

We're starting a new series tonight looking at and working through the Apostles' Creed.

- a. For some of you, who were probably raised in a liturgical church, you're excited about this.
  - b. For others of you, you may be wondering, "should we be doing this?"
  - c. You may even have been raised in a faith community that says, "No creed but the Bible" and if that's the position you hold, let me ask you to reconsider it, because the statement, "No creed but the Bible" is an anticreedal creed.
    - i. Additionally "if you say no creed but the Bible" what you've done is you've cut yourself off from 2000 years of Christ-honoring, Cross-exalting wisdom, and why would you want to do that?
  - d. So, Why Study the Apostles' Creed? I believe by the grace of God and the power of His Spirit three things will happen as we work through the Apostle's Creed.
1. **It'll Anchor Our Convictions:** The Apostle's Creed is the oldest and simplest creed of the church. All Christian traditions recognize it and its importance as a standard of doctrine.
    - a. The Apostles' Creed, as well as the Nicean and Chalcedonian creeds were written in large part in response to some heresy gaining traction at that time.
    - b. The Apostles' Creed, though it wasn't written by any of the Apostle's, what it does is, it summarizes the Apostolic teaching; it sums up the main truths of the Christian faith and puts them into a concise narrative that is meaningful and memorable; it gives us a synopsis of the entire sweep of redemptive history that narrates a sequence including God, creation, redemption, and restoration...
    - c. It's the reason why historically the Apostles' Creed was used as early 215AD as a baptismal statement; you would recite the Apostles' Creed before undergoing the waters of baptism, so that you knew and those witnessing knew you held to an authentic expression of the faith.
  2. **It'll Foster Our Community:** By reciting the Creed, as we'll do each time, it'll remind us that we belong to a community that stretches across the globe and down through the centuries! To become a Christian is to enter a community of faith that stretches right back to the upper room where Jesus met with His disciples (Jn. 21).
    - i. And here's why this is so important. One of the under lying feelings in our world today is the feeling of disconnectedness. Despite all of our technological advances where we can talk to people around the globe, we sense we're more isolated and alone than ever before.
    - ii. What happens as you recite the Creed is you remember that you belong to a family that stretches from Jesus and the apostles all the way forward to us today and it's a diverse

family in its many parts but united to the story of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ!

3. **It'll Shape Our Confession:** Here's what I mean by that. As we work through the Apostles' Creed, as we let it point us to the storyline of the Scriptures, and anchor us in our convictions, regarding God the Father, His Son, the Spirit, the Church and life-everlasting, what it'll do, is it'll better equip us, to share our faith, our confession and to defend it.
  - a. And in our day, we need to be able to do both. We need to be able to clearly articulate what we believe and why we believe it; it'll help us with our confession of what are the crucial elements of our faith and help us safeguard it from those who would like to distort it.

### 3 Things to Note about the Nature of Belief:

1. **It's has be to embraced by the mind; embraced by the head.** Meaning there's real content to the Christian faith. It's not just a leap into the dark or into nothingness, no, no there's real content there.
  - b. *This content is propositional*—God reveals Himself and His truth in both the Old and New Testament. The Bible and the Creed begin by telling us there is a God and its not us, and that this God is the Creator of Heaven and Earth. The Christian faith asserts that He's the Lord almighty, who by His very word spoke Creation, the cosmos and humanity into existence, and who sovereignly reigns over the nations and raises up and vanquishes kings. He's the Father whose completely trustworthy for He cannot lie...so the content of the Christian faith on one hand is very propositional in nature.
  - c. *This content is also very personal*—At the heart of the Scriptures and at the heart of the Creed is the royal announcement about the person of Jesus Christ! That God has brought salvation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
    - i. 1 John 1:1-2: The shocking announcement of the Scriptures is that God sent His Son into the world and how He brings eternal life to all who receive Him.
    - ii. Hebrews 1:1-3a: At the heart of the Christian faith is the person of Jesus Christ, who is the final and fullest revelation of God! To know Him, not just know about Him, is to know God.
  - d. There's real content that you must give mental assent to and the reason you have to give mental assent to them is because *your heart won't hold what your mind doesn't embrace*.
  - e. While mental assent is needed, it's not enough. James 2:19
2. **It must also be embraced by the heart.** Christian belief moves from pure mental assent to a genuine heart response that's brought about by the work of the Spirit.

- a. What you need is a heart that believes and is committed to those things. In John chapter 6, has just given a very hard sermon on what it means to follow Him and many of His disciples turned away and no longer followed Him, and Jesus turned to the twelve and asked them if they wanted to leave too, and Peter speaking on behalf of the Apostles said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to *believe* and *know* that you are the Holy One of God” (italics added). Heart and mind working together to foster faith.
- b. Romans 10:9-10: It’s not just knowing intellectually or being able to recite a creed. Biblical faith captures our heart and our heart responds with love and loyalty!
- c. So the nature of belief is first a recognition of the facts put forward in the Scriptures as God’s answer to our hopeless situation, and secondly a responsive outgoing of the heart in trust and confidence towards the living God and His living Son!
  - i. Now, here’s the thing, because we’re dead in our trespasses and sins our hearts are unable to respond until God’s Spirit enlivens them, which means the faith that’s been birthed in you is entirely the work of God.
  - ii. J.I. Packer states, “Sin and Satan have so blinded fallen man that he cannot discern that the witness of Christ and the apostles is God’s truth, nor see and grasp the realities of which is speaks, nor come in self-renouncing trust and poverty of spirit to Christ until the Holy Spirit has enlightened and renewed him. Only those who are divinely taught and drawn come to Christ and abide in Him. Saving faith is thus God’s gift. If we ourselves have faith, that is only because God in His mercy opened our eyes; and if we desire that others should come to faith, we need to pray that God will open their eyes and enliven their hearts, for they will never believe otherwise, any more than we ourselves would have done. “
  - iii. Ephesians 2:8-9. Our faith is entirely the work of the Trinity as the Father planned, the Son purchased, and the Spirit produced and preserves.

### **3. It’s Embraced with our Hands in obedience to the Lord and service to the human community.**

- a. James 2:14-26: James says while what saves is faith alone, the faith that saves is never alone; it’s always accompanied by good works in both obedience to God’s Word and service to others.
- b. The proof that a person’s faith is real is that it prompts us to good deeds. A kind of faith that is merely intellectual, inactive and without works is according to James, “no faith at all, it’s dead. True genuine faith is born out of love and always propels the recipients of it towards God-shaped endeavors!

- i. Ask yourself, “Are my affections being drawn to Christ and His Word in obedience and am I actively engaged in service to others on His behalf ?”
- c. So the nature of Biblical faith is that it’s embraced first in the head. The mind recognizes the facts put forth put forward in the Scriptures as God’s answer to our hopeless situation. Secondly, its then embraced by the heart. Your whole heart is enlivened by the Spirit and puts trust and confidence in the Living God and His living Son and third, it’s embraced by our hands in obedience to God’s Word and in service to the human community!

Have you lost the simplicity of faith? Has other things attached themselves to your faith, like barnacles to a boat? If so, let offer 4 suggestions to help bolster your belief and strengthen your faith.

1. **Fix Your Eyes on Jesus**—Hebrews 12:2. If your belief has waned, if your faith has weakened, Christian friend, go back to the person of Christ, we look to Him; we put our faith in Him, not in a creed, but in Him and the love He has for us, which enabled Him to endure the Cross with joy knowing it was going to open up the way of salvation for all who would put their faith in Him.
2. **Rest Securely In His Grace**—Titus 3:4-7. One of the reasons our faith sometimes wanes is because we forget that we’re saved simply by His grace. We think we need to add something to it and then when we fail and fall short we feel like giving up, but Christian friend, your faith and standing before God isn’t rooted in your record or righteousness, but in Christ’s, so you can rest securely in the grace that He’s given you.
3. **Root Yourself in a healthy Christian community.** Root yourself in a healthy Christian community that majors in the majors, and keeps the main thing the main thing and whose teaching and doctrine emphasizes the faith that’s expressed in the Apostles’ Creed.
4. **Engage Your Hands in Active Service.** Ephesians 2:9-10. Just as Christ came not to be served, but to serve, we need to follow His example and find an area where we can serve others, putting our hand to the plow, trusting the Lord to use us as He sees fit.
  - a. The truth is as our head and our heart and our hands are engaged, our faith deepens and our love for the Lord and His Work and His people grow.

