

“Honoring Elders”
1 Timothy 5:17-18
(Preached at Trinity, August 22, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we have seen, the Pastoral Epistles contain a wealth of information concerning practical matters in the life of the church. There are few subjects of greater importance. Jesus told Peter, “Upon this Rock I will build My church.” We shouldn't miss the gravity of the words, “My Church.” The Church belongs to Him. The Church owes its existence to Him. The Church is loved by Him, protected by Him – the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The Church is His beloved Bride and He will soon return for her.
2. Jesus has not left us without direction. **1 Timothy** covers a wide range of points for the instruction of the church. It deals with the issue of false doctrine, the role of women in the church, the qualifications for church offices, the pastor's personal life and public ministry, how to confront sin, the care of widows, how to handle money as well as various theological points.
3. In **Verses 1-2** Paul addresses the proper way to handle cases of sin among the various age and gender groups. All should be treated with respect even during times when sin has to be confronted.
In **Verses 3-16** Paul addresses how widows should be cared for by the church.
4. Now as we continue with **Verse 17**, we return to the subject of pastors within the local church. Paul devotes a large portion of this epistle to the subject of the church's leadership. The church is the body of Christ – the visible form of Christ upon the earth. Our purpose is to reflect and reveal His glory. As the pillar and support of the truth, the church is God's chosen vessel through which saving truth flows to the world. The church's ability to carry out its ministry is humanly dependent upon the quality of its leadership.
 - A. The history of Israel was the history of failed leadership. The apostasy of the leaders led to the apostasy of the people. The kings consistently led Israel ever deeper into sin.
1 Kings 15:33-34 NAU - "In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel at Tirzah, *and reigned* twenty-four years. ³⁴ He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin."
This phrase is repeated 18 times in 1 & 2 Kings.
 - B. In many ways, the history of the church is also a mirror of its leadership. When pastors have declined in their teaching of biblical truth, the church has declined in its understanding of biblical truth resulting in great weakness.
4. The remainder of chapter 5 deals with practical matters concerning pastors.
Verses 17-18 deal with the church's responsibility to their pastor.
Verses 19-25 deal with how to handle accusations against the pastor and instruction dealing with cases when a pastor falls into sin.

- I. First, we see a couple things about the nature of the office.
- A. We see the concept of plurality. The norm in the New Testament is leadership by more than one pastor. **Verse 17** says, "The elders (plural) who rule well . . ."
1. In Paul's letter to the church of Philippi he writes, **Phil. 1:1** - "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (pl) and deacons:" (Phil. 1:1)'
 2. The church at Jerusalem had a plurality of elders. **Acts 15:4 NAU** - "When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church (sing) and the apostles and the elders (pl.)" (Acts 15:4).
 3. Paul told Titus, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders (pl) in every city as I directed you," (Titus 1:5).
 4. James instructed the sick believer to call for the elders (plural) of the church (singular).
 5. In Paul's first missionary journey they "appointed elders (plural) in every church (singular) (Acts 14:23).
- B. We can see the concept of parity and diversity.
1. Elders are equal in office. But among this equality there is also diversity. Not all have equal gifts or maturity.
 2. Because of the diversity among elders there will be a distinction in duties or job descriptions. Some will be more gifted in preaching and teaching.
 3. In **Verse 17** Paul distinguishes those who labor hard at preaching and teaching. These pastors will usually be vocational, giving themselves entirely to laboring in the Word of God. This is in contrast with bi-vocational pastors who will divide their time with secular vocation.
 4. In accordance with the Biblical model of parity and diversity, one elder will usually be recognized as the leader of the elders, not necessary by appointment but by leadership capabilities.
 5. Churches will usually maintain at least one vocational pastor, although there may be more than one.
- C. Paul also stresses two of the functions of the office
1. It is a teaching office. One of the qualifications is that he be an able teacher. God's people need to be given the spiritual nourishment of the Word of God.
Ephesians 4:12-15 NAU - "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,"
 2. It is also a ruling office – the elders are to “rule well”
The pastors are vested with the leading of the church.

II. Now we need to proceed to the church's responsibility to their pastor or pastors which is the subject that will carry us to the end of the chapter

1 Timothy 5:17 NAU - "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."

A. I have to stand before you and describe your duty to give me double honor. It is much easier for a pastor to preach of his responsibility to the church than the church's responsibility to the pastor.

1. I am most blessed to serve a loving and gracious congregation. Not every pastor shares this blessing.

I'm grateful for the many kind words and expressions of gratitude I have received over the years. I've held on to gracious notes and cards.

I'll treasure the two-edged sword I recently received from the congregation – a reminder of your love and of the Word that I preach and teach, a sharp, two-edged sword.

2. The pastor should serve faithfully regardless of the honor he receives. He serves a good and gracious Lord who is the Chief Shepherd of the church. He has promised a reward for faithful service.

1 Peter 5:2-4 NAU - "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

3. Remuneration or recognition should not be the primary motivation for service.

B. Part of having a biblical eldership involves the duty to give proper honor to the elders serving faithfully.

1. Respect for the ministry is a consistent Biblical principle

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 NAU - "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."

Hebrews 13:7 NAU - "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith."

Hebrews 13:17 NAU - "Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

1 Timothy 5:17 NAU - "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor"

2. The dual meaning of "honor"

a. Definition: τιμή - honor, price, precious – The word can refer to respect or it can refer to financial support – both are implied here.

- b. It's the word used for reverence or honor.
1 Timothy 1:17 NAU - " Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be honor* and glory forever and ever."
 - c. It also refers to value ascribed to a person or service.
1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NAU - "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."
- C. Paul is saying that the pastor is worthy of respect.
- 1. This doesn't mean he should wear vestments so that others would stand in reverence of his position.
 - 2. It does mean there should be a certain honor placed upon his leadership of the church and the intrinsic value placed upon the preaching of the Word of God.
- D. Paul is also saying that an elder is worthy of his pay. This fits the context.
- 1 Timothy 5:18 NAU** - "For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."
- 1. If at all possible the preaching pastor should be free from secular labor.
 - 2. Sufficient time should be spent in preparing to preach. This can be a great challenge.
I try to carefully guard my time to provide sufficient time for study.
I upload my notes to help those preparing to preach who may put in full-time labor in their secular job.
 - 3. This also implies that great value should be placed upon the preaching.
Galatians 6:6 NAU - "The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches *him*."
 - 4. It is the pastor's right to receive his wages. Paul at times gave up this right. He did not take pay from the Corinthians but he did from the Philippians.
1 Timothy 5:18 NAU - "For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."
 - 5. Paul puts it in the form of a command – it is a present passive imperative. ἀξιόω – “let them be considered worthy”
- III. Paul gives a qualification for the honor
- A. Paul is not setting forth different classes of elders – ruling and teaching elders
- 1. Paul IS stating that there are differing degrees of proficiency
 - 2. Those who are set apart vocationally to receive of the churches resources are those who have proven themselves able to “rule well.”
 - a. All elders rule. Paul is separating those who rule “well” - καλῶς – well, good, beautiful, excellent, commendable
 - b. Such pastors are worthy of their pay - double honor

- B. "especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."
1. As we saw in Chapters 3-4 the Pastor's primary duty is to be a teacher of the Scriptures
1 Timothy 3:2 NAU - "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach" – the word means "apt at teaching."
1 Timothy 4:11 – "These things command and teach."
1 Timothy 4:13 NAU - "Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching."
2 Timothy 4:2 NAU - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."
John Owen – "The first and principal duty of a pastor is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the Word. This feeding is of the essence of the office of pastor, as unto the exercise of it; so that he who doth not, or can not, or will not feed the flock is no pastor, whatever outward call or work he may have in the church."¹
 2. The worthy pastor must labor hard in the Word.
κοπιᾶω - labor, toil, be wearied – exhausted, to labor with wearisome effort, to labor to the point of exhaustion
 It is the same word we saw in 1 Tim. 4:10
1 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."
1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 NAU - "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."
 3. Paul ties it back to O.T. Law
1 Timothy 5:18 NAU - "For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."
- C. The extent of the honor – "double honor" – literally double pay
1. This means ample compensation
 2. Not necessarily double the average income of the congregation
 But his work should be honored

Conclusion:

The primary emphasis of the passage:

1. "especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."
 Once again, we find the importance of the Word of God. It must be consistently preached and taught in the church.
2. The Pastor must labor diligently in the Word and the congregation must place value upon the preaching.

¹ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen, Vol. XVI*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009)
 Page 127