

Honour & Discipline for Leaders

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[0 : 00] Alright, well, as we come to God's Word, we're continuing on with our series in 1 Timothy. And we're picking things up in chapter 5.

So if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to 1 Timothy chapter 5. And we'll be at verse 17 today. Last Sunday, we did the first half of this chapter.

And we heard Paul give instructions about how we should relate to one another in the household of God. And the general principle is that we should relate to one another as to family.

We heard Paul talk about how the neediest members of the family should be provided for. Widows. And now Paul goes on to discuss another group in the church who should be honored or provided for.

Which is the elders. And Paul will have more instructions in this passage that we're looking at today. Concerning elders in the church.

[1 : 09] Let's start by reading the passage. Paul writes, The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor.

Especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For scripture says, Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

And the worker deserves his wages. Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

But those elders who are sinning. You are to reprove before everyone. So that the others may take warning. I charge you in the sight of God and Christ Jesus.

And the elect angels to keep these instructions without partiality. And to do nothing out of favoritism. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands.

[2 : 14] And do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. Stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach. And your frequent illnesses.

The sins of some are obvious. Reaching the place of judgment ahead of them. The sins of others trail behind them.

In the same way, good deeds are obvious. And even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever. So the majority of these instructions that Paul gives to Timothy here have to do with how elders should be treated in the church.

And we see and hear Paul say several things. First, that elders should be honored. That's verse 17 and 18. Then that elders should be trusted.

Verse 19. That elders who sin should be rebuked publicly. That's 20 and 21. That favoritism should not be shown to elders.

[3 : 23] That's verse 21. And that elders should not be appointed hastily. That's verse 22. Then in verse 23, we get Paul giving a little advice for Timothy regarding his health.

And then he ends in this passage, this section, with a word of wisdom for evaluating people's character in verse 24 and 25. So let's just work our way through these instructions, starting at the top.

How should elders be treated in the church? Verse 17. The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For scripture says, do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and the worker deserves his wages.

So this idea of honoring elders is really connecting back to what came before. Paul urged that widows be honored.

[4 : 33] Same word, back up in verse 3. And what he meant by that, we saw last week, was not just that people say some nice things about them, but that they be looked after and provided for by

the church in cases where they're really in need.

The Greek word for honor that's used here has several meanings. It can mean price or value. It can mean to show reverence or respect.

And it can also refer specifically to compensation that's paid to someone. And in this case, it would have a meaning similar to our English word today, honorarium.

An honorarium is a voluntary payment for professional services rendered without the normal fee. That's from the Canadian Oxford Dictionary. Nowadays, honorariums are typically given to teachers, coaches, guest speakers, people who officiate ceremonies, musicians, performers.

[5 : 41] And in these cases, it's often a one-time thing between the giver and the recipient. But what seems to be described here by Paul for the elders in the church is a regular thing.

As elders continue to do the work of leading and preaching and teaching, they are to be regularly compensated and provided for.

Not unlike how the widows, who are really in need, were to be honored or provided for. Now, as you can imagine, these verses are the subject of much debate.

Some will say that giving the elders honor does not mean giving them money. Others say, or ask, rather, what does double honor mean?

Is this talking about wages and salaries, like for an employee? Or is this talking about more of a regular honorarium or stipend?

[6 : 50] The questions that we have for Paul here are many. And the best that we can do to answer these questions is simply to look carefully at what he has said right here in the passage.

Paul gives two supporting quotations from other places in Scripture to undergird this instruction and to explain a little bit more of what he means and why.

Verse 18, he says, Scripture says, do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. Now this is a quotation from Deuteronomy 25, verse 4, a passage in the Old Testament law.

And we're not going to go back and look at that, but it's worth noting that Paul uses these same words in another of his letters, his letter to the Corinthians. Let's look at that.

1 Corinthians 9, verse 9 and 10. Paul says there, for it is written in the law of Moses, do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

[7 : 56] Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

So here in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul is defending his rights as an apostle. And one of those rights, according to Paul, is to have his needs met, his expenses paid for by the people he is serving as an apostle.

In other words, Paul was saying that it was good, it was right for the apostles to receive material and financial compensation for what they were doing. And Paul defended that right, even though he himself chose to pay for all his own expenses and needs out of his earnings as a tent maker.

And so, as he is defending that right to be provided for out of the work that he does as an apostle, he quotes this instruction in the Old Testament law about oxen.

Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. And his point here to the Corinthians is that this thing God said about oxen is something of a proverb that applies all the more to people.

[9 : 25] So, we just have a look at the picture here on the screen. Here you have a picture of what this setup might have looked like.

You've got the ox kind of tied together, yoked together, tied to this post and they're kind of walking around and around this thing and then they would throw the grain into the spot where they're walking on so that they would trample it and it would separate the wheat from the chaff.

And all of this is the idea here making the work easier for the man but often times they would muzzle these oxen. And the point of this instruction is simply this.

Let the ox have something to eat from the grain as he does his work. You ought to be kind and caring toward the animal who's providing this great service and not stingy and cheap so much that you put a muzzle on him and then expect him to work for you for who knows how many hours of the day and then go find his own food later on after hours.

And so here in 1 Timothy Paul applies this to elders in the church. Let them get something for their living from the work that they're doing for you for the service that they're offering you in the church.

[10 : 59] And Paul's second quote to reinforce this is likely a quote from the gospel of Luke. Luke chapter 10 verse 7 Jesus is talking to his apostles here his disciples and he says he gives them instructions he says stay there eating and drinking whatever they give you for the worker deserves his wages.

And if you know the story from Luke there Jesus is about to send his disciples out to towns all over Israel. How will they be provided for in the midst of this?

Jesus tells them to eat and drink whatever the people give you at the first house that you come to and welcomes you in the town he says for the worker deserves his wages. And so here Paul seems to quote Jesus himself and use those very words to describe how the elders should be honored. Now some people argue after all that that this doesn't refer to money because in the context of both of these quotes it has to do specifically with food.

Some suggest that maybe the elders had been given a larger portion at regular church meals rather than money. Or that if there was a distribution happening regularly for widows that the elders were also included in that distribution and maybe they got double the portion.

[12 : 31] But on the other side of the discussion I mean wages is a money word. It has to do with earning money. money. And in our day and culture money is needed to cover the costs of living.

It wasn't just food that the widows would have needed in Ephesus. In some cases housing clothes medicine doctor's fees. Furthermore when we look at Peter's instruction to the elders notice what he said 1 Peter chapter 5 he commands the elders to be shepherds of God's flock and to look after them to take care of the people that have been entrusted to their care.

But then he says something about how they're to do that. He says not pursuing dishonest gain but eager to serve. And the word for gain here has to do with greed.

Not greedily eager to make money to get money. And it seems implied from Peter's comments that elders were compensated financially.

And so there was a right motivation and a wrong motivation to serve as an elder. If you're just doing it for the money out of a greedy heart well that's the wrong motivation. Do it in order to serve eager to serve just like you should not do it to be in control to lord it over those entrusted to you.

[14 : 13] That's the wrong motivation. So it seems that what Paul means here in 1 Timothy is that elders are worthy of being compensated financially for the work that they do in the service of the church.

For directing the affairs of the church well and especially for those whose work is preaching and teaching. But what's not entirely clear here is how much.

What does double honor mean? Does it mean double the average salary of a worker in a similar kind of role outside the church?

like a teacher? Well some people see it as that way. Or does it mean the amount that the widows on the list up in verse 3 and 9 would get but double?

Are we talking a sort of living expenses stipend? Or is this just a salary?

[15 : 28] something that would help provide for their needs and perhaps more? And that discussion is still going on. I don't know that we can really find too much more clarity than that here.

And perhaps the Lord has left it this way for a reason. Perhaps it's the principle that's most important. Are we giving adequate care and compensation to the elders of the church?

like with the widows who are in need are we ensuring that our elders many of whom will be older men are well honored adequately compensated for the work they are doing in service of the church?

Now at this point I want to say thank you to all of you for how you have been so generous to God and together have been generous to me and my family providing for our needs both monetarily through the wages that I'm paid by the church and in other ways through the gifts that you have given us.

Thank you. I feel as though I have been doubly honored and maybe more in my time here in service of the church. The only question I have on this matter is whether we should be doing something to honor our other elders for what they have been doing.

[17 : 06] So this is Paul's first instruction about how elders should be treated in the church. Elders should be honored for the work they do in service of the church. Next Paul says that elders should be trusted.

Verse 19 Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. So if we have listened to Christ's instructions about the kind of men who should be serving as elders back in chapter three, these are already men who have an excellent reputation and a proven track record of goodness and faithfulness in their conduct and their words.

And so naturally then if a lone individual rises up with accusations or allegations against an elder, we ought to give the elder the benefit of the doubt.

Being in leadership in the church makes one a greater target of the devil. Jesus said, strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

And there's nothing more the devil wants than to make that a reality among Christ's people. And so we can expect that from time to time the devil will work against the elders by sowing division and deceit.

[18 : 37] trying to get the people in the church to take aim at the elders, to slander them. And people will arise at times to falsely accuse and bring down the good reputation of leaders with malicious intent.

And so this is to be a safeguard against that in the church. Paul says, don't even listen to someone speaking ill of one of the elders unless the thing has been witnessed by two or more people.

By default, the elders should be trusted. But the elders are not perfect. They too can still stumble and fall, give into temptation and sin.

And when that happens, they should be quick to repent. And just like every other member of the church, they should be reminded again of the good news, the gospel of Jesus, and shown grace and mercy.

But, in the case where an elder is sinning repeatedly, or continually, or in an especially grievous manner, Paul gives instructions that an elder should be rebuked publicly.

[20 : 02] verse 20, but those elders who are sinning, you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.

So yes, the elders are held to a higher standard. They're not permitted by their position to sin as much as they want and get away with it.

Jesus has put a clear instruction in here, by which the rest of the church, all together, can hold an unrepentant elder to account.

And Paul is absolutely serious about this. In the next breath, he says, I charge you in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

So do you hear the seriousness of these instructions? This charge to Timothy is so serious that Paul calls God and Christ Jesus both as his witnesses while he writes these words to Timothy.

[21 : 18] It's as though he's saying, God and the Lord Jesus have seen me pen this charge to you, Timothy, and they will hold you accountable to carrying it out there in Ephesus.

And at this point we need to notice that this charge, these instructions concerning elders are given specifically to Timothy. I charge you, that's a you singular, not a you plural as in the church, but you Timothy.

Let's remember that Timothy was an apostolic delegate assigned to Ephesus by Paul for the time being. And so as we apply these things to our own church today, who is it that should be doing these sorts of things?

We're talking about rebuking an elder who is sinning before everyone. we don't have apostolic delegates still around today, and so naturally it would fall to one of the other elders who are in authority in the church to do this in the case of an elder who has been sinning.

And this is where this charge given to Timothy matters so much. For Timothy, these men who are elders, are like brothers.

[22 : 47] They're like comrades in the trenches, co-workers in the field, friends and brothers at the deepest levels. And so that's, I think, why Paul charges Timothy like this.

It may be exceedingly difficult if it should ever happen that an elder in the church falls into a continuing sin or a pattern of unrepentant sin.

It may be exceedingly difficult to do what needs to be done and drag that brother before the whole church and rebuke him publicly.

The fear may be high, but Paul reminds Timothy that there's someone far greater that we need to fear in these cases. We need to fear God. We need to fear the Lord Jesus to whom we must give

account.

don't. We cannot let sinning leaders go on sinning and get away with it. It doesn't matter how good of friends we become.

[23 : 53] Paul charges Timothy to keep these instructions about rebuking a sinning elder publicly without partiality or favoritism.

It doesn't matter if in your heart you want that brother to be innocent or you want that brother to be spared humiliation or disgrace. You're not to allow your personal feelings to interfere with your duty as a leader in the church.

God is watching to see that you carry this out and fulfill these instructions in your church Timothy. I hope that you who are elders are trembling right now.

I know I am. But notice here that it does not say that in all such cases elders who have been caught sinning like this should be excommunicated from the church.

It says rebuke them, correct them, expose what they are doing, bring it to light, reprimand them in front of everyone.

[25 : 07] sin. But then it seems to leave it open to one of two possibilities. Either they receive that rebuke well and repent and acknowledge their sin and confess it and earnestly seek God's forgiveness and the forgiveness of anyone in the church that they have wronged.

will be or the alternative would be that they do not receive that rebuke well. They refuse to repent. Perhaps they continue to deny or minimize. They fail to accept responsibility for their actions. Or maybe they do apologize but they prove in the days that follow that that wasn't sincere.

It was only made to save face but that there was no real change of heart and that the behavior continued. Well in the first case of genuine repentance do we believe that Christ's death has made atonement for that elder's sin?

Will we forgive that brother of the wrong that he has done just as Christ has forgiven us of our sins? Now if it's something that many of us are quite prone to struggling with say he gets into a pattern of losing his temper.

[26 : 36] The church may even agree to have him continue on as an elder with the other elders holding him accountable and perhaps some sort of plan to help this brother address this issue in his life right away.

but in most cases if he has been committing ongoing sins such that he needs to be rebuked publicly he should be removed from his position and time should be given as much as it takes for him to restore his reputation and prove his repentance genuine.

in such cases he has disqualified himself from being an elder but not from being a brother in Christ for we are all sinners.

In such cases he may in the future become qualified again by the grace of God even reputations can be restored over time.

Let's not forget what Jesus said with the measure you use it will be measured to you. We're not a perfect family and at times in the Lord's household sin happens dysfunction happens and the Lord has given us these means of grace in his word to address those times and correct those times when it comes to leadership in the church but sometimes it will take great courage and strong love to see dysfunction restored to see brokenness healed.

[28 : 24] Elders are entrusted with real authority in the church but two or three witnesses in the family may at times need to come forward holding an elder to account and if a pattern or continual sin is exposed elders must be rebuked in front of the church by the other elders and there must not be favoritism shown to elders in these situations to shield them from God's means of discipline but the good news is that we can avoid having these kinds of things happen more often than not simply by taking our time when we appoint and approve elders to the position.

Verse 22 Paul says do not be hasty in the laying on of hands nor sharing in the sins of others keep yourself pure.

virtually all scholars and commentators see this laying on of hands to refer to appointing someone to the position of elder.

The context of this whole passage is elders it's not healing and this language was used to describe what happened when Timothy received his gift by the spirit and when a word was a prophecy was spoken over him about the special work of leadership that God had for him to do.

And so do not be hasty in the laying on of hands. Don't be in a rush to fill the position of elder in the church. Slow down. Take time.

[30 : 14] Know the character of a man first. Is he qualified to serve as an elder in the church? As we heard that he should be in chapter 3.

And Paul sort of tacks a couple other imperatives onto all this. He says do not be hasty in the laying on of hands nor sharing in the sins of others. We got two imperatives there in the same breath and I think that these ideas are connected.

The idea here seems to be that rushing to put someone in leadership in the church without first knowing the kind of man they are may lead to you, Timothy, sharing in their sins, their guilt.

Or, still looking at the context here, perhaps you do know the man and he's a close friend and favoritism or partiality leads you to recommend him for the position of leadership even though you know there's something about going on in his life that's not above reproach.

or also looking at the context in the case where an elder is sinning and you know about it, Timothy, but fail to follow this instruction and rebuke him publicly, you then may share in his guilt like an accomplice helping to cover it up.

[31 : 38] keep yourself pure, Timothy. Don't be a participant in the sin of others by putting people in leadership who aren't qualified or by failing to rebuke men publicly who now hold the position and are sinning.

So these are the instructions that Christ has through Paul about elders in the local church. Elders should be honored, elders should be trusted, elders who sin should be rebuked publicly, favoritism should not be shown to elders, and elders should not be appointed hastily.

Next in verse 23 Paul gives some brief advice to Timothy about his frequent illnesses. He advises Timothy to use a little wine and not to drink only water.

We don't have time this morning to talk about the various speculations on this and its relevance to the issue of alcohol, so we're just going to pass right by that and go on to the final words of wisdom that Paul gives in verse 24 and 25.

Paul says, the sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them. The sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever.

[33 : 09] These words remind me of what Jesus said about how to recognize false prophets. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 that you will recognize them by their fruit.

fruit. Whether they are a good tree, a true prophet of the Lord, or a bad tree, a false lying prophet, the stuff that comes from them in time, the fruit, will show beyond the shadow of a doubt what kind of person they are.

Time will tell. And that's what Paul is saying here. There are some who are sinning so visibly and obviously that there's no question about whether or not they're Christians, or there's no question about whether they are qualified to be an elder.

Even before the moment of judgment comes, everybody knows that the verdict is guilty, or everybody knows that the verdict is unqualified. But there are others whose sins trail behind them to the place of judgment, says Paul.

They get to the moment of judgment and that moment where everybody's looking at them and wondering about them. They're under the scrutiny of everybody and it's not until a bit later as the proceedings of the trial unfold that the facts begin to emerge of some of the wrongs that they have done in the past, the things that they have said.

[34 : 40] Now the flip side is also true, says Paul. In the same way, good deeds are obvious and even those that are not cannot remain hidden forever.

Time will tell. Now in the context, this wisdom applies to discerning whether a person is qualified to become an elder or whether discipline is needed for a sinning elder.

Don't be in a rush. Don't be hasty. Let a careful examination be made. And time has a way of bringing out the truth. But these words are also helpful for our own everyday discernment.

Let's not be hasty to judge the character of others or the sincerity of others by words that they say or by things that they do, whether good or bad. Time will tell.

this is a wonderful warning to any of us who may be drifting in our faith or who may be giving ourselves regularly and knowingly to sinful behaviors.

[35 : 52] The truth will come out eventually. Far better to humble ourselves and repent now. this is also a wonderful encouragement to those of us who may be serving the Lord tirelessly and doing good and yet maybe your good deeds have gone unnoticed.

Be encouraged. Your good deeds will not remain hidden forever. You will receive your reward and your commendation in time.

So these are Paul's instructions concerning elders in the local church. elders should be honored.

Elders should be trusted. Elders who sin should be rebuked publicly.

Favoritism should not be shown to elders. Elders should not be appointed hastily. And as we work in this last word of wisdom, patience, time, and care should be given as we appoint new elders and as we examine current elders.

elders. Now I know that these words are all about elders and how we should treat them. May we give good consideration and reflection to these things as they pertain to our church.

[37 : 12] But I also know that most of these things are not everyday things. These are things that happen occasionally in the life of the church. church. One of the undergirding truths of all this is that elders ought to live lives that are worthy of the calling and position they have received.

But let's not go from here today thinking that it's only the elders who must live this kind of exemplary life devoted to Christ. Christ. As Paul wrote to the entire church in the city of Philippi.

Philippians chapter 1 verse 27. He said whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. We are all called to live lives worthy of our king and worthy of his glorious good news.

Let our elders lead the way. But may we not hesitate to follow and to do the same. Let's pray.