

“THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF YOUR PASTORS” 1 Timothy 5:17-20

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We have an expression for something you hardly ever give a thought to, but you ought to?

We say, “You’re taking it for granted.”

It’s usually something important. Even though you don’t think about it, you count on it.

It’s quite okay to take some things for granted. It’s impossible to take a deep interest in everything or everyone.

If it’s gone or if something’s wrong, suddenly you pay attention to it.

You can get by taking your health for granted—for a while—until you hear *snap, crackle, pop* in the morning, and it’s not coming from your cereal.

You take family for granted at your own peril. Sooner or later you will learn the value of getting intimately involved in the welfare and interests of your spouse, your parents, and your children. It pays awesome dividends.

- The Apostle Paul told Timothy to be sure that certain people in the church were not taken for granted—the pastors and elders.

In our study today the Apostle Paul wrote, *‘Now I want to say something about those people that are easily taken for granted in the church—the elders who lead the church, and who preach and teach’* (5:17).

Of course that’s not exactly what Paul wrote; it’s a very free paraphrase. But that’s pretty much what it means.

- In the early New Testament church, the line between an elder and a pastor was blurred. They were practically identical, but some elders had the distinct role of preaching and teaching.

Paul calls some of the elders *ruling elders*. They *direct the affairs of the church* (NIV). Among them were elders who preach and teach.

- In the Bible our word *pastor* is the same word as *shepherd*. Usually it is a verb. Pastoring or shepherding is what elders do. They shepherd the flock of God.

The Apostle Paul said to the Ephesian elders, *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood.* (Acts 20:28)

The Apostle Peter writes essentially the same thing: *To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers . . .* (1 Peter 5:1-2)

This is how God has ordained that his church should be led and cared for.

- Among those called elders, are those we know as pastors, who work hard at what Paul told Timothy to devote himself to: . . . *the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching* (1 Timothy 4:13)

Here Paul focused on them especially—the preaching/teaching elders, or pastors.

Paul told Timothy to make sure these elders who served well are not taken for granted

- I have learned that church folk want to be sure that the pastors are doing what they are supposed to do for the members. That’s good.

But I don’t know of any church that regularly asks its members to look at what God’s word says they are supposed to do for the ones God has appointed to serve as their pastors/shepherds.

It’s awkward for the pastors to broach this subject, even though the Bible addresses it head-on, as we’ll see.

But it’s not difficult for an interim pastor like me to do it.

- What about the responsibility of the church to its pastors? What should the pastors expect from the church?

This is not one of the major doctrines of the church. In most churches it’s never dealt with. But it should be.

- Today I’m going to talk about your pastors, based on what God’s Word teaches us.

You have Pastors Bill and Kaleb, whom you love and trust.

Now some of you are fasting and praying that our Lord will guide your Senior Pastor Search Committee in its important task.

- Let us read what God’s Word says about this.

17. *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

18. *For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”*

19. *Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.*

20. *Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that others may take warning.*

How can Crossroads Church be sure that your pastors are not taken for granted?

In 1 Timothy 5:17-20 the Apostle Paul explains that a church should care for its pastors in two ways.

I. PROVIDE FOR YOUR PASTORS 1 Timothy 5: 17, 18

17. *The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

Timothy was clearly not the only one who preached and taught.

The church at Ephesus was already about 10 years old when the Apostle Paul wrote this letter.

There may have been several full-time elder-pastors because the church had grown. Timothy himself served as the lead pastor under the Apostle Paul's guidance.

Paul told Timothy to make sure the pastors were respected, or honored appropriately.

- Jesus Christ taught his followers that those who would be leaders should first be servants: *'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.'* (Luke 22:25-26)

Pastors are servants. That is how they must view themselves.

Any pastor who expects to be molycoddled and fussed over every time he adjusts his halo has a big ego problem and isn't fit to care for God's flock.

Every now and then there's a bad egg. But pastors are also leaders to be respected as those who have responsibility to preach, to teach and care for God's flock.

In the Book of Hebrews we read this: *'Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you (lit. your souls) as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.'* (Hebrews 13:17)

- Let's consider the meaning of the word "honor" in verse 17.

In our text today "honor" has financial implications.

One Bible translation reads, *'Reckoned worthy of double stipend.'* (NEB) Another version reads, *'considered as deserving twice the salary they get.'* (Williams)

God's word says *"those whose work is preaching and teaching"* are especially worthy of honor.

- Why are pastors to be treated with this special respect or honor?

Pastors are not more important than anyone else in a church.

It's all because of what they do—because of what God has entrusted to them as his servants.

We respect our pastors especially because they have the primary responsibility of preaching and teaching the inspired, authoritative Word of God.

The proclamation of the Word of God by preaching and teaching is the most important thing that happens in the activities of a church.

- But in the history of the Christian Church other elements pushed aside the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

For example, the sacramental focus on the Eucharist.

The altar was elevated and placed in the center of the sanctuary.

This has led many people to believe that all they need for their spiritual welfare is to receive the Eucharist or mass, or communion regularly.

This is what the reformer Martin Luther learned through years of painful struggle. He wrote: *'I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept up any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work.'*

And yet, after all that work Luther had no peace of heart or assurance of salvation. Something essential was missing—the truth of God's Word.

Martin Luther had been starving spiritually.

- After the Reformation the pulpit or lectern from which the Word of God was preached was elevated and placed in the center of the sanctuary. The communion table was placed below it or to the side.

The pulpit has stood as a symbol that the Word of God that deserves to be elevated. Everything else in the life and practice of a church is subordinated to the Word of God.

Some people say that engaging in worship is more important than preaching. Not true! You cannot worship properly unless your worship an expression of your understanding and your obedience to the word of God.

You must know God and the truth of God's Word in order to worship God in spirit and in truth. Otherwise worship just becomes nice sounding, soppy sentimentality.

- Sadly, in many contemporary churches today, the tastes of people are given precedence over the word of God. People want the preaching to be brief and not too deep.

That attitude in any church is a slippery slope that eventually ends with the word of God being shunted to the side as something incidental instead of that which is most essential.

There's a story about a little girl who was vigorously stirring a glass of ice tea. She sipped some of it, grimaced; stirred it again and contorted her face with displeasure once again. She complained, *'Mother, this tea won't come sweet.'* Her mother answered, *'Of course it won't. There's no sugar in it. All the stirring in the world won't do any good.'*

All the stirring-up of people in a church through edgy music or entertaining stories or captivating videos won't do any lasting good without the gospel

The old camp meeting preacher Vance Havner said, *'The Gospel is for lifeboats, not showboats, and a preacher must make up his mind which boat he is going to operate.'*

We must never permit anything to take the place of the preaching and teaching of God's Word--and obeying it!

There is nothing else that takes place in the life of a church that is anywhere near as important as the preaching and teaching of God's holy Word.

The work of preaching and teaching explains and underscores why people must place their faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation and the forgiveness of sins.

- Pastors are ordinary Christians, but they have an awesome, sobering responsibility.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, *'We ask you brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.'* (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

Honor them, take care of them, because they will give account to God for the work of preaching and teaching and caring for God's flock.

- Paul appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures to emphasize that caring for pastors must be practical.

18. *For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."* [Quotes Deut. 25:4; Luke 10:7]

God said to Moses, *'Don't deprive oxen of eating some of the grain while they're working for you in treading it out.'*

- Paul is not hesitant to deal with this in his writings to other churches too.

He wrote to the Galatians: *'Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.'* (6:6)

He told the Corinthian church: *'In the same way the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.'* (1 Corinthians 9:14)

The officers of a church wrote to the famous British Pastor, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, requesting that he recommend a minister in their pastoral search. When Spurgeon learned of the meager salary they intended to pay a pastor, he wrote back: *"The only individual I know, who could exist on such a stipend, is the angel Gabriel. He would need neither cash nor clothes; and he could come down from heaven every Sunday morning, and go back at night, so I advise you to invite him."*

- The Apostle Paul states briefly, but emphatically, that if God provided for oxen treading out corn, churches must provide honorable compensation for their pastors who preach and teach the gospel and guard it from distortion.

II. PROTECT YOUR PASTORS. 1 Timothy 5:19, 20.

In almost every church there are people who readily attack pastors, usually with their tongues.

In the Old Testament era people attacked the God's prophets. They even killed some of them.

Moses was the object of constant grumbling by the Israelites. God even threatened to get rid of those grumblers (Numbers 17:5).

- Why does this happen?

Frankly, some pastors ask for it by their arrogant, self-serving attitude and behavior. They are not true shepherds of God's flock.

But most often, there are people in a church who want to discredit pastors because they don't want to submit to the authority of God's Word.

I don't know any pastor who has never been the object of malicious lies.

Nor should we be surprised. The devil does not want people to submit to God's truth and to live in love and harmony as the flock of God.

Sometimes the devil deceives people to believe lies, and to stir up opposition against the pastor.

Then the church becomes embroiled in a divisive controversy.

The church then loses its Christ-like love and unity. Everyone loses.

So Paul tells Timothy to make sure there are protections so that wolves don't succeed in attacking the shepherds.

- Where do people get the notion that it's okay to attack pastors?

I have found that this wicked practice usually arises and is fuelled among people who think the church belongs to them.

They've been members for many years; they've given a lot of money. How could anyone suggest it's not their church?

The Bible makes it very clear that the church does not belong to anybody in the church.

I think someone should say something like this to a congregation every year: "Remember, this is not our church, no matter how long we have been here. We do not own this church. This church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is his church, and only his church. We may speak of this as *our church* only because we belong to it, not because it belongs to us.

Church members do not have any rights of ownership. They are members of God's flock. The church is his flock. A church prays that the Lord of the church will send the shepherd of his choice to be the pastor of his flock, their local church.

- Now the Apostle Paul gives us some guidelines, first for dealing with accusations against an elder/pastor, and second, for dealing with sin by an elder/pastor.

19. *Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.*

Be sure you have the facts, not gossip or rumor. An accuser must be able to support the accusation with witnesses.

Jewish law required the agreement of two witnesses before a man could be accused and answer to a charge (cf.

Deut. 19:15)

A church must protect pastors and elders from those who have malicious intentions, and find out if there is a basis for the accusation.

- Then Paul deals with offenses by pastor-elders.

20. *Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that others may take warning.*

There's a story of a mother who sent a note to the school teacher of her precious little boy Morton: *'If my Morton should ever misbehave in class, punish the child next to him. That will get Morton's attention and will be afraid to misbehave again.'*

Pastors are not exempt from discipline. God's flock should not have to suffer for the misconduct of a shepherd.

- It's a sobering thing when a pastor or elder has been disciplined or removed from office.

The Bible provides clear guidelines for disciplining church members (see Matthew 18:15-18, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-16, 2 Timothy 2:23-26, Romans 16:17-18, 2 John 9-11, Galatians 6:1-3, Titus 3:10, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 2:6-11).

God's word is also clear about disciplining church leaders who persist in sin. Do it in such a way that it is a warning to others—to other church leaders, and to everyone.

Christ's church needs credible models of faithfulness and Christian purity.

- A Church is responsible to protect its pastors, and not tolerate false accusations against them. But if the charges are true, they must not be excused.

- How do you encourage your pastors?

Honor them by paying attention to the word of God and obeying it. Honor them by caring for their needs

- How do you deal with an accusation against a pastor or an elder?

Do you pass it on as a juicy tidbit, or do you ask for witnesses to be sure it's not a false accusation?

- Do you pray for their protection?

Our enemy knows that he can cause tremendous confusion in the flock if he can injure the shepherds.

- Please remember the call to prayer and fasting this month for church unity and for the unity of the Search Committee.