

**Chapter 26 of the 1689 Confession of Faith: “Of The Church”, Session # 2,  
“Metaphors for the Universal Church”, Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall in the  
Adult Sunday School, on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017.**

**The 1689 Confession, Chapter 26: “Of the Church”**

**Paragraphs 1 and 2 –**

**1.** The catholic or universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

(a) Hebrews 12: 22 and 23; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:10, 22-23; 5:23, 27, and 30-32

**2.** All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called **visible saints**; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1: 2; Acts 11:26; c Romans 1: 7; Ephesians 1: 20-22

**3.** The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan; nevertheless Christ always hath had, and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name.

(d) 1st Corinthians 5; Revelation 2-3; (e) Revelation 18: 2; 2nd Thessalonians 2: 11-12; (f) Matthew 16: 18; Psalm 72: 17; 102: 28; Rev 12: 17

**Paragraph 1 – The Universal Church Defined**

**A. The whole number of God’s Elect by Regeneration, the Work of the Spirit –**

**John 3: 3-8    Mark 12: 28-34    Luke 17: 20, 21**

Last week I said to you that **the Kingdom of God** is the realm of the Triune God’s saving activity and rule. **Christ’s Universal Church** is all those persons savingly brought into the Kingdom of God. It is God’s work to open the door to their entering (their becoming a part of) the Universal Church and coming under Christ’s righteous rule. He transfers them from the Kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God, and He literally, spiritually places them in this body of believers in Christ. This transfer is brought about not only by the regeneration of the heart of the elect sinner, but by their believing in the gospel of Christ in close connection with the New Birth.

**Today we want to look at some of the Metaphors used in the Bible for the Universal Church, Metaphors specifically mentioned here in the 1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph of Chapter 26 – “Of the Church”.**

**B. The Church Universal is One Body Gathered under Christ her Head**

**Colossians 1:18** – “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

The body of Christ is all of the persons chosen by God unto salvation, and gathered through the preaching of the gospel, and placed into His spiritual mystical body; invisible to men, but clearly known and visible to God.

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12: 12, 13** – “For as the body is one and has many members but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

**Ephesians 1: 10** – “That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.”

This glorious body of people are His spouse and they are being gathered in their generations, according to the will and purpose of God, and they shall all eventually be gathered into one glorious body at the time of Christ’s return at the end of the world, and the resurrection of all of the righteous dead. Christ is the Head of His body, the Church, and He is the Sovereign Ruler and King over His everlasting Kingdom. He, by virtue of the glory of His Person and His Mediatorial work of obedience to God’s law, and His sufferings and death on behalf of all of the elect, has been appointed by God the Father as the Ruler of the Nations, and the Judge of the living and dead. The putting forth of the blessed influences of His Spirit in this particular work of saving the elect, and thus gathering them to be a part of His Universal Church is invisible from the standpoint of our perceiving how that work is brought done in regeneration or brought to complete fruition in the gathering, both individually and corporately, as one body or spiritual building. Nevertheless, the work is most definitely accomplished by God’s might and power, and not by the power of men, and thus all glory will belong to God for its being done and completed according to His eternal plan.

### **C. The Metaphor of Marriage – The Church is Christ’s Spouse**

**Ephesians 5: 23-27, and 30-32** –

**Verses 23-27** – “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

Now, what is being talked about here is that the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the Body. There is no reference to any particular local church here; simply the statement of Headship for Christ and the Church being Christ’s spouse. He has loved her, that is the Universal Church, and given Himself for her, so that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that eventually He might present her to Himself in the Last Day, the Day of the Resurrection from the Dead, as a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This is the whole universal body of the Elect people of God, and it is described here as the Church.

**Verses 30-32** – “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Here you see that Paul is stating that we (all Christians) are members of Christ’s body, of His flesh and of His bones; not in a literal physical sense, but in a mystical spiritual sense which has a literal reality. It is called here by him – A great mystery. But he is speaking of Christ and the Church; the Universal Church.

**The Preacher's Homiletical Commentary** says: "The Church does not exist simply for the benefit of individual souls; it is an eternal institution, with an affiance to Christ, a calling and destiny of its own; within that universal sphere our personal destiny holds its particular place. The Christ is worthy and she must be made worthy. From eternity He set His love upon her; on the cross He won her back from her infidelity at the price of His blood. Through the ages He has been wooing her to Himself, and schooling her in wise and manifold ways that she may be fit for her heavenly calling. Through what cleansing fires, through what baptisms, even of blood, she has still to pass ere the consummation is reached, He only knows who loved her and gave Himself for her. He will spare to His Church nothing, either of bounty or of trial, that her perfection needs."

**Song of Solomon 4: 9, 10** – "You have ravished my heart, My sister, my spouse; You have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace." "How fair is your love, My sister, my spouse!" "How much better than wine is your love, and scent of your perfumes than all spices!"

The saints, taken all together, are the Bride of Christ. They are Christ's inheritance in which He has joy and delight. They are spiritually espoused to Him and have been given the inestimable privilege of having Him be their heart's constant companion. Christ expects you, O believer, to develop this heart relationship with Him. You know how it is with lovers who are married; that they have a way of knowing what is in each other's heart and mind; by one look of the eyes, by one turn of the neck; by the scent of the perfume that is worn; and especially by the words that are spoken.

There are people who may not want to hear the things which we would speak to them about Christ. They may even profess to be Christians and yet not want to talk about spiritual things. But let this not discourage us. We who are speaking with Christ and to Christ about spiritual realities and the things that we hope for; these are a sweet perfume to Christ. You see there are earthly spices and perfumes and ointments which are very satisfying to earthly people. But for spiritually-minded people, there are heavenly fragrances, spices and ointments. There is the balm of Gilead found in Christ's death. There are scents of myrrh and frankincense of the love that took Him to the cross that we have come to desire to be on our spiritual garments. Myrrh and Aloes and Cassia which come from Christ's garments. God anointed Him with the oil of gladness more than all His companions. And since we are His companions, He shares these spiritual fragrances with us in imparting grace to our hearts and speaking through His Word to our souls. Let us draw near to Him and He will draw near to us. James 5: 16 says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." John Gill says, "The prayers of the meanest believer are as delightful music in his ears, as sweet-smelling odors in his nostrils, and like the honey or honey-comb to his taste."