

CPC Adult Sunday Studies, Fall 2025
 Total Christ: The Full Vision for His Church
 3 | Confessional

CONFESSINAL: CHRIST OUR PROPHET

Last Week: We looked at what it means to be “missional,” especially in how that turns the Church itself into the missionary presence of God. Being gospel-centered means we trust the final *work* of Christ; being missional means we access the *person and presence* of Christ through His Church. We now move into experiencing the work and person of Christ according to his three roles of prophet, priest, and king.

Key Text: 2Timothy 1:3-14

In the midst of such persecution, notice Paul’s concern for guarding the truth and testimony of the gospel. Guarding “doctrine” may sound boring or stodgy, but to the Christian it is part of preserving the good news of the gospel, which is better than anything we could imagine.

Why is guarding doctrine an aspect of God’s love and grace?

- 1Tim. 1.5 - *“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”* - comes in the midst of great debate about doctrine!
- 2Tim. 3 - You cannot be “complete, equipped for every good work” without knowing and loving the Scriptures.
- Gal. 1.8 - *“even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.”*

Sufficiency of Scripture because of Christ our Final Prophet

1. **Heb. 1.1-4** - *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at*

the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

1. **"These last days"** (1Peter 1.20; Acts 2.17) refer to the time after the resurrection because Christ's work was so complete and final that there's nothing "left" to reveal about God. Jesus is the full manifestation of God (Col. 1.19, 2.9), and we now live in the time when we are to respond to that revelation.
 2. See also Eph. 2.19-20 as an example of a **foundation** already laid, on top of which the church builds
 3. **Apostolic connection** (by person or teaching) was the main burden for the Church in determining which books to include in the New Testament, since if it goes back to an apostle, it goes back to Jesus!
2. **WCF 1.6** - "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either **expressly set down** in Scripture, or by **good and necessary consequence** may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men." (See WCF 1.1)
1. **"Revelation"**, which we believe has technically ceased with the apostles, is different from **"illumination"**, which is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to make the revelation that He inspired come alive in our hearts and minds. Neither "new revelations of the Spirit" (aka Anabaptists) or "traditions of men" (aka Roman Catholics) can add to the revelation preserved in Scripture.
 2. God is not trying to trick us! We often speak and even pray with such uncertainty, especially about "God's will", that denies God's final and complete revelation in Christ and His Word. The sufficiency of Scripture should give us great confidence - God has fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ!
 3. **Good and necessary consequence** - we must be sure that when we declare "thus says the Lord", we are sure the Lord really said it, to the point that it should bind our conscience. More than just a "good" inference from Scripture, we want to know what Scripture necessarily teaches. For example, it's a "good" inference from Gen. 1 that God created the world in six 24-hour days, but is it a "necessary" conclusion from the text to the point that all Christians must believe it?

How to Know What Christ the Prophet Says | Interpreting the Bible with the Global and Historical Church

1. **Learning from and Submitting to Creeds and Confessions** - "God's saving actions are historical, but they need to be interpreted, to be explained by words, in order for the audience to grasp them. . . . [Creeds and confessions] have been constructed throughout the ages by people from very different contexts but who are all bound together by the shared horizons of God's revelation in Christ and in the biblical text and their own common human nature as readers of that text. This is what gives creeds and confessions a quality that **transcends the local conditions** of their original composition and that allows us to take them seriously." - Carl Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative*
 1. In a *postapostolic age*, Paul needs to provide for the continuation of gospel teaching, hence the language of "**handing on**" or "**passing down**" tradition - 2 Tim. 1:3; 2Thess. 2:15; 1Cor. 11:2; 2Thess. 3:6.
 1. Examples of "creeds" - 2Tim. 1:9-10; Phil. 2:5-10; 1Tim. 1:15; 3:16
 2. Jesus appoints the apostles (inc. Paul!), and then everything after the apostles is not "new" but the same, passed down.
2. **Church as an Institution requires authority and creeds**
 1. An institution is merely "a self-consciously organized body of people who identify with a cause (what we now call "church membership") and who acknowledge a structure of ministerial authority" (*Creedal Imperative*, 66).
 2. Connection between **communal** aspects and **doctrinal** aspects - elders marked by ability to teach a particular content - the gospel of Jesus Christ
 1. **Inclusion** - Rom. 10:9-10 - Public statement and private belief, both with doctrinal content
 2. **Exclusion** - Rom. 16:17 - Divisions caused by wrong teaching (Cf. 1Tim. 1, 3; Titus 1:9; 2:1) and wrong behavior (1Cor. 5)
 3. Elders also have authority to "rule" and command respect - 1Tim. 5; Heb. 13:7-17; 1Peter 5:5ff.
 1. When a pastor or elder is "**ordained**," they are recognized as being authorized to teach and govern according to the tradition that's been passed down. To ordain yourself or be self-appointed is always a negative in Scripture.
 3. Our church subscribes to the **Westminster** standards (c.1630). We don't think every Christian has to agree in order to be a Christian; rather, we

believe they're the best summary of what the Bible teaches for keeping the church and church officers accountable. There is a church process to **change** the confession of faith and book of church order since they're not infallible; there is no process by which we can change Scripture!

3. **"No creed but the Bible" is unbiblical!** Our creeds are meant to guard our trust in and submission to Scripture, rather than personality, implicit creeds that are never made explicit or explained, or individual interpretations. Everyone has a creed. If we make it explicit, then we can ensure Scripture itself gets the last word by testing the creeds against Scripture. Heretics would also have said they believe the Bible; the whole debate is whether the Bible teaches "x" or not.
 1. This also allows for engaging with **different cultures and times and languages**. Creeds and confessions are meant to take the Bible's teachings and answer a contemporary question. The Nicene Creed (of 325 a.d.) had to answer specific questions about Jesus' divinity. The 16th century Reformed confessions answered questions about justification, election, etc. They are attempts to take what does not change - Jesus Christ, the gospel, etc. - and put them in changing languages that must be contextualized in some way.

What does it mean to be Confessional?

- A culture of **humble submission to Scripture** revealed in a willingness to biblically regulate **worship** and practice; and is less prone to be blown about by every wind of faddish doctrine and philosophy of ministry.
- A high regard for the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice wherein the church, acting corporately, is careful to declare nothing except the **whole counsel of God's Word** (not more, not less) as discerned by good and necessary inference.
- A high regard for the Scriptures in **preaching** that is expositional and Christ-centered, careful to discern the original intent by preaching right doctrines / practices from right texts.
- A humble regard for the church vs. the individual as the "pillar and bulwark of the truth" such as to read the Bible **communally** vs. individualistically, including the use of historic creeds and confessions.