

Introduction

What do we expect from God? Read Eph. 3:14-19

¹ So far we have heard the first part of Christian doctrine. We have seen all that God wants us to do or not to do. Now there properly follows the Creed, which sets forth to us everything that we must expect and receive from God. To state it quite briefly, the Creed teaches us to know Him fully [Ephesians 3:19]. ² This is intended to help us do what we ought to do according to the Ten Commandments. For (as said above) the Ten Commandments are set so high that all human ability is far too feeble and weak to keep them. Therefore, it is just as necessary to learn this part of Christian doctrine as to learn the former. Then we may know how to attain what they command, both where and how to receive such power. ³ For if we could by our own powers keep the Ten Commandments as they should be kept, we would need nothing further, neither the Creed nor the Lord's Prayer. ⁴ But before we explain this advantage and necessity of the Creed, it is enough at first for the simpleminded to learn to comprehend and understand the Creed itself.

Creator

⁵ In the first place, the Creed has until now been divided into twelve articles. Yet, if all the doctrinal points that are written in the Scriptures and that belong to the Creed were to be distinctly set forth, there would be far more articles. They could not all be clearly expressed in so few words. ⁶ But to make the Creed most easily and clearly understood as it is to be taught to children, we shall briefly sum up the entire Creed in three chief articles, according to the three persons in the Godhead [Colossians 2:9]. Everything that we believe is related to these three persons. So the First Article, about God the Father, explains creation. The Second Article, about the Son, explains redemption. And the Third, about the Holy Spirit, explains sanctification. ⁷ We present them as though the Creed were briefly summarized in so many words: I believe in God the Father, who has created me; I believe in God the Son, who has redeemed me; I believe in the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me. One God and one faith, but three persons. Therefore, three articles or confessions. ⁸ Let us go over the words briefly.

Redeemer

Sanctifier

1. What does the Creed teach us, and why is this so necessary? (paragraphs 1-3)
2. How does Luther divide the Creed? Why? (paragraphs 5-7)

Article I.

⁹ I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

¹⁰ This shows and sets forth most briefly what is God the Father's essence, will, activity, and work. The Ten Commandments have taught that we are to have not more than one God [Deuteronomy 6:4]. So it might be asked, "What kind of a person is God? What does He do? How can we praise, or show and describe Him, that He may be known?" Now, that is taught in this and in the following article. So the Creed is nothing other than the answer and confession of Christians arranged with respect to the First Commandment. ¹¹ It is as if you were to ask a little child, "My dear, what sort of a God do you have? What do you know about Him?" The child could say, "This is my God: first, the Father, who has created heaven and earth. Besides this One only, I regard nothing else as God. For there is no one else who could create heaven and earth."

¹² But for the learned and those who are somewhat advanced, these three articles may all be expanded and divided into as many parts as there are words. But now for young scholars let it suffice to make the most necessary points, as we have said, that this article refers to the Creation. We emphasize the words "Creator of heaven and earth." ¹³ But what is the force of this, or what do you mean by these words, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?" Answer: "This is what I mean and believe, that I am God's creature [2 Corinthians 5:17]. I mean that He has given and constantly preserves [Psalm 36:6] for me my body, soul, and life, my members great and small, all my senses, reason, and understanding, and so on. He gives me food and drink, clothing and support, wife and children, domestic servants, house and home, and more. ¹⁴ Besides, He causes all created things to serve for the uses and necessities of life. These include the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, day and night, air, fire, water, earth, and whatever it bears and produces. They include birds and fish, beasts, grain, and all kinds of produce [Psalm 104]. ¹⁵ They also include whatever else there is for bodily and temporal goods, like good government, peace, and security." ¹⁶ So we learn from this article that none of us owns for himself, nor can preserve, his life nor anything that is here listed or can be listed. This is true no matter how small and unimportant a thing it might be. For all is included in the word *Creator*.

¹⁷ Further, we also confess that God the Father has not only given us all that we have and see before our eyes, but He daily preserves and defends us against all evil and misfortune [Psalm 5:11]. He directs all sorts of danger and disaster away from us. We confess that He does all this out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a kind Father. He cares for us so that no evil falls upon us. ¹⁸ But to speak more about this belongs in the other two parts of this article, where we say, "Father Almighty."

Small Catechism

The First Article

Creation

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that he has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.

All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

Who is the subject of the first article?

What does God do for you in the first article?

What does God provide for you?

¹⁹ Now, all that we have, and whatever else is in heaven and upon the earth, is daily given, preserved, and kept for us by God. Therefore, it is clearly suggested and concluded that it is our duty to love, praise, and thank Him for these things without ceasing [1 Thessalonians 5:17–18]. In short, we should serve Him with all these things, as He demands and has taught in the Ten Commandments.

²⁰ We could say much here, if we were to wander, about how few people believe this article. For we all pass over it, hear it, and say it. Yet we do not see or consider what the words teach us. ²¹ For if we believed this teaching with the heart, we would also act according to it [James 2:14]. We would not strut about proudly, act defiantly, and boast as though we had life, riches, power, honor, and such, of ourselves [James 4:13–16]. We would not act as though others must fear and serve us, as is the practice of the wretched, perverse world. The world is drowned in blindness and abuses all the good things and God's gifts only for its own pride, greed, lust, and luxury. It never once thinks about God, so as to thank Him or acknowledge Him as Lord and Creator.

²² This article ought to humble and terrify us all, if we believed it. For we sin daily [Hebrews 3:12–13] with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and possessions, and with everything we have. This is especially true of those who fight against God's Word. Yet Christians have this advantage: they acknowledge that they are duty bound to serve God for all these things and to be obedient to Him.

²³ We ought, therefore, daily to recite this article. We ought to impress it upon our mind and remember it by all that meets our eyes and by all good that falls to us. Wherever we escape from disaster or danger, we ought to remember that it is God who gives and does all these things. In these escapes we sense and see His fatherly heart and His surpassing love toward us [Exodus 34:6]. In this way the heart would be warmed and kindled to be thankful, and to use all such good things to honor and praise God.

²⁴ We have most briefly presented the meaning of this article. This is how much is necessary at first for the most simple to learn about what we have, what we receive from God, and what we owe in return. This is a most excellent knowledge but a far greater treasure. For here we see how the Father has given Himself to us, together with all creatures, and has most richly provided for us in this life. We see that He has overwhelmed us with unspeakable, eternal treasures by His Son and the Holy Spirit, as we shall hear [Colossians 2:2].

What do we learn about our dependency on God?

What is our response to God for His gracious provisions? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

How do we act in accordance with the one true faith? Read James 2:14, Hebrews 3:12-13

1. What sort of God do we have? What does He do for us? (paragraphs 12-16)
2. How is God unlike a watchmaker who wound up the universe and just left it to run (paragraph 17-18)
3. How would God have us respond to Him for all His blessings? (paragraph 19)
4. How does knowing God is our Creator change the way we view ourselves and life in general? (paragraph 20-23)