

Restoring Biblical Eldership

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[0:00] While He was on earth, the Lord Jesus promised that He would establish His church.

! Whether such evil originated with humans or demons.

And in the formation of the church, we see the Trinity at work. The Father designed the church and chose just how the church would be populated.

The Son redeemed the church by His precious sacrifice on the cross. Because the Holy Spirit empowers the church to face a very hostile world.

I read a book a number of years ago. I need to read it again by Bishop J.C. Ryle. A great man of God. And he wrote a book. 1800s, maybe?

[1:13] He wrote a book. Warnings to the churches. And it was like he was writing to the 20th century church. That's when I read the book. It was phenomenal.

But he said something in there. You remember Bishop Ryle's book? Just starting out, he said, everything's tearing down. Everything's breaking down. Which is the second law of thermodynamics.

Everything is wearing out. Going into chaos. You know, whatever. Except the church. And he said the church is eternal. The church will be the church in heaven.

And it's an amazing book, which I need to reread. God reveals truth through His Word. The church is responsible for delivering the word of truth to a dying world and seeing dead people raised to newness of life.

I want you guys to remember something. Probably a name you're not familiar with. Douglas Wilson, Credenda Agenda. He said, we live in the midst of a massive graveyard.

[2:32] The church. We're in a graveyard of people walking around that are dead. And they don't know they're dead because they're dead in trespasses and sins. And we bring the pure gospel to them.

And God is snatching some of them out of the fire. I think Jude said that. But it was left to the church to deliver the word of truth to this dying world.

And see people raised to newness of life. Israel was going to be that channel of truth. But Israel turned inward. Israel turned to apostasy.

They forfeited for now the right to be a channel of blessing. Now God is not through with Israel. And on earth God is not through yet with the church. Once he is through with the church and we depart, then God will, I believe, turn his attention once again to Israel.

[3:36] But for 2,000 years, the church has penetrated the darkness with the light of the gospel. In my global travels, including areas of the world that restrict the spread of the gospel, I find faithful believers.

You know why? Because the gospel is so powerful, it will find a way to penetrate the darkest areas of the world.

Nations can't keep it out. North Korea can't keep it out. China can't. Russia can't. The Arab world, the Muslim world, can't keep it out. Most of the church is already in heaven.

The church on earth today, which we're part of, we're the caboose bringing up the rear. Most of the church, the majority of members of the true church are already in heaven.

Why are we still here on earth today and not in heaven with our Lord? And the only answer I can come up with is because God is still working through his church to bring men to light and rescue them from the power of darkness.

[4:57] You know, what other reason would we be here for? And by the way, connect to that is what's the one thing that you won't do in heaven? And the answer to that is share the gospel witness to a lost person.

If you're going to do that, guys, now's the time. That's the one thing you won't do in glory is share the gospel, the good news with lost people. The church is the body of Christ on this earth. We are the only visible part of Jesus in this dying world. We represent Christ. Christ is the head. We are the body.

Because we represent Christ, we are called to model his virtue to live godly lives based upon the commands he has given his church.

And I appeal tonight to Peter, because I think he said it quite well in 1 Peter 2.9. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[6:24] Now, Peter's writing by the power of the Holy Spirit. Who did he say is to proclaim the excellencies of Christ? He said, we are. We are. How is the true church to fulfill this divine calling?

Well, God, in the structure of the church, has raised up leaders to lead his church in achieving all that the Lord has set before us.

I would submit there's leadership throughout this room at every table, every man in here. No church ever rises above the quality of its leaders, whether good or bad.

Churches tend to kind of take on the characteristics of their leaders. Churches tend to be a leader among the nations.

Churches tend to be a leader among the nations to proclaim his truth, to deliver to them his commands. And to do so, God raised up prophets and priests and kings and elders.

[7:48] in serving the Lord they were to be models of godliness by being holy the nation was to proclaim a holy message to a very unholy and lost world around them and to deliver God's message of forgiveness and mercy Israel failed Israel failed Israel failed at all of this primarily because Israel's leaders failed when we study the leadership of Israel we see sin and defection and apostasy and when the leaders defect it leads to the defection of the people over whom the leaders served I can carry that forward into our era and we can see whole denominations that have failed because of the quality or lack of quality of their leadership and there are many examples of the church entering into similar failures since its establishment godly leaders failed to prevent the rise of false teachers false teachers infect and corrupt the church we've looked at it in here we're looking at it on Sunday morning false teachers was huge particularly in the writings of Paul who tried to build in safeguards and here of course we know he's developing Timothy to be the leader among leaders to establish churches in Ephesus or he has a church but to go from there and to select elders of the churches false teachers are the cancer from within that will lead to the downfall of churches and has led to the downfall of many churches and entire denominations again problems facing the church can be traced to failed leadership failed leadership well what kind of leaders does God want for his church the scriptures are very clear on this

God wants a plurality of men to share leadership in the church God did not design the church to be ruled by one pastor one man and be he pastor king pope that wasn't God's design and I say king in there because sadly if you study the history of Great Britain we see king or saw kings in history try and rule over the church and as a result thousands died tens of thousands 18,000 in Scotland Diane in my ancestral home hers more than mine but 18,000 died who would not submit to the king's rule and they would not proclaim the king as head of the church they had this horribly dastardly saying that Christ was the head of the church and the covenanters arose in Scotland they signed the national covenant and they were slaughtered for

Diana and I will be in Scotland from June 7th to June 17th it will be our third trip and we will go to Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh huge church there thousands of people buried there including covenanters and we will see the prison which housed her great great great grandfather John Porterfield why was John Porterfield in prison he was a minister he would not proclaim the king as head of the church he was ordered to he refused he was imprisoned he lost his farm which was considerable the family farm 8500 acres in fact their names were Porter the king gave them land became Fields of Porter and the next generation Porterfield she is a Diana is a Porterfield and we've been there before and seen and when I say prison just picture some iron gates in the open air cold snow rain people died from exposure they didn't have a roof over their head and they put a thousand of them in an area probably the size from that wall to the outer wall down to

Don's office and there were a thousand people in there with no hope he was finally the king released him and he died but he got his family to Ireland a spinach generation then they came to America every Porterfield in the world is related from that man it's a marvelous story another point I

want to make is this God does not intend his church which is made up of local congregations to submit to leadership outside the local congregation most denominations that are on earth today or in America at least do that they take their orders from someone else now I understand we are the southern baptist convention and I'm glad we are southern baptist but we don't every morning have to get our prayer mat and bow to Nashville we don't do that we don't bow to Oklahoma city to the baptist general convention of Oklahoma we may draw strength through the cooperation and that's the whole spirit of the cooperative program but they are not our mecca if they ever became our mecca I have a feeling we wouldn't be southern baptists very long we are an autonomous church and certainly the president of the SBC is not our pope the head of the church is Christ alone not the king of England not the pope in Rome not the president of the SBC and he'd be the first to tell you that the head of the church is Christ alone it is the local church that raises up effective leaders now there is a an invisible church and local churches most local churches I hope I'm a lot of local churches have members of the invisible church this church has a lot of members of the church universal but we are a local church with members of the invisible church and it is the local church that raises up effective leaders and they do so they are to do so in conformity to God's will submitting to the

[15:16] Lord in all things church membership depends upon the Holy Spirit to identify and confirm the men that God raises up to lead his church because of this the church always shares in the burden of leadership responsibilities together Paul has been dealing with Timothy and the Ephesian church and they were plagued with false teachers and a failure in leadership and you can track them all the way to the second chapter of Revelation when they were criticized by the Lord Jesus in the first church to come under condemnation of the seven churches but here we have Paul he's teaching young

Timothy how to restore biblical leadership to the church and as we shall see that you know Paul of course writing by the power of the Holy Spirit will teach the vital crucial role of elders within the body of Christ churches that are weak and failing have weak elders churches that are well and growing spiritually and doing the will of God have strong God ordained elders you show me a strong church with strong elders godly leadership I'll show you a church that's participating in an unpayable debt just as one example as one example we're going to examine what Paul has to reveal to us on this crucial matter of elders and I told Don at dinner tonight I'm going to be talking a lot about him tonight he's the chief elder thought I was a chief he's a chief at least you don't have to put up with a union yet elders are to be honored 1st

Timothy 5 verses 17 and 18 let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor especially those who labor in preaching and teaching for the scripture says Lee here's the verse we talked about you shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain and the laborer deserves his wages Lee and I talked before dinner that we're going to refer you as an ox here in this deal Paul says that the first step in restoring biblical eldership is found in giving proper honor to the elders who serve the church faithfully and we've got five good elders in this church we have six we got five good ones I don't I I'm I'm not so conceited as to include myself in that deal we want to be careful in looking at the meaning of honor because we are not building some hierarchical structure within the church we're not made up of bishops and archbishops and cardinals and all that and perhaps

Paul clears this up somewhat in his first letter to the Thessalonians is set apart! I believe for greater honor because he has a deeper commitment in terms of service now he's probably going to object to this point but just wait me out and I'll prove this he has a deeper commitment in terms of time he has a deeper commitment in terms of development that he underwent to be where he is at today he holds a doctorate in ministry he won't let us call him Dr. Coleman but you do have a doctorate I saw you when you threw the dissertation on it almost collapsed the stage and I went up after that service and said are you going to now work on another doctorate maybe in theology or Latin he wasn't too amused at that in this capacity we double honor him how do we do that?

[23:52] well for one thing we give him a salary with benefits not enough needs to be more but we do honor him and respect as the chief elder the first among equals like we are fond of saying we honor him with with a salary here I believe in his capacity our pastor is worthy of greater acknowledgement from the congregation I believe he is worthy of great respect from the local body and he is certainly worthy of his pay he is worthy of his pay and Paul was very clear on that in his

ministry Paul says that elders to be worthy of double honor must rule well this is a Greek word interesting it means to stand first dad okay yeah that was my wife and I finally found her he says

I hid your number if I was clean okay when you do that I think I thought there was something going on I think of your dad as an elder or your mom as an elder we often refer to brother brother Don as an elder as the first among equals he has the oversight of the church he is the shepherd and he provides care for the flock that second part of that is the word well they must rule well well is translated with excellence a man with honor earns such he earns such Paul then singles out the elders that work hard at preaching and teaching some elders while capable of teaching may not take that as their primary role work hard is an interesting word meaning to work to the point of exhaustion this is not in terms of the amount of work as much as the effort the effort that is put into the work men are rewarded by God based upon their excellence in ministry

I'm really warming up through our study to J. Oswald Sanders and he wrote his book Spiritual Leadership and I really have looked at that here's what J. Oswald Sanders says willingness to renounce personal preferences to sacrifice legitimate and natural desires for the sake of God's kingdom will characterize those marked out by God for positions of influence in his work very interesting preaching is the public proclamation of truth not all elders have the same responsibility of preaching and teaching and certainly even our elders don't have the same responsibilities as brother Don does when it comes to that those whose ministry demands all their attentions are the ones that should be freed from having to make a living outside the church

Paul was very definite even though he himself at times supported himself with his tent making I don't know if you've ever tried that but there were other times when Paul took a salary he accepted money this was especially true when he was in a Roman prison or under house arrest as some believe he was a member of Paphroditus brought him some money from I think the church at Philippians wasn't it and he brought him some money but we don't require to me this is one of the beauties also of the cooperative program our missionaries don't have to come home every three months and raise support as so many denominations do and they spend VOM is the same way we don't force Shane you don't have to raise your money it frees men and women up to go to fulfill that command to go and I applaud what we do how we handle that

Paul supports all this with two quotes first he goes to the Old Testament and he says you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing very interesting quote Deuteronomy 25 4 the Old Testament law provided that the oxen that thresh the grain were entitled to eat it I mean they are threshing it let them have some samples don't put a muzzle on them the net effect would be they would be incapable of eating all they would do is be going around threshing with no chance to consume and Deuteronomy the law said don't muzzle the ox he's working for his living he's entitled to consume some of it if God required animals to be fed for working how much more would he require the pastor to be fed the way

[29 : 28] I'm saying to earn a living for working for God's own kingdom how much more worthy is the chief shepherd than an ox and God provided for the ox in Deuteronomy in the Old Testament Paul next gives a quote from the New Testament and I was amazed by this and I've seen this a thousand times and I just passed over he says the laborer is worthy of his wages and there's something very exquisite in all that because Paul has just quoted a New Testament passage Luke chapter 10 verse 7 and it's very significant because we see one New Testament author writing by inspiration affirming the inspired writing of another New

Testament author very very important and Paul actually does this twice in his writings and by the way both times he was affirming the inerrancy and authenticity of Luke of Luke's writings Dr. Luke you may recall was a frequent traveling companion of Paul's they traveled around together and this second quote moves Paul from talking about animals to talking about a servant both testaments said that a servant of the Lord was to be paid those that would deny a pastor a living wage are just as heartless as those who deny the ox food or the laborer his wages so God's very specific here the spirit of God is very specific and elders are to be protected verse 1st Timothy 5 19 do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses!

man I'm telling you it's amazing do not I had Gordon tell me one time I got this letter complaint on I said did they sign it? yeah I said Diane Holland your wife do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses men of God are constantly and falsely accused of wrongdoing they are there can be a variety of reasons for this they may be resented because of the calling that God has put on their life and not on another person life they may people may resent

his virtue well I can't live at that level they may be jealous of the blessings that the Lord has placed on his life many people falsely accuse the pastor because they are a tool of Satan and Satan is using tears in the church to falsely accuse the brethren and especially the pastors and we have a lot of men in the Bible who suffered from such false accusations think in terms of Joseph Moses David Jeremiah you want a New Testament example the Lord Jesus Christ the Lord himself who was ultimately martyred based upon false accusations we have seen ministers in our day put out of their church because that pastor violated the trust that the Lord had put in him but churches must be able to discern between what is true and what is false gossip that's that's the church's role that's imperative upon the church false accusations were so dangerous that Paul instructs

Timothy to receive such only on the basis of competent witnesses if the accusation is false the church is not to receive it or even entertain it and Dr. McBride at one time Mike you may recall he was falsely accused by Guy and Alabama of all places there was no basis for it whatsoever and we talked to Mike and we put it in the trash can we put it in the trash can VOM has been attacked by false accusations we've got to have discernment when it comes to this and Paul says to Timothy it's got to be on competent witnesses the testimony of competent witnesses the operative word there's competent if the accusation is fault don't even don't even consider it don't entertain it if it has a level of credibility it is to be received if multiple witnesses can confirm it now this was God's

[35:00] God's rule this is a protection against false accusations and let's face it Satan would love to orchestrate through the tears in the church such falsehood God says in Psalm 105 15 do not touch my anointed ones and do my prophets no harm anyone wanting to make a false accusation on one of God's servants I think is treading on very dangerous ground very dangerous ground one of our previous pastors had associate a great man and Mike and I were on that pulpit committee and great man of God and Ed I don't know if you remember but Ed had a man in his church a guy named Ed and Ed was on a course no relation to Ed the pastor this guy's name was Ed too

Ed Smith and he wanted to destroy Dr. Saussier's ministry he was on a course of that and Ed tried to reason with him he wanted to pray with him he tried to share with him wouldn't hear anything of it and Ed had a habit of rising early and going to the church from the parsonage for prayer on his face before God and one day he just had enough and he just went to the Lord and he said Lord I cannot handle Ed Smith anymore I give him over to you for you to deal with and the phone rang and the chairman said Brother Ed Ed Smith just died and Ed Saussier said Lord I didn't mean kill him I meant send him to first baptist I didn't mean for you to kill him that wasn't what I was praying he died my father-in-law got saved at 65 and unfortunately was in a situation within two years he was a deacon now that's fast track at his age especially but they didn't have anybody there was a guy there trying to destroy the church

Willie I knew the guy and I gave them they would call me for counsel and I would give it to them and I called Dr. McBride and he would help me out and finally it all stopped Willie killed over dead he killed over dead God wanted that church there men that want to falsely accuse the shepherd of the flocks on very weak!

dangerous grounds! there's also a passage in 1 Timothy 5 20 21 rebuking elders those who continue in sin rebuke in the presence of all so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of his chosen angels to maintain these principles without bias doing nothing in a spirit of partiality that is a very interesting passage the church is to fiercely protect elders from false accusations no elder though receives immunity from the church if the accusations are true there's not an immunity system if the elder continues to commit sin that specific sin he must bear the consequences

Paul makes no mention of any specific sin here and he may be thinking of those who violate the qualifications set out in 1st Timothy chapter 3 verses 2 to 7 which we've already looked at you might want to review those but Paul does not set out any specific discipline for an elder that continues in sin he does say that such sins where there is no genuine repentance are to be exposed to the congregation John MacArthur said in a sermon several years ago that men in ministry hang by a very thin thread and when that thread is snapped by serious sin his ministry is over and in that message which you all heard in here he was referring to Jimmy Swaggart when he fell with a crash hurt around the world churches are to have high standards for elders they have a higher responsibility before

[39:46] God obviously to publicly rebuke an elder takes a lot of courage a lot of courage we are called on to confront sin where does that begin in our own hearts that's where most of that confrontation should actually occur for the leaders of the church when Jim when the Jimmy Swaggart story broke it was proven that the church leaders and his local church knew he was cavorting with prostitutes months before it was exposed the church did not expose that sin the world did God used the world to do what the church had been called to do but refused because the leaders knew about it why were they trying to protect him he was famous and he brought in a lot of money the last full year of ministry before that thing broke 150 million dollars that's a lot of money sin in the church is to be dealt with

God requires the church to maintain holiness to strive for holiness the question facing any church whether they here is this are you more concerned about the church's reputation or about God's standard of holiness that's a serious question and there's one more point I want to make in this area and it's related to this if there's a man in here tonight that is battling sin and we all battle sin but if you're battling in a particular area of sin then you have to ask yourself a question who am I worried about finding this out am I trying to keep my wife from finding this out am I trying to keep the church from finding this out or am I trying to keep God from finding this out because whatever you're hiding from your wife or the church

God already knows that's why you should deal with him on the matter through genuine repentance genuine repentance when a bunch of us went down to see Steve Farrar gosh that's a long time now great guy and the 4,000 men in there and he said there's some of you in this room that are committing adultery right now against your wife and I know that's going on and he said stop it stop it now and repent of it I'll never forget that and I wasn't doing that and then we look at the process of selecting elders finishing out chapter 5 do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others keep yourself free from sin we have a real interesting aside here for Baptists no longer drink water exclusively but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments we'll be serving wine next when you die here the sins of some men are quite evident going before them to judgment for others their sins follow after likewise also deeds that are good are quite evident and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed laying hands on someone was the method of setting a man apart for ministry we do that here when for instance deacons when a man is elected deacon it is not to be done hastily candidates for church leadership are to be investigated if you don't like that use the word evaluated to see first of all and foremost do they meet the scriptural qualifications if the church consciously chooses a man known to be actively involved in sin then according to

Paul the church shares in those sins so the church can't do that Paul was telling Timothy he would remain pure himself by not selecting unqualified men see how that works and Paul then gives this a side all of a!

sudden he starts talking about liquor he's talking about mixing a little wine with water and most theologians believe that Timothy most likely had made a hard commitment concerning himself to totally abstain from wine now I made that same commitment because I have no taste for alcohol God blessed me with that God really did bless me with that but here Timothy probably made this commitment total absence Paul steps in though and he says Timothy don't allow that commitment to injure your health I need you God needs you as the elder that he's raised up water was very dangerous in those days it carried with it diseases probably the biggest if you read the histories back in those days was dysentery and dysentery was often fatal it was a fatal problem

[45:41] Paul said mix a little wine guys little with water what would that do that kill the bacteria that would make them sick would Paul give us the same advice today my answer is maybe with bottle fill water but you know drink bottled water don't mix it with any wine we have higher standards for our drinking water today and let me tell you don't ever underestimate the ability to turn on a light switch and electricity turns on the light and to turn on the tap and you can actually drink I've been to a number of parts world I know Shane has maybe some others of you where you can't even brush your teeth with tap water I've showered in a lot of countries where I keep my teeth clenched shut my mouth tight shut because you don't want to ingest any water we relied on bottled water in many of those areas and

I kept hoping I hope they didn't hold this under the tap somewhere you know I know one of the places I've been where I did this and there were a lot of them but one of them being Nigeria Nigeria you can die from the water there that comes out of the shower head in Nigeria and I was you Coke

and I'm going wait a minute where did that ice come from the tap and they made ice out of it so you got to be real careful and in Paul's day it could be fatal Paul then closes out chapter five with four principles for selecting elders if sins are evident in a man's life, do not select him. If sins are not evident but come to light during the evaluation or investigation period, do not select him. Men who are known to meet the qualifications should be selected. If the good qualities come to light during the examination, select him. If you're not sure, you investigate, everything proves out, select him. Why all this? The church in our day is in desperate need for qualified men to serve as pastors, elders, deacons. You can go right through the list. And they must be held to the biblical standard. And that's what Paul is telling Timothy. Timothy, you're going to be selecting elders. Hold them to the biblical standard.
Thank you.