

# Apologia Talks

## Apostles' Creed – Third Article

By Theresa Haines

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

### Introduction to the Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed was first formed in approximately the year 150 and was known as "symbol of the faith." Historically, "symbol" meant the token that a messenger took with him or her to prove themselves to be a trustworthy source. When you say the words of the Apostles' Creed you recognize yourself as a believer of what the creed says. The Apostles' Creed is the most common creed used in western Christianity. Some Christian denominations do not use creeds, typically because the common creeds used by churches are not found as whole statements in Scripture, yet all parts of the creeds are Scripturally based. Creeds are a summary of Christian doctrine. Each article starts with "I" and not "We" because of its use as a baptismal creed. The Apostles' Creed is deeply personal. What this creed and others allude in its structure is that Christians believe in the only true triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three articles of the Creed correspond to the three works of God: creation, redemption and sanctification. They also correspond to the three Persons of the Trinity, though in such a way that the external works of God remain indivisible. Other creeds get more specific on how the Bible has been interpreted and its statements about the Holy Trinity. Think of the Apostles' Creed as a doctrine 101 of the Christian Church.

*What the Creed does for us: To know Him perfectly, to know how to obtain the strength to carry out the 10 Commandments, a response and confession of Christians based on the first commandment... (The Large Catechism)*

*Here in the Creed you have the entire essence, will, and work of God exquisitely depicted in very brief but rich words. (The Large Catechism)*

### Introduction to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article

The theme of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article is "On Being Made Holy," or "sanctification." This article is much like the 1<sup>st</sup> Article – little but mighty. The five points covered read like a to-do list – the Holy Spirit, the Church, forgiveness of sins, the resurrection and eternal life. This to-do list mentality is not far from the truth. The Holy Spirit has you on His to-do list and you have some tasks on your end to be working on.

In regards to wording, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article's text changes depending on church congregation or denomination. This was even common during Martin Luther's days, which recognized the difference between translating a word directly and translating a word to its true meaning –not always with the same result. This distinction is made by Luther in the Large Catechism on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article with expositions on the phrases "holy Christian church," "communion of saints," "resurrection of the flesh." If you are one who likes linguistics, go check it out.

### Scripture Connect

- Psalm 139:7-10 – Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.
- Titus 3:5 – He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.
- 1 Corinthians 12:3 – No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

- Romans 15:13 – The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Hebrews 11:6 – Without faith it is impossible to please God.
- Philippians 1:6 – Who began a good work in you will carry it on to the completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
- Ephesians 4:3-6 – Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit –just as you were called to one hope when you were called –one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is overall and through all and in all.
- 1 Peter 3:15 – Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.
- Habakkuk 2:4 - See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness
- John 5:28-29 – A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out.

### Doctrinal Quotation

- What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.— Luther's Small Catechism
- ...it is not enough to believe that Christ was born, suffered, and was raised again unless we also add [the forgiveness of sins], which is the real purpose or final goal. – Apology of the Augsburg Confession: Article IV Justification
- How does such sanctifying take place? Answer: ...the Holy Spirit effects our being made holy through the following: the community of saints or Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. That is he first leads us into his holy community, placing us in the church's lap, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ. – Large Catechism: The Creed
- Forgiveness is constantly needed, for although God's grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God's Word in the unity of the Christian church, yet we are never without sin because we carry our flesh around our neck. - Large Catechism: The Creed
- ...the Holy Spirit continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day, and for this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work. - Large Catechism: The Creed

### Application

Sometimes we want to downplay the work of the Holy Spirit. He is not an afterthought. The Holy Spirit is an equal member of the triune God. Your faith is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, not you! That is sanctification in the *wide sense*. He is working in your heart, head, and hands to further make you holy (sometimes known as the *narrow sense* of sanctification). Are you giving the Holy Spirit stubbornness or willingness?

Good works are a result of the Holy Spirit working inside of you. Are your thoughts, words and actions matching your confession of Faith? If not, what is stopping you? Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through God's Word, nature and His people. That is what the body of believers is there for – correct and admonish you.

God is all about presents. The Father provides and protects. The Son gives you life in His name. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts. Each believer receives from the Holy Spirit faith and forgiveness of sins. Many will be blessed with special miraculous gifts. Are you hoarding God's presents [blessings] or generously giving?

## **References**

Kolb, R., & Wengert, T.J. (2000). *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press

*Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House