

BLESSEDNESS OF THE TRUTH: THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH

Intro: - We have looked at the identity of the church: the invisible, organic, spiritual body of Christ, manifesting herself visibly in local congregations!
 -And we have seen the church as a glorious unity: one church by election, sharing the life of Christ, purchased by his blood, indwelt by his Spirit.
 -Now we look at the second attribute of the church, catholicity. I believe a holy catholic church, the communion of saints.

I. WHAT IDEA OF ONE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

- A. The meaning of catholic:
1. A good definition of catholic is 'universal': boundaries and walls broken down, open windows, wideness.
 2. The word itself is never used in Scripture, but the teaching is Scriptural:
 3. Our text: "for ye are all..." In Greek, 'all' is the first word of the sentence. (See also Ps. 72, 87, Eph. 2:14, Rom 10:10-12).
 4. The church is international (supra-national), gathered out of every tribe, tongue, and nation.
- B. Errors:
1. There are those who have **too-limited a view**. A particular instituted church claims sole right to the name catholic.
 - a. The Roman Catholic Church claims that she alone is the catholic church: only those who acknowledge the Pope.
 - b. This can also be a danger of Reformed churches, claiming that they are the only true church.
 - c. Dispensationalists: claim the church began at Pentecost, differentiating between the Kingdom and Church people.
 2. There are also those who have **too-broad a view**.
 - a. They view as church any and all groups that calls themselves 'church'.
 - b. Belgic Conf. art. 29 "we ought to diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true church.."
 3. Over against these errors, the Scriptures apply this attribute to the church which is an object of faith.
 4. The invisible church is catholic because she includes every believer from all lands, from beginning of time to the end.
- C. The catholic church manifested:
1. Catholic in sense of **time**: all of time is included, the church began in Eden and ends in the New Paradise of God.
 2. Catholic in the sense of **space**: all places, countries, ethnic groups, nations: having different languages and customs.
 3. Catholic in the senses of **economic standing**, bond and free, rich or poor.
 4. Catholic in the sense of **gender**: male and female are one in the church and place for both.
 5. This catholicity was veiled in the old dispensation, but never completely hid: promise of Abraham, Melchizedek, Nineveh...
 6. Realized at the fullness of time and in the new dispensation: Pentecost and commission given to the church.
 7. Finally realized in the multitude which no man can number in new heavens and earth (Rev. 7:9).

II. THE SPIRITUAL SOURCE FOR SUCH CATHOLICITY.

- A. The catholicity of the church finds its source in and is limited by sovereign election.
1. The catechism says that the church is chosen to eternal life.
 2. God chose, gave to Jesus Christ, works faith only in the elect.
 3. So the boundary of election in eternity is manifested by the limitation of faith during one's lifetime. Not all believe.
 4. Out of the organism of the human race, the organism of the church is saved. The human race is saved by sin and grace.
- B. The root and basis of catholicity is found in Christ Jesus. "everyone who believes, being members of Christ." (Q.A. 55)
1. The tree of the race is grafted on the new root, Christ. The church is the redeemed, delivered, sanctified, glorified race.
 2. Christ gathers, defends, and preserves to himself....a church chosen to eternal life. (Q.A. 54)
 3. Christ himself is catholic: "no difference betw. Jew and Greek for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call on him."
 4. Out of Christ flows what is necessary to establish a catholic church. That is LOVE that conquers all.
 5. By God's love we accept the differences we have, see them as advantages: all of the rich diversity enriching the church.
- C. The true church possesses a catholic Spirit, is united by a catholic faith, preaches a catholic gospel.
1. The Spirit was poured out to the 3000 on Pentecost, from every nation and people.
 2. The church is not limited any longer by natural boundaries, but spiritual: "whosoever believeth in Christ."
 3. This is the gospel that is to be preached to all nations: baptized into Christ, confessing Christ, worshipping the Triune God.
 4. Not circumcision, not works of the law, but faith. We share one catholic faith worked and strengthened by Christ's Spirit.

III. THE BEAUTY OF THIS CATHOLICITY.

- A. The beauty:
1. In sin, the whole race was divided, nations hate each other and go to war, prejudiced against ea. other, barriers and hatred
 2. In Christ, the church brings to expression the NEW human race, harmony is restored in Christ the head of the church.
 3. Manifested in the Old Testament through the promise, evident in exceptions: Job, Melchizedek, Nineveh, Naaman, etc.
 4. At Pentecost expresses itself with the preaching of the gospel to all nations in obedience to Christ.
 5. The rich diversity of nations, cultures, poor and rich, male and female like a choir singing in different parts the same song!
- B. The continuity of the church.
1. Because God has chosen his church and Christ by his Spirit gathers his church, she is indestructible and unassailable.
 2. Why is this important; because her enemies are many and because she is weak and so sinful, and at times very small.
 3. The church's indestructibility is not found in her own strength or means, but in God's unshakeable promise!
 4. In Christ alone she will not perish but is invincible. This is true of the invisible church while local manifestation are removed
- C. Our calling:
1. Preach the precious gospel wherever and whenever God opens up doors for us.
 2. The universal gospel is limited to where God sends and blesses it.
 3. Pray for the catholic church, that by the Word she may be gathered, built, and preserved. "Preserve thy church O Lord!"