

September 17, 2017

## “How to Treat Elders”

### Focal Passage: 1 Timothy 5:17-25 (NASB)

Cross References: Deuteronomy 25:4; Matthew 7:21-23; 10:10; 18:15-20; Luke 10:7; Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 9:9, 14; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

**Lesson Idea:** We should honor faithful ministers, rebuke unfaithful ones, and be careful about who we ordain.

#### BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Sept 10 Ezekiel 34-36	Sept 11 Ezekiel 37-39
Sept 12 Ezekiel 40-42	Sept 13 Ezekiel 43-45
Sept 14 Ezekiel 46-48	Sept 15 Daniel 1-3
Sept 16 Daniel 4-6	Sept 17 Daniel 7-9

**Background:** The term “elder” here seems to indicate an official position in the church, since it involves such things as “ruling” and “preaching and teaching.” The Greek word is “*presbuteros*” from which the word “presbyterian” is derived. It has been translated as elders, bishops, or officers of the church. In our church life, it most often refers to the pastors or ministers of a local congregation.

#### 1 Timothy 5:17-25

*17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” 19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. 20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. 21 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. 22 Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.*

*23 No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.*

*24 The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. 25 Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.*

#### DISCUSSION:

- v 17. What kind of elders is he speaking about, and what does it mean for them to “rule well?” Why would they be worthy of “double honor,” and what would that look like? (see 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) Why are “preaching and teaching” especially important?
- V 18. What does these quotes teach about the church’s responsibility towards its ministers? (see Deuteronomy 25:4; Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:9, 14)
- V 19. Why did Paul tell them not to even “receive an accusation” against an elder without at least two or three witnesses? (see Matthew 18:15-20)
- V 20. What should happen to the elders who continue in sin, and why? What kinds of things would disqualify an elder from his role in the church? (see the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1)
- V 21. Why did Paul feel the need to “solemnly charge” Timothy concerning this type of discipline towards elders? (see Galatians 2:11-14)
- V 22. What does “laying hands upon” someone indicate in this passage? How could that be done “**too hastily**,” and why would that be bad? How would that be sharing “responsibility for the sins of others?” How do we “keep ourselves from sin?”
- V 23. Why did Paul share this admonition with Timothy? What does it teach us about the proper use of things such as alcohol? (see 1 Timothy 3:3)
- V 24. How are some sins “quite evident,” while others will only be known at judgment time? What warning does this give us? (see Matthew 7:21-23)
- V 25. How are good deeds and bad deeds both “quite evident?” How does this correspond to Jesus’ teaching that we would know people by their “fruits?” (see Matthew 7:15-20)

#### APPLICATION:

- ✓ How do you treat those who minister to you?
- ✓ What will be revealed about you and your work at the final judgment?

Lesson by Bro Stan

**NOTES:** from David Guzik, *1 Timothy 5*:

**V 17:** In this context, *double honor* means financial support. Paul has already stated that certain widows are worthy of honor (1 Timothy 5:1), speaking of financial support. He then goes on to say *Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine*. Some think the church should not support staff, and that the paid ministry is an abomination – they say that the church instead should be using the money to support the needy. This is an attractive way of thinking; but it isn't Biblical. If the *needy* (that is, *the truly needy*) are *worthy of honor*, then those who rule and teach in the church are *worthy of double honor*.

White paraphrases Paul's idea: "What I have been saying about the support of widows reminds me of another question of Church finance: the payment of presbyters. Equity and scriptural principles suggest that they should be remunerated in proportion to their usefulness."

**V 18: *For the Scripture says:*** The principle that those who serve God's people should be paid (when possible, of course) is supported by Scripture: Deuteronomy 25:4, and Luke 10:7 (significantly, Paul quotes Luke and calls it **Scripture**).

**V 19: *Do not receive:*** In these verses, Paul hit the balance between believing and acting on every bit of gossip that comes along about a leader in the church, and ignoring serious sin in a leader's life. Either extreme is wrong. "Nothing does more harm than when some people are treated as if they could do no wrong and others as if they could do no right." (Barclay) ...

***Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses:*** Any accusation against a leader should not be automatically received. The accusation should be carefully verified by two or three witnesses – not just two or three others who also heard the gossip. Timothy can't allow false accusations about church leaders to circulate.

"It is indeed a trick of Satan to estrange men from their ministers so as gradually to bring their teaching into contempt. In this way not only is wrong done to innocent people whose reputation is undeservedly injured, but the authority of God's holy teaching is diminished." (Calvin)

**V 20: *Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest may fear:*** However, if leaders are in sin, it must be addressed forthrightly – with public rebuke, to promote a fear of sin among the leadership and the entire church. Many churches have had great trouble because sin in the leadership was not forthrightly dealt with. It's important that everyone understand that leadership in the church does not shield one from accountability, it makes one even more accountable.

**V 21: *Observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality:*** Prejudice and partiality are grave sins before God. In the New Testament, the emphasis is on partiality according to class (James 2:1-9); but partiality according to race and gender is also included (Galatians 3:26-29) and regarded as sins.... "Do not treat any man, in religious matters, according to the rank he holds in life, or according to any personal attachment thou mayest have for him. Every man should be dealt with in the church as he will be dealt with at the judgment-seat of Christ." (Clarke)

**V 22: *Lay hands on anyone:*** This is used in the sense of ordination. Paul cautioned Timothy to let a man prove himself before he was recognized in ministry. There should not be a rush; time must season a man and his ministry.... Since ordination simply recognizes God's calling, it is all the more reason to not be in a hurry – time should be given to allow those gifts and callings to demonstrate themselves....

***Keep yourself pure:*** This connects to an important idea. If Timothy was called to observe and assess the lives of others, it was important that he pay even more attention to his own life.

**V 23: *Use a little wine:*** Timothy was probably abstaining from alcohol for the sake of setting a good example. However, this abstinence was hurting his health.... So Paul is telling Timothy that it isn't wise to sacrifice his health for the sake of this abstinence – he will do more good for the Lord by taking care of his body in this circumstance...

Timothy was the victim of *frequent infirmities*; yet Paul did not simply command a healing on apostolic authority.... This demonstrates that Paul did not have miraculous powers at his own command, but only at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Apparently, there was no such prompting in Timothy's case.... God uses natural

remedies and the work of doctors in healing, as well as the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit – they don't contradict one another.