

Last week we began a short topical series on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. If you recall, we considered three related truths: The Holy Spirit is a Person, a Divine Person, and a Distinct Divine Person. In short, we learned that the Holy Spirit was equal to the Father and Son, and yet, distinct from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is a distinct divine Person.

This brings us to our first study on the work of the Holy Spirit, and to the theme: The Work of the Spirit in Creation and Common Grace.

Scripture speaks about two creations—the first creation refers to the creation of all things in six-literal days, the second creation refers to redemption, wherein God is re-creating sinners to ultimately live in the new heavens and earth.

And while the role of the Spirit in the second creation (redemption) is most obvious, it's unfortunate that many Christians overlook His role in the first creation. The Spirit is just as involved in the first creation as is the Father and Son.

- I. His Work in Creation
- II. His Work in Providence
- III. His Work in Common Grace

I. His Work in Creation

1. The first thing that needs stressing, is that Scripture ascribes creation to each person of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit.
2. And yet, as we consider these passages we learn, that the Father creates through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit.
3. Remember what we learned last week with regards to the internal and external works of God—His internal works refers to the inter-Trinitarian relations of the three persons.
4. The Father begets the Son, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and Son (these are internal and eternal).
5. His external works take place in time and refer to creation, providence, and redemption—these take place outside of God.
6. If you remember I mentioned that the external works of God reflect the internal works of God—the Father sends the Son to become incarnate, and the Father and Son sends the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
7. Put another way—the Father plans, the Son accomplishes, and the Spirit effects—the Father works through the Son by the Spirit.
8. This is true both in the first and second creations—everything comes to pass from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.
9. The external acts of God are a reflection of the internal acts of God—the Father works through the Son by the Spirit.
10. And so, it was in creation—the Father purposed creation, He spoke it into existence through His word (Son) and effected it by the Spirit.
11. Thus, while it's proper to distinguish the works of the Persons, we must be careful never to divide them from one another.
12. The creation of the world was an act of the Triune God, and yet, it's proper to speak of specific aspects of that work performed by each Person.
13. Ps.33:6—"Through the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."
14. (a) All things were made through the word of the LORD—by "the word of the Lord" is obviously meant the Son.
15. (b) All things were made by the breath of His mouth—by "the breath of His mouth" is obviously meant the Spirit.
16. Thus, we learn while creation was the work of the Triune God, each Person played a special part in that creation.

17. The Father created through the Son and the Father and Son created by the Spirit (who was the direct Agent of creation).
18. (1) Non-moral creation—by this is meant, everything except man—the planets, stars, water, animals, and vegetation.
19. Gen.1:1-2—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."
20. Having made reference to the heavens and earth (v1), Moses focuses in upon the earth (v2)—"The earth was without form."
21. (a) The earth was without form and void—literally—"the earth was desolate and waste"—it was not ready to inhabit.
22. It was a large mass, that had not yet been adored or prepared as a suitable residence for man (heaven's favorite).
23. (b) And darkness was on the face of the deep—darkness here doesn't carry any immoral or wicked connotation.
24. It was simply void of the light that would be created in v3—"Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."
25. It seems likely that at this point the earth was fully covered with water, as the dry land doesn't appear until v9.
26. (c) And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters—the word "hovering" is elsewhere applied to mother bird.
27. Ken Ham—"If we look closer at the word 'hovering,' we find that it conveys the idea of a bird sitting in a nest, hovering and brooding over her eggs, caring for the new lives. The same word is used to describe how 'an eagle stirs up its nest and hovers over its young' (Deut.32:11)."
28. Thus, here's the idea—the earth was supplied with the matter necessary for every form of life on earth and the Spirit hovered over it.
29. He was about to give it life—it was the Holy Spirit who rendered the earth a suitable place for every form of life.
30. (2) Moral creation—by this is meant mankind—this is the greatest of God's creation who alone is made in His image.
31. Gen.2:7—"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."
32. When Moses says that God "breathed into man," we must understand this to refer to the ministry of the Spirit.
33. Thus, God breathed life into man by the Holy Spirit, the direct author of life both in the first and second creations.
34. Nice Greed—"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son."

II. His Work in Providence

1. By this is meant, the Holy Spirit not only directly caused creation, but He also presently sustains or preserves creation.
2. This is referred to as His work within providence and there are basically two parts to it—He sustains and He fashions.
3. (1) He sustains—by this is meant, it's the Holy Spirit who holds all of creation together and in its proper place.
4. While it's true there are various laws or principles imbedded in creation (such as gravity), it's the Spirit that sustains these.
5. Heb.1:2-3—"in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, through whom He made the worlds, who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power."
6. Here we learn two things about the Son with regards to creation—(a) the Father made the worlds, "through Him."

7. (b) The Son upholds "all things" by the word of His power—that is, by the powerful Person of the Holy Spirit.
8. By "all things" is meant "all created things"—the "worlds" and all they contain—everything created in the original six days.
9. But "upholding" is meant His ongoing work of sustaining and preserving creation—He holds it all together and in place.
10. But for our purposes this morning, I want to notice how the Son upholds creation—"by the word of His power."
11. Now, if you remember last week I pointed out, that at times the Scripture speaks of the Spirit by His ministry (work).
12. Thus oftentimes, the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit as the Power of God—this doesn't mean the Spirit is a mere force or power but that He is powerful and the direct Agent by which He effects or brings to pass His work.
13. (2) He fashions—in the strictest sense creation was completed in six literal days, and in that sense, God no longer creates.
14. But there is another sense in which we can use the term create in the broader sense to refer to His ongoing work.
15. For example, when He brings forth a new forest after the old one was burned down or brings an oak tree from an acorn.
16. While these are not creations out of nothing (which technically is what a creation is), they are the ongoing works of the Spirit.
17. Job 33:4—"The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life"—here Job is referring to himself.
18. That means, what the Holy Spirit did to Adam in creation, He continues to do every time a person is conceived.
19. Notice, Job refers to both his body and soul—"The Spirit of God has made me (body), and the breath of the Almighty gives me life (soul)."
20. Perhaps we can say, the Holy Spirit hovers over every womb, forming the little baby and breathing into it life.
21. What a tremendous thought—every baby within the womb is the direct and specific result of the Holy Spirit of God.
22. Ps.104:30—"You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth"—by "they" are meant the animals of this world.
23. V29—"You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created."
24. The phrase "And You renew the face of the earth" goes beyond the animals and refers to every form of life on earth.
25. In other words—the Holy Spirit is the one who gives life to every baby animal and to every new plant on the earth.
26. There is a sense in which the Holy Spirit governs every activity on earth—every leaf and blade of grass is His work.
27. Isa.40:7—"The grass withers, the flower fades, because the Spirit of the LORD blows upon it, but the word of our God stands forever."
28. Why does the grass wither? Why does a flower fade? Because the Spirit of the LORD blows upon (or perhaps, fails to blow upon it).
29. Thus, the Holy Spirit not only originally beautified creation, but He ongoingly beautifies it by sustaining it and forming it.

III. His Work in Common Grace

1. By this is meant, the Spirit's work in restraining native and fallen man, or to what is often called—common grace.
2. This providential work has been called "common grace" because it's gracious and common to all men without exception.

3. MLJ—"Common grace means those general operations of the Holy Spirit in which, without renewing the heart, He exercises a moral influence whereby sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted."
4. Thus, here we learn the Holy Spirit did not abandon creation after the fall but continues to work upon and within it.
5. Now, I suggest the Spirit's work in common grace entails three things—He restrains, provides, and empowers.
6. (1) He restrains—the Holy Spirit restrains fallen man and keeps him from being as wicked as he otherwise would.
7. Gen.6:3—"And the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be 120 years.'"
8. This verse refers to the Lord's resolve to destroy the world with water because of his wickedness in 120 years.
9. The word rendered "strive" literally mean "to contend or struggle with"—the Spirit would contend with that generation only for another 120 years.
10. This would give Noah sufficient time to build the ark and also allow the world time to repent from his sin and evil.
11. At the end of the 120 years, the Spirit would cease striving or contending with man and then the flood would come.
12. This is what the Spirit is doing today—He is striving or contending with man, restraining his naïve wickedness.
13. 2Thess.2:7—"He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way"—that is, until the Spirit is removed.
14. 2Thessalonians 2 speaks about a time, just prior to Christ's return, when wickedness will be allowed to expand.
15. The reason why this wickedness will expand is because the Holy Spirit, who now restrains, will be taken out of the way.
16. That is, the Holy Spirit will cease His restraining work upon this evil age and allow it to collapse upon itself, and then Christ will return.
17. Dear brethren, as wicked as this world presently is, we have no clue as to what it would be without the Holy Spirit.
18. (2) He provides—by this I mean, the Holy Spirit bestows temporal blessings upon wicked and unthankful men.
19. Matt.5:45—"for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous."
20. How does He specifically cause His sun to rise on the evil and send them rain but by the work of the Holy Spirit.
21. (3) He empowers—by this I mean, the Holy Spirit enables non-Christians to perform various good deeds or works.
22. This can be illustrated in the OT, where the Spirit gave specific skill and ability to certain men to construct the temple.
23. Ex.31:2—"I have called by name Bezalele the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving word, and to work in all manner of workmanship."
24. Now, we have no way of knowing whether these men were converted—in one sense it doesn't make any difference.
25. It was the Holy Spirit who enabled them to beautify the temple—it was by the Spirit they created good and helpful things.
26. There is a sense in which every beautiful, non-sinful act of man, is the gracious result of the Spirit's common grace.
27. Think of men who invented things that have been a blessing to mankind—not all of these have been Christian people (though a lot were).

28. Think of men who have labored to beautify this world through art and music, who have been especially skillful.
29. This again was the result of the common and generic work of the Holy Spirit, within men who never go to heaven (perhaps I can put it like this – everything good in this world is the result of the Holy Spirit).
30. Exhortation 1—Let us joyfully honor the Spirit for His work in creation and common grace—while it's true we typically think of the Spirit's work in salvation, let us not overlook His work in creation.
31. (1) Behold the beauty of the Spirit—there's a sense in which creation is the canvas, and the Holy Spirit is the painter.
32. Job 26:13—"By His Spirit He adorned the heavens"—by "heavens" are meant the sun, moon, stars, and planets.
33. The Hebrew word rendered "adorned" literally means "to beautify"—the Holy Spirit adorned or beautified the heavens.
34. Perhaps we can say—The Holy Spirit is the Beautifier of creation—all that's beautiful in it, is from His hands.
35. Though creation is in a fallen condition, it nevertheless displays the glory of God and the handiwork of the Spirit.
36. (2) Behold the patience of the Spirit—by this I refer to how the Spirit patiently endures with the evil of this world.
37. God by His Spirit, has been striving with man for thousands of years, and He will continue to do so until the end.
38. 2Pet.3:9—"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."
39. Just as the LORD waited 120 years in the days of Noah, so He waits now, and in part, to give sinners time to repent and be saved.
40. (3) Behold the love of the Spirit—by this I mean, there is a sense in which creation and providence serve the church.
41. Why did the Spirit adorn the heavens, give life to this world, and restrain the moral corruption of man? Because He loves the church!
42. Perhaps we can say—the Holy Spirit prepared this earth as a stage upon which redemption would be achieved.
43. There is a sense in which every drop of water and every blade of grass, ultimately serves His redeeming purposes.
44. LBC (5:7)—"As the providence of God does in general reach to all creatures, so after a most special manner it takes care of His church and disposes of all things to the good thereof."
45. Exhortation 2—Let us behold in the first creation a preview of the Spirit's work in the new creation—the one shadows the other.
46. And it's for this reason, the book of John starts in a similar to the book of Genesis—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word become flesh."
47. And just as the Spirit was hovering over the darkness, so the Spirit overshadowed the darkness of the virgin's womb.
48. Lk.1:35—"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.
49. And just as the Spirit spoke life into Adam, so He speaks life into dead sinners, Jn.6:63—"It is the Spirit who gives life."
50. And just as the Spirit beautified the first creation with stars, planets, and vegetation, so He beautifies the soul various graces.
51. This is why these are called "the fruit of the Spirit" because just as He causes fruit to grow on trees, He causes grace to grow in our hearts.
52. Thus, there is a real sense in which the work of the Holy Spirit in the second creation mirrors or echoes His work in the first creation.