

THE APOSTLE'S CREED

ACTS 15:11 • TV-026A

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By

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Acts 5:11

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

I invite you to turn in your Bibles to the book of **Acts chapter 15:11**. My subject today is: **“THE APOSTLE'S CREED”** or what the apostles believed about salvation.

In the **15 chapter of Acts: 11** Peter is speaking here and he says; *“We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”*

Now, Paul and Barnabas had preached the Gospel of Christ among the Gentiles. And many of the Gentiles had come to believe the Gospel. They had received Christ in their hearts and they were rejoicing in the salvation of Christ Jesus our Lord.

But certain men, the Scripture says, there in the **15 chapter of Acts**, if you'll read that whole Chapter; it says; *“Certain men came down from Judea and tried to tell these Gentile believers; except you be circumcised after the law of Moses you cannot be saved.”*

Now these people had heard Paul preach the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of substitution, the Gospel of the blood sacrifice, the Gospel of Calvary, and the Gospel of redemption by faith alone. They had heard them preach this, and believed it and received Christ.

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And then, these men came down from Judea and began to preach among these Gentiles and say, “Now you can't be saved unless you, according to the Law of Moses, receive circumcision.”

Now the pulpit today is full of these same legalists, these same ritualists, who say things like this; “Except you belong to our particular denomination you can't be saved.” You've heard them preach that and I've heard them preach that unless you're Catholic, unless you're a Baptist, unless you're a Church of Christ, unless you are this, that, and the other, you can't be saved.

And then, we hear them say this; “Unless you're baptized by us; it doesn't matter if you're emerged or however you're baptized, but if you are baptized, you must be baptized by us, they say, or you cannot be saved.”

And then others come along with this type of preaching saying; “Unless your lifestyle, manner of your clothes and your behavior and your conduct, unless your lifestyle is just like ours and according to our church rules and our church standard you cannot be saved.”

And then others say this; “Unless you hold our particular beliefs about prophecy and about different parts of the Scripture you cannot be saved.”

Now that's what these men were saying to the Gentiles, these men who came down from Judea. They were saying to these believers; “You can't be saved just by believing on Christ. You can't be saved by just receiving Christ Jesus as your Lord and Saviour; you've got to be circumcised after the Law of Moses.”

Now when these legalists put forth these arguments; well they had quite a stir up there in the church and the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas and other men up to Jerusalem to confirm with the apostles of Christ.

The church got together. There was a big argument over this. There was a division and so they chose Paul and Barnabas and other men in the church and sent them to Jerusalem directly to Peter, James, and John, and asked them about this.

Now they wanted to find out, is it true that these Gentiles cannot be saved only by believing in Christ, only by receiving Christ? Is it true that these Gentiles must be circumcised after the Law of Moses in order to be saved?

Now, when they got to Jerusalem and presented the problem, they had a conflict there too. If you'll look at **verse 5** it says; “In Jerusalem there arose certain Pharisees who had professed to believe the Gospel, who had professed to believe in Christ, and said that's right. They said the same thing; they said that's right; these people can't be saved. They can't be saved unless they are circumcised and keep the law of Moses.”

And then Peter arose, the apostle of Christ. Peter arose and delivered a powerful message. He delivered a powerful Word. He answered these legalists, he answered these ritualists once and for all and this is my text today, what Peter said.

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He delivered this, what I call, "The Apostle's Creed." He tells us in this verse of Scripture what the apostles believed about salvation. Now listen to Peter as he speaks. You'll find it in **Acts 15** beginning about **verse 9 or 10** in there.

This is what he said; he stood up and he said; "*Brethren; a good while ago God sent me to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.*" You remember; Peter went to the household of Cornelius.

"And these people heard the Gospel of Christ from my mouth and they believed. And God gave them the Holy Spirit. God made no difference between these Gentiles and us but He cleansed their hearts by faith and He gave them the Holy Spirit."

"Now brethren; why do you try to test God or tempt God by putting a yoke on the necks of these Gentiles, a yoke which our fathers couldn't bear and a yoke which we cannot bear? What are you trying to do, mix law and grace, works and grace?"

Now listen to this statement; "*We believe, (and this is why I call it the "Apostle's Creed" and this is the answer to every ritualist today and to every legalist today) we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.*"

Now this is an important statement. It ought to be underlined in your Bible. It ought to be studied carefully. This is an important statement from the lips of our Lord's disciple, Simon Peter. I call it the, "Apostle's Creed," what the apostles believed and much can be learned from it.

And if you will let me divide it into two categories I think we can learn a great deal about what they believed concerning salvation, concerning redemption.

Now first of all, I want to deal with this, what the apostles did not believe and then in closing, what the apostles did believe.

First of all: What they did not believe!

It is clear from this statement; it is clear from the discussion which these men conducted, it is perfectly clear that these disciples did not believe in salvation by ceremony or by ritual. They did not believe in salvation by the works of the law.

Many people claim that Peter was the first Pope. You will hear that everywhere, Peter was the first Pope; Peter was the head, the great head of the great church that in compasses all religions.

But listen; when Peter declares what he believes about salvation, when he declares in this text: "*We believe that we shall be saved or by through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; we shall be saved, even as they;*" he didn't say a thing in the world about the sprinkling of infants. He didn't say a thing in the world about the sacraments. He didn't say a thing in the world about Holy Days and Feasts and ceremonies did he?

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He didn't say a thing in the world about priests, altars, robes, candles, religious pomp and ceremony, he said; *"We believe through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, (not through the church, not through the ceremony, not through the catechism, not through the confirmation principle) we believe that through the grace of God we shall be saved."*

No, these men did not believe in ritualism, or ceremonialism; they talked about salvation by grace and grace alone. Christ was their message. Their theme was grace and Christ.

That's the reason Paul said, *"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ."* That's the reason Paul said, *"I'm determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*

These men were not willing to put a yoke of ritualism and a yoke of legalism and a yoke of ceremonialism on the necks of people, a yoke that their forefathers could not bear and a yoke that they couldn't bear. They didn't believe in ritualism.

Secondly: They did not believe in salvation by works!

It's clear here. He said, *"We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."* Now grace and works are opposite. Paul said, *"If it is grace, it is not works."* And salvation by works is not grace. You cannot mix the two.

Now; I know what the creed of the world is; I've been around a while. I've preached for a few years. I know what the creed of this world is. I know what the belief of most people listening to this telecast is; "Do the best you can, according to human standards and you'll go to heaven when you die." Now that's the creed of this world. We're born with that in our hearts. We are all born Pharisees. We are born self-righteous. We are born filled with human pride.

And this is what the average person believes, good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. And if you'll do the best you can according to human standards, according to human morality and law, then you'll go to heaven when you die; there's no doubt about it.

And to question this, to question this is treason against human pride. You just don't question it. Every person is born self-righteous. Every person is born seeing the best in himself and the worst in everybody else.

You know it's so and I know it's so. Nearly every one of us is like the Pharisee in the temple who prayed with himself and said; "Lord; I sure thank you that I'm not like other people. Why Lord I tithe, I go to church, I give alms, and I'm not an adulterer, I'm not an extortioner and I'm not even like that Publican over there. I sure thank you Lord that I'm not like other men."

But the disciples didn't talk that way. John said; *"If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar."* Because God said, *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."*

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Paul was very explicit. Paul was very plain. He said; *“There’s none good, no not one. There’s none righteous. There’s none that seeketh after God.”*

These disciples did not believe in salvation by works. They did not believe that the way to heaven, the road to heaven, was by the way of self-righteousness and human morality. They believed that the way of the cross leads home.

**“And there’s no other way but this
We’ll never get sight of the gates of light
If the way of the cross we miss.**

**That dying thief rejoiced to see
The fountain of blood in his day
And there may I**

(preacher in the pulpit, pastor of a church, leader of believers)

**There may I though vile as he
Wash my sins away.”**

No, these men did not believe in salvation by works, by the grace of God; that’s what they believed.

And then these men did not have any confidence, any faith, in their ancestors or in their heritage. That’s right! They had no confidence in their ancestors. Peter didn’t say, “Now we believe we shall be saved because we’re Israelites.”

“We believe we shall be saved because Abraham is our father,” that’s what the Pharisees said. They got real angry with the Master when He talked to them about salvation by grace. And they said; “We’ve got Abraham to father: Why we’re the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

People today; “We’re Baptists, we’re Methodists, we’re Presbyterian; what are you? We’re Catholic, we’re something else. We have Christian parents. We were raised in a Christian home. We have an unbroken line all the way back to John the Baptist or all the way back to Jesus Christ.”

Let me tell you something, *“In Christ there’s neither Jew nor Gentile. There’s neither bond or free. There’s neither male nor female.”* There is neither Baptist, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Catholic, or anything else. It’s Christ and Christ alone.

Now you better quit trying to trace your salvation back to an experience or back to a feeling or back to a decision or back to a denomination; salvation is in Christ.

And these men when they came to them and they summed this whole thing up, what they believed, they didn’t say; “We believe that we shall be saved because we are loyal, faithful,

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Jews.” They said; *“We believe we shall be saved by the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

No, these disciples did not believe in salvation by ritualism, salvation by ceremonialism, salvation by sacraments and ordinances. These men did not believe in salvation by works, by morality, and by self-righteousness and they did not believe in family inheritance.

What did they believe? Let me give you four things:

First of all: From this confession when Peter stood before these faithful men and he said: *“Men and brethren; we believe we shall be saved.”* I see in that the first thing that he believed; he believed that man was lost and needed to be saved.

He believed in human ruin. He said, *“We need to be saved.”* Peter viewed men as fallen creatures, not as dignified, noble, creatures, not as evolved creatures; he viewed them as fallen creatures who needed to be saved, saved from sin, saved from the wrath of God, saved from judgment, saved from the condemnation of God’s holy law.

If the apostle Peter was standing here today and preaching to you he wouldn’t flatter you talking about human dignity. No he would not! He would not flatter you talking about human nobility and human goodness.

Do you know what he would preach? *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* That’s what he’d preach. He’d preach what he said to Christ when he saw the power and wisdom of our Lord. He said, *“Lord; depart from me, I’m a sinful man.”* That’s what he would preach.

He would preach this; *“What the law says it says to those who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty, before God almighty.”*

Have you ever faced the wrath of God, the judgment of God? Have you ever faced God as a guilty sinner? Not many people have and do you know why? It’s because of the flattery that falls from the average pulpit today, because of the deception that is delivered today from the average pulpit.

The preacher cries; *“Peace, peace, when there is no peace. Everybody’s all right. Everybody’s doing the best they can. Everybody comes to church once in a while and gives a little offering and wins a soul and does the best that he can and everybody is all right.”*

But this is not what the apostles preached. Paul said; *“When we were without strength Christ died for the ungodly.”* Can you imagine what would happen in the average Sunday morning congregation if the preacher got up and called the people, *“Ungodly, ungodly?”*

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And that's what Paul says, though. He says, "*Christ died for the ungodly.*" More than that; he said; "*When we were enemies of God we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, (enemies, enemies).*"

And again he says; "*You're without God, you're without Christ, you're without hope, and you're without help.*" That's the way the apostles preached. They called men "sinners." John the Baptist called them a, "*Generation of vipers. Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*"

These disciples believed that men were lost and that men needed to be saved. Now I don't know my friend whether you have ever been or will ever be convinced of your sin. I'm not just talking about an outward act of murder, an outward act of adultery, and outward act of lying; I'm talking about sin in the heart, sin in the imagination, and sin in the inward man.

The law of God reaches not only the actions of men but the attitudes of men. There are sins of commission but there are sins of omission. There's sins of deeds and there's sins also of motive. Sin is in the heart; out of the heart proceeds those things that defile a creature and damn a creature.

If we don't love God with a perfect love its sin. If we don't love our neighbor with a perfect love, as ourselves, its sin. Anything short of the glory of God is sin. Anything short of the absolute, perfect, immaculate, purity of God is sin. Can you see that?

These disciples did. They believed that they needed to be saved. They believed they needed to be saved because they were lost. Peter said, "*We shall be saved.*"

Secondly: They believed in salvation by grace and grace alone!

Peter says; "*We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" "*For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

Can words be any plainer than that? Listen to this Scripture in **Titus chapter 3:5**; "*Not by works of righteousness which we've done but according to His mercy hath he saved us.*" Listen to this Scripture; "*The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

Grace, what is the meaning of that word grace? Well somebody said, "Grace is undeserved favor, unmerited favor. Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve." But I do believe that the meaning of the word grace is right in the word grace (g-r-a-c-e).

G: "*Salvation is the gift of God.*"

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He owed us nothing but He was pleased to give us life. John wrote; *“This is the record, God hath given us eternal life.”* It’s a free gift, unmerited, unsought, unearned, and unbought. It’s a gift, grace, the gift of God.

R: Redeemed, redeemed by Christ’s death:

**“He paid it all
All the debt I owe.”**

I contributed nothing for the salvation of my soul. As far as my being legally justified before the throne of a holy God I was totally passive in it and am passive now in it because it’s all through Christ. He took my guilt, He took my blame, He took my sin, and paid the debt. He redeemed me, He ransomed me, and He paid it all.

The word grace, G-R-A;

A: *“We are **accepted** in the beloved.”*

You know; the Scripture tells us in **Hebrews 10**, that we have access to the presence of God, to the very throne of God. And we can come there how, through Christ because of the sacrifice of Christ, because Christ opened for us, in the presence of God, a new and a living way by His blood.

C: Complete, God’s gift, redeemed by Christ, accepted in the beloved, and we’re complete in Christ. That’s what Paul wrote in Colossians said, *“We are complete in Him.”*

And then in **1 Corinthians 1:30** he said this, *“Of God are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,”* all I need.

The little song that our young people sing:

**“Jesus Christ is made to me
All I need, all I need
Wisdom, righteousness
Holiness forever more
My redemption
Full and sure
He’s all I need.”**

E: I am **enriched** by Christ.

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I have an inheritance, the Scripture says, that's undefiled, that's reserved in heaven that fadeth not away. I'm an heir of God and a joint-heir of Jesus Christ.

That's grace! And that's how we're saved. That's what Peter said; "We are saved by the grace of God, the gift of God, not by works." If you're one of God's children it's by His grace, it's by His grace.

Thirdly: What did these men believe about salvation?

Well; they believed that men were lost and needed to be saved. We believe we shall be saved. They believed that men were saved not by works but by grace, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, they believed in perseverance. They believed in an effectual salvation. They believed in an eternal salvation. Peter said; "*We believe we shall be saved.*" He didn't say "we might be, perhaps we could be or if things go right we might be." He said, "*We shall be saved. We believe we shall be saved.*"

My friends; I love the shall's and the will's of God's Word. You ought to take your Bibles sometime and read the shall's and the will's of God's promises. God never says "I might do anything." No He does not!

He says things like this: "*All that my Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. I shall, I will.*" He says things like this; "*He that believeth on Him shall not come into condemnation.*"

He said; "*Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them I must also bring and they shall hear my voice and they shall be one fold.*"

Oh, I know if we depend on ourselves we'll fall. I know that and you know that. But I'm not depending on myself. I didn't come to Christ depending on myself. I don't remain in Christ depending on myself and I'm not depending on myself to finish the journey. I'm depending on Him who is not only the author but the finisher of my faith.

I'm depending on Him. We shall be saved because we shall be kept and we shall never perish. That's what He said. "And we shall never perish because the purpose of God will not change. He said, "*I'm the Lord; I change not.*" And because the sacrifice of Christ cannot fail; "*He shall not fail.*" That's what it says.

And because the love of Christ is everlasting He said; "*I've drawn you with an everlasting love.*" Christ's love is not like yours, it's here today and gone tomorrow. It's as a fervent pinch today and it's at rock bottom tomorrow; that's not Christ. His is an everlasting love; it never changes. "*Having loved His own He loved them to the end, even to the death of the cross.*"

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And then we shall not perish because the Spirit's regeneration is called, "*Eternal life*," not temporary life, not life for five months or five years, or fifty, eternal life. "*I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish.*"

And then, last of all: Now I want you listen very carefully. Peter said; "We believe we shall be saved because we're lost, because we're sinners through the grace, not by works, God's grace, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"

We shall be saved; there's no might about it; "*We shall be saved, even as they.*" Do you see that? "*We shall be saved even as they*"

Now I like the way he said that. Peter didn't say; "Now we know that God has shown mercy to these Gentiles. We don't like them and we never have liked them but God has shown them mercy and we admit that they're going to be saved just like we are."

He didn't say that; he says, "*We're going to be saved like they are.*"

You know some of us; we might say with a little compassion, with a little affection; "Now I believe the drunkard and the harlot will get saved just like we get saved."

You've got it wrong friend. You're going to be saved just like they're saved. That's what the Scripture says. Can you say with these disciples, I believe that the outcast, that the poor sinner, that the most wicked person on earth; I believe I'll be saved like he's saved?

You know Charles Wesley wrote a great hymn:

**"How can it be?
That I should gain
An interest in
The Saviour's blood
Died He for me
Who Him to death pursued**

**Amazing love
How can it be?
That thou my God
Should die for the for me**

(Gentile, No, me, for the Methodist, no, for me, for the Israelite, no, for me)

**That thou my God
Should die for me."**

Friend; you better come down just like old Naaman; come down so that you might find mercy!