

## VIII. The Apostles' Creed in Biblical Perspective

*"I Believe..."*

*"Crucified, Dead and Buried"*

Philippians 2:5–11

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

July 12, 2020 • Sunday Sermon

We will be looking at Philippians 2. God's Word is true. God's Word is the truth. This is part of Paul's discipleship at the church at Philippi from prison as he is attempting to grow them in grace. His words are very helpful to us and actually for a pattern that the writers of the Apostles' Creed are going to use as hopefully you will see in this study.

Philippians 2:5–11 says [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

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.

The following is the Apostles' Creed;

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, (first affirmation)*

*maker of heaven and earth;*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (second affirmation)*

*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 hell.*

*On the third day he rose again;*

*he ascended into heaven,*

*is seated at the right hand of the Father,*

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

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, (third affirmation)*

*the holy catholic church,*

*the communion of saints,*

*the forgiveness of sins,*

*the resurrection of the body*

*and the life everlasting. Amen*

As you read this you immediately see that this Creed is a statement of faith. It focuses on, not what Jesus taught but, who God is – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and on what He does as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Note that it is in an economy of words. It almost as a rapid fire sense to it, like an automatic machine. In this study we are at the depth of the truth of the Gospel as we look at the phrase in the Creed, *was crucified, died, and was buried*. We are also at the depth of the humiliation of Christ and the anticipation of His exaltation.

If you read this Creed in its original form, in Latin, you will note that it is exactly 100 words and 75 of those words are devoted to who Jesus is and what He did which is the second paragraph of the Creed. Three fourths of the Creed is devoted to Jesus and you begin to see a pattern. Perhaps through this illustration I can help you see this pattern. My father was very pointed with me, not so much due to the fact that I would be outstanding, but he told me that if I did something outstanding (praiseworthy) whether it was in school or the athletic field or wherever that I was not to talk about it. Don't promote yourself, he would say. If I scored a touchdown I was to act like I had been there before or if I hit a homerun cross the plate as if I had done it before. My dad and mom also felt like they didn't need to talk about it either. My dad would tend to point out the areas I needed to work on with others rather than the areas I did well in.

A mentor of mine years later put some theology around something my parents were doing with me as they taught me that. This mentor said 'Harry whenever God blesses you and something happens that is praiseworthy, success noteworthy, what God just gave you was a platform. Now you have to decide, are you or He going to be on that platform? There is only room for one and it will be either you or Him.' This is what we call the grace-filled, grace-patterned life. Those who have been saved by grace want to live by grace and when you live by grace you pattern after the life of the One whose life purchased your grace. So Peter, James, Paul, Solomon and Jesus all wanted to get this point across to us. It is seen in the book of Proverbs, I Peter, James and the Gospels. I Peter 5:6 says *[6] Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.*

Have you ever noticed how we take pride in our request for humility? I do think you can ask for humility but when you pray for humility the next thing you need to do is duck for the answer to that prayer is usually not very enjoyable. It's interesting to note that the Bible doesn't give humility so much as a prayer request but more as a life takeaway. It doesn't say pray for humility directly but you can, yet in the Bible He really tells us to just do it which is what we see in I Peter 5:6. Yet we exalt ourself and then pray for humility. God tells us to humble ourselves and at the right time He'll exalt us and that's a pattern of life that we follow not to be saved, but because the Savior who purchased us followed that pattern to save us – humility then exaltation.

In a real sense the Apostles' Creed is following Philippians 2 where Paul lays it out and we also see it in I Corinthians 5 where Paul goes into Christ being born, dies and raised according to the Scripture. I want you to notice the flow in the second paragraph of the Creed as we affirm Jesus is the only Son, our Lord...

*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 hell.*

We have now gone from the heavens where He has descended to the grave and buried in a tomb. Then the Creed takes us in anticipation of where we're going.

*On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

So we see this clear flow in the Apostles' Creed from Philippians 2.

The Creed was not written by the Apostles but by those who were disciples of those who were disciples of the Apostles. Its value is that it distills for us the essentials of New Testament Christianity that is how Jesus fulfills all the promises, prophecies, symbols and types of the Old Testament and the Apostles bring that out for us, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Every Christian believes more, not less, than what is in the Creed, but the Creed is putting together some, not all, of these basic essentials and because it's not part of inspired Scripture we have to test it by inspired Scripture. So each time we have looked at these affirmations we go back to the text in the Bible. In this text it wasn't hard to navigate back to Philippians 2, because it gives us the whole flow of this affirmation of Jesus.

Philippians 2 says 'have this mind in yourselves...' which is not the mind you were born with for you have another mind that exalts yourself but you have to get a new mind in Christ to do this. We see this as the text goes on to say 'which is yours in Christ Jesus' for Christ has purchased this for you. Philippians 2, [6] *who, though he was in the form of God* (which is He reigns in the Godhead as the Son of God eternal with full equality – Father, Son and Holy Spirit), *did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself*, (not of His Deity but laid aside His privileges) *by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men* (conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary). I Corinthians 15:21 says [21] *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.*

Philippians 2 goes on to say [8] *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross* (crucified, dead and buried as the Creed says). Now we have descended to the depth of His humiliation to save us from our sins. Yes, it is a wonderful grace-pattern of life to follow but it's His humiliation and exaltation whereby we have life in Him. In other words, if He had not come He could not have gone to that cross and if He had not gone to that cross we would still be in our sins. If He was not dead then He could not atone for our sins because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). And if He was not buried then He could not be resurrected – crucified, dead and buried.

I want to ask you a question that comes from an R.C Sproul John MacArthur discussion I heard. Jesus was the Son of a carpenter where it was possible as He learned this trade He could have cut Himself or scraped Himself. So here's the question. If you had been standing next to Jesus, He cut His hand, out of His hand a rivulet of blood flowed and fell upon you, would that save you from your sins? The answer is 'no' with great confidence. One is that Jesus had already been cut when He was circumcised on the eighth day. That pointed to the cross but it didn't replace the cross/atonement.

The atonement that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ as the Messiah – Prophet, Priest and King – was very clearly laid out in symbol, practice, precept and prophecy in the Old Testament. For Jesus to get your blessing of salvation He had to take your place for your cursing because of your sin. That cursing is the wages of sin is death but not just any death. There is a thing called the ironic blessing which is 'may the Lord bless you and keep you' and the Lord's curse is to send you not keep you – depart from Me you workers of lawlessness for I never knew you. We are under the curse of God's wrath and that is the unendurable, unending, infinite, eternal wrath of God in a place called the lake of fire/gehenna/hell. For us to be saved that curse must be removed. The Old Testament is clear.

I want you to understand these two words – expiation and propitiation. Expiation is to take something away, to send something away. For you to be saved you must have someone take your place for the curse of sin which is to send you away under the unmixed wrath of God. Propitiation is when an atonement that is satisfactory that is made so that the payment matches

the offense and now everything is satisfied. In the Old Testament God told us what had to happen in order for this to take place. Where is the curse of God? Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23). There had to be a direct cursed death.

It's just like the song we just sang that says;

*I'm forgiven because You were forsaken*

*I'm accepted, You were condemned*

*I am alive and well, Your spirit is within me*

*'Cause You died and rose again.*

Jesus paid the penalty. He was sent away. In the Old Testament it was shown by the scape goat. Here is Israel. They come out of Egypt into the wilderness. God tells them He will be in their midst and a Tent of Meeting is made. He puts it within a tabernacle. Then He gives ceremonial laws for worship. It all centers primarily on this moment called Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement. On that day two things happen at the Tent of Meeting.

One is a scape goat was brought and the priest on behalf of the people laid his hands upon the scape goat as he confessed the sins of omission, commission, thought, word and deed – all the sins of all of God's covenant people. Then the scape goat is sent out from the camp, sent away with all the sins of all the people, away from the presence of God at the Tent of Meeting. That goat is driven out into the wilderness, outside the camp, outside the city of God, outside the gathering of God's people. Then secondly, a lamb was brought and slain, anticipating the Messiah who would not only be the Scape Goat of expiation to take our sins away from us as He is driven away from us, but also to make a satisfactory payment for our sins. What happened? They were in Egypt and the torment of the plagues fell and the darkness descended. They went out and the scape goat is sent. The lamb is slain and they are declared the redeemed of the Lord.

There at Mount Calvary Jesus is driven out of the city. If you were there 2100 years ago, where would you expect the lamb to be sacrificed? I would expect to show up at the temple at the Holy of Holies, is where I would expect Jesus to die for me, but He doesn't die for our sins at the temple. He doesn't even die for our sins Jerusalem. He dies for our sins outside the walls of the city as He is driven outside of the city which is there where the Scape Goat of God has taken away our sins and the Lamb of God – spotless, pure – gives Himself in our place. So this is also propitiation which is a satisfactory sacrifice is given.

What descends upon that hill? It is the darkness. Then what does He cry out in torment? John 19:28–30 says [28] *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."* [29] *A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. [30] When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.* What He had prayed to be taken from Him – the cup of God's mixed eternal, infinite wrath against all of our sins – the Father tips the cup for Him to drink the last drop and the Son of God now hanging between two criminals, just days earlier had been lifted up between Moses and Elijah, now lifted up in malediction. There in affirmation between Moses and Elijah – this is My Son in whom I am well pleased – days later a malediction is pronounced upon Him and [46] *Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46).

Jesus is driven out of the presence of God and all of our hell is poured out upon Him and He drinks it to the last drop. After the Lamb who was given for us says 'It is finished!' our sins are no more. They have been taken from us as far as the east is from the west and we are redeemed, not by a martyr's death or a revolutionary's death or even a model death, but by an

atoning death. Cursed – the divine wrath of God upon Him who hangs on a tree – which is why Jesus kept saying ‘I must go to Jerusalem, I must be delivered over and I will die on the cross but on the third day I will rise again.’ But this day He suffered under Pontius Pilate, then crucified, dead and buried.

The report goes back to Pontius Pilate and he is incredulous that Jesus died so quickly upon the cross and that His burial should be taking place hours later than what was happening (Mark 15:44). Just as a sovereign God had orchestrated the presence of a Roman Empire to bring a capital form of judgment (a cross) in order for us to be redeemed on that cross because if He had been put to death under Jewish law He would have been stoned, but curses would reign upon the one who hung on the tree, now this sovereign God does not have His life taken from Him but He freely gives it up. Jesus says in John 10:18, [18] *“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”* Jesus also says in Luke 23:46, [46] *Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.*

Pilate wants to affirm it so he sends a centurion who not only affirms it but will give an order not to break His legs (John 19:33). This One hanging on the tree is not the victim, but the Victor and He even assures the promises of God when it says that not one bone will be broken (John 19:36). The centurion declares ‘Surely, this is the Son of God!’ (Matthew 27:54, Mark 15:39). A spear is secured and driven into His side as the separated water and blood flowing reveals His death and He is taken down. The body is secured for burial and prepared for burial on the Day of Preparation with 75 pounds of spices. The One who had been attended at His birth with frankincense and myrrh is now incased with it. He was crucified, dead, but no man takes His life for He freely gives it for us. Then He is buried but this sovereign Savior keeps revealing His authority.

What is interesting about ‘buried’ is where He wasn’t buried. By Roman practice with this being a Roman crucifixion carried out by Roman authorities as one being crucified He was supposed to be thrown in the trash heap, which Jesus used earlier as a symbol and metaphor for the eternal judgment of hell – gehenna – for it is ever burning what is thrown into it, there in the Valley of Hinnom, but His body was not. By the petition of Joseph of Arimathea, as the Scripture takes great delight in telling us he was a rich man, who has secretly been following Christ, is now no longer silent. Joseph comes to Pilate, likely due to the accessibility of his wealth, and asks for Christ’s body in which he receives it. Another secret follower comes forth and that is Nicodemus who would come to Him by night, along with the women help Joseph prepare Christ’s body for burial so that the Lord of Sabbath who has redeemed us and given us eternal rest in His redeeming work, will rest in the grave on the Sabbath. Darkness descends. The stone is rolled in front. On the first day He is placed in the grave, on the second day He will rest and on the third day He will come again, but He first will be buried with no resuscitation for it will require a resurrection.

I can’t help but think this. What’s coming? It is the resurrection, the ascension and the second coming. It is His exaltation that is coming. Here we have been at the depth of humiliation yet at the very depth of humiliation there’s a gleam of anticipation for there is no trash heap, there is the fulfillment of Scripture, a new, unused borrowed tomb and His grave is a sign with the rich. He has been abandoned by His Father at the cross as He becomes our sin but at His burial we are anticipating He will not be abandoned to Sheol or to the grave. Look at the

grave that was secured for Him but cannot secure Him for He will rise. So as it says in the Apostles' Creed, *was crucified, died, and was buried.*

I had asked our minister of music if we could sing the hymn Glorious Day, but I grew up hearing it called One Day. It is a hymn that has captured my heart and I love it particularly in light of the Apostles' Creed. The first verse speaks of the conception and virgin birth. The second verse speaks of His crucifixion and death as the rest of the verses focus on his burial, resurrection, ascension and His coming again. I love how the chorus goes;

*Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;*

*Buried, He carried my sins far away;*

*Rising, He justified freely forever:*

*One day He's coming-- O glorious day!*

This day He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried and in three days is the Lord's Day and He'll be raised. He will ascend and on that day He will come again. To put it another way, on this day we call it Good Friday in Holy Week because of what He accomplishes when He was crucified, dead and buried. We follow the pattern in the Apostles' Creed of the birth of Jesus straight to the day of His death and there are 33 years between that time that it doesn't say anything about of Jesus' life. Maybe, I spoke too soon and I understand I'm pressing this right now but I want to press. Maybe His 33 years are covered by one word and that word being 'suffered' under Pontius Pilate. Suffered is an interesting word that they chose to use in the Apostles' Creed. It immediately attaches back to Isaiah 52 and 53 where the Messiah would be a suffering Messiah, a suffering Servant, despised, rejected and forsaken of men and we wouldn't even be able to recognize Him in His sufferings.

Perhaps there is something more. When a person goes to court and gets a judgment, a sentence that's commiserate with their penalty, do you say they are suffering? Not really, because we usually say 'they got what they deserved' but in this human court Jesus didn't get what He deserved. In fact, Pilate knows that this suffering ought not to take place even the suffering on the way to the cross. The only reason Pilate allows it, is not because the law demands it, is he is merely making a political, cultural decision. He actually tries to get out of five times as He sends Jesus to Caiaphas, Herod, the people, etc. to get out from this. Why? It is because ten times he makes a verdict on the 33 years of Jesus' life which is innocent, no guilt, no evil. In that court Jesus is innocent but that court can't bring the right judgement. Yet Jesus in that court never claims innocence because He knows He is standing in another court and He is taking your place and my place. And in the court of God He is not innocent for He is bearing our guilt and our shame to take it away as the Scape Goat of God. The One innocent, becomes guilty for us. On this day Christ suffered, was crucified, dead and buried in place of me but on the Lord's Day He arose and declares that He will prepare a place for me. And on that day He will come again for me.

What about you? In the midst of this death, burial and crucifixion, He is saving men and women – a criminal will confess Him. On this day, arguably, a centurion is converted who says 'this must be the Son of God.' On this day, a secret silent follower who wasn't even at the trial, in the Sanhedrin, will follow Him, find his voice. Do you see your sovereign Savior orchestrating entire empires to put in place a crucifixion whereby an atonement could take place? Do you see your Savior in sovereign rule who gives up His life, no man takes it? Do you see your Savior sovereignly assigning His own burial place and the Roman authorities agree to it which He has already prophesied hundreds of years before?

It is this sovereign Savior who is sufficient to save and on this day a criminal is brought into the Kingdom for Jesus says to Him while hanging on that cross ‘this day you will be with Me in paradise.’ On this same day, a centurion will give a confession that I pray is at least the nugget of his conversion when he says ‘this must be the Son of God.’ On this day a coward, silent, secret follower will find his voice, stand up and speak up and Joseph of Arimathea will be numbered with the people of God who put their trust in Him who went to the cross for us, died, was buried and will be risen.

I love the way Mark describes this in Mark 15:43, [43] *Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, **took courage** and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.* As he took courage I immediately go to what Jesus said in John 16:33 which says [33] *These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but **take courage**;* (the One who was crucified, dead, buried and risen) *I have overcome the world* (NASB). Let’s pray.

Prayer:

I love the Bible as it tells me what happened on Good Friday – suffered, crucified, dead and buried. I love the Bible as it tells me what happened on the third day – He rose again. I love the Bible that tells me on a day Jesus was born, on a day He was crucified, dead and buried, on a day He was resurrected and on a glorious day He is coming again to take us to the place He prepared for us but it is only for those who He took their place on the cross. Have you come to Him as your Place Holder and Savior, Lord, King and Redeemer? Will you find your voice? Romans 10:9 says [9] *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* Will you confess Him through the power of grace brought and grace bought courage? Take courage for He has overcome. If you would like to pray with someone about this decision please contact us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to pray with you. You can go right to the Lord right now. For those of you who have already come to the Lord, will you this day take courage? And in an increasing hostility, not get angry at men, but find your voice and take courage to confess Christ for they need the Savior. Proclaim Him. Jesus, I pray this in Your Majestic Name, Amen.

Power Point

... CRUCIFIED... DEAD... BURIED

I. Crucified

II. Dead

III. Buried

LIFE TAKEAWAY

*ONE DAY*

*This Day – Lord’s Day – That Day*

*On “This Day” Christ suffered, was crucified, dead and buried in “place of me;” on the “Lord’s Day” He arose and will prepare a “place for me;” on “That Day” He will come again for me— And You?*