

“...And some pastors...”

The Lord Jesus Christ determined that there ought to be pastors in the church, which is His body (Ephesians 4:11,12). He has every right to design and to organize His church because He is the Head of the church (cf. Ephesians 1:22; 5:23). He gave Himself for her and sanctifies her (5:25, 26). Who are these pastors whom Christ has given to His church?

Sadly, men have a history of corrupting the pure doctrine of our Lord and Savior. Biblical principles and terms are often taken out of their context and misused. As a result doctrinal error then spreads and infects. In the New Testament the word “*pastor*” is not used to refer to all preachers and evangelists, nor is it a title to be tacked on to someone’s name. Rather, it is a description of a man who tends to herds or flocks – literally or metaphorically. A pastor is a shepherd. Jesus, God’s Son, is the great and chief Shepherd (cf. Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 2:25; 5:4). The good Shepherd gave some to be shepherds or pastors in His church.

Pastors of churches in the New Testament are also referred to as elders and bishops [overseers]. These words are used interchangeably when addressing these men in regard to the work the Lord Jesus has determined for them to do. For example, the apostle Paul met with the “*elders*” of the church in Ephesus. In his admonishments to this group of men, he reminded them that they had been made “*overseers,*” who are “*to shepherd*” [to act as a shepherd in tending to] the church (Acts 20:17, 28). Peter instructs fellow elders, “*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers,...*” (I Peter 5:1-2). Ecclesiastical hierarchy is foreign to pure Christianity. Since Christ Jesus built and organized His church, we must then adhere to His pattern.

The work of pastors is a serious spiritual matter, not to be handled carelessly, nor to be given to men whom the Lord does not approve because pastors watch out for the souls of the sheep (cf. Hebrews 13:17). This position of being a spiritual overseer is a good work to be desired, but mature men in the faith must possess certain essential characteristics and abilities as stated by the Lord in the writings of His apostle Paul (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Interestingly the pattern which has been preserved in the divinely inspired New Testament reveals that elders [pastors] were a group of men with families, who served in the congregation where they were members (cf. Acts 14:23; I Peter 5:2; Philippians 1:1). Biblical tradition and teaching does not authorize one man overseeing one church, nor a group of men overseeing many churches.

According to the gospel of Christ, all preachers are not true pastors of Christ, but a rightly appointed pastor [elder] may preach, laboring in the word and doctrine (I Timothy 5:17).