

Let Us Hold Fast Our Confession

Hebrews 10:19-25

“HOLDING FAST”

- 1. The book of Hebrews is written to a group tempted to go back to Judaism.**
 - Main message: Jesus is superior—to angels, to Moses, to the Levitical priesthood.
- 2. Because of the blood of Jesus, we have confidence to draw near to God. v.19-20 Ref. Lev. 16**
- 3. Because Jesus is our great priest, we can draw near in truth and purity. v.21-22**
- 4. We are called to hold fast to our confession of Jesus without wavering. v.23; Ref. Heb. 4:14-16**
 - A call to action: “Hold fast” to our confession...
 - A warning: “Without wavering” – implies that we will be tempted to waver from what we believe
 - A promise: “...for he who promised is faithful.”
- 5. We hold fast our confession by being in community and continuing to meet together. v.24-25**
 - Paul uses the same language: “hold fast”. Rom 12:9; 1 Thes. 5:21-22

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT WE ARE A ‘CONFESSIONAL’ CHURCH?

- 1. Definition: Confession = con (with or together) + fess (to declare or admit) = to agree together**
 - One use of “confession” is when we acknowledge sin to God and to one another. James 5:16
 - Another use: a written statement summarizing what we believe. E.g., Apostle’s Creed, Westminster Confession of Faith, the London Confession of Faith
 - “Confession” = Gk. *homologia* Lit. homo = same + logia = to speak. Ref. Heb. 10:23; 4:14
- 2. Catechism: a form of instruction by means of questions & answers;** particularly in the principles of religion.
 - E.g., Heidelberg Catechism; Westminster Shorter & Longer Catechisms
- 3. Confessionalism: the belief in the usefulness, importance, and necessity of a full and unambiguous statement on the teachings of Scripture.**

THE WORD OF GOD AND CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

- 1. The Bible is filled with many “confessions” of faith used by God’s people over centuries.**
 - The word confession is used in this way numerous times. *See back of outline.
- 2. The right use of man-made written confessions never equates them with Scripture.**
 - *Sola Scriptura* – Scripture alone. (I.e., the Bible alone is our only rule for faith and practice).
- 3. Man-made confessions of faith are bound by time and historical context.** E.g., WCF written 1643-1646

WHEN USED RIGHTLY, CONFESSIONS OF FAITH ARE HELPFUL TO GROW A HEALTHY CHURCH

- 1. They PROVIDE CLARITY in the faith.**
 - Some divisions in the church are healthy and good. 1 Cor. 11:19: For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.
 - 2. They PROMOTE UNITY in the faith.**
 - 3. The PROTECT FIDELITY to the faith.**
 - ‘Yes, the Confession is imperfect, but it is better than your wrong theology.’
 - The Bible alone is without error (inerrant) and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Confessions and creeds are not.
 - But we are foolish to think that we alone can interpret it: “Never go into the water alone.” Examples:
- Jesus Christ is one Person with two perfect and distinct natures (divine and human)
 -“Inseparably joined together in one person without being changed, mixed, or confused” (WCF 8:2).
 -Trinity: “In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, & eternity: God the Father, God the Son, & God the Holy Spirit. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father & the Son” (WCF 2:3).

*The idea for and much of the content of this message credited to Ligon Duncan @ Gospel Reformation Network.

1 Cor 15:3-7: For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

1 Timothy 3:16: Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

“Trustworthy sayings” texts:

1 Timothy 1:15: The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

1 Timothy 3:1: The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

1 Timothy 4:8-10: For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

2 Timothy 2:11-13: The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

Titus 3:4-8: But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ The saying is trustworthy and I want you to insist on these things...

In Luke’s Gospel, surrounding the birth of Jesus:

- Mary’s song of praise to God for lifting up the humble (aka. The Magnificat) Luke 1:46-55
- Zechariah’s prophetic hymn praising God for redeeming His people (aka. The Benedictus) Luke 1:68-79
- Simeon’s song of peace after seeing the baby Jesus (aka. The Nunc Dimittis) Luke 2:29-32

In the Old Testament:

Deut. 6:4-6: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.”
-Compare 1 Kings 18:39: And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God.”

A couple of sources for reading on this subject:

Carl Trueman’s book: *Crisis of Confidence: Reclaiming the Historic Faith in a Culture Consumed with Individualism and Identity*

Samuel Miller’s book (1839): *The Utility and Importance of Creeds and Confessions*