

With the Augsburg Confession, it does not start with a small catechism. It starts with the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed. When we say that we confess the truths found in the Book of Concord, what we are saying is we have confessed the truths that have always been the faith of the Christians. If you believe what is said here, you are in the Christian faith. If you do not believe these things, you are not part of the Christian faith. It is that basic, it is that straightforward.

Now that being said, trying to explain exactly what we mean by unity and trinity and trinity and unity, that becomes a little more difficult because as much as I would like to tell you that I can explain it all for you and you will have a logical, rational, reasonable understanding of the Trinity, that's not going to happen. I'm not smart enough to be able to do that. None of us are, because let's face it, if we could explain the nature of God in such a way that it all made sense to us, that wouldn't be a very big God because I have a very small brain and therefore I can only imagine a God who is small like I can imagine, but God is so much greater than what we know. He is so much more powerful than we can possibly imagine. His nature is such that we have to describe it even though we don't understand it.

And we describe it as there are three persons because each person, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are given the attributes of God in scripture. The Father is declared to be God. The Son, of course is declared to be God, and the Holy Spirit is very clearly declared to be God. And so therefore, we must wrestle with the fact that all three have the distinction and the description of God, holy, righteous, eternal, all-powerful, almighty. And yet as the Old Testament says very clearly, "The Lord your God, He is one." So we have to wrestle with that fact.

But the fact of the matter is God has presented himself in such a way as he is greater than we can possibly imagine, but what he has given to us, we are able to understand at least enough for our own salvation. So we confess the Trinity and unity and unity and Trinity and that quite frankly is the best way and about the only way that we can describe the Trinity, there's unity in the Godhead. The Father does and plans and is the leader. He's not greater than the Son or the Holy Spirit, but he is the leader. He's the one that guides. The Son is also equal with the Father, and he does what the Father wills and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both of them completing their task and giving their hope that we have of eternal life to us. They work together in unity. They are unified as one God.

In fact, in the Old Testament, when we say, you know all caps Lord or Yahweh as the name of God, that is God, father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Genesis chapter one, it says that the Father created and the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters and the Son spoke the word because the word is God and the word was God. He is the Son of God, and all three of them are present at creation and all three of them are given

the name Yahweh. When we think Old Testament, they were praying to the Trinity even if they didn't fully understand what that meant.

So the Trinity is not a new invention that the Christians made up based on their own ideas. It is something that they look back to in the Old Testament and saw now with the new eyes of the power of the Holy Spirit given to them as Peter is proclaiming in the Book of Acts with Pentecost. And Peter declares that in the Old Testament, the Son was prophesied and in the Old Testament, the Son was prophesied that he would be born, that he would die, and that he would rise again to new life, that his body would not see corruption. The incarnation of Jesus Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament, there is a unity in the nature of God, but each person has a distinct role and function within the Trinity, and so we celebrate that and we rejoice in that because we are baptized into that.

Now, you look at the Old Testament, you look at Isaiah and Isaiah is having a vision of seeing God in all of His glory and he cries out, "Woe is me. I am a man undone. I'm lost for I have unclean lips and I live in a generation of unclean lips." If we look around ourselves, we can sympathize with Isaiah. We live in a world of people who have unclean lips and we ourselves, if we're honest about it, also have unclean lips. We speak what we ought not to speak. We fall short of glory of God, and yet we are cleansed by the very same thing that Isaiah has cleansed by.

Now, I'm not saying that God has to take a hot coal and stick it on our lips to cleanse us, thankfully. Can you imagine that was the rite of passage into Christianity? Okay, let's take a coal from the altar and stick it on everybody's lips. Okay, now you are cleansed of your sins.

First off, what does that coal do? How does that coal cleanse Isaiah of his sins? Well, it was done because on the altar sacrifices were made. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were a sign and a symbol of the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the ultimate and final sacrifice that was pleasing to God. And so Isaiah was cleansed by the burning coal as a sign of the hope of the Jesus Christ coming to finally sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. Now, like I said, we don't need to be seared on our lips with a burning coal to be cleansed. We rather get to be brought into the kingdom through water, water and the spirit because when a pastor baptizes us in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, that is God's word going forth with the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us and cause us to be born again.

Now Nicodemus, although he was a leader and a teacher and was going to Jesus because he recognized Jesus having authority from God, didn't fully understand that, rejected the teaching at first, but later on, the word of God dwelt in him, grew in him, nurtured him and guided him to finally confess his faith. We know this because he is one of the men that removed the body of Jesus Christ from the cross,

him and Joseph of Arimathea. So the word of God worked and created and planted and grew that faith within him, and this is what we confess happens through the work of God.

Now, many of you will notice at the end of the Athanasian Creed, it says that we will be judged according to our own deeds, and those who have done good will enter into eternal life and those who have done evil into eternal fire, that makes it sound like I get to heaven based on what I do. But we need to take what the Creed says with the whole council of God because there's unity in what God has done. There's unity in what God has said and what has He said? That none of us are perfect and none of us deserve heaven. So how are we going to be judged by our deeds and still have hope of eternal life? What is the greatest deed that is done in our lives?

We are born again by watering the spirit and made alive in Christ, and we confess that we believe that to be true. That's it. That is the deed that we are judged upon. Do you believe that God did all of the work for you? Do you believe that his son, Jesus Christ on the cross, true God and true man, that this is not just some man on the cross, but it is God and man, God is hanging on the cross. Do you believe that that was for your sins, for your forgiveness? If you do, that is what is credited to you and counted to you as righteousness. In other words, your good deeds are Christ's deeds given to you freely, and that is what we put our trust in.

That is what we put our hope in. It is God working in and through us, the Father sending His son and the Son and the Father sending the Holy Spirit to give us the benefit of the gift that His son gave us on the cross working together. We pray to the Father in the name of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, all again working together to create faith, to enliven faith, and to keep us in that one true faith. We may not ever be able to explain the Trinity, but we see what God has done in our lives. We see the effect in essence of the wind, of the breath of God. We see the effect that it brings us into the kingdom, that brings us to fellowship together, that brings us to trust not in our own efforts and our own ideas, but to trust in God's word.

And the reason we use this creed is because this creed helps us to understand the nature of God, and it keeps us in the one true faith. The amount of heresies that are found in history because somebody veered away from the confession here found in the Athanasian Creed are too numerous to count because what this creed says is what the scriptures say. And anytime we go beyond what the scriptures say, we get ourselves into trouble trying to explain something that scripture has never explained. But what the scripture has explained gives us peace and gives us joy.

And what the scriptures told us is this, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all working together to give us all good things, most importantly, to give us

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salvation through the Son Jesus Christ, and to keep us and gather us and enlighten us and hold us in the one true faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity working together in unity for the purpose of bringing us into salvation. And that is something we can stand firm in, that is something we can hope in and find joy in.

We do live in a world of chaos and unclean lips, and yet our God is continually at work in our lives. And so it is now our responsibility to take this faith that has been given to us and to go forth and to share the love that God has given, the love that we know is for all people. It is said that this is the Catholic faith, the universal faith. What is implied in that it is universal for all people. All people can become part of the family of God because Christ died not just for us, but he died for the whole world. And he came to forgive the sins of not just us, but the sins of the whole world.

And so all universal are welcome into the family of God. If they believe it to be true, they are part of the family and our task is to share that with them so they then might know and understand the great joy that the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit have given to us by their working of faith in our lives. Let's thank God for the Father, for sending His son to die for us, to forgive our sins and giving us the benefit of that through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the words of baptism, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit causing us to be born again in the spirit for life everlasting. May His grace and His mercy and His peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.