



WCF Prayer:

Chapter 30 - Of Church Censures

Gracious Lord and Heavenly Father,

We bow before you, recognizing that our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the sole King and Head of His Church. We marvel that we are united to Him and one another by grace through faith in Jesus. Lord we praise you for the gift of life that comes with this gift of faith.

We humbly acknowledge the great privileges and solemn responsibilities of being members of your visible Church.

Living God, we praise you for your divine direction that within your Church, you have appointed a government of office bearers to oversee the life and order of your people and that these officers are distinct from civil authorities.

Lord God, we are struck by the gravity of their calling, for you have entrusted to the office bearers within your Church, the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. We acknowledge that in the preaching of the Gospel these keys unlock your kingdom to the repentant and close your kingdom to the unrepentant. What a sweet privilege it is to declare the forgiveness of sin and gift of eternal life to the repentant. However, Lord, what seriousness there is withholding that declaration where no visible faith or repentance are evident.

We pray for all office bearers within your Church that they may possess abundant wisdom, grace, and love as they exercise this most solemn responsibility. Grant that they may fulfil their duty carefully through the preaching of the Gospel and even through the application of church censure, where necessary.

Lord, we acknowledge with heavy hearts that such discipline is a necessary application of your grace within your church in this era. We pray that if any censure is necessary, this would be exercised with the loving aim of winning back those who have evidently departed from your Gospel through the words they have spoken or things they have done.

We pray, Lord God, that through such discipline others might be deterred from similar sin. Holy God, we also pray that as these censures are enacted, your Church would be protected. We pray that correction of one part may lead to the well-being and flourishing of the whole body.

In all action taken against those who publicly sin and are unrepentant, we pray above all for the honour of Jesus Christ. Lord we pray also that these censures would protect the preaching of the Gospel. We pray that such discipline might preserve your Church from your wrath, a wrath that would justly fall upon us should we ignore such visible sin in our midst.

Lord, it saddens us that in this age between Christ's ascension and His second coming, that we must still have these censures as part of our church life. Forgive us Lord. Sanctify us by your Spirit. However, Holy God, please grant your office bearers courage to exercise their responsibility through warning, through suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season, and, ultimately where necessary, through the step of excommunication until repentance is evident.

May your grace, love, and wisdom drive all the actions of the office bearers within your Church. May these attributes be present as your servants oversee all aspects of the life of the Body of Christ.

Holy and gracious God, keep us free from sin and be glorified in your Church, we pray.

Amen.