

## Questions on Chapter 4: *God in Three Persons—the Spirit and the Trinity*

1. Read Acts 18:24-19:7. What does this passage indicate is necessary for one to receive the Holy Spirit? How does this relate to Fee's account of Rose and the Jehovah's Witnesses?
2. The Arian heresy held that the unbridgeable gulf between creator and creation meant that God could not truly have communicated his essence to Jesus, and that Jesus, while special in God's eyes, must nevertheless have been created, not eternal. The First Ecumenical Council of Nicea was called in 325 by Constantine primarily to resolve this debate. It concluded, based on a proposal from Constantine, that Jesus is of the "same substance" (*homoousios*) rather than a "similar substance" (*homoiousios*) as the Father.

Fee writes on p. 37, "...I became convinced that the reason Rose, and so many others like her, get trapped by this present-day Arianism is only in part because the Trinity is a mystery (most people, after all, prefer to reduce God to a size that their own minds can grasp, and thus control); it is also because they have been let down by the church, which continually treats the Spirit as a matter of creed and doctrine, but not as a vital experienced reality in people's lives."

How was Rose trapped in Arianism? Arianism is a demotion of Jesus from creator to creature, how would this *result* from a lack of immediacy in one's experience of the Spirit? What is Fee saying?

3. Someone somewhere (not Fee) has categorized the views of the Spirit as follows:

*Unitarian*: The Holy Spirit is an impersonal gift

*Binitarian*: The Spirit is a personification of the unity of the Father and Son

*Trinitarian*: The Spirit is a full person within the Godhead

*Nonsectarian*: Lack of clarity regarding the Spirit leads one to avoid the subject altogether

What does Fee mean by "binitarian"? Where do you fall in this list, in the areas of (a) worship; (b) doctrine; and (c) prayer?

4. Fee lists three explicitly Trinitarian passages, include 1 Cor 12:4-6 Paul: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same **Spirit**; and there are varieties of services, but the same **Lord**; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same **God** who activates all of them in everyone."

Fee says Paul "begins... by noting that diversity reflects the nature of God and is therefore the true evidence of the work of the one God in their midst. Thus the Trinity is presuppositional to the entire argument, and it is the more telling precisely because it is so unstudied, so freely and unconsciously expressed." (41) What does Fee mean by this? What is the importance of what he's saying?

5. Fee concludes that "the Trinity, including the Holy Spirit, is the ground of both our unity and our diversity within the believing community... The more truly trinitarian we are in our thinking the more vigorously we should affirm our diversity and pursue our unity" (45-46). What does this mean for the local church as well as for the church in our local community.
6. The doctrine of *appropriation* holds that each member of the Trinity is involved in every outward action of the Godhead. (E.g. Jesus' baptism, our salvation, etc.) If this is true, then it is possible to be fully Biblical while emphasizing the Father and Son and simply not focusing explicitly on the Spirit. Is this what Fee means when he says that the Spirit "has been practically excluded from the experience life of the church"? (45)



*Fun quote*: "If you deny [the doctrine of the Trinity] you will lose your salvation, but if you try to understand it you will lose your mind." —Augustine



Texts which “portray salvation as the threefold work of the triune God” (43-44):

- “For we know, brothers and sisters beloved **by God**, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel [**of Christ**] came to you not in word only, but also in power and **in the Holy Spirit** and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake.” (1 Thess 1:4-5)
- “But we must always give thanks **to God** for you, brothers and sisters beloved **by the Lord**, because **God** chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification **by the Spirit** and through belief in the truth.” (2 Thess 2:13)
- “I give thanks **to my God** always for you because of the grace **of God** that has been given you **in Christ Jesus**, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony **of Christ** has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any **spiritual gift** as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 1:4-7)
- “My speech and my proclamation [**of Christ crucified**—see v. 2] were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration **of the Spirit** and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the **power of God**.” (1 Cor 2:4-5)
- “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit** that is **from God**, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed [**in the cross**—see again v. 2] on us by God.” (1 Cor 2:12)
- “And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed [**by God**—the divine passive implies God as actor], you were sanctified, you were justified in the name **of the Lord Jesus Christ** and **in the Spirit** of our God.” (1 Cor 6:11)
- “Or do you not know that your body is a temple **of the Holy Spirit** within you, which you have **from God**, and that you are not your own? For you were bought [**by Christ**—see 7:22-23] with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. ” (1 Cor 6:19-20)
- “But it is **God** who establishes us with you **in Christ** and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us **his Spirit** in our hearts as a first installment.” (2 Cor 1:21-22)
- “You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that **Jesus Christ** was publicly exhibited as **crucified!** The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you **receive the Spirit** by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. Well then, **does God** supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?” (Gal 3:1-5)
- “For **God has done** what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by **sending his own Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but **according to the Spirit**.” (Romans 8:3-4)
- “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘**Abba! Father!**’ it is **that very Spirit** bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs **with Christ**—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.” (Rom 8:15-17)
- “Let the word **of Christ** dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual [Spirit-inspired—Fee] songs **to**

**God.”** (Col 3:16)

- “I pray that the **God** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, the Father of glory, may give you a **spirit of wisdom and** revelation as you come to know him” (Eph 1:17)
- “...for through him [**Jesus**] both of us have access **in one Spirit to the Father.**” (Eph 2:18)

In prayer, for example, we might address the Father as co-heirs with Jesus and by virtue of his atonement, and simply not articulate that it is “that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:15-17). Reflecting on our salvation we might thank God that “by the Lord... God chose you as the first fruits for salvation” forgetting this happened “through sanctification by the Spirit” (2 Thess 2:13). We worship God and bring glory to his Son but may not always recall that we “worship in the Spirit of God” (Phil 3:3). In studying the word of God we come to a greater depth of understanding of the work of Christ, but may not notice that it is the Spirit accomplishing this in us (Eph 1:17; Gal 3:1-5). God the Father has saved us through his Son, but we may not always recall that the proof and assurance of this is that he put his seal on us and gave us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment (2 Cor 1:21-22).