

**Understanding Conservative Congregations Of The Church Of Christ-Part 2
The History Of Centralized Authority In The Church**

I. Centralized Authority In The History Of Israel

Judges 8:23 But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."

1 Samuel 8:5-8 and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." 6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."

1 Samuel 12:12 And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God was your king.

2 Kings 21:11-12 "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols),

II. The Work Of The Church Under The Oversight Of The Elders

Ephesians 3:10-11 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

1 Timothy 3:15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Ephesians 4:12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

1 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

1 Thessalonians 1:8 For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place.

1 Timothy 5:16 If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.

Acts 14:23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

1 Peter 5:2-3 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

Acts 11:29-30 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. **30** This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

III. Centralized Oversight In The Early Church

Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. **30** Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

“The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution. (Gibbons, *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, p.170)

“The public functions of religion were solely intrusted to the established ministers of the church, the bishops and the presbyters; two appellations which in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons,...the episcopal presbyters guided each infant congregation with equal authority and with united counsels.” (Gibbons, *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, p.170)

“But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate: and the order of public deliberations soon introduces the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions of the assembly.”

“It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of Presbyter;”

(Gibbons, *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, pp.170-171)

“Nobody must do anything that has to do with the church without the bishop’s approval...whatever he approves pleases God as well. In that way everything you do will be on the safe side and valid.” (Ignatius, 110 A.D.)

“Towards the end of the second century, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods,...As the legislative authority of the particular churches was insensibly superseded by the use of councils, the bishops obtained by their alliance a much larger share of executive and arbitrary Power”

(Gibbons, *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, p. 172)

“The same causes which at first had destroyed the equality of the presbyters introduced among the bishops a pre-eminence of rank, and from thence a superiority of jurisdiction.....the office of perpetual presidents in the councils of each province was conferred on the bishops of the principal city; and these aspiring prelates, who soon acquired the lofty titles of Metropolitans and Primate, secretly prepared themselves to usurp over their Episcopal brethren the same authority which the bishops had so lately assumed above the college of presbyters.

(Gibbons, *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, p. 173)

“Nor was it long before an emulation of pre-eminence and power prevailed among the Metropolitans themselves....it was easy to foresee that Rome must enjoy the respect, and would soon claim the obedience, of the provinces.

(Gibbons, *The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, p. 173)

“If one deserts the chair of Peter upon whom the church was built, has he still confidence that he is in the church.”

(Cyprian of Carthage, 258 A.D.)