

Protecting Against Predators in the Pulpit

Study Questions for Sunday, November 6, 2016.

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” Acts 20:17–35 (ESV)

1. As you consider the terms “elder”, “overseer” and “shepherd”, what responsibility did these men have in the church of Ephesus? (**Ezekiel 33:1-9**, Acts 20:26)
2. Is Pastoral ministry all positive instruction, or is there also an element of negative confrontation and correction?
3. Do you think you need an ‘overseer’? Do you need an ‘elder’ or ‘shepherd’? Why?
4. What blessing has God bestowed on your life as a result of faithful preaching or the counsel of a godly pastor?
5. Do you think your pastor *also* needs an overseer or fellow pastor? Why?
6. *If you think your pastor needs a fellow pastor to help him, what is your responsibility with regard to making sure you have multiple pastors in your church?*
7. *How can different pastors complement each other and bless the church together?*
8. *According to Acts 20:28, who are the ones who must be carefully looked after even prior to the flock? Why is it so important that pastors have accountability to other pastors within the church?*
9. *Have you ever experienced the abuse of a bad pastor who was never held accountable?*
10. *Notice what Paul says to young Pastor Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16. What benefit is brought to the church by keeping predators out of the pulpit and carefully holding to sound teaching?*