



Faith Baptist Church of Cabot, Arkansas
Pastor's Mid-Week Bible Study
January 20, 2010

Lesson Sixteen – Honoring Elders
1 Timothy 5:17-20

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer *is* worthy of his wages." Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

Introduction

"The elders" refers to those with the spiritual oversight in the church at Ephesus. Paul has given their qualifications (3:1-7) and now addresses honor for those doing a good job and rebuke for those who are sinning. It was Timothy's responsibility to work with these elders in correcting errors in the church and setting the church on a Biblical course for the future.

Exegesis

- ❖ Considered Worthy
 - The elders who rule well

"Rule" speaks of superintending, exercising oversight in regard to the church. The elders are set over the church with the purpose to care for the church. The Biblical image is not that of the lord of a manor, but a shepherd and his sheep. (1 Peter 5:1-4) As such, the elders were far more than the church's staff, they were (and are) the Good Shepherd's under-shepherds charged with the oversight of His flock and accountable to Him.

- The elders who labor in word and doctrine

Apparently there were different responsibilities among the elders: daily spiritual care, administration, corporate worship, organization of teaching ministries, etc. The Apostle notes especially those who labor (work to exhaustion) in word and doctrine (the substance of teaching).

- Counted worthy of double honor

Those who rule well (rightly and excellently) are to be considered worthy of double honor. "Honor" speaks of the value by which a price is fixed or the price itself. One affixes a high price to that which he highly values. So the ministry of the well ruling elder is to be highly valued and out of that valuing the minister, himself, is to receive proper provision. This is especially true of the one laboring hard at word and doctrine because of the value of the word and doctrine. Paul references Deuteronomy 25:4 and Leviticus 19:13.

❖ Cautious Accusation

Criticism is the common lot of leaders. This can be especially true of genuine spiritual leaders who chart a Biblical course for their ministry and church. Paul encourages Timothy not to receive an accusation without two or three witnesses. This Old Testament command (Deuteronomy 19:15) would protect elders from the adversary's frivolous attempts to destroy their ministries.

❖ Calling Sinning Elders to Repentance

Paul's caution in no way was to be misconstrued as leniency for those elders guilty of sin. Once the sin was established, the erring elder was not only to be confronted privately, but also rebuked publicly. The result was to instill fear in everyone else. To sweep a leader's sin under the rug is to leave the impression that sin does not really matter and has no real consequences when anything but that is true.

Application

1. Elders do possess oversight of the church and are expected to exercise it for the church's benefit and the glory of Christ according to the Holy Scripture. (1 Peter 5:2-4)
2. A church should value and follow those elders who exercise their oversight well, that is Biblically and faithfully. (Hebrews 13:17)
3. People should be careful in accusing or believing unfounded accusations regarding an elder.
4. An elder who is found guilty of sin must be dealt with privately and publicly. He who assumes such serious and public responsibility must be held to a serious and public accountability.

Pray for Us (Hebrews 13:18)

This lesson was prepared by Brent D. Summerhill, Pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Cabot, Arkansas. Permission is granted to reproduce this lesson, but please do not alter the content.
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