



19 Minutes with Luther

The Third Article

- The Knowledge of God
- Law and Gospel
- Introduction to the Law
- 1st Commandment
- 2nd Commandment
- 3rd Commandment
- 4th Commandment
- 5th Commandment
- 6th Commandment
- 7th Commandment
- 8th Commandment
- 9th & 10th Commandments
- The Conclusion
- The Gospel & the Nature of God
- The Apostles' Creed (Faith)
- 1st Article (Creation)
- 1st Article (Preservation)
- 1st Article (Protection)
- 1st Article (The Fall into Sin)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Person)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Office)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Work)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Humiliation)
- 2nd Article (Christ's Exaltation)
- 2nd Article (Christian Life)
- 2nd Article (Saved by Faith)
- 3rd Article (The Holy Spirit)
- **3rd Article (Calls)**
- 3rd Article (Enlightens)
- 3rd Article (Sanctifies)
- 3rd Article (Keeps in Faith)
- 3rd Article (Invisible Church)
- 3rd Article (Visible Church)
- 3rd Article (Forgiveness)
- 3rd Article (Eternal Life)
- Baptism (Part 1)
- Baptism (Part 2)
- Holy Communion (Part 1)
- Holy Communion (Part 2)
- Keys & Confession (Part 1)
- Keys & Confession (Part 2)
- Keys & Confession (Part 3)
- Introduction to the Lord's Prayer
- The Address
- 1st Petition
- 2nd Petition
- 3rd Petition
- 4th Petition
- 5th Petition
- 6th Petition
- 7th Petition
- The Doxology

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.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

1. The work of God the Holy Spirit is called sanctification, the work by which he calls people out of an unbelieving world to faith in Jesus the Savior. Why can't people bring themselves to faith?

2. According to the following passages, what are the means (or tools) that the Holy Spirit uses to call people to saving faith?

"From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14).

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38).

3. Martin Luther wrote: "I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel." While Luther would never deny that Jesus Christ is our only Savior, neither would he deny that we owe our salvation to God the Holy Spirit. Explain.

4. The Bible uses several pictures to describe the miracle that the Holy Spirit works in people when he calls them to faith. Explain how each of the following serves as an accurate picture of the Holy Spirit's work.

conversion (a turning around)

regeneration (being born again)

quickenings (being made alive)

5. Comment on the following:

“Faith in Christ is . . . voluntary. A person cannot be coerced, bribed, or tricked into trusting Jesus. God will not force His way into your life. The Holy Spirit will do everything possible to disturb you, draw you, love you—but finally it is your personal decision. God not only gave His Son on the cross where the plan of redemption was finished; He gave the law as expressed in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount to show you your need of forgiveness, [and] gave the Holy Spirit to convict you of your need. He gives the Holy Spirit to draw you to the cross, but even after all of this, it is your decision whether to accept God’s free pardon or to continue in your lost condition.” (Billy Graham, in his book *How to Be Born Again*, Word, 1977.)

6. The Holy Spirit uses his Word and sacraments alone to call people to faith. In light of this truth, evaluate the following strategies and practices of personal and congregational outreach and evangelism.

Allowing unchurched people to play on the congregation’s softball team.

Having an “open-door” policy at your church regarding infant baptism.

Conducting an annual vacation Bible school.

Inviting an unchurched friend or neighbor to the annual church picnic.

Luther said:

“The Holy Spirit reveals and proclaims the Word; he uses it to shed light into human hearts and set them aglow; he empowers them to grasp the Word, accept it, cling to it, and faithfully stay with it.” (Tappert, p. 416.)

Closing Prayer

Spirit of God, we praise you for bringing us from death to life and from the darkness of unbelief to faith in Jesus our Savior. Through the Word we have just studied, strengthen our faith. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

At home

- Memorize the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed and Martin Luther’s explanation.
- Read Acts chapter 2.

Helps

(1) Make the comparison to a physical corpse. People, by nature, are spiritual corpses. They cannot bring themselves to spiritual life, that is, to faith in Jesus the Savior. Neither can they desire or make a decision to do so. (2) The Holy Spirit brings people to faith through the Word of God or the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. (3) Faith is the hand that receives the eternal blessings of Christ (forgiveness, salvation, eternal life). Without the Holy Spirit working faith in our hearts, we could not receive these blessings. Thus, we owe our salvation to the Holy Spirit. (4) The Holy Spirit convicts us, that is, he turns us from the darkness of unbelief to faith in Jesus. When the Holy Spirit does so, we are born again, that is, we experience a second birth—a spiritual birth—that follows our physical birth. This birth quickens us, raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life. (5) This statement is a denial of the Bible’s doctrine concerning a person’s natural spiritual condition. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that a person can trust in Jesus as the Savior (see 1 Corinthians 12:3). A denial of this truth robs God of the glory that is his for saving us. It is also a subtle form of work-righteousness, and therefore is a danger to immortal souls. (6) All of the strategies and practices mentioned may have a place in a person’s or a congregation’s outreach and evangelism program. It is important to remember, however, that the Holy Spirit works through the Word and the sacraments alone. Some of the practices listed, therefore, will simply serve as bridges to the gospel, or side-door entrances into congregational life, which eventually will bring a person into contact with the gospel.