

Caring for Elders

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[0:00] Going to 1 Timothy chapter 5 verses 17 through 25. It is a passage of scripture that talks about how elders are to be paid! And it also talks about how elders are to be protected from false accusations.

So I'm disclosing right up front my interest in this passage. So I can't be accused of having a conflict of interest because I disclose it right up front.

And this passage benefits me personally as a gospel minister serving as a full-time elder in this church. But I assure you this morning that I'm not preaching it because I'm desirous of receiving more support from the church.

Nor am I preaching it because I want to be above criticism the way the minister of foreign affairs and immigration wants the prime minister to be. This morning I'm preaching it because, first of all, it is the passage we have come to in our week-by-week study in this letter of 1 Timothy.

This is where we have come to this morning and this is what I am obligated to preach. That's the first reason. The second reason I'll preach it this morning is because it is God's word.

[1:21] And this is the word that was given to Timothy. And Timothy was called to preach this word even though he had a personal interest in this word.

And so I'm called to preach this word the way I'm called to preach the rest of God's word in a faithful way. And by God's grace, I will seek to do that this morning.

So if you have not yet done so, would you turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5. We will begin reading in verse 17.

And then we will conclude in verse 25. 1 Timothy chapter 5, starting in verse 17.

Paul writes, Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

[2:30] For the scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out to 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. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you this morning for your word. Lord, this is your holy inspired word that you have given to your people, and Lord, you have preserved it over the ages.

[4:21] We ask this morning, Lord, that you would come by the power of your spirit, that you would grant us all illumination. You would grant us all ears to hear and hearts to obey your word.

Lord, I pray for your abundant grace to be poured out upon me to preach a passage that by its very nature is awkward for one who at the end of the day stands to benefit when it is obeyed.

But Lord, I pray that you would help us all to put aside the personalities and help us to hear this morning that this is your very word to us.

I pray, Lord, this morning that above my words, your voice will be heard. Let it be heard in every heart we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, my own assessment of these verses that we just read is that for many believers, these verses are like the book of Leviticus.

[5:45] They are rarely read and they are barely understood. These nine verses address the responsibility of local churches to care for their elders.

But when it comes to caring for elders, as laid out in these verses, many believers are ignorant or disobedient to their responsibility in this regard in the local church.

They are well aware of the need for and they expect that elders would certainly care for them, but many of them are unaware that they have some God-given responsibility as well to care for their elders.

And in these nine verses before us this morning, the Apostle Paul addresses some of these responsibilities. And in the context of this letter of 1 Timothy, here's how I would describe what he says to local churches like ours.

Here's what he says. Just as elders are appointed to care for the church, the church is called to care for its elders. I think that is a faithful summary of what the Apostle Paul says in these nine verses in the context of this letter of 1 Timothy.

[7 : 07] In the same way that elders are appointed to care for the church, the church is likewise called to care for its elders. Now I imagine that this would come as a surprise to some of you, but elders need to be cared for as well.

And this is why God has put it in his word and given it to his church. It is so important that he has inscribed it in his holy word.

Now in these nine verses, the Apostle Paul covers three important aspects of caring for elders. He addresses how they are to be compensated, how they are to be accused, and how they are to be ordained.

What the Apostle Paul writes about the care for elders can be reduced into three statements concerning compensation, accusation, and ordination.

And so what I want to do in our remaining time is I want to consider these three important statements that we can derive from this text and show how they are to be a guide for local churches in caring for their elders.

[8 : 24] And the first aspect of caring for elders that the Apostle Paul addresses is compensation. And what he says is this, compensate them appropriately. That's what he says to Timothy, to the church at Ephesus, that's what he says, to churches in general, about elders, compensate them appropriately.

He says this in verses 17 and 18. Let's look at it again. 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. Now even before we consider how elders are to be compensated, it is helpful for us to note what they do.

Notice what he says in verse 17. He says they rule. If you happen to have the New International Version, it says they direct the affairs of the church. That is the work of elders.

Now in the face of it, when we consider what Paul is saying in verse 17, it doesn't appear that he is talking about compensation. And I say that because many of us do not associate the word honor with compensation or with money.

[9 : 44] But in the Greek, in the original language, the word from which we get honor is a word that means allowance or stipend, a monetary amount, an allowance or a stipend.

It's where we get our English word honorarium from. Where you give an honorarium to someone who speaks or who does some particular duty or task. It is also important for us to see that Paul was not instituting the compensation of elders.

That was already happening. He was not saying to Timothy, let the elders be compensated. No, he is addressing something else. And by implication, we are able to see that it was a clearly established pattern that the elders were being compensated.

Instead, what Timothy is being told is, Timothy, you and the church need to have a different attitude to the work of elders, towards the work of the elders. And what he says is that those who are elders, those who rule well, are worthy of double honor.

Now, is he literally saying that the elders who rule well are worthy of double pay? In other words, there's a pay that you give the elders and those who rule well are worthy of double pay.

[11 : 07] Is that what he's saying? I don't think that's what he's saying. I don't think he's trying to set the salary for the elders who rule well, that is double whatever you pay the other elders.

He's not saying that at all. It's a matter of speaking. He's saying, those who rule well, those who serve well, he says, Timothy, and to the church at Ephesus, you are to consider them worthy of just

incredible generosity.

Whatever you are giving the elders in a general way, those who rule well, those who serve well, you are to have an attitude towards them. You are to consider them worthy of generous compensation. That's what he's saying to Timothy. That's what he's saying to the church. He's calling them to recognize these individuals in this particular way.

But he goes further. He doesn't stop there. He goes on to say that this is especially true about those who labor in preaching and teaching.

[12 : 11] Now, in a fundamental way, the work of the elder is to rule the church. to govern the affairs of the church.

But in the midst of that, there's a particular duty to preach God's word and to teach God's word and some elders are called to that in a primary, ongoing way more than the rest of the elders.

So he makes a distinction here between what elders generally do and what some elders specifically do. Some elders specifically give themselves to laboring in preaching and teaching.

And this is the reason that some churches like the Presbyterian church, for example, they have established two kinds of elders. They call them ruling elders and then they call the others either the minister or teaching elders.

And I don't think that there's a need to make a distinction in terms of titles because they're all elders but their duties or their responsibilities are simply different. So they're all elders but some labor in preaching and teaching what Paul says is those who rule well are worthy of generous compensation and in particular if their responsibility is to preach and teach.

[13 : 29] It's very insightful the word that Paul uses for the work of the one who is bringing God's word. He uses a word that speaks about strenuous work.

It is a word that is used for agricultural work. Being in the field planting crops and rearing animals. He says the one who is handling God's word he is laboring in preaching and teaching.

He doesn't make it like some little thing on the side. It is labor. It is strenuous work. That's what he refers to it as. He could have used other words to refer to it but that's what he calls it that they labor in preaching and teaching.

Now Paul doesn't spell it out but it is pretty obvious that he is making a point that not all elders rule well. That not all elders govern well.

Because he is saying the ones who do well who do govern well they are worthy of this generous compensation but obviously not all rule well. Some govern the affairs of the church poorly and both scripture and experience bear this out.

[14 : 40] Now a good question is why? Why? Why must elders be compensated in this particular manner?

Well Paul goes on to tell us in verse 18 and again he appeals to the world of agriculture. He appeals to a world that his hearers would have known very well.

He doesn't come up with his own words but instead he appeals to scripture and he quotes two particular scriptures. The first one is in Deuteronomy 25 verse 4 that says you shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.

So don't do that. You don't muzzle the ox when you're treading out the grain. That was a command in Israel. That was not an optional thing. Though that was your animal the Lord says you cannot muzzle that ox while he's treading out the grain.

God was concerned for the ox. But now think about that. Imagine an owner of an ox who puts his ox to work in the field to tread out the wheat to tread out the grain and he muzzles him so that he can't eat any of it.

[15 : 56] And I think it's pretty obvious what's going to happen. He's going to get weak and tired. He's not going to have the energy that is needed to be able to tread out the grain and in the end he may even die from starvation.

And clearly what Paul is doing is he's making an analogy. You see what happens really or what should happen is when faithful pastors who have the responsibility to preach and to teach God's word when they fulfill that responsibility what they're doing is during the week they're essentially shredding grain from God's word.

And in a sense they're spiritually making flour and with all their efforts and the gifts that God has given to them they are kneading that into some kind of dough and through prayer and through meditation they bring bread they make bread and they bring it and they lay it before God's people.

They lay it before God's people as the bread of life as the word of God. We call it a sermon. We call it a message but it is labor.

I know some of you would be aware of this but when I stand before you on a morning like this typically I would have spent 12 to 15 hours in that message sometimes more this one was more 12 to 15 hours in preparing a message to bring and that's not things that I do during the week that's normally between Saturday and Sunday morning.

[17 : 40] By my own practice my own choice my Saturdays are largely given to preparation so I rarely leave the house on a Saturday and I only say this to say that this is treading out the grain this is doing the work to bring food for God's people.

The second quotation that Paul refers to is one that is believed to be from the Lord himself. The laborer deserves his wages.

In Luke 10.7 Jesus sent out the disciples two by two and he told them not to take any money with them not to take any supplies with them but instead they were to depend on the support of the people who they ministered to.

Why? He said because the laborer deserves his wages. Now this is a very clearly established practice in scripture. The people of God are to materially and financially support the ministers of God primarily because they give themselves to the ministry of the people ministering the word of God.

In some cases elders are bivocational. They serve as elders but they also work to support themselves apart from the church. That's not the norm.

[19 : 03] That's the exception to the rule. But the rule is that those who preach the gospel are to live by the gospel. Now I can imagine that in some of your hearing in a time where you have celebrity preachers who financially fleece the people of God who ride around in jets and have flamboyant lifestyles like CEOs.

I know sometimes some of this could be hard to hear and you could hear it with some degree of skepticism. But the truth is that in spite of that abuse these words before us this morning are true. Elders are to be compensated appropriately. not extravagantly but appropriately. Appropriately in accordance with their work performance and appropriately in accordance with their work responsibilities.

Those who desire to be rich, those who desire to be treated like a CEO, well they should find a different line of work because in the church if you serve in a biblical way and if you are compensated in a biblical way you will not become rich.

serving as an elder. You will not. It just won't happen. Your needs are to be met, you are to be cared for, but it is not a place to be rich.

[20 : 25] And this is why the Bible says that those who are to lead God's people are not to be lovers of money, not to be motivated by money. More than anything else you are to be motivated by a call from God to do what you do and money is not just secondary, it is far secondary to what you do.

So despite the abuses, God's word is true. As I was preparing, I thought when you talk about compensation, there will be some inquiring minds.

I wonder how much you make. And so for those inquiring minds that might be here this morning, I thought I talked to you about my own compensation.

Yeah, I do that. First of all, I make less than most of you. That's the first thing. But for the first 14 years that I had the wonderful privilege of leading this church, I received no compensation.

I was happy to do it. I made far more money than my family needed, and so we were happy to serve without any compensation.

[21 : 45] I was bivocational. I worked in the offshore financial services industry, eventually had my own company. God blessed it. We made money. I was able to not just give to the church, but be tithed from the business, and were very generous with the church.

In 1998, I came here at the church, on a full-time basis, continued to serve without compensation, was happy to do that, no grudges about it. I had well-meaning friends in ministry who said to me, hey, you should receive something despite the fact that you don't need it, and we didn't need it, so we didn't receive it.

But things began to change for me. So in 2004, I came to the place where it was about three years, I had sold the majority interest in my business to my brother, who happens to be here now, so he

makes all the money I used to make.

And I certainly needed to bridge my income, so I shared that with a small committee here at the church, including the treasurer.

She chaired that committee, and five persons, and I said, here's my situation, and here's what I need, and they looked at it, and they thought, that's reasonable, and so they agreed to that.

[23 : 09] But when it came down to it in the end, as I looked at the situation in the church, I took 25% less than they approved. That was 11 years ago, approximately, my salary is the same, hasn't changed, and not because anyone wants to withhold from me, I simply did not leave the process to put something in place for that to be considered in an ongoing way.

But I share that with you just to give you an appreciation for my own particular context. The bulk of my income continues to come away from the church.

My brother who's here, very generous with me, I'm a minority shareholder in the business, do very, very little, and he is generous with me to allow me to continue to get the bulk of my income from the business.

So that is how we largely care for ourselves and for my family. So if I was still making the kind of money I used to make, I'd gladly serve without any compensation because I'm called to do what I do.

I don't see what I receive as payment as such, I see it as support. It is support for the ministry that I have. So hopefully if you had an inquiring mind, it's now satisfied.

[24 : 38] Now these words were addressed to Timothy, who was a kind of apostolic delegate for Paul, and he was instructing Timothy in terms of how the elders were to be compensated.

But Paul was not just addressing Timothy, he was addressing the church as well. He was addressing the Ephesian church as a whole. This letter that Paul wrote to Timothy was intended to be read by the whole church, and really, by extension, all of God's people.

So this morning, Kingdom Life, this is addressing us as well. Elders are not compensated out of thin air. Elders are compensated when the people of God bring into the house of God tithes and offerings, however, and wherever you land on that issue.

Giving is the ability, or it creates the means by which elders are compensated. And I think this is important that when you give, you don't give in a vacuum, you don't give in an absent-minded way, you're to give mindful of what your giving does.

When you give money to this local church, whenever you give it, however you give it, I wonder what goes through your mind. What are you thinking when you give your money?

[26 : 13] And I know there are many answers to that, but hopefully a common answer in everyone's mind is that I'm giving to the Lord. That's the first thing.

That's the first thing that comes to all of our minds when we give, that we are giving to the Lord. But we shouldn't end there. In a secondary and a very practical and real way, in the context of the local church, in the context of this local church, you are giving to the financial needs of this church, and top among those needs is the support of the paid elder.

Top among those needs is the support of the paid elder in the person of myself. Brother David is bivocational. He takes his role in this church seriously.

He is more defined as an elder, more than someone who works and who is an elder. He's an elder and someone who works. But I'm the one who receives compensation.

And so when you give, top among the priorities of this church really is support for the paid elder.

And my own conviction is that in a local church, the only thing that should be more important than the compensation of elders is debt obligations that that church has entered into and needs to meet because that church has given its word to pay those obligations.

[27 : 43] But absent debt obligations, the most important expense in a church is the compensation of the elders.

Now, obviously, there are times when wisdom would dictate that those priorities are to be shifted and changed. But as a general rule, that is the priority.

The priority is to care for the elders. And if you think about it, as wonderful as this building is, as convenient as it is to meet here and do all the wonderful things that this facility affords us, we can be a church without this building.

The church is people. The church is not a building. The church is not brick and mortar and chairs. The church is people. So we can have a church away from this building.

but you cannot have a church without elders. Any group of people where there is no leadership in place, where there is no eldership in place, and they say they are a church, they are joking.

[28 : 49] It's not true. And this is why you find, for example, and I say this especially now that we are going to pray for Alex in a short while, a campus ministry, as wonderful as it is, as beneficial as it is to students, it is not a substitute for a local church.

Because there's no one in that campus ministry who is able to lead and govern that group, and you in particular, in the way that scripture calls.

In those campus groups, it's pretty much everyone is for himself, no one can correct the other person, everyone's idea is as good as the other person's, and that's not a church. It's a group of believers who are coming together, but it does not define what a church is.

So, you can have a church without buildings, but you cannot have a church without elders. And certainly you can imagine that having a building like this, there's expenses and upkeep, insurance, and all kinds of other things that are associated with it.

And sometimes churches have had to make sacrifices on those secondary things so that they're able to properly and appropriately compensate their elders.

[30 : 07] So, this doesn't happen in a vacuum. As Paul was addressing the church at Ephesus, concerning the care of elders, in a very real and practical way, he was calling the members of the church to care for the elders through their giving.

But that's the first aspect of caring for elders that the Apostle Paul addresses in this passage, compensation. The second aspect, the clock is wrong.

The second aspect of caring for elders that Paul addresses in this passage is in the area of accusation.

Here's what he says. He says, accuse them cautiously. accuse them cautiously. First he says, compensate them appropriately.

Now he says, when it comes to accusation, accuse them cautiously. Let's look at how he says that, starting in verse 19. First he says, do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

[31 : 24] as for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

In a nutshell, what Paul is saying is, elders are to be accused cautiously. He tells Timothy in verse 19, he says, Timothy, do not admit a charge, do not admit an accusation against an elder, except it is in the mouths of two or three witnesses.

I guess he probably was thinking two by being husband and wife. Husband and wife doesn't count as two, it counts as one. Two best friends, they count as one. So two or three witnesses.

Now why does Paul raise this? Why does he raise this issue of accusations and how Timothy is to handle it? I think he does because elders, by the very nature of their work, which can sometimes be difficult, having to correct individuals, having to correct the wayward, having to rebuke the disobedient, they can come under accusation.

And sometimes they can come under accusation falsely. And so Paul, being a wise, wise pastor, he tells Timothy, he says, Timothy, this is the way you're supposed to do it.

[32 : 54] We don't know if maybe the situation was such that accusations were being leveled.

Timothy was in a situation where there were false teachers there, he had to address it, he had to bring a lot of correction, maybe accusations were flying left, right, and center, and Timothy needed some help on how to handle them.

And Paul tells him, this is what you're supposed to do. Here's what John Calvin wrote on this issue of accusing elders. Listen to it, very, very insightful words. He says, none are more exposed to slanders and insults than godly teachers.

This comes not only from the difficulty of their duties, which are so great that sometimes they sink under them, or stagger and halt, or fail to take a step, so that wicked men find many occasions of finding fault with them.

But added to that, even when they do all their duties correctly and commit not even the smallest error, they never avoid a thousand criticisms.

It is indeed a trick of Satan to estrange men from their ministers so as to gradually 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.

[34 : 29] That is so true. That is so true. Calvin insightfully understood, as Paul understood, that the very nature of the work of elders opens them to criticism, opens them to accusations, and he says, Timothy, there is a way that you are to handle those accusations.

It is quite interesting that this is quite a high standard that Paul sets for elders. And you should realize that this doesn't apply to members. The rule doesn't apply that an accusation must come from two or three persons before you would consider it against a member.

this is a standard that is reserved for elders. In the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 19:15, a similar standard was applied in terms of convicting a person of a crime.

You could not convict a person of a crime based on just a single witness. It had to be two. If they're solid witnesses, if they're not most solid, then you need an additional one to make sure that it could be established and that it could be verified.

But what he's saying to Timothy here is not even on the conviction level, this is on the accusation level. He says, don't you admit or accept a charge except it is based on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

[35 : 57] So the point is clear. Elders are to be accused cautiously. Now let me offer two very obvious reasons why I think this is, why elders are supposed to be treated in this way.

First of all, elders are supposed to be men of stellar character. Not perfect character, but stellar character. Over in chapter 3, verses 1 through 7, we considered this some weeks ago.

This is the character of the elder. Elder oversees the interchangeable words. The first thing is, he is to be above reproach. These are men who have been proven to be above reproach.

They are only to be ordained as elders after they have been proven through some patient process of determining their suitability as elders. So essentially what he seems to be saying to Timothy is he is saying to Timothy, because they are to be above reproach, Timothy, be cautious.

Be cautious in how you admit charges against them. Not just because of who they are supposed to be, but Timothy recognized that if you wrongly admit charges against them, you taint what they are supposed to be.

[37 : 14] You bring into reproach where there should be no reproach. So Timothy accused them cautiously, allowed them to be accused cautiously.

This is a high degree of protection for elders. And the second reason is that the church has to be protected. The church has to be protected from its reputation falling into disrepute because if the elders fall into disrepute, then the reputation of the church is also going to be damaged.

And so Paul is saying to Timothy, you must therefore be careful, be careful for the elders themselves, be careful also for the church. Now does this mean that there's never a time when a single accusation against an elder should be considered?

I don't think that's what Paul is saying. He's not saying because there's some acts of sin, there's some crimes that by their very nature would only have one witness, would only have one person who can make the accusation.

A female employee says, oh, the pastor inappropriately touched me or the pastor harassed me sexually. There are no other witnesses.

[38 : 37] You can't say, well, oh, just one witness, we can't talk about that. No. That is serious enough to investigate it. A child says, oh, the pastor touched me inappropriately, he sexually abused me, there's only one witness.

You don't turn the blind eye to that and say we need two others. No. Reason and common sense dictates that those would be looked into. I think what he is addressing more is the kind of verbal kinds of things, situations where someone might just say, oh, he was, I don't know, belligerent in his attitude, he was unkind in what he said to me, and those kinds of things.

I think it's in that realm that he is addressing, but the point is, he is not giving immunity to pastors to say unless two people say you do it, nothing can happen to you.

He's not saying that at all. but what he is saying is accuse them cautiously. Accuse them cautiously. Now the sad reality is that some of the charges brought are sometimes true. And Paul addresses this in verse 20. He says in verse 20, as for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

[40 : 04] He says two things and let's not miss it. The first thing, when he talks about persisting in sin, he is indicating that they sinned previously. So elders do sin.

And charges can be, ought to be brought against elders when they do sin. What Paul addresses here is he is addressing those who persist in sin and he says, if they continue to sin, you are to rebuke them in an open way.

You are to rebuke them before all, in the presence of all. The implication is, if they're not persisting in sin, then the rebuke is more of a private rebuke. Or the rebuke matches the nature of the sin. You see, if a sin is private, you don't correct it publicly. However, if the sin is by its nature public, then it needs to be corrected publicly. Because if you have a public sin that you correct privately in the eyes of others, they would think the sin continues.

They would think the sin is being overlooked. But if it's a public sin, it can only be appropriately addressed in a public fashion. And so Paul says to Timothy, he says, for those who persist in sin, you are to rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

[41 : 26] This is not to shame people. It's not God's object in this. Anyone who would attribute that motive to God should put their hands over their lips.

Notice what he says. Here's the reason for it. The reason is so that the rest may stand in fear. in a very strict sense, this is not even about the person who's being rebuked openly.

This is for the good of the church, for the holiness of the church, that to be rebuked in the presence of all. That's the whole church. So that the rest, the rest of elders, but no doubt the rest of the church as well, so that they would fear, not fear in a terror kind of sense, but fear in a reverent sense, fearing the Lord.

Paul is telling Timothy here in verse 20 that he is to have the same resolve that he has to protect elders from false accusations, to correct elders who sin.

Same resolve. You resolve to protect them from accusations, you resolve to correct them when they sin. And the result is a holy fear, a holy reverence on the other elders and also by extension on the church.

[42 : 53] This is a form of church discipline for elders. And there are those who today would consider this instruction, they would consider the practice of church discipline to be unchristian and unliving.

And brothers and sisters, it couldn't be further from the truth. It could not be further from the truth. The reality is the opposite. It is the most loving thing that you can do to a brother or to a sister or to an elder who is in sin.

There is no parent this morning who would say that they would watch their child commit wrong and do wrong and they would say it is unloving to correct that child.

No, you correct that child because you love that child and you want the best for that child. And God calls us to do the same in his family. Commenting on this verse, this is what Philip Riken writes.

He writes, in these undisciplined times, many churches have allowed discipline to fall into disuse. Christian leaders too rarely have the courage to correct sinners.

[44 : 03] Sometimes there is some kind of cover-up. That's an honest statement. even scoundrels never get punished. So people think they can get away with sin.

John Chrysostom said, For as it is wrong to condemn hastily and rashly, so not to punish manifest offenses is to open the way to others and embolden them to offend.

For it is as much greater scandal that the offense should be known and not the punishment.

For as when sinners go unpunished, many commit crimes, so when they are punished, many are made better. These instructions are for the good of God's people.

Now Paul knew that this was hard to do. Paul knew that this was hard for Timothy to carry out. He understood that. He knew these rules were not, this is not a cake walk.

[45 : 18] But he also knew they were critically important to the health of the church. And so, he invokes the very presence of God when he gives these rules to Timothy. Notice what he says in verse 20.

Timothy, he says, as for those who persist, sorry, in verse 21, in the presence of God, in the presence of God, and of Christ Jesus, and of the elect angels, I charge you, Timothy, to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

Paul invokes the presence of God, and of Jesus Christ, and of the elect angels, and he says, Timothy, in their presence, I charge you, keep these rules.

Keep these rules without prejudging, keep these rules without partiality. He's saying to Timothy, don't prejudge situations, you'll be tempted to, but remember, one side of a story is good until the

other side is told.

He's saying to him, be careful that your judgment is not based on just part of the information. He also tells him, be careful that you're not partial in how you correct.

[46 : 41] You see, it may be a dear friend, it may be a close relative, Timothy, you want to be careful that you're not partial in how you carry this out.

So I charge you in the presence of God. And see, there's an awareness. Not only that the charge is given in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ and of the elect angels, but it is carried out in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ and the holy angels.

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 when he talks about the man who had committed adultery, who was sleeping with his father's wife.

He said, when you are gathered in the presence of God, the spirit of God is there. He said, you are to put that person away from you. He was making them aware that you are doing this in the very presence of God.

And that's what Paul says to Timothy. He says, this task that you have, you are doing it in the very presence of God. Do it without prejudging. Do it without partiality. John Calvin rightly commented on this.

[47 : 58] There is nothing harder than to pronounce judgment with complete impartiality so as to avoid showing undue favor or giving rise to suspicions or being influenced by unfavorable reports or being excessively strict and in every case to consider nothing but the matter at hand.

He says it is so hard to do. It is so hard to only focus on that matter and not let other things creep in. Our concerns about how people would view us, what would they think about us.

Am I too harsh? Am I too easy? Am I showing favoritism in this particular situation? Calvin says it is so hard to do it without allowing those other things to creep in.

this was Timothy's task specifically and it was the task of church elders generally and it is a most serious charge.

But here again although Paul wrote to Timothy church members were not just bystanders listening or watching and wondering how the rules would be carried out.

[49 : 15] church members were very much a part of this whole process of ensuring that elders are protected that their reputations are protected that they are not accused falsely.

You see first as a church member you can commit yourself to protecting elders by not making or entertaining unsubstantiated or false accusations against them.

You can pray for them so that they would keep these rules without prejudging. And when the elders have to administer discipline whether it's pertaining to a fellow elder whether it's pertaining to a member of the church as a faithful church member you would be prayerful and supportive of every act of obedience to God's word knowing that it is so difficult to do.

I've said before that it is church discipline is one of the most difficult if not the most difficult part of the responsibilities of any pastor.

And he passed through smiles when he administers church discipline is in a sad place. Nothing to smile about brings grief brings heartache but yet the charges before God in his presence in the presence of Christ and the elect angels and not just to the elders but to the church as a whole.

[51 : 02] And that's why Paul said to the church in 1 Corinthians 5 when you gather as a church that's when you do it. Now one or two persons in a corner making that decision when you gather in the church you do it because the church is responsible for its purity collectively.

When we as a church cease to deal with sin we cease to be a church. If we as a church sweep sin under the rug we cease to be a church.

And this is so important so Paul says to Timothy I charge you Timothy not just my words this is in the presence of God that you are to do this and you are to carry it out as well in the very presence of God.

So having addressed the compensation of elders and the accusation of elders the third aspect that Paul addresses is the ordination of elders. elders. And on this point he says ordain them carefully.

This is my third and final point. In verse 22 he tells Timothy look at it with me to not be hasty in the laying on of hands nor take part in the sins of others.

[52 : 21] Keep yourself pure. here Paul is understood to be speaking about ordination the practice of laying hands on to set a man in office and in the office of elder in particular.

And he points out that this is to be a patient process. It is to be a careful process. He says Timothy don't be hasty with it. Don't be so quick to lay your hands on other men ordaining them to the ministry because if they are not qualified Timothy if they are men with reproachable character then you will be by extension involving yourself with their sin even though you might not know it. You would be tacitly approving of their sin. So I warn you Timothy keep yourself pure and you keep yourself pure by not being hasty. This is wise. very wise. And the reason it's wise is that few churches err taking too much time to ordain but many err rushing into the process.

For a man who is called and who is qualified for ministry even though one may say ordination is delayed in a true sense if he is truly called to some measure he's going to be fulfilling his ministry. [53 : 58] Not in a complete way because he's not authorized to do that but in some measure he's going to be fulfilling some aspect of his ministry. ministry. Now if you have the ESV you would come to verse 23 and you see it's parenthetical it's in parentheses and Paul says no longer drink water only but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

I said earlier that this whole passage is like the book of Leviticus where many people barely know it and even fewer understand it.

This is one that doesn't fit in that category. A lot of people know this one and some know it by heart. Some use it as their license to consume alcoholic beverages.

But this is not a good one. There are some better ones that you can actually find in scripture. This is not a good one. This actually is one about medicine. This is medicine.

So if Paul was here today he wouldn't be saying go drink something of your stomach certain. He'd say no, go to the pharmacy and get some over the counter medicine for your stomach. This was medicine in those days.

[55 : 22] This was high tech. This is what they did. And I was wondering why is this dropped right in the middle here? It would be nice if Paul had put it to the end.

And just let verse bump up the verses and let this be verse 25. But he puts it right here. So to get to verse 24 we have to talk about this verse. verse 25. And he tells Timothy he says Timothy don't drink water only but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

Now here's what is clear. For some reason that we don't know Timothy was not drinking. We don't know why. Scripture doesn't say. Could have been a personal thing.

Certainly it was a culture where they drank. It was normal to drink. It wasn't a sin to consume wine. But for some reason Timothy wasn't drinking.

And it seems like he needed Paul's authority to do so. I don't know why. But Paul would say to him Timothy you need to take care of yourself.

[56 : 31] You have these ailments. You have some stomach issues. A little wine would help you with it. One of the commentators I was reading. He said that Timothy was having so much problems in the church.

The church made him sick. And Paul was trying to help him. I mean I thought that's not a good thing. That could send a lot of pastors to drinking. I mean have a problem today.

Take a little drink. Some pastors really with the kind of problems they have. They'll really be drinking. A lot. A lot of times. things. But yeah I'm not sure why Paul put it there.

Maybe you know it's interesting when you have modern technology like we do you can go back and insert it. But when you're writing on parchment there's no way to go back and insert it.

So maybe he decided I've got to put it right here before I forget. So he stuck it right there. And he told Timothy he said by the way I know we're talking about ordination but you need to drink something because you have some problems in your digestive system.

[57 : 37] But then he gets right back to the point. He goes on. He picks up where he left off in verse 22. He says and he explains why he tells Timothy not to lay hands on people suddenly.

Here's why he tells him not to lay hands on people suddenly. He says here's why Timothy verse 24 the sins of some people are conspicuous meaning they're very visible. They're very obvious.

They're right in the open. He says their sins are going before them to judgment. In other words he's saying Timothy there's some people they're on a bad track. You could see them going to hell.

You can look at the fruit of their lives and you know that if they don't repent they're going to hell. He says but there's some others. Their sins are not so obvious.

Their sins! Their sins appear later. And so Timothy take your time. take your time. Be careful.

[58 : 38] Be patient in ordaining elders. If you're patient Timothy you'll see some things a little later that you don't see right now. Because the sins of some men he says will only appear later.

Everything seems fine. Life seems to be okay on the outside but they live a double standard. And here's the point about this brothers and sisters I want us all to hear this it will eventually come out if we're leading double lives.

That is a guarantee. The only question is when and where. Whether on this side of eternity or on that day. And I'll tell you something. It is better to be found out today than on that day.

It is better today to be found to be a hypocrite and repent than on that great day when you stand before the Lord and there's no more repentance. And Paul is making the point he says some people sense they're obvious but they're others not so obvious.

And we hear so many sad stories today. So many sad stories of people who are leading double lives. Showing one face on the outside or to the public and then privately there's something different.

[59 : 58] And I just say to every single man in this church whether you're an old man or a young man if you desire to be an elder walk with integrity before God. Remember as we read in table talk that little thought at the end of every devotional koram deo we live before the face of God.

We live before the face of God. All of life is lived before God. Whether people see you or not. What you are privately God sees. What we are privately God sees.

we fool ourselves when we think it's otherwise. And so Paul says Timothy be patient. You don't see everything.

Don't quickly lay hands on men. So there are two kinds right there. Those whose sins are very obvious. Those whose sins are not so obvious.

But he goes on. He doesn't end there. He also talks about good works because good works are very similar. He says Timothy in verse 25 so also good works are conspicuous and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

[61 : 08] In other words there are some people you look at them and their lives are bearing all the good fruit. And Timothy you may go ahead and ordain them. But Timothy don't overlook the other person who may be you're not seeing the fruit of those qualifications for elders right now.

But Timothy don't give up on them. If the good work is there if the good fruit is there it's going to be manifested. It cannot ever it cannot be hidden forever. It will be manifested.

And so while he's telling Timothy to not be hasty in laying hands on individuals he's also telling him Timothy don't be so hasty to write people off as well.

You don't see any bad fruit in their lives but you also don't see any good fruit in their lives but who knows what God is doing what may happen down the road. So be open. To how God might use that person.

I think the point for Timothy in all this is it is easy to appoint people. It is hard to disappoint people. And I think we all understand that very well.

[62 : 22] Again though it seems like Paul is exclusively addressing Timothy he is not. He is addressing the church as well. The church has an important role to play in the ordination of elders.

The ordination of elders varies from church to church but I would say that the best processes for ordaining elders are those that include congregational involvement to some degree.

when congregations are involved in some kind of a partnership with the eldership of the church you have the best arrangement for identifying and ordaining suitable candidates for ministry.

You see what you gain from the congregation's input is you gain a set of eyes and heirs in every single member in that church when it comes down to considering those candidates.

But if you just have a few men in a corner who make their decisions in a vacuum and they're choosing people and they're not referencing the church they're limited in their perspective. The congregation knows far more collectively than the elders could ever know together.

[63 : 41] And therefore for us in our process when we appoint additional elders there will be congregational involvement in that. Elders would nominate them identify them but the congregation will affirm them and say yes or to say no because those members in the congregation are the ones those elders at the end of the day will be caring for.

And when that's done it minimizes as much as is humanly possible the appointment of poor candidates elders. And it spares the church much grief and much harm.

So here are the three important ways that churches are called to care for their pastors first of all by compensating them appropriately, by accusing them cautiously, and by ordaining them carefully. Paul says that is the way churches are to care for elders. And that is a responsibility that we share all together as a local church.

And my prayer is that this would be increasingly evident in our midst as a local church in terms of how we care for the elders of this church in accordance with this passage.

[65 : 11] Let's pray together.