

The Universal Church

Text: He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)

Belgic Confession, article 27: We believe... And so this holy church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or certain persons, but it is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world, though still joined and united in heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.

Intro: the context

I. God's plan

The commission

The equipping

II. God's servant

Failure

The final decision

III. Israel's success

Application 1: No Limits

Christ himself came upon the errors of scribes and Pharisees among the Jewish people, but he did not on that account reject everything they had and thought (Matt. 23:3). We on our part confess that there is much that is Christian and good under the papacy; indeed everything that is Christian and good is to be found there and has come to us from this source. For instance we confess that in the papal church there are the true holy Scriptures, true baptism, the true sacrament of the altar, the true keys to the forgiveness of sins, the true office of the ministry, the true catechism in the form of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the articles of the creed. Similarly, the pope admits that we too, though condemned by him as heretics, and likewise all heretics, have the holy Scriptures, baptism, the keys, the catechism, etc. O how do you dissemble? How then do I dissemble? I speak of what the pope and we have in common. He on his part dissembles toward us and heretics and plainly admits what we and he have in common. I will continue to so dissemble, though it does me no good. I contend that in the papacy there is true Christianity, even the right kind of Christianity and many great and devoted saints. Shall I cease to make this pretense? --Luther

For when they thunder out with full cheeks—"We are the Church of God," or, "The seat of the Church is with us,"—the solution is easy; the Church is indeed among them, that is, God has his Church there, but hidden and wonderfully preserved: but it does not follow that they are worthy of any honor; nay, they are more detestable, because they ought to bear sons and daughters to God: but they bear them for the Devil and for idols... --Calvin

Chapter 25 - Of the Church

4. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.

Application 2: A Warning

Application 3: Multi-Ethnic Churches