

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Church and Last Things,

Session 7, Historical Theology of the Church

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Doctrines of the Church and Last Things. This is session 7, Historical Theology of the Church.

We continue our lectures on the doctrine of the church.

Turning our attention now after working with the biblical story, some key passages in both testaments that dealt with the people of God, pictures of the church, especially in the New Testament, and then a pretty long section on the people of God in the Old Testament, we turn to historical theology. Historical theology is a study of how the church has understood the Bible's teachings through the centuries. It's also called the history of doctrine, and it doesn't take the place of the Bible, but it is one area, take it into account, one discipline in formulating a systematic theology, which should be certainly based upon exegesis and biblical theology, but it takes into account historical theology as well.

We want to hit just some highlights in the history of the doctrine of the church. That is Saint Cyprian, the creed of the Council of Constantinople, some of the contributions of Saint Augustine, Boniface VIII and his special writing *Unum Sanctum*, which claimed amazing power for the Roman church, Wycliffe, Jan Hus, the Augsburg Confession, the Scots Confession, the Belgic Confession, and then we'll finish off with the Westminster Confession of Faith. Cyprian, Cyprian was a North African.

He was a teacher of rhetoric, the same as Saint Augustine was, and was converted and served the Lord in the church, rising to the position of Bishop of Carthage. His dates are approximately 200 to 258, and his birth date is 258, which is a more sure date for the time of his death. He is not a theologian of the stature of, say, Tertullian, whom he respected and revered even, but he was a pastor and a leader, and his treatment of pastoral and especially schismatic problems made him influential, not only in his own day but some of those issues continued.

The problem occurred in the church, especially when the Roman emperors were persecutors of the church. A problem arose as to those who were the lapsed they were called. How is the church to treat people who deny Christ during persecution? How's the church to deal with them? It was a problem in every major persecution, including the Decian persecution.

Cyprian is important because he grounded, accepted people back, accepted the lapses, and allowed them to go through a series of penances, demonstrating their true repentance in his estimation and in that of his fellow leaders. He emphasized, he

founded at the end of the day, he emphasized the unity of the church was more episcopal in the bishops than it was theological. The Novatian, Novatianism of the lapsed was caused, lapsed caused this division, this cism between those who stood their ground and those who were indignant.

You know, my pastor gave his life standing for Christ. Yours ran away. Well, sometimes those who ran away said, if all the pastors died, who would pastor like that? It was a very difficult situation, and there was no easy answer. But anyway, certain sayings of Cyprian within the context I have sketched out, a rough context, we can understand better.

He said no, he cannot have God for his father, who does not have the church for his mother. That's his most important writing, perhaps, was one called on the unity of the church, emphasizing the importance of the church. Certainly, individuals believed in Christ to be saved, but their belonging to the church is very important in Cyprian's eyes.

He cannot have God for his father, who does not have the church for his mother. He couldn't understand the contemporary phenomenon of people claiming to be Christians and not belonging to the church. It would be so impossible for him to understand.

In his epistles, epistle 73, section 21, another famous saying that there is no salvation outside the church. So confronted with problems as a pastor and problem solver, he emphasized the episcopate, the bishops, even more than theological principles, to deal with that difficult problem of divisions and how the church treat those who denied Christ, who handed over their copies of the Bible, and so forth, during times of persecution. The Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 comes from the first council of Constantinople in the same year.

It's recognized as the second ecumenical council of the Christian church after Nicaea in 325. As a matter of fact, Nicaea affirmed the deity of Christ and affirmed Athanasius against Arius, but Arianism did not go away. And this council in 381 marked the end of 50 years, five zero years, of Arian political and theological dominance in the empire in the east.

The first council of Constantinople spoke of the restoration of Nicene orthodoxy and the extension of Nicene orthodoxy. Nicaea opposed Arius, who said Christ was the first creature through whom God created everything else. He is not equal with God.

He is a created being but didn't do much with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The first council of Nicaea restored the emphases of Nicene orthodoxy and also extended that orthodoxy to include the Holy Spirit. That is, there's the restoration and pneumatological extension of Nicene orthodoxy.

Within that context, the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 makes the very famous statement that as part of the confession of faith, we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. From those four adjectives derived nouns, unity, sanctity or holiness, and Catholicity, it doesn't speak of Rome; it speaks of the universality of the church and apostolicity. One holy catholic and apostolic church gave as the basis, creedally, we call creeds and confessions symbols.

So, speaking symbolically, Constantinople and its creed gave the vocabulary that led to the four attributes of the church. We'll deal with both the attributes and the marks. The attributes, as this indicates, are patristic.

They go back to the fathers, who helped define the church. The church is one church. The church is holy by virtue of people believing in Christ and then living for the Lord.

It is catholic wherever it is. It's part of the universal church on earth, and it is apostolic. We will see that Rome and the reformers had very different meanings in terms of what that expression means.

In the end, Protestantism says it is not some kind of descent from Peter in terms of ordination, but rather, it is adherence to the apostles' teaching that makes a church apostolic. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We will revisit those words and their implications.

Saint Augustine, 354 to 430, his dates are solid. And there was no more influential person in the first hundreds and hundreds of years of the Christian church. Both Luther and Calvin give him credit and say that they rediscovered his understanding of the gospel.

It is true, at least in outline form, that they also made further advances and clarifications of his viewpoints. But Calvin famously said he could get his whole theology from Augustine. And Augustine said many, many things about the church.

Here are just a few that we touch upon in our survey of the most important historical theological points. There are many Christians, but only one Christ. The Christians themselves, along with their head, because he has ascended to heaven, form one Christ.

It is not a case of his being one and our being many, but we who are many are a unity in him. There is, therefore, one man Christ, consisting of head and body. That's from Saint Augustine's commentary on the Psalms, his commentary on Psalm 127 and verse 3. What he is doing is defining the church as the body of Christ, who's the head, in terms of union with Christ.

Of course, in other regards, we are many, but in this sense, although we have many members, we're part of one body. And being joined to Christ, we're joined to one another. And that picture of head and body, I'll say it this way.

In Romans and 1 Corinthians, that imagery speaks of body-life, the relationship of the members to one another. That's the emphasis. In Ephesians and Colossians, the image of Christ as the head has more of this in view, that he is the source of life of the church.

He is the Lord of the church. And as usual, Augustine's words influenced hundreds and hundreds of years of the church's history following him. Nevertheless, he emphasized in actual practice he was a pastor.

The church is a quote, mixed company of good and evil people. This is in his famous writing on Christian doctrine. If you want to understand the churches, the Catholic church, and perhaps Rome, but not as Roman as it's going to get, the church's basic views around the year 400 AD on Christian doctrine is a good place to start.

Augustine, the teacher of rhetoric, gave it up because he said, I was giving devious lawyers abilities to deceive people. In this book, he speaks of homiletics toward the end. So, he puts some of his rhetoric, rhetorical training, and experience as a teacher to use.

But first of all, he talks about what the church believes. As a matter of fact, Christian doctrine is famous as a study in hermeneutics. He talks about signs and what they signify.

It is a simple yet profound piece summarizing what Christians believe, teaching us some principles for biblical interpretation. Then, the teacher of rhetoric becomes the teacher of homiletics, teaching his students and readers how to communicate what the church believes. Therefore, by the way, on Christian doctrine, section three, subsection 45, is where he says that.

The mixed company teaching. That will persevere throughout, except for the Anabaptists, who claim to have a totally pure church. But that carried the day, both for Rome and for the reformers.

Therefore, he taught otherwise, the only true members of the church, since it's a mixed body. Okay. And there are good and evil people.

And you can't always determine what they are, what they are, and what particular individuals are. The only true members of the church are, quote, the fixed number of the elect. This is from his treatise on baptism.

Section five, subsection 38. So. Well, as we'll see later.

In times of conflict and in times of the church being unsettled from within, not persecution from without, but being in decline, the gospel being hidden and so forth. Some of the pre-reformers, Wycliffe and Huss, sought refuge in God's sovereignty expressed in predestination because they said outwardly, outwardly, the church is a mess. Augustine isn't saying that.

But the late medieval Roman Catholic Church, in the estimation of Huss, Wycliffe, and then Luther, a couple hundred years later, amazingly, they were before him significantly before him. It's the true people of God who are chosen by God and known by God. The church will never fail that church.

The hidden number of the people of the people of God of the elect, something like that. And again, we cannot overemphasize the importance of Augustine's thought. It just reverberates down through the ages, through the Reformation, so that Christians who would identify themselves as Calvinist now are really in the Augustinian Calvinian tradition.

There's no doubt about it. Boniface was a pope, to distinguish him from other people named popes named Boniface. Technically, he is Boniface VIII.

Unum Sanctum, one holy institution or church, sounds like the Constantinopolitan Creed and is deliberately designed. He claims creedal authority, creedal background, and authority for this amazing statement, which was published in 1302. Here is the tracing Roman Catholic Church through history.

The claims of Rome grew and grew. This represents a high point from a Roman Catholic perspective. We are obliged by the faith to believe and hold.

We firmly believe and sincerely confess that there is one holy Catholic church and an apostolic church. And you better believe he means Roman Catholic, as you will see. And that outside this church, there is neither salvation nor remission of sins.

Well, not only do we hear Constantinople, but we hear Cyprian. And the meaning now of Pope Boniface is outside this Roman Catholic institution on earth; there is no salvation. Nor remission of sins of this one and only church.

There is one body and one head, not two heads like a monster. Namely, Christ is the only head and Christ Vicar. His representative on earth is Peter and Peter's successor.

Therefore, if the Greeks or others say that they were not committed to Peter and his successors, they necessarily confess that they are not of Christ's sheep. He is alluding to the great system of 1054, in which the Eastern Orthodox churches broke with

Rome, and both the patriarch of Constantinople and the Pope in Rome issued anathemas of condemnation on the other one. Either you laugh, or you cry sometimes.

They excommunicated each other if that were possible. And here, Boniface regards the Orthodox church as the heterodox church. Why? It doesn't belong to Rome.

And the Roman church is the church. His biblical proof is that there's one Roman Catholic church. The Lord, he means Jesus, says in John, there's one fold and one shepherd.

Obviously, he's talking about the institution of the Roman Catholic Church as it existed in 1302 AD. I don't think so. Rather, Jesus in John 10 is talking about God bringing Gentiles into the church, along with Jewish believers, the original believers.

And we learn from the words of the gospel. Here's some more spurious exegesis. We learn from the gospel that in this church and in her power are two swords, the spiritual and the temporal.

For when the apostle said, behold, here are two swords. The Lord did not reply. It is too much, but that's enough.

That's all you need to take with you. And here's his interpretation. When the Lord said, behold, here that is in the church, since it was the apostles who spoke are two swords.

The Lord did not reply. It is too much, but it is enough. According to Boniface's exegesis, one of the two swords is the spiritual sword.

Rome has authority over the souls of Christendom. The other is the temporal sword. Rome has authority over the governments on earth.

This is a tremendous claim of power. And the earthly lords were not hearing it. They did not accept the princes of the different city-states, who were not at all impressed and did not accept this.

Nevertheless, it's official Roman Catholic teaching. Wycliffe, there are different estimations of him now. And he certainly was a pre-reformer in some senses.

Again, we don't know exactly his birth date, but approximately 1329. We do know he died in 1384. He was an English scholar whose study led him more and more to criticize the Roman Catholic church.

He was eventually condemned by Rome in 1377. His own biblical study led him to reject transubstantiation, the sacramental power of the priesthood from the Council of Constance. I don't have the date right in hand.

The ordination of a Roman Catholic priest, and this became canon law and is still valid according to Rome. In the ordination ceremony, the ordinand, the priest receives the power to forgive sins. Wycliffe found nothing like this in the Bible.

Neither do you find transubstantiation there. And in fact, he also questioned the efficacy of the cross. All of that brought his condemnation by Rome in 1377.

So, for the last seven years of his life, he lived under that quote. Remember, I said earlier, the Augustinian principle of the predestined was appealed to in times of doctrinal declension and moral decay within the church. So, it was.

So, Wycliffe says, the church is, quote, the assembly of all those predestined to salvation. It's from his treatise on the church. This is the Augustinian predestinarian theme that is appealed to by church leaders and thinkers in times of trouble where it's hard to find believers or to tell them the truth from the false and those kinds of struggles going on.

He said those words, the assembly of all those predestined to salvation. That is the church in his treatise on the church. He said so in agreement with Augustine.

Salvation, he was plain, he was clear. Salvation is through God's grace, not through human effort. All that not only got him but also made him a persona non grata and a persona condemnation by the church.

Jan Hus, 1373 to 1415, was an early Czech reformer. He experienced a conversion in his early 20s. Wycliffe's ideas were influential to him, especially his teachings on the spirituality of the church.

Again, that is tied with God's sovereign election. See, because things look bad around us, but God always has his people. Maybe they're even hidden, but God has the people he has chosen regardless of what things look like.

Hus was excommunicated. Hus was promised safe counsel and safe passage to the council of Constance, but you were allowed to lie to heretics, was the official statement. He was excommunicated and burned at the stake for his views.

Listen to his statement. Two righteous persons congregated together in Christ's name constitute Christ as the head of a particular holy church. So again, hard times, the immorality of the clergy, the immorality of the people.

People hardly understand Christian doctrine. It looks bad. So, he goes two ways.

Outwardly, a small number of believers gather. They're the little flock. They're the remnant.

They're God's people. They love the Lord. The church exists.

Theologically, two righteous persons congregated together in Christ's name constitute with Christ as the head a particular holy church. But the holy Catholic, that is universal, not Roman, my words, but his meaning, but the holy Catholic, that is the universal church, is the totality of the predestinate, again, appealing to the election, or all the predestinate present, past, and future. That is from his book, *The Church*, written in Hus' book, *The Church*, written in 1413.

Very early on, pages two and three of that document. A godly man is struggling and emphasizing the believing church and God's election at the same time. Now, from Luther came the Reformation.

He didn't intend. He brought the abuses of indulgence sales in Germany. People who should have used the money to buy milk for their babies were paying the money to get grandma and grandpa out of purgatory.

And he thought, oh, if the Holy Father in Rome only knew what was going on, he'd put a stop to this immediately, not knowing that the Father in Rome had his hand in the till for 50% take of the indulgences. Anyway, out of the Lutheran Reformation came a standard of, the Reformation produced symbols. It produced confessions of faith.

They wanted to teach children. It produced catechisms, teaching instruments based upon confessions of faith, and sometimes different levels of catechisms. So in the Presbyterian tradition, there is the shorter catechism originally intended for children and the larger catechism intended for adults and elders.

Augsburg Confession of 1530. Melanchthon was the author. Luther's brilliant successor was the author.

But the teaching, scholars agree, Melanchthon is the author, but the teaching is Luther's teaching. Article 8.7. I'm sorry, I should say more about Huss. I found some more notes here.

I didn't trace my arrow down very well. I want to be clear on Huss. He is not a reformer, okay? You can call him a pre-reformer, and everything I said is good, right? But if you put him in his own historical context, his own beliefs were a mixture of evangelical and traditional Catholic doctrines.

I mean, what would you expect? For Luther to ransack the whole thing didn't happen all at once. In debate, Roman Catholic debaters pushed him to the point where he was forced into a position of sola scriptura. Are you saying that the councils and the popes can err? Now, as a monk, that is not something he would say easily.

But when he was pushed, he'd said if the Bible is clear, and if they disagree with the Bible, then yes, they can err. That made him a heretic right there. His teaching and his ideas progressed, and he would have been killed after worms, except his own prince had him kidnapped.

He thought he was a goner, I'm sure, and hidden in the castle where he translated the Bible and so forth. Enough. So, to be fair, Huss is no Luther.

Although, when Luther was at worms, he said they said, do you alone believe these things? Nobody believed him. He went in the library and read, and Huss had some of the same ideas. So, he was a pre-reformer.

It's not an unfair designation. Nevertheless, Huss's own belief system had evangelical and Roman Catholic doctrines. But he did emphasize preaching the word.

He had a biblical vision of the church, more or less. That's the things we quoted. And the universal priesthood of believers.

So, Roman Catholic, sure, still. But moving in some really interesting pre-reformational ways. Augsburg Confession, Article 7. It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church, you see, Constantinople, the Constantinopolitan Creed, has such influence.

Oh, you are exactly right. Exactly right. 381.

Today, in theology books of all different persuasions, you have a section. The attributes of the church. Unity.

Sanctity. Catholicity. Apostolicity.

And rightly so. The fathers knew what they were talking about. There is one holy Christian church, which will be and remain forever.

Augsburg. This is the assembly of all believers. Believing church.

Among whom, that goes back to Huss, for example. Although I don't think they knew of Huss. Among whom the gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.

This is the seed of what would be called the marks of the church. The reformers built upon the attributes of the church. But they had to come up with ways.

How do you distinguish the true from the false? It was tricky. Both Luther and Calvin themselves acknowledged certain Roman Catholic priests as men of God and certain Roman Catholic congregations as churches. As biblical, evangelical churches.

So, it's a mess. How do you sort this out? They devised marks. And the most important mark is the pure teaching of the word.

The second mark was the proper administration of the sacraments. Third was church discipline. Here you have two marks.

It's also told among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. Because Jesus said the gates of hell are not going to prevail against my church. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is preached in its purity, and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.

For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it. And that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies instituted by men should be observed uniformly in all places.

What are the Lutherans doing in this early date? 1517 Luther nailed up the theses. This is 1530. It's pretty early.

They're saying some things are more important than others. And there could be details of church government or other things that are not the same. That's not essential.

It is as Paul says, in Ephesians, 4:4, and 5, quoting the epistle, there's one body and one spirit, just as you were called in one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. That is the biblical proof for the unity of the church, which we will address later. Article eight of Augsburg, Augsburg Confession 1530.

Again, although the Christian church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints. Yet, in this life, many false Christians, hypocrites, and even open sinners remain among the godly. The sacraments are efficacious, even if the priests who administer them are wicked men.

For as Christ himself indicated, the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, Matthew 23:2. What is this? This is Augsburg's appeal to the Augustinian principle, which reflects the

Bible, of a mixed company. See? True believers constitute the church. Nevertheless, there are false Christians, hypocrites, and even open sinners among the godly.

Were there not in the New Testament? Yes, 1 Corinthians 5. Put the man out from your midst, Paul says, the guy living with his mother and stepmother, the way a man lives with his wife. Accordingly, still, Augsburg, the Donatists' schismatics, and all others who hold contrary views are condemned. That last part is saying that even an unsaved person could preach the true gospel, and if they did, then you could be saved.

And the Donatist controversy, another response to schism, okay? The schismatics following Donatus, called Donatists, said that after the persecution quieted down, anybody baptized by a pastor, by a priest who denied Christ in the persecution, that baptism invalid. Like that, see? And if you believe the gospel preached by that person, you're not saved. Well, Saint Augustine said, no, no.

We rejoice when godly people preach the gospel. We're never happy for people who lapse. But nevertheless, the gospel and the sacraments don't belong to men.

It is Jesus' gospel. It is Jesus' ordinances, and they are valid regardless of the lifestyle of the person who gave them. He's not encouraging ecclesiastical wickedness, okay? But he is saying there's an objectivity to the word of God.

And no matter, you don't have to keep track of the person who gave you the gospel the rest of your life in fear or who baptized you so that your baptism is invalid if they really mess up. No, no. That's a misunderstanding of both word and sacrament.

The Scots Confession of 1560, so 30 more years. Calvin's dates are 1509 to 1564. So, the Reformed Church is moving, and Scotland has really embraced the Reformed faith.

The Scots Confession was actually the standard among English speakers until the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1646. Now, I got to tell you something. The Scots don't play softball.

Oh, they come out swinging, as you will see. Wow. Scots Confession of 1560, Article 16.

As we believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, note the Trinitarian emphasis. We do most constantly believe that from the beginning, there has been, now is, and to the end of the world shall be one kirk. The Scottish word for church. What they're saying is, Adam and Eve were part of the kirk.

They're saying, as I have said, there is unity between the Old and New Testament people of God. That is to say, one company and multitude of men chosen of God, predestinary in emphasis, who rightly worship and embrace him by true faith in Christ Jesus. Believing church, so you have both angles, see? God's sovereignty, human faith, true faith.

God's sovereignty is not just a theory. It results in people believing. And they don't just believe on their own.

God chose them and worked in them, so they did believe. Who rightly worship and embrace him by true faith in Christ Jesus. Who is the only head of the same kirk, which also is the body and spouse of Christ Jesus?

Which kirk is Catholic? What do you think they're going to say next? Oh yeah, you got to give the Pope a kick in the shins. Which Kirk is Catholic? That is universal because it contains the elect of all ages and of all realms, nations, and tongues. So that be they of the Jews, or be they of the Gentiles, who have communion and society with God the Father, and with his son, Jesus Christ.

With his son, Christ Jesus, through the sanctification of his Holy Spirit. Whew! They're defining the church in terms of union with the Trinity and, again, Trinitarianism. Union with Christ is union with the Trinity.

There's one God. The persons are inseparable. And again, Trinitarianism.

Therefore, it is called communion, not of profane persons, but of saints. The Scots were strong on church discipline and in people not just saying they were Christians but living for Christ. They could be too strong in church discipline.

Not of profane persons, but of saints, the communion of saints, who, as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, have the fruition of the most inestimable benefits. To wit, that means namely, of one God, one Lord Jesus, one faith, I hear Ephesians 4 again, one baptism, out of which kirk, church, there's neither life nor eternal felicity, happiness. And therefore, here we go, we utterly abhor the blasphemy of them.

I wish these guys would say what they believe and stop beating around the bush. Whew! We utterly abhor the blasphemy of them that affirm that men who live according to equity and justice shall be saved, what religion that ever they have professed. Oh, the English language developed, and that ever was separated from the what at this point.

That is, they're anti-pluralists, okay? Just because you believe in a divine being, you're not saved. For as without Christ Jesus, there's neither life nor salvation, so shall none be participant thereof, but such as the father has given unto them his son

Christ Jesus, and they that in time come to him, avow his doctrine, and believe into him. This is language from the gospel of John.

One of John's themes of election is the father giving people to the son. In John 6, coming to the Son means believing in the Son. Whew! Again, it's loaded with the Bible.

Now watch this. They that in time believe in him, we comprehend the children with the faithful parents. The Scot's confession is covenantal in two senses.

It traces the people of God back to the Garden of Eden. It's one people of God, and it has what I call the theology of the family. It includes children.

Is it saying children don't need to believe? Of course, it's not saying that, but it's saying children are included in God's covenant of grace. This kirk is invisible, known only to God, the invisible church, who alone knows whom he has chosen and comprehends as well, it is said, the elect that be departed, that is who died, commonly called the kirk triumphant, and they that yet live and fight against sin and Satan as shall live hereafter—Scott's confession 1560.

Oh, I know it's a later section of these same notes where they go after Rome. Wow, they just blast Rome. And Scottish people were killed by Rome.

It's understandable. The Belgic Confession of 1561 is one of the three reformed symbols called the three forms of unity by believing reformed Christians to this day. The Presbyterian tradition comes from Scotland and the Westminster Assembly meeting in London.

Its doctrinal standards are the Westminster Standards, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and the Westminster Larger Catechism. The three forms of unity that reformed Christians against Presbyterian ones reformed Christianity come from continental Europe, not England, and Scotland, and Holland, for example. Uh, the three forms of unity are the Belgic Confession, from which I'm going to quote in a moment, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the canons, the theological statements of Dort.

Belgic confession, Heidelberg catechism, canons of Dort. Heidelberg catechism, Belgic confession, 1561. Basically, the same time as the Scots confession.

Article 27, we believe and confess one single Catholic or universal church, a holy congregation and gathering of true Christian believers, awaiting their entire sanctification in Jesus Christ, being washed by his blood, and sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit. It's the first mention of sealing in these documents. I really appreciate it.

Sealing is mentioned in Ephesians 1, Ephesians 4, and 2 Corinthians 1. It speaks of God keeping his people saved by giving them the Holy Spirit as a seal. It also speaks in a lesser way of them being identified as God's people. This church has existed from the beginning of the world and will last until the end.

Covenantal, one people of God, will last until the end. Jesus' statement, I will build my church, the gates of hell will not prevail against it, as appears from the fact that Christ is eternal king and cannot be without subjects. That is John Calvin's teaching.

Christ is the eternal king. He must have subjects. So, there's one people of God.

Is that saying we shouldn't? Is there no discontinuity among the people of God? Yes, there is. But these documents emphasize the continuity between Old and New Testament people of God. And this holy church is preserved by God against the rage of the whole world, even though for a time it may appear very small in the eyes of men, as though it were snuffed out.

And so, this holy church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world, though still joined and united in heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, capital S, by the power of faith. In our next lecture, we will take up the Westminster Confession of Faith.

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