

***THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS***  
**The Apostles' Creed – Week 11**  
**By Andy Manning**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. On Easter Sunday, we began the series with a sermon called “I Believe,” because the Creed uses that phrase three times:
  - i. I believe in God, the Father
  - ii. I believe in Jesus Christ
  - iii. I believe in the Holy Spirit
2. The Creed is all about what Christians believe.
3. Today, as we wrap up the series, we are going to talk about the benefits of faith. The very end of the Creed talks about the three benefits of faith, or three promises to those who have Jesus Christ.
4. Before we get into the sermon, let’s recite the Creed together one more time. “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth; I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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.”
5. The Christian life is not all sunshine and rainbows. It is a constant battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Just like nonbelievers, Christians must face hardship, sickness, failure, disappointment, rejection. And more than that, Christians have to face persecution for marching to the beat of a different drummer.
6. But at the very end of the Creed we are reminded that as hard as the Christian life is, it is worth it. Following Jesus is worth it. The Creed reminds us of the three benefits of faith.

**II. THE THREE BENEFITS OF FAITH**

**1. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

- i. Theologian RC Sproul says the words “the forgiveness of sins” is the quintessence of the Christian faith. “Quintessence” means “the most perfect or typical example” of something. In other words, these four words are the best summary of Christianity.
- ii. D. James Kennedy says this phrase in the Apostles’ Creed is “the great pinnacle of its declarations.” In other words, this is the best, the most glorious part of the Apostles’ Creed.
- iii. What does it mean? To understand “the forgiveness of sins,” you need to understand four ideas about forgiveness:
- iv. First, the need for forgiveness.
  1. The need for forgiveness is sin.
  2. What does the Bible teach about sin?
  3. First, sin is any failure to obey God’s commands, either by commission or omission.
    - a. Any time you fail to obey God’s commands, you sin against God.
    - b. There are two types of sins – sins of commission, and sins of omission. A sin of commission is when you do what is wrong (e.g., murder). A sin of omission is when you don’t do what is right (e.g., forgive a wrongdoer).
  4. Second, everyone has sinned against God.
    - a. **Romans 3:23** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
  5. Third, sin incurs a punishment.
    - a. Sometimes the Bible refers to sin as a debt (Mt 6:12). God created you, so you belong to Him. Because He is your author, He has authority over you. He deserves your obedience. When you fail to obey Him, you incur a sin debt that must be paid.
    - b. The Bible calls the punishment of sin the wrath of God.
    - c. **Romans 1:18** For God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness

of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth

- d. God's wrath is hatred for sin and His determination to punish it. It ultimately refers to the final judgment, a day in which God punish all sinners by sending them to eternal hell (Rm 2:5; 2 Thess 1:8-10).
- e. In other words, because you have sinned against God, you deserve and are headed for eternal punishment.
- f. Some people reject this idea. "I'm not that bad. Surely I don't deserve eternal hell!" But this is probably because you don't understand the true horror of sin.
- g. **Theologian Al Mohler** "Christian, your sin amounts to nothing less than a desire for God to cease being God. Your sin rebels as cosmic treason. Your sin against God beckons him to step off his throne that you might ascend its steps. Your sin wishes the Creator to relinquish his rightful rule and claim to glory and give way to your will." (*The Apostles' Creed*, 174.)
- h. So, to understand forgiveness, you must first understand the need for it.
- v. Second, the offer of forgiveness.
  - 1. **Colossians 1:14** In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
  - 2. The Bible teaches that in him – in Christ – we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
  - 3. The word redemption is interesting. It means to set free. That's what God's forgiveness is. God offers to set us free from the penalty for our sins. We are all sinners who deserve eternal hell, but God offers to forgive us; to set us free.
  - 4. But God's forgiveness is more than just a setting free from punishment. The Bible uses words like "reconciliation" and "adoption" to describe salvation. God offers to bring you

back into a friendship with Him, even a father-child relationship with Him.

5. Question: If our sins deserve to be punished, then how could God forgive us?

vi. Third, the means of forgiveness.

1. **Ephesians 1:7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.
2. Notice the words “through his blood.” God’s forgiveness is available through the blood of Christ, or the death of Christ.
3. The Bible calls Christ’s death a propitiation (Rm 3:25; 1 Jn 2:2). To propitiate is to quench or satisfy or remove God’s wrath against us.
4. Because we are sinners, we deserve to be punished. Because God is the just judge of the universe, He must punish us. Just as it would be wrong for a human judge to not punish a murderer, it would be wrong for the Divine Judge to not punish sinners.
5. But God is not only just, He is merciful. He is loving. He wants to save us from wrath. In order to forgive our sins, He sent His Son to die for our sins. He was punished in our place, and His punishment propitiated (quenched, satisfied, removed) the wrath of God that was against us. Because of blood of Christ, God can now forgive us.

vii. Fourth, reception of forgiveness.

1. Just because Christ died so that we could be forgiven doesn’t mean that God’s forgiveness is automatically given to every human being.
2. As the theologian **RC Sproul** said, “Forgiveness is not granted automatically to the world via the cross. God has prerequisites (What We Believe, 206).”
3. What are the prerequisites to receive God’s forgiveness? There are two.
4. First, faith.

- a. **Acts 10:43** All the prophets testify about him that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.
  - b. You must believe what the Bible teaches about Jesus. That He is the perfect, divine Son of God who died in your place for your sins and then rose again.
  - c. To believe in Christ is to stop believing in yourself. You must believe that it is through Christ alone that you can be forgiven and be saved. You must believe that you don't deserve forgiveness, you can't earn forgiveness; your only hope is Jesus Christ.
5. Second, repentance.
- a. **Luke 24:47** and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations
  - b. To repent is to decide to turn away from all sin and give Jesus complete control of your life.
  - c. Does that mean that you will lose God's forgiveness if later on you fall into sin? No. Repentance is not about perfection, but determination. It is the decision to daily deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus (Lk 9:23).
6. The offer of God's forgiveness is available to everyone (Lk 24:47; Acts 10:43). Anyone, no matter what you have done, no matter how bad it is, can be forgiven and restored to fellowship with God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.
7. Someone put it like this: "I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody about Somebody who can save anybody."

## 2. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

- i. The second benefit of faith is the resurrection of the body.
- ii. To understand this part of the Creed, you need to understand death from a biblical perspective. When you die, your soul leaves your body and immediately goes to heaven. **J.I. Packer** calls death "the dissolving of the union between spirit and body (*God's Words*, 203)."

- iii. But you were not created to live in a disembodied state. Your body is how you interact with creation. Without your body, you are highly limited. So in one sense, death is a tragedy, even for Christians.
- iv. **J.I. Packer** put it like this. “Scripture sees death – life’s one certainty – not as a friend but as a destroyer. When my body and soul separate, I shall only be a shadow of what I was. My body is part of me, the apparatus of my self-expression; without it, all my power to make things, do things, and relate to my fellows is gone. Think of someone with full use of his faculties, and compare him with a paralytic; now compare the paralytic with someone totally disembodied, and you will see what I mean. Paralytics can do little enough; disembodied persons, less still. Thus death, while not ending our existence, mollifies and in a real sense destroys it.” (*Affirming the Apostles’ Creed*, 137.)
- v. But the Bible teaches that when Jesus returns, He will give Christians new, eternal bodies, completely free from sin.
- vi. **Philippians 3:20-21** 20 Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself.
- vii. This event is called the resurrection of the body, or the final resurrection, or the glorification.
- viii. You can divide salvation into three parts – justification, sanctification, and glorification. Justification is salvation in the past tense. It happens the moment of your conversion when God declares your sins forgiven. Sanctification is salvation in the present tense. It begins the moment of your conversion and lasts until death. It is the lifelong process of the Holy Spirit making you more like Jesus. Glorification is salvation in the future tense. It is the act of your salvation, when God gives you a new, eternal body, completely free from sin.
- ix. What does this passage (Phil 3:20-21) say about the resurrection of the body.

1. When will it occur?
  - a. It will occur at the return of Christ.
  - b. Verse 20 “we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
2. What is it?
  - a. Christ will give us a new body, completely free from sin.
  - b. Verse 21 “He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body.”
3. What will our new bodies be like?
  - a. Your new body will be like Christ’s resurrected body.
    - i. Verse 21 “He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body.”
    - ii. What was Christ’s body like?
      1. It resembled His earthly body. The disciples recognized Him when they saw Him.
      2. It was a physical body. Jesus was not a ghost. At one point Jesus invited the disciples to touch him to see that he was real (Lk 24:38-39).
  - b. Your new body will be immortal/eternal.
    - i. **1 Corinthians 15:53** “This mortal must be clothed with immortality.”
    - ii. It will never get old and die.
  - c. Sinless.
    - i. **1 Corinthians 15:43** “So it is with the resurrection of the dead: Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor, raised in glory.”
  - d. Powerful.
    - i. **1 Corinthians 15:43** “Sown in weakness, raised in power.”

- x. **Theologian Wayne Grudem** “These new bodies will be imperishable, that is, they will not wear out, grow old, or ever be subject to sickness or disease. They will show no sign of aging but will instead be completely healthy and strong forever. The new bodies will be what God originally designed them to be: far more beautiful and attractive than anything we might imagine in this age. Those who are raised with Christ will forever live in bodies that have all the excellent qualities God created us to have.”

### 3. THE LIFE EVERLASTING

- i. The third benefit of faith is the life everlasting.
- ii. **John 3:16** For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.
- iii. The Bible promises that if you are a Christian, the moment you die you will wake up in heaven with Jesus (Phil 1:21-23), and you will live in heaven forever (Jn 3:16).
- iv. **Adrian Rogers** Death is just a comma to a Christian, not a period.
- v. What is heaven like?
- vi. **Revelation 7:15-17**
  - 15 For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple. The one seated on the throne will shelter them:
  - 16 They will no longer hunger; they will no longer thirst; the sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat.
  - 17 For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
- vii. This passage gives us six insights about heaven.
  - 1. Perfect safety.
    - a. **Revelation 7:15** “The one seated on the throne will shelter them.”



- b. In heaven, nothing can hurt you. Sin, Satan, sickness, people, wild animals, bad drivers, incompetent doctors – nothing.
- 2. Perfect provision.
  - a. **Revelation 7:16** “They will no longer hunger; they will no longer thirst.”
  - b. In heaven, all your needs will be supplied. You won’t have to worry about paying the bills, putting food on the table, or living on a budget.
- 3. Perfect comfort.
  - a. **Revelation 7:16** “The sun will no longer strike them, nor will any scorching heat.”
  - b. You’re A/C repairman will be out of a job.
  - c. This verse means that heaven will be a place of perfect comfort. No more aches and pains. No more breathing problems. No more sleeping problems. No more migraines.
- 4. Perfect peace.
  - a. **Revelation 7:17** “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”
  - b. In heaven there will be no more sorrow, no more worry, no more shame, no more regret, no more fear, no more discouragement, no more depression.
- 5. Perfect relationship.
  - a. **Revelation 7:15** “For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple.”
  - b. The best thing about heaven is that we will be with Jesus. We will see him face to face (1 Jn 3:2).
  - c. Theologians call this the beatific vision. Being able to see God and live forever in His presence is the highest state of human happiness.
- 6. Perfect duration.

- a. **Revelation 7:17** “For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life.”
  - b. Jesus will guide you to the springs of the water of life. This means that in heaven there will be no death. You will live with God forever and ever.
- viii. Heaven is a perfect place. It’s going to be wonderful. And that’s why you need to make sure you are going there. How can you make sure? There are five lies that will keep you from heaven.
  - 1. “There is no heaven.” False. Jesus often talked about heaven and eternal life. The most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16, which says “that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”
  - 2. “Everybody goes to heaven.” False. Jesus said that not everyone who calls him “Lord” will go to heaven, but only the one who does God’s will (Mt 7:21). In fact, Jesus said that there will be more people in hell than in heaven (Mt 7:13-14).
  - 3. “Good people go to heaven.” False. The Bible says that there are no good people; all are sinners (Rm 3:23). The Bible says that salvation is by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9). In other words, it is a free gift, not something deserved or earned, and the way to receive it is not by being good, but by faith in Jesus Christ.
  - 4. “There are many ways to heaven.” Another way to put it is, “It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere.” False. Jesus said that the only way to heaven is through Him. **John 14:6** says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
  - 5. “All you have to do to go to heaven is believe in Jesus.” False. Even the demons believe in Jesus, and they aren’t going to heaven (James 2:19). To go to heaven you must believe and repent (Lk 13:3). Faith without repentance is not true faith. True faith is not only trust in Christ as Savior, but also as King.

### III. CONCLUSION

1. And so today we complete our study on the Apostles' Creed.
2. Theologian JI Packer said there could be nothing really healthier in the church than to periodically study the Apostles' Creed (ThirdMill, lesson 1 on Apostles' Creed, p. 19.)
3. Theologian Alister McGrath said that there are few better subjects to study than the Creed. (*I Believe*, 9.)
4. So that's what we've done.
5. But the purpose of this study is not to help you know more, but if you are a Christian, to help you know God better. And if you are not saved, to lead you to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
6. Where are you today in your relationship with God? Are you confident that you are saved and will go to heaven? If not, you can be. You must simply apply what you've learned today. I can summarize it for you. If you would like to get saved – the be forgiven of your sins and receive the gift of eternal life – just do ABC. Admit that you are a sinner. Believe in Jesus Christ. Call on Him to save you.