

The Apostles Creed

Looking at our Roots

The forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

Psalm 130 (especially vs 3-4)

1 Corinthians 15:35-43

Introduction

We've come to the end of our series looking at our roots, the Apostle's Creed. What a way to go out, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Each phrase marks a colossal doctrine within the Christian faith, in fact there are many books written on each phrase. For now, we will limit ourselves to just a few words of explanation.

The forgiveness of sins

I believe in the forgiveness of sins. What a positive statement set against a dismal background of world affairs. Sin, in the world and in our lives is a ruthless task master. There is nothing 'naughty but nice' about sin. Sin wrecks lives; we see this in the chronic self-destruction of addiction, in the lives of those damaged at the hands of others. We see it internationally, when those greedy for land and power grab and take what isn't theirs. Sin is not playful, it's a beast.

Yet the Apostle's Creed teaches that it isn't the last word on human existence. Instead of the doom and gloom of sin, I believe in the forgiveness of sins. The Psalmist writing hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus says.

³ If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you. (Psalm 130:3-4)

God forgives sin, and God calls us to forgive sin. It is often easier to be the sinner begging forgiveness than the one being begged for forgiveness. It is not easy to forgive, especially when we have been severely sinned against, but it's God's way to forgive, and his Son our Lord and Saviour, calls us to forgive. These may be the hardest but most positive words we could ever dare to pray. **Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.** (Matt 6:12)

Christians are forgiven people and by God's grace forgiving people, because I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

The Resurrection of the Body

The word for body used in the original version of the Apostles Creed, Latin, is 'carnis'. The word literally means 'flesh' but in a rugged and very earthy sense. The English word carnal, finds its roots in the word 'carnis'. Such word usage shows that the early church wanted others to know that God is not at odds with us in these bodies. Christianity, like its parent Judaism, isn't dualistic, dividing us into bad bodies (it is true that we have all sinned, but sin is at odds with God's creation not a necessary part of it) and good spirits. Rather, we are whole beings made up of body and spirit, and God likes it that way so much that he will raise us bodily.

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; (1 Corinthians 15:42-43)

We will not be raised out of our bodies but with new resurrection bodies that bare something of the likeness to you and me. We will not be the same; at the resurrection our bodies will be of a different order, but I will still be me and you will still be you. In all truth we can sing the Vera Lynn song, 'we'll meet again', if not before, certainly at the resurrection.

I believe in the resurrection of the body.

And life Everlasting

Finally, and assuredly, the writers of the Apostles Creed believe in the resurrection to eternal life. In his epic work 'City of God' (written in a time of incredible upheaval, as the Roman Empire began to crumble) Augustine of Hippo says of the Christian's final destination, 'we shall rest and we shall see, we shall see and we shall love, we shall love and we shall praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end.'

Our destiny moves us speedily towards everlasting life. The forgiveness of sins and the resurrection more than adequately prepare us for this moment. The Revelation gives insight to this transition.

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'

But this is beginning for us now. Christians have more than a toe in the water of everlasting life, we are living under the rule of Christ our King. We are acclimatising to being wholly in God's. As a chorus from a few years ago pictures 'To be in your presence, To sit at your feet, Where your love surrounds me, And makes me complete, This is my desire O Lord, This is my desire.'

Conclusion

These three phrases affirm the work of God in our lives, 'I believe'. Whilst Christians celebrate being a community of people, the body of Christ. We each must affirm the Creed ourselves. Its ultimately not enough, that others believe. Another's faith might be a comfort to us, but it has to be 'I believe' not only 'they believe.' God invites us to put our faith in him, to declare 'I believe.'

Connect Group Questions

1. God forgives sins, why is it important for us to forgive sins?
2. What do you think of Pauls illustration of wheat in our reading from 1 Corinthians, what does that say about the body we currently have?
3. What might be best way to prepare ourselves for life everlasting?