

**Chapter 26 of the 1689 Confession of Faith: “Of The Church”,**  
**Session # 6, “The Local Church’s Significance” Presented by**  
**Pastor Paul Rendall in the Adult Sunday School,**  
**on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017.**

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

**Paragraph 3 will be our focus today –**

**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) 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5; Revelation 2-3; (e) Revelation 18: 2; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2: 11-12;  
(f) Matthew 16: 18;

Psalm 72: 17; 102: 28; Revelation 12: 17

**Hebrews Chapter 12, verses 22-29** – “For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: “AND IF SO MUCH AS A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT SHALL BE STONED OR SHOT WITH AN ARROW.” And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I AM EXCEEDINGLY AFRAID AND TREMBLING.”) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “YET ONCE MORE I SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO HEAVEN.” Now this, “YET ONCE MORE,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”

**1<sup>st</sup> – I want to speak to you about the significance of the Local Church, to all Christians.**

The general assembly and church of the firstborn are the Universal Church. And the names of all those persons included in it, it says here in verse 23, are registered in heaven. Whether they are now living upon the earth, or whether they are presently in heaven, their names are registered in heaven. You remember how the Lord Jesus said to His 70 disciples after they returned from their mission of preaching and casting out demons ( as it is recorded in Luke 10: 20) – “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” They are registered there. I said to you last time – One of the reasons that the churches in our day, as well as in past centuries since the early church, have not been more pure, is because they do not understand what kind of a kingdom

that they have come into. They do not have a very good understanding of the difference between the law and the gospel, and since they are afraid of being seen as legalists, they say things like – “We are not under law, we are under grace. And therefore they believe that they really do not have to keep all of the commandments of God. They believe that they are simply required to have a general love for all Christians, and it is not really important, nor is it required, that they come to church, or formally commit themselves to a local church.

But, if this is the case, then why does it say that our God in the New Testament times is just as much a God who is a consuming fire as He is portrayed for us in the Old Testament times? Why is it that we have to learn to “serve God acceptably”, and with “godly fear”? It is because God Himself does not change in His Being, and He is still a consuming fire for those who reject His word to them. And so, we must conclude, that even though Christians are no longer under His wrath, yet He still has expectations of all Christians and their relationship to His gathered church, in every local church, here upon the earth.

God says here in verse 26, that He intends to “shake” not only the earth, but also heaven. In other words, He will shake all things. In regard to the kingdom of the Jews He would destroy their City of Jerusalem and bring their nation to widespread dispersion and desolation because they largely rejected the truth of their need of Christ. And, then, we find that His further purpose was to shake all the kingdoms of the Gentiles with the gospel; the whole world, with the truth about the kingdom of Christ, in all generations to the end of the world. Christ’s rule and His kingdom, by the appointment of the Father, is presently over all. But the kingdom shall someday be given to the saints and they shall reign upon the earth. (Revelation 5: 10) But all through the many generations of this Church age, Christ’s Church which is composed of many local churches, is designed by the Father to be the way and the means of His exercising His righteous rule in all the earth. This is why we pray: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The Father would have Christ’s kingdom, as it is seen in all of the local churches, be the means of the outworking of His wise and righteous rule in the lives of all who believe in Him. The spiritual kingdom which we are a part of, is a kingdom which will remain forever, and it will not itself be shaken. But the receiving of the truth of Christ’s word, which is the basis and the foundation of our meeting together as a local church, is designed by God to shake ourselves and everything in the world around us, spiritually and practically.

The truth of the reality of what God would proclaim through Christ’s churches is this – The power and presence and glory of all earthly kingdoms shall not remain to be established any farther than that they hear the voice of the Son of God speaking to them. The Son of God was speaking to all of the Jews in that day, through the words of the apostles, and He was saying that they must realize that the Old Covenant had been fulfilled in Him, and that a New Covenant had come. Christ is now seated at the right hand of God having all power and authority. It is the word concerning Christ which was intended to shake them up so that they would turn from their promoting their own legalistic works righteousness, and that they would repent and believe the gospel. From that vantage point, they could then worship and serve God acceptably through Christ; in accordance with His word through the apostles. But, as we think about this great truth, it should shake us up as well; we who are the New Testament church composed of Jews and Gentiles. It should shake us up so that we will see our own particular responsibilities in relation to Christ’s kingdom.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – We should understand what our responsibility is in relation to the local church.**

Here in these verses – “Refusing God who is speaking” in verse 25, means that it is possible that a Christian person might be refusing to serve God acceptably through grace, in the context of a local church. Instead of seeing what God has called them to, which is a committed attachment and love for Christ’s Universal Church through a more specific and detailed

involvement and interaction with God's people in the local church, in relation to keeping the commandments of God, that a person may actually be clinging to a selfish and legal mindset of what the Christian life is, and what it means to them. They may falsely think that living the Christian life is a matter of their own choices and their own opinions, and thus they choose to remain aloof from any real and tangible involvement in the local church. They are not really receiving the word of God as it is preached to them by a faithful gospel minister. Rather, they think that they really do not need the preaching and counsel of a faithful minister in the setting of a local church. This shows a great immaturity in such believers, and their attempts to serve God independently of any local church will not bring glory to Him because it is not what He has commanded through Christ's apostles in the word of God.

Every Christian has the solemn responsibility to choose what church they come to, attend, and eventually join. And the choices that they make in this regard will radically affect their growth as a Christian, and whether they will glorify God with their life. God will deal with every Christian according to their choices and their deeds, and the question over the long haul in the life of any person professing to know God and follow Christ will be whether they will learn to see things and do things from the perspective of what God has commanded and promised in His word, or whether they will go their own way and do their own thing. A person who would serve God acceptably will not forsake the assembling of themselves together with a church of the Lord's people. Rather, they will consciously cultivate having a godly fear that they might fall short, somehow, of the grace of God, and will not glorify Him in the way that they choose to live their life, and thus lose their reward on the Day in which Christ returns, and when He will judge every person according to their works.

So, the last time that I spoke to you from these verses, I was beginning to declare to you the truth that becoming a member of a local church is a very important part of your obedience to God. It is essential that you be born again to enter the kingdom of God. Being born again is a spiritual work of God alone, where He regenerates the heart of an elect sinner and then places them in the mystical spiritual body of Christ, the Universal Church. Christ is the head of the body, the Church, whether we think of it in the Universal sense or the local sense. The working of His Spirit, at the time of your conversion, places you in the Universal Church. But then He expects that because of the working of His grace in your life, that you will want to respond in obedience to His expectation that you will be baptized and want to join a local church where the good doctrine of the Bible, the Word of God, is preached. God has this expectation of you, I am saying, because He wants you to participate in much good interaction with the various members of the church, the members of Christ's body, in that local church; people who will help you by teaching you, exhorting you, and encouraging you, with you the truth of the word of God. It is in this good way that you will be held accountable to the truth of the word, and this will become the place, where because of your regular attendance, you will thrive and flourish spiritually, and contributing what you can in terms of the gifts and grace that God has given to you. It is here that you will learn to practically love the brethren.