

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Restoring Biblical Eldership, Part 1**

Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:17-18

Code: 54-40

Well let's open our Bibles this morning to 1 Timothy chapter 5...1 Timothy chapter 5. We embark upon a new section in verses 17 to 25 that I've entitled, "Restoring A Biblical Eldership - Restoring A Biblical Eldership." And again, I wish we could cover the whole thing so you get the full perspective but we can't do that in one session and really do justice to what is here, so we're going to at least begin at the beginning and see how far along we go.

Our Lord Jesus only founded one organization while He was here on earth and that was His church. That is the only organization, organism, institution the Lord Jesus founded and the only one He promised to bless. He said, "I will build My church." It is His church that is the fullness of His plan for this world. The church designed by God and initiated by the Spirit of God, made possible by the work of Christ, is designed to be the channel of the saving gospel to the world. In a sense, the church has replaced Israel. God called out the nation Israel in order to be a peculiar people, a people of His own who would be the channel of saving truth to the rest of the world. As you know, Israel was unfaithful, Israel became apostate, the channel was blocked and God carved out a new channel so the river of salvation could continue to flow to the world and that new channel is the church. We are called by God then not to receive but to channel the truth through us to a waiting world.

The church by design is to have a purity and a power that can penetrate the kingdom of darkness and take men and women captive to the kingdom of light. The church is to be the living body of Christ, the visible form of Christ in the world to reveal His attractive glory and thus draw men to Himself. The church is to be the perfect model and example of godly virtue in the face of an ungodly world in order to draw men out of their sin unto His righteousness.

Peter summing up these things says of the church and to the church, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His own that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We are to be demonstrators of the saving grace of God in Christ.

The church's ability then to be this, the church's ability to establish a pure powerful testimony to radiate Christ's glory, to manifest godly modeling and patterning of virtue is largely dependent on one crucial area, and that is the area of leadership. No church really rises higher than its leadership, as Hosea put it, "Like people, like priest." The character of the people of God is in great measure dependent on the character of those who lead them. Our Lord's plan for assuring that the church

would be what He desired was the same plan He had used in Israel. He called out the nation Israel and He set within that nation certain leaders, kings and priests and prophets, elders among the people. Their task was to demonstrate godliness and virtue and holiness and character and to live out the will of God and to give their lives wholly and zealously to the service of God. They were to be the virtuous, holy examples to direct the rest of the people toward godliness that in and through that godliness they might be the channel to reach the world. But tragically, if you study the history of Israel, you will study the failure of the leaders of Israel. The kings, the story of Israel's kings and Judah's kings is a story of tragic decline, apostasy and defection. The priests degenerated so rapidly that by the time you come to the life of Christ they are a motley crew of politically motivated money-hungry works/righteousness people. There was even a plethora of false prophets winding their way through the history of Israel, to say nothing of evil generations of elders who produced evil generations of children. And the defection of the leadership resulted in the defection of the people and that caused God to turn and cut that new channel, the church, and start the process all over again of calling for godly, holy, virtuous leaders.

Tragically, the church has seen much of the same thing happen in its midst that Israel saw as well. There has been a defection among leaders from the biblical pattern and the biblical standard and the biblical perspective and the biblical role and function of leadership. And I believe the issue facing the church today really most significantly is an issue of leadership. And as the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy here and calls for the restoration of a biblical eldership, I think he speaks to us a message desperately needed by the church today.

The effectiveness of the church in advancing the name of Christ in the glory of God is largely related to its leadership. And that leadership today is desperately in need of a restoration of biblical power and purity. Those who have been placed in the church as under shepherds to serve Christ who are called pastors or overseers or elders have a high and holy and sacred calling to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry. And largely the problems in the church can be traced back to the problems of leadership. After all, leaders are responsible for teaching. They're responsible for preaching. They're responsible for direction. They are responsible for protection. And so there's a premium, as there always has been, on godly leadership.

And may I say to you, that when I talk about this I'm not talking about some kind of hierarchy in the church. The Scripture presents no hierarchy, it presents a shared leadership, a shared leadership with a team concept. We're not talking about one man ruling a church. We're talking about a shared leadership among all men who are qualified and willing. The Bible speaks not of some hierarchy, some pecking order, some corporate structure, some pyramidal design. But it emphasizes a plurality of men who equally share the responsibility of leadership, though their functions in specific may be somewhat different.

As Peter spoke of the elders who are among you, he really helped us to understand the essence of this leadership. It is a leadership from among, from within. There's no one-man head of a church and there is no board of men who are over those who feed and lead the flock. And yet churches today, many of them, have one man who rules the church or a board of men who rule the elder pastors who are called to lead the church. Nowhere in the New Testament is the people of God enjoined to obey him who has the rule over you, but rather them who have the rule over you. Nowhere are pastors told to submit to people but rather to people in Hebrews 13 are told to submit to the elder-pastor leaders over them.

So, we're talking about a very simple plan that God has outlined. A congregation of people from within that congregation there are selected by the Spirit of God and the affirmation of the people a plurality of godly men who in a shared leadership model the virtue and the godliness that the Lord has desired for His church and in so doing teach and preach that truth which can change the lives of people. That shared leadership is the design of God. It does not preclude some men manifesting a stronger gift than others, some a wider influence than others, but they are first among equals and it is not a hierarchical ranking. They are a group of godly men feeding the church, leading the church, setting the example of holy duty, faithfully proclaiming the truth, warning of error and serving with all humility. They set the model for humble service, the model for cooperating love, the model for devotion to one another, the model for commitment to prayer, the model for exposition of the Word, the model for zeal for the lost. And churches today which are desperately in need of a revival of biblical authority, a revival of holy living, a revival of careful exposition, of humble love, of zeal, of self-sacrificing service are desperately in need therefore of those kinds of leaders who can model that for them and live out the reality which they seek so much to fulfill.

It wasn't any different in Timothy's day. He had been left in Ephesus to set in order the things that were wrong in the church at Ephesus, a church where Paul had ministered so wonderfully for three years, a church he himself had founded, a church with great foundations which had drifted away, the leadership of which had become corrupt. And this church at Ephesus where Timothy is when Paul writes was also desperately in need of restoring a biblical pastorate, or a biblical eldership, as the church today is in need of the same. It is imperative that the church of Jesus Christ develop a new generation today of godly pastor/elders and in so doing that it challenge and eliminate other unbiblical forms of church leadership. It is also essential that pastor/elders already serving churches be awakened to the true call of their office, both in character and function. Unbiblical forms of church leadership without elders are bad but they're no worse than a biblical form with ungodly men. And so we must restore not only a biblical pattern, but a biblical reality so that not just the form is right but the men are right as well. And the church which the Lord purchased with His own blood in large measure is dependent on its leadership. The New Testament certainly doesn't consider a church fully developed until it has qualified itself with a fully functioning group of elders.

And so, as Paul writes to Timothy here this is what's on his heart. And because it's so vital today it's as if he were speaking to us. In Ephesus there was obviously a very serious problems among the leaders. There was obviously among those who were the pastors of this church, a group of people teaching error and living ungodly lives and therefore both in word and deed they were saying the very opposite of what God wants His church to know. Back in chapter 1, you'll remember, in verse 3 how Paul reminds Timothy that there are some who were teaching other doctrine, are giving heed to fables, endless genealogies, their concerned with questions rather than answers and questions that have no redeeming virtue. There are some, verse 7 says, who want to teach the law but they don't understand the law. And what they say and affirm is in ignorance. At the end of verse...at the end of chapter 1, rather, and verses 18 to 20, Paul tells about having to put out two men by the name of Hymenaeus and Alexander who, no doubt, were pastor/elders in that church, and who because of their blasphemy had to be turned over to Satan not to do do that. The assumption of chapter 2 is that women had stepped into the role of an elder and usurped that teaching position and were in need of being reminded that they were to learn in silence and not to be permitted to teach. Chapter 3 also has a polemic flavor to it in the sense that it is not just a list of qualifications for elders giving in a vacuum, but it is a list of qualifications for elders given again a background of unqualified men who needed to be tested by whether they fit this or not. Chapter 4 further indicates that there were some lie speakers in that congregation mentioned in verse 2 who were teaching doctrines of demons, basically energized by seducing spirits. And then from verse 6 to 16 comes a definition of proper godly ministry given by Paul to Timothy as to how he is to conduct himself, again in contrast, no doubt, to the ministry of some in that congregation.

Furthermore in chapter 6, starting in verse 3, the mention of people who teach other than truth who are proud, verse 4, who only want to dote about questions and dispute with words and cause envy and strife and so forth and so on, who may be in it for the money, those kinds of people had found their way into the leadership of this church, no doubt. And so all through this epistle you get the feeling that the leadership of the church in Ephesus has gone bad. And if there is good leadership there, it is to be properly treated and esteemed, as we shall see here. Where there is bad leadership, it is to be replaced. A major portion then of Timothy's work and no doubt the thing that made it so very very difficult and brought about the great distress of soul which is shown in the second epistle to Timothy was trying to set the church right at the top, at the level of leadership...not an easy task...not an easy task. The problem of removing unqualified leaders and restoring qualified leaders needed all the enablement that God could possibly give to this man Timothy.

Now for this section, Paul wants to assist Timothy and the church at Ephesus in understanding how to restore a biblical eldership. He has already given us the qualifications for an elder in chapter 3. He has already defined for us the nature of ministry in chapter 4 as he instructed Timothy. Now he speaks to Timothy as if it were that he was speaking through Timothy to the church and telling them how to restore the biblical eldership in general. Not talking about the man so much but how the church treats the man, the church needs to know this.

He's going to discuss four things...honoring elders, protecting elders, rebuking elders, and selecting elders. And these four things when properly understood and properly implemented will restore to the church a biblical eldership, a very very vital vital portion of Scripture. I wish we could take it, as I said, in the whole, but we must take it as it comes in part and fully understand it because of its tremendous implications.

Number one, the first thing on Paul's mind in verses 17 and 18 is the matter of honoring elders...the matter of honoring elders. And I want to say at this juncture, please, a bit of a disclaimer. I feel a little bit awkward up here telling you that you need to honor elders of which I am one. Obviously I could be accused of a conflict of interests and I could also be accused of having a self-serving motive and I could frankly be accused of trying to get myself a raise because I am going to talk about paying the preacher in a little while. So I want to put in an immediate disclaimer on any of those things. I'm trying to teach you the Word of God. I am not seeking more of anything. I don't want to be elevated in my position. I don't want anybody to buy me a robe or a backward collar or a special hat. I don't want anybody to give me a raise, if they do I'll turn it down. I'm not seeking any of that except to teach the Word of God for all of our instruction and edification that we might better be able to honor those godly pastor/elders that the Lord has put in our life. That is my whole purpose and my heart rests at ease before the Lord because He and I have gone over the matter of my motives several times this morning and if you'll accept that I have worked it out with Him, then you can handle me. All right?

First of all, then, honoring elders. Now I want you to know what he says in verse 17, it's very simple. "Let the elders that rule excellently be considered worthy of double honor, specially the ones who work hard in preaching and teaching." That's a rather literal translation. The key word here is the word "honor." You might just sort of mark that in your mind, or in your text. That's what he's really saying. This verse calls for honor to be given to pastor/elders in the church. Those who serve the church, leading the church, as it were, fathering the church by way of example and leadership, feeding and teaching in the church are to be given honor.

This is not a new concept in the Scripture. It has appeared in other places. A couple of books earlier in the New Testament Canon we read in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you." That would be your pastors, your elders. "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Those who are over you in the Lord who minister among you, you should know them, you should love them, you should esteem them for the work which they render. In Hebrews chapter 13 verse 7 it says, "Those who have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the Word of God, you follow their faith." And then in verse 17 it says, "Obey them, submit yourselves to them for they watch for your souls as they that must give account that they may do it with joy and not with grief for that's unprofitable for you." Love them, esteem them, know them, remember their lives, follow their pattern, obey them, submit to

them and do it all with joy so that they may have joy. If they don't, then their ministry will be unprofitable for you.

So the New Testament has enjoined us on several occasions to give proper honor and proper respect to those that are over us in the Lord. And there are other passages with which we will intersect in our discussion this morning, also.

Now I want to just remind you that the term "elder" is a general term referring to those in leadership in the church. They can be called shepherd, pastor, same word. They can be called overseer, as in chapter 3 verse 1, they are referred to, or elder. The term pastor refers primarily to the shepherding function; the term overseer to the authority and the leadership responsibility; and the term elder has to do with their role in maturity as a father or as the senior member of the congregation, senior members I should say since there are many. There's no such thing, by the way, as a senior pastor. There's no such thing as a senior pastor and his staff. There is simply a plurality of godly elders and in that shared leadership there may be varying responsibilities but there's no hierarchy or pecking order taught in the New Testament. So the pastor, overseer, elder as we know is the same person, one in the same. One emphasizes the feeding responsibility, one emphasizes the leading responsibility, one emphasizes the maturity of his position in leadership.

Now, we assume that these elders who are to receive elders are qualified. We don't have to go through that. We're basing that on chapter 3. If an elder is tested against the principles of chapter 3 and is qualified and therefore continues to be an elder, he is to be honored. He is a man, obviously, based upon his qualifications who is blameless, who is a one-woman man, who is temperate, who has his priorities in order, who is good in his behavior, who is committed to the love of strangers, who is skilled in teaching, not given to wine, not a violent man, he's patient, he's not a striker or fighter, he's not covetous, he rules well his own house, has his children in subjection with seriousness, he's not a novice. He has a good reputation among outsiders. It's that kind of man who qualifying to be an elder is worthy of honor. So we're assuming then elder here, or elders, as it's always in the plural except when Peter refers to himself as an elder and when John twice refers to himself as an elder, every other time it's a plurality because the assumption is the church will be led by a plurality of godly elders.

So we see then here that when it says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor," it means elders who are qualified. If a man is qualified to be an elder, he is qualified then to receive honor. We could say then generally that underlying this verse is the idea that elders are worthy of honor, okay? Elders are worthy of honor.

Now what do we mean by honor? Well the word is time, basically it means respect or regard. It's so used in chapter 6 verse 1, "But as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor." That doesn't mean a servant is supposed to pay his master, it means he's

supposed to give him respect. So the word time can relate to respect or regard. But also it can relate to remuneration, that is money. Back in chapter 5 we used it that way in verse 3 as Paul had that in mind, "Honor widows that are really widows." And what we saw there inherent in the word honor is the idea of financial support. It includes, along with respect and high regard, the idea of remuneration, salary, whatever. In fact, in our English language we have a word that tells us that, it's the word honorarium. Honorarium is a form of the word honor which relates to giving someone money. When I go out and speak sometimes people will give me an honorarium. When I fill out my Income Tax every year I put down a category called "honoraria," which has to do with people who showed me a certain amount of regard in a financial way. And so the word meaning that originally has come down in the English form to mean that even today in some regard.

So when we read about honoring these elders, we are talking not only about respect, but also talking about remuneration. In fact, the word time is translated in several places in the New Testament by the word price. So it is not a word disassociated from money. You will find it so translated, for example, in Matthew 27:6 and 9, Acts 4:34, 1 Corinthians 6:20. So what Paul is saying is give honor but let that honor have within it remuneration, if need be.

By the way, honor in the Old Testament, I just thought of that, also contains that same idea. For example, in Proverbs 3:9 it says, "Honor the Lord with your substance." What does that mean? That means honor the Lord with your respect and your regard as demonstrated by giving Him your money. And then it further says, "With the firstfruits of all your increase." So there honor carries the idea of giving money to God in an offering. Also in verse 31 of Proverbs 14 it says, "The one who honors the poor by having mercy on him," it refers to one honoring the poor through mercy that has the idea of giving them something to supply their needs.

So, Paul here is saying then that you are to make sure that one who is over you in the Lord, who feeds you and leads you, is honored. An elder is to receive honor, that is respect and remuneration as fitting and necessary. That forms a true estimate of his worth in a tangible way.

You say, "If Paul meant that why didn't he just say money?" Well, because money is such a crass expression he would rather deal with the motive behind the money than just deal with the money. How much nicer is it to say, "Here's your money, fella?" You wouldn't appreciate that. If someone could say to you, "We want to honor you with this gift." There's a big difference in that expression. And Paul was want to do that almost on every occasion. In fact, you're hard pressed to ever find Paul actually talk about money.

Let me give you just a little insight into that. In writing to the Romans and the Corinthians, he referred to money on one occasion as service. In writing to the Corinthians, the Galatians and the Philippians, he referred to money as fellowship. He referred to it again to the Corinthians as grace. In 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 he called it liberality. In 2 Corinthians 8:20 he called it bounty. In 2

Corinthians 9:5 he called it blessing. In 2 Corinthians 9:8 he called it a good work. In Galatians 6:6 he called money good things. In Philippians 4 he called it a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice. In 2 Corinthians 9:10 he called it a seed, in the same verse he called it a harvest of your righteousness. In Philippians 4:17 he called it a gift, and here he calls it honor.

In other words, rather than dealing with the crass nature of the money itself, he wants the money to convey a heart attitude, a motive, a sense of love and intimacy and spiritual significance. So he puts it in terms other than just the crassness of the terminology of money itself.

So what he is saying here is to honor. And he's really dealing with the motive which will result in remuneration. So the bottom line here is that an elder is to be cared for, he is to be honored in terms of respect and he is to be honored in terms of remuneration. Every elder is to be so honored, every elder is to be so respected. That's implied in this verse. Now some elders may have greater needs than others, those needs are to be met. Some pastors may earn their own living. There are pastors who do that. There are pastor/elders in this church who choose by God's direction to subsidize themselves, they work outside. They do not need to be paid by the church but they are to be honored by the church. If they are called by God to give their whole life to the service of Christ, then they are to be remunerated as well. A man may make a choice in that regard.

Such a choice, I believe, is expressed in several places in the New Testament. But look back to 1 Corinthians chapter 9 for just a moment, to what is a very helpful insight here. The church has the responsibility to honor all who are elders. Somebody might say, "Well, does that mean we have to pay all the elders at Grace? Should all the elders who are pastoring our church quit their jobs and be paid by the church?" Not necessarily. The question of subsidy has nothing to do with whether you're a pastor or an elder. There are many pastors of small churches around this country and around the world who are subsidized by their own employment and they carry on the ministry beyond that. There are some who are subsidized through their ministry. That's not the issue.

Let me show you. Chapter 9 of 1 Corinthians, Paul says, "Am I not an Apostle?" He has some need to establish the right to support here and that's what he's attempting to do. "Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord and are not you my work in the Lord? And if I be not an Apostle to others, yea doubtless I am to you for the seal of my apostleship are you in the Lord." In other words, is there any doubt in your mind that I'm an Apostle? My message, my usefulness, my having seen the risen Christ...you know because of those things and the seal of my apostleship the fact that you were converted to Christ that I am an Apostle. "My answer to them that do examine me in this is, Have we no right to eat and drink?" In other words, if I'm an Apostle, don't I have a right to food and drink? "Don't I have a right to lead about a Christian sister as a wife, as well as the other Apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas or Peter?" Don't I have a right to eat? Don't I have a right to be married? Don't I have a right to have a family? "Or I only and Barnabas, have we no right to forebear working? Don't we have a right to give ourselves to ministry



and be supported by that ministry and not have to work?"

"Don't I have a right to stop making tents, or stop doing leather work?" As was his trade. After all, verse 7, he says, "Who goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and eats not its fruit? Who feeds a flock and eats not the milk of the flock?" I mean, there are some things that have in them built in remuneration. You don't go to the war and try to hold a job on the side. You don't raise a crop and not eat the results. You don't have a herd and not enjoy the milk. "Say I these things as a man," these are just human things, "but doesn't the law of God say the same? Doesn't it say in the law of God, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain? Does God take care for oxen?" If God says in Deuteronomy 25 verse 4 you're supposed to let the ox that treads the grain eat, don't you think He cares about the one who provides your spiritual food as the ox provides your physical food? And isn't a man more valuable than an ox? And isn't a preacher more valuable than anyone?

If we have sown, he says in verse 11, verse 10 rather, or saith he it all together for our sakes, for our sakes, no doubt, that it is written that he that plows should plow in hope, and he that threshes in hope should be a partaker of his hope. You work and in your work is built in the hope of your remuneration. "If we have sown to you spiritual things, is it such a big deal if we reap your carnal things?" In other words, if we give you the things of God, is it wrong for us to have back the things of this world so that we might live? "If others be partakers of this right over you, are not we rather who preach to you the Word of God (implied)? Nevertheless we have not used this right." How about that. Twelve verses to have established the right to be paid and then he says, "But we don't want it." He says we have a right to it and I want to lay that down, but I choose not to take it so we don't hinder the gospel of Christ. There was some exigencies in Corinth, there were some reasons why he didn't want to be chargeable to them. He felt it would be better for the ministry so he said we have a right to it, and he establishes the right of every preacher and teacher in the future, every pastor and elder, every apostle and prophet in the future to be supported. But here he defers from that because, he says, we don't want to hinder, and there were some reasons why in his mind that would be a hindrance so he cared for his own living. And as he says in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, "He robbed other churches." In other words, he took money from other churches to fund himself to minister to the Corinthians because he didn't want to be chargeable to them. If you know anything about their church, you might understand that. They were a tough bunch to work with and he didn't need anything that might cause more criticism of his ministry. He was being very harsh with them, as it was, he didn't want them accusing him of a money motive.

But verse 13 he picks up the same thought, "Do you not know that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? They who wait on the altar are partakers with the altar? Priests function in their priesthood and are supported by that function itself. Even so....and here's the climax...has the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." That does not mean, as you hear so often, if you preach it you ought to live it, that means if you preach it you

ought to be supported in your preaching of it. You ought to be able to earn your living in your preaching.

So, here Paul affirms the idea that those who minister are to be supported in that ministry. However, he says, if you choose, as I choose-implied, that you can defer from that support for whatever reason you might have. For example, in writing to 1 Thessalonians, writing to the Thessalonians in the first letter he says, verse 9 of chapter 2, "You remember, brethren, our labor and travail, laboring night and day because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." We didn't want to be chargeable so we worked night and day. He had to work his ministry all day, and he had to earn his living all night, but he did that because he chose to do it to make the gospel more palatable to them.

So we can safely say then that while the text of 1 Timothy says that the one who is an elder is to be honored, and that implies both respect and remuneration, there may be those circumstances when by God's design and the prompting of the Spirit and the will of God there is a pastor/elder who chooses to earn his own living and that by God's design certainly has a place in the plan. Should the time ever come when he feels that he would desire to pour himself whole-heartedly, totally and consume his life in the ministry, the church then should take over that remuneration. But as long as he feels it is the direction of God for him to be in employment where he is, the church has no obligation. The point here is we are to honor and give respect and remuneration where remuneration is due and where it is necessitated.

Now let's go back to 1 Timothy chapter 5 and see if we can't follow a little bit further through this thought. And I've just laid really the sort of the implicit underlying truth that elders are to be honored. When a man is an elder, just because he's an elder or a pastor, same thing, he is due respect and whatever remuneration is fitting to supply his needs and expedite his level of service just because he is a pastor/elder. Now that is the underlying point, now mark this, but that is not Paul's point here. That just sort of lies beneath the surface. What Paul is doing here is contrasting, or really comparing that with this, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, specially the ones who work hard in preaching and teaching." The underlying assumption is that all pastors are to be honored, but Paul's talking about the kind that are worthy of double honor, by contrast to the general category of pastors who are to be honored on a single honor level.

Notice the little phrase "double honor," what does that mean? Well, it basically means generous ample pay, generous ample respect. The intent here is to show a difference between general category of pastors and a unique category of pastors who rule with great excellence and who work very hard in the preaching and the teaching. They are worthy of double honor. Double honor assumes as its comparative honor, so we say honor for elders, double honor for excellent hard-working elders. That's the idea. The Spirit of God knows that among those who serve the church there will be a great group of faithful men who will serve the Lord with blessing, but there will also be

a group of men who will serve the Lord with a greater effort and a greater commitment and a greater excellence and they are worthy of a greater acknowledgement, of honor from the congregations they serve. It's not a mathematical equation here to figure out what the normal elder gets and double it, it's the idea of ample generous support, remuneration and respect. All elders are worthy of it, some are worthy of more.

Now who are these who are worthy of double honor? Look back at verse 17. First of all, the elders that rule well...the elders that rule well. Now the word "ruling" means oversight, taking charge, giving leadership, having responsibility. Proistemi, the verb, means to stand first. They're first in order in terms of leadership. It is a word used to speak of the father and the husband in the family, he is the leader. He is the one who stands first. He is the protector, the provider. So the elder is the one who leads, who stands first, giving the task of leading the church. It's a tremendous responsibility, beloved, by the way, for all the privilege that is there you're really overwhelmed by the accountability. As Hebrews 13:17 says, "We have to give an account to God for what we've done."

But the emphasis is not on the verb ruling, the emphasis is on the adverb - well. And that adverb means with excellence. The elder, the pastor who leads with excellence. Now what would that be? How would we define excellence? I suppose we could go back to chapter 4 and we had in chapter 4 from verses 6 to 16 at least a pretty good insight into what excellence would be in leadership as Paul instructed Timothy. He said, verse 6, "If you put the brothers in remembrance of these things, you'll be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, refusing profane and old women's tales, exercising yourself to godliness." And he talks about down in verse 11 teaching and commanding, in verse 12 living out an example, verse 13 giving your attendance to explaining the Word of God, verse 14 using your gift, verse 15 concentrating on all these things and into verse 16 summing it up, taking heed to yourself, your personal life, to your teaching, continuing in them and so forth. If we were to go back through all of that, which we did over several weeks, we would find the excellence of ministry is there. It is bound up in quality leadership. It is bound up in godliness in the life. It is bound up in teaching and explanation of Scripture and exhortation, setting a model and example and pattern that others can follow.

When a man excels in his ruling, in his leading, he is to be given double honor. Now the point here, keep it in mind, is not to make a distinction between two kinds of elders, one kind who rule and one kind who teach and preach, there's no such distinction made in Scripture. It is a contrast between elders worthy of honor and some elders worthy of double honor because of the excellency of their ministry. All serve, all lead, all teach and preach to one degree or another. Some may preach more than teach, some may teach more than preach, some may lead more than preach or teach, but they all do all of those to some degree. The contrast is not between ruling and teaching elders, there's no such dichotomy, the contrast is between the general group of men and those who are a cut above because of the excellence of their ministry. I mean, double honor assumes honor. It's not a contrast between all good elders and bad elders. The New Testament knows nothing of bad elders. As soon

as you're a bad elder you're not an elder. As soon as you've sinned, you're disqualified. So he's not comparing holy elders and sinning elders because if holy elders were worthy double honor, then sinning elders would be worth honor. But since sinning elders are worthy nothing, you can't be making comparison between sinning elders and excellent elders because if sinning elders are worthy nothing and good elders get double that, they get double nothing which is nothing. I mean, every way you look at it, and I'm pushing the point, the contrast is not between good and bad, it's not between ruling and teaching, it's between those elders who are faithful, worthy of honor, and those who are excellent, surpassing the others in their ministry. He is comparing the respect and remuneration due to all elders with those due to unusually committed and diligent pastor/elders.

And the verb "let be considered worthy," which is the Greek text, reflects on a mental estimate. You evaluate them and let them be worthy of double honor. Now what he's saying here is this isn't a gift, you're not saying we want to give this as a gift, we want to give you this as a reward, we want to give you this as an act of grace. The idea is they deserve it. Consider that if they do an excellent job, they are worthy of that. It's not something you're giving out of grace as a gift, it is something they have really earned, they are worthy of that because of the excellence of their leadership.

Now please understand me. Again, this sounds so self-serving, even in my own mind. And I don't want you to get the wrong idea. You people pay me too much already, please know that. And I have refused to take raises many many times and I always have a little trouble with the elders. Recently they said they insisted and I told them I didn't want a raise. And so they said, "Why?" And I said, "Because I have more than I need." And they said...I said, "If you give me more than I just have more of more than I need to deal with." And they said, "Well, we want to give you more because we want to see what you do with what you don't need." So, I said that's fair enough. So the same thing happened again this year. And they said no, we insist and they watch me. But it's been a wonderful thing. I guess in a real sense you have to expect that if they trust you they would just as soon trust you with God's money as anyone else, right? If you're the kind of a person that walks with God they would assume that in your life you would be a steward of what God provides. And I pray, God, that that's true. I face my own unfaithfulness day in and day out because money is such a captivating reality, but the task before me is to be faithful in my ministry. And in this particular point in my life at this church to say to you, "Please, you have demonstrated honor above honor, you're into the triple category already, that's enough." I'm not asking for anything. I don't think this is a license for indulgence. I don't think this means you're supposed to set your pastor apart by giving him the biggest house in town and buying him a Rolls Royce and sending him all around the world on vacations or whatever. I don't think that's the idea. The idea is that he is to be provided for amply so that you show generosity, so that you show love and so that you free him up from being constrained in the ministry to have to earn his bread and therefore take himself away from needful things to do things less needful to support himself.

Then he adds a further thought here, just capping it off, "Especially...malista...it means chiefly or particularly when you're considering who is to get double honor, chiefly the ones who work hard in preaching and teaching." Now the assumption here is that there will be some elders who will not work as hard in preaching and teaching. That's a fair assumption from the text. In other words, their role may be less prominent in teaching. They may be more involved in the leading role, although they all teach and we insist, of course, that all elders and pastors at Grace Church be involved in teaching and preaching God's Word, and they are. Many of us do it more than others. For me it is a totally consuming way of life. And for those who teach the most and work the hardest at it, there is to be that double honor.

What does it mean working hard? Well it's that very familiar and almost ubiquitous word in the vocabulary of Paul, that word kopia which means to work to the point of fatigue, to grow weary in work, to work to the point of exhaustion. And what he is saying is, "Look, when there is a godly elder who fits the qualifications and he models a ministry according to the divine standard and he does his ministry with excellence and he works to the point of fatigue and weariness in teaching and preaching the Word of God, that is the man to be identified as worthy of the double honor, the person who works so hard in excellent service to give...as to give a maximum self-sacrificial effort." It's not stressing the amount of work, it's not stressing even the content of work, it's stressing the effort...the effort. A man's reward is designed by God to be in proportion to the excellence of his work and the effort in the toil that he makes. And that's a wonderful parallel. There are a lot of people who can do things that are surpassing and have external excellence and they can do it without much effort. Have you noticed that? There are some people who slave and slug and hack away to get the job done well. There are others who have those innate gifts, those natural gifts and those compelling gifts of the Spirit of God who enable them sometimes to do things with excellence without much effort. But the combination here is so wonderful. On the other hand, there are those people who slug and slave away and not much of what they do would be considered excellent. But here is that wonderful combination of the church recognizing that excellence and that diligence that when they come together mark out a man who is worthy of double honor.

And I have to confess to you that in my own heart the standard is so high that I don't believe that even those of us who have received from you honor upon honor are at the level of honor that Paul is talking about here. This has to be a surpassing kind of quality and character to that which we know, which I know of my own heart.

But when we find people like this, we must honor them. If we are to restore, beloved, if we are to restore to the church a biblical eldership, we must find these kind of faithful diligent excellent godly men and grant them the honor, the remuneration, the respect that is due to that kind of effort. And then we begin to restore to that place that kind of man that God would have there.

On the other hand, and I don't want to belabor the point, do you realize how churches can literally destroy good godly diligent faithful men? It's a sad sad tale. We talk so often about the defection of pastors but we need also to talk about the defection of churches from loving esteeming obeying submitting to following honoring and remunerating their pastors. It's sad some times to see young men coming out of seminaries starry-eyed and ready to go out and conquer the world for Christ and literally be devoured by people who dishonor, discredit, speak evil of them because they don't do precisely what they want done in the way they want it done or because they go against the grain of some would-be diatrophies(??) who has risen to prominence in a self- appointed position in some church. There's a balance here. And the church if it's going to restore a biblical eldership has to give back to that position its honor. You can't expect a pastor who comes in as a whipping boy for a board of laymen who don't have the spiritual knowledge, insight or commitment that he does to function in a way that's going to bring the respect that that kind of office demands from the statement from the Word of God.

So, restoring a biblical eldership, part of that is giving honor to whom honor is due. All elders then teach and preach, all elders lead. But some elders are worthy of double honor. All elders are worthy of honor. Elders are worthy of honor in two ways, respect and remuneration. Hard-working and excellent elders are worthy of the double honor, especially if they major in the teaching and preaching which is the particularly worthy thing. Preaching, by the way, is logo, just means speech, it includes exhortation, admonition, the prophetic kind of proclamation. It has mostly to do with the one who proclaims to the heart and calls for commitment, calls for a response to God. Teaching, didaskalia has to do not with the content again but with the act of teaching. And it speaks mostly to the mind and whereas the preaching part calls for a response from God, the teaching part bulwarks one against heresy. Both are crucial, both are essential. And where you have men whose hearts are totally given to these things and their ministry is excellent, they are to receive honor.

I wish I could give this message to a lot of congregations who don't seem to understand that. And then they wonder why they have an unhappy church because they have an unhappy pastor whose doing what he does with grief and not with joy because they are an unsubmitive people. We can see then the high point of Christian ministry from the viewpoint of the elder or the pastor is to exhaust oneself in diligent careful constant preparation and preaching/teaching of the Word of God and in excellent leadership by life and example.

A young man said to Dr. Barnhouse, the great Bible teacher of the past generation, one time sitting by him on an airplane, he said, "I'd give the world if I could teach the Bible like you do." And Barnhouse said, "Good, because that's exactly what it will cost you." And he's right. Oswald Saunders said in his book, Spiritual Leadership, "Willingness to renounce personal preferences to sacrifice legitimate and natural desires for the sake of His Kingdom will characterize those marked out by God for positions of influence in His work," end quote.

In other words, it isn't the talent, it's the issue that's the issue, it is the effort so much of the time. I wish we could encourage young men that the thing that makes the difference between an elder worthy of honor and an elder ruling well, laboring hard is effort. Mediocrity comes from willingness...unwillingness to pay the price of effort. Excellent pastor/elders put in their hours of study and prayer and preparation in strenuous effort.

Now all of this is supported, Paul feels and articulates, by Scripture in verse 18. We close with this simple verse. He says, "For...we could even substitute...after all, the Scripture says," that's a very common Pauline formula, a way of introducing a scriptural reference, "thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain," and he quotes again that Deuteronomy 25:4 verse that he quoted also in 1 Corinthians 9 as I read earlier. The picture here is very vivid. The Deuteronomic law said that if you're going to have an ox grinding out grain and that ox is providing food for you, then let the ox eat, don't muzzle his mouth while he's doing that, let him eat as he goes. The picture is that of a threshing floor. And I don't know if you know how they handled a threshing floor but they would bring in the bundles of grain and they would untie the bundles and throw them all out on the threshing floor and then they would put some oxen out there, very often the oxen might even be pulling a sled and it would be a large flat area, often the top of a rock and as the oxen were driven over that they would crush under their feet and under that sled the grain and they would crush the grain and the kernel, of course, would be released and they liked to have these threshing floors on a flat rock, high on a hill because the breeze and the wind that would blow would blow the chaff away and when the oxen was done he would have done the job of separating the kernels from the rest and the chaff would have been all blown away ideally. Very often those sleds would have sharp stones or blunt stones rather at the bottom which would help to break up the grain. And what the law said was if an ox is going to provide your food, then you're going to have to provide the ox's food.

And this is not a prophecy. This isn't even the same principle, this is just an analogy. He's just saying it's analogous to God's desire that an ox who provides your physical food be fed in his work. If God cares about an ox and if God wants an ox who gives you physical food to be fed, isn't it pretty apparent that He would want a man who gave you spiritual food to be fed?

And then he also quotes from another Scripture, "The laborer is worthy of his misthos, his wages." It's not a reward, it's not a gift, it's his wages. And he moves from an ox to a man. He moves up one level from an animal to a servant. And he says, "The Scripture also says, the laborer is worthy of his misthos." You know what Scripture that is? Most interesting...Luke 10:7. Here is Paul calling Luke Scripture. Here is Paul, a New Testament writer affirming that another New Testament writer and a dear friend, Luke, is Scripture. This is the testimony to New Testament Scripture. By the way, the only times that Paul quotes from the gospels, one is here and one is 1 Corinthians 11:24 and 25, both times he quotes from Luke. This is verbatim Luke 10:7. And he probably quoted from Luke because Luke was his dear friend. Luke was written probably in the year 60 A.D. when Paul was in his Roman

imprisonment. It is about 63 A.D. as he writes here so Luke's gospel has been around for three years. The early church recognized the canonicity and authenticity and authority of New Testament Scripture even before the writers had died. And so here is Paul affirming Luke's gospel as Scripture. He would have had several years to be exposed to it and read it. And he is saying there is something said there that is analogous to the same truth and that is a man who works ought to be paid. An animal who works ought to be paid. A man who works ought to be paid. If you pay your animal who helps you eat, if you pay your servant who helps you eat, then you ought to pay your teacher, your pastor, your elder.

In Galatians 6:6 Paul put it this way, "Let him that is taught in the Word share with him that teaches in all good things." And I believe clearly that is a reference to supporting the one who teaches you. To refuse generous support to a hard-working and excellent pastor who feeds you is as unjust and heartless and selfish as muzzling an animal working to give you food or a servant endeavoring to provide you service.

And so, we are clearly indicated here as responsible people in the matter of honoring elders. And please know this does not encompass fancy robes and hierarchical seats and special clothes and chief seating places and credentials and all of the fancy titles. That isn't the idea. It's love, it's honor, it's obedience, submission, all those good things. What a high calling. I wish we had time to go the second point of protecting elders because that's so vital, but we'll save that until next time. Let's bow together.

Father, I want to thank You this morning for the reminder this text has been to me of the good and generous way in which this church and these wonderful people have honored me and other elders here. Their faithfulness to provide respect and even remuneration to us and how they have exhibited confidence in us, how they have supported us with their love and their prayers...I thank You, Lord, that I don't really know by personal experience the pain and the difficulty of men in places where this is not so. But I pray for them. I pray for the young men who are here training for ministry, who will go out, that You will find for them, Lord, a place where they are loved and esteemed and honored. I pray for the people here who go out and by Your providence are in different churches in different places in years ahead, that they might be the source of high regard and honor, encouragement and joy to their shepherds, their elders. And I pray, Lord, that You'll help to restore in Your church a biblical pastorate, a biblical eldership that the perception of both leaders and people would be as it is in the Word revealed. Help us all to be faithful. The responsibility is great, we all fail, we are all frail, we are all human. Our imperfections are glaring. And yet may we see beyond those things to love with the love of Christ, people for leaders and leaders for people to give our hearts and our souls to one another that in coming together we may blend the grace of Christ and the power of Christ in our living, that we may be that channel of saving truth to reach our lost world. That's our objective. Help us to meet that by being a church which functions the way that You've designed. In the name of our Savior we pray. Amen.



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