaiah of the coming of the year of the Lord's favor is fulfilled in him ( Isaiah 61: 1-2; Luke 4: 16-20) and the year of the Lord's favor or the coming of the kingdom of God, is marked by the coming of the Holy Spirit ( Matt 12:28).<sup>17</sup>

The empowering work of the Holy Spirit is seen in Jesus' life and his ministry. He drove out demons by the Spirit of God implying that the kingdom of God has come (Matthew 12:28), he was anointed by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel and the gospel is full of accountings of him, healing people from their sickness "The blind receives sight, the lame walks, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor." (John 11: 4-6)<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the Holy Spirit also acts and speaks through the disciples. In Mark 13:11 and Matthew 10:20, Jesus instructs the disciples not to worry for the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, will speak through the disciples when they are arrested and brought into trial. Besides, Jesus declares also that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for it (Luke 11:13). Besides the twelve disciples, he sent seventy two more disciples to do mission work among people and empowered by the Holy Spirit they went out to proclaim the gospel.

As previously mentioned, the Old Testament prophets have prophesied both the coming of the Messiah and the coming of the Holy Spirit which will mark the coming of the kingdom of God and Jesus has declared the fulfillment of that prophesy in him. That implies that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated and some of the visible signs of it is that God has confirmed that Jesus was the Son of God, and Jesus and the disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, preach the gospel and drive out demons. In John 14:15-31, Jesus promised that

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>18</sup> *NEW STUDENT BIBLE*, 1092.

when he ascends to the Father, he will ask God Father to send us in his name the Holy Spirit, another advocate to help us, to teach us all things and be with us forever. In the Pentecost, this promise has been fulfilled. In Acts 2, the author makes accounts of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon believers and the apostles that gathered together in Jerusalem. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and were able to speak in other tongues. They were Galileans speaking, but the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in other languages they have not previously learnt, which amazed the “ God fearing Jews”, from different nations, who were gathered there because they could all hear their native languages being spoken. The apostle Peter addressed the crowd and reminded them of the prophesy of prophet Joel in the Old Testament about the day where God will pour out His Spirit on all people (Joel 2: 28-32). Then, Peter preached the gospel of Jesus Christ and declared that to get the “gift of the Holy Spirit”, they ought to “repent and be baptized (...) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.” (Act 2:38).

It is obvious from those events that the prophecies of Prophet Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel and the promise of Jesus Christ of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to whoever asks for it have been fulfilled and the Holy Spirit empowered the work of the disciples in various ways. The Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to be Jesus’ witnesses in Jerusalem and all around the world (Act 1:8), he transported a person from one place to another as accounted in Act 8:39-40 where Philip was suddenly taken from one place and appeared another place, and another example in Revelation 21:10 where the Holy Spirit carried the author away to a mountain. Though the act of direct transport of the Holy Spirit is not so common in the Scripture, we can account for some examples of such events in the Old Testament too, such as mentioned about Elijah in 1 kings 18:12 and 2 kings 2:16, and about Ezekiel on some occasions (Ezekiel 11:1 ; 37:1 ; 43:5). The New Testament testifies several direct guidance from The Holy Spirit; For example, the Holy Spirit guided Philip to go up and stay near the chariot driving the Ethiopian eunuch in Act 8:26-40, and the Holy Spirit told Peter to boldly go with three men to Cornelius household (Act 10:9-20 ; 11:12).

The apostle Paul portrays more works of the Holy Spirit in his letters. First, we receive the Holy Spirit by believing the gospel and not by the work of the law (Galatian 3:2). The Holy Spirit himself attests to our Spirit that we are children of God ( Rom 8:16). Besides the Holy Spirit reveals his desires to us so that we can live according to those desires and not the desires of the flesh which will lead us away from the kingdom of God (Rom 8:4-16 ; Gal 5:16-25). In fact, Paul urges Christians to walk according to the Spirit; to receive the Spirit like Christ who was willing to be shaped by the Holy Spirit.

## 2.2 Chronological presentation of Martin Luther's pneumatology

### 2.2.1 Luther's pneumatology in "The freedom of a Christian" from 1520

In "A treatise on the Christian liberty" or "The freedom of a Christian" from 1520, Martin Luther exposes the relations between the twofold nature of a man, and the way to understand relationship between good works and faith, relating to those twofold nature which the apostle Paul, in the letter to the Ephesians 4:22-24, refers to as the "old self" which is the flesh or the bodily nature of a person and the "new self" or "inner man" (Eph. 3:16) which is spiritual nature of a man; those two natures contradict each other for what the spirit or the new man desires differs from the desire of the old self or the flesh (Gal. 5:17; 2 Cor. 4:16).<sup>19</sup> He highlights also how one become righteous before God apart from any meritorious work of any kind, for only faith in the Gospel of Christ is necessary for one's salvation or righteousness before God as summarized in the letter to the Romans.

Luther does not specifically mention the Holy Spirit in this article, but in later writings like the Large Catechism or the sermon of John, just to mention some, he explicitly explicates that it is the Holy Spirit who works faith in us.<sup>20</sup>

To have faith in God means to trust Him and to believe what He says, and it is besides easier to follow the direction of someone that we trust than of another we doubt and judge untrustworthy.<sup>21</sup> Faith is like a wedding ring that unites our spirit with Christ as "a bride is united with her bridegroom."<sup>22</sup> When two persons are united in marriage, they usually share all they have together as a common possessions, both the good and the bad; and with Christ, He takes ours sins and condemnation as His though He is sinless himself (1 John 3:5), and in return His righteousness becomes ours so that whoever has faith in Christ own His righteousness and are therefore justified upright before God (John 3: 16-17).<sup>23</sup> Scriptures make it clear that only faith in Christ makes one righteous, implying and even stating so explicitly that good works or strive to fulfill the law does not justify one before God, so

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Luther, "A treatise on Christian Liberty," in *Works of Martin Luther*, vol2. (Albany: The Ages Digital Library Collection, 1997), 225-254, 225.

<sup>20</sup> Jens Olav Mæland (RED.), *Konkordieboken: Den evangelisk-lutherske kirkes Bekjennelsesskrifter*, 3. Opplag, (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 2006), 347-351; Martin Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 1-4 in Luhter's Works*, vol. 22, Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, and translated by Martin H. Bertram, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), 244-245.

<sup>21</sup> Luther, "A treatise on Christian Liberty," 230-231.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 230-254.

believers are free from the requirements of the law of God since Christ has fulfilled the law and as His bride, we share that fulfilment too; meaning that faith fulfill all the requirements of the law. That is to say that we need faith to gain God's grace and therefore free from the law which Luther entitles the "freedom of a Christian" or "liberty of a Christian".<sup>24</sup>

Now that we have seen that good works do not make one righteous, that does not mean that it is unnecessary; good works are unnecessary for salvation but are necessary to purify the body and to keep it in check and under the control of the Spirit, and also to be a good example for others.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, faith produces love and joy which are also fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5: 22), and love makes us serve our neighbors and do good works by them. In other words, our faith in Christ does not free us from good works as our body is still sinful and need to be kept under check daily, but faith in Christ free us from the false belief of salvation gained through good works, which faith alone can accomplish; after faith, good works are done out of love to obey God and do good.<sup>26</sup>

To say that faith frees us from the requirements of the law for our salvation implies that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of freedom; for without the Spirit working faith in our hearts, we could not please God and would still be bound under the requirements of the law.

### ***2.2.2 Luther's pneumatology in the "Large Catechism of 1529"***

In the Small and Large Catechism, Martin Luther summarized the core of evangelical Lutheran faith. He addressed more or less the same topics in both catechisms, but the Small Catechism was written for Laypeople while the Large Catechism was destined for Clergies and more elaborate in explanation.<sup>27</sup> I will focus on the third article of the Apostle's Creed : "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."<sup>28</sup> The third article treats the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier; To sanctify means "to purify", "to free from sin" or make holy.<sup>29</sup> In the Small Catechism, Luther briefly explains that the Holy Spirit sanctifies by calling people through the Gospel, enlightening them with his gifts and preserving believers

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 238-245.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 244-246.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>27</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 277.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.cuaa.edu/academics/services/faculty-staff-resources/celt/assets/ThreeEcumenicalCreeds.pdf> downloaded 02.04.22

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sanctify> downloaded 02.04.22



in union with Jesus Christ in true faith.<sup>30</sup> Besides, he continues to forgive sins daily and will grant eternal life to whoever believes in Jesus Christ.<sup>31</sup> The explanation in the Large Catechism is more elaborate as previously mentioned and I will present its main ideas concerning the third article of the Creed. The Holy Spirit is the One who sanctifies or makes us holy and does so through his holy church, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and eternal life.<sup>32</sup> First, the Holy Spirit leads us into his holy church or holy assembly, and it is important to emphasize that church here does not refer to a particular consecrated building that we usually refer to as church or assembly house. It is rather about a community of all people that sincerely believe in Jesus Christ as savior, called together by the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup> The Holy Spirit leads one into this fellowship of holy assembly so that one can hear the Word of God preached, and by this revelation, the Holy Spirit illuminates and ignites one's hearts so that the hearer can understand and accept the gospel.<sup>34</sup> For no one can come to believe in Christ by his own reason or strength, only by the power of the Holy Spirit as Luther stated in the Small Catechism.<sup>35</sup> That is to say that the Holy Spirit offers and bestows faith; He brings us to Christ, through the Gospel, which is summarized in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup> Luther points out to what the apostle Paul said in Roman 10: 14 that without the preached word, no one can know or believe in Jesus Christ and therefore will not receive the gift of salvation that Christ has won for us by his sufferings, death and resurrection.<sup>37</sup> Christ died on the cross for our sins (John 3:17) and was raised from the dead so that anyone who believes in him will not perish due to punishment of sins, but inherits eternal life (John 3:16 ; 1Cor 15:14).

Furthermore, Luther explains that the Holy Spirit also effects sanctification on believers through forgiveness of sins which is granted through the sacraments, absolution and all the comforting words of the Gospel.<sup>38</sup> We receive forgiveness of sins, also God's grace, through the salvific work of Christ which is bestowed on us through the work of the Holy Spirit; also God has given us his Son whom reveals us God's love and grace through his ministries and salvific work, and we know about Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit

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<sup>30</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 284.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 347-351.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

(matt 16:16-20).<sup>39</sup> Here Luther gives us an understanding of the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity in the economy of salvation and sanctification.

The act of sanctification is not a once for all action and has to continue daily because human-beings are sinners and therefore never without sin which implies that we need daily forgiveness of sin through the Word and sacraments so that our consciences will not grow weary.<sup>40</sup> Sanctification has begun and can grow daily but it will only be fulfilled in the day of resurrection of the body when sin will be no more.<sup>41</sup> It is important to remember that the ten commandments teach us what we ought do and they are God's laws written in all humankind's hearts (Rom. 2:15) but the ten commandments alone cannot make a Christian as it is impossible for sinners to please God, we cannot meet the requirements of God's law no matter how hard we try.<sup>42</sup> God is holy and God's people have to be holy (Lev. 11:44), and the Holy Spirit is the only One who sanctifies. The Holy Spirit has sanctified us in leading us into his holy community to hear the Word of God so that we may have faith in Jesus Christ and be saved. Besides, the Holy Spirit continues to sanctify believers daily through forgiveness of sins that we receive through the holy sacraments, absolution and the Gospel so that our faith may persevere and grow. Our holiness has begun and may grow daily but it will not be fully accomplished until the day of resurrection because as long as we live, our human nature will always lead us to sin.

### ***2.2.3 Luther's pneumatology in his commentary of St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians from 1535***

In his commentary of St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians, Dr. Martin Luther exposed the fact that Christians are dead to the law, meaning that we are free from the law when we have faith in Jesus Christ because law points out to sin, and Christ has conquered sin and death and by dying on the cross while sinless, he has conquered the law.<sup>43</sup>

Only our flesh is under the law, but our conscience is under the grace of God for we are justified and righteous before God by faith which unites us to Christ.<sup>44</sup> Christians are still human-beings and therefore still lives in the flesh, but do not live after the flesh, Christ enters

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 349-350.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 347-351.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 351.

<sup>43</sup> Luther, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 40-41.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 42.

the heart of believers through faith and lives there with the Holy Spirit which does all things to help true believers protest and resist the desire of the flesh ( Gal. 2: 19-21).<sup>45</sup>

To hear the Gospel is the first step of being a Christian because at the preaching of faith, we are granted forgiveness of sins, Christ and the Holy Spirit in spite of our sinfulness.<sup>46</sup> It is by believing the preached Gospel that we receive the Holy Spirit, meaning that it is God's gift and does not depend on our doings or work of the law, and the reception of Holy Spirit accounted in Act 10:44 or other accounts in Act prove such statement where the Holy Spirit came on people hearing the preached Gospel.<sup>47</sup>

Receiving the Spirit will not make us perfect and without sin, but it will make us holy because our sins are pardoned when we believe in Jesus Christ; Our sins will become his and we get his righteousness.<sup>48</sup> In other words, we transfer our sinfulness and everything that goes with it and in exchange, we receive Christ's merits and blessings (2Cor. 5:21).<sup>49</sup> That is to say that it is faith alone that will make us righteous or just before God (Gal 3:14), for it is through faith that we receive the promise of the Spirit and its blessings such as sanctification, freedom from law, sin and death, also forgiveness of sins (Gal. 3:14c, 22).<sup>50</sup> Freedom from law do not permit us to do whatever we like though, we still need to resist the flesh and its leadership, and that is why Christians are instructed to love their neighbors, and that way be instructed about real good works because our sinful nature will refrain us from doing them (Gal 5:17).<sup>51</sup> The only way to resist temptation is to follow the leadership of the Spirit and not of our flesh (Gal 5:18), for someone led by the Spirit will seek the glory of God rather than his own.<sup>52</sup>

It is important to mention that in the early church, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was more visible (Matt. 3:16 ; Act 2:3) in order to establish the church, but once established, visible outpouring is no longer common; the Spirit is now mostly sent into the hearts of believers (Gal. 4:6) inspiring us with new judgement and desires and persuading us that our sins are forgiven (Rom 6:14).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 49-51.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 65-76.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 115-119.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 84.

## 2.2.4 *Luther's pneumatology in the "sermons on John" from 1537*

In his sermons on the gospel of St. John, Martin Luther points out that the main message in the entire gospel of St. John, is to get one to seek Christ and rely only on Him for salvation, and also to convince one to refrain oneself to try to attain eternal life in other decrees or the law of God like the ten commandments and good works.<sup>54</sup> Anyone who tries to work his righteousness through own good works or merits is damned, for the only way to God is through Jesus as Jesus stated in John 14:6. Furthermore, to enter the kingdom of God, one has to be born again by water and the Holy Spirit, also be baptized (John 3:5); for baptism is an act of mercy by God to save us through the blood of Christ which is the "washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit".<sup>55</sup> Also, only those who believe in Christ, and be baptized will enter the kingdom of God and attain eternal life (Mark 16:16); that also means that only faith in Christ saves, implying that to be a Christian, one must become a totally different person by being born again through water and the Holy Spirit and become holy.<sup>56</sup> Luther differentiates between two different kind of holiness, which are a work-righteous holiness that only has value in the world, and a God-given holiness which one acquires through Baptism and the proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>57</sup> The first, work-righteous holiness, counts to nothing before God while faith in Christ will assure us God's grace and eternal life.

But one important thing to remember is that, though one becomes holy through those means of grace, the old self or our flesh is not physically dead yet; meaning that we are still sinners in our flesh and blood. In other words, a believer is a saint and still a sinner at the same time.

Whoever believes that Christ was born, died for ours sins and was raised again from the dead, is then a born again, a whole new person. The Holy Spirit centers its proclamation on this and inscribes this gospel in our heart so that we believe.<sup>58</sup> Luther makes a case about the difficulty of grasping such idea of rebirth; for reason cannot grasp the reality of baptism in which we are born again of the Spirit for it is not a physical matter but a spiritual one, and the reason can only deal with physical matter.<sup>59</sup> Luther exposes that if we believe that the wind exists though we can neither touch it nor see it, how it is that we doubt what God says, only

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<sup>54</sup> Martin Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 1-4 in Luther's Works*, vol. 22, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, and translated by Martin H. Bertram, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), 487-488.

<sup>55</sup> *NIV Student bible*, 1395; Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 14-16 in Luther's Works*, vol. 24, edited by Pelikan, Jaroslav, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 279.

<sup>56</sup> Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 1-4*, 168-169.

<sup>57</sup> Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 14-16*, 108.

<sup>58</sup> Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 1-4*, 286.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 285-305.

because we cannot grasp what he says with our senses.<sup>60</sup> To be a Christian, you have to believe in Christ, meaning that a Christian life is lived by faith and therefore a Christian's life is not guided by senses, but rather by Christ's words which the Holy Spirit inscribes in our heart as previously mentioned.

It is stated in John 3:34 "(...) God gives the Spirit without limit"<sup>61</sup> and it is mentioned in John 3: 35 and Col. 2:3, 9 that Christ has the Spirit without limit, also Christ possesses the Spirit entirely while believers are apportioned the Spirit partially, in different gifts; some are imparted with the gift of prophecy, healing or miraculous powers, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, discern different spirits or guiding, just to mention some (1Cor. 12:4-11, 28-29; Eph. 4:11).<sup>62</sup> But through Christ, we are granted unlimited grace and complete remission of sins; also faith in Jesus is the only way to merit God's grace and eternal life (John 14:6).<sup>63</sup> Here the author of the gospel of John still points out that good works and other attempt to please God without faith in Jesus mounts to nothing before God, and whoever preaches salvation based on work or merit of man and not on the merit of Christ, does not have the Holy Spirit either; for the Holy Spirit is "a Spirit of Truth" (John 16:13) and will stay true to the gospel of Christ which is salvation through faith alone.<sup>64</sup> The Holy Spirit bears witness of Christ to us and impress the Word of God in our hearts; meaning that the Spirit will guide us into all truth and teach us all things about Christ and His words (John 14:26 ; 16:13).<sup>65</sup> And concerning the order of good works and faith, it is clearly stated in the Scripture that one has to believe in Christ to be granted forgiveness of sins, and good works follow faith as God commands it but not for the remission of sins but out of love for God; for Jesus said that anyone who loves Him keeps His words (John 14:26). And as His friends, He commands us to love one another as a way to prove our faith in Him.<sup>66</sup>

As previously mentioned, the Holy Spirit preaches Christ in our hearts and He will persuade us about the truth about Christ ( John 15:26); implying also that the Holy Spirit will counteract all lies and false doctrine and the Holy Spirit will therefore remind us of the promise of forgiveness of sins when Evil accuses us of our sins and shortcomings.<sup>67</sup> Evil can use the law of God to point out our sins and terrify us with penalty of sins but God has given

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> *NIV Student bible*, 1201.

<sup>62</sup> Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 1-4*, 486-488.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 500-501; Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 14-16*, 79.

<sup>64</sup> Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 14-16*, 117-291.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 248-252.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 290-291.

us Jesus for the remission of sins so that whoever believes in Him have his/her sins forgiven, and the Holy Spirit reminds us of this reality when our conscience is terrified; for the Spirit makes our faith sure, by removing all doubts, strengthening our hearts and enabling us to discern and judge all other spirits.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 291.

### **3 The work of the Holy Spirit in justification and our salvation**

#### **3.1 The Holy Spirit is the One that brings Christ to us and brings us to Christ**

No one can come to believe in Christ by his own effort and reason, only by the calling of the Holy Spirit, as apostle Paul argues in 1 Cor 12: 3b “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord, ‘except by the Holy Spirit”, and he also adds in Rom. 8:9b that “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.” That means that the Holy Spirit is the One that reveals Jesus’ identity and what Christ represents for us, and in doing so creates faith in our hearts. Those passages also indicate that the Holy Spirit dwells inside all Christians that believe in Christ; that is to say that the Holy Spirit is a seal or a mark of belonging to Christ. To belong to Christ signifies that one shares His merits and attributes, which means that someone who belongs to Christ is therefore righteous before God and saved because one’s sins are forgiven; implying that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in you if your sins are not forgiven. However, it is important to clarify that those who do not believe in Christ do not receive the Holy Spirit, meaning that the Holy Spirit does not dwell in them as He does with a believer. Yet, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, and that includes both believers and unbelievers (John 16:7), and the Holy Spirit is also responsible for the regeneration of unbeliever into a believer as stated in Acts 10:44-45. That is to say that the Holy Spirit is still involved in unbelievers’ life, but not in the same way as with believers; Paul points that difference out in 1 Cor. 6:19 when he refers to believers as “the temples of the Holy Spirit.” In other words, the Spirit of Christ does not dwell in you if your sins are not forgiven. The question anyone may ask is how we can ensure that our sins are really forgiven. To answer that question, we are first going to describe the meaning of the term righteousness of God and what it means to be righteous and justified before God and to be saved. After that, we are going to explore the different means to receive the Holy Spirit.

##### ***3.1.1 The righteousness of God and our salvation***

The term Righteousness of God can both refer to the attribute of God of being faithful in keeping His Word and promises ( Isaiah 25: 1) and the quality of God of being just in all his works and judgment. Genesis 18:25 testifies that God judges equitably and does not judge guilty and righteous alike; as righteous and just as He is, He does not clear guilty but punishes them (Psalm 7: 9-17) and likewise does not abandon the righteous to their scheme if they live under or undergo injustice but deliver them from injustice (Isa. 11:4; Psalm 34:16-22), rescues

them from their enemies and oppressors to restore their rights (1Sam. 12:6-11; Isa. 46:11-13). Those are some examples from the Old Testament portraying how God reveals His righteousness. Said another way, God is righteous when He punishes the wicked, disobedient, or lawbreaker, and He is also righteous when He delivers the righteous and justified; at the same time, God's righteousness points out His faithfulness for always keeping His promises.

God is right when He punishes unrighteous sinners and that could imply that He is not right or just when He lets sinners unpunished for the definition of justice itself requires the judge to give people what they deserve whether it is punishment or rewards. The Scripture makes it clear that the consequence of sin is condemnation or death; in Rom. 6:23, apostle Paul declares that "the wages of sin is death". That is to say that a righteous God is just in his judgment when He condemns sinners as we can read Psalm 51:4, for how He can be just and equitable if He lets sins go unpunished and allows lawbreakers to go free of charge without any payment from their parts for transgressing the Law. That is not how human legal justice work, and consequently, it is logical to assume that a righteous God will punish sinners for their sins.

We need a sort of criterium or framework to pass judgment on something; a lawyer for example studies the law to be able to make a fair judgment in deciding who does right or wrong according to the law.<sup>69</sup> That also suggests that we can judge a case according to the set of law applicable to it, and the framework of the context within which the case takes place. God entered into a covenant pact with Abraham and his descendants and thus will judge or justify His people according to the covenant or the terms set in the covenant.<sup>70</sup> We read in Gen. 15:6 that Abraham believed what God promised him, and on that basis, he was considered righteous before God; implying that faith in God's promise justifies one righteous before God which is referred to as the "Passive righteousness of God" in which we are justified not based on our doings but based on God's promise of forgiveness of sins that we receive by faith.<sup>71</sup> Said another way, God judges all people in equity in his righteousness and the criterion for justification is faith in Christ alone. In the parable of the pharisee and tax collector in Luke 18:9-14, Jesus teaches that the one who acknowledges one's sin before God and trusts in His forgiveness is justified. And the promise of forgiveness of sins is to be trusted because God is righteous and faithful to His Word, which leads us to 1John 1:9 "if we

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<sup>69</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lawyer> downloaded 02.05.2022

<sup>70</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's theology of the cross: Martin Luther's theological breakthrough*, (Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1990), 105; Elwell, *Evangelical dictionary of theology*, 952.

<sup>71</sup> McGrath, *Luther's theology of the cross*, 97.



confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

God’s righteousness refers to God’s faithfulness to His Word, both promises and punishments. God is also just and righteous when He rewards and punishes sinners according to the terms of the covenant He has made with Abraham and extended to all humankind. The term of this covenant is summarized in John 3:16, and grounds justification on the basis of Christ’s atoning death which anyone can receive through faith, meaning that righteousness is a gift from God to justify and declare righteous anyone who will put his/her faith in Christ (Act 13:39; Rom. 3:22; 5:1; 5:15); implying that anyone who wants to be justified apart from faith is not guaranteed justification.

Merriam-Webster defines sin as “a transgression of the law of God”<sup>72</sup>, from which one can imply that if a person manages to keep God’s law, that person will be righteous before God based on the fulfillment of the requirements of the law. We are later going to discuss how impossible it is to rely on our self-righteousness by the work of the law which we can never accomplish, for transgressing one law will be the same as breaking them all (James 2:10). Besides, Jesus emphasizes in the sermon of the mount that even looking at someone with lust, makes one guilty of adultery for one has already sinned in one’s heart which makes it impossible to be justified by the terms of the law. Consequently, the only way to be justified and accounted righteous before God is through faith based on Christ’s merit gained on the cross. It is important to remember what we have previously mentioned, namely that no one can believe in Jesus Christ except through the Holy Spirit; meaning that the Holy Spirit is the One who bestows the merit of Christ on us which we receive through faith. We are now going to find out the different means to receive the Holy Spirit.

### **3.2 Means to receive the Spirit**

We have seen that the Holy Spirit was only poured out on specific people for specific services in the Old Testament, but the prophets like Joel (Joel 2:28ff), Ezekiel (Eze. 36: 14ff), and Isaiah (Isa. 11:2ff) have anticipated a time where the Spirit will be poured out on all people.<sup>73</sup> Preceding this new age, the Holy Spirit will anoint and rest upon a Servant Messiah (Isa. 11:2-3, 43:1) which happens to be Jesus Christ proven by the event at Jesus’ baptism

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<sup>72</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sin> downloaded 02.05.2022

<sup>73</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical dictionary of theology*, 521.

where the Holy Spirit descended like a dove on Him and where God has confirmed, with a voice from heaven, that Jesus was His beloved Son and He was pleased with Him (Matt. 3:16-17). The work of the Holy Spirit was seen in Jesus' life and ministry as previously mentioned and the Holy Spirit also spoke and acted through the disciples. Jesus promised the disciples that after he has ascended to the Father, He will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit in His name which leads to the event of Pentecost narrated in Act 2 where people received the Holy Spirit.

It can be deduced from Martin Luther's writings that we receive the Holy Spirit through the three means of Grace which are the Word of God, Baptism, and the Lord Supper, and we are going to explore each one of them.

### ***3.2.1 Proclamation of the Word of God about Christ***

Words of God can be divided into laws and promises. Only the Word of promises offers forgiveness of sins; for the law of God points you to what you ought to do but does not give you the power to perform them and the law also points out sins, while the Gospel promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life for anyone who believes in the Promise.

In Galatians 3:2, apostle Paul asks a rhetorical question to the Galatians if they have received the Holy Spirit by keeping the law of God or by believing the preached Gospel. When commenting on this passage, Martin Luther exposes that the Galatians should know that they have experienced reception of the Holy Spirit through hearing the Word of faith, also the Gospel; for no one can say that they received the Spirit under the preaching of the law.<sup>74</sup> In Exodus 20:1-21, Moses was sharing the commandments of God, yet there is no record in the Scripture showing that people in the Exodus narratives or Jews in synagogues reading the law, have received the Holy Spirit as compared to the narrative in Acts 10 for example, where people receive the Holy Spirit while hearing and believing what they heard from the Apostle Peter's preaching about Christ and his resurrection which is the Gospel. Besides, it is stated in Jeremiah 31:33 that God will write His law in people's hearts and minds so that everyone will know the will of God and what kinds of principles, He wants everyone to live by, but nowhere in the Scripture, is it stated that sharing and preaching those commandments would give anyone the Holy Spirit. For though, the Holy Spirit uses the law of God to "(...) convict the world of sin," (John 16:8) so that we may repent and receive

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<sup>74</sup> Luther, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 49.

forgiveness, preaching of the law alone does not grant you grace, only faith in the preached Gospel of Christ will give you the Holy Spirit and salvation.

Moses received the law from God hundred years after Abraham was recognized as righteous before God. That alone is a hint pointing out that salvation does not depend on the law; the law makes sin obvious and accuses us of our shortcomings of not meeting the requirements but does not give us the power to perform them. But if the law does not lead to salvation or give us the Holy Spirit, one may wonder if it is of any use. The law is necessary because it makes us aware of our sins and points out our shortcomings, to make any honest person realize that one needs help to fulfill them or be justified another way. Also, the Holy Spirit uses the law to convince us of our sins and points us to Christ where we can seek forgiveness of sins; for apostle Paul is clear in his statements in his letter to the Romans that we cannot be righteous through the work of the law because sinners cannot meet the righteous standard of God since what the flesh desires are contrary to the law of God which puts anyone trying to fulfill the law on difficult, if not impossible position. Besides of not meeting the requirements of the law, self-righteous people appear to not need Christ as they believe in their own power, which suggests that they do not have the Holy Spirit either. What self-righteous people miss is that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

As human beings, as long as we live, the flesh or the “old man” will always fight with a wish or attempt to follow the law of God; in Rom. 7, Paul laments about it, saying that he keeps doing what he knows he should not do and doesn't succeed in doing what he knows he ought to do, and that is to point out that we have no chance to fulfill the law of God no matter how much and how hard we strive to do so. As previously mentioned, to stumble on one law is the same as transgressing them all, implying that there is no little or big transgression, breaking one of them will lead to the same condemnation. And Jesus also has explained that you don't even have to physically sin, like adultery, for example, the simple act of looking at someone with lust will be punishable because in doing so, one has already sinned in one's heart and mind, which leads Paul to announce in Gal. 3:2 that anyone who relies on the law is cursed, but he also announces in Rom. 4:5 that people who trust the One that justifies ungodly will be reckoned as righteous; also, only faith in God justifies. And in the Large Catechism, Luther exposes that it is the Holy Spirit who calls us to faith through the preaching of the Gospel which signifies that faith is a response to the divine Word of forgiveness.

Martin Luther maintains that all scriptures pointed to Christ alone, and as we have argued so far, the Holy Spirit promotes Christ; we can therefore state that the Holy Spirit is bound to the Word of Scripture. Besides, the Scripture is also full of the Holy Spirit; for it is

the function of the Holy Spirit to testify about Christ, and the Scripture bear witness of Christ.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, we have already mentioned that the Old Testament testifies about the Holy Spirit, revealing God's Word to prophets (Num. 24:2; 1Sam. 16:15; Ezek. 11:5; Zech. 7:12; etc.) and inspiring them to prophesy.<sup>76</sup> Some of the main rules of choosing the canon of the New Testament are whether the authors are directly or indirectly in close relationship with Jesus Christ and whether the writings are in accordance with Jesus' words and the Apostles' witnesses about Jesus' life, death and resurrection; we already know from chapter two that the Holy Spirit has empowered Jesus through his life and ministries.<sup>77</sup> Those are to attest that the Scripture is full of the Holy Spirit; implying that what is written or narrated in the Bible is inspired by God's Holy Spirit and passages in 2Sam. 23:2, Matt. 21:42, John 14:26, 2Tim. 3:16 and 2Peter 1:21, just to mention some, also testify that factum.

In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther argues that we cannot bring ourselves to Christ on our own, but God has given us means to receive the Holy Spirit to bring us to Christ, namely, the Word and the sacraments.<sup>78</sup> On that basis, Luther criticized those theologians who believed that one can experience the Holy Spirit prior to hearing the Word of God. He refers to them as "Enthusiasts" or "Spiritualists" in his writings, especially in *Against the heavenly prophets (1525)*; they maintain that we can have immediate access to grace, also inner experience of the Holy Spirit, apart from the appointed means of grace which are the external Word or biblical preaching and sacraments.<sup>79</sup> In other words, they maintain that we can inwardly receive and possess the Holy Spirit without the preached Word, implying that one can come to Christ without or before hearing the preached Gospel as a result of being able to receive the Spirit that bears witness of Christ apart from the Word of God. That also means that the Word of God can directly come to one's heart, without external mediation, but through prophecy, and one may argue that the concept of direct revelation is not directly contradictory to the biblical view of divine revelation narrated in the Scripture.<sup>80</sup> Problem with that doctrine is that they place themselves at the same level as the prophets of the Bible and contrary to them, we already have the complete canon, also the Scripture to witness the

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<sup>75</sup> Martin Luther, "The Catholic Epistles" in *Luther's Works*, vol. 30, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan & Walter A. Hansen, 18; Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel & IÚbomír Batka (ed.). *Oxford handbook of Martin Luther's theology*, (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014), 205.

<sup>76</sup> Elwell, *Evangelical dictionary of theology*, 521.

<sup>77</sup> Reidar Hvalvik and Terje Stordalen, *Den store fortellingen: Om bibelens tilblivelse, innhold, bruk og betydning*, (Oslo: Det Norske Bibelselskapet, 2013), 32-41.

<sup>78</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 347.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 255-256.

<sup>80</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in ecumenical, international, and contextual perspective*, 51.

triune God to us. We read in Eph. 2:20 that “(...), with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone,” the Church is founded on the holy Writings of the prophets and apostles.<sup>81</sup> That is to say that all we need to know about faith and salvation is already written in the Scripture and as apostle Paul declares to the Galatians in Gal. 1:8, anyone that teaches another Gospel than the one written in the Scripture is to be cursed, meaning that when it comes to faith and salvation, one has to cling to Christ and his teachings written in the holy Scripture. Furthermore, God has already revealed Himself to us through the writings of the prophets and in Jesus Christ which the apostles and the authors of the New Testament testify about. That is to say that we can test experiences of a spirit through the external Word that God has provided for us to know Him. Consequently, we cannot set a present revelation of a spirit above the proven authority of the Word; for to talk about encountering the Holy Spirit without knowledge of the preached Word is to meet a “hidden God”, we do not know so much about and therefore cannot speculate so much about in certainty. Without the preached Word, it will be difficult to discern what kind of spirit one deals with.

It is true that God can reveal the Word into our heart, also illuminates His Word to us inwardly through the Holy Spirit, his gifts and faith besides the preached Word and sacrament which Luther refers to as the “outer” way, but it is though important to point out that the inner and outer clarity of Scripture depend on each other.<sup>82</sup> First, God approaches us outwardly through the Gospel and sacraments and gives us the Holy Spirit, and after that, the Holy Spirit lives inside believers, meaning that the Holy Spirit can enlighten our heart that way, but Luther underlines that such illumination from the Spirit is for oneself only and cannot be used as a unique source for public teachings and ministries. Said another way, inner clarity is meant for oneself and can be used as an inspiration for teachings, but one has to base public ministries and teachings on Scripture and not solely on experience.<sup>83</sup>

Though external Word and inner experience of the Spirit are both important, as they complement each other, it is clear that the outer way or the preached Word is primary, and the inner way or the gifts of the Spirit is a function of the outer way; also, the inner experience of the Holy Spirit and his gifts is a function of the preached Word and not the other way around.<sup>84</sup> It has to be in that order, for only after we have received the Holy Spirit and come to

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<sup>81</sup> John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics: A handbook of doctrinal theology for pastors, teachers, and laymen*, (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), 9; For explanations on the criteria of canonship of the Scripture, see: Reidar Hvalvik & Terje Stordalen, *Den store fortellingen: om Bibelens tittelivelse, innhold, bruk og betydning*. 5.ed. (Oslo: Det Norske Bibelselskap, 2013), 19-50.

<sup>82</sup> Kärkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 70.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

faith through the promised means of grace, will we be able to discern whether we experience the Spirit of God or something else; for after having received the Holy Spirit which is also a Spirit of truth, we will be equipped to discern other spirits by the help of God's Spirit dwelling in us (John 15:26; 16:13). It is important to remember that manifestation of the Holy Spirit in believers may be different from one person to another as we are also given different gifts (1Cor. 12:7-11), but as stated in 1Cor. 12:11, it is the same Spirit that is given to all, implying that the salvific experience of the Holy Spirit is the same, and apostle Paul testifies that in his message in Gal. 3:2 where he conveys that believers receive the Holy Spirit through hearing the Word of God.

We can say that boasting of receiving the Spirit of God or a saving experience of the Holy Spirit without the testimony of Scripture is not in accordance with what the Scripture declares.<sup>85</sup> However, once we have received the Spirit through the means of grace, anyone may have different inner experience of the Spirit; in the Bible, for example, we can read stories about different ways God deals with His people and manifests His presence and direction through His Spirit, and Christian biographies or any true believer giving account about how the Holy Spirit has remarkably manifested in his/her life on special events or on ordinary daily events, will testify that individually inner experiences of the Holy Spirit are countless once we have received the Spirit.<sup>86</sup>

Human beings are sinful though, and we cannot trust the desires of the flesh, and neither can we trust our feelings because they constantly change, whereas God's Word stays the same; it never changes (Isaiah 40:8). Therefore, when it comes to the matter of faith and knowing where we stand with God, we should turn to His Word and what It declares and promises instead of listening to our feelings.<sup>87</sup> We can conclude that inner experience of God or the Holy Spirit prior to the encounter of the Gospel, is uncertain as there is no way to distinguish such experience between general human conviction or experience and the divine experience.<sup>88</sup>

We have now argued that through the Word of God, we receive the Holy Spirit who works faith in us. Besides the preached Gospel, the Word of God speaks also of other tangible

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<sup>85</sup> Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian experience*, (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020), 20.

<sup>86</sup> Some examples of Christian biography I have read to testify my claim : Brother Yun & Paul Hattaway, *The heavenly Man: The Remarkable true story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun*, (Kregel Publications: 2002) ; Richard Wurmbrand: *Tortured for Christ*, (Living Sacrifice Book Company, 1998).

<sup>87</sup> Martin Luther, "Commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7" in *Luther's Work*, vol. 28, edited by Hilton C. Oswald and translated by Jaroslav Pelikan, (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 70-1.

<sup>88</sup> Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian experience*, 21.

means of Grace, namely, the sacraments which create faith in us by the power of the same Word.<sup>89</sup>

Sacrament is from Latin “sacramentum” and refers to the Greek word “mysterion” which is used to indicate the “saving work of God” in general.<sup>90</sup> St. Augustin understands sacrament as “visible forms of invisible grace” which leads to Martin Luther’s definition of sacrament as Promises of God of forgiveness of sins that is attached to visible and divinely instituted sign, also referred to as “sacramental sign”.<sup>91</sup> We can read in Act 2:38; 22:16, in Ephesians 5:26, and Titus 3:5 that sacrament offers and distributes grace. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper have divinely instituted signs and God’s promise of Grace attached to them which make them sacraments.

### ***3.2.2 Reception of the Holy Spirit through Baptism***

We receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism, as Peter says in Act 2:38, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”, which let us understand two things about Baptism; we are baptized for the remission of sins and to receive the Holy Spirit, and we know from Scripture that the Holy Spirit does not reside in hearts lacking forgiveness of sins; to confirm that we receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism as we get our sins forgiven. What happens in Baptism is a representation of how forgiveness of sins happens; our old self dies and is buried with Christ and a new self comes forth; said another way, in Baptism we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection to become a new creature in Him (Rom. 6:3-5; 2 Cor 5:17). What that means is that we die and are buried with Christ in Baptism, but we are also united with Him in His resurrection which grants us forgiveness of sins, God’s Grace and the Holy Spirit with his gifts.<sup>92</sup> What’s more, in Gal. 3:26-27, apostle Paul declares that we are “children of God through faith” and clothed with Christ through Baptism and Luther explains that to be clothed with Christ or put on Christ has two meanings and according to the Gospel, it means to have Christ’s righteousness and His Spirit.<sup>93</sup> In other words, we are clothed with Christ in Baptism and therefore have both His righteousness and the Holy Spirit; for anyone

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<sup>89</sup> Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Spirituality of cross: The way of the first evangelicals*, revised edition, (St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 27.

<sup>90</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian theology: An introduction*, 6th ed., (Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 382.

<sup>91</sup> McGrath, *Christian theology*, 383-385.

<sup>92</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 369.

<sup>93</sup> Luther, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, 83.

who is in Christ has the Spirit and you cannot be in Christ if you do not have His Spirit; meaning that in Baptism, we get Christ and his righteousness, which implies remissions of sins based on His merits, and you also receive the Spirit of Christ which is a sign of a true believer because the Holy Spirit is God's seal on believers, as a mark of belonging to God and being His children and as a guarantee for our salvation or inheritance of eternal life on the basis of Christ's righteousness.

However, it is important to point out that Baptism is not an act of magic that will bestow us forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit without faith (Act 8:18-24); for Baptism is a visible Gospel, meaning that it promises forgiveness of sins, but requires the candidate to trust in the reality of the promise for it to work and have effects. In Mark 16:16, we read that the one who believes and is baptized will be saved; implying what we already know that to be saved, also to have one's sins forgiven, we have to believe in the promise of forgiveness of sins that are offered in the Sacraments. We can say that the condition to receive the Holy Spirit and salvation promised in Baptism, is faith and that is how we receive the Holy Spirit through the Gospel too, through faith.

Baptism is Word of God in water and does not bestow less or more grace than what we receive with preached Word of God, namely, the Holy Spirit and his gifts like forgiveness of sins and eternal life. For as mentioned above, Baptism is Gospel in water, also visible Gospel which makes it a sacrament. What's more, we can be sure that the promises offered in Baptism is real and worth to be trusted because it is not a mere human invention but a divine ordinance, founded on Christ's command in Matt. 28:19-20 where He commanded the disciples to go and make all nations disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching all nations everything Jesus has taught them. However, that does not mean that Baptism is the only means to receive the Spirit and forgiveness of sins, for the preached Word does that too; also, our belonging to Christ does not depend on Baptism. For Mark 16:16 does not state that you have to be baptized to be saved, it says "he who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" pointing out that faith is the key point of being saved and unbelief is the condition for being condemned, also not belonging to Christ and therefore not having his Spirit or sharing his righteousness. Also, it is not the state of being unbaptized that condemns, but unbelief; for baptism without faith is of no use and faith can still exist with the lack of baptism. Yet, refusal to be baptized as a Christian testifies contempt towards Baptism which infers rejection of



what Baptism as a sacrament offers and is in this way condemning (Mark 16:16; Luke 7:30).<sup>94</sup> For to reject to be baptized for the remission of sins is the same as refusal to believe the Word of God attached to the water, which suggests a lack of faith or unbelief.

It is important to clarify that lack of faith is not the same as having a weak faith. As sinners, we are weak in our faith and need to be reminded and convinced that our sins are really forgiven, for it can be hard to believe in remissions of sins without doing anything to merit it. Besides, Satan uses the law to condemn us of our wrongdoings, and that is why Luther urges Christians to remember to go back to their Baptism whenever their conscience are burdened with guilt or sins, or whenever the devil attacks them on their sins, pointing to the demand of the law, because in Baptism we are promised forgiveness of sins and eternal life.<sup>95</sup> It is therefore crucial to remember that the promise of forgiveness of sins, we get in Baptism, is a promise we can come back to every day of our lives (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 4:16). Baptism gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to suppress the flesh, also the old man, so that the new man may emerge and thrive.<sup>96</sup> That does not suggest rebaptism, for Baptism's validity does not depend on our faith or on the baptizer's faith as some theologians suggest; the validity of Baptism relies upon the One who has instituted it, namely, Jesus Christ.<sup>97</sup> That is to say that God's promise is not changed by any sin, for God is faithful to His promise; meaning that one will not lose one's salvation and the Holy Spirit due to sins, as Paul puts it in Rom. 8:1 "(...), there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," only unbelief will condemn.

We can therefore affirm that once baptized, you can always cling to it and remind yourself that God has already washed your sins away, that your old self is dead and buried with Christ and you are no longer under the condemnation of the Law because Christ has already fulfilled the law and has shared that victory with believers in faith and He is present within you through the Holy Spirit.

### ***3.2.3 Reception of the Lord's Supper through the Lord's supper***

The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, or the Sacrament of Altar is a means of Grace offered to believers for the forgiveness of sins and to receive the Holy Spirit and his gifts. As

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<sup>94</sup> Edward W.A. Koehler, *A summary of Christian doctrine: A popular presentation of the teachings of the Bible*, 2. Edition, (St. Louis: CPH, 1952), 191.

<sup>95</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 369.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 372.

<sup>97</sup> McGrath, *Christian theology*, 386-387.

a Sacrament, it is Gospel attached to a tangible sacramental sign: bread and wine. The Lord's Supper like Baptism is visible Word instituted by Christ. We can read the Word of institution in the Gospel of Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20 and in 1Cor. 11:23-25. And 1Cor. 11:23b-25 sounds like this:

(...) on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."<sup>98</sup>

In the words of institution in Matt. 26:26-28, it is explicitly stated that the blood that is poured, is for the forgiveness of sins, otherwise the four versions are alike in meanings, in exception of some unimportant different formulations. In the four of them, it is clearly stated that the body that is given and the blood that is shed is "for you" for the purpose of "forgiveness of sins". Said another way, the Lord Supper is given to a communicant, the one that take the Lord's Supper, for forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins assures us new life with Christ and salvation.<sup>99</sup> We have previously mentioned that the Holy Spirit sanctifies us in granting us forgiveness of sins through the Sacraments, also Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper, the sacramental signs which are the bread and wine are attached to the Word of promise of forgiveness of sins, implying that the Lord's Supper is also Gospel joined with tangible signs given for us through faith for the remissions of sins for our salvation, and we already know that God's grace can only be received by faith; meaning that the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine will be of no use if we do not believe God's promise attached to them, and Martin Luther formulates it this way, "faith of the heart receives the gift."<sup>100</sup>

We receive the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins by believing the Word of promise attached to the bread and wine. As a sacrament, also a visible Gospel, the Holy Supper does not grant us more of the Holy Spirit or grace than what we receive in the preached Word, for it is the same God who gives the same Spirit but through different means. Believers need constant reminder of remissions of sins because the law of God keeps condemning us and it is through the Gospel whether it is in preached form or sacrament, that God gives us His Spirit and strengthens our faith. The Sacrament of the Altar does that, and we hear in the words of

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<sup>98</sup> *NIV student Bible*, 1319.

<sup>99</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 291; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communicant> downloaded 27.04.2022.

<sup>100</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 377.

institutions that by eating the body of Christ united in the bread and drinking his blood united in the wine, our sins or transgressions are washed away. By taking often the Eucharist, we get the assurance to overcome the doubt that endangers our faith; for it's not easy to believe that we don't need to do anything else to make amends for our sins than to acknowledge our sins and ask for forgiveness and immediately receive it.

However, it is important to emphasize that we do not receive forgiveness of sins merely from participating in the Eucharist in the act of eating and drinking, it is faith that receives the body of Christ that is given to you in the bread, and the blood of Christ that is shed for you in the wine for the atonement of sins so that you may be saved from the penalty of sins through faith in those promises. The act of eating and drinking and seeing the elements of the sacraments emphasize their meaning to persuade us even more than the Promise is real, and we only have to receive and accept it. That is to say that both the Word and the elements attached to the promise strengthen our faith for as we have mentioned before, where there is forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit enters the heart, for it is the Holy Spirit who convinces us of the reality of the promise of sins and through faith, the Holy Spirit dwells in us and we receive remission of sins at the same time.

It is also important to point out that the validity of the instituted Holy Communion rests upon the One that has instituted it and his Word. Jesus says that during the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the bread we eat is his body and the wine we drink in the Lord's Supper is his blood (1Cor. 11: 24-25), hence faith or unbelief of the communicant do not affect what is received; meaning that what we receive in the Lord's Supper is still the body and blood of Christ and likewise, the Holy Spirit and his gifts are still attached to the elements of sacraments. However, remissions of sins and salvation offered are only beneficial if we believe in those words, otherwise, we eat and drink the body and blood of Christ for our condemnation (1Cor. 11:29). Said another way, the Word of God attached to the sacramental signs makes the sacrament valid but only through faith, can we benefit from the merits of Christ offered to us, and to take the sacrament unworthily or without faith is condemning.<sup>101</sup> That does not suggest abstinence from the Lord's Supper when we feel unworthy or burdened with guilt and experiencing wavering faith; Luther argues that on such moments, believers should urge themselves to seek even more the benefits of the sacrament to strengthen their faith and clear their conscience of guilt.<sup>102</sup> In Matt 11:28, Jesus does not recommend us to hide from him when we are worry and burdened with sins, guilt or whatever weakens our

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<sup>101</sup> John Theodroe Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, 481; Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 377.

<sup>102</sup> Mæland, *konkordieboken*, 379-381.

faith in salvation, He rather incites us to come to Him and put our burdens on Him so that He may give us rest and He will not drive away whoever comes to Him (John 6: 37); implying that Jesus does not recommend us to abstain from His sacrament neither when are weak and feel unworthy nor doubts our forgiveness but rather the opposite. The Lord Supper is to be practiced often to remind us of the gifts Christ has given us by suffering on the cross so that we do not doubt of being forgiven since the sacrament of the Altar visibly reminds us that Christ has given his body and shed his blood to pay the penalty of our transgressions so that we can walk free in faith.<sup>103</sup>

God has given us the Gospel and the Sacraments to grant us the Holy Spirit and His gifts of new life in forgiveness of sins and salvation from death, sin and the devil. The Sacraments are pure Gospel attached to tangible material elements. To summarize what we have discussed about the Gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we can state that Gospel and Baptism engenders faith while the Lord's Supper strengthens it, but all three grant us forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ which also means that God grants the Holy Spirit wherever forgiveness of sins is offered.

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<sup>103</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 380-381

## **4 The Work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification and discipleship (The Holy Spirit's work as a counselor to live a Christian life: Live by faith in Christ, walk in the Spirit and rest daily in God's grace)**

### **4.1 Importance of understanding the righteousness of God**

We live in the age of the Holy Spirit, since Jesus Christ, the anointed Messiah has come and ascended to the Father, and the Holy Spirit has been poured ever since on anyone who believes Christ to be Lord. The Holy Spirit makes his dwelling in every heart that believes in Christ, as apostle Paul states in Romans 8:9b, "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ," to emphasize that anyone who belongs to Christ also has his Spirit. Before ascending to the Father, Jesus promised in John 15:16 that He will send us another advocate to be with us forever, in a greater way than He did when He was alive on earth because before his resurrection, He was visible only on one place at a time like every other human being. Now He lives in the believer's heart through and with the Holy Spirit.

We have exposed that we receive the Holy Spirit through the preached Word and the visible Word which are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts through the Gospel, He convinces us of the truthfulness of the gift of the preached Word, which we receive through faith. And when we believe in the promise of forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life, the Holy Spirit enters our hearts and makes His dwelling in us at the same time that we receive Christ and salvation through His merits. It is therefore important to understand the reality of salvation and how it works. For our understanding of God, as a believer who wants to live according to His will, is going to impact the way we reason and conduct our lives. Every true believer needs to understand the reality of righteousness of God as a gift of remissions of sins that we receive freely by faith, and by which we are justified before God. Someone who does not grasp this reality, will have from time to time, if not often, a doubting conscience about one's salvation or something like what Martin Luther experienced in his early years in the monastery; having a troubled conscience of being a sinner and not pleasing to God and therefore fearing God's judgment or God's active righteousness by which He punishes and condemns sinners of their transgressions.<sup>104</sup> Hence, if a believer does not understand the meaning of righteousness of faith, he/she will have his/her spirit troubled at times when sins weigh and when trust in the promise of faith begins to wither. At such times, grasping the reality of righteousness of faith will give one the assurance needed to reassure one's spirit of the gift of God's righteousness, which relies upon

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<sup>104</sup> McGrath, *Luther's theology of the cross*, 96.

Christ's righteousness and not on one's good work or strength. Our righteousness relies on the One who has defeated death and has given us His merits and righteousness, which we receive by faith. That is what Luther refers to when he urges believers to remember their baptism; for in baptism, our old flesh is united with Christ in death and buried with Him while a new self raises to life with the Spirit of God where our sins are forgiven due to our union with Christ, in which we share His righteousness.

Being a human being, still living in the flesh, one may wonder how we may be still sinners if the old self has died in our union with Christ. That draws us to what Martin Luther says about Christians being a saint which is the same as being justified and sinner at the same time; we are both saint and sinner, and since we are saints by believing in Christ, our sins are forgiven when we ask for forgiveness on the name of Christ, from whom we draw our righteousness.<sup>105</sup> Assurance in this righteousness will liberate our conscience and heart from the burden of the condemnation of the law because of our sins, and assurance of the forgiveness of sins will allow us to experience a freedom of Christian that Luther describes in his writing in "A treatise on Christian Liberty" in *Works of Martin Luther*, vol.2; a life where one is no longer burdened by the requirements of the law to be saved from the penalty of sins, but rather living a life where one desire to obey the law of God out of love for Him, and not out of fear of punishment, which makes all the difference.

As written in Roman 8:16, "the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children," and this testimony of the Holy Spirit produces faith, in our hearts, in the promise of forgiveness of sins that God offers which we receive through the same faith. Luther argues that the testimony of the Spirit in our hearts are given in three parts, "you cannot have remissions of sins except through the kindness of God,"<sup>106</sup> and you cannot possess good works or "earn eternal life by any of your works, unless it is given to you by grace."<sup>107</sup> Said another way, the Holy Spirit testifies to our hearts that we are saved by faith, that it is God's doings and not our own; for our good works count for nothing before God, and only faith in Christ justifies and that is what the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts, a justifying faith that trusts God to accomplish what He has promised. What we read in John 3:16 "for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life," summarizes the whole Bible in which it announces that Christ

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<sup>105</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 347-351.

<sup>106</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans in Luther's Works*, vol. 25, edited by Hilton C. Oswald, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 359. <https://archive.org/details/works00025luth/page/n4/mode/1up> downloaded 07.05.2022

<sup>107</sup> Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 360.

has given His life to amend for our sins so that our sins will be forgiven and we will be assured eternal life despite our sinful nature and future sins, and that is why it is important to grasp the reality of righteousness of God, for if we do so, we will know how to differentiate law from Gospel and will truly know what treasure we have in Christ and what it means to be a Christian.

#### **4.2 Holy Spirit guides believers to live a Christian life through the Word of God**

In the Scripture Jesus teaches the disciples and people around who listened to him how to live a life that pleases God. The apostles and some who have witnessed Christ, or the risen Christ have written down those teachings for future generations. In John 14:26, Jesus promises the disciples that He will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit in His name, and He also promised that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things and will remind us everything Jesus has said, including His life and teachings.

First, we have the Scripture, testifying about Jesus's life and ministries and also the life of God's people in ancient times in the Old Testament. We have mentioned earlier that Martin Luther argues that the external Word is clear as it is, but we still need the Holy Spirit to clarify the Scripture for us in order to really grasp their true meaning; to say that the Holy Spirit will help us understand the meaning of God's revelation in the Scripture for our present life, to know what it means for us today and why it is relevant. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can give such clarification and illumination into one's heart and that makes the Bible a living book of God's revelation, not only for ancient Israel but for anyone who reads them and listens to the Spirit. Moreover, internal understanding of the Scripture will equip one against attacks from evil and guilty conscience when sins burden so much that one may doubt of one's status of being a child of God. It might also be easy to think that one has fallen from grace when having guilty conscience that leads one to fear God's judgement and punishment as David states in Psalm 51:4b "so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge"; for it is human to think that way, and it is quite logical to fear God's wrath when one is aware of one's wrongdoings. And when we come to understand the difference between law of God and Gospel, we will have weapon to fight against whatever it is that tries to rob a believer's joy of the assurance of forgiveness of sins that one has in Christ; the law is to fight the sinful desires of the flesh and not to condemn our consciences. Besides, the Holy Spirit reminds us also through the Gospel and the sacraments the assurance of salvation that we have in Christ and He inscribes the Gospel in our hearts so that the Gospel will guide us

through our daily life. To say that the Word of God is inscribed in our heart means that besides our senses, human reason and other circumstances, we will have the Word of God guiding us in our decisions whether it is about a minor daily matter or a decision of high importance; meaning that the Spirit of God in our hearts has a voice when we weigh our decisions. It will be no surprising that those insights will be opposite to our own reasoning or will; as Paul exposes in Roman 7, the desires of the flesh counteract with the desires of the Spirit of God and that is why it is essential to know and study the Scripture to argue against our own perception of things when the voice of God, also the voice of the Spirit counteracts our own reasonings no matter how wise and reasonable we think they are. Besides the Scripture which contains many stories of God's people, reading other story of faithful people of God may help one understand the way of God, to understand how God interacts and treats His people so that we will know Him more, and will learn to trust to listen to His voice and listen to what He says. The Holy Spirit will use those Bible stories to persuade and convince our heart to put our trust in God.

We learn from Scripture that God is trustworthy and has our best interest at heart; God never lies and is faithful to His promises which also include taking good care of His people; meaning that He will not lead you astray and can be trusted though we may not always understand His ways, for there are things about God that we do not know or understand since He has not revealed them to us like the day of judgement for example as read in Matthew 24:36, "but about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." That is to highlight that not knowing reasons behind God's direction should not hinder a believer to trust His direction and guidance, for the definition of trust itself takes away doubt and mistrust because trust assumes assured reliance on someone's character not to deceive or betray.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, Scripture also affirms that one can expect good things from God and He has good plan for our lives as we read in Jeremiah 29:11 where it says "for I know the plans I have for you, 'declares the Lord,' plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future," and John 3:16 is an evidence of God's love that is hard to deny when God has sacrificed his only begotten Son to save us from the penalty of our sins, He has given us a way out to save us from condemnation and as Jesus says in John 15:13 "greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends," which Jesus did on the cross. He has suffered and died on the cross so that anyone who believes in Him will be saved from the penalty of sins. And in Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus emphasizes the fact that

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<sup>108</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trust> downloaded 07.05.2022



we can expect good things from God; for human beings at their best are still sinful and is therefore bad in comparison to God that is good and holy, yet a child can usually expect good gift and good intentions from good parents; to point out that God, being essentially good, will give his children, also those who in Him, even greater gifts. All that is to highlight that direction from God is to be trusted though we do not always understand reasons behind them or though they contrast our own thinking, for God's wisdom is infinitely higher than human being's, as Paul says in 1Cor. 1:25a "(...) the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom."

To be able to follow God's direction, it is logical that we first need to hear it and know it is from Him. Jesus declares in John 10:27 that those who belong to Him will know his voice; first, he says in verse 14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me," and in verse 27 "my sheep listen to my voice, (...)." What Jesus states in those verses is that those who belong to Him, also those who believe in Him, will recognize his voice among other voices for they know Him. It signifies that someone who believes in Christ will recognize and listen to the voice of His Spirit, but those who do not belong to Him or do not believe in Him will not listen to His voice, they will not recognize His voice for they do not know Him. That implies that when people believe in Christ, they will know what Christ says or wants them to do for the Holy Spirit will tell them in their conscience or heart, and they will know what the Spirit says or directs them to do because they know Christ.

It can be hard to explain such directions from the Spirit to other people, and it can be even harder to explain that to unbelievers who do not know believe in God and therefore do not know Him personally. Someone who doesn't believe in Christ may have a cognitive understanding of the reality of the Spirit for believers but will not really grasp it and even believe it to be true. Furthermore, to hear God's voice or to get illuminations from God's Spirit is comparable to internal understanding of Scripture as Luther describes it; it is beneficial for the individual who hears it and listens to it, nevertheless it is not meant for others and least for public ministries or teachings. It is a personal guidance meant for the person who gets it, and Christians are advised to be cautious against anyone who claims to hear from God on their behalf; for firstly the authority of God's voice is not to be used as a middle to control others or persuade other people to do one's wish and desires, and second if one has really heard from God about something, instead of stating publicly that one has gotten internal illumination from the Spirit, one can always use Scripture or other arguments to implement the revelation. Said another way, internal illumination is not meant to use on or for others or to influence other people's decision but for oneself to use. In Matthew 7:15, Jesus

warns believers to watch out for false prophets; people can come in God's name and claim to reveal a message from God's Spirit and in such occasions, a believer has to be cautious and test those revelations whether they are in accordance with Scripture and whether they preach Christ. What's more, a true believer has the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of truth who testifies about Christ, will help one discern whether a teaching or a revelation is from God or not.

### **4.3 The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth and will help believer discern other spirits and teachings**

In John 16:13a, Jesus announces to the disciples that "(...) when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth," implying that this Spirit is to be contrasted with all spirits of lies.<sup>109</sup> What the verse means is that the Holy Spirit who Jesus calls the Spirit of truth will testify to the disciples that everything that Christ told them are the truth and the Holy Spirit will confirm the teachings of Jesus in one's heart and convince believers of their truthfulness. That is to say that it is the Holy Spirit, also the Spirit of truth who guides and preserves one in the truth of Christ; for no one can do that on one's own.<sup>110</sup> In John 16, Jesus made that point clear when He predicted that the disciples will not understand the sufferings and death that He was going to endure, and He predicted that the disciples will be offended and lose their faith when they will see Him suffer on the cross; for it is hard, if not impossible, to understand the fact that the One that they understood as the Messiah and the Son of God will be tortured and put to death on a cross like criminals who receive capital punishments and besides cursed by God as written in Deut. 21:22-23. In other words, Jesus knew that they had all the reasons to doubt and fall away if left on their own, that is why believers have the Spirit of truth to lead them to the truth of the Gospel, so that everyone who follow Christ will see beyond their circumstances and sufferings through faith in everything that Jesus has taught.<sup>111</sup> That is to say that without the Spirit of truth, no one can remain in faith in Christ in the midst of sufferings or persecution. This same passage gives also encouragement if and when a believer gets discouraged by state of Christianity encountered in the world whether it is about blasphemy, unbelief, false doctrines or malice of all kinds; for Jesus' saying in this passage imply that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to preserve the church in the truth about

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<sup>109</sup> Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John chapters 14-16*, 357.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

Christ, and it is not a task that relies on human power but on the Holy Spirit. Luther adds that no matter how Christendom appears, and whether false teachings and false prophets seem to frighten Christianity, what Jesus says in John 16:13 indicates that the Spirit of truth who is the Holy Spirit will “strengthen and preserve hearts in the faith.”<sup>112</sup>

Luther maintains that trials from evil and human hearts and the world are some of the reasons that prevent human hearts to persist in faith and in confession of Christ; for without the Spirit, those trials could lead Christians to blasphemy and deny God’s existence or God’s righteousness, faithfulness and goodness.<sup>113</sup> That is to say that without the help of the Holy Spirit to preserve one in the truth of Christ, it is impossible to hold fast to faith in trials. And apostle Paul expresses the same statement in 1Cor 12:3 when he says “no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit”. Said another way, no one who has the Holy Spirit will curse or blaspheme God because the Holy Spirit is the One who creates faith in Christ in our hearts and it is therefore logical to say that if the creator of faith dwells in you, you cannot lose your faith and still have Him. For the Holy Spirit creates faith and will preserve your faith against all attacks that attempt to remove Christ from you. Luther summarizes this fact in “The Small Catechism” when he states:

I believe that by my own reason and strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith.<sup>114</sup>

The Holy Spirit will also help us discern false teachers and false prophets. Jesus says further in John 16:13b that the Holy Spirit “will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears,” which leads us back to the discussion about the relationship between the Word and the Spirit, namely that we receive the Spirit of truth through the Word, for it is the Holy Spirit that reveals to us the meaning of Scripture or the preached Word, convincing truthfulness of the Word that we hear or read and creating faith in our hearts at the same time. That suggests that the Holy Spirit does not come with new revelation about Christ but reveals the same message that we read in Scripture, namely the same Gospel that Christ taught the disciples. That is also to say that anyone who preaches other Gospel than the Word of Christ cannot be identified with the Spirit of Christ. We can therefore infer that the Word of God that

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>114</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 284.

the Spirit of truth, also the Holy Spirit keeps in believers' heart and memory is a weapon that Christians can use against all lies of the devil and other spirits that present themselves to be the Spirit of God, and being armed with the Word of God inscribed in our hearts and memory by the Holy Spirit, believers do not risk to lose their faith in the midst of trials because they possess weapons to fight against any invasions that attempt to rob their faith in Christ.

What's more, we can differentiate between teachers that possess the Holy Spirit and teachers that have other spirit by analyzing their message.<sup>115</sup> Jesus declares somewhere in John 16:13 that the Holy Spirit "will not speak on his own," and we can deduct that those who come and preach on their own authority is not from Christ, which implies that such people will preach messages from their own nature as read in John 8:44, their messages are just pure fabrication from their own reasonings and not from God. For the Spirit of God as Jesus says on the verse above does not speak on his own authority but will only speak of the truth from God Father and Jesus.<sup>116</sup> That also means that anyone who claims to receive internal revelation from the Spirit of God and conveys other messages than testimony about Christ or other messages that are not in harmony with the Word of God in the Scripture, after what Jesus says above, is not talking on behalf of the Spirit, for the office of the Holy Spirit is to testify about Christ. By this way of differentiation, we can discern all other doctrines as well, to determine what is the true and false doctrine of Christendom. In other words, the Spirit of truth will qualify believers as fit to judge all other doctrines and spirits.

The Holy Spirit not only will create faith and strengthen that faith in believers' hearts but also, He will equip believers to discern all lies that accuse them and attack their assurance in salvation. Such attacks include other spirits of lies that spread other doctrines than Jesus' teachings.

#### **4.4 The Holy Spirit will comfort believers**

In John 15:26, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, whom He calls the Comforter to His disciples, and that includes anyone who believes in Christ. Eerdmans dictionary defines a disciple, as a committed follower of Jesus, and Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a disciple as someone "who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another."<sup>117</sup> The Apostles

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> David Noel Freedman (ed.), *Eerdmans dictionary of the Bible*, (Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2000), 348; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disciple> downloaded 09.05.2022.

were disciples of Jesus and so is anyone who accepts the teachings of Jesus and believes in Him. That is to say that when Jesus promised to send the Comforter, that promise was not only meant for those who were there when He said it, but also for anyone who describes oneself as a disciple; that is follower of Jesus.

In commenting on the passage above, Luther announces that the Comforter which is the Holy Spirit will give believers strength and courage to adhere in Christ, for without the Spirit, our faith in God will not persist.<sup>118</sup>

Jesus has also promised to give us His peace in John 14:27 when he says: “my peace I give to you; not as the world give” and the Holy Spirit is the one who actualizes this peace in believers’ hearts by daily testifying about Christ to our conscience. God’s peace is a peace of heart and conscience and not a life without troubles or problems of any kind as the world describes peace.<sup>119</sup> Peace in the world can be described as “a state of tranquility or quiet” such as “freedom from civil disturbance” or “a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom” and peace describes a state of harmony in relationships or a “freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions” as J.H. Newman describes it.<sup>120</sup> The kind of peace that God gives, does not have to exclude those descriptions of peace above but Jesus specifies that the peace of God that He promises his followers is a peace of heart and conscience. The kind of peace that Jesus gives his disciples is stronger than the freedom that we find in the world; for a state of tranquility and quiet can be disturbed by a troubled conscience, and any state of external peace is fragile and can be disturbed and destroyed by many circumstances but believers that have the peace of God in their hearts and consciences will not be troubled and retain their peace of hearts even in the midst of chaos and that is what differentiates between the peace of God and the peace of the world. In other words, though believers are harassed and suffer outwardly, they will have joy and courage in their hearts and will not be overwhelmed because their peace is from another source and not from what they experience and see. In stories about martyrs who suffer and die for their faith, we encounter narratives of Christians who maintained their peace and faith in midst of what can be described as the opposite of the definition of peace itself, yet those narratives seem to convey that martyrs keep their faith though they should be troubled. Brother Yun in *The heavenly man: the remarkable true story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun* (2002) or Corrie Ten Boom in *The hiding place: The triumphant true story of Corrie Ten Boom* (1974) testify

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<sup>118</sup> Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John chapters 14-16*, 290.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>120</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/peace> downloaded 09.05.2022.

the point that was just made; God's peace is not the same as what is generally understood by peace. Those two characters suffered imprisonment and injustice in different places, they recount the difference between being troubled by their circumstances and the kind of peace of heart and serenity they have when they rely on God and not on their circumstances. That is because the Holy Spirit convinces believers' heart and conscience that they are at peace with God and will inherit eternal life with God whatever their circumstances look like; their righteousness is intact, and they can trust it, for righteousness is not a feeling but a status that believers have permanently through faith.

We can see and feel that we are sinners, and our actions and what we have done prove before our eyes that we have sinned before God, and the devil may burden our conscience with guilt. But the Holy Spirit has created faith in our hearts, and we must hold to this Promise we have by faith, that our wrongdoings do not condemn us because Christ has already paid for them and we share His righteousness, and on this can we boldly claim that we are righteous no matter how we feel. Our feelings are changing, but we can hold to God's unflinching love and faithfulness anytime when our circumstances and own conscience burden us with guilt. As previously argued, our righteousness relies on Christ alone and His merits, and His righteousness is also our righteousness because we believe in Him, He has promised that if we believe in Him, our sins are forgiven and that is a fact; meaning that we are not to turn out to our feelings to be sure of our status of being saved, but to God's promise and to the fact that He is faithful to His promise. Besides, the Holy Spirit will convince our hearts of our righteousness based on Christ and Christ alone, not any good works that we perform. For our good works or performance of the Law of God do not gain us salvation, only faith in Christ will assure one's salvation as previously mentioned, it is impossible to perform the Law because trespassing on one of them is the same as trespassing them all and the requirements of the Law is more strict than one may assume as Jesus clarifies on the sermon of the Mount in Matthew 5:28; when one looks at someone with lust, one has already committed adultery in one's heart with that person; meaning that there is no chance we can achieve the requirements of the Law and gain our salvation or get our sins forgiven there. We cannot be more wrong if we think to balance our wrongdoings with our good works and estimate our status before God based on the result. Christianity does not teach that kind of doctrine, God does not balance our good and bad behaviors and judge us upon the result, Paul makes it clear in his writings, especially in the letter to the Romans, that we are saved by faith alone and not by works for anyone that is under the Law is cursed; they are cursed because they are damned to fail, no one besides Christ can fulfill the requirements of the Law and Christ has fulfilled the Law so

that we will have only Him for our righteousness, He has made the way to salvation easy for us; through faith, His righteousness is ours. That is what we can say to our conscience and whoever accuses a Christian of being a sinner and therefore damned and does not merit salvation, for it is a fact that we are sinners and our actions do not please God, and if we behave good, they are not enough, and we will never reach the standard of God's holiness whether we live in a monastery like Luther did and spends our days and nights praying and doing benevolence for God and our neighbors; our thinking and motives may still betray us. There will be no way to be sure if our actions are enough and Luther warns believers in his *Commentary on the Epistles to the Galatians (1535)* of the false assurance of gaining remissions of sins and salvation from work-righteousness. To feel good and righteous due to one's good work is not what makes our righteousness; we get our righteousness from turning to the cross, that is where Jesus promised us to gain our salvation, only through faith can we assure ourselves of forgiveness of sins whether we feel it or not. The Holy Spirit will convince our hearts that we do need to trust our feelings when it comes to our salvation, He will testify to our conscience that we are saved through faith and our sins are forgiven even when our feelings do not comply with that reality. Christians must trust God's Word over their feeling.

#### **4.5 The Holy Spirit will reveal and teach believers to follow God's will**

We learned in John 16:13 that Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit. He will teach us all things that Christ has taught and will help us remember Jesus' teachings, and Jesus added that He will declare to us things that are yet to come as well. That is to say that the Holy Spirit will help believers stay in the truth of Christ, meaning that the Holy Spirit will lead Christians to remember and live according to the teachings of the Christ. Jesus taught the disciples to follow His command: to love God and one's neighbor. That implies that the Holy Spirit will help believers remember those things Christ has commanded us to do so that we will live our life by following them and having those revelations direct our decisions in daily life.

With the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and imparting us with God's wisdom, we get to know God and we learn to know His ways and will and how He wants us to live our life and conduct ourselves in every situations. Not only the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the will of God for us, but He will also help us act upon them and will assist us in discerning whether our thoughts are from God, from other spirits or of our own, because He is the Spirit of truth. He

will help us act upon the will of God He revealed to us because He is of another kind than the law. We have learned that the law will only direct you to the commandments of God, only to make you realize that you cannot fulfill them. While the Spirit will also use the law to convict you of your sins, but only to remind you to repent and point you to turn to Christ where you have your Righteousness. Contrary to the law, the Holy Spirit will not only tell you and remind you of the will of God, but he will also convince you to desire it. It is important to remember that the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter for a reason; a comforter by definition, conveys comfort and consolation, and it is hard to believe a comforter who tries to frighten people. That is to say that the Holy Spirit will not lead us to fear, and apostle Paul points that out in 2Tim 1:7 that God did not give you a “spirit of fear” or a “spirit of cowardice”<sup>121</sup> to make us fearful and lose hope. Paul contrasts the Spirit that God has given us with a spirit of terror and helplessness, which implies that the Holy Spirit will not lead to fear and despair, but rather will give us power, love and self-discipline. That is to say that whenever a Christian feels desperate over oneself or one’s circumstances, that thought is not from God, because as a Comforter, the Holy Spirit will never frighten you or make you despair. Said another way, a feeling of despair is never from God whatever its origin and Prophet David shows that in Psalm 42:11 when he says: “why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, (...).” That implies also that we despair when we put our hope somewhere else and not in God.

Both Romans 8:4-16 and Galatians 5:16-17 convey the message that the Holy Spirit will lead us live according to God’s will.

We have previously exposed that believers are children of God and the Spirit of God dwells in them. In Romans 8:4-16, apostle Paul explains that a believer lives in the realm of the Spirit and does not live by the flesh, meaning that one’s mind is governed by the flesh. In the same unit of text, Paul argues that Christians who have the Spirit of God are children of God and are therefore led by the Holy Spirit. And in Galatians 5:16-17, he says “(...) walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”

Paul urges Christians to fight against the desires against sinful desires of the flesh; the desires of the flesh are sinful because they are not pleasing to God, for the desires of the flesh counteract the desires of the Spirit of God. Said another way, what the flesh wants you to do

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<sup>121</sup> BDAG, 215.



is contrary to what God wants. And he exposes that we resist the desires of the flesh by the Spirit. That means that the Holy Spirit will lead us to live a life that pleases God.

As sinners, the flesh will always draw us to go against the will of God, revealed by the leadership of the Spirit. Paul says in those passages that we are to suppress and resist those desires. In Luther's writing "A treatise on Christian Liberty" in *Works of Martin Luther*, vol.2, he argues that Christians are no longer bound to the leadership of the flesh, because we have Christ and the Holy Spirit to help us resist the desires of the flesh. We have the Holy Spirit to lead us towards God's will, and we are no longer enslaved to gratify sinful desires because we have a counselor to teach us the things of God.

It is a reality described both by Paul and Luther that a Christian's life is a constant battlefield between the flesh and the Spirit of God, for those two opponents both claim the intentions of believers. The flesh will stir up sin while the Spirit will create desires to obey God. Luther highlights in *A commentary of the St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (1539) that we cannot totally escape our sinful nature, for as long as we live and covered with flesh, we will sin. For Christians are still sinners even though they are justified, and Christians ought to remember that, otherwise they will despair over themselves and their situations as Paul expresses in Rom. 7:4 "what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death," and in verse 19 and 20, he says:

For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

That is to point out that Christians have sinful nature and as long as we have flesh and blood, we have sin inside us that will fight to subject its will on us; when it succeeds, we may despair. That is one of the reasons why the Spirit of God keeps testifying to our spirit and reminding us that we are still children of God despite our actions, and that is also why Jesus has promised the Spirit to dwell in us forever and not for some period of time. For we need to comfort our troubled conscience, to strengthen our faith and constantly persuade and remind us that we are saved by faith; meaning that we are justified by our faith and not by our deeds or thoughts. That implies that both the thought of losing one's salvation due to sins, and the thought of gaining or keeping one's salvation based on good deeds, are ideas inspired by the Spirit of God. We can therefore infer that those thoughts are products of the flesh and a sinful mind.

It is important to clarify that even a true committed believer cannot escape sin as long as they breath air and live in their sinful flesh, but that is not a reason to despair or to give up on fighting against sinful desires in the flesh.<sup>122</sup> We can resist temptation with the help of the Holy Spirit, and by following His leadership, we counteract the demands of the flesh. One can argue that we have the power to choose with our free will to resist the flesh, but Luther makes it clear in his discussion with Erasmus *On the bondage of the will* (1525) that without the Holy Spirit, we are bound to follow the will of the flesh; it is the Spirit of Christ who liberates our will through faith; the Holy Spirit liberates our will to give us freedom to make godly decisions. Luther argues further that as long as we cling to Christ and His righteousness, we will be led by the Spirit who will give us means to resist the desires of the flesh and fight temptations.

Luther also explains that the flesh self-centered and seeks its own glory, and chooses only its own interest, not caring about the things of God. That is to say that the flesh idolizes oneself and considers oneself as “ultimate object of the life.”<sup>123</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are no longer bound to your personal agenda, in seeking your own interests and having no place for God since you have already made yourself a god in your own life. People who are led by the Spirit, consider good, only things that are good in the eyes of the Lord because they do not seek their own glory, but seek to honor God with their life. We can therefore confirm that people who have the Spirit of God are no longer slaved to sin (Rom. 8:15); they are no longer bound to comply to the demands of the flesh in doing and living by their own philosophy and reasonings, and not wanting any relationship with God. Believers are liberated by that bondage of sin and are given a Spirit of freedom. That does not mean that we are no longer tempted by the flesh to gratify its desires, but what makes the difference between unbelievers and believers are that they have the Holy Spirit to help them resist the flesh, by leading them to Christ.

The Holy Spirit will reveal to us the will of God. As Paul declares in 1Cor. 2:11 “(...)who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” That means that the Spirit of God that lives in us will tell us the thoughts of God and whatever God wants us to do, because He knows them and will make them known to us. The Spirit will also reassure us of our salvation in Christ in order to strengthen our faith when we doubt or despair in our failing attempt to permanently resist sin, the situation that apostle Paul describes in Romans 7. The Holy Spirit

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<sup>122</sup> Luther, *A commentary on the St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, 119-120.

<sup>123</sup> Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 350-351.

will help us understand our status of being both righteous and sinners. That way we will not despair when we fall back to sin but will boldly run to Jesus for forgiveness. And He will also warn us against self-righteousness or attempt to make amends for one's sins by oneself, for such attempt will put one directly under the curse of the law again and away from Christ's righteousness. In Galatians 5: 22-23, Paul cites the fruit of the Spirit as "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control," implying that if we have the Spirit of God, we are well equipped to resist temptation and our love for God will lead us to desire to please Him and live our life to glorify Him.

#### 4.6 The Holy Spirit sanctifies believers daily

To sanctify means "to purify", "to free from sin" or make holy.<sup>124</sup> In the Large Catechism, Luther exposes how the Holy Spirit sanctifies believers. According to the definition of sanctification, we can say that the Holy Spirit purifies believers and makes them holy by freeing them from sin.

We have mentioned earlier that the Holy Spirit liberates the will of believers from the bondage of sin. That means that before we receive the Holy Spirit, our will were bound to obey the command of the flesh; we were bound to gratify the desires of the flesh. That implies that without the Holy Spirit, we are bound to live a life that is hostile to God (Rom 8:7), but by freeing us from sin, the Holy Spirit frees from the penalty of sin as well.

Luther explains in the Large Catechism that the Holy Spirit sanctifies us through the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life.<sup>125</sup> It says that the Holy Spirit calls us into the Christian church or the communion of saints. That does not necessarily mean that the Holy Spirit calls us into the consecrated building we call church, for church refers to the community of all people who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ.<sup>126</sup> Both true Christians and false Christians may meet in the church building, and we are baptized in the church, but here it is important to underscore that the Holy Spirit will call people into faith and to become a true believer, and not merely a church member that meets up in the building.

The first stage of sanctification is through the Gospel, when the Holy Spirit calls you to hear the Gospel and creates faith in your heart. We have previously mentioned that

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<sup>124</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sanctify> downloaded 02.04.22

<sup>125</sup> Mæland, *Konkordieboken*, 347.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

someone who comes to faith becomes a whole new person, for you become a believer when are born anew (John 3:7), and Paul emphasizes in 2Cor 5:17 when he says “(...) if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!” That means that we come to faith, the old flesh in us is united with the death of Christ, so that a new man of faith will come forth. A person who comes to faith receives the Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit strengthens our faith through the Gospel, absolution and the sacraments.<sup>127</sup>

Faith in Christ alone justifies, and it is the Holy Spirit who creates faith in hearts. That also means that our sanctification begins with justification. We are saved once for all when we come to faith, but the Holy Spirit will sanctify believers daily to preserve them in faith and that is what we have discussed all over chapter 4. The Holy Spirit brings us to Christ through faith, and He keeps doing so daily, and that is what is meant with daily sanctification.

We know from earlier that the work of the Holy Spirit is to testify about Christ, leading us to the truth of Christ so that we grow more like Him, namely without sin. He does so through the Gospel; He clarifies and reveals to us the will of God. He comforts and gives advice and helping us to act upon those insights that He gives. We can therefore state that He trains believers to live a godly life. Said another way He helps us grow in sanctification, by teaching us to put our full trust in God. Our justification is assured in faith, but we are still sinners. Therefore, we need to obtain daily forgiveness of sins otherwise our faith will weaken, and we may despair.

Luther differentiates between two kinds of holiness; a work-righteous holiness that we gain through our doings and a God-given holiness.<sup>128</sup> A work-righteous holiness has a value only in the world, they count to nothing before God, the kind of holiness that we acquire through the Holy Spirit is of another kind.

The Holy Spirit purifies sinners daily through the forgiveness of sins. And based on the two different kind of holiness, it is important to underscore that we do not grow in holiness with good deeds. For that implies self-righteousness. The Holy Spirit sanctifies sinners when He convicts them of their sins so that they turn to Christ for forgiveness. For it should be obvious by now that forgiveness of sins is offered by Jesus only, through faith. Paulus points that out throughout Romans that good works that springs from faith do not make us grow in sanctification. Our faith in Christ justifies and sanctifies and we grow in holiness by holding on to Christ. And the Holy Spirit sanctifies us daily by strengthening and preserving our faith in Christ.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>128</sup> Luther, *Sermons on the gospel of St. John Chapters 14-16*, 108.

## 5 Conclusion

I have described and argued throughout this thesis that the Holy Spirit dwells in believers, and He also leads them daily to Christ and guides them to live a Christian life.

The Holy Spirit was only poured on certain people for specific tasks in the Old Testament, but the prophets prophesied a time in the future where God will anoint a Servant-Messiah, and that will precede the pouring of the Holy Spirit on all people. The Holy Spirit will dwell forever in people that believes in the Servant-Messiah, and we live in this period.

Martin Luther did not write a large systematic pneumatology besides the short explanation of the third article of Apostles' Creed in his Catechisms. However, I have understood from his writings that I have selected for this project, that he has a Christological pneumatology that goes by Paul's declaration in Romans 8:9 "(...) if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."<sup>129</sup> That means that without the Spirit of Christ, you do not have Christ's righteousness and therefore not justified or reckoned as righteous before God. From that understanding, I can safely state that he has written a lot about the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, but He does not work in unbelievers the same way He does with believers. He calls people into faith through the Gospel, and He is also the One who nourishes and preserves faith in believers. He creates faith and makes his dwelling in hearts that have faith in Christ, and we receive Him through the preached Word and the sacraments. We receive Christ and the Holy Spirit through faith, and we are justified by the same faith. However, justification by faith is a hard concept to grasp, but the Holy Spirit illuminates believers' hearts and reveals to them the meaning of the Scripture which Luther refers to as the inner clarity.

The Holy Spirit leads people to Christ and makes His dwelling in them, convicting them of their sins, and persuading them to turn to Christ for forgiveness of sins. We cannot believe in Christ by ourselves, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to Christ. That is clearly expressed in both Pauline's letters and Luther's writings. Our salvation is assured when we have faith in Christ. When the law accuses us of our sins, the Holy Spirit will make sure that we do not lose hope but preserve our faith in Christ by teaching and reminding us the truth of Christ, testifying to our consciences that we are children of God. He will also remind us that our salvations are not based on our deeds, meaning that we do not lose our salvation because of sins, only unbelief can do that, and though faith can sometimes wither, that is not the same

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<sup>129</sup> *NIV Student Bible*, 1298.

as unbelief. We also know from previous discussion above that a true Christian has the Spirit of God and it is faith in Christ that makes a Christian. And someone who has the Holy Spirit will desire to please God as the Spirit will inspire his/her heart to love God and do good works with the awareness that neither good work nor sin will change the status of his/her salvation; good works do not make you righteous and sins do not make you lose your faith.

We have discussed how the Holy Spirit leads believers to live a life according to God's will through the Word of God; He testifies to our consciences that we are children of God, and He clarifies to our hearts the real meaning of Scripture and that way makes the Scripture a present God's revelation for us. Besides, the Holy Spirit will inscribe God's Word in our hearts and with this internal understanding of the Scripture, we will be equipped to fight against temptations, evil's attack and guilty conscience. He will also impart believers with God's wisdom, so that they get to know God better and know His ways. And since He knows the mind of God, He will reveal to us the will of God and will help us accomplish them.

The Holy Spirit also is a Spirit of truth and will help believers discern spirits of lies, false doctrines or false prophets. He will make you wise in your decisions and keeps you in the truth of Christ against anything that try to frighten your faith. He will not only preserve believers and Christendom in the truth of Christ but will also preserve the peace of God that Jesus has given us, to give us peace of heart and conscience. We also have argued that any feeling of despair is not from God, since the Holy Spirit is a Comforter and not a spirit of fear.

A believer needs to remember though that a human being has a sinful nature, and the flesh will counteract the desires of the Spirit. The flesh wants to make itself a god and wants to do whatever it is good for itself, while the Spirit of God will incite in believers, desires to please God and live a life that glorifies Him. Moreover, without the Spirit of God, we are bound to the desires of the flesh and unable to choose otherwise. When we have the Spirit, we are no longer bound to sin, but has the freedom to choose to follow God's will by the assistance of the Holy Spirit. That is to say that people who believe in Christ are led by the Spirit and will therefore desire to please God with their life.

Therefore, we can affirm that the Holy Spirit is very present and active in the lives of believers, first in creating faith into their hearts and leading them to Christ daily by revealing to them the ways of God and influencing their daily decisions to follow God's will.

While searching for sources for this thesis, I have noticed that there are not many scholarly Lutherans writings about the function of the Holy Spirit in guiding Christians to live a life according to God's will. In the writings of Martin Luther that I have used in treating this

project, I can't ignore the emphasis that Luther puts on the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding Christians to live a Christian life. But if I had more time in disposition, I could have read other Christians' literature about the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit to compare and discuss the similarities and differences of understanding between those writings and letters of Paul and Luther's writings.

An interesting idea for a new project would be to conduct a research through narratives of personal experiences with the Holy Spirit of heroes of faith throughout history.

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