



THE FAITH WE SHARE

A STUDY OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

Week Eight: "I believe in...the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen"

Romans 8: 1-4, 22-25, 31-39

Opening Question: What is something either in your real future or in your "someday I hope this happens future" that brings you excitement when you think about it?

CONTEXT

A quick look back: Our image for this study is a big table around which all believers' past and present can gather. Think over the past 8 weeks- what truths from the Creed have we said are the "food" on that table? How does the Creed point us to Scripture?

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

Today's Passage: The Creed began by turning our eyes ALL the way back to creation. And today, it lifts our eyes ALL the way into the forever future. To the sure promise that the God who created the world has accomplished a way to dwell with that beloved creation, with us, forever. Today we use a passage from Romans 8 to explore the realities of forgiveness, resurrection, and eternity. Paul starts Romans 8 with the word "therefore," and what comes before that word in Chapter 7 is his realization that no matter what he does on his own, he can't seem to outrun the power of sin. But the word "therefore" is the hinge on which this unsolvable problem turns, as Christ's redeeming work opens the door to a life and hope and freedom and intimacy with God that is not just ours "someday" but is ours now. Paul asserts that part of the way we know that hope is in the sure promise that our own bodies will be raised when Christ returns to make all things new. The passage ends with one of the most beautiful, sweeping, comforting sections in all of Scripture, as we ask with all of history and humanity "Can anything separate us from the love of God?" The answer is definitive and reminds us that the God described in the Creed- Father, Son, and Spirit- has already accomplished everything needed to truly and fully be "God with us"- today, tomorrow, and always.

CONTENT

Read Romans 8: 1-4, 22-25, 31-39 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with these passages.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text? What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group to share and discuss your observations, writing them in a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, lists, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together to share and discuss what you drew and why.

Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:

Forgiveness of sins: vs 1-4

1. What couldn't save us from sin?
2. What did save us from sin and how? How complete is this saving?
3. What is condemned and what/who is not condemned?

Resurrection of the body: vs 22-25

1. A central teaching of the New Testament is that not only are our souls united with Christ when we die, but that God will raise, renew, restore, and reunite our spirit with our physical bodies when Christ returns.
 - a. What common (but intense!!) human experience does Paul use in vs 22 to help us understand the mystery of this promise? How does this image help you think about what physical death means or doesn't mean?
 - b. What does vs 23 say about what we are waiting for in our bodies?

Life everlasting: vs 31-39

1. Vs 31-34 use a courtroom scene to illustrate how thoroughly God holds, protects, and defends us. Imagine yourself in the seat of the accused. How does God intervene? Where does Christ sit in this picture and what is he doing? Is there any fear in this room? How does this tie to 8:1?
2. The Creed says we believe in "life everlasting." How do verses 35-39 describe and affirm this reality in a different way? What parts of these descriptions address current realities? future realities?

APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.

- What has stood out to you or been particularly important from the passages we have studied together this semester? If someone asked "What is one thing you will carry with you from this study?" what would you say?
- The Creed ends with the word "Amen." In what ways is this Creed a prayer? How could you imagine using it in your own prayer life? If you had to talk about the Creed as a prayer to someone else who doesn't see it that way, how would you explain it? What are the potential gifts in prayers that come from other people, other times, other traditions?
- The end of Romans 8 affirms that there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ. If we wanted to put Romans 8: 35 into modern categories, we could list the following as just some of the things that can't separate us from God's love: cancer, loneliness, brokenness in our family, a horrible grade on a test, an inability to pay for food or groceries, war in our home country. Is there something happening in your own life right now that makes you wonder if God's love is far away? As a group, have each person share and then name that thing out loud, followed by, "...can't separate me from God's love."

PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer: Pray the Apostles' Creed in unison or have each person say a line:

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creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
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The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
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