

“APOSTLES’ CREED: PART 3 – I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT” (Ephesians 1:13-23)
Apostles’ Creed: The True Confession of Our Triune Faith
Zionsville Fellowship | May 24, 2026 | Danny Strong

Introduction:

1. What is the Apostles Creed?

- **“Apostles”** – the creed wasn’t written by the apostles, but it was created by the apostles in the sense that it is the distillation of the apostles essential teaching as recorded in the NT.
- Some theologians would even say that the creed is the flushing out of what Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:19 to “baptize disciples in the name of the Father of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The Creed comes to us in those same three parts—The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- **“Creed”** – From the Latin *credo*, which just means “I believe.” So it’s literally taken from the first two words of the creed. But don’t miss that third word...”in.”
- The creed is not merely believing that something is true. It is believing “in.” This is what I trust. This is what I’m building my life on.
- Rich Mullins song “I believe what I believe. It makes me who I am. I did not make it. Not, it is making me. It is the very truth of God and not the invention of any man.”

2. Why study it?

- **Focuses us** – The Christian church spans thousands of years of history, every continent, thousands of cultures. What are the most important things?
- Imagine spending decades of your life studying secondary and tertiary beliefs, debating online, certain you are right, and one day you stand before the face of Christ, and he says, “You were wrong.” And even if you were right, you spent way too much time on that.
- There are things you can study (and it’s fine to study) and be wrong about, and there are things you can’t be wrong about. That’s the Apostles’ Creed.
- **Protects us** – From false gospels, insufficient, water-down gospels. So we know what hills I will die on.
- And it shows when a church isn’t being made by these truths but are focusing on other things.

I. The Spirit That Creates

A. Third Part of the Creed

1. **Transition:** We've looked at the Father and the Son. Now comes the third and final part, "I believe in the Holy Spirit."
2. **Not the junk drawer** – This is not the junk drawer of the Creed. Where we through all the random little bits and bobs.
3. Instead the Creed follows a Triune logic— "I believe in the Father, the Son" and now "I believe in the Holy Spirit."
4. **Summary** – "I believe in the Holy Spirit who creates a supernatural community with an infinitely bright future." So three parts...
 - First part, the Spirit who creates
 - Second, not a merely human-made community but a supernaturally made community that has a power beyond anything nature or nurture could fashion.
 - Thirdly, with an infinitely bright future that cannot be limited or constrained by suffering and death, but is actually enhanced by it.

B. What the Spirit Is and Does (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Transition: So first part. The Spirit Who Creates. Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

1. Read Ephesians 1:13-14

2. **Context:** The Holy Spirit here is set in the last part of Paul's prayer. And this prayer follows the same order and logic of the Creed. Starts with the Father, then the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. So just like in the Creed, the Spirit operates as the third person of the Triune God, co-eternal with the Father and Son, and of equal glory.
4. The Prayer
 - **1:3ff** - The Father blesses us with every spiritual blessing.(Eph 1:3), so He's the source.
 - **1:4-5** - He chose us and predestined us to this great salvation. So the one who planned our salvation, and chose us.
 - But how did he plan to accomplish this salvation? Answer is through His Son.
 - We are "blessed in Christ" , chosen in Christ, predestined for adoption through Christ, in vs. 7 we have forgiveness of our trespasses through Christ's blood.
 - It's all summed up in vs. 9-10 that the Father is working all things according to His purpose which he set forth in Christ. That purpose is cosmic, to unite all things back to God.
 - So the Father is the source. He plans and choses. But the Son accomplishes what the Father has planned

- **Transition:** But how does saving grace get from the cross, from the empty tomb, from the risen and ascended Jesus to me? The answer is the Holy Spirit.

C. The Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14

Transition: So here we get to salvation actually coming to us. What happened when the grace of the cross and resurrection get to me?

1. “Sealed with the Promised Holy Spirit”
 - “Sealed” – something was permanently done to you, you were sealed.
 - That was not made by nature or nurture. It’s not the result of DNA, discipline or training. It is an act of God. He seals you.
 - Seal is a mark of ownership – Just as a king puts his seal upon something to mark it as belonging to him, so God marks his people as his.
 - “with the Promised Holy Spirit” – so the Spirit IS the seal, and it was promised.
 - “Promised” likely refers to a passage like Ezekiel 36:26-27

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” (Ezekiel 36:26-27 ESV)

- “A new heart” – “heart” in the Bible refers to the entire inner person. EX: An evil scientist kidnaps you and hooks your brain up to a machine to try and discover what makes you, you. He can discover all kinds of things, but he’ll never find in your brain you. Your personality, desires, values, choices. That part is your heart. And the Spirit creates a new inner person that believes and wants to obey God.
 - So a new “heart” is a new supernaturally created self – you become something more than your genes.
 - That new person is empowered by the Holy Spirit.
2. “Guarantee” – Word means something like the first installment. The future new creation has invaded the present moment by the Spirit indwelling you.
 3. **Summary:** So the Spirit creates supernatural people, and he is the first downpayment of their infinitely bright future.

D. What the Spirit does in us – Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation (1:15-19)

1. **Transition:** So what does this Spirit do in us?
 - Two ditches on either side of the road – We can either ignore the Holy Spirit. Or two we can focus on what the NT, the apostles, Jesus, and the whole Bible don’t focus on.

- So let's turn to the prayer of Paul? What does Paul see as the Spirit's work in the Ephesians? (Read 1:15-19)
2. Spirit of wisdom and revelation, illuminating the eyes of our heart
- The Spirit's work is not primarily charismatic gifts, nor high emotions, nor spontaneous feelings.
 - Don't hear what I'm not saying — The Spirit gives gifts, he gives powerful emotions, being spontaneous is fine.
 - BUT the Spirit's primary work is a Christ-exalting, gospel-centered revelation that leads to the praise of Jesus to the Father's glory.
 - The supernatural work of the Spirit is illuminating the inner person. As it says in Ephesians 3:16-19)

“that he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:16-19 ESV)

- Ex: Imagine that you are looking out a glorious mountain range. There is Mt. whatever there, and that mountain there. You can see it all, but that is a very different thing than being in the midst of those mountains. Living in them. Directly experiencing them. Hiking to their summits. That takes strength that you don't have. Training.
- The mountain range is the Apostles Creed. There is the Father, and the Son, and Spirit, but that's very different from directly experiencing their glory for yourself. That's what the Spirit is empowering you to do.

II. The Spirit-created Supernatural Community

A. “The holy catholic church”

1. **Ephesians 1:19-23 – As we read...** See the highly exalted identity given to the church.
 - The Father didn't just give the church to Christ. He gave Christ as “the head of all things to the church.” What does that even mean?
 - Answered with “which is his body.” – So just as your inner person animates your body, so Christ through the Spirit dwelling in you animates his people in the

world. The church is the physical manifestation of Christ, the head over all things.

- “the fullness of him who fills all in all” – temple language. Just as the glory of God filled the temple, so now the church is the living temple of God filled by the glory of God, Jesus Christ, by the Spirit dwelling in us.
- These are not mere statements. Abstract truths. The living, ascended Christ is really and vitally present in the midst of His church.
- This is a “holy” church

2. “catholic Church”

- Notice there is one church, singular, in 1:22. “He gave him as head over all things to the church.”
- “Catholic” just means “universal
- So not a church for Ephesus, a church for first century Asia minor, another for 4th century Constantinople, and now a church for 21st century Americans. No, one “universal” (that’s what catholic means) church.

3. Local Church is the manifestation of the universal

- Question: So what about us as a local church?
- So notice, Paul is speaking to one local church, the church of Ephesus, and yet he speaks of “the church.”
- Putting this all together, theologian D.A. Carson does an amazing job, “Each local church is not seen primarily as one member parallel to a lot of other member churches, together constituting one body, one church; **nor** is each local church seen as the body of Christ parallel to other earthly churches that are also the body of Christ—as if Christ had many bodies. **Rather**, each church is the full manifestation in space and time of the one, true, heavenly, . . . new covenant church. Local churches should see themselves as outcroppings of heaven, . . . colonies of the new Jerusalem, providing on earth a corporate and visible expression of “the glorious freedom of the children of God”
- EX: Ryan Hallahan used the illustration of a US Embassy. A US Embassy on foreign soil is still the United States of America. It doesn’t represent a little piece of the US, but the whole. An attack on it is an attack on America itself.
- Each local church is an embassy of new creation, the full manifestation of .

4. Belief in the church is part of the essentials of the faith

- When people say, “I believe in Jesus, but I don’t believe in the church.” But that’s just it, you can’t believe in Jesus and not believe in His body. Jesus died to create the church by the power of the Spirit.
- If you believe in Jesus, then you believe he can do what

- Church should be central — The church is far from perfect, and some local churches don't manifest Christ either in doctrine or in practice or in both. But if you believe in Jesus, then you believe in what he died to create, and what he by His Spirit is creating.
- Missions — As the church takes the gospel to unreached peoples, it's not enough to simply proclaim the gospel. We should seek to plant local churches.
- Personal Evangelism — As we share the gospel, we aren't merely seeking decisions. We are seeking to impart the whole gospel, which means we help them get connected to a gospel-preaching local church.

B. "Communion of Saints"

1. By the Spirit we have a supernatural union, (theologians have called it mystical, but they just mean beyond man-made) in Christ.
2. The union of Christ's church cannot be limited or nullified by death, age, time, ethnicity, language, national boundaries, or cultures. One catholic inviolable church.
3. **Read Eph 4:3-6** — So notice, identity precedes action. Union precedes unity. We do not create union in Christ BY our unity. We express the reality of union in Christ by our love and unity.
4. Jesus said in John 15:9, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love," by which Jesus meant, you'll keep his commandment and love one another.
5. Each Christian is loved not just by the Son, but loved with the same intensity and fervency as the Father has for the Son.
6. Failing to live union – This is why divisiveness, gossip, grudges, territorial jealousy should be unthinkable in the church, because it proclaims that our union with Christ is a lie.
7. So believe in the "communion of saints."

III. The Spirit-given Infinitely Bright Future

A. "The forgiveness of sins"

1. 1:7 – we saw this already, but just notice that forgiveness comes through Christ's blood.
2. To believe in the "forgiveness of sins" means 2 things – 1) we understand the offense and guilt of our sin. There is something to forgive. And 2) believe that the shedding of Jesus' blood for us was sufficient to purchase full forgiveness of our sin.
3. "forgiveness of sins" is never a popular concept – Today most people would claim they believe in forgiveness. But what many actually believe is that we don't ever really do anything serious enough to warrant judgement from God. And if someone did something that everyone can agree truly warrants the judgment of God, like

murder or rape, we don't believe they can or should be forgiven. But functionally that just means we don't believe in the forgiveness of sins. We just believe that people are either good enough for love or too bad for it.

4. As Christians we believe that we are all guilty and if we were to bear the actual cost that justice demands, it would be terrifying. But through Christ blood, and joined to it by faith, I am forgiven.

B. "The resurrection of the body"

1. **1:19-20** states that the immeasurable greatness of his power at work toward us is the power that raised Christ bodily out of the grave.
2. So a core belief of Christianity is that God will raise our bodies out of the grave.
3. So what is the Christian hope? In the midst of crisis, the loss of loved ones, years of debilitating and chronic pain? Especially, when we know that one day we will all end up in graves ourselves?
4. The answer is this promise, "I will raise you out of the grave." And give you a body of health and vitality untouchable by time or decay, and unstained by sin.
5. Fully realized, perfected, glorified spiritual life is not a non-physical life. It is the physical perfected.
6. The world that Christ saved us to is not an invisible world out beyond the sky. It's a supernaturally renewed physical creation filled with the spiritual glory of God.
7. And as glorious new creation will be, it will pale into comparison into what the Spirit is making us both internally and externally. In our spirit and in our body.

C. "Life everlasting"

1. What kind of life are we raised to? Well, the life that the Spirit brings to us is called "eternal life."
2. "Eternal life" does not merely mean an eternal duration of time. There are several Greek words for "life." Like *bios*, for example, which just mean normal, biological life. But eternal life is eternal *zoe*, which speaks of a fullness of life. What we mean when we say, "I felt so alive."
3. Throughout our lives we are given moments so beautiful that we think, "I wish this moment could last forever." But even that thought diminishes the joy, because you know the moment will come to end.
4. Eternal life means that the only reason the joy and life of that moment will end is because a better will follow, and your joy will only increase and never decline.

IV. How do we live in this?

- A. "I believe in the Holy Spirit" – What does that mean practically in our lives? I can think of two quick things.

B. First, we need to live in Spirit-dependency

1. When we forget about the Holy Spirit, we fill his power with ourselves.
2. We seek to achieve results with human-powered, human-manufactured, human-motivated effort. And we reap exactly what we sow, a man-made result, and NOT a supernatural community.
3. We think that our effort, impressiveness, attractiveness, and financial abundance creates spiritual life. And it doesn't. I can't.

C. Secondly, we live that primarily through prayer

1. People who believe in the Holy Spirit, who build their lives on the Spirit's power, do what Paul does in this passage. He prays. This is all what he is praying for the Ephesian church. Even as he writes to them he is praying.
2. Spirit-dependency means we are people who can't function without prayer.
 - We can't do parenting, marriage, worship, work, worship without prayer.
 - Everything in our worship that matters eternally can only be done by the Holy Spirit. Everything our various ministries are truly seeking to accomplish can only matter through the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - In prayer-dependency, we don't just pray for safety, but for the Spirit to remove our anxiety
 - We don't just pray for success, but for protection from pride in our success. And for increased faith in failure.
 - We pray not just to stay faithful in our Christian duties, but that the Spirit will strengthen our hearts to absorb the fullness of Christ.

Conclusion: So I believe what I believe, and it makes me who I am. I did not make it, no it is making me. It is the very truth of God and not the invention of any man.

Prayer: Father, we've just traversed through a mountain range. It is far more than we can absorb. So send the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to strengthen us to understand. And if there are any here who still have a heart of stone, by the Spirit remove it and give them a heart of flesh, a new inner person empowered by your Spirit.