

XVIII. The Apostles' Creed in Biblical Perspective

"I Believe..."

"The Resurrection of the Body"

I Corinthians 15

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We will start by reading part of I Corinthians 15 but I will be going back to it in our study of the Apostles' Creed in the affirmation that we believe in the resurrection of the body. This is a familiar text. This is the Word of God. God's Word is true. I Corinthians 15:12–19 says *[12] Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. [14] And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. [15] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. [16] For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. [17] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. [18] Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [19] If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

So most of you know that creeds are not inventions external to the Bible but they're actually found in the Bible. They are found in various places in the Bible – Titus 2:11–14, I Corinthians 3, Deuteronomy 6 etc. A creed whether it's in the Bible or written after the Bible has been given, but is based upon the truths given in the Bible, like the Apostles' Creed, is only so good as it is faithful to God's Word, but it's good for a purpose. The creeds in the Bible and from the Bible but outside the Bible have three purposes. One is to be used in worship because worship calls us to confess the truth. Secondly, a creed is used to protect the church from false doctrine. Thirdly, it is used to disciple Christians in the faith particularly around what that creed is focused upon.

The Apostles' Creed was an effort of the disciples of the disciples of the Apostles. In other words, these who knew the value of creeds began to develop a creed of the essentials of the faith, the things most surely believed among us and they put it in an economy of words. The Apostles' Creed is only 100 words in Latin, a little bit more than that in the Greek and a little bit more than that in English. This creed is Trinitarian – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and it is amassed together to give us these essential truths of the faith. This creed came about in the second century and maybe spilled over into the third century.

What if these Biblical truths from the Apostles' Creed had been written in the first century by the disciples of the Apostles? This creed is coming from the Apostles' teaching led by the Spirit in terms of what New Testament Christianity is. What if I was living in the first century? Thirdly, what if I decided to do a series of sermons on the Apostles' Creed in the first century. This is exactly what I decided to do in the 21st century. I knew as soon as I would get into preaching on this creed that emails and texts would come to me. I also knew that the vast majority of them would say one of three things or even all three things.

One of the questions would be 'what is the *quicks* and the dead' thing? A second question which would be a little more focused would be something like this; 'I thought we were reformed

and protestant so why do we say in this creed, I believe in the holy catholic church? The third one would be 'what does it mean that Jesus descended into hell' or in the original Greek, 'into hades/Sheol'? I have gladly received those questions and in this series I have tried to walk you through the Biblical answers and if there are more questions I commend you to them, but I can tell you that none of these questions would have been asked if I had done this series in the first century.

It would have been known in the first century that the word catholic used in this creed means universal, the part that becomes the whole. So it means the universal church. You would have known of the elect of God. You would have known that the descended into hades was actually a fulfillment Psalm 16 where it says Jesus died a true death which separates body and soul. His soul went to the intermediate state of hades – the place of blessings in hades called paradise – and then would remain there for three days. After three days His soul would come forth, His body would come out of the tomb as His soul and body would reunite in the resurrection for a 40 day ministry and then ascend into heaven. Those questions wouldn't have come up because you would have been taught that in the first century.

Let's pretend there was email and texting in the first century in which I probably would have gotten a question from a Christian that came from a Gentile background. The question I would have gotten from the creed would have been, why do we believe in the resurrection of the body? Right now you would have no problem working through that and believing it. The resurrection of the body here is not talking directly about Jesus' resurrection but it's talking about the resurrection of the body of the believer. Why would they have had a problem with this?

Perhaps how do I know they would have had a problem with the resurrection of the body? There are two reasons. One is that man-made pagan religions divided the body in two parts. Some of the man-made pagan religions worshiped the body. Salvation was the body. One would have seen this in Egypt, thus the embalming practices were developed. But the vast majority would have believed that which was influenced by the Greeks which was the spiritual is good, the physical is bad and salvation is liberation and deliverance from the body. One could see this in how they dealt with the dead. Those who made the idolatry of the body embalmed it, wanting to hang onto it. They did everything they could to deny the reality of the death of the body. Those who had the Greek view of life viewed the body as evil, as a container for the spirit and the whole point was to get it liberated from the body so when someone died they always burned the body because of their desire to never have anything else to do with it so salvation was to get free from it.

We see this in Paul's writings. This passage in I Corinthians was written to Corinth which was a suburb just south of Athens, the intellectual capital of the world. It was dominated by Greek philosophy. The intellectual giants were men like Plato, Aristotle and Socrates. Plato is the man who taught the platonic view of life and in that view the upper story is deliverance and the lower story is the physical. Here the whole point of salvation is to escape and be delivered from the physical and that's why when Paul went to Athens as he preach in front of the philosophers in Acts 17, it says they begin to mock and ridicule him when he spoke of the resurrection of the body.

There are two greatly important lessons there. The first is that the resurrection of the body was despised by the pagan religions. One had the idolatry of the body and the other was to get rid of the body. Here was Christianity saying the body had to be resurrected and it would be resurrected new. Anyone who tells you that Christian doctrine was developed out of wish

fulfillment I'd say to them why would, you embrace a Christian doctrine in order to have wish fulfillment when no one wished or wanted the body back. That is why they made fun of the doctrine which also tells you that the early church did not frame its preaching by what the audience wanted but by what God revealed. It didn't get a good hearing at Athens nor at Corinth.

They told Paul at Corinth that the resurrection of the body wasn't true. You better be ready to defend yourself when you tell Paul something because he goes after this and goes after this with clarity. In opposition is Biblical religion and it shows up not only in life but also in death. Whether it was Old or New Testament what did they do with the bodies? They didn't idolize them and worship them – no ashes to ashes, dust to dust. But they always did it in reverence in laying aside the body because what you do in life and death speaks theologically. They laid it aside in reverence to make two statements. One is the body was made good, it's not evil. When God made the body He said 'it is good.' It is sin that has corrupted the body, just as it corrupts the soul. Secondly, they laid the body aside in reverence because of the sure expectation of the resurrection. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, the patriarch believed it for they believed in the resurrection although everyone around them either idolized the body or despised the body. But they stood in contrast based upon what God had revealed to them.

Now let's look at the resurrection of the body in context of the Apostles' Creed with the Biblical content. The creed is Trinitarian for it recognizes the Father, Son (and what He did) and the Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed is as follows;

I believe in God the Father Almighty, (first affirmation/1st Person of the Trinity)

maker of heaven and earth;

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (second affirmation/2nd Person of the Trinity)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;

He descended into hades.

On the third day he rose again;

He ascended into heaven,

is seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty,

and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, (third affirmation/3rd Person of the Trinity)

the holy catholic church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body

and the life everlasting. Amen.

What happens between the ascension of Jesus and His coming? He sends the Holy Spirit. Then the creed gives us a twofold look at the work product of the Holy Spirit until Jesus comes back.

Jesus has finished His work product. He has redeemed His people from their sins. He has accomplished our redemption in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. He now sends Holy Spirit to do His work on gathering and perfecting the redeemed to bring them to glory. What is the Holy Spirit's work product? When Jesus finished His work He said 'Father, all whom You have given Me I lose not one but raise them up on the last day' (John 6:39). In other words, all of the elect has been secured through Christ. Romans 8:33 says [33] *Who shall bring*

any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. The Holy Spirit's work is bringing to glory the holy catholic church which is the one, perfect, universal church of the elect from all of the nations. It is perfect, not mixed. It is triumphant. Whenever that church is gathered in the heavens it's gathered from its work on earth and it now enters into its rest. This church is assured through the finished work of Christ and the present work of the Holy Spirit.

There is not only the church triumphant, there is also the church militant. So the second work of the Holy Spirit is the communion of the saints. Together we are the church militant and have a mission, a message and are on ministry until Christ comes and gathers up all the church triumphant through the ministry of the church militant which is imperfect. This past week this congregation had two of its faithful servants of Christ leave the church militant and go to the church triumphant as they were taken into the presence of God.

Then there is a second dimension of the work product of the Holy Spirit where He goes to the individuals that He is working on and He gives three Gospel blessings secured in Christ – the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Those three are inseparable. To have life everlasting with a resurrected body you have to have the forgiveness of sins. If you have the forgiveness of sins now you will have a resurrected body then for the purpose of everlasting life with Him and eternal joys. You can't pick and choose on this. You must believe, repent of your sins and come to Christ for forgiveness in order to gain Christ. As you gain Christ you not only have forgiveness but He has assured you of an everlasting body like His for an everlasting life to be with Him.

Everyone will get a resurrected body but not for the same destinations. Some will have a resurrected body to eternal condemnation if they have not come to Christ as Lord and Savior. Hebrews 9:27 says [27] *just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* The earth, land and sea will give up its dead and they must all appear before the judgment. The believer does not appear for the issue of salvation but for the issue of stewardship. The unbeliever appears and will hear the verdict of condemnation so I know you will get a resurrected body but the question is where are you headed? That comes back to the first blessing because if you come to Christ for the forgiveness of sins then you're headed to an everlasting life.

I love the three r's – redemption, ransom and remission. The Bible says in Christ we have remission of sins. What word do you see as a root of remission? Mission, which is a task you are sent to do. So what is remission of sins? It is the sending away of your sins from you. Your sins have been sent away, how? It is by Christ, the Sent One, who was sent to save you from your sins and when He saves you He sends your sins with their guilt and shame away from you. How? It is by the cross, His atoning death. I want to continue to flesh this out for you.

Do you owe money to anyone? Perhaps you have bills that need to be paid. If you're like me who still hasn't left the 19th century yet then once a month you get a paper bill in the mail. The bill tells you what you owe and what you need to do to get remission for it. They are so gracious to include an envelope to send it to. The bill will say something like write your check for this amount and remit it to this address. For remission of the debt you need to remit the payment for the debt. That is what Jesus did on the cross. At the cross Jesus took our sins on Himself and He "mailed" it to the bar of God's holy justice. Jesus paid our debt, our penalty and then said *tetelestai* which means, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Your sins were taken away from you.

The picture of this is gloriously given in the theater of the Temple at Yom Kippur every year. It is known as the Day of Atonement. On that day a priest would take his hands as he

confesses the sins of the people and would place them on the scapegoat who would be led out to take away the sins of the people to perish out in the wilderness. The scapegoat did what we call expiation. He took away the sins on the basis of what? The priest also laid his hands on the lamb who was sacrificed for propitiation to satisfy the debt. Blood of bulls, goats and lambs can't do it but it's God giving us the picture of what had to happen and then God fulfills it with His Son Jesus who is the Lamb of God. His Son went to Calvary outside the wall of the city to take our sins as He buried them as He endured our condemnation, the wrath of God, on the cross and paid for them in full. Thus we have remission of sins.

Now I want to move from economics to this same word in the medical field. I can use my own example with prostate cancer. I have heard remission used in relation to cancer. The doctor will say 'Good news, your cancer is in remission' and if you're on the receiving end of that news you are so glad to hear that. Many times though the doctor will follow that statement with 'it could come back' but in Jesus your sins are in remission. They have been sent away because Jesus was sent to pay for them. Paul affirms this in Romans 8:1 which says *[1] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* When Jesus pays for them you are forgiven and they cannot come back with their guilt and shame, because they have already been paid for. God has dealt with them in His Son. You are forgiven in Christ.

Now you have ahead of you a new body. Then ahead of you is the best is yet to come – no pain, no sorrow, no sickness, no tears, no death, no crying. We see this in Revelation 21:4–5 which says *[4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. [5] And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."* The new has come not simply by promise, a down payment, but in fulfillment. He will give you a resurrected body transformed for that purpose.

The assurance of your forgiveness of sins is in Christ's atoning death. The assurance of your new body is in Christ's resurrection. We can see this in I Corinthians 15:13 which says *[13] But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.* Why? It is because your resurrected body is the result of His resurrection and if there is no resurrection of Christ then our faith is futile, we're false witnesses of God and we're people that is most to be pitied. Then Paul goes from the rhetorical to the factual in the I Corinthians 15 text.

I Corinthians 15:20–26 says *[20] But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21] For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. [24] Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. [25] For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. [26] The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

In Christ's first coming His death defeated His enemies and in His second coming He will destroy them. In His death He defeated not only His enemies but sin, death, hell, Satan and the grave. When He returns He will destroy them in the place called hell. Secondly, He accomplishes this for you in Someone who has come for you. Here we are approaching the Christmas season and this makes me think of the hymn *Hark the Herald* and the verse that says;
*Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth.*

When He comes again the forgiven will be with Him for all eternity with a new body and a new heavens because they are in Him. I Corinthians 15:22 it says in Adam we all sinned and we all die. In the Second Adam, Christ, we live because in Christ He takes our sins and gives us His righteousness. So we're cleansed, our sins in remission, we're clothed in His righteousness and accepted in the beloved.

I get so excited about this! It's absolutely glorious and wonderful to see what He has promised and what He does in and through His people, in Adam. Here's an illustration. When Adam sinned you sinned. When Adam died you died. Then comes Christ, the Second Adam. When He paid for your sins your forgiven in Christ. Then He gives you His righteousness. This is what we call federal headship, how we get saved.

In 1969 Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. This is what he said when he stepped onto the moon, 'One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind' and then he planted a flag. So when he put the flag there we were there as a nation but he took a bigger scope than that. He had thought about what he said for the first thing was not a national thing but a humanity thing – one small step for a man but when he took the next it was 'a giant leap for mankind.' I saw this happen and in all the reports about it I never heard someone say 'Neil Armstrong landed on the moon.' It was 'we landed on the moon.' When Jesus came out of that grave you came out. When Jesus paid for your sins you were free. When that happened to Christ, in Christ, it happened for you who are in Christ.

Here's the takeaway. Christians do not believe we are saved for our bodies nor from our bodies but that we are saved from our sins to our resurrected bodies for life everlasting. Every song you sing – the confessions, the Psalms, the hymns, the readings – all of them have these three blessings – forgiveness of sins, the new body and life eternal. I have forgiveness. I will have a new body for life everlasting with the Savior to be with Him forever and ever.

I meet a number of people who have a hard time believing they are going to get a new body for eternal life because they don't feel forgiven. My heart breaks for them. They all seem to know the following verses; Romans 8:1 which says [1] *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* John 3:16 which says [16] *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.* Romans 8:33 which says [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* They have turned from their sins and put their trust in Christ but they say they just don't feel forgiven.

I struggled with hearing that so many times and then I listened to something by R.C. Sproul which kind of helped me on this. There was a man and woman in the same situation and he kept bringing them to the Scripture that gives assurance where they could know they had eternal life in Christ but they just didn't feel it. Then he said to them 'My friend, I now tell you to repent.' They said 'We have repented of our sins and put our trust in Jesus for forgiveness of sins, we just don't feel it.' He said 'That's right, I'm not asking you to come to Jesus for I believe that you have repented and come to Jesus but I'm asking you to repent of elevating your feelings over God's Word.'

We just recently celebrated Reformation Sunday and the five solas are Sola Scriptura, Sola Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, and Sola Deo Gloria. The foundational one is Sola Scriptura which means the Scripture alone is our final authority for faith and practice, not our feelings, not the world, but when Jesus says there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus you are forgiven. If Christ is your Lord and Savior by faith you are forgiven. You have eternal life. You will have a new body to enjoy the praise of God for all eternity.

I would like to leave you with a task and that would be to go find a hymn on the resurrected body for believers. I found one. Now we do sing hymns that will refer to it in a verse, because this affirmation is not about Christ's resurrection. It's about our resurrection that is effectively tied to Christ's resurrection. The hymn I found is by the great hymn writer Margaret Clarkson. It goes as follows;

*In resurrection bodies like Jesus' very own,
we'll rise to meet our Savior with joy around his throne;
we'll marvel at the mercy that bids poor sinners come,
be welcomed at his table and share his heavenly home.*

*O joy of resurrection, all sin and sorrow past,
to see the face of Jesus, to be like him at last!
Made perfect in his image, complete in Christ the Son,
in resurrection glory we'll share the life he won.*

*O resurrection body, set free from pain and death,
sin's curse forever vanquished by Christ's victorious breath!
Lord, teach us in our trials your hidden ways to trace,
to walk by faith, discerning your mysteries of grace!*

*O resurrection body, young, radiant, vibrant, free,
with powers unthought, undreamed of—how rich your joys will be!
Through endless years to marvel, design, create, explore,
in resurrection wonder to worship, serve, adore!*

*With holy joy, Lord Jesus, we sing the life you give,
the hope you hold before us, the strength by which we live!
Lead on in sovereign mercy through all earth's troubled ways,
till resurrection bodies bring resurrection praise!*

In our resurrected bodies, after the 4th verse we'll probably turn to one another and say 'I haven't felt this good in a long time!' And I'd say 'You're right, you never have.' These bodies will be untouched by sin or the ability to sin. It is so glorious to think of our resurrection bodies but realize that body for life eternal is only gained for those who are in Christ – forgiven of our sins.

Paul goes onto say 'the grain has to fall and die to get the plant,' then he goes to astronomy, then biology, to botany, to agronomy, to pure agriculture, etc. to show us consistency of God's general revelation with His revelation. We are being added to paradise one by one but on that Day when Jesus comes we'll all come as one with new bodies into a new heavens and a new earth. Will you be numbered with them? It comes down to, what say you of Jesus? Is He your Lord and Savior? If He is I invite you to know the joys of forgiveness – guilt and shame removed, the new body promised and life evermore with resurrected bodies for resurrected praise. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much for the time to be in Your Word with Your people in worship and to encourage one another and to walk through these three Gospel promises, Gospel truths that are

sure. Our forgiveness of sins is secured by Christ's atoning death, our resurrection bodies are assured in His resurrection and our eternal life proclaimed in His ascension. Jesus I do pray and ask You that no one reading this is apart from this Savior and that they would come to You now, surrendering, repenting and putting their trust in Your atoning death and Your triumphant resurrection. Jesus would You come speak to those who don't know You and give them eyes to see and ears to hear to come to Christ, for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

"The Resurrection of the Body"

Apostles' Creed Context

Biblical Text Content

Life Takeaway

Christians do not believe we are saved for our bodies nor from our bodies, but that we are saved from our sins to our resurrected bodies for life everlasting.