

Of Church Censures

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[0 : 0 0] as some of you will be aware most of you don't know the last few weeks and for the next succeeding two or three we'll be looking at the and have been looking at the biblical basis behind the last section of our church's confession of faith and that confession of faith we come this morning to the biblical basis behind chapter 30 which is entitled Of Church Centures there's no way you can make Of Church Centures sort of too interesting or exciting in a sense and yet it's a necessary part of what our faith requires and certainly it is that which is definitely taught in the New Testament and to an extent in the Old as well as to how the church of Jesus Christ should be maintained and protected from harm and danger now that harm and danger is primarily not so much for those within it and people within it going astray doing bad things and what have you although because we're all human we're all susceptible to that but ultimately you've got to remember that the person most desiring to destroy or to undermine or to infect the church of Jesus Christ will be the devil it is he who will ultimately desire to cause the church the body of Christ to become sick and to become weak and to become wayward and within that the body then as a whole has to act and to protect its health and its integrity that is the sense in which I think we should best understand church centers just as our body has the soldier cells within it which act when you get a cut or an infection it instantly begins to work away to heal over to knit together the lines of the cut and to make skin grow over it and to protect it and infection it swells up so you can get the infection out and so on if you happen to suffer from a particular bug or a fever or whatever a sickness and diarrhea bug or a high fever what is that except the body seeking to expel seeking to eradicate a virus or infection which is within it it is seeking to expel to expunge to get rid of to sweat out or to remove by any possible means that which it detects to be harmful now the Lord has set within his church a government in the sense of those who rule and order things were set in place by the body itself by the church but nevertheless a government in that sense which is distinct of course of the civil government and the Lord has put in place to in a sense rule his church

I mean if you think in Timothy for example where it says in chapter 5 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 17 where it says let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour there is a rule there is a rule a holding of regulation which is required in the church of Jesus Christ this government then the Lord has put in place we read in Matthew chapter 18 and we read of how the Lord has given this authority to his disciples to the church of God whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven if two of you shall agree your earth is touching anything that they shall ask it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven you might think wow that's a wide ranging power that's given any two Christians meet together and they say we agree on this and we want to ask the Lord for this then he'll do it remember the context in which this is being given it is in the context of the church of God seeking its order its discipline whatsoever you shall bind in earth shall be bound in heaven whatsoever you shall loosen in earth shall be loosed in heaven this is the Lord giving this collected instruction to the disciples as a whole just as a couple of chapters earlier he had spoken personally to Peter as the one who was the most outspoken and if you could say in human terms the leader of the apostles he said to him in chapter 7 16 verse 90

I will give unto thee singular the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatsoever thou shalt bind in earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven then charged even his disciples they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ now you might think yeah this is huge power Jesus has given to Peter but then of course a couple of chapters later he gives the same power to the disciples collectively he speaks it to Peter first because Peter is the one who makes this confession of who he is thou art the Christ the son of God Jesus answered and said unto him blessed art thou Simon Barjola for flesh and blood hath not revealed unto thee but my father which is in heaven and I say to thee thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it now of course we can debunk right away the idea that oh well this gives to the power to St. Peter's successors the bishops of Rome this power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven which has been claimed of course all the way down the centuries by the papacy by the bishops of Rome and I'll say again what we've said so many times in the past there is no evidence whatsoever that Peter was ever at Rome no biblical evidence no accurate historical evidence heaps of tradition but the tradition only originates from the Roman church taking these verses and saying oh yes let's take Peter as our first bishop because he's got the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven that means we can claim them as well there's no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome let alone bishop of Rome and all the evidence would be in the Bible would be to the contrary but if it had been

Thomas if it had been Nathaniel to whom this was said you can bet your bottom dollar that they would have been claimed as the first bishop of Rome likewise in the same way I would suggest that verse 18 in chapter 16 is often misinterpreted by us as Protestants and we tend to say oh well that's not talking about Peter and I think this is because people are afraid that if they concede that to Peter that verse to Peter that Christ is going to build his church on Peter that it shores up the papacy it doesn't Peter has nothing whatsoever to do with the church of Rome I would suggest the context implies Jesus is talking about Peter but all he means is he's going to be the leader of the disciples in the human sense and the evidence from the acts of the apostles is Peter was very much their leader very much their spokesman until James the brother of our Lord came in and he then took over the leadership of the more established church as it became but to Peter and to the apostles

Jesus says collectively as well as singularly here he gives them the keys of the kingdom of heaven they can shut what they like they can open what they like what does he mean by that does he mean that you can stop people getting into heaven you can stop people from being saved they can't stop people from being saved in the sense that you know the conversion of the heart is something that only the Lord can do through his Holy Spirit only the Lord can ever convert people only the Lord bypassing the Bible leave them in darkness the church cannot get people into heaven any more than it can keep people out of heaven what does it mean it means that where there is an outward behaviour that the church may need to act on and say this is inconsistent with what a Christian should do this is a fault this is a failing you shouldn't be doing the soldier cells of the body able to say this is an infection it needs to be got rid of this is something that is wrong it has to be dealt with then for that time whilst the infection or while the sin may be cherished in a sense heaven will be closed to them because the church will say or the officers of the church will say on the church's behalf that this is incompatible with a profession of faith in Christ this is not in line with what a

[9 : 06] Christian should be doing or what a Christian claims to be saying and to that extent they say there is a barrier there is a barrier between you the person professing the faith and the behaviour there is that which is inconsistent we are calling it out we are saying there is a problem here that is what they are required to do and as long as that problem continues it will be because having had it pointed out the sinner the believer the person professing the faith saying no I don't accept that I want to hold on to this and I want all the privileges as well now where the Lord says I will you know what you will bind on earth will be bound in heaven what you will loose in earth will be loosed in heaven what should we understand of that I would suggest to you it is in the sense of the Lord recognising the authority he has given if you were in let's say the forces and you were a colonel of a regiment and as the colonel of the regiment you were lots of different companies underneath you and the captain of one of your companies perhaps does something you don't agree with and he tells his sergeant to send the men running up and down this mountain five times and they're exhausted and they're absolutely wiped out and they're not fit for duty the next day and one of them protests and says no I don't want to go up this mountain

I'm not going to do it anymore and the sergeant says well you have to do it because the officer says it and the captain says no you've got to keep doing it and they appeal to the colonel and they say we don't want to go running up and down this mountain anymore what are you going to do about it he says well if your captain's told you to do it you have to do it you're going to obey his orders the colonel may not like what the captain has said but he must uphold the authority of the chain of command within his battalion or within his armed forces now likewise the Lord will recognize that church officers just as ordinary believers are fallible human beings they make mistakes sometimes church courts or church governments or whatever will make mistakes but if they are making those mistakes based truthfully and humbly on what the word of God teaches God will stand by their decision he will say well these are what your lawful authority said so this is what you should do it's likewise if your mum or your dad when you're a child stops you going out to play with your friends and it may be a completely illegitimate reason they're saying no they just don't want you to do it they're fed up with you going out so they're making you stay in and they may not have a good solid reason but because they are your parents they are to be obeyed because they have made this decision it is for the sake of that decision that it may be obeyed and if you were to pray your way to him and say lord my mum and my dad won't let me go out to play they're not right to do this are they and the lord might think well that should be ok we have to let them go out to play but your mum or your dad have said no so you shouldn't do it because honour thy father and thy mother is one of

God's own commands this is what I would suggest to you as men whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven if the church of God through its officers takes a decision which is based upon his word and teaching then God will honour that decision and if the church likewise is convinced that the person has shown suitable penitence and reformation of life and so on and loses that particular charge that was against them and releases them from it then God will recognise that to be released God will uphold what they uphold and he will honour what they honour now where does that then leave we might say somebody who in a congregation or a branch of the church where let's say that rampant immorality is allowed and the church says yeah that's okay you go right ahead and do it is God going to hold the individual responsible if the church has told them no that's okay that's fine is he going to blame them or is he going to blame the church authorities well

I think we can take examples of this for example the New Testament and then also from the Old in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 the case of a notorious case of the person in Corinth who was having an affair with his stepmother his father's wife he says to the Corinthians and you are puffed up and I've not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you for I verily as absent in body but present in spirit have judged already as though I were present concerning him that hath so done this deed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ when you are gathered together and my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus your glorying is not good in other words you're letting this guy just carry on this affair as though it was okay your glorying is not good know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened for even

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us so in other words if the sin goes unremarked and undealt with then whose problem does it become it becomes not merely that of the sinner themselves not merely that of the offender themselves it becomes that also of the church which allows it in the old testament we think of Achan remember just after the fall of Jericho reading Joshua chapter 7 but the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing but Achan the son of Carmi the son of Zabdi the son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah took of the accursed thing and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel and then after they are defeated in battle Joshua cries to the Lord alas O Lord whereforest thou at all brought this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us would to God we had been contented welcome you outside Jordan and the Lord O Lord what shall

[15 : 34] I say when Israel turned to their back before their enemies and the Lord said unto Joshua get thee up wherefore liest thou thus upon my face Israel hath sinned and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them for they have even taken of the accursed thing and have also stolen and dissembled also and they have put it even among their own stuff therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies but turned their backs before their enemies because they were accursed neither will I be with you anymore except you destroy the accursed from among you up sanctify the people and say sanctify yourselves against the world for thus saith the Lord God of Israel there is an accursed thing in the midst of thee O Israel thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from you now notice how God is wording that in Joshua he's saying Israel has sinned the whole nation the whole people the whole nation hadn't sinned one person in it

Achan had sinned he had stolen some of the plunder he had hidden it in his tent but because he had done it the whole nation was tainted with that sin and so God withdrew his blessing and Israel was defeated in the face of their enemies says you're a person and as long as you continue a person you won't be able to stand before your enemies now think here of what Paul writes again to the Corinthians to deliver us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in your gammal together my spirit with the power of our Lord to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that sounds terribly sort of inquisition like burning people at the stake remember what would say here if one is being delivered out of the church of Jesus Christ to whom are you being delivered the prince of this world rules effectively this fallen world Christ is in ultimate control of course

Satan is a dog and a leech he can only do what the Lord allows him to do he can only have as much leeway as the Lord allows him to have but the Lord has allowed Satan to have a comparatively free reign in this fallen world because we have turned our backs upon God as a people as a race a human race therefore the Lord has allowed Satan pretty much free reign he takes his own people as brands plucked from the burning but as long as we are not in the church of Jesus Christ if we are not turned to the Lord the living God the true God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength if we are not in that number then where are we if we're not in the ark then we are out there in the flood we're out there in death and if we are not in the church of Jesus Christ then we are out there with Satan and all his hordes whatever form they take whether it's secular humanism whether it's government communism as in the far east whether it's

Islam whether it's other religions that persecute Christianity whatever it might be Satan has lots of different faces lots of different colors to his particular army but to deliver such anyone unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh what does that mean it doesn't mean the destruction of the body it doesn't mean put him to death it means that that which is not of the spirit that which is of the flesh and all that it reaps all that it brings upon the offender may likewise be starved be destroyed as they come to see there is a consequence to what they have chosen to do and the consequence of what they have chosen to do is that they must choose between this sin that they cherish in this case having an affair with a stepmother or the church of Jesus Christ and being faithful to the Lord there is going to be a consequence one way or the other to deliver such in one unto

Satan in the sense that if they are not with the Lord's people then they must be out with the Lord's people Jesus said he that is not with me is against me and if we are against the Lord Jesus Christ then there's only one person we're on the side of it doesn't matter what we call it ultimately we are supporting the evil one if we're not with Christ we are against him and the ultimate adversity of Christ and his people is Satan it doesn't matter what form that takes it doesn't matter if people say oh no it's just we're just secular humanists we're just atheists or agnostic or we just happen to follow our own particular religion or we just worship in our own way it doesn't mean that we're Satanists no no you're not practicing the occult and you mean you're completely secular like North Korea or China or whatever or the secular humanism or the unbelieving West it doesn't matter it doesn't matter what form or color or flame it takes if it is not with Christ it is against him and it is not for

[20 : 51] Christ ultimately it is forsaken and if we are being delivered out of the fellowship of the Lord's people then ultimately it is to Satan near the destruction the flesh the flesh is what has caused this person to turn away from the teachings of Christ and to have this flame with his step mother or whatever form of immorality somebody may follow and people will always rationalize it in their minds and they will always say no no this is okay this is perfectly you know it's consensual we're grown ups it's loving how could God be against love God is love God doesn't want us to be unhappy and people make all these manner of excuses and you know where it goes in our society today God is love God is love yes but God is love it doesn't mean God is sex it doesn't mean God is immorality God is a love of purity God is faithfulness God is justice

God is holiness as well as love there are some physical expressions of love which God in his word has forbidden this man in Corinthians may be unable to prevent the fact he may be madly in love with his step mother he may cannot help what he feels for her but he can help what he does about it we may be fatally attracted to somebody who is not ours to have we may fall in love with our neighbour's wife or husband or with somebody of the same gender as ourselves we cannot help what we feel but we can help what we do about it we can help how we respond to it the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets the spirits of believers are subject to those believers and the power of God's spirit to rule them likewise here this is what Paul is requiring of them that they make a choice that they exercise church centuries now that this was done in Corinth clearly in such a way as Paul required we read in 2nd

Corinthians chapter 2 from verse 6 onwards and this indicates something to us of the intention the purpose behind such church censures which is for the reclaiming of the offender and the gaining of them remember in the chapter that we read in Matthew 18 Jesus talks about lost sheep he's not just talking about a lamb that has gone astray and he isn't a believer yet but if somebody brings him in and converts him and brings him into the flock there's great rejoicing this is a little sheep which belongs to the flock but has somehow become separated and gone astray the shepherd the one who has the charge over the flock goes and seeks the land goes and seeks to bring them back the church officers those who rule are given to rule in the New Testament as we read in Timothy earlier goes and seeks to bring them back the reclaiming of the offender 2 Corinthians chapter 2 from verse 6 sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of many in other words by the church as a whole so the country wise he ought rather to forgive him and comfort him lest perhaps such a one should be swarmed up with over much sorrow wherefore I beseech you that you would confirm your love toward him for to this end also that I write that

I might know the proof of you whether you be obedient in all things this is the purpose to reclaim the offender but the offender will not be reclaimed if they are not able to know that they have gone to stray and the offender will judge largely whether they have gone to stray in terms of how the church reacts to what they do they say oh everybody is doing it it's ok it's no problem then they will think yeah this must be ok with God now what is the leadership what is the rule of the church doing think of Joshua's account with Achan if they are not holding the church of God to the teachings of God God will require it at their hands he may loose what they loose he may bind what they bind but he will require it at their hands the purpose of all such censures is the reclaiming of the offender the vindicating of the honour of

Christ the deterring of others so that they are kept in safety now one reason why for example go back to our army example somebody steps out of lying in army discipline then wrath will descend upon them from the army establishment discipline may be harsh but others will see and they'll think well better not do that this is what happens to people who do that so likewise one of the purposes of such discipline even in a secular even in a military and in the church of God atmosphere is to reclaim and to deter others it is likewise to be preventing the growth of infection because infection grows when it is allowed to continue untreated if you think of somebody with a fearful disease like cancer and let's say that the doctors they detect with a scan or something there's some cancerous cells there in whatever part of the body it is now we can operate and we can cut out the cancerous cells and we can hit it with radium and chemotherapy and all the other stuff or because we don't like to be nasty and we don't like to be cutting into people's flesh we can just leave it we can just put some cream in it and say that's okay you know you're fine you're fine go out with a clean bill of health and the doctors and say it's okay you're great when they're not great and what they need is surgery and what they need is treatment and what they need is for the cancer to be cut out and for the issue to be dealt with now what we find in the new testament church is not contrary to what we might be tempted to think a pristine church with all saints who are all in a spirit of holiness and unity and brotherhood and sisterhood together and nobody needs to be told anything because they all love the lord so much because they live so near to the time of christ but they are all pretty much perfect as far as it goes in this one but we've just taken the example from first corinthians chapter 5 which is pretty wild when somebody having an affair with his stepmother we've got likewise second thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 6 now we command you brethren in the name of our lord jesus christ that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us verse 14 if any man obey not our word by this epistle note that man and have no company with him that he may be ashamed now thessalonians is one of the very early letters that paul has written and it's interesting in our own branch of the church church discipline has church centuries discipline has four stages and these are admonition rebuke suspension and excommunication and basically these boil down as follows admonition is described as involving affectionate warning of sin and danger and exhortation to greater circumspection in other words warning someone in love that they are going astray and they need to address the issue exhorting them to greater carefulness circumspection or rebuke now rebuke is distinguished from admonition in the sense that after confession or conviction of a scandalous offence either before the session alone or before a congregation so when there's been something a bit more public there is a rebuke and that would imply the rebuke is public now Timothy of course is taught to rebuke where there is need for it in chapter 1 of course verse 20

[29 : 27] Paul talks about Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I have delivered unto Satan there's that term again that they may learn not to blaspheme in chapter 5 verse 20 then that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear now again this is the New Testament church we're talking about where there's need for the next stage is suspension suspension from privileges you know you won't be able to get your children baptized you won't be able to sit at the Lord's table and so on because all is not as it should be things need to be addressed before you can reclaim these privileges again because what is happening in that person's life is inconsistent with the profession that they have made and the profession is what's enabled the privileges but that profession must be backed up by a life that lives it that states it now suspension from privileges is not saying we actually believe you're a heathen not a believer it's saying look brother sister your life is not as it should be there are things you need to address there are things you've been told about and you haven't dealt with so you need to just withdraw for a while from these privileges just take a back seat and once it's sorted out and once you've worked through whatever the process is then you can come back again all it's saying really is withdraw for a time or certainly the privileges are withdrawn from you there's also finally excommunication sometimes called greater excommunication and this means the person is no longer a member of the church of Jesus

Christ and effectively what that greater excommunication is saying is if you ever were a believer we don't believe you're one now we don't think you are a believing Christian anymore we may have been fooled for a time but the evidence of your life your behaviour your witness is no way could a Christian do and be what you are doing and being you're out and to that extent it's not just your denied privileges it's really effectively saying we do not believe that you are a believing Christian at all that's what greater excommunication is obviously that is the most serious the most solemn of all and only to be used in the very most serious cases but to go back to Timothy if we look in 2 Timothy we see in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 24 how you know such discipline admonition whatever it is to reapply the servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle unto all men apt to teach patient in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive by it as well you see the purpose of the censures the purpose of the disability to recover the offender and how the officers of the church must themselves be wise to the fact that they also can be tempted they also can fall into sin they have to be watchful and vigilant of themselves in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves now

Paul in apostolic days writing to Timothy and clearly there are those who oppose themselves there are those who follow the way there are those who argue don't be those who fight back likewise chapter 4 of the same way instant in season out of season reprove rebuke exhort with all long suffering and doctrine for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned on the fables but watch thou in all things in due afflictions do the work of an evangelist make full proof of thy ministry or service so likewise there is this warning that it is human nature to want to do whatever we want to do it is human nature for us to reject restriction and rule and regulation that is part of our fallenness it is grace that causes us to desire the word the teachings the commandments of the

Lord that they are made sweet to us is not because we are of a nicer nature than the next person or because we're more good than the next person it is because God's work of grace works in us and that work of grace is at conflict with the flesh conflict with the old natural self that wants to do what it wants to do and we read likewise in Titus chapter 3 verses 10 and 11 tube all chapter 3 verses 22 and 23 of some have compassion making a difference and others same with fear pulling them out of the fire hating even the garments spotted by the flesh now all of these are fairly diverse quotations and what they do indicate to us is that there in the apostolic days of the New Testament church there is a constant emphasis on what nowadays we would call discipline and what the church confession of faith calls church censures that the government of the church is constantly having to be vigilant it is having to act as the soldier cells in the body to deal with infection to heal cuts and grazes and sores to make sure that cancer cells do not grow but are likewise removed or fought against so that where there is the inclination to go back back to the old unsaved or self-centered or evil ways that where the church of Jesus Christ works on these things and seeks to reclaim on behalf of the body itself discipline is not so much about expelling the offender from the church but as we saw you know with Corinthians it's more like the church withdrawing itself from the individual you know as we

Paul wrote with Thessalonians withdraw thyself from every brother that walketh disorderly the dramatic instance of that of course with Korah and the rebellion against the Lord against Moses and Aaron in the book of Numbers where when Moses is arguing with him he says right okay God's going to decide who's right and who isn't and he says in Numbers chapter 16 he says to everybody else get you up from around these men's tents and everybody sort of edges away about you don't know what's going to happen so they get up and they move their tents away from these guys' tents and make a space round about them they withdraw themselves from these rebels or founders because whatever is going to happen and they don't know yet what's going to happen they don't want to be associated with it now all of this means that there has to be in a sense conflict there has to be a sense of you might say confrontation that is never an easy thing to do it is never an easy thing to do by our human nature it is certainly never an easy thing to do in the context of the church of Jesus Christ but failure to do that means that the body becomes progressively more sick we think of the free church in the late 19th century where heresy was rife and where so called higher criticism was calling the bible into question at every turn professors were fated and honoured who basically despised the authority of the bible and said you don't have to believe what it says and they were taken to the general assembly and the general assembly just slapped them on the wrist and said well just you know don't be so unguarded in your speech but they left them to it and the failure to deal with that heresy the failure to deal with that dishonouring of Christ meant the church just got sicker and sicker and it became more and more doctrinally unwell unable to stand for its own truth and that flaccid weak lack of strength meant that the church ended up splitting three ways and all the strength and stuffing came out of it and it took years for it to recover the same is true of course of the national church the same is true of any branch of the church where heresy or ungodliness or immorality is allowed to just carry on because nobody wants to call it out nobody wants to deal with it now when we let these things it's not that we are being nice to people it's that we are being unfaithful to what God teaches in his word anybody might say well who are you to say that to me who are you to say I should do this or I should do that and always as far as the church is concerned it must be a case never mind what this person says let's go to what

[39 : 15] God says let's see what he says in his word let's see what he requires of us because there will always be plenty who will say oh you don't have to believe that you don't have to do that nowadays nobody does that nowadays but it is not by what people do in our day that we will be judged it is by what the Lord said thus saith the Lord about the referee keeping the rules for both teams about the mum or dad acquiring what is to be done for their child they may have it wrong but their authority is from God the captain may make a mistake that the colonel may not approve of in the army but his authority is from his commission and likewise the courts of the church the officers of the church they may make mistakes and do things wrong but ultimately the rock on which they stand has to be God's word if it is not if it's just their own opinions then it's just a sponge it's just sand shifting sand that they stand on ultimately the purpose of church centuries is not for expelling or cruelly inflicting damage or hurt on anyone it is rather to reclaim to heal to restore to bring back the lost sheep that go astray this is the purpose of it this is why the Lord has given it into the hands of initially his disciples and thereafter his officers in the church and this is why we see constantly and if it is one thing that all these different references should have done it should have reinforced to us that constantly throughout the new testament there was a need for the officers of the church to be vigilant even in those new testament days even so early on in the life of the church of Jesus Christ because it is composed of fallible human beings in which there is always that warfare the spirit lusting against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit the Lord's kingdom and the evil ones seeking to pull us away ultimately we must choose between the Lord and the world ultimately we must submit to one authority or the other back in the old testament

Moses says to the people I set before you blessing and cursing life and death therefore choose life and that is what ultimately church centuries are all about that is prayer