

March 29, 2026

Creed Series #7

“Future Hope”

1 John 1:5-10

Intro:

We have made it to the end of our series on the primary items of faith for the Christian. We have spent the last seven weeks drawing ourselves back from the many points where disagreement in the church often take place, to try and find ground where we can all, as Christians in every church across the globe and time, stand in agreement. I have been using the Apostles’ Creed as the guiding document for this foundation. There are, of course, other versions of the creed – primarily the Nicene Creed, and the later Constantinopolitan expansion of that creed – and catechisms that seek to give greater clarity and deeper definition to the statements of what we believe, but as statements and documents get longer, they are also harder to easily recall as an expression of faith. So we used the shorter Apostles’ Creed, which is shorter. Does it leave some things out, or open the door for questions and possible challenges? Sure, but the purpose of the creeds is not to answer all questions, but to anchor the believer in the foundational truths.

As we look at the concluding points of the Apostles’ creed this morning, we need to be reminded again that the creed is not intended to show *how* something of faith is accomplished (the forgiveness of sins, for example), but highlight the *what* of faith. As is relevant to our topic this morning, the creed asks us if we believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. It does not seek to explain how those things are realized.

Can you take it on faith that forgiveness, resurrection, and eternal life do and will happen? Can you be united with other Christians on those points, even if there is differing opinions on other areas of Christian understanding? Can we hold our belief in God the Father Almighty, His Son Jesus Christ, and the person and work of the Holy Spirit as primary to everything else? If the Church is able to do those

things, I believe that many of the breaks in fellowship and divisions that we see today would be healed, and the Body of Christ would be healed.

Forgiveness of Sins:

Do you believe that you have been forgiven from your sins? This is one of the key points of becoming a Christian. In order to be a Christian, you need to confess your sins, and as 1 John 1:9 tells us, God will then be faithful to forgive those sins. It sounds simple, but it requires quite a lot behind the scenes. We, as humans, have to understand and accept that we have something to confess in the first place. And also, what is a sin? Is it something that happens when we go to Las Vegas and if you have never been there then you have never sinned? Is sin only the failure to be faithful to the law of Moses and the prophets – as some people in Jesus' day seemed to think? By those standards, it would be possible for a person to be without sin, and therefore not in need of forgiveness. But Paul tells us that everyone has sinned, and the wages of those sins is death. There is no getting around it.

So if we have all sinned, and the creed doesn't explain what sin is, just that we need forgiveness, do we believe that we have been forgiven?

I really like the simplicity of this line in the creed. There are no exceptions. There is no sliding scale or spectrum saying which sins are worse than others. It levels the playing field. Everyone needs to be forgiven, and every Christian has been forgiven. We might look at one sin as being worse, or as one person being a worse sinner, but in God's economy of grace it is all equal, and we have all been equally forgiven. According to Luke Johnson, the "phrase, 'forgiveness of sins' expresses the removal by God of everything that prevents full reconciliation between God and humans."¹ How that happens, we don't know. We do know that it is accomplished through Jesus' death and resurrection, but exactly how that takes away sin from the world remains a mystery that we only scratch the surface of.

¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters* (Westminster: The Crown Publishing Group, 2007), 147.

But we don't have to understand the intricacies in order to believe the reality and accept it.

If I have been forgiven, truly and fully, then how can I condemn a fellow believer who has also been just as equally forgiven? It is not my job to judge others. That is in the hands of Jesus, who the creed earlier reminds us will come to judge the living and the dead. Do not take this to mean that we should just stand by while a fellow believer intentionally continues to engage in a sinful lifestyle, but we do need to be very careful and prayerful in holding them to account.

The Resurrection of the Body, and Eternal Life:

Forgiveness leads to life. That is the end goal for the restoration and reconciliation of God's work through Christ. Prior to sin, creation – including the human body – was not marred in any way. It was good and very good. In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had full access, and permission to partake from and interact with, everything in creation except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That access included the tree of life. When sin entered into the scene, creation became imperfect – it was not good any longer. There is no place for imperfection alongside the holiness of God, and so eternal life was then also taken away through the denial of access to the tree of life. Since that point in time, our bodies have been frail and our existence finite.

Creation, and specifically humanity, was never intended to be less than a glorious reflection of God. And so, God has moved through history and through His control of creation and ability to work outside of the rules of natural law, to restore creation to what it was meant to be. When we recite the words of the creed that speak of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, we are expressing a faith that says glory is possible. It is a hope for a future that we cannot yet see. It is more than a desire to have the perfect figure and all ailments removed (although that does sound like a nice part of heaven!). It is a desire to be restored to what we were intended to be. It is a hope for a future that says we will be able to finally understand, appreciate, and live what life is supposed to be.

Again, this is not one of those points that we can concretely identify. We don't know what the future, or end times, will look like. We don't know what heaven looks like, even though Scripture does paint a partial picture. The church has debated those things for centuries, but those debates are not the main point. The main point is that there will be an end and a new beginning. There will be resurrected bodies for each of us, just as there was for Jesus. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. A new temple that is not defined by walls or structure, but by the fullness of the presence of God. There will be no need for light as we know it because the radiance of God will be in and over everything. All of these things are described in the latter parts of the book of Revelation.

I have titled the sermon this morning "Future Hope", but really the words of the creed affirm a *confidence* in the future promises of God. Confidence is more than hope. Hope, while good, still leaves room for doubt. Confidence says there is no doubt, even though we don't fully know everything. All Christians should be able to stand united in that confidence, not in knowing the details, but confident that it will happen. When we all stand united on that confidence about the future, then we can allow grace to guide how we disagree.

Conclusion:

Hebrews 11:1 says this: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (NIV)

No one person, no one church, and no one denomination or association of churches can know everything about the mysteries of God. The creed, and specifically the Apostles' creed that we have focused on, anchors us so that there can be a dialogue space opened to listen to what the Spirit has to say through those different expressions and understandings of doctrine within the body of Christ – that is, believers. Will we agree on all points? No. Should we agree on all points? Again, no, as I don't think that is the point of faith. But we do need to be careful to not claim, or come across as claiming, that we are the only ones who have the correct understanding of God and His mysteries. To do that is to skirt entirely too close to making oneself equal to God. Those who do this have

completely missed what forgiveness of sins means, and missed the grace of God. The Creed helps to remind us that God is God, and we are not. It gives us language to rejoice in that. It gives us freedom to be safe in the mysteries of God, and to explore those mysteries with one another.

Allow me to close with a final quote from Luke Johnson: “the creed does more than declare what Christians believe. It challenges those who recite the creed week by week to live as though that which they recite is true.”²

While you and I might not recite this creed every day, week, or even month, we are nonetheless challenged to be sure of what we hold as primary issues of faith, and to live in the grace of those truths.

Let’s pray.

² Johnson, *The Creed*, 247–48.