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*I Believe in God the Father – The
Apostles' Creed, Part 1*

September 10, 2023

Sermon Text: Hebrews 11:6

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The Heidelberg Catechism takes its name from the city in which it was written, over 460 years ago in the city of Heidelberg. It was ordered by a German prince, Frederick, to be written for the purpose of uniting his people and mending factions among reformed people.

Two men were chosen to write it, Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus who were gifted preachers and theologians, being only in their 20's.

The catechism is arranged in three parts, that outline based upon Paul's Epistle to the Romans:

1. Man's Sin and Guilt – the Law of God
2. Man's redemption and freedom – The Grace of God in Jesus Christ
3. Man's Gratitude and Obedience – New Life Through the Holy Spirit

The catechism opens with this great heading – “Our Only Comfort” – and question/answer number one reads like this:

Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own,[1] but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death,[2] to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.[3] He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil.[5] He also preserves me in such a way[6] that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head;[7] indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.[8] Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life[9] and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.[10]

[1] *I Cor. 6:19, 20* [2] *Rom. 14:7-9.* [3] *I Cor. 3:23; Tit. 2:14.* [4] *I Pet. 1:18, 19; I John 1:7; 2:2.* [5] *John 8:34-36; Heb. 2:14, 15; I John 3:8.* [6] *John 6:39, 40; 10:27-30; II Thess. 3:3; I Pet. 1:5.* [7] *Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18.* [8] *Rom. 8:28.* [9] *Rom. 8:15, 16; II Cor.*

1:21, 22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13, 14. [10] Rom. 8:14.

The Heidelberg, therefore, sets out what Reformed people have called “The Triple Knowledge.” We see this in the second question and answer to be used on Lord’s Day Two (the catechism is designed to be used each Lord’s Day, there being 52 questions and answers) –

2. Q. What do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. **First**, how great my sins and misery are;[1] **second**, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery;[2] **third**, how I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance.[3]

[1] *Rom. 3:9, 10; I John 1:10.*
[2] *John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43.* [3] *Matt. 5:16; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 5:8-10; I Pet. 2:9, 10.*

Now, starting at Lord’s Day #7, saving faith in Christ is addressed

and at Question 21 we are asked, “What is True Faith”? –

21. Q. What is true faith?

A. True faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word.[1] At the same time it is a firm confidence[2] that not only to others, but also to me,[3] God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation,[4] out of mere grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.[5] This faith the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the gospel.[6]

[1] John 17:3, 17; Heb. 11:1-3; James 2:19. [2] Rom. 4:18-21; 5:1; 10:10; Heb. 4:16. [3] Gal. 2:20. [4] Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:10. [5] Rom.3:20-26; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10. [6] Acts 16:14; Rom. 1:16; 10:17; I Cor. 1:21.

And then, the logical question follows (questions 22 to 24) –

22. Q. What, then, must a Christian believe?

A. All that is promised us in the Gospel,[1] which the articles of our

catholic and undoubted Christian faith teach us in a summary.

[1] Matt. 28:19; John 20:30, 31.

23. Q. What are these articles?

A. I believe in God, the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Lord's Day 8

Q. 24. How are these articles divided?

A. Into three parts:

God the Father and our creation;
God the Son and our deliverance;
and God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

Among other topics, the catechism also gives an exposition of the Law of God, the ten commandments, and in addition an exposition of the Lord's Prayer.

It is then to these "articles of our faith," the Apostles' Creed, that we now turn our attention to. We begin with a few explanatory remarks.

First, this Creed is a concise summary of *biblical* doctrine. Just as you might read a church doctrinal statement, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, we are using the Apostles' Creed as a tool (symbol is the classical term; "symbolics" is the field of study of the creeds and confessions) which defines what the gospel is according to the Holy Scriptures. These symbols are very necessary

to the church because they expose false teachers, pinning them down and forcing them to state clearly what they are teaching. These symbols were in fact written because of some heresy which was threatening the church. For example, the Nicene Creed written even earlier than the Apostles' Creed (circa 325 AD), was adopted in order to expose and condemn the heresies of Arius concerning the Trinity and the deity of Christ:

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into

heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Let's begin then at the beginning with this opening declaration of what is necessary to be believed in order to be saved:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

And this takes us to our scripture text for this morning:

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The Apostle has just been speaking of actual cases of faith by which these believers pleased God:

Heb 11:1-5 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (2) For by it the people of old received their commendation. (3) By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. (4) By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (5) By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.

By faith, by faith, by faith – and the list will continue through the rest of the chapter, concluding this way:

Heb 11:32-40 And what more shall I say? For time would fail me

to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— (33) who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, (34) quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. (35) Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. (36) Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— (38) of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (39) And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, (40) since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made

perfect.

Do you want to know what real, saving faith is? You need look no further than here. Faith sees the unseen and will not exchange the promises of God for the trinkets of the world.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

You will notice that a fundamental necessity of saving faith is that its object must be the living and true God. It is not enough, in other words, to simply say, “I believe in God.” Many people will answer in the affirmative if asked “do you believe in God?” But in the majority of cases this “god” they profess is one of their own creation, a product of man’s own imagination. An idol.

Therefore the Bible, and thus the Creed, insists upon more specifics. The God we must believe in is:

- The Father Almighty
- Maker of heaven and earth

“...for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists...

“He” is the God of the Bible. And this is very the God whom the mass of mankind refuses to confess. The Apostle Paul addressed this very evil in Romans 1 –

Rom 1:18-23 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (21) For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping

things.

I believe in God the Father Almighty – the first Person of the Holy Trinity, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that He is the Almighty One in whom rests ALL and infinite power and might. He is the God against whom no enemy can stand. The God to whom even Satan and his evil hordes are bound to obey.

And He is the One who, by this almighty power, *created all things, the heavens and the earth.*

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

In this brief statement we have the very truths by which the sinner’s unbelief and wickedness is exposed. People who quickly claim “I believe in God,” are instantly exposed – “Oh, so then you believe in God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the first Person of the Trinity, the Creator of Heaven and Earth and therefore your own Creator to whom you are obligated to give acknowledgment, praise, and thanksgiving?”

You see it? It is quickly revealed that these kind of “God believers” do not believe in the living and true God at all. In fact, they hate Him and any declaration that they are guilty before Him because they embrace a false god of their own making and they refuse to give the true God acknowledgment and thanks, will bring out their fangs.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

How many professing Christians today deny the historicity of Genesis and thus deny the opening lines of the Bible – *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* You cannot hold to the lie that the universe is eternal, that somehow on its own it just broke into being and that life, including human life, is a product of time and random chance.

“Well, I believe that God used evolutionary process to create the universe and life.” So-called “theistic evolution.” Let me ask this of such a person – *How is God going to create the New Heavens and Earth?* Through billions of

years of randomness and chance? Of course not:

2Pe 3:1-13 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, (2) that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

(3) knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

(5) For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water **by the word of God**, (6) and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

(7) **But by the same word the**

heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

(8) But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (9) The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

(10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

(11) Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, (12) waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

(13) But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

God speaks and it is done. No, you cannot deny that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and that He did so by a Word, and be a Christian. All of these things are encompassed in this first phrase of the catechism –

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Pastor Herman Hoeksema wrote a 3-volume exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism. Listen to some of his remarks on this opening confession of the Apostles' Creed-

“The believer does not mean to say: ‘I believe in some Unknown One, and I know not what I say when I say *God*.’” On the contrary, in the words *Credo in Deum*, he takes the stand that God is known, because He has revealed Himself.” [The Triple Knowledge, Reformed Free Publishing]

To expand on this, when we say that “I believe in God,” what the Christian means is that he believes in the revelation by which God has made Himself known to us. We believe His general revelation in His creation. We believe in His special revelation in the Scriptures wherein we have the Word of God incarnate who declares to us – “he who has seen Me has seen the Father.” We believe in the God of the Bible because we believe His Word.

And so, it necessarily follows that anyone who denies that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God is simply not a Christian. Because such a person cannot say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. This God, the living and true God –

Heb 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Heb 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the

prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

It is, then, only the genuine Christian who can say in truth, *I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.* Only the true church of Jesus Christ can make this confession:

1Co 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

The necessary gift of God which enables a person to confess truly – “I believe in God” – is the gift of faith.

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

The unregenerate sinner is hostile to God and cannot please Him because he or she is devoid of this

faith. The Christian exercises faith which is given him by God so that he believes by that faith whatever God's Word says. He does not sit in judgment on that Word. He does not inject his own ideas about God into that Word. God has spoken and the Christian believes.

Also, we see this in the confession
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1Jn 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

1Jn 4:12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

2Co 5:7 for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Exo 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

That is to say, when we confess "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth," we are declaring our believe in God who is Spirit, and whom we have never seen. We believe in His promise of a new heavens and earth, which we have never seen.

Heb 11:8-10 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. (9) By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. (10) For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Heb 11:13-16 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (14) For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. (15) If they had been thinking of that land from

which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. (16) But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

All of these truths, and no doubt more, are included in the Christian's confession –

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth...

Let's each one carefully examine ourselves in this light. Is this God of the Bible the God you confess? Or is your confession of another god of your own imagination? Our enemy is crafty and subtle and always working to deceive us to lead us away from Christ down that broadway to destruction. Watch and pray and ask the Lord to show you which path you are on.