

6.21.20 ~ **1Thessalonians 5:12-13**, Shepherding Responsibly

Read 1Thessalonians 5:11-13... In **verse 11** Paul commends the believers in Thessalonica for encouraging one another and for building one another up.

Now in **verse 12**, Paul makes a request of the believers, concerning how they are to think about those who have the responsibility to lead them:

- To appreciate their diligent labor among them.
- To hold them in high regard, because of their work.

Paul asks the believers (**1Thessalonians 5:12**) to show appreciation for those who have been given the responsibility to care for, teach, and look out for them. The Greek word *oída*, used here, is translated *appreciate* [meaning to personally know and respectfully value] the work these leaders are doing in the church.

Paul also asks (**1Thessalonians 5:13**) that the believers esteem these men highly, i.e., that they think about these leaders in high regard, not because of some innate goodness, but because "of their work," which Paul stated in **verse 12** as being "in the Lord."

It was the Apostles of Christ who brought the Word of God to both Jews and Gentiles, beginning with the Day of Pentecost, when all the believers were gathered together in Jerusalem, and the first local congregation was formed (see **Acts 2:42-47**).

The Apostles were called and commissioned by Christ Himself to act on behalf of God and to proclaim the very Word of God with power (see **1Thessalonians 1:5**).

As the church grew and local assemblies were formed, it was the Apostles (as agents of God) who set apart leaders to care for, oversee, and build up those who belonged to God and were part of the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-12, "And He gave some *as* apostles... and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

There are some special terms used in the New Testament to identify and characterize those men who would be ordained by God to watch over and care for the family of God, the Church, the Body of Christ: **Elder** [presbuteros, *pres-boo'-ter-os*] is spiritually mature, an example to others: Who the man is.

Overseer [episkopos, *e-pe'-skop-os*] has oversight of and manages the church: What the man does..

Shepherd/Pastor [poimen, *poy-mane'*] caring for the sheep, i.e., feeding/teaching: How the man serves.

The Pastor is not a different person from the overseer or elder. These are different ways to identify the same man, e.g., two passages use all three terms.

Acts 20:17, 28 Acts 20:17, [Paul] “sent to Ephesus for the **elders** of the church”. **28** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

1Peter 5:1-3, “Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **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; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

This man [pastor, elder, overseer] is called to watch over the flock of God and is a steward and caretaker of what belongs to God.

These men [pastor-elder-overseers] are to set an example by their own lives. This is why very specific qualifications are given in **1Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9**, for men who will serve in this way; and there is special mention made in **1Timothy 5:17**, concerning their ability to teach, “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”

There are some very distinct responsibilities laid out in Scripture for Pastor-Elder-Overseer:

Preach & Teach God's Word [1Timothy 3:2; 2Timothy 4:1-4; Titus 1:9]

Appoint other elders [2Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23]

Direct the affairs of the church [1Thessalonians 4:1-2; 5:12; 1Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17]

Oversee the finances of the church [Acts 4:32-35; 11:29-30]

Determine and manage church government [Acts 15:6, 19-20; 16:4-5]

Guard, protect, lead and feed the church [Acts 20:28-31; 1Peter 5:1-4]

Now, in reference to the church in Thessalonica, remember, this was a young church [6-12 months old], and it was very unlikely that there were many (if any) mature believers, at that time; and yet, Paul had evidently identified (with the Holy Spirit's leading) some men he had set apart (**1Thessalonians 5:12**) “who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord, and give you instruction.”

Paul's appointees were no doubt in Paul's training program in order to be able to teach other new believers in Thessalonica (like themselves), the Word of God, in order to nurture and mature them.

2Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

But these men placed in positions of leadership in the church in Thessalonica weren't apostles, and most likely weren't well schooled in the Old Testament Scriptures, as this was a Greek city in a Greek culture..

So they would have been using Paul's writings and teachings, along with other available writings and/or teachings from other Apostles. As you can imagine, it was perhaps hard for these new believers (as appointed leaders) in the church in Thessalonica, to gain the respect of other new believers in the church.

No wonder Paul says in **1Thessalonians 5:13** that the believers should "esteem them very highly in love because of their work." The work of these appointees was to teach the Word of God as it had been given to them by the Apostles; and so, these 'young in the faith' leaders were to be regarded with respect because of the job they had been given (**1Thessalonians 5:12**), "to have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction."

Their job was the ministry of the Word of God (**Ephesians 4:12**), "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." And so, Paul urges the believers to respect, love and to regard highly these men who, although young in the faith themselves, are serving the church (let me just say here, that if Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit selected men to serve; they were no doubt more mature in their understanding of the Scriptures than the majority of the new believers in Thessalonica); and therefore, Paul is basically exhorting the believers to not make the task of these men more difficult than it already is, by not showing them the proper respect.

Hebrews 13:7, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." **17**, "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."

Paul is basically saying to the Thessalonians, "don't give these guys a hard time, help them help you. I put them in these positions of leadership to serve you, because I couldn't be there myself. If you disrespect them, you are disrespecting me. Don't critique them for being young in the faith, you are all young in the faith; but God has ordained that these men will serve, in order to nurture and lead you as God intends for them to."

In a sense, Paul is saying, "if you aren't able to show them respect for what they do in the Lord's service, because of some pet peeve, personal bias, or an improper evaluation of them that you may have, shame on you; instead, what you ought to consider is this: Do these men love the Lord? Do they delight in God's Word? Are they diligent in handling God's Word with reverence and urgency? Do

they show love and care for the flock of God? Do they have a heart for the downtrodden, the broken hearted, for orphans and widows and castaways?

In the last part of **1Thessalonians 5:13** Paul says, "Live in peace with one another;" i.e., Paul is saying, live in peace with your brothers and sisters in Christ, with those who serve over you [like these men chosen to lead the church there], with those who serve alongside you [most everyone else in the church], and with those who may serve under you [perhaps a subordinate or slave].

To the Christians in Rome Paul wrote (**Romans 12:18**), "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

The point is, we all need to make it our purpose and practice to be peace makers and peace maintainers, for Jesus said, **Matthew 5:9**, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Having repented of sin and believed in Christ as Lord, August 1, 1978, I began actively serving the Lord as I was growing in my knowledge of God and understanding of His Word, and in 1986 I stepped into my first pulpit in Mariposa, CA, as Pastor Mike, and I can say without any regrets, it is an awesome privilege to labor among God's people as a pastor-elder-overseer: preaching, teaching, discipling, and counseling with God's Word; sharing the Good News of salvation with the lost, while protecting God's people from false teachers and false doctrines, by rebuking and refuting all that is contrary and/or opposed to the character and nature and revelation of God in Christ, bringing all such things under the sovereign authority and judgement of God's Eternal Word.

I am so very thankful to God to have been allowed the privilege of serving here at the First Baptist Church in Waldport for the past fourteen years, what a glorious adventure it has been, and I look forward to whatever number of years the Lord has ordained for me to continue serving here, in this relationship with you all.

If you belong to God through Christ, you have the blessed assurance of salvation and eternal life; if you don't know or you are unsure, why not consider accepting God's precious gift to you right now (**Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 8:1; 10:9-10, 13**)?

Forgiveness for all your sins (past, present, future) and eternal life in order to enjoy the new heavens and hew earth, where there will be no more crying, or pain, or death, or darkness; this is the free gift of God, made effectual in and through the sacrificial death and sovereign resurrection of God's One and Only Son, who is both Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ: Crucified, Resurrected, and Coming Again to take us to be with Him forever!

Pastor Mike
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