

Paper 1. Caring for the Pastors

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Nearing the end of his earthly life, the apostle Paul, with calmness and confidence, was able to make this assessment of his ministry in 2 Timothy 4:6-8: *'For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.'*¹

It is, surely, the earnest desire of every minister of the Gospel here this morning, that when the time for our own departure comes, we will be able to make a similar assessment of our own ministry. We do not wish simply to finish the race and to stagger over the finish line. We desire both to run well and to finish well, and we do so, because above all else, we love Christ. He has saved us. He has called us. He sustains us. He is at the heart of our ministry. Any fruit that we bear is his. He is our only hope in the face of death, and he is the one that we long to see. He is everything. In our eyes, he is *"altogether lovely,"*² and it is the deepest desire of our hearts, that we might serve him and his people, well.

In this paper we will consider the subject of *'Caring for the Pastors.'* Firstly, we will consider why such care is necessary. Secondly, we will reflect upon the example of Paul and his care for his young friend Timothy. And finally, we will consider who should provide pastoral care for ministers and this how might be done.

Why Pastoral Care is Necessary.

Writing about the pastoral office in 1877, Thomas Murphy, wrote, *"it may be safely said that it is not possible to over-estimate the grandeur of this calling. It is an office that may be little thought of among men, but it is highly esteemed by God and by angels, and its results extend away into everlasting brightness. It is the highest and grandest office in the world."*³ Few of us would disagree with this assessment of the ministry, and we never cease to be amazed at the remarkable privilege God has bestowed upon us in making us ministers of the Gospel. But this high calling is not without its difficulties, as a visit our local Christian bookshop will confirm. Browsing the relevant section, certain titles immediately catch our eye: *'Zeal without Burnout,'*⁴ *'Leaders Who Last,'*⁵ *'Pastors Under Pressure,'*⁶ *'Resilient Ministry,'*⁷ *'How To Survive And Thrive As A Church Leader,'*⁸ *'Honourably Wounded: Stress among Christian Workers,'*⁹ *'Serving Without Sinking,'*¹⁰ *'Going the Distance: How to Stay Fit for a Lifetime of Ministry,'*¹¹ and a *'Dangerous Calling.'*¹²

These titles only confirm what we have already learned by experience. Ministry is difficult. In part, that difficulty arises from the sheer scope of our ministry. It has been observed that, *"variety is one of the joys of ministry, and yet also one of the difficulties."*¹³ First and foremost, there is the heavy responsibility of preaching the *"unsearchable riches of Christ"*¹⁴ week in week out to the same people, often three times a week, whilst seeking to remain fresh and relevant. The pressure of this responsibility remains constant regardless of other demands upon our time and irrespective of our own spiritual condition. There is the regular visitation of the flock, the importance of which we recognise, but due to the busy lives of our people, is increasingly difficult to organise. Then when we do visit our people, and move beyond pleasantries, we can encounter any number of difficult pastoral situations that will demand much of our time and energy. There is the attendance and chairing of meetings and committees, both at the local level and in the wider church. Then there are the emergencies. We may have made copious notes during the Pastoral Theology lectures at college, but nothing can fully prepare us for the situations we encounter during the course of

¹ Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Version Bible, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation.

² Song of Solomon 5:16, The Revised Version 1885 by Oxford University Press.

³ Thomas Murphy, *Pastoral Theology* (Old Paths Publications - 2001) p. 27.

⁴ Christopher Ash (The Good Book Company - 2016).

⁵ Dave Kraft (Crossway - 2010).

⁶ James Taylor (DayOne - 2004).

⁷ Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman and Donald C. Guthrie (IVP - 2013).

⁸ Nick Cuthbert (Monarch - 2006).

⁹ Marjorie Foyle (Monarch - 2001).

¹⁰ John Hindley (The Good Book Company - 2013).

¹¹ Peter Brain (Matthias Media - 2004).

¹² Paul Tripp (Crossway - 2012).

¹³ Derek Prime & Alister Begg, *'On Being A Pastor'* (Moody - 2004) p. 272.

¹⁴ Ephesians 3:8, The Revised Version by Oxford University Press 1885.

ministry. Entering a home devastated by the sudden death of a loved one. Seeking to comfort a husband or wife who has just discovered that their spouse of many years, has been unfaithful. Visiting that church officer who seemed to be living an exemplary life, and yet has now fallen foul of the law. Seeking to calm someone in the midst of a psychotic episode. Then there is that church member who exploded upon hearing the decision of the Deacons Board to move from cut to dried flowers on the communion table. Again and again, we find ourselves in situations which we did not foresee and which leave us feeling utterly out of our depth.

Added to these difficulties is the realisation that, *“our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*¹⁵ We are engaged in a spiritual battle, and as Richard Baxter warns us, *“Take heed therefore, brethren, for the enemy hath a special eye upon you. You shall have his most subtle insinuations, and incessant solicitations, and violent assaults. As wise and learned as you are, take heed to yourselves, lest he outwit you. The devil is a greater scholar than you, and a nimbler disputant; he can transform himself into an angel of light to deceive; he will get within you, and trip up your heels before you are aware; he will play the juggler with you undiscerned, and cheat you of your faith or innocence, and you shall not know that you have lost it; nay, he will make you believe it is multiplied or increased, when it is lost.”*¹⁶ Now of course, the devil wages war against every believer, but we must realise that he has a particular interest in ministers of the Gospel. John Erskine notes, *“The devil assaults the shepherd, that he may make easier prey of the sheep; and he has many faithful agents, who enter fully into his malicious views, and lay snares for ministers.”*¹⁷

So the demands of the work are great and the opposition from the devil fierce. This would be enough for any man, but there are also those dangers arising from indwelling corruption. Although we handle holy things and spend much of our time in the word, how easily can our own devotional lives begin to wane. We read the Scriptures, but no longer for our own benefit, but merely for the next Sunday’s sermons. Prayer can become cold, formal and sparse. As we gain competence in sermon preparation, we can become lazy and self-reliant. If we experience any degree of success, we can become proud. If there is an absence of success, we can become bitter and jealous towards those who are more successful than ourselves. The very nature of our work means we become emotionally involved with people, and there is the temptation to cross the line with members of the opposite sex. In addition to these things, we struggle to be attentive sons to aged parents, as well as loving husbands and fathers. We have to cope with criticism, battle with loneliness, fight depression, and much more.

When we left theological college, we did so with great optimism. We were fully prepared, or so we thought, and were eager to get to work. But it is surely true to say, that, *“Few if any of us anticipated beforehand how great the difficulties of ministry were going to be. “The ministry of the gospel,” John Newton wrote, “like the book which the Apostle John ate, is bitter sweet; but the sweetness is tasted first, the bitterness is usually known afterwards, when we are so far engaged that there is no going back.”*¹⁸ And these difficulties take their toll over time. It has been estimated that in the region of 1500 people leave pastoral ministry every month in the United States due to burnout, conflict or moral failure.¹⁹ One survey of 300 ministers showed that the majority of them experienced periods of self-doubt and loneliness.²⁰ It is also been suggested that, of those church leaders who remain in ministry to the end of their careers, only 30% finish well.²¹ These sobering statistics are further confirmed by our own experience. Most of us will be able to think of men who have left ministry either because the work became too much for them, or because of moral failure. Even giants of the faith have struggled. Think of Jonathan Edwards’ battles with exhaustion and depression.²² Robert Murray McCheyne’s health was never good, but in the winter of 1835-36 he suffered a complete breakdown, which seems to have been caused by both physical and emotional weakness.²³ Even the prince of preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, experienced repeated bouts of ill-health and depression.²⁴

Now none of these difficulties detract from the glories of the pastoral office. It remains *“the highest and grandest office in the world,”*²⁵ and we should always rejoice in the service of Christ. But ministers are only

¹⁵ Ephesian 6:12.

¹⁶ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (American Tract Society - 1829) p. 118.

¹⁷ John Erskine, *The Christian Pastor’s Manual* edited by John Brown (Soli Deo Gloria Publications - 1991) p. 188.

¹⁸ Derek Prime & Alister Begg, p. 279.

¹⁹ Christopher Ash, p. 16

²⁰ Derek Prime & Alistair Begg, p. 281.

²¹ Dave Kraft, p. 19.

²² George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (Yale University Press - 2003) p. 102-113.

²³ David Robertson, *Awakening: The Life of Robert Murray McCheyne* (Christian Focus - 2004) p. 69.

²⁴ Tom Nettles, *Living By Revealed Truth* (Mentor - 2013) p. 595-631.

²⁵ Thomas Murphy, p. 27.

flesh and blood, and we need pastoral care, and the example of the apostle Paul's care of Timothy can help us.

Learning From Paul and Timothy.

Patrick Fairbairn makes the following observation regarding the relationship that existed between the great apostle and his young friend, *"We have no other instance of such a near, unbroken, and prolonged fellowship in the history of apostolic times, as that which appears to have subsisted between Paul and this youth disciple; the more remarkable, considering the disparity of their ages. From the period that Timothy entered upon his ministerial discipleship, he seems rarely to have been absent for any length of time from the apostle; and even when not expressly mentioned among his companions, some turn in the affairs, or incidental expression, reveals the presence of the beloved disciple."*²⁶ Whilst not everyone is agreed,²⁷ yet it seems most likely that this remarkable relationship began with the conversion of Timothy through the ministry of the apostle whilst in Lystra during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23).²⁸

Whether this is the case or not, it is certainly true that when Paul returned to Lystra, he met Timothy, and was so impressed with this young man, that the apostle took him along with him (Acts 16:1-3). Thus *"Timothy began his ministry under the apostle's tutelage,"*²⁹ and with it, a warm, affectionate, and much valued relationship began, that was to last for the rest of the apostle's life. As F. W. Farrar writes, *"What Melancthon was to Luther, whom Luther felt that he could not spare, and for whose life when all seemed over he stormed heaven with passionate and victorious supplication, that and more than that was this comparatively youthful Timothy to the more tried and lonely Paul."*³⁰

As one reads through the Paul's letters it is clear that he took a keen interest in Timothy's wellbeing. This interest, which was wide ranging and lasted for over a decade, is helpful in the area of pastoral care for ministers of the Gospel. We will consider three areas of concern.

For example, Paul is concerned about Timothy's progress in godliness. Having left his young disciple in Ephesus in order to deal with various matters, Paul subsequently writes to Timothy. He exposes the blatant worldliness of Timothy's opponents,³¹ and then exhorts him in this way, *"But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."*³² Timothy is busy. He has a lot on his plate. There is doctrinal error that needs to be opposed, dominant women that need to be instructed, church appointments need to be made, and yet in the midst of all this busyness, Timothy is to take heed to himself. He is not to lose sight of the priority of progress in personal godliness. Whatever the pressures, he is to guard his own heart and nurture his relationship with his Lord. We find something similar in Paul's second letter, *"Now flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."*³³ William B. Barclay writes, *"As in 1 Timothy, Timothy's responsibility in regard to false teachers means first of all a concern for his own spiritual health and godliness. Then it means combating the false teachers in a godly way. This is important for two reasons. First, personal holiness in life is essential for purity in doctrine. Secondly, a godly response to our enemies is impossible without proper training in personal holiness."*³⁴

Another concern Paul has, is Timothy's personal development. He writes, *"Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and teaching. Do neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."*³⁵ Timothy is to be single-minded and relentless. He is to go on developing and fine-tuning his gifts, which will help him as a preacher, and in turn, will benefit those who hear him. Towner writes, *"Paul regards Timothy's development in the things he has set out as crucial not only to the missions' credibility in the apostle's absence but also to the growth of the congregation."*³⁶ Again, Paul strikes the same

²⁶ Patrick Fairbairn, *1&2 Timothy and Titus* (Banner of Truth - 2002) p. 32.

²⁷ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters To Timothy and Titus* (Eerdmans - 2006) p. 99.

²⁸ John MacArthur, *1 Timothy* (Moody Publishers - 1995) p. 7.

²⁹ Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy* (P&R Publishing Company - 2007) p. 5.

³⁰ F. W. Farrar, *The Life & Work of St. Paul* (Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co - 1879) Vol. 2, p. 544-545.

³¹ 1 Timothy 6:3-10.

³² 1 Timothy 6:11&13.

³³ 2 Timothy 2:22.

³⁴ William B. Barclay, *1&2 Timothy* (Evangelical Press - 2005) p. 261.

³⁵ 1 Timothy 4:13-16.

³⁶ Towner. p. 327.

note in his second letter, where he states, “For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through laying on of hands.”³⁷ Stott says of Timothy, “His mother and grandmother could teach him out of the Scriptures and lead him towards conversion. Paul could actually bring him to Christ, befriend him, pray for him, write to him, train and exhort him. And God could give him a special gift at his ordination. But still Timothy must himself stir up the divine gift within him. He must add his own self-discipline to God’s gifts.”³⁸

Finally, Paul is concerned about Timothy’s physical and emotional wellbeing. He writes, “No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”³⁹ Whilst the precise relationship between this verse and the immediate context is debated and may never be satisfactorily answered,⁴⁰ yet it seems clear, that, amongst other things, Timothy suffers from digestive ailments for which Paul prescribes a little wine, which was a recognised treatment in the ancient world.⁴¹ Some have suggested that this may be an indication that Timothy has been neglecting himself.⁴² Whether this is the case or not, it is clear that the apostle is not simply concerned about Timothy’s spiritual wellbeing, but also his physical health. It is also safe to assume that Paul is concerned about the impact Timothy’s health problems will have upon his ability to carry out his ministerial duties in Ephesus. The apostle believes that it is essential that Timothy takes care of himself. Patrick Fairbairn draws this conclusion, “The principle involved, then, in this prudential advice to Timothy, is in its most natural and obvious sense capable of the fullest vindication; it is, indeed, of practical moment for all times; the laborious pastor or evangelist, if he is wise, will never neglect it: for his work’s sake, as well as for his personal comfort and advantage, he will endeavour to keep his bodily frame in a sound and healthful condition.”⁴³

This concern for his young friend’s physical wellbeing is paralleled by Paul’s concern about Timothy’s emotional wellbeing. There are strong indications that Timothy was temperamentally timid,⁴⁴ which may have been related, in part, to his health issues.⁴⁵ When writing to the church in Corinth, Paul feels it necessary to say, “Now if Timothy come, see that he be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do: let no man therefore despise him.”⁴⁶ And again and again in his letters, the apostle needs to encourage and exhort his young friend who seems in danger of being overwhelmed by the work and the difficulties he faces.

From what we have considered, it is clear that Paul took a loving and wide-ranging interest in Timothy’s wellbeing. It should also be noted that, if the apostle visited Lystra for the second time about AD 51-52 and wrote 1 Timothy about AD 62-63, then this means that Timothy was continuing to receive pastoral support from Paul even after a decade in ministry. It is true that Timothy was relatively young (probably less than forty),⁴⁷ but he was not inexperienced, yet still needed to be cared for pastorally.

Providing Pastoral Care For Ministers.

Having examined the need for pastoral care and the example of Paul’s care of Timothy, we must now consider the provision of pastoral care for ministers of the Gospel. We will consider four areas:

1. Our Shepherd. Any consideration of pastoral care for ministers, must begin with the acknowledgement that ministers are themselves sheep. Our calling may be to shepherd the flock,⁴⁸ but we are only ever under-shepherds. The Chief Shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ,⁴⁹ and just as he pastors the flock at large,⁵⁰ so he pastors us. We must listen to his voice as he speaks to us through his word, and we must follow him wherever he leads. Our wellbeing and our fruitfulness both as private and public persons, depends upon our abiding in Christ.⁵¹ We must stay close to the Saviour. Richard Baxter writes, “O, brethren, watch therefore over your own hearts: keep out lusts and passions and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith and love

³⁷ 2 Timothy 1:6.

³⁸ John Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy* (Inter-Varsity Press - 2012) p. 31.

³⁹ 1 Timothy 5:23.

⁴⁰ Henry Alford, *The New Testament For English Readers* (Rivingtons - 1865) Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 545.

⁴¹ Towner, p. 376.

⁴² John Stott, *1 Timothy & Titus* (Inter- Varsity Press - 2011) p. 140.

⁴³ Fairbairn, p. 226-227.

⁴⁴ John Stott, 2 Timothy, p. 19-20.

⁴⁵ Patrick Fairbairn, *The Imperial Bible-Dictionary* (Blakie & Son - 1885) Vol. 5-6, p. 283.

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 16:10-11 The Revised Version 1885 by Oxford University Press.

⁴⁷ Towner, p. 314.

⁴⁸ 1 Peter 5:1-2.

⁴⁹ 1 Peter 5:4.

⁵⁰ Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekial 34:11-16; John 10:11-16; Rev. 7:17.

⁵¹ John 15:4&5.

and zeal; be much at home, and be much with God. If it be not your daily business to study your own hearts, and to subdue corruption, and to walk with God - if you make not this a work to which you constantly attend, all will go wrong, and you will starve your hearers; or, if you have an affected fervency, you cannot expect a blessing to attend it from on high. Above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices: remember, you cannot decline and neglect your duty to your own hurt alone; many will be losers by it as well as you. For your people's sakes, therefore, look to your hearts."⁵²

2. Our Brothers. Another key element in providing pastoral care for ministers is the role played by fellow ministers. A helpful example of this can be found in the life of Robert Murray McCheyne. Whilst at high school and then theological college, a group of friends gathered around McCheyne, including Alexander Somerville and Andrew Bonar. These men met to study, to discuss, to sing, and above all else, to pray.⁵³ And whilst the core group remained the same, even after college, yet the group grew over time as they encountered other like-minded men. The ties that bound these men together were deep and loving. No one individual dominated the group, but as David Robertson has observed, "*they were bound together in Christ and each of them had a common passion and desire for the work of the gospel.*"⁵⁴ Very early on, they started praying for each other on Saturday evenings, that the Lord's blessing might rest upon their Sabbath labours.⁵⁵ They remained in regular communication by letter. Whenever they could, they visited each other, and prayed together. They exchanged pulpits, assisted each other at communion seasons, encouraged each other, and even engaged in constructive criticism of each other's sermons.⁵⁶ It is not surprising then, when one considers these ties, that this band of brothers exercised a considerable "*influence on the spiritual life of the Church of Scotland at the time.*"⁵⁷

From the example of McCheyne we see the real benefits of developing strong ties with fellow ministers. The simple fact is that, as ministers of the Gospel, we need one another. So how can such meaningful and fruitful relationships be initiated and developed? One possibility is through the fraternal, where ministers in a particular locality get together on a regular basis to be instructed, to share, and to pray. William G. Blaickie says this about fraternals, "*The more formal gatherings of ministers ought to conduce to the increase both of personal devotedness and of professional activity. Some plan should be fallen upon whereby iron may sharpen iron, and the servant of the Lord may leave the society of his brethren not only with a heart refreshed by pleasant intercourse, but with all his activities quickened - with more earnest desire to labour heartily in his work, and with a more clear perception of the way in which he should do so.*"⁵⁸ Blaickie goes on to say that the value of such meetings "*can hardly be over-estimated.*"⁵⁹

Another possibility, which is really a modern take on an old theme, are the '*Companies of Pastors*' organised by the '*Gospel Reformation Network*'⁶⁰ in conjunction with the '*Twin Lakes Fellowship*'⁶¹ within the Presbyterian Church in America. The goal is to bring together small companies of like-minded men for friendship, support, accountability, teaching, and encouragement. Amongst other things, those belonging to these companies undertake to conference-call once a month, meet annually at their General Assembly, and attend the Twin Lakes Fellowship fraternal. Whilst this is an American model, yet it could be easily adapted to the European context.

No doubt there are other ways of organising such gatherings, but however we formulate them, if we learn anything from the example of McCheyne and his friends, we will appreciate just how important they are. Obviously attending a fraternal requires us to set aside time, and we might be tempted to think that this is time that we can little spare, but this is surely a false economy. As the isolation, discouragements, and difficulties of ministry take their toll, we need brothers in arms around us. And as Blaickie notes, in the

⁵² Richard Baxter, p. 101.

⁵³ L. J. Van Valen, *Constrained by his Love* (Christian Focus - 2002) p. 89.

⁵⁴ David Robertson, p. 140.

⁵⁵ Andrew Bonar, *Memoir & Remains of Robert Murray M'Cheyne* (Banner of Truth - 2009) p. 52.

⁵⁶ David Robertson, p. 140-141.

⁵⁷ L. J. Van Valen, p. 230.

⁵⁸ William G. Blaickie, *The Work of the Ministry: A Manual of Homiletical and Pastoral theology* (Solid Ground Christian Books - 2005) p. 231.

⁵⁹ William G. Blaickie, p. 231.

⁶⁰ The '*Gospel Reformation Network*' is an organisation the purpose of which is '*to cultivate healthy Reformed churches in the Presbyterian Church in American.*' See www.gospelreformation.net.

⁶¹ The '*Twin Lakes Fellowship*' is '*a ministerial fraternal devoted to the encouragement of Gospel ministry and ministers, and to the promotion of healthy biblical church planting. The Twin Lakes Fellowship is a ministry of the Session of the historic First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS.*' See www.twinlakesfellowship.com.

absence of any form of episcopal superintendence within Presbyterianism, we need to find ways of looking after one another, and the fraternal is one such possibility.⁶²

3. Our Sessions. A third element to providing pastoral care for ministers of the Gospel is the role played by the Session. Our Lord Jesus Christ has so ordered his church that as ministers we do not labour on our own, but have the support of ruling elders. Whilst these men are primarily responsible for oversight of the wider congregation, yet they are perfectly placed to provide support for ministers. At the most basic level, ruling elders should faithfully carry out their own duties, thus allowing ministers of the word to devote themselves to their own calling without unnecessary distraction.⁶³

Ruling elders should also be earnestly praying for and offering emotional support for their ministers, as well as encouraging and advising them.⁶⁴ J. W. Alexander once said, *“The preacher who is constantly pouring out, and seldom pouring in, can pour but a little while,”*⁶⁵ and again, the elders are perfectly placed to encourage ministers to spend time in the study, attend fraternal meetings and conferences, accept pulpit exchanges, and where possible, to take advantage of study leave and sabbaticals. To quote Alexander again, *“And it will be your duty to impress on your people the truth, that you are as really serving them when you are in your study, as when you are in their homes.”*⁶⁶ Ruling elders need to be aware of this, and where necessary, explain to the congregation why it is so important that their minister seeks opportunities to feed his own soul. Ruling elders also need to encourage their ministers to take their day off and make full use of their holiday leave.

4. Our Denominations. The final element to providing pastoral care for ministers is the wider church, particularly, the courts of the church. Whilst there will be differences between denominations, yet the courts of the church need ensure the material wellbeing of ministers by setting/advising general terms and conditions of employment.⁶⁷ The courts of the church will also surely wish to encourage the ongoing development of ministers by making provision for study leave and sabbaticals. The courts of the church may also give direction and training to Sessions regarding their responsibilities, including their responsibilities towards their minister.⁶⁸ The courts of the church will also have in place arrangements to visit congregations, and to meet with the minister, elders and deacons.⁶⁹

Whilst all of the above is helpful, yet the courts of the church may have an additional role to play in the provision of pastoral care for ministers. Returning to the example of Paul's care for Timothy, could it be, that, not only do we have areas of pastoral concern that are of ongoing relevance, but also a model for exercising pastoral care that can be applied in our own day? Does this example not give us warrant for utilising, say, the gifts of retired ministers with a lifetime's experience, who could befriend and encourage younger men? Obviously care would need to be taken, and younger men would need to be open to the idea, but would it not be wise and could it not be helpful?

Conclusion.

We commenced this paper by noting the apostle Paul's assessment of his ministry in 2 Timothy 4:6-8. After years of ministry, he was able to say, *‘For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.’* May this be true of us, and to that end, may we seek to support and care for one another, that we might all finish well, and bring glory to the Saviour we love. Amen.

⁶² William G. Blaikie, p. 231.

⁶³ Thomas Smyth, *An Ecclesiastical Catechism of the Presbyterian Church* (Boston, Crocker & Brewster - 1841) p. 56&57.

⁶⁴ A Manual For Elder (Edited and published by the Home Section of the Mission Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland - 2006) p. 17&18.

⁶⁵ J. W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Preaching* (Banner of Truth - 1975) p. 127.

⁶⁶ J. W. Alexander, p. 134.

⁶⁷ The PCA have produced a helpful guide for the churches in this area, *‘PCA Call Package Guidelines’* (2013). Within English Independency the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches have produced a guide entitled *‘Caring For Your Pastor: A Code of Practice for Churches’* (2017).

⁶⁸ A helpful example is *‘A Manual for Elders’* produced by the Home Section of the Mission Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

⁶⁹ For example within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland this is supposed to happen at least once every seven years, see The Code of the EPC FSO2.1. Within the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland this is to happen at least once in ten years, see The Code of the RPC 10.03 (2014).