
CREEDS NEED CHURCHES AND CHURCHES NEED CREEDS

1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16



“What’s the point in creeds and confessions? They’re just academic theology with no practical relevance or value.”

I must confess that when I was a young Christian, I not only thought that, I said it. So, if that’s what you think or say, I sympathize and understand.

But thirty-plus years on, I see that creeds and confessions are supremely relevant and extremely valuable. I learned by painful experience, but I could have learned much more easily by simply reading 1 Timothy 3:14-16. As we’ll see, these verses teach:

- **CREEDS NEED CHURCHES**
 - **CHURCHES NEED CREEDS**
-

LEARNING

CREEDS NEED CHURCHES

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth (14-15).

Paul was anxious to see Timothy, but, aware that he might be delayed, wrote this letter to ensure order in the Ephesian church. In chapters two and three he's been teaching **how one ought to behave in the household of God.**

The first two names he gives to the church, **the household of God and the church of the living God,** remind us that it's God who owns the church and therefore has the right to order it as he decides.

The third name, **pillar and buttress of the truth,** reminds us that God established the church to establish, support, and promote the truth. Without the church, the truth would disintegrate and disappear in the world.

THE CHURCH DOESN'T MAKE UP THE TRUTH,
BUT IT DOES KEEP UP THE TRUTH.

"So, creeds need churches. I thought churches needed creeds?" That's true too! So Paul next gives the church a creed to keep.

CHURCHES NEED CREEDS

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness (16). What follows is the first and real Apostle's Creed. The so-called Apostle's Creed is a good creed, but it was not written by the Apostles. It was first mentioned in 390 AD. The 1 Timothy 3:16 creed was recorded by Paul the Apostle. It contains three pairs of truths that explain previously hidden truths about how godliness is produced.

The first pair says Christ was **manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit (16).** We confess that Christ was revealed by his incarnation and by his resurrection.

The second pair says he was **seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations (16).** We confess that Christ was witnessed to, or reported in heaven and earth.

The third pair asserts he was **believed on in the world, taken up in glory (16).** We confess that Christ was received on earth and in heaven.

CONFESSING OUR FAITH
IS CEMENTING OUR FAITH

LOVING

Confessing such a Christ inevitably brings us to loving Christ. We hear these six great confessional statements and join Paul in worshipful adoration when he says, **Great is the mystery of godliness.** It's so great, so massive, so important, and so significant. As someone wrote, "The magnificent Christ of this grand confession makes possible the godly conduct that Paul so earnestly desires."

LIVING

The church depends on the truth for its existence and life; the truth depends on the church for its defense and proclamation. The particular truth Paul is referring to here is not just the truth that Christ is our Savior, but the truth that Christ is our Sanctifier. Godliness is not so much the result of trying harder to be like Christ; it's more about believing better in Christ. That's why Paul says it's a great mystery, which means something that used to be hidden but is now revealed. **Let's hold fast and hold up our confession of Christ to strengthen our faith, our holiness, and our churches.**

