

Love Your Church by Honouring

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5. And if we read again at verse 12. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 at verse 12. Where Paul writes, We ask you, brothers and sisters, 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.

We ask you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and to admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, it was written to a people who loved their church. The Thessalonians had heard Paul preach the gospel.

He heard them preach in their hometown or their home city of Thessalonica. And they heard him during his second missionary journey. And the Thessalonians, they responded to the gospel.

[1 : 28] They confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and they committed their lives to the church of Jesus Christ. And so the Thessalonians, they loved their church. And Paul knew that they loved their church.

Because throughout his letter, Paul thanks the Thessalonian church. He thanks them for their fellowship in the gospel and their faithfulness to God. And Paul encourages the Thessalonians, if you read through the letter, he encourages them to persevere.

He encourages them to press on, despite the ongoing onslaught of persecution that was taking place against the church. But as Paul brings his caring and very compassionate letter to a conclusion, he makes this remarkable request to the church in verse 12.

He says, We ask you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and to admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Paul's remarkable request was for the church in Thessalonica to remember to respect their pastor. As he labors among them. And I say that it's a remarkable request because it's not a routine request.

[2 : 49] It's not something we hear often. But as a pastor, Paul here, Paul is exhorting and encouraging the church in Thessalonica to love your church by honoring your pastor.

Love your church by honoring your pastor. That's the topic that we're thinking about this evening as we continue our study, Love Your Church.

As you know, our study is based upon the helpful and yet hard-hitting book by Tony Merida, Love Your Church. I don't know if you've bought it yet. I don't know if you've read it yet. But in the book, you're exhorted and encouraged to love your church because Jesus loves your church.

He loves Barba's Free Church. So love your church. Love Barba's Free Church because Jesus loves Barba's Free Church. But this evening, we're drawing from chapter 6 of the book.

Love your church by honoring your pastor. Love your church by honoring your pastor, which personally speaking, I find this a very difficult sermon to preach.

[3 : 57] It makes me very uneasy and very uncomfortable to talk about this topic as your pastor. But it's in the Bible. It's in the Bible.

And, you know, I wanted to step over chapter 6 and just leave that one. But it's in the Bible, so we cannot skip over it. We cannot sidestep it. So Jesus says to us through his word, love your church by honoring your pastor.

And I'd like us to consider this topic under two headings. So boys and girls, the two headings, the pastor's position and the pastor's people. The pastor's position and the pastor's people.

So first of all, the pastor's position. Paul says, We ask you, brothers and sisters, 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.

Now, as you know, throughout the Gospels, throughout the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there are many profound sayings and statements of Jesus.

[5 : 07] And we're familiar with many of these profound sayings and statements of Jesus, where Jesus said to Nicodemus, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Or even the statement that Jesus said to the Pharisees when there was a woman caught in adultery. Jesus said to them, He who is without sin, cast the first stone.

Or even Jesus is saying from the cross in the darkness of dereliction, Jesus cries, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? There are many profound sayings and statements of Jesus in the Gospels.

But, you know, as a pastor, there's one profound statement and saying of Jesus that I've always thought very interesting. And the Gospel writers must have also thought it very interesting because all of them record it in their Gospels.

It's recorded in all four Gospels. And it's the occasion when Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth. And he went along to the local synagogue.

[6 : 08] And on that particular occasion, during the Sabbath service, Jesus was asked to preach. But when Jesus preached to his own people, when he preached to them that he's the Savior of sinners, we're told that his own people did not receive him.

In fact, the people of Nazareth, they rejected Jesus. They wanted to throw him over a cliff. To which Jesus responded to them. He makes this profound statement and saying, He says, A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own household.

A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own household. And by using a double negative, not without honor, a double negative, Jesus emphasizes a strong positive.

That a prophet, or a preacher, or a pastor, will always be shown honor, except when he's in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own household.

A prophet, preacher, or pastor, will be shown honor by other people, except by his own people. And you know, if Jesus came to his own people in Nazareth, and they didn't honor him as the prince of preachers, then it will probably be true of every preacher.

[7 : 36] If they didn't honor the good shepherd, then it may be the case that they won't honor the under-shepherd either. If they didn't love their church by honoring Jesus as their pastor, then others will do the same as well.

A prophet, preacher, or pastor is not without honor, among other people, except among his own people. But you know, this word honor, a prophet is not without honor.

That word honor, it's a very interesting word. We've been singing about the word honor this evening, and it's a royal word. The word honor is a royal word.

And it's used in the Bible in different contexts and different situations, but particularly first of all, when God reveals himself to his people. When God reveals himself to his people, he reveals that he's a king.

And he says to his people, those who honor me, I will honor. Those who honor me, I will honor.

[8 : 40] It's also used throughout the Bible to show reverence and respect towards kings and queens. You see that in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and also the book of Esther. Even in creation, we sang that in Psalm 8, when God created Adam and Eve, he created them as king and queen over the creation, and he crowned them with glory and honor and love.

But this royal reverence and respect, this word honor, it's also to be shown towards parents. So boys and girls, and even as me with parents.

This word should, it highlights the fifth commandment. What is the fifth commandment? Honor your father and your mother.

It's a royal word. Honor your father and your mother. And so honor is a royal word of reverence and respect. But it was when referring to the reverence and respect that should be shown towards preachers and pastors, Paul said, this is Paul writing, Paul said, let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

Therefore, in comparison to ruling elders, Paul says, Paul says that a teaching elder is a pastor and preacher. And according to Scripture, what Paul said to Timothy is that he's to receive double honor.

[10 : 15] He's to receive double honor. And you know, this is fascinating, because Paul's description of a pastor receiving double honor, that's where we get the title reverend from.

But the title reverend or rev, as people often say, we call Donnie Macaulay, revvy, that was the title reverend.

It was never intended to become an official title for an ordained minister. The use of the word reverend, it actually was first introduced in the 15th century.

And it was used as a term of reverence and respect towards a minister of the gospel. But it was never, and I want to stress this, it was never to be used in the sense of putting a minister on a pedestal.

Never. The minister was never to be above the people, because the minister, the word minister means servant. He serves the people.

[11 : 16] That was, it was never the intention to elevate the minister. Therefore, the original intention of the word reverend, it was to express a deep love.

And a deep affection and reverence towards the parish minister, because he's the one who preached and pastored, and prayed for the souls under his care.

But it wasn't until the 17th century, so two centuries later, time goes on, that the word reverend and, or rev, it became the norm. It became an official title, associated with every ordained minister.

And you know, I always find it so humbling when I meet some of the children from the school. They don't come here normally on a Sunday, but you meet some of the children, you meet them in the community, or in this shop, or at the youth club on a Friday night, and they all call me Reverend Campbell.

They all say, Reverend Campbell, then they start talking to me. And that's even when I'm not wearing the clerical collar. They still call me Reverend Campbell. But you know, the amazing thing is that even the clerical collar, it doesn't originate from the Roman Catholic Church.

[12 : 28] And I say that because, you know, when I was preparing for this evening, and I find this evening very difficult to preach, I have to be honest with you, it's very difficult talking about the position of a pastor. But when I was preparing for this evening, I noticed that every article I read about the origin of the clerical title, Reverend, it also explained alongside it the origin of the clerical collar, which didn't originate in the Roman Catholic Church, but actually in the Protestant Church.

In fact, the detachable clerical collar, which is what I wear, it was invented in the 19th century by a Presbyterian minister called Reverend Donald MacLeod.

Not Mac, but MC. MacLeod. Reverend Donald MacLeod. And it was only later in the 19th century that the Roman Catholic Church, they adopted the clerical collar, and in some countries, they made it mandatory for priests to wear it.

And the reason the clerical collar became mandatory was simply for that the parish minister or the parish priest could be easily identified as he went about his business.

But with the passing of time, as it was with, just as it was with the title reverend, the norm, which was the norm for addressing the minister, the clerical collar, it also became the uniform of a minister.

[13 : 54] And so, in the end, you come to the 21st century, or maybe more so, the 20th century. And every minister is called reverend, and most are wearing a clerical collar.

And to this day, similar to nurses, paramedics, police, fire brigade, the clerical collar, it is universally recognized as the uniform of a minister.

I always say to people, how do you know who the minister is in Postman Pat? He's wearing a collar. How do you know who the minister is in any TV program?

He's wearing the clerical collar. It's a universally recognized uniform of a minister. So this is my uniform. This is my uniform. And as I mentioned recently at a midweek meeting, I don't know if you were there.

If you're not at the midweek meeting, you should be there. But you know, as I mentioned recently on a Wednesday night, I'll never forget the first time I went to visit. And I became the minister, when I became the minister here in Barvis, I was 26, just out of college, and I just started wearing the clerical collar.

[15 : 05] And I wasn't convinced that I should keep wearing the clerical collar because I was so young and everyone else wasn't wearing it. But when I went on my first pastoral visit, I went, and some of you know who this was, I went to the door and I knocked on the door, terrified as I was.

But the woman who opened the door, she took one look at me and she said, well, I don't know who you are, but I know what you are. And if you weren't wearing a collar, I wouldn't let you in.

And that was it for me. I've worn the collar ever since. Of course, nowadays, most ministers, they don't wear a clerical collar and they don't like the title reverend.

Some ministers like, would rather be known as the pastor, which is a very biblical word because a pastor is a shepherd. And as you know, a shepherd, he knows his sheep, he protects his sheep, he leads his sheep, he feeds his sheep.

A pastor shepherds the flock of God as God's under-shepherd. But the thing is, whether a minister wears the collar or not, whether they're addressed with the title reverend or pastor, or they're addressed by their first name, which I like, because that's the name my parents gave me, called me Murdo.

[16:19] But you know, when it comes to showing honor or double honor towards a minister, and it's mentioned in the book, when it comes to showing reverence and respect towards a preacher or pastor, as you know, these things, they have to be earned in a congregation and a community.

Reverence and respect can't just be expected. It has to be earned, just like in any sphere of life. You know, damage is often done when reverence and respect is dictated or even demanded just because of the office that's held or the uniform that's worn or the title that's used.

But honor and double honor, reverence and respect, they can't just be expected from people. They have to be earned from people. And that takes time because trust takes time.

It takes time for people to trust their pastor. It takes time for trust to be nourished and nurtured within the life of a congregation and community.

What's more is that trust can't be manipulated. Trust can't be misused. And you know, I found myself preaching more to myself than I would to you this evening about trust.

[17:43] Trust cannot be manipulated. Trust cannot be misused, especially a pastor who's in a position of trust where you get into homes and into very personal experiences with people.

Manipulation or misuse of trust can be damaging. It can be detrimental. It can be destructive in a congregation and community. We've seen it in the past.

We've seen it in our own island communities and congregations. And it has left many people hurt and many people heartbroken. And you know, I want to say to you, I hope this is not the case, but I want to say it to you because I always want to be open with you and honest with you.

If I've hurt anyone in our congregation or within our community by something I've said or something I've done, I would hope, I would hope that you'd get in touch and let me know.

Let me know so that there could be reconciliation. That's what we're all about. So that there will be restoration in relationships. So let me know because as you know already, you know this already, this pastor is not perfect.

[19:03] This pastor is not perfect. But this pastor's position, and you know this, this pastor's position is to point you to a perfect Savior.

That's my role. That's my responsibility, to point you to Jesus. That's my desire. That's all I can do. This pastor is not perfect, but his role and responsibility is to point you to a perfect Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so we see the pastor's position. The pastor's position, but then secondly, the pastor's people. The pastor's people. We'll read our verses again. We ask you, or we instruct you, we urge you, brothers and sisters, 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.

I'm sure that everyone here or maybe even those watching at home this evening, I'm sure that you're all aware that this month, the month of October, boys and girls, this month is Pastor Appreciation Month.

Pastor Appreciation Month. And of course, as a congregation, I know, I know that you've all been waiting until today, the last Sunday in October, to conclude Pastor Appreciation Month in a very, very special way.

[20 : 34] So I'm just waiting to see what's going to happen. Truth be told, I didn't know that it was Pastor Appreciation Month and I don't even know how Pastor Appreciation Month came about. Apparently, it started 30 years ago.

It started 30 years ago in 1992 with the intention of encouraging all pastors, missionaries and church workers. And as you'd expect, it's a big thing in America, but it's not catching on yet in the UK.

But just to quote you an article about Pastor Appreciation Month, and it was actually Hugh Ferrier. I'll name drop him. He told me it was Pastor Appreciation Month, so he must be big on it in the high free. But this is what the article said, October is Pastor Appreciation Month, a time set aside each year to honor and give thanks for our pastors who give, care, and serve us and our communities in a remarkable way.

Now, you know, if that wasn't enough, if that wasn't enough, the second Sunday in October, we've passed it already, it has been set aside as Pastor Appreciation Day.

So there's not only Pastor Appreciation Month, which is the whole month of October, but there's also Pastor Appreciation Day, the second Sunday in October. And you know, I'm gutted I didn't know all this at the beginning of the month.

[21 : 54] But now I have something to look forward to next year with you. Of course, I'm not sure if this is what Paul had in mind. He didn't have Pastor Appreciation Month in mind when he wrote to the church in Thessalonica.

But what he says here is certainly along those lines. Because just to summarize what Paul is saying, it's what we're looking at this evening. Paul is saying, love your church by honoring your pastor.

Love your church by honoring your pastor. And the church in Thessalonica, they needed to be taught this. They needed to be encouraged in this because they were very, they were a very young church.

They were full of young Christians. They'd just been converted. They didn't really understand how church worked. They'd only been established as a church for two or three years before Paul sent this letter to encourage them and to exhort them to keep pressing on in the faith.

And you know, it's interesting that even if we had read chapter 3 of Paul's letter here, what you read in chapter 3 is that Timothy, for a time, Timothy was sent to be the pastor in Thessalonica.

[23 : 04] Timothy, as you know, as we know from Wednesday evening, Timothy was the pastor in Ephesus. He must have gone on to pastor the church in Ephesus. But he was also sent to Thessalonica to establish and to exhort this young church in the faith.

And as we learn from our letters or the study of Paul's letters to Timothy on Wednesday evening, we've learned that Paul strived and stressed to Timothy that a church will flourish when the pastor is a faithful leader.

The church will flourish when the pastor is a faithful leader. But in his book, Love Your Church, Tony Merida says, to be sure, pastors aren't perfect and they will have bad days and make mistakes.

But the pursuit and pattern of a shepherd's life should be marked by happiness, holiness, and humility. That's his alliteration, not mine.

The pursuit and pattern of a shepherd's life should be marked by happiness, holiness, and humility. But you know, it's easy to remember what a pastor should be and what a pastor shouldn't be.

[24 : 29] It's not so easy to remember what a pastor's people should be and a pastor's people shouldn't be. far too often, and I hear from other ministers, a pastor's people are disheartening and discouraging to their pastor.

They're often disheartening and discouraging. I mentioned to you before when Professor John McIntosh, he was our church history professor, what he said to us as students for the ministry when we were in the college, he said, don't be surprised when you learn that some of your congregation go home for dinner and instead of having roast meat, they'll have roast minister.

And it's quite a thought. Instead of having roast meat, they'll have roast minister. And we saw that with Moses. We were seeing that in our study in the book of Exodus. Moses was the leader of the Lord's people.

He was shepherding the Israelites through the wilderness. He was pastoring this people. And yet the Israelites, how did they respond? To their pastor. They grumbled and groaned and growled against God's servant.

They muttered and moaned and murmured against Moses, their minister. And it left Moses, how? At breaking point. It left him at the brink of burnout.

[25 : 52] Moses was disheartened. He was discouraged and he was depressed. Elijah was the same. Elijah was saying, Lord, take away my life. I'm no better than anyone else.

I'm no better than my father. But, you know, being disheartened, discouraged, and depressed, that's often the reasons men resign from the ministry. And there are many men who do.

In fact, Tony Merida, he highlighted that so many pastors are disheartened, discouraged, and depressed. because the pastor's people, he says, they don't realize that sermon preparation is exhausting, lonely, and often unrewarding.

And pastoral care is often unnoticed and draining, which causes a pastor to be disheartened, discouraged, and depressed. Moreover, he says, the pastor's people often fail or forget to encourage their pastor for fear that he will get a big head.

But as one minister once said to me, what happens if the head goes down and doesn't come back up? What happens if he becomes so discouraged and so disheartened and so depressed that he has to resign?

[27 : 14] Now, that doesn't mean you need to molly-cordle your pastor. I'm not looking for sympathy at the door. By the way. Because I think it's healthy. I think it's always healthy to discuss and to debate things with your pastor.

I think it's always good to be open and honest with your pastor. I really do. But, you know, don't ever discourage or dishearten or depress the pastor.

Because the devil does a good job of that already. And, you know, I think it's so true because, you know, I can tell you that before you've said anything positive or anything negative to me at the door and I do get positive and I do get negative things at the door.

But before you've said anything, the devil has been there before you. In fact, usually before I reach the bottom of the pulpit, before I reach down there, the devil has been in my ear already, giving me an earful.

And so the encouragement to us all this evening, love your church by honoring your pastor. Love your church by honoring your pastor.

[28 : 22] As I said, it's an uneasy and uncomfortable topic for me to preach on as your pastor. But as you can see, it's in the Bible. It's in the Bible. We can't sidestep it. We can't skip over it. And the Bible is saying to us tonight, love your church by honoring your pastor.

Respect your pastor. Encourage your pastor. Love your pastor. But most importantly, this is what Tony Merida is saying from his book. Pray for your pastor.

I covet your prayers as your pastor. Pray for your pastor. You know, as Paul often concluded his letters, and with this I'll conclude this evening, Paul often concluded his letters by exhorting and encouraging congregations.

to remember the pastor. As a pastor himself, he knew what it was like. And Paul says, remember the pastor. He said it to the Thessalonians.

That's what we're seeing this evening in chapter 5. He said it to the Corinthians. He said it to the Ephesians. He said it in the letters of Timothy, which was directed more to the Ephesians.

[29 : 29] And even in the letters to the Hebrews, it concludes in chapter 13 with the words, obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.

I have to give an account for your souls on the last day. That's what he's saying. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.

Let them do this with joy, not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. And you know, it was this verse where he speaks about keeping watch over your souls.

You know, it reminded me of what's written. What's written when you sign a call for a minister. Now, it's a number of years since you signed my call. I don't think many of you will remember it.

But you know, signing a call for a minister, it's a solemn thing. I dug out the call that many of you signed. I was actually finding the names. Some have passed away since. Now, some of you have signed it.

[30 : 39] And you know, when you sign your name, it says you're signing your name to that minister of the congregation and you're signing your call and in the call it uses this word, these words, that in signing the call you invite, call, and entreat you, the minister, to undertake the office of pastor among us and the charge of our souls.

And further, it says, and upon accepting this, our call, we promise you all dutiful respect, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord.

So you sign that. Just to remind you, you sign that. You know, it's a solemn thing. It's a solemn thing to sign a call for a minister because you're actually signing your name and saying what we've been looking at this evening.

You're signing that you love your church and you're going to love your church by honoring your pastor. You're going to love your church by honoring your pastor.

Father, we ask you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and to admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

[32 : 03] Love your church by honoring your pastor. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for Thy Word, Thy Word that speaks to every situation in church life and we thank Thee that we are part of the church of Jesus Christ.

We thank Thee, O Lord, for bringing us together as a people, both pastor and people and we pray that together we would seek to serve the Lord, to bring glory to His name.

Help me as Thy servant to be faithful. Help Thy people to be encouraged. Enable them, Lord, to be faithful witnesses, to serve the Lord with gladness.

And Lord, for those who are, who may feel that they are not committed or not inside the church as it were, Lord, we pray that Thou wouldst make them realize that they are part of this church family that they are important to this church family, that Thou wouldst bless us together, that in all that we do, in all that we say, in all that we go about doing from week to week, that Thou, Lord, would have all the glory, that Christ would ultimately have the preeminence, that His name would be lifted on high, and that in lifting His name we would know blessing.

we would experience blessing, not only in our souls, but in our numbers. And Lord, that Thou wouldst bless us in all things, that we would grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[33 : 50] Do us good, then we pray. Go into a new week with us, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing, singing in the words of Psalm 91.

Psalm 91 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 91. It's on page 352 of the blue psalm book.

Psalm 91. We're singing from verse 14 down to the end of the psalm. But before we sing these words, do you have answers for me?

Yeah? Question one. What is the fifth commandment? Can you say that one again? Right.

Okay. I will hold you to that. What month is it? No. What kind of other month is it? Pastor Appreciation Month.

[35 : 07] So we've got one more day. And what are tonight's headings? The pastor's position. Yeah, it was the first one.

And the pastor's people is the next one. Good job. Well done. So the fifth commandment, honour your father and your mother. It's Pastor Appreciation Month and tonight's headings.

The pastor's position and the pastor's people. So well done. So we're going to sing Psalm 91 from verse 14 down to the end of the psalm.

Because on me he set his love, I'll save and set him free. Because my great name he hath known, I will him set on high. He'll call on me, I'll answer him.

I will be with him still, in trouble to deliver him and honour him. I will. With length of days and to his mind, I will him satisfy.

[36 : 01] I also, my salvation, will cause his eyes to see. So we'll sing these verses in conclusion of Psalm 91. We'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise.

Psalm 91. Psalm 91. Psalm 91. Because on me he set his love, I'll save and set him free.

Because my great name he hath known, I will him set on high.

He'll call me, I'll answer him, I will be with him still, in trouble to deliver him, and honour him I will.

With length of days out to his mind, I will him satisfy.

[37 : 45] I also, my salvation, will cause his eyes to see.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen.