

## Lesson 1 **CONFESSION AND CREEDS**

### 1.0 **Public Profession of Faith**

#### 1.1 Making Public Profession of Faith

To confess means “to say the same thing”. It is closely related to the word “to witness” in the Bible. In making confession, we witness to the glorious counsel of the one triune God, and to Jesus Christ and His victorious power.

##### 1.1.1 Old Testament usages

Genesis 4:26 includes the idea of public confession.

Deuteronomy 26:5-11 comprises an early Old Testament confession of faith. Notice the three parts of the confession: sin, salvation and service.

Deuteronomy 27:14f shows the character of covenantal confession: the people reply as one body. Here **to confess** also implies saying **Amen**.

Joel 2:32, later quoted in the New Testament, Acts 2:17-21, alludes to a public profession.

##### 1.1.2 New Testament usages

Christ continually worked towards public profession of His Name. Faith requires confession, Matthew 10:32, John 9:22.

Faith and confession are also closely connected in Romans 10:10f. where Paul quotes the Joel prophesy.

True believers must believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, 2 Corinthians 4:13, Revelation 14:1, 15:1f.

## 1.2 Reason for Confession of Faith

From the earliest days of the Reformed Churches, public profession of faith has been connected to admittance to the Lord's Supper. Note here the relation of confession of faith to the use of the sacraments. In making public profession, we give our answer of faith to the promises of baptism, and so receive admittance to the Lord's Supper.

Admittance to the Lord's Supper requires a conscious and public acceptance of the promises of the gospel. This is our calling, 1 Timothy 6:12. Note that in the act of public profession, we confess and respond to all that is **promised** to us in the gospel, Lord's Day 7, Heidelberg Catechism. Scripture's address and appeal to the believers is constantly a promissory appeal.

## 1.3 Confession in Scripture

The Scriptures themselves point out the way in making confession of faith. Several passages have the character of early confessional statements:

Deuteronomy 26:5-11	Philippians 2:5-11
1 Corinthians 12:3	1 John 4:2
1 Timothy 1:15	1 John 5:1
1 Timothy 2:5,6	2 John :7
1 Timothy 3:16	

## 1.4 Creeds

The word **creed** is derived from *credo*, Latin for "I believe". A creed forms a summary of what we believe. It is also called a

symbol, or rule of faith. In making confession, the Church should never add to or subtract from Scripture; we may only summarize and order (systematize) what Scripture teaches.

A creed also has recognized ecclesiastical authority. It never represents the thought or writing of one man, but confesses what the Church believes and has adopted through a process of consensus. As such, the creeds are also pledges, badges and signs pointing out our identity as children of Christ.

#### 1.4.1 The Ecumenical Creeds

##### 1. The **Apostles'** Creed

This is the oldest creed, dating from around the second century A.D.

##### 2. The **Nicene** Creed

This creed dates from the fourth century A.D. It was the most universally accepted creed in the early Church.

##### 3. The **Athanasian** Creed

This creed dates from the fifth century A.D. It represents an extensive defense (apology) of the doctrine of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ.

#### 1.4.2 The Reformed Confessions

The Reformation of the Church in the lowlands of northern Europe led to the adoption of the following confessions:

1. The **Belgic Confession** - 1561
2. The **Heidelberg Catechism** - 1563

## 3. The Canons of Dort - 1618-19

Some confessions of the Reformation in other countries are:

1. The First Helvetic Confession, 1536.
2. The Second Helvetic Confession, 1566.
3. The French Confession, 1559.
4. The Scottish Confession, 1560.
5. The Irish Articles of Religion, 1615.
6. The Westminster Confession, 1647.

## Exercises Lesson 1

**I. Reference Passages**

Study: 1 Timothy 6:11-16, Romans 10: 5-17, Deuteronomy 26:5-11  
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7

**II. Review Questions**

1. What does the word "to confess" mean?
2. Who made the perfect confession on our behalf? Who enables us to confess today? Prove your answer from Scripture.
3. What must we do throughout our whole life once we have made profession of faith?
4. What kind of lifestyle does our confession require? Why is this important for us?
5. Why are the confessions we have adopted called the *Three Forms of Unity*?

**III. Extra Questions**

1. Do our confessions exhaust the Word of God? What do they intend to do?
2. Analyze the Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds. How many parts can you find in these Creeds?

3. Do our creeds and confessions reflect the time in which they were written? How does this affect their authority?