

The Creeds of the Faith Part 7

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- [0 : 00] Welcome, brothers and sisters. This will be our final class on the creeds.! Father in heaven, Lord, we thank you for your rich example of faithfulness, Lord, to your church.
- Lord, that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Father, that you have been faithful in the past, and so we can be assured that you will be faithful today. And that you will guard us, protect us, and that you will bring us safely home.
- Father, we pray that today will be edifying. Lord, there be unity and love. And, Father, just sincere thankfulness toward you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.
- All right. Well, ignore this for another 10, 15 minutes. So today, this year marks the 1700th year of the Nicene Creed.
- And Christians around the world have been pausing, using this as an opportunity to reflect, again, at the rich heritage of the creeds that we have.
- [1 : 32] And creeds, if you recall, come from the word credo. I believe, believing, confessing. These are truths that God calls the church to believe and confess.
- And in this class, I'm going to use the word creeds and confessions almost synonymously. They're very similar in function.
- It's been said confessions are about what we believe. Creeds are about in whom we believe. Creeds tend to be more ecumenical in the early church, universal in nature.
- Confessions, on the other hand, come from the Protestant Reformation and tend to be more comprehensive. There might be a more surgical way of distinguishing creeds and confessions, but that's just a roadmap for us.
- And we do have a rich heritage that reminds us that we join an assembly of believers across the ages, both saints today and saints from yesterday, from the past.
- [2 : 38] As we're thinking about this, in the old world, Christians often created graveyards on church property, mostly in the UK, but here in Connecticut as well.
- And it was a reminder that when you came to church, that you join the communion of saints, present and the past.
- You walk into church, and you join the saints who have gone before us, those who have departed to a better place. And being a member of the church universal is to be a part of that community, a community that stretches back to antiquity.
- And we're united in the faith that we confess. And I've been encouraged just throughout this class where we stand in line with generations of Christians who believe the same things we believe today.
- That should be a rich encouragement for us. So let me recap some of what we've discussed, and then we're going to pivot and look at creeds for today. And when we discuss the creeds, Christians can either have a healthy or an unhealthy relationship to the past.

[3 : 54] An unhealthy relationship to the past is when we elevate traditions to the place of Scripture, where we begin to venerate human teachers. Or on the flip side, an unhealthy relationship to the past is when we try to reinvent the wheel every Sunday.

A healthy respect means we recognize that the Spirit of God has been at work in the church. Every age, every generation of Christians are called to study, proclaim, and live out the Scripture.

But we have healthy models from our brothers and sisters in Christ who have taken God's Word, applied it to the challenges of their day, and we need to pay attention and learn from their example.

That's a healthy relationship to the past, where we stand on the shoulder of giants. You know, when there's a crisis, you're going to have Scripture come to mind, right?

But what else? Hymns will start to come to mind. Maybe it is well, great is thy faithfulness. And in sickness and chronic struggles, how many times have people quoted as a comfort Heidelberg Catechism?

[5 : 10] What is my only comfort in life and death? Maybe some of you have quoted that answer, that I am not my own, but belong body and soul in life and in death to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

So in clear, powerful words, this reminds us that we can rejoice because we belong to the One who laid down His life for us. True comfort and assurance.

Again, not Scripture. And the Heidelberg Catechism wouldn't claim to be Scripture. But maybe that statement reminds you of John 10, where Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. Or maybe it reminds you of Psalm 100, verse 3. Know that the Lord, He is God. It is He who made us, and we are His, and we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

In the same way, martyrs march to their death, reciting the words of the creeds. Again, not Scripture. Remember, these creeds are helpful summaries of biblical teaching.

[6 : 12] Going back to our first class, this is not the inspired, authoritative Word of God. It's not additional, special revelation. We do not claim infallibility for creeds. Yet these creeds are helpful summaries.

They're hearing aids to help us strengthen our understanding of the Scripture. And these are summaries. They're doctrinal aspirations of the Church. Here's what we believe.

Here's what we aspire to. When you come into our Church, here's what you can expect to be taught. We're not replacing Scripture. We're using them as helpful summaries.

And so if someone asks you a question, you know, who is Jesus? What does it mean to be a Christian? What is the Church? What role do good works have in the Christian life?

You could say, well, you know, I believe in what the New Testament teaches on those things. Okay. And you could just start from Genesis 1-1 and start citing a list of Bible verses.

[7 : 16] That's one way of doing that. Or you could do what most people do, and you start to summarize of what the Bible teaches. But as soon as we say to summarize, we're moving in the direction of creedal statements.

In our second class, we discussed how creeds were used by Christians in the early Church. We talked about people like Irenaeus and Tertullian and Ignatius, and who used the rule of faith to summarize those matters which were at the heartbeat of their faith.

The rule had things like the Trinity and creation, God's grace, Christ's incarnation, his suffering, his resurrection, the ascension, his second coming in judgment. They emphasized Jesus was really, really, really, really human in contrast to the heresies of their day.

And just like laws that are passed after an offense, creeds were often a response against heresy, where theological error forced the Church into articulating theological clarity.

I remember Raul said, creeds are not intellectualistic. You know, someone sitting in their study, it's because from within and without, they are clarifying, because there's a threat to the Church.

[8 : 30] And we talked about the Nicene Creed, a response against Arianism. You know, Arian said the Son was highly exalted, even a divine figure, but a creature, nonetheless.

There was a time when the Son was not. And we saw Arian used evasive language, maybe similar to Jehovah's Witnesses today. But the Church had to formulate terminology that became a guardrail to protect the Church.

Christ is of the same substance as the Father. And we talk about Constantinople, response to those who deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit, or Chalcedon, a response to the nature of Jesus, fully God and fully man, the hypostatic union.

So that's what we've been discussing as these last six weeks. So let's pivot for creed for today.

Are creeds still relevant? One way we could say this, to creed or not to creed? That is the question. Like Shakespeare, we're thinking about creeds.

[9 : 38] So first, I think three things I want us to consider together. First, I'm going to suggest that creeds protect against authoritarianism in churches.

Authoritarianism in churches. Second, we're going to discuss how the Apostles' Creed speaks to modern cultural issues. And third, we're going to conclude by looking at future creeds.

Creeds that have not yet been written. So before we do that, let's make sure that we don't miss the wood from the trees. This is a reminder for myself, as it were.

If the creeds are large red oaks that have withstood the test of time in God's kingdom, it's not the main tree, right? It's not the gospel.

So let's keep the main thing the main thing. There are godly Christians who disagree about the use of creeds. And you know what? We'll spend eternity with them.

[10 : 37] This is an inner family conversation. All right? And more liturgical Protestant traditions, our brothers and sisters in Lutheran traditions, the Presbyterians, Anglicans, some Baptists, creeds are used within churches.

not only for protecting doctrine, but teaching it to help memorize these fundamental truths. And you'll often hear that Baptists do not recite creeds.

Well, that might be true of many Baptists in America today, but that historically has not been the case. There's kind of been a fear that only Roman Catholics recite creeds.

We're Bible people. Baptists are an electric bunch, right? So we are, it's a wide tent. And we have brothers and sisters who are Baptists who we love.

They're good Christians who love the Lord, love the gospel, who disagree with the use of creeds. And that's okay. I just want to keep the main thing the main thing, that we both love Jesus and we're committed to the authority of Scripture.

[11 : 42] But I want to suggest that creeds protect against authoritarianism in churches. Because, you know, every church has a creed. And even the pastor who gets up to the pulpit and claims, we have no creed, but the Bible actually has a creed.

And I've been influenced by Carl Truman on this question. And he has a book called The Creedal Imperative where he writes this. The only difference between someone who claims no creed, but the Bible, and a creedalist is this.

The creedalist writes his creed down. What he, the non-creedalist, really should say is this. I have a creed, but I am not going to write it down.

So you cannot critique it or test it by the Scripture. And I am going to identify my creed so closely with the Bible that I am not going to be able to critique it either. So in other words, he's saying, when we refuse to acknowledge our own framework, framework, we refuse actually for an opportunity for others to publicly scrutinize what we as a church believe.

So creeds actually help to avoid authoritarian leaders in churches. How? Well, every church has boundaries. Every church draws boundaries. And when you write it down, when you write those boundaries down, you give others the benefit of knowing where those boundaries are.

[13 : 10] And I wonder if you've ever been in a church where there's just underground landmines where you actually don't know where those boundaries are until you've crossed it.

And worse than that, one person can change that boundary in secret. So rather than having above-ground fences where it's a clearly delineation of here's what we as a church believe, you have people who are afraid of abandoning of crossing boundaries, but they're not actually quite sure where those are.

And I think historically, J.A. Packer, he wrote that historic creeds assist the church in carrying out four principal responsibilities. The first is disciplinary, so guarding.

You're guarding the truth from error. The second is doxological or worship. Third is declarative, witnessing.

And fourth is didactic or teaching or instruction. So that's how the creeds have normally been used. And so for today, I want to consider witnessing. How does the Apostles' Creed help us to witness?

[14 : 22] And can the Apostles' Creed speak to our modern challenges? So in North America, you know, there's been a general idea, I would say, within the past 100 years, maybe, of course, farther back than that, of what constitutes Christian belief.

It's often been assumed, right? But for various reasons, we've entered into a consciously post-Christian, even anti-Christian outlook. So when churches recite, share the gospel and evangelism, they'll often use something called the Romans' road.

And I want us to talk about that together. The Romans' road to evangelism, where they present the gospel to a non-believer. The ABC method, admit, believe, confess.

All right? And the Romans' road typically goes like this. Okay, admit that you are a sinner. And they recite Romans, chapter 3, verse 23. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And they'll say, well, and then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

And believe that He laid His life down for sinners. And then third, confess Jesus as the risen Lord and He will welcome you into heaven. Okay, so you may have seen some of these ways of presenting the gospel.

[15 : 41] But let me ask this question to all for all of us here. What information do you think this assumes about the non-Christian hearer who is listening to this? What are we assuming about that?

Luke. Yes, exactly. I mean, this kind of makes no sense if you don't know what a sinner is or what an idea of sin.

Exactly. Anything else? That they know who Jesus is? Like what He said about Himself? Yep. Jesus is undefined here.

Yep. Excuse me? God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. This certainly could create a whole bunch of pastoral issues down the line. Yes.

Yes. Anything else? It assumes that the modern reader or hearer acknowledges the existence of the biblical God.

[16 : 41] Mm-hmm. Yes. Yeah, that God has certain demands on your life. Yeah. Yeah. When a person is suppressing the truth and unrighteousness, all of this doesn't mean anything.

He doesn't believe miracles. His conscience is seared maybe. Mm-hmm. It's a smorgasbord of belief that you believe and doesn't mean a thing to me.

Right. I'm trying to find out where I'm going to get my next meal. You're talking about a guy that rose to the dead. Yes. Yeah. So I would suggest that the ABC method is not enough in our current day.

The gospel call is not understood. There's an ignorance of who God is. So if you told a pagan that Jesus was Lord, you know, they might think, okay, he's one of many options. And the problem, this problem ran deep in the early church in the Roman Empire.

And so the Apostles' Creed was actually born as an instrument for evangelism. All right. So do you think you can find the gospel in the Apostles' Creed? Anybody want to give a shot?

[17 : 48] Is the gospel in there? Yeah. Forgiveness of sins, communion of the saints, he ascended into heaven, he's sitting at the right hand of the Father, he will come and judge the living and the dead.

Mm-hmm. Right. It starts with creation. God is the maker of everything, including ourselves. And the Father's care for everything is of heaven and earth.

And so he's Lord over it all. Then the incarnation, right, the Son stepping down into creation, his humiliation, into death, and his resurrection. He's reigning, soon returning as royal judge.

And what was his mission? To suffer, to die for the forgiveness of sins. And we have the Spirit's power in our lives. And we're going to talk more about this section particularly.

And we have a future hope. So really what the Apostles' Creed is doing, and you can make sense why the writers of the Creed would need to have this written down, is that they're providing a biblical theology of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

[19 : 02] And it's giving content to the entire scheme of the biblical storyline. And it's radically God-centered and it requires a reorientation of our entire lives when we confess that Jesus is Lord.

And so I think that schema would be helpful for people today who don't understand this part, especially that God is the creator. Or who Jesus was.

And I think it also does something else besides providing biblical theology. And I've been reflecting on Tim Keller's words before he died in his writing on church renewal.

He wrote about the idea of the church needing to do counter-catechesis. And counter-catechesis is what the church has always done. And it's using biblical doctrine to deconstruct the beliefs of the culture around us and then provide alternative narratives to the secular narratives.

So counter-catechesis, he's not saying using actual Q&A; catechesis. He's just saying we need to provide a Christian narrative of what's most true in the world over and again secular narratives that are bombarding us every day.

[20 : 17] And I think we can do better. Those have still yet to be written. But I think the Apostles' Creed actually helps with that. It helps us to understand the kind of world we live in.

It helps us to understand a counter-narrative of what's most true in the world. And as pilgrims, we need to avoid being squeezed into the mold of this world but constantly being renewed by the...

renewing our mind with God's truth. And so, I want us to consider the Apostles' Creed almost in a counter-catechetical way where we're contrasting it with secular creeds.

And so, let's consider the secular creed together. So this month, Pride Month, is almost a liturgical calendar to a modern secular creed.

Rebecca McLaughlin has called one creed you might see during the election day, during the election season, where you might see a sign like this. It says, In this house we believe, so credo, we believe black lives matter.

[21 : 23] Women's rights are human rights. No human is illegal. Science is real. Love is love. Kindness is everything. Right? So we've gone from an age of moral relativism to an age concerned acutely with issues of what is of justice, of what is right and wrong.

And that is a creed. That's a secular creed, as Rebecca says. And the point isn't to disentangle these ideas but just to recognize we live in a very creedal age.

And we face challenges of rival conceptions of what is most true of things like rising individualism and autonomy and freedom.

Everyone has the right to decide what's right for them. That's true freedom, right? Throw off traditions and expectations. Let what's inside of you come outside. Our biggest problem could be political repression, trauma from your past, people's judgmental attitudes.

the problem comes from outside of you. And Charles Taylor calls this ethic expressive individualism. It's a story we live by.

[22 : 29] It's the air we breathe. And Pride Month is almost an annual liturgical calendar where we can act these beliefs out as a culture. But on top of that, the secular creed has a very has an understanding of power that would be different than what I think Christians' idea of power is.

Where in the secular creed, the idea of power is almost always harmful. You know, freedom is the ability to do what you want and power is the ability to make others do what you want.

Christianity is just a raw form of power to control and to oppress. And according to some, everything can be reduced to matters of power. Who has it? Who doesn't have it? And any use of power power is of a dominant group maintaining its state of dominance by imposing its control.

And power invokes negative emotion that's damaging, it's bad. It's like a sheep in the jaws of a tiger. Many find themselves in the jaws of an abusive leader, an abusive pastor who abuses the sheep.

But the creed has a lot to say about power and how Christians understand power. And I'm indebted to our brother from down under, Reese Bezzant for his thoughts on this.

[23 : 46] After all, what is power? What does the scripture say about power? And do you have any thoughts? I would say certainly there are examples of leaders using their power to enslave its victims.

Think of Pharaoh and the Israelites. But the scripture also has a lot more to say about what is power. And the creed is going to get into this. The scripture says the gospel is the power of God.

So according to the gospel, God's power actually brings life. And Jesus uses his power to rescue captives and to set them free.

So power, according to the scripture, can actually heal creation. And things can be powerful and they can bring life. So think about a defibrillator restarting someone's heart.

Powerful. Think about a helicopter rescuing a sick patient, airlifting them to the hospital to get the care they need. Think of the power of a compassionate leader who stands up for those whom God has called to protect.

[24 : 55] That's power. And according to the scripture, by God's power, Jesus was raised from the dead. And the power of the gospel raises those who are dead to new life.

Right? He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies. Paul says, in this same power is the same power working in your heart, brother and sister, by the Holy Spirit.

The power of God brings perseverance. So, according to the scripture, God's power brings healing.

And let's consider the last part of the creed together. here. I don't know if that's...

I think I can... Here we go. Try it again. Here we go. There it was.

[25 : 54] It was. It was. I hope you memorized it. Okay. It's okay. It's okay. So powerful.

So powerful. There we go. Okay. So I want us to consider this section together. I believe in the Holy Spirit. And the sentences that follow are all about the Holy Spirit's power and how the Spirit works powerfully to help us in our lives to live lives to the glory of God.

The Holy Spirit is working powerfully in our lives. To consider 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 7, God gave us not a spirit of fear but of power, of love and self-control.

The Spirit brings power but it's a different kind of power, isn't it? It's a power that the world does not have a category for. So how does the Spirit work powerfully?

The writer of the creed start with, I believe in the Holy Catholic or Universal Church. Where is God's power most evident? God's power most evident in the world.

[27 : 06] Where is His power most evident? As we see God's power working itself out, what is God's primary strategy to make us like Christ? Well, it's the church, isn't it?

This is a place where God's power is evident. And the gospel is the power of God which saves us. But week after week the gospel is applied to all of life as we become more like Christ, more holy.

It's a holy church. We belong to the holy universal church, a people for God's own possession. sin. You know, one of my favorite descriptions of the church is in Ephesians 1 verse 23 where Paul says the church is the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The church is where Christ dwells and is made manifest. This is where His presence is known. So where is God powerfully working? He's working in the church, isn't He?

And isn't it sad in our modern day that, you know, for example, after COVID there are some who have not returned to gathering with the church or those who think watching a service on their couch is equivalent to being part of this church.

[28 : 29] They have not partaken of one of God's greatest gifts. The Spirit works powerfully in the church and how many of us need to be reminded that the church is God's primary way of displaying His new creation to the world.

The Spirit is working powerfully. But not only that, the Spirit works powerfully in the communion of saints. I'm going to ask this question.

In a divided world, how might the communion of saints be a witness to God's, the Holy Spirit's power in the church? not a rhetorical question.

How might this demonstrate God's power? How might this demonstrate God's power? powerfully? How might this be a witness of the church? How might this be a witness of the communion of saints?

Surely you can't be talking about promulg killing all those tens of thousands of Irish Catholics. Well, this would be the communion of saints.

[29 : 38] Yeah, of course the church has not lived up, right? This is aspirational. This is what we aspire to. Of course we're not going, the communion of saints is not going to be perfect until glory.

And I take your point. But isn't it a witness to the Holy Spirit's power that he's so powerful that he binds us together? The communion of saints is us, right?

And not only us, but those who have left us. The union we have in Christ, this communion with each other binds us together.

So, brother and sister, we have much more in common than that which divides us. Wouldn't that be a wonderful testimony for us to church to save the world? We have the communion of saints.

We are bound together in the gospel. And I think in a divided world, that witnesses to God's power in the church. church. In Hebrews, I was thinking of Hebrews, which tells us that we have this communion together with all saints in glory.

[30 : 48] Hebrews 12, verse 22. But you have come to Mount Zion, into the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriad of angels, the general assembly, and church of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

perfect. This idea that we have come to this great assembly, which is in heaven, the spirits of the righteous made perfect, those present and past.

So the spirit works powerfully in the church, in our union in Christ together. The spirit of God works powerfully in the forgiveness of sins.

Does the Holy Spirit play a role in the forgiveness of sins? I mean, at first glance, right, the Father sends the Son to die. The Son secures our forgiveness through redemption, but does the spirit play a role at all in the forgiveness of sins?

What do you think? The answer is yes, but it's all Trinitarian. It's one plan working together. How does the spirit play a role in the forgiveness of sins?

[31 : 59] Yes, he applies the work of forgiveness into our hearts.

Yes. He reminds us of the forgiveness of sins that we have in Christ. And isn't that one of God's greatest gifts to us? You know, Jesus didn't want us to take this for granted.

And neither did the writers of the creed, and we're so likely to forget this. Remember, Jesus tells his disciples to do two things regularly. He gives us the model of the Lord's Prayer, right?

Pray like this. And in the Lord's Prayer, it says we need to ask for forgiveness. And we need to extend forgiveness to others for their sins against us. And secondly, he says, at the communion table, Jesus tells us the bread is broken, the cup poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

He's saying, church, don't forget this. Your sins are forgiven. And of course, that's easy to talk about, harder to live, isn't it?

[33 : 09] You know, forgiveness may be one of the hardest things many of us face in our lives. Truly. Has God really forgiven you for all that you've done?

Could he? Has he forgiven me? Could he forgive all the sins that I know condemn me? The voice of the accuser.

And C.S. Lewis once reflecting on his church reciting the Apostles' Creed. He wrote this in his Weight of Glory. He has a small essay called On Forgiveness.

And he writes this, we say a great many things in church, in Adam Church too, without thinking of what we are saying. For instance, we say in the Creed, I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

I've been saying it for several years before I asked myself why it was in the Creed. At first sight, it seemed hardly worth putting on. But again, if one is a Christian, I thought, of course one believes in the forgiveness of sins.

[34 : 08] It goes without saying. But the people who compiled the Creed apparently thought that this was part of our belief which needed to be reminded of every time we went to church.

And I have begun to see, as far as I'm concerned, they were right. To believe in the forgiveness of sins is not nearly so easy as I thought. Real belief in it is the sort of thing that very easily slips away, even if we don't keep on polishing it up.

So this is very easy to forget. And Jesus didn't want you, brother and sister, to take that for granted. In Christ, you have been forgiven. And for Lewis, he needed to be reminded of this truth over and over again.

I think Jesus would agree, don't forget this, you have been forgiven. He is not only able, he is willing to forgive your sins. Now, this is a radical idea.

This kind of turns the world upside down. Right? The world today pretty much believes I'm pretty much a good person. And if God is real, he will accept me because doesn't he accept everybody?

[35 : 17] But the church confesses, no, we believe in the forgiveness of sins when we confess Jesus Lord. And I wonder, it goes on to believe, I believe in the resurrection of the body.

I wonder if you've ever heard someone who thinks, you know, Christians are just always hung up talking about sex. And view the body as basically bad. You know, Christians care nothing for the material world.

Christians hate the body and are just interested in flying off to some spiritual realm somewhere. But again, the writers of the Creed thought it was very important to say not only that we believe in the resurrection, but we believe in the resurrection of the body.

So it stresses the physicality of the afterlife. And so Christians have been very positive about the body and the material world since the very beginning. We love creation.

We love the material world. When Jesus died, he came back not as a spirit, but as a body. He bodily rose from the dead. And life is a life of body and spirit.

[36 : 24] And there's going to be a day where we will be raised in our body. So Alzheimer's disease, those who have been ravaged by that horrible disease, will be changed and transformed.

Paul, remember he says, well, at the final resurrection, we will be raised and changed in glory. So Jesus wants us to remember in his word that we will be raised to new life and that new life will be bodily.

And the Creed writers want us to remind us of the same thing. And the final clause, we believe in the life everlasting. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 12, therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have such a hope, we are bold.

So when we declare the Creed, what we are saying is that this is what's in our hearts. This is what the world needs to know. The world needs to know the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Spirit in their lives.

And this is a hope that we declare and devote our lives to. The truths we believe are not localized by our own specific culture or demographic. No, these truths are universal.

- [37 : 35] We stand shoulder to shoulder through the ages of Christians who make the same profession. And so, brother and sister, I think this is a flag I personally want to fly.
- This is a profound way of summarizing the Christian faith, universally recognized. There's only one thing missing in that group. And I've been looking at it for the last ten minutes.
- And it's plain. It's, I believe in the Holy Spirit. But I, Raul, believes in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There's nothing in all that about it.
- Because it wouldn't be true if it wasn't, if his spirit wasn't indwelling me. You just said, I believe this because it's in my heart. Yeah. If the Holy Spirit wasn't in you, you wouldn't believe that.
- Right. So that's the only thing for me. Sure. And this is just a side point. Yeah. I mean, it doesn't mention grace either. It doesn't say everything we want. But I think if we use this as a teaching tool, that we could, it's certainly we would get to that point.
- [38 : 36] The Spirit is indwelling the saints. Yeah. This is a teaching tool. We have to explain what this means. And I highlighted these in red because we could also talk about the nature of Christian discipleship.
- Christ comes, his descent, right? He was conceived, born, suffered, crucified, descended. And then there's the ascents. He rose, he ascended, he's seen, he will come again.
- So there's a cross, but then there's a crown. And so we could talk about the nature of Christian living, picking up your cross, and there is a crown at the end. But I didn't get there.
- So I think, brothers and sisters, that the Apostles' Creed does speak to modern issues. And it's not just an archaic document that is, that we should just file in the filing cabinet somewhere.
- I think this, again, reproduces accurately Scripture, and Scripture is always going to speak to our modern age. church. So that's old creeds.
- [39 : 43] We have a few minutes left. What about new ones? What about new creeds? Semper reformanda, right? There's always going to be new questions for the church to answer.
- There are new challenges. There are new heresies. So should we have new creeds, new confessions, to combat new challenges? And I think I want to say the answer is yes.
- So I think, you know, we could look at the Westminster Confession. We'll be an example of Protestant churches trying to recover the Apostolic Gospel from a form of medieval Catholicism.
- We could look at the Barman Declaration, where it reiterated during Nazi Germany the independence of the church and the state and the secular Nazi totalitarian ideologies in the church.
- and the Barman Declaration, again, a summary of what Scripture teaches that the church is independent from the state. Perhaps today's day and age, we don't face a similar Westminster confession.
- [40 : 46] And, you know, the church, there are places in the church that are being co-opted by the state. And so maybe they need to revisit the Barman Declaration. But for us, you know, I think this is one issue I was reflecting on.
- You know, the moral issues we face track with the brilliant technological innovations in the last, you know, even ten years. In an age of artificial intelligence or transhumanism, where machines are helping humans advance beyond our creaturely limitations.
- Our reproductive technology like IVF or the dehumanizing impact of social media, smartphones, where many have distinct online identities divorced from their day-to-day living.

Or think about medical ethics as it relates to euthanasia. All right? An age of free-willing sexuality. What do we believe about sexuality? So I think the defining question that the next generation has to answer is, what does it mean to be human?

What is the purpose of our bodies? Right? What we need is a biblical anthropology. anthropology. And what is the soul? I think a creed would be very helpful in articulating a biblical anthropology.

[42 : 04] That would be helpful for Christians today to articulate and to teach from. You know, we've seen an explosion in the last decade of men presenting as women, women presenting as men.

There's a lot of confusion. And I think if you're like me, you struggle with some of these things. You know, you have a host of issues. You have pronouns. And what about new names for people at work?

Puberty blockers. What about a child who feels isolated and expresses internal wounding? And it's painful when they feel distressed about their own bodies in a highly sexualized culture.

You know, loved ones who are confused. And there are those within the church who say the compassionate approach, the life-giving approach is to affirm that person.

But again, this is not an issue for the ivory tower. Right? One example, Fuller Seminary just a couple weeks ago said, you know, the incarnation should be a basis for which we affirm same-sex marriage.

[43 : 06] Because the God becoming man, it's a mystery. And so this same issue is a mystery. That's how we should treat this issue. Again, is that a valid view for the incarnation?

What do you do when you're a 13-year-old and identifies as trans? The pediatrician is telling you that you have to validate that child's beliefs. And the child begins to ask you to use their own pronouns.

And you go to a pastor for counsel and they say, here's what you need to do. Follow the scripture and love your child. That's all I tell you. Just follow the scripture, love your child.

That's not helpful. That would be pastoral malpractice. So wouldn't it be good if we had theologians from around the world to come together to answer wisely, scripturally, these challenges in our day and age?

Wouldn't it be nice if we had a statement that engaged wisely with these issues based in the scripture? That it was so good that we could use it to reinforce in our teaching and to counter secular narratives?

[44 : 12] You know, of course, we don't need a confession to do that. We could just reinvent the wheel, each church doing that. Or we could acknowledge that, you know, we need the help of others.

We need thoughtful theological reflection of the church at large to help us answer faithfully this problem in our day. And I think the church that isolates itself from the wisdom of others is clearly at a disadvantage.

So if you're interested in these topics, don't worry, we're going to have a class in the fall, Lord willing, on ethics. But I think there's modern challenges and it would be wonderful if we could have brothers and sisters across the world from different denominations engaging with this issue scripturally.

So I'm going to pause there. I went through a lot. Any questions? Let me remind you that it was creeds avoid authoritarianism.

Second is the Apostles' Creed speaks to modern issues. And third, there is a place for new creeds, for new challenges.

[45 : 25] questions. Yeah.

Do you really think it's possible to address some of these issues like an anthropology that speaks to our day, et cetera, et cetera, in a creedal statement that is as succinct and memorable as the Apostles' Creed?

That's a good question. That would be hard to do. But I think...

So that's why I was increasing confessions very similarly. It's distilling certain elements of the scripture.

But I would say maybe. But of course we would need a more fuller exposition on sort of like a biblical anthropology.

[46 : 40] I mean, you know, we could say the main parts are, you know, we're creating God's image. We're a union of body and soul. We have creature limitations. You know, we all are dealing with effects of the fall inside our bodies.

And we're going to be renewed one day. I mean, there's... That's kind of the broad framework. But I don't know. I mean, that's why I need thoughtful reflections from people who are much smarter than I.

But that's why the church should come together, I think, and come up with something. It doesn't have to be a creedal statement like the Apostles' Creed. The Barman Declaration or the Westminster Confession, like, they're much longer, more comprehensive.

So that's probably how that would have to be handled. Richard, are you doubtful that something like that could happen because you don't imagine that the Bible would give us sufficient clarity on some of these new issues like technology or gender or that?

Or is it because you're doubtful that maybe universally Christians might agree on the solutions? I'm just curious as to what, where your doubtfulness arises.

[47 : 55] I guess my doubtfulness arises because I don't think we have the wherewithal to come up with anything that is as succinct as that to meet the needs of our generation.

I guess what I would suggest is since the Nicene Creed or the Chalcedonian Creed, the Apostles' Creed, there have been some subsequent ones.

There's a reference to the Heidelberg Confession or the Westminster Confession of Faith or maybe the London Baptist Confession of Faith or the Philadelphia Confession, Baptist Confession of Faith.

It would be interesting to give him a read and see if you thought, well, I think that's true and I think that that's succinct and I think that that's a wonderful turn of praise.

I think you might be impressed. it's as if the Holy Spirit doesn't leave us abandoned with inadequate gifts for the church to meet the needs of each moment that we find ourselves in.

[49 : 14] Maybe there's hope that the Holy Spirit would raise up those who could actually be good shepherds to guide these areas. that might be a hope that we'd be encouraged to cling to.

I have no doubt about the ability of the Holy Spirit to give this church. What I do doubt is that a creed can meet these challenges.

I am hopeful, maybe in my lifetime, that there will be thoughtful theologians who will engage wisely and faithfully and scripturally on these issues.

And maybe we have to come up with new terminology, like the way the Nicene creed it. I don't know. But I think looking forward, there is certainly a place for this to be worked out again in community with other Christians across the world, just like the way they did in the Nicene creed.

I'm hopeful, but we'll see what the Lord has. We'll see what the Lord has for us. Any final thoughts? I guess I think succinctness comes with the more ecumenical something it is, right?

[50 : 49] Because I think the more specific to a particular Christian tradition something it's going to be, the more you have to explicate it and describe exactly what you mean. One of the benefits of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene creed, is that basically any Christian can affirm it, right?

And there's certain... I mean, I like the idea of them being gargoyles, because there's a lot of play in between the gargoyles. Mm-hmm. And the gargoyles are there. So I think, you know, we could do an anthropological creed.

It just might not be as... I mean, it could be succinct. It could be saying, we believe in God Almighty, the created man in his image, male, female.

Already that's starting to become controversial, right, to the world. Now what those things mean is probably going to be played in the gargoyles. Mm-hmm. I think there's probably value in just stating, like, putting all those...

Mm-hmm. And the more succinct it is, I guess is what I'm saying, there's probably less specific. Yeah. Well, there's still work to be done, brothers and sisters.

[52 : 01] So that's why I wanted to leave this for you, is we have reminders of the past, but God is calling our generation, Semper Reformanda, new challenges to engage wisely with the scriptures, and I think there are new creeds that have yet to be written, or confessions, like Lord willing.

We'll see what the Lord has for his church. Let me close in prayer. Father, I thank you, Father, for your Holy Spirit who works powerfully in our lives. We pray your Spirit would be with us as we gather together as a church, as we celebrate the communion of saints that we have with one another, that there's far more that unites us than divides us in your household.

We pray you'd be glorified in Jesus' name. Amen.