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Tillamook, Oregon

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*I Believe in God the Father – The  
Apostles' Creed, Part 2*

*September 17, 2023*

**Sermon Text: Hebrews 11:6**

**Scripture Reading: Romans 3:9-31**

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.

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?  
[And here then we have our subject, the Apostles' Creed] -

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.

I would like to consider in more detail this matter of *faith*. Because as the Apostles' Creed emphasizes ["I believe...], it is by faith alone in Christ alone that is the channel through which our justification, our righteousness before God, is received. Many people may claim that they believe in God or even in Christ, and yet their faith is a false faith and their salvation is a delusion.

First, however, here is just a bit more background to the Apostles' Creed in general. Here is William Perkins [1558-1602] on this topic:

"This Creed is a badge (from the word 'Symbolum' and thus "symbol") because as a soldier in the field by his badge and livery (an identifying design that designates ownership), is known as to what captain he belongs, even so by this Creed, this expression of faith, a Christian may be distinguished and known from all Jews, Turks, atheists and all false professors.

For this reason it is called a badge or symbol.”

“It is called the Apostles’ Creed because it contains in summary the chief and principal points of religion, handled and propounded in the doctrine of the apostles (as known from the Holy Scriptures). It is a summation of things to be believed concerning God and concerning His church, gathered forth from the Scriptures for the helping of the memory and understanding of men.

This Creed was written in the form of an answer to the question. ‘what do you believe’ when a person was to be baptized. He answered then according to the form of this Creed, ‘I believe in God....’ And so on.

Perkins went on to say that although “all people for the most part among us can say this Creed, yet now one in a thousand truly knows the real use of it and commonly it is recited as a prayer without understanding and when used so men make it to be no better than a superstitious charm.” We must not err in this respect.

This past week I drove by a Roman Catholic church (I will comment on this word “catholic” in a moment and show you that the Roman Catholic church is neither Catholic nor a church). As we drove by, I saw on a display board in front of the church building this statement, “We place our trust in Jesus.”

Now here is a perfect illustration of why the Apostles’ Creed (and other confessions of faith such as the Nicene Creed, the Westminster Confession, etc) are vital and necessary. “We place our trust in Jesus” says Rome. The Creed however says this about Jesus:

**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.

Now, it is without question that Rome is guilty of idolatry. Rome has created and worships a false god. How is this you say? Because the Jesus of Rome is not the Jesus of the Bible. I will show you.

The Jesus of the Bible who, as the Creed says, suffered, was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again from the dead, effected our complete salvation. "It is finished," were his words in this regard. The work His Father gave Him to do was finished. All that was necessary for the redemption of His elect was complete.

Heb 9:24-28 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. (25) Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, (26) for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (27)

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, (28) so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Rome however, is exposed by the Creed to be a lie. Because the Jesus Rome puts forth is a Jesus who has not completed the work of redemption. Whose blood was not sufficient. More is required on man's part. We must, for example, suffer in purgatory for our sins until that suffering is enough in God's sight for us to be considered righteous by Him. The Jesus of Rome can only say, "It is not finished. I have done my part, now man must do the rest." And so, Rome invents these unholy sacraments - *baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, reconciliation ( confession ), marriage, anointing of the sick, and holy orders.*

In addition, you have this business of *penance* by which a person works to atone for his or her sins.

And then there is that blasphemous practice known as the mass in which the Roman Jesus is sacrificed over and over and over again.

The Jesus of Rome does not have the same Mary as the Mary of the Bible. The Roman Mary is elevated virtually to deity, who whom we are to pray and who operates as a kind of co-worker with Christ in redeeming the sinner.

All of this to say, as the Apostle Paul put it –

2Co 11:3-4 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (4) For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

In our day, many professing Christians want to go soft on Rome's heresies. When they do

this they expose their sinful foolishness. Rome is the master work of Satan. It is a false church with a false Jesus, a false baptism, a false eucharist, a false priesthood, a false gospel, and that false apostle, the Pope.

As Paul said plainly, this is the work of that cunning serpent of old who deceived Eve and who leads people today away from Christ. Rome comes and proclaims another Jesus, a different spirit, and a different gospel. If anyone listening today is offended by these truths, then this is a challenge to you – why are you offended? Rome is the work of Antichrist. Everything about it is a counterfeit and cheat. Rome will mouth the words, "I believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son," and profess the virgin birth and the resurrection, the Roman Jesus is no Savior at all. He is a false god and thus Rome is an idol temple pronounced anathema (damned by God) by God's own word-

Gal 1:8-9 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we

preached to you, let him be accursed. (9) As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Rome is no church. She is in agreement and form and spirit with that harlot of Revelation 17 –

Rev 17:4-6 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. (5) And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations.” (6) And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.

Now, I said that Rome is not only a false church, but she has no right to the title of “Catholic.” Catholic, a word appearing here in the Creed -

**I believe** in... the holy catholic church,

Many people balk at this because, rightly so, they do not want to confess that they believe in the Roman “church.” But this has nothing to do with Rome. The word “catholic” means “universal.” Rome claims that it is the true Christian church and is to be acknowledged universally, in all times and places, to be that true church. But this is a lie.

When we profess to believe in the holy Catholic church, we are professing faith in the true and only body of Christ, that there is no other true church in any time nor in any place throughout creation. That the church of Jesus Christ is the church of all the elect, whether Jew or Gentile, no matter what race –

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

I hope then that no one listening today will be naïve enough to drive by a Roman Catholic “church,” see a sign that says “We put our trust in Jesus,” and drive on satisfied and content that while Rome has its

errors, it trusts in Jesus and that is really what matters. *That sign is a lie from Satan and to believe it is to go right along with his deception.* We cannot walk down a middle path, neither right nor left, with one foot in Broadway and the other supposedly in the narrow way. Jesus will not have middle of the roaders.

This then is an example of why we need symbols such as the Apostles' Creed and why we must be understanding and wise about just what it is we are confessing when we say, "I believe..."

What then, is this "faith"? What does it mean when we confess "I believe" in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? If you have been following our mid-week study of Ephesians, this passage should be coming to your mind by now –

Eph 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which

God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Paul right at the start of this Epistle, has been showing that our salvation is entirely the work of God to which we contribute nothing. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling...". Our salvation is entirely due to God's own good pleasure, not due to anything in us. Likewise His passing by of the rest is in accordance with His own good pleasure which is always righteous.

And here in this second chapter he continues to drive this truth home – it is by grace we have been saved. And this salvation in Christ comes *through faith*, but even that faith is no grounds for boasting. Why? Because it is a gift. A gift given to Christ's people when He regenerates us – that is, when we are born again. Everything about the genuine Christian is the work of God. Even the works we do out of obedience to this faith and out of love for Christ, cannot be boasted of because they were "prepared beforehand" by the Lord.

Faith then, this faith through which we are saved, is not of man. The sinner in fact is not capable of saving faith because he does not possess it. He may deduce from creation that there is a God and thereby claim “I believe in God,” but this is all still human ability – it is not saving faith. The devil can declare “I believe in God.”

If we are ever going to be saved, we must be done with this lie that man in his nature, as born into this world, has at least some degree of “free will.” That is to say, he or she can “choose Christ.” That he or she has the ability to seek God and find Him. God’s Word says otherwise –

Act 17:22-34 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. (23) For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, **I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.**

(24) The God who made the world

and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, (25) nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (26) And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, (27) that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

(28) for “‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “‘For we are indeed his offspring.’ (29) Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

(30) The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, (31) because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he

has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

(32) Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, **some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”**

**(33) So Paul went out from their midst. (34) But some men joined him and believed,** among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Why did “some men join him and believed” while most of them mocked and procrastinated? It is because in this hearing of the gospel, God opened their ears and eyes and granted the gift of faith to them, by which they believed.

Notice here that by man’s efforts, even the wisest in the world’s wisdom like those Athenian philosophers, he can never find God. The best he can do is conclude that some god must exist, but we can know nothing about Him. And we cannot – unless God reveals Himself to us and grants us faith.

People will go about in their life looking for God and even claiming they have found Him.

- They create god in their own mind
- They go to Islam or Buddha
- They go to Rome
- They turn to philosophy like the Athenians
- They will even run after some false Jesus or false prophet as found in Mormonism or Christian Science.
- They will embrace the false Jesus taught in many evangelical and liberal churches

*But genuine faith will always have as its object, the Son – the Lord Jesus Christ and He will only be found in the gospel which is His power to salvation-*

Rom 10:8-15 But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); (9) because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will

be saved.

(10) For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (11) For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”

(12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

(13) For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

(14) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

(15) And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

Here is wisdom – here is reason to examine ourselves. It is, as we have said, quite easy for a person to say that they believe in Christ. To even

mouth the words of the Creed. “I believe, I believe, I believe.” But what is the nature of this claimed faith? Has it come from the person, or from God?

Let me give you some an example to help in this self-examination. Now perhaps you were raised in a church, or in professing Christian home. Or maybe who came to a point in your life when you professed belief in Christ and were even baptized and joined a local church. *But there are many, many people who have done all this and yet they are not in possession of real, saving faith given to them as a gift from God. MANY will come to Jesus and say to Him on the Day, ‘Lord, Lord....’?*

And so I ask you, has there ever been a point in your life when all of that external religion – became internal. Of the heart.

Let’s think on this further.

Was there ever a time in your life and perhaps it was a process or perhaps in an instant, when your professed faith became real? That is to say, when you realized that

you were no longer just going through the motions, but Christ became real to you, His Word became real food and drink to you, the preaching of His Word became truth to you, and when you picked up your Bible to read, you had to have more because the lights had gone on and you now hungered to know Christ more. A time when your acquaintances and family perhaps accused you of “going to far” in this business.

Was there a time when you realized that the Lord had drawn near to you and you wanted to draw near to Him? This is true faith in action, you see.

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.

In other words, *you who profess to believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, where did your faith come from?* From God, or from yourself? Has this gift of faith come to you from the Lord, or is

your faith something that is man-made?

Without this faith which is heaven’s gift, *it is impossible to please God*. It is impossible to recite the Creed and to be able to genuinely declare – I believe.

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.**

No one can confess faith in Christ unless God has given them this faith. Has this faith ever come to you? By it you will love Christ – you won’t just mouth a faith which originates in yourself. You will love Christ’s people. You will evidence the fruits of the Spirit. You will give yourself to the hearing of God’s Word. You will be ready to suffer for wearing this badge of Christ in a world that mocks and hates Him. This is faith. The faith that only God can give. Do you have it?

Let’s close then by this – if we have this gift of faith, this gift from God,

then by it and by our being in Christ, *God is pleased with us*. That is to say, He has adopted us as His children, owned us as His people, justified us by Christ's righteousness, forgiven us our sins, raised us up with Christ seated in heaven, and He loves us with a love unsearchable. All condemnation is gone. We who were once His enemies and He ours, are now at peace. By His doing we can truly say, I believe.