

## **First Timothy: The Household of God**

Caring for Elders, Caring for the Church

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September 25, 2011



### **CARING FOR ELDERS, CARING FOR THE CHURCH 1 Timothy 5:17-25**

Good evening. Let me invite you to take your Bible and turn with me to 1 Timothy 5:17. Last week, it was Secret Church style, and so that meant a number of chapters that we covered in this particular book, and so tonight, we are only going to look at eight verses, the remainder of chapter five, and still a number of important issues that we want to look at in God's Word tonight.

1 Timothy 5:17, if you are there, let me invite you to read along with me as I read God's Word to us. Paul says:

*"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.' Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden."*

Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we are privileged tonight to be able to even open your Word and to read of you and to read of your instructions to us and so, Father, tonight we begin by praising you for speaking to us, for calling us to yourself, and we pray that as we open your Word tonight, we ask that you would help us to understand, and we pray that by your Spirit, you would help us to obey for the glory of your name and for the glory of Christ. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now, if you are perhaps visiting with us and maybe are wondering why it is that we are looking at these particular verses tonight, it is because we actually left off last time at verse 16. I say that because, very often, when money is the subject of a sermon, particularly pastor compensation, people assume sometimes that there is some kind of motivation behind the message, that there is some kind of crisis or maybe there is some kind of perceived need on behalf of the church, but I am happy to say, tonight, as we even open the Word of God, there is no such need, there is no such crisis. I can't tell you...and I know I speak on behalf of more than just myself, but leaders in this church...I can't tell you how grateful I am to you, to The Church at Brook Hills, for the way that you give and the way that you honor and the way that you support. I just want to establish that from the very outset, that this is no plea for money or anything along those lines.

It's funny; I was preparing this particular part of this message even on the financial side in verses 17 and 18 earlier this week. It was Thursday, and a lot of times I'll go to a coffee shop or something like that to kind of get away and be able to kind of work through the remainder of the outline for example. So, I was there this Thursday, and I was working on this section about "double honor" and so forth, and on two different occasions as I was working, there were people from Brook Hills who apparently had come in just very quickly and twice, about two or three hours apart, someone just laid a Starbucks gift card right there on the couch and just walked away. I don't know if that was just to kind of freak me out because I was preparing this part or maybe illustration material, I don't know, but the moral of the story is two-fold: one, the people of Brook Hills are extremely generous, and two, always prepare your sermons at Starbucks. I was just really encouraged. We are well taken care of, and so I just want to be clear from the outset what we are doing tonight in the text.

With that in mind, I want to reset the stage for us as we look at verses 17-25 because there are a number of issues, and they may appear disconnected. In fact, a lot of...really from about chapter three on in 1 Timothy, Paul seems to go in a lot of different places, and so what I want to do is to bring us back to what I think really sets the stage for chapters four, five and six and at the end of chapter three, verses 14-16. So, if you would, flip back there to those particular verses. It is the verses, really, that kind of establish, even going up to this point and then coming out of it.

So, turn to 1 Timothy 3:14-16. What I want to try to show you very quickly as we get into the text is that I really think that everything that Paul is going to say in chapters four, five and six, flows out of this idea of the church as *"the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."* He makes that statement and the confession that the church holds the gospel there in verses 15 and 16. Then, he proceeds to kind of unpack that and say, "What does that look like in leadership? What does that look like in a lot of different areas?"

Let's look at verse 15: *"If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God."* The implication is that we don't know how to behave in the household of God. In other words, it's not just good enough to kind of go on our own or with our own natural wisdom. We need instruction, and we need someone to tell us how we ought to behave in the household of God, *"Which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."* What truth is it that the church is a pillar and buttress of? Well, verse 16, *"Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness"*, so he proceeds to talk about the gospel. "He was manifested..." speaking of Jesus, "He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit in His resurrection. He was seen by angels; proclaimed among the nations; believed on in the world and taken up in glory."

So, I think Paul now, as he proceeds from that, unpacks this idea. If I can sum up verses 15 and 16 it would be simply this: that the gospel should be on display in the church. The gospel should be on display in the church. Not only in what we believe...we certainly confess the gospel and believe the gospel...but not only in what we believe, but also in how we behave. There ought to be something that is radically different in the church in the way that we believe and in the way that we behave apart from the world.

Then, Paul begins to kind of unpack that. I want you to just notice those. We are going to glide over these because we covered these last week, but it sets the stage for tonight. Notice, he says, based on that idea that there ought to be a distinction between the church and the world...the way that the church behaves and the way that the world behaves...Paul says the leaders ought to be different. Church leaders ought to be different from worldly

leaders and that is why he commends Timothy at the end of chapter four in verse 16, he says, *"watch your life and watch your doctrine."*

In the very same way, our relationships ought to be different than worldly relationships, and so he says in chapter five, *"Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity."* The very same way, it ought to flesh itself out in the way that we relate to widows. We looked at that extensively last week. So, the world naturally casts aside those that are weak, those that are poor, those that can easily be overlooked, but the church is not to be that. The church is to embrace them. The church is to take care of them. The church is to esteem them very highly.

The very same thing when we come to chapter five verses 17 and following. Paul says that the relationship...and this is where we are going tonight...the relationship between those that lead and those that are led ought to be different. It ought to look different in the church than it does in the world. In the church, the gospel ought to be on display.

Think about it in your own experience, in your own life, the dynamics for example of the workplace. Think about the dynamics that exist between those that are leading in the secular workplace, whatever that is, and those that are being led typically. When you think about all the things: the destructive gossip that normally exists, suspicion, favoritism, cutthroat mentalities, injustice, harsh leadership, impatience, bitterness. All of these things are the norm out there, but Paul says they ought not to be the norm in here. That we ought to expect these things in secular organizations, we can expect these things in government, but *"the church of the living God, the household of God, the pillar and the buttress of truth,"* the church, ought to get these things right. There ought to be a difference in other words in the way that we, the elders, care for the body, and the way that the body cares for elders. There ought to be a difference in the way that we care and the way we see care expressed out there.

Why? Because God intends for the church...for people to look into the church and to see the glory of God expressed in the gospel of God as the gospel stamps everything that we do. It stamps every relationship, every dynamic, every way that we relate one to another.

## **The Ways We Care...**

What I want to do, tonight, is I want to kind of group all four of these instructions that I think we see in 1 Timothy 5:17-25 under that umbrella of care, and we are going to talk about care for elders and care for the church. There are two different things there, and you will notice as we proceed through this sermon that there is a lot of a two-way street. It is not just how the congregation should care for elders, but also how the elders are responsible to the church, how they are accountable to the church. So, there is a two-way street. We are going to talk about two ways that the congregation should care for elders, and two ways the elders ought to be accountable to the body of Christ. Then, at the end, give two motivations, two keys how we can carry this out.

### **Honor faithful elders with generous provision.**

Two ways that the congregation should care for elders. Let's look, tonight, first of all at the ways that we care. Notice first, we honor faithful elders with generous provision. We demonstrate the power of the gospel, the glory of God in the way that we honor faithful elders with generous provision. Look at verse 17: *"Let the elders who rule well be*

*considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.*" The expression "double honor" there really is the key to understanding verse 17. The problem with that is that Paul never ever uses that expression in any other writings of his, so it is a unique expression that we do not find anywhere else in Paul's writings. It leaves us kind of scratching our heads and commentators are all over the place. What does it mean for the church to show double honor to those who rule well, especially, in teaching and preaching? Well, I think the best thing that we can do then...not explicit parallels...is to simply look at the context, and I think the context suggests two ways in which the body of Christ cares for elders. Two ways the body of Christ honors elders.

First of all, double honor involves respect. You say, "Where do you get that?" Well, look at the immediate context; look at 1 Timothy 6:1. I think this is a great place. You might want to jot some of these verses down; I'm going to give you two or three here. 1 Timothy 6:1, and you will see this idea of honor. At the very least, it involves respect. Notice what he says, *"Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor."* So, we are going to talk about the financial side in a minute, but at the very least, it involves respect. Clearly, slaves were not intended to pay back their masters in a financial way. In fact, the vast majority of them would not have the means to do that, and so Paul is indicating here that there is a sense of gratitude, a sense of appreciation that is involved in this idea of honor.

The same thing down in 1 Timothy 6:16, notice what he says down there this time in reference to God, *"who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen."* Again, the idea of honor, appreciation, gratitude, respect toward God. So, at the very least, from congregations...we're going to unpack this in a minute. For those who rule well and labor in preaching and teaching, there ought to be from the congregation an esteeming, an honoring, a respect, a gratitude that is prevalent.

You say, "Well, where do you get that?" Notice...I want to give you one other verse. I think it is an excellent commentary on these verses. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. If you want a good verse that exemplifies the principle here in 1 Timothy 5:17, it would be 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 where Paul says, *"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work."* "...To esteem them very highly in love because of their work."

So, the idea of double honor, initially at least, includes the idea of respect, but I think it also includes the idea of pay or compensation. It includes the idea of pay or compensation. You say, "Well, where do you see that?" Look, if you would, at 1 Timothy 5:18. Notice the word "for" there. So, Paul, what he is doing is giving us the basis in verse 18 for what he just said in verse 17, *"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor,"* and then verse 18, *"for the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'"* So, clearly, respect is involved but also, in this particular case, I think he is talking about those that would give themselves full-time or part-time to the ministry of preaching and teaching.

Obviously, there were occasions in the New Testament...it is not where you have to be paid. There were occasions where Paul worked and there were occasions where Paul didn't work. You can look at 1 Corinthians 9, if you want to investigate that on your own. So, it is not that it has to be, but it certainly can be. Those that the church has recognized and those that give themselves to that, there is then the idea of the laborer indeed deserves his wages.

Now, it still begs the question though doesn't it? What does he mean by double honor? When it comes to the final analysis, what does it mean to pay someone in a way such that there is double honor? Well, commentators are all over the place on this, but here is what one person said, "Does double honor mean that it is double what someone else who did not do as well, who does not rule as well?" Doubtful. "Is it double what the widows get?" Probably not what Paul intends. "Is it double what the church down the road gets..." or my favorite, "Is it double what he got last year?" Who knows? Probably not: I cannot make any case whatsoever that this is the case here.

In the final analysis, Paul is not being prescriptive here. He is not telling us exactly what we should do and how we should handle things, and I don't think that Paul is indicating in any sense extravagance. I don't think he is saying that we should pay people that labor in preaching and teaching in an extravagant fashion. In fact, he is going to warn against some of those ideas in 1 Timothy 6. I do think though the expression "double honor" indicates that there should be generosity on the part of the people of God. So, whatever that looks like and, certainly, we can delve into that, but at least it includes the idea of generosity.

There is a saying that perhaps some of you have heard, that is clearly not what is being intended here, but I have heard it on a number of occasions. Not here, but regarding pastor pay, congregations or churches say, "Lord, you keep him humble, we will keep him poor." I don't think that is what Paul is intending, in fact, I think that is antithetical to what Paul is saying here. We all know don't we...or most of us know...of cases where pastors and, maybe, their families are abused in this regard. It is not the case here, and I praise God for that, but there are many brothers who labor and who are not really given the wages that they deserve.

That is troublesome in a couple of ways. One is it simply violates verse 18 where Paul is calling for a basic sense of fairness. If a laborer is laboring...and he quotes Jesus here from Luke 10:7 or Matthew 10:10...he is saying the laborer deserves his wages. Even brings up Deuteronomy 25:4 where he says, "*You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,*" he is at least allowed to eat as he goes along and as he labors. Paul is citing that verse just to remind us that if we are to treat animals that way, surely we would treat those that are human that labor among us. Surely, we would treat them in a better way than that, or at least as good as that.

So, I think it violates a basic principle of fairness, but not only that...and I know churches don't necessarily intend to do this; they don't overtly think this way, but it says something not only about how much they value their own possessions, it says something about how little they value the ministry of the Word. When churches withhold from pastors in an excessive way, and they are not fair to them, they are not just wronging a pastor...they are doing that...but they are also communicating to that church and to the outside world how little they think of the ministry of the Word of God. It seems like a trivial matter but like all matters of money in the Bible, it really goes far beyond dollars and cents and goes to the heart. I praise God again for a church that values the Word of God, esteems the ministry of the Word and then, as an expression of that, is generous to those who labor in preaching and teaching.

It involves the idea of respect, it includes the idea of pay, but I want you to notice and this is where that two-way street thing comes in, that this is not automatic. That there is not an entitlement based upon position or background or anything like that. There are conditions that Paul lays down as to who is worthy of double honor, and again, he lays down two and they are very closely related.

First of all, he says they must rule well in the church. Now, we have to be careful here. What does Paul mean when he says they must rule well in the church? We might get the wrong idea, the wrong impression from the idea of "rule well in the church" because we use that word "rule," we sometimes think in a heavy-handed kind of way. I want you to jot these verses down. He uses this same word in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and 12. In every one of these cases, the first two with elders, the third with deacons, all of them have to do with managing a house, managing a family.

Now, certainly there is an administrative idea to that, a managing of a household so there is not chaos, but you know we don't think of fathers in a heavy-handed fashion. As fathers lead their homes, they lead by love, they lead by care, they lead by sacrifice, and they lead by laying down their lives. So, when Paul says they must rule well, he is not saying that they manage the church in a harsh or efficient way even. He is saying they shepherd the people of God, they love the people of God, they lay down their lives like the Good Shepherd of John 10; they lay down their lives for the sheep.

We may get the wrong idea from "rule," and we may get the wrong idea from "rule well." What does Paul mean? What is the standard? How do we know when a particular minister of the gospel is ministering well? We may have in our minds some kind of comparison. We need the Christian version of Steve Jobs at Apple, or maybe someone who is really efficient, someone who is really effective, or someone who is really successful. Maybe that is what Paul means when he says rule well. Actually, the word used here for "well" is not a comparative word. There are other words in the New Testament that speak of comparison; this is a word that speaks of goodness or rightness or meeting a certain standard. I say that to simply say that Paul here is indicating that we ought to evaluate, not based against this person or against this particular standard, but simply are they faithful? In and of themselves, are they doing what they ought to be doing? I think we don't have to go any further than this particular book to look and say, "What does it mean for a minister of the gospel to be successful? What does it mean for a minister of the gospel to be faithful or one who rules well?" I think we see it particularly in 1 Timothy 3. He must be above reproach, he must manage his household well, he must hold sound doctrine, he must point out error, he must be an example to the flock. Is he a faithful minister of the gospel? So, he must rule well.

Not only must he rule well in the church, he must labor diligently in the Word. In order to get that kind of double honor, he must labor diligently in the Word. Now, I am not going to go excessively in this one. I think what Paul was indicating...and what we all know, certainly, those who give themselves in preaching and teaching, it is not the only thing that they are called to do, not just that they read their Bible 168 hours a week and pray 168 hours a week along with that. That is not the idea. Certainly, it is the idea that they are giving themselves to a lot of the time, a lot of their work is given indeed to the ministry of Word and prayer. In fact, I think the translation here in verse 17 may kind of throw us off the scent if we are not careful, because I believe the better way to translate here in verse 17...you might want to look at your text again...is "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." That word "especially" there, it could be, and I think it is, better to be translated "that is." In other words, "those that rule well in the church, that is, in other words, those who labor in preaching and teaching of the Word." So, there is almost an identification between those that are ruling well. In fact, I think there is an identification...those that are ruling well are the same ones in fact who are laboring in preaching and teaching in the Word. My prayer is, then, that God would give us grace to continue to esteem the Word of God in such a way that we then honor those who give themselves to it.

### **Protect all elders from unfounded accusations.**

So, we honor elders with generous provision, and then number two, we protect all elders from unfounded accusations. Verse 19, we protect all elders from unfounded accusations. Verse 19, *"Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses."* Elders ought to be accountable to the body of Christ. Now, I want to put forward a couple of cautions, a couple of warnings here, as we look at this particular verse.

First of all, we should not be surprised when elders are accused. We shouldn't be surprised when elders are accused. Now, I think at the beginning that might sound a little counter-intuitive; it may seem kind of the opposite of what we would expect. If these are elders, if these are men who are above reproach...if these are men who are above reproach, it would seem that there would be fewer accusations, fewer allegations against those kinds of people. However, I think for anybody who has been close to pastoral ministry for any stretch of time, you realize that it is actually not the case. That it is the case that the very nature of pastoral work...the things you have to get involved with, the sticky, sometimes messy, and definitely sinful situations that you have to be involved in...the stand that you must take for truth; the satanic attacks that are certain to come your way. All of these...and we could cite other reasons why it is that elders, those that lead in the church, are more often, more frequently the target of accusation than perhaps other people in the congregation. Calvin said, "None are more exposed to slanders and insults than godly teachers. They may perform their duties correctly and conscientiously, yet, they never avoid a thousand criticisms."

Which then leads us to the second point: what should we do? We should then be cautious when elders are accused. Accusations are going to come. We should not be surprised, and therefore, we should be cautious when elders are accused. Paul says, notice very clearly, and I think we need to read this and accept what he is saying here, verse 19, *"Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses."* If there is not that, then we simply dismiss it. We just don't listen to it. Now, I am not saying that we should stonewall or we should dismiss out of hand or that we should ignore serious allegations, but it does mean that we must take the utmost care and consideration when elders are accused. You say, "Well, shouldn't we do that with everybody? Why do elders get that special treatment? Why is there favoritism in that case toward those laboring teaching and preaching? Shouldn't we be careful when anybody is accused?" Well, I think the reason Paul says this it has to do with the public nature, the public office of the elder.

I'll give you an illustration to throw a little bit of light on what I think Paul is getting at here. Think about over a decade ago, there was the Clinton scandal, the Clinton affair, the Clinton impeachment, all that stuff. After all the dust settled and the facts were known, and it was moving along in the process, there began to be a debate in our nation about whether or not a public official like the President of the United States could perform in his office in light of moral failings. So, in other words, the argument was that there is a distinction between someone's public office, their public function, their ability to do the job and a separation between that and their private life, that those are disconnected. I certainly don't intend to settle that dispute in terms of Presidential politics or whatever. I do intend to remind us, though, that that separation between public office, public function, what an elder does and his private life, obviously, has no place in the Bible. Those two are wed. So, why is it that Paul is so zealous to guard the reputation of an elder? It is simply because an elder simply cannot function...he cannot be an example to the people of God if the people of God do not believe in him both publicly and privately.

Which then leads us by way of application...how can we...Let us be always zealous, always be eager to do whatever we can to protect the reputation of those that preach and teach,

those that labor in the Word, those that lead us in the church. Not because they are some special class of super-Christians, but more importantly, because the church is the pillar and buttress of truth, and we don't want that undermined in any way. We don't want the glory of God diminished in any way. We don't want the gospel to be hindered in its advance in any way, and it will be if people in the church or in the community do not believe in that person personally. So, let us be eager to eliminate, by God's grace, unfounded accusations. Be eager to stop unhelpful and ungodly criticism that simply brings down the reputation of those that labor in the ministry of the Word.

### **Rebuke unrepentant elders in the presence of all.**

Paul gives three admonitions, I think, to the congregation in particular, and in its relationship to the elder: One, to honor faithful elders. Two, to protect all elders in terms of their reputation. Then, he proceeds, number three, to encourage us to rebuke unrepentant elders in the presence of all. Paul goes on, and he doesn't just say, "Don't listen if there are accusations," he says, "You need to make sure it is substantiated by two or three witnesses; that there is credible evidence, and when there is credible evidence," he says...well, go here in verses 20 and 21..."*As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.*" I take "rest" to be the "rest" of the congregation and not just the "rest" of the elders. Verse 21, "*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.*"

Again, I ask, "What does he mean?" We could immediately run into a thousand different applications, how this might look as it plays out in the life of the church, and so I want to urge us to be careful as we think through what it would look like to apply these particular verses. I will give you an example. I don't think Paul here is saying that every little sin...obviously, all sin is sin, so I am not belittling sin. I am saying I don't think Paul is saying every single sin is then worthy of a public rebuke in the congregation. I don't think that is what he is getting at, so I'll give you kind of an example. If two or three of you, two or three witnesses, are driving somewhere in Birmingham this week and you see me jaywalking, I don't think necessarily that that calls for a public rebuke in the presence of all. Now, I know that we probably have law enforcement brothers and sisters here, and you realize the dangers of jaywalking much more carefully than we do, so I'm not belittling jaywalking. It is wrong, it is sinful, period.

However, I am saying that I think there is something here that Paul is indicating that there needs to be a "big-ness" to it. There needs to be a magnitude to what we are talking about. I am not being prescriptive as to what it is that deserves public rebuke or not; certainly, congregations can try to determine that as best they can in the leadership of the Spirit. However, I am saying that I think he is saying that those sins, in the context of 1 Timothy, would discredit that individual in terms of his ability to be an example to the flock. If there is something of such a magnitude that he can no longer serve as an example to the flock in the ways that we looked at in 1 Timothy 3 and in other places in the Bible, then I think that calls for a public rebuke if they are not repentant. That is why the ESV says, "*If they persist in sin,*" if there is a pattern of unrepentance in their life, or there is a sin of such magnitude, those kinds of situations. Again, I am not being prescriptive; I don't know exactly what this always looks like, but in those kinds of circumstances, Paul says we rebuke them in the presence of all.

Why would we do that? That seems so backwards, you know? It seems so inefficient and disruptive. Why not just kind of just push them out or just kind of sweep them to the side and just kind of go on? Why would we do that? I think for a couple of reasons. One, we should rebuke as a witness to the truth. We rebuke as a witness to the truth. I take this



from verse 21, *"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus..."* Do you hear? Or, "Do you feel" may be the better way to say it. Do you feel the magnitude of what Paul is saying here? *"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging..."* We know Timothy had personal relationships. No doubt, in the context of this book, there were false teachers who were disrupting the church, and Paul is implicitly calling for their public rebuke. No doubt Timothy had some relationships with them, and Paul says, "I don't care how painful it is; I don't care how difficult it is; I am charging you *"in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality..."* either favoritism or its opposite.

Why do we do that in the church? We do that because as the pillar and buttress of truth, which is what we are called to in 1 Timothy 3, it is our desire and our need to align ourselves with the judgment of God. To align ourselves with the judgment that is sure to come, either now or on the last day. So, Paul is saying if we are going to be...if we are not going to deny our very identity as the pillar and buttress of truth, we must align ourselves with the truth of God and with the judgment of God. We do it as a witness to the truth no matter how difficult, no matter how painful, and two, we should rebuke as a warning to others.

So often the Bible motivates through grace. Things like Galatians 5:1 where Paul says, *"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."* There is this idea of grace motivating us, the gospel motivating us, in all avenues of obedience, but you know that is not the only way the Bible motivates. Sometimes the Bible motivates by grace, and sometimes the Bible motivates through fear. This is one of those cases. Why is it we do that? He says in verse 20, *"As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all..."* and you might want to underline or circle this, *"...so that the rest..."* and again, I believe he is speaking about the whole congregation. I can't be certain about that, but I think that is what he means, *"...so that the rest may stand in fear."* So that other people, other elders in particular, may look on that public rebuke and say, "May it never be with me. I don't want that."

My parents were big believers in firm and frequent discipline, and I have three older brothers, twin brothers, that are five years older than me and an oldest brother that is seven years older than me, and so I saw a lot of their stuff. I saw a lot of that firm and frequent discipline in their lives, and my mother tells me that I received, far and away, fewer episodes of discipline than my brothers did. Why is that? Well, it's because even sinners have common sense. I don't want that. I don't want that to be the case in my life.

So, God is giving us here then...He is motivating us by grace, even though it is motivating through fear in a sense, it is still of grace because our natural instinct is to think that, "I will get away with this," and "I will never get caught," and there's never going to be a day of reckoning. This verse serves kind of as a shock treatment to say, "Brother there will be a day of reckoning, certainly on that last day, but it may come even sooner than you think, and it won't be in the privacy of your home, but it will be in full view of everyone else." It says, "Rebuke them in the presence of all."

God forbid that we would ever need to take that step, but if it ever comes to that, may God give us the courage to believe His Word and to do His Word. To trust that He has infinitely more wisdom than we do. We may think we have a better and more creative way to do that, but we are at the same time short-circuiting His very intentions in the church in being a pillar and buttress of truth. So, God, give us the courage to obey what He says.

### **Appoint each elder with great care.**

We honor, we protect, we rebuke and then last, we appoint. We appoint each elder with great care. We appoint each elder with great care. Verses 22-25...read those with me again if you would. "*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands,*" and I think the better translation here, not that this is a bad translation, it's just maybe to kind of bring it out..."*Do not be hasty of laying on hands,*" I think that word "nor" could also be kind of "and in so doing." So, there is a connection between what he is saying in these two phrases. "*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands (and in so doing) take part in the sins of others.*" We will unpack that in just a moment. So, he says, "Keep yourself pure."

Then, verse 23, which I know many of you are drawn to like a moth to the flame. So, what is Paul saying? What is he indicating here? I will save you some time: I don't know. I don't know exactly why Paul has this here. I think it is probably because he ends verse 22 with, "keep yourself pure." So, it really is a parenthetical remark; it is almost a footnote here. We do this sometimes when we are writing an email, for example, and you are kind of going along, and you just think of something. "If I don't put this in parentheses and say this right now, I am going to forget it," so you just kind go ahead and blurt it out, say it, close up parentheses and go on with your thought. I think that is what Paul is doing here. Perhaps Timothy has given himself to an ascetic lifestyle, maybe, and the beginning of 1 Timothy 4 may be the background of that and Paul is saying, "Brother, that's killing you. You have serious medical issues, and if you want to be an elder for a long time, the best way not by, in this case, abstaining, but the best thing you can do is use this wine as a medicine." I think he is urging that and saying, "Don't think your purity is going to demand that, in terms of eliminating any medicinal help, that wine might provide." That is all I am going to say about that.

Verse 24: "*The sins...*" The reason I say that is I want you to connect those two. I do want you to see verse 22, "*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.*" Then, realize that verse 24 picks that thought back up, so those two are connected where he says, "*The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment.*" In other words, it is obvious. In some brothers, it is obvious that they should not have hands laid upon them. Simply recognize there is nothing spiritual about that...about laying on of hands. They shouldn't be recognized as leaders in the congregations, as elders in the congregation because their sins are so obvious, they are conspicuous. On the other hand, he says, "*but the sins of others appear later,*" so you are going to make mistakes. Sometimes it's not going to be so obvious. I think the implication here is that you need to take all the time and all the care and all the due diligence that you can and make sure to the best of your ability. It says, "*But the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.*" So, I think the point is fairly clear. He is urging them...he is urging Timothy, to not be hasty in the laying on of hands, to be careful. It is not always immediately obvious who should be or who should not be an elder.

Why is this so important? Two quick reasons: first of all, careful selection is for the benefit of those choosing. Again, verse 22, "*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, (and in so doing) take part in the sins of others.*" In other words, "Timothy, you cannot just go lay hands on a particular brother and say he should be an elder and do this in haste. Then, when he falls, because you didn't do the due diligence that you should, say, 'You know what, I had nothing to do with it. It is not my fault. It is not my responsibility that he fell.'"

No, he says there is culpability...a responsibility...that attaches to your laying on of hands. I think that is a word for us, whenever we appoint elders, that every step along the process

we need to realize that there is a responsibility that goes along with setting apart people for leadership. So, it is for the benefit of those who are choosing.

Number two, it is for the protection of the church. For the protection of the church. I think this one is fairly obvious. There is always a need for more elders; there is always a need for more people to be raised up but the last thing that we need is haste in making those decisions. We are not always going to make the right decisions. Sometimes we are going to be wrong. Sometimes we are going to deny brothers we shouldn't deny, and sometimes we are going to allow brothers we shouldn't. That is just the nature of it, but we need to make sure that we do everything that we can on our part to minimize those mistakes; to make every effort to follow the Word, to appoint godly men and in so doing, protect the church.

## **The Keys to Care**

Now, how do we do that? How do we...kind of backing up, maybe, to the entire sermon and say, how do we honor, how do we protect, how do we rebuke, how do we, in this last case, appoint in such a way that is consistent with the text? Maybe even to think about it this way: how do we avoid...this may be the biggest danger for us, when we look at this particular case...how do we avoid indifference to all of this? I know there are a lot of you here tonight that came tonight and said, "Man, I really hope he delves into pastor compensation. It's just been gnawing at me all week." No, I suspect in your mind there are bigger issues. There are more critical, more pressing issues in your mind; things that are going on in your life, things that are going on in your marriage or things that are going on with your kids or things going on at work or whatever.

### **We remind ourselves of the glory of God in the church.**

So, how do we avoid indifference to this? I think two ways. Number one: we remind ourselves of the glory of God in the church. We need to remind ourselves of the glory of God in the church. Even though these matters may seem trivial in our eyes, they are not...they are not trivial in God's eyes. Acts 20:28, Jesus has bought the church with His own blood. The church of God is precious to God. Not just in and of itself, but because the church, as we reference back in 1 Timothy 3:14-16, because God intends to display the glory of God in the church. If that is the case, how do we then do that? How do we stir ourselves up to realize the glory of God in the church? One, we sense the gravity of casually ignoring God's Word. I won't camp out here, just to simply say that there are a lot of commands in this passage; they are not suggestions. He says to honor; He says to protect; He says to rebuke; He says to appoint, and He means what He says. He says: do it. Obey the Word.

Number two: we see the glory on the positive side, not just the negative; we see the positive side. We see the glory of rightly ordering Christ's church. We see the glory of rightly ordering Christ's church. I know that many of us have all kinds of negative experiences, maybe baggage we bring into here tonight in regard to the church, and we just can't imagine, in light of all these things that we have seen, all the abuses, maybe pastors that have had exploited the congregations or congregations that have exploited pastors. How in this world can the church display the glory of God as messed up as the church is?

I just want to remind you that this not the way it has to be. That is certainly not God's intention. God's intention is not for shepherds who exploit the sheep or for sheep who abuse the shepherd. God's intention is for pastors who would lay their lives down for the flock, who would live among them and who would love them with the love of Christ. Then, in

response, the congregation...the sheep...who would then love their shepherd, follow their shepherd, who would give generously to their shepherd, not reluctantly or under compulsion but because they love him, they love the Word of God. That is the ground, brothers and sisters, that is the ground in which the gospel best flourishes.

We want the gospel to advance, but we cannot see the gospel advance if we don't pay attention to the way we order things around here; the way we follow the way of God around here. You see the end goal of this passage; the end goal of all these passages really in the middle of 1 Timothy, the end goal for example, tonight is not to have well-paid pastors or public rebukes. The end goal is the glory of God. The end goal is for the gospel to go forward from the church. If that is the case, then we need to sense the gravity of disobeying God's Word and see the glory of rightly ordering the church according to God's Word.

**We remind ourselves of the kindness of God in the gospel.**

Then, last, we need to remind ourselves of the kindness of God in the gospel. How do we avoid indifference? We remind ourselves of the kindness of God in the gospel. How do we avoid disobedience even? How do we avoid pitfalls of gossip and allegations and suspicions and atmosphere of mistrust? How do we foster an environment of love? Think about this as we are closing up; think about this as we finish. How do we foster an environment, in this church, The Church at Brook Hills, how do we foster an environment of love and forgiveness and charity and unity from those that are leading to those that are led and from those being led to those who are leading? There is only one way we get there, brothers and sisters, and that is through the gospel.

Here is what I mean by that. As I was preparing this sermon, I was overwhelmed by my need for the gospel to lead in His church. Brothers and sisters, I need the gospel to deliver me from self-centeredness. I need the gospel to deliver me from desire for shameful gain. I need the gospel to deliver me from laziness. I need the gospel to deliver me from a sense of entitlement. I need the gospel to deliver me, and we could go on and on and on...all manner of sin. I need the gospel to deliver me, and at the same time, by the same token, you need the gospel. You need the gospel to deliver you from criticism. You need the gospel to deliver you from the spirit that would seek to bring about disunity in the church. You need the gospel to deliver you in all ways that are inconsistent with this passage. You need the gospel, and I need the gospel. We all need the gospel.

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