

1 Timothy 5.17-25 Treatment of Elders

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[0 : 00] So far in the book of 1 Timothy, there's been discussion on the work of an elder or the ministry of the word or the laboring in the ministry of the word and those who were false teachers and who needed to be confronted and then there's also the qualifications of an elder which were listed in 1 Timothy 3.

And now we return to the subject of elders and dealing with what to do with elders, what to do with faithful elders, what to do with unfaithful elders, and how to be proactively thinking ahead in terms of eldership.

So let's take a look if you'll open within your copies of the word of God to 1 Timothy chapter 5. Our text this morning will be verses 17 to 25, but for context, we will read the whole chapter of 1 Timothy chapter 5.

Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters with all purity.

Honor widows who are really widows, but if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents, for this is good and acceptable before God.

[1 : 17] Now she who is really a widow and left alone trusts in God and continues in supplication and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command that they may be blameless.

But if anyone does not provide for his own and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than a non-believer. Do not let a widow under 60 years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works, if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.

But refuse the younger widows, for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith.

And besides, they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Therefore, I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully, for some have already turned aside after Satan.

If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.

[2 : 47] Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, and the labourer is worthy of his wages.

Do not receive an accusation against an elder, except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels, that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins.

Keep yourself pure. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment.

But those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

[3 : 56] Our great God, we praise you that you are the Lord God Almighty, and we thank you that you have given us divine testimony, that we have your word written, and that the church may know how we ought to conduct ourselves.

And I pray that you would guide us in this morning's ministry of the word, that you would illuminate your word to us and help us to grow in our knowledge of truth, and that you would grant us a wisdom from above, that we would grow in understanding, and that we would grow as people of God in doing your will.

And as we desire to see a healthy and faithful church built up here, we pray that we would indeed conduct ourselves as we ought, according to your word, to be a faithful New Testament church. We pray, Lord, that you would use even me in the preaching of your word, and that you would bless the preaching of the word and the hearing of the word, that it would be for the edification and nourishment of the saints, for the convicting and the salvation of the lost, and, Lord, that above all, you would be glorified, and that we would enjoy you and glorify you.

Pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So this morning we have a bit of a longer text, verses 17 to 25, but in this section, the church, we see in this section that the church bears responsibility and accountability for the careful and due treatment of all elders.

[5 : 21] I'll say that one more time. The church bears responsibility and accountability for the careful and due treatment of all elders. So that would break into three parts, the first one being of faithful elders, the second part being of unfaithful elders, and the third part being of future elders.

So in the treatment of elders, faithful elders, unfaithful elders, and future elders. So first of all, faithful elders, and it speaks of compensation.

So verses 17 to 18, let's read those two verses again. Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox while it shreds out the grain, and the laborer is worthy of all his wages. All his wages. So the first question to clear up is, who is the elder that's referred to? We have just read about treatment of older men and older women, and then it proceeds on to honoring widows, those who are over 60.

So some might think it's now shifting into talking about older men, but that's not what the word elder refers to here. So the question is, is it speaking to an older man or to the office?

[6 : 42] Or in the words of Matthew Poole, an ancient man or the office of an overseer? Well, as it continues to explain the work or the office of whoever this elder is, it describes it in this way.

Those who rule well, this is the work of an elder. Those who labor in the work of a doctrine, this is the work of the office of an elder, of an overseer.

Those who are the laborer. And it also goes on later to speak of laying on hands, laying on hands being ordination or installation.

So it's clearly describing the office, the office of elder, the office of an overseer, not to an older man or an ancient man. And now it says, let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor. So what is this double honor that these elders are to be counted worthy of? Could it be that if to honor somebody is putting their picture up in the lobby wall, then to double honor them?

[7 : 50] Could that be to get their glamour shots done where they're side glancing over their shoulder and there's bubbles around them and lasers in the background and then double honor them by putting that up in the lobby wall?

Or could it be to give them a lapel pin that says double honor that they get to wear while they're preaching? That's not what's in mind, what's in view here, when it says to count them worthy of double honor.

Rather, it's speaking of honorarium, honorarium or compensation, to compensate them for their labors in the word and doctrine and for their labors and caring for the souls of Christ's body.

Now, in one sense, this is kind of an awkward thing to preach on, to preach on the fact that the one who preaches should be compensated for his preaching, but it is in the text and it also goes on to speak about unfaithful elders.

So it's very important to cover this text and I pray it will be a faithful exposition of it. So it goes on to say to give background for this.

[8 : 56] The background for the compensation of elders and the background, notice that he appeals to both the Old Testament and the New Testament and referring to them both as being scripture.

He appeals to Deuteronomy 25 as well as Luke 10 and calls them both scripture. And he references, you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.

That's Deuteronomy 25. And then labor being worthy of his wages. This is in Luke 10. So if the concept, if an ox, if a beast of burden isn't to be drained of his capacity to labor, so that he doesn't faint or get discouraged, then so also a laborer, likewise, a laborer is also likewise, should not be drained of his capacity to work.

An ox, so to speak, that is adequately fed will be more productive. So if you have an ox, a beast of burden, and you don't feed, if he's not fed while working, then not going to be as productive. And the same concept is transferred over to a laborer who is denied while working, is not going to be as productive. Now, our confession, the Second London Confession of Faith, in chapter 26, paragraph 10, it speaks more in detail to kind of fleshing out the compensation for the labors. [10:26] I'll leave that for you to look up in your own time. But it's the financial compensation for labors in the ministry of the word. So notice, it also gives us a bit of an understanding of what the labor is.

What the primary labor of an elder is. Churches will try to rewrite the job description of an elder to make it anything but what it is supposed to be, according to scripture.

Some will try to cause an elder, or a pastor, an overseer, to be preoccupied with other duties, such as coordinating the parking lot, or as serving tables.

But notice what the primary labor of an elder is, according to our text here. It says, ruling well, ruling as the office of overseer, and labor in the word and doctrine.

And as we read of what was directed to Timothy, is that an elder is to give himself to laboring in the word and doctrine. So, if that's what honor means, why does it say double honor?

[11:35] What does double mean? Some people, and if you spent much time in your life going to church or various different churches, if you've been to many churches, you've probably seen this, that some people, for whatever reason, I can't tell you, I don't know why, but some people think that it is their divine calling in life to ensure that an elder, that their pastor stays humble, and that it's their duty to criticize them instead of affirm them.

It's their duty to discourage them instead of support them, and it's their duty to stifle and starve them instead of remunerate them. And on this text where it says, double honor, I think John Gill puts it most clearly.

He says this double honor is to be understood both of that outward respect that is to be shown them by words and actions, and of a sufficient maintenance that is to be provided for them.

So there will be faithful elders, and this tells us the treatment of what the church is to do with faithful elders, but there is also going to be unfaithful elders.

So what is the church to do with unfaithful elders? The thing is, is that there will be faithful elders, and false accusations will come against them, and there will be unfaithful elders with true accusations brought against them, because there will be also false teachers.

[13:06] So there will be false teachers, and there will be false accusations. So how, the question is then, how is the church to examine when this situation arises?

How are they to examine which is the case? How are they to decide which is the case? And how are they to handle the situation, whether it be an unfaithful elder, a false teacher, or whether it be a false accusation against a faithful elder?

And a question to ask at the same time, is it really that important? Must it actually be handled? Can the church just sweep these kind of things under the rug and hope that they go away?

Because sadly, and again, if you have been going to church for much of your life and attended different churches, sadly, you've probably seen this somewhere where the church, instead of being faithful according to the word of God, to deal with such important issues, they just ignore it or sweep it under the rug.

Is this an option? For the church. Must it be investigated and decided or can we just sweep it under the rug? In these situations, there is sinning regardless.

[14:19] Granted, there's probably the occasional time where maybe there's some miscommunication, somebody heard something that was miscommunicated, but for the most part, somebody is sinning.

Is it okay for the church to just allow this obstinate, unrepentant sinning to continue to occur? Either there's a sinning elder who is unrepentant and is sinning, which is very serious, or there is a sinning false witness who is unrepentant and bearing false witness.

And it must be investigated and it must be duly handled. So this brings us to our second point, that the church is responsible for protecting the church from unfaithful elders and protecting faithful elders from unfaithful accusations.

So our second point is unfaithful elders and discipline. Verses 19 to 21, let's look at those verses. Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.

[15 : 49] So unfaithful elders. First of all, what is a true church? How is a true church to be governed?

Is a church to be governed by giving in or giving priority, just giving in to those who seem to have a more stronger personality?

Those who have a stronger personality, they're very vocal about their opinions and everyone else just gives in to them. Is this how a church is to be biblically governed? Or is the church to be governed by the opinion of those who are related to 70% of the people in the church?

As that happens, it's well, you know, it's Uncle Fred and he's nice, so he's got to be right in what his opinion is. Or is everybody in the church just supposed to compromise and be subject to the person with the most seniority because they've been going there the longest, then they have the most influence and everybody else is just a compromise.

Now again, if you have attended many different churches, sadly, you probably have seen this.

[17 : 04] And it is sad that some churches govern themselves this way. And so, many churches appoint elders based on these reasons.

instead of examining them according to 1 Timothy 3, they'll appoint elders because they just have a stronger personality. Or they'll appoint elders because they're related to 70% of the people in the congregation.

Or they'll appoint elders because they've been coming the longest. Instead of appointing elders according to 1 Timothy 3. So, when this happens and when it is sad that it does happen and they're appointed not because they're qualified but for alternative reasons and then it turns out that they're not qualified, when this happens, what then do we do when it's discovered that they are in sin?

So, a true church. Where there is a true church, so whatever a true church is, where it is, where there is a true church, we know from Scripture that Christ is present.

In Revelation 1-7, where there is a true church, Christ is in their midst. Some will take Matthew 18 where it speaks of church discipline and it says where two or three are gathered, they'll take that and say, well, that constitutes a church.

[18 : 33] Where two or three Christians come together, that's a church. But that's not what that text is saying and by the time we're done we'll see what it is saying. But merely two or three Christians coming together doesn't make a church.

So what does make a church? What is a true church? Well, there are three marks of a true church. First one is the pure preaching of the word.

You take away the pure preaching of the word, it's not a true church. For Christ to be in the midst nourishing people, if there's not the pure preaching of the word, Christ is not in their midst, it's not a true church.

The second one is the pure administration of the sacraments. There's, if you've seen videos of hyper-charismatic seeker-sensitive churches, they make it about entertainment and high-diving boards and zip lines into the baptismal tanks and without any discussions as the question goes out, does anyone want to be baptized and people come in?

This isn't the pure administration of the sacraments. Christ is not there. That is not a true church. And the third one is the due exercise of church discipline.

[19 : 46] Now it's been said that if church discipline departs from the church, then Christ departs the church with it. Christ departs with it. So if there is not pure preaching of the word, if there is not the due administration of the sacraments, and if there is not exercise of church discipline, namely an abuse of these things, then it's not a true church.

So those are the three marks of a true church. And the last one being the due exercise of a church discipline. If there is a church and the church decides to no longer do church discipline, then it's not a true church.

So, the investigation. A true church when there is an unfaithful elder or an accusation of unfaithfulness against an elder, the church must investigate it.

A mark of a true church is church discipline. The church must investigate an accusation against an elder. So let's consider, first of all, if the elder is found in sin.

If an accusation is brought against an elder, which is true, the elder is found in sin. In verse 19, it says, do not receive an accusation against an elder.

[21 : 04] Now, some people stop there and they say, you can't bring an accusation against an elder. You can't do church discipline against an elder. Elders are untouchable. Is this what the text is saying?

Chances are, if an elder is saying that, then they're probably the ones that should be investigated. It's not saying, do not receive an accusation against an elder, period.

It's saying, do not receive an accusation against an elder except. So, it's laying out a process, a process that must be observed.

Elders are not exempt from investigation of charges, but there is a due process before taking it to the church. There is a due process before rebuking them in the presence of all.

It says, those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all. So, first of all, sin has been proven.

Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all.

[22 : 05] And notice how it's continuing. It's not bound. They are sinning. It's not that they committed a sin, they were confronted, they saw their sin, they repented, and that's not what it's saying.

It's those who are sinning. Their sin, they're shown their sin, and they're obstinately unrepentant in their sin. Those who are sinning, so this requires an investigation.

Those who are sinning, investigated, it's proven, the elder is found in sin, the elder is unrepentant, rebuke in the presence of all.

So, it says, don't receive. What it says by saying don't receive doesn't mean don't investigate. What it's saying is don't publicly expose and act on it until due process is done, until it's been investigated, and then step forward or continue with the process.

So, it says, do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Now, what does this mean, two or three witnesses, and who are witnesses?

[23 : 15] witnesses? Is it witnesses of the sin? Is it that only a charge and only an accusation can be accepted against an elder if there are two or three people who have observed him committing the sin?

Some will take that position and say, if you're the only one that's seen it, then you can't even start the investigation. There needs to be two or three people that have seen it.

But this is highly problematic because this is a sin cursed world. There is corruption in everything. There are those who are false teachers who may come across as having an appearance of godliness, but are not.

And there is also remaining corruption. Those who start off intending to be godly, who sadly fall into sin. Now, let's say there is an accusation of private sexual assault.

Nobody else saw it. Does that mean it can't be investigated? Does that mean if that happens then it can't be investigated and it's like, oh, it's out of our hands, we can't do anything about it? Well, clearly, the church cannot leave something so serious as that by just sweeping it under the rug and not investigating it.

[24 : 30] It does not mean that there has to be two or three other people who have observed the sin. Rather, the investigation be witnessed.

They are witnesses by way of investigation. And that investigation is listed in Matthew 18. So, actually, keep your finger here, we'll flip over and we'll read it quickly, but the process of church discipline is outlined in Matthew 18, starting in verse 15, and elders are not exempt from this process.

So, Matthew 18, starting in verse 15, Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he hears you, you have gained your brother. It's no longer a continuation of sin, right? It's not an unrepentant obstinate sinning. But, if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.

It's what's referred to by witness of two or three others, through bringing two or three along, showing the sin and the response of the person.

[25 : 50] And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my father in heaven, for where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.

So these witnesses are witnesses by investigation. If somebody has an accusation against an elder and they would rather do the Matthew 18 process instead of just going around behind their back and gossiping, chances are it's probably credible.

But if they would rather go around behind his back and gossip instead of going through the Matthew 18 process, chances are it's probably false. So that's what is to be done if the elder is found in sin. But what if through the investigation it's determined that the person bringing the accusation is in sin? If it's bearing false witness against a faithful elder, if an accuser, and again granted there's probably the occasional hypothetical situation where somebody misheard something, third-hand news, and they came to them and they cleared it up and it's dealt with.

[27 : 31] But if the person is bringing false accusations against a faithful elder attempting to malign their character, they are bearing false witness and this is sin. They are slandering, they are trying to malign somebody's character.

So the accuser in this case would be in sin. So if through the investigation the accuser is found to be in sin, what is to be done? You might think, well this surely can't ever happen.

If somebody is just a faithful pastor, a faithful elder, a faithful preacher, and is faithful to the word, people wouldn't bring a false accusation against them, would it? John Trapp, he said it's in Old English, I'm going to keep it in the Old English, just because I think it gives it, the way it's written, it gives it better sense.

But truth hath always a scratched face. Men hate him that reproveth in the gate. Every fool hath a bolt to shoot at a faithful preacher.

So just because somebody is a faithful preacher doesn't mean that there's not going to be false accusations because people don't like to be told that they're in sin. And it might not even be told one on one, but just through the articulation of God's word from the pulpit, they're internally convicted of their sin and they don't like it.

[28 : 54] So those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all. This comes after, and it doesn't specify whether it is the elder or whether it is the accuser, but that through the investigation process, those who are sinning.

Sin has been proven, there's no repentance, it's continuing unrepentant obstinate, those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all.

And this is what we see in Matthew 18. If your brother has sinned against you, go to him, show him his sin. If he listens, you've won your brother. If he doesn't listen, bring two or three witnesses along.

If he still doesn't hear you, take it to the church. It's making it public, rebuke in the presence of all. Now, what you think of rebuking them in the presence of all. This leads to a more further depth of church discipline.

And church discipline, sometimes when you hear it, you might think excommunication. And maybe that's why some churches are afraid of having church discipline, because it's like somebody's in sin, well, I don't want to excommunicate them yet.

[30 : 02] Well, that's the end process. Church discipline really actually starts in the pulpit, just the faithful preaching of the word. Maybe somebody is sinning internally or at home, and the pastor, the preacher, has no idea.

They don't see what goes on in the private corners of that person's house, but by God's providence in preaching God's word and preaching the law, it exposes within them their sin, and they're convicted of their sin.

So it starts right from the pulpit, from faithful preaching, but then also when it's observed to go to your brother to show him his sin, and so forth. So excommunication isn't the first step of church discipline.

It's after the process. So discipline. Notice that it says, those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all. Either rebuke and put out the unrepentant sinner, and if you don't do that, then you put out discipline, and consequently you put out Christ.

So either rebuke and put out an unrepentant sinner, or put discipline in Christ out of the church. There is no middle option.

[31 : 20] Somebody is sinning, and a process needs to be done, there is no middle option, there's no option of just sweeping it under the rug, or ignoring it. And what I'm going to say next is very important.

If you get nothing out of this sermon, but one thing, get this next one thing. In my notes, I put two stars behind it so that you know how important it is. Hear this, excommunication is a glimpse of judgment day.

The Christian Sabbath is an emblem of eternal rest. Worship is a glimpse of glory. The gathering of the church and what it does is a glimpse of glory.

And the church gathering for church discipline is a glimpse of judgment day. except here where there's church discipline, where there's putting out unrepentant sinners, when excommunication is practiced, as a glimpse of judgment day, here on earth, when excommunication takes place, here there is still opportunity for repentance and restoration.

At judgment day, there will be no such opportunity, but the unrepentant will hear, I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.

[32 : 40] Excommunication gives a second chance that's not available at judgment day. John Chrysostom wrote, the threatenings of hell show the care of God for us no less than the promises of heaven.

So those who say that church discipline is unloving could not be more wrong. If somebody is an unrepentant sinner, there's nothing more loving to do than to obey God's word and to go through the process where there is a second chance for repentance before judgment day, where there will be.

There's no such thing as purgatory. There will be no second chance to, there's no balanced scale of good versus bad deeds. It's either you are in Christ and you're clothed, you're robed in Christ's righteousness or you're not.

There will be no second chances. Excommunication is a glimpse of judgment day. So discipline, church discipline, all the way up to excommunication, is for the benefit of the one who is sinning. Discipline is for the benefit of the one who is wrongly maligned, the faithful elder who a false accusation has been brought against. Church discipline is for the benefit of the protection of the whole church.

[34 : 02] And that can be either protection from the whole church of a false teacher, an unfaithful elder, somebody who is an unrepentant sin, or against somebody who is a slanderer, somebody who likes to bear false witness, somebody who likes to divide.

Church discipline benefits also the protection of the whole church by preventing others from likewise sinning, by bringing whether it be false accusations against somebody to malign their character, or by falling into the sin that they observed in another.

Notice what it says in verse 20, that the rest also may fear. So church discipline is for the benefit of everybody, for the unrepentant sinner, for the whole church, for the one who has sinned against, as well as for those in preventative measure, for them likewise sinning as well.

Now in Matthew 18, 20, if you remember at the end of that process of church discipline, it said, for where two or three are gathered together, in my name, I am there in the midst of them.

Now remember, this is in the context of church discipline, where within the church, confronting a brother because of his sin, bringing two or three witnesses, and investigating sin, showing somebody his sin, there's the sinner, there's the one going to his brother, and there's the witnesses, there's somebody else present in this act, isn't there?

[35 : 45] There's somebody else present in this process of Matthew 18, or in our text, of showing a brother his sin, of investigating it. So the church that tries to do away with church discipline, or sweep these things under the rug, or hope that it just goes away, I think they overlook this fact.

That's where there is a true church, and they exercise church discipline, and this process is followed, who else is present in this process? Christ is present.

Christ is present in this process, not only present, but giving his approval of this process. An investigation, investigating of sin in the church, even to the point of putting out unrepentant sinners, Christ is present.

Now there's more than just the fact that Christ is present in this process. That we have in our text here, inspired commands, so all of scripture is inspired.

The human authors were moved or carried along by the spirit of God. Every word and every thought in scripture has God ultimately as the author.

[36 : 58] So where there is a command in the Bible, it's a divine command by nature of being inspired. So we have divine command, inspired command, and heavenly attestation to this process.

Look in verse 21. I charge you, this is a command, I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things.

This is a divine command to observe these things. Notice that it's not just the local church. It's not just the local church involved in this process.

Christ is involved in this process. God is involved in this process. So when a true church conducts church discipline and it goes to the point of excommunication, the unrepentant sinner who is put out of the church is not just put out of that local building, that local assembly.

They are put out of the household of God, the church of the living God. So wherever there is a true church, if that person has been duly put out of the church and excommunicated, they can't just go down the street and pretend as though nothing ever happened and then continue in partaking in the Lord's supper, having been excommunicated from the church.

[38 : 33] It says, I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. It is to be done without prejudice, without partiality.

And I keep saying sadly in many churches, and we've probably seen that, sadly in other churches, because somebody is a stronger personality or because somebody is Uncle Fred, they're related to half the church, or because so-and-so has been going here for the longest, that it is not done properly because of partiality.

They're seeing the person instead of the cause. So this is to be done in a way, not seeing the person, but the causes, not being influenced by the person or their popularity or their relations or their seniority, but this is to be done before the presence of God, Christ, and the elect angels without prejudice and without partiality.

So that means that where this is needed to be done, it will be a very difficult and painful situation to go through. Let's say Uncle Fred is in sin. Maybe Uncle Fred is an elder and he was appointed as an elder because if you have an Uncle Fred, I'm not referring to him, it's just something I drew out of the air.

And just because he's a nice guy and he's been going to church for so long and he's related to everybody and he's got a strong opinion and made him an elder, but he is not qualified and he is an unrepentant sin.

[40 : 13] How painful this would be to have to investigate him and in his unrepentance to bring in two or three witnesses to show him his sin, he's unrepentant, he's obstinate and having to put him out.

This would be very painful. So, best case scenario is preventing it from happening in the first place. How do we prevent finding ourselves in such a difficult and painful situation and that brings us to a third point that the church itself is responsible for the examination, the vetting, the ordaining and maintaining of faithful elders.

So, our third point is future elders or future eldership and ordination verses 22 to 25. First, the selection for future elders, the selection of elders and preventing installment of unfaithful elders. So, preventing from even being in that painful situation in the first place. Look at verse 22. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins.

Keep yourself pure. Now, this laying on of hands, it's probably in reference to the ordination and setting apart a man for the office of elder. It can also be applied to an installation.

[41 : 42] So, installation is where somebody has already been ordained and maybe they've changed churches or another church has hired them to be their pastor. They've already been ordained but they're being installed or perhaps they were an elder and for, let's say, for health reasons, they stepped down from the office for a while and they're reinstalled.

Ordination or installation preventing unfaithful elders. Perhaps a church is looking for a pastor and they get this man from this church who's ordained in this church and he's very knowledgeable and he speaks very well and he's charming and people like him and they just rush him into office or somebody starts coming to your church.

They just moved here from down south or from somewhere in a different province. And again, they're very knowledgeable and they're a nice person. So they just fast track them into the office of an elder.

Our text warns us against the rash appointment of elders, not to impulsively appoint somebody into office in order to not impulsively appoint an unsuitable office bearer.

So when we just looked at discipline of an unfaithful elder, there is an examination and a trial to put an elder out.

[43 : 11] There's also an examination and a trial to put an elder in. To put somebody in as an elder, he is to be examined to undergo a trial.

and this is the vetting. The selection process is vetting a ministerial candidate for his qualifications for a job, sorry, for the work, for the office, to be examined according to 1 Timothy 3, the qualifications of an elder.

And this step, this step of vetting, of examining this trial period for an elder is not to be neglected. Don't neglect this critical step.

It even speaks of purity. Keep yourself pure. What do you think that means? It means the church to keep itself pure of the sin, the hidden sin of the unqualified elder.

If the church rashly or impulsively puts somebody into the office of elder without vetting, without seeing he's not qualified, either doctrinally or by way of conduct, and then after being an elder and that comes out, the church is responsible.

[44 : 27] The church is culpable for its own purity in that sense. So don't neglect this critical step. Its purity from sin is both the one ordained and the church that installs.

So to lay hands and to ordain or in the case of to install on an unworthy man means that the church shares in culpability of the unfaithfulness of the unfaithful elder.

The church is responsible and accountable. This is a very important step that is not to be neglected for the church. So the selection, this vetting process, this vetting is not a popularity contest.

It's not a trial period to see who's the most popular. People put in your votes of who you like the best for this position and we'll see who has the most ballots.

It's not a popularity vote. It is a true and it is a thorough evaluation process. Verse 24, some men's sins are clearly evident preceding them to judgment.

[45 : 36] What it's referring to here is not judgment day but judgment of the church of this trial period that give it time and it'll become evident. Some men's sins are clearly evident preceding them to judgment but those of some men follow later.

Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. In other words, give it time for the vetting process, for the selection, for this examination and trial period, give it time and sins will surface.

Some people are good at hiding their sins at first but with time, sins will surface. Alternatively, also with time, a person's fruit will also be made obvious.

So future eldership, selection as well as longevity. Longevity of future eldership, the preventing of burnout of faithful elders.

Verse 23, when I was reading through it, when I got there, you might have thought, that seems strange to be placed where it is. Why is it placed there? Verse 23, no longer drink only water but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

[46 : 51] He says to use a little wine. Of course, too much wine is sin, drunkenness is sin, or being enslaved to wine, or being in debt, or squandering resources, or squandering wealth, because of, while it may not be drunkenness, squandering your finances in order to be drinking is sin, but a little wine.

It's not drunkenness, but a little wine. He's recommending it. Now why is he saying this? No longer drink only water but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

Perhaps, and again, the details aren't given, but perhaps his body absorbed the tension from all the stress of having to confront these false teachers, these false teachers who were here before him, these false teachers who may very well have been more senior or have been related to many

people, but it would be stressful, and perhaps his body absorbed the tension of that stress and confronting them.

Perhaps his body absorbed the tension from the stress of removing unrepentant elders, and probably as a result being the target of false accusations.

being the target of false accusations, being the target of character maligning on account of having to tell people that they are wrong, on account of having to tell people that they are in error, on account of doing what he was told to do, commanding, teaching, exhorting, reproving, and rebuking.

[48 : 34] There's also probably the possibility of him being affected by those which were spoken to in 4, verse 3. If you remember, speaking of those who forbid to marry and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth, perhaps he was influenced by the asceticism, and he was too afraid to take a little wine.

So, Paul says, use a little wine. Not sure what exactly his stomach problems were, or why he had them, but the sense of this verse and why it's where it is, the sense of the text is that elders painstakingly labor for the spiritual well-being of souls in the church, and they also need to take care of themselves.

What it's saying is don't fall into neglect of physical and mental health. Too much stress and tension without relief takes its toll on the body. So, faithful elders, unfaithful elders, and future elders.

Now, what are some concluding uses that we can take out of this text? Very quickly, first of all, the office of elder is a very serious work.

It's a very serious office, and it must be taken very seriously. Many churches do not. But, the office of elder is not to be removed from the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3.

[50 : 17] 1 Timothy 3 lays out the qualifications of an elder. Somebody is not to be put into the position of an elder who does not meet those qualifications. Second, elders will be subject to disgruntled people trying to malign their character because those people have been offended by the truth of the word.

This will happen. There will be false accusations brought against faithful elders. For the health of the church, for the sake of everybody involved, they need to be investigated to see who is sinning.

Third, in a sin-cursed world, there will be unfaithful elders. Elders are not exempt from the Matthew 18 procedure of church discipline of those who are sinning in the church.

fourth, excommunication is the opposite of baptism. To understand the significance and the gravity of what excommunication is.

Excommunication is the opposite of baptism. Baptism is the person being baptized, it is their public profession of faith, of being a Christian, their public profession of being united to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, and the church baptizing that person, it's the church's affirmation that that profession is credible.

[51 : 51] So when we say a visible saint, it's those who have a credible profession which has been, which is affirmed by the church because there's some who will say they're a Christian, but maybe in doctrine they deny the deity of Christ, or maybe in their life they demonstrate no fruit, but only fruit of belonging to the world.

So who, when somebody says they have been united to Christ, that they have been united to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, they have been made a new creature, who affirms if that's true?

Is it the person? Who is the arbiter of if that is true? It's the church. The Bible tells us it's the church through baptism, the affirmation that that is a credible profession of faith.

baptism, then, actually I'll just read quick, Romans 6, 3-5, Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in units of life.

[52 : 57] For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection. Baptism is a visual of what the spiritual reality is, going under the water, immersed into death, united in Christ's death and burial, and then resurrection coming up out of the water to new life.

So baptism is the church's affirmation that this has occurred spiritually within the person. And excommunication is the opposite.

Excommunication is the church's affirmation that their profession of faith is not credible. Man is infallible, and the church will sometimes baptize and bring into church membership those who are not saved.

But with time, sins will become evident, and the sinner will be unrepentant, and church discipline will be required, and it will result in excommunication. It will happen. But that's why this process is important, because we are not God.

We are not infallible, but God gives us his rule, his standard of what we are to do in those situations. excommunication is the public declaration that someone's profession is not credible.

[54 : 24] The person claims to be a brother, they are an unrepentant sin, they were shown their sin, they have not listened, two or three others came, they are shown them their sin, they are not repentant, it was taken before the church, they were rebuked in the presence of all, they are still obstinately unrepentant, they are to be put out of the church, which is a glimpse of judgment day, but yet on earth there is a second chance for restoration, for repentance, and for restoration.

But this excommunication is a public declaration that someone's profession is not credible, and Christ, who is head of the church, who is head of every true church, is present in this act of church discipline.

So when there is an elder who is unfaithful, who is sinning, this process is done, investigated through a trial, he has found that he is sinning, he is unrepenting, going after the process, he is obstinate and unrepentant, he is to be put out of the church, and Christ is present in this act.

So if Christ is present in this act, it's not that he can go to another church in a different city, and there is a different Christ who is head of that church. There is great seriousness and weightiness that occurs in excommunication.

And it's the church's affirmation that this person's profession is not credible. It's the opposite of baptism. So a credible profession is the outward fruit of the spiritual reality.

[56 : 00] When someone professes to be united to Christ, it's an outward fruit of what is spiritually real inside. So it's the outward fruit of the spiritual reality that baptism is a sign of, namely union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

So having gone over all this, the question then is are you united to Christ? Have you been united to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection?

Because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and the wages of sin is death. And if after this life, as I said, excommunication is a glimpse of judgment day, judgment day is when the veil of this flesh is taken from us, and we are before our maker, and all of our sins are exposed, the private ones, the secret ones, internal ones, the external ones, all of our sins are open and exposed.

And if we are found to have even one sin, then God will say, I never knew you, depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. But to be united to Christ is that being united to Christ in his death and burial is that our sins are imputed to Christ and nailed to the cross, paid for in full, and we were united to Christ in his death and burial, the death and the punishment has occurred, divine justice has been satisfied, and united to Christ in his resurrection up from the grave, up from death, and to new life.

Believers, Christians, are new creatures, those who have been regenerated or born anew. So if this has not occurred, then when you are before God, you will not be clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ, and it is only by the perfect righteousness of Christ that anybody can stand in the presence of God.

[57 : 52] And this discussion of excommunication, as I said, it's a glimpse of judgment day. It shows not only to the person being excommunicated, but to the whole church and everybody watching that those who are unrepentant in sin will be cast out.

And at judgment day, if you are in unrepentant sin, if you have not repented of sin and turn to Christ for salvation, you will be cast out. There will be no second chances. So now is the acceptable time for salvation.

Now is the acceptable time to repent of sin, to turn to Christ, to have your sins paid for in full, receive a full pardon of sin, be robed in Christ's righteousness, and you will be saved.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, receive him, rest on him alone, and the gospel promises of forgiveness, of Christ's righteousness, of salvation, of justification, of being glorified in Christ's kingdom forever.

Let's pray. Our great God, we thank you for your word and all that it tells us of how the church ought to conduct itself, and the very serious matter of sin in the church, and the very serious office and work of an elder, and what the church is to do when there are faithful elders, when there are unfaithful elders, when there are unfaithful accusations against faithful elders, and how the church can preventatively keep these painful situations from arising by the due process of selecting elders and maintaining elders.

[59 : 29] I pray, Lord, that you would build your church here, that you would enable us to do what your word prescribes to be done. We thank you for salvation.

That salvation is offered to lost sinners in this life while there is time for salvation. And if there are those who are not saved this morning, I pray, Lord, that you would show them their sin and the misery of sin, that they would be shocked by their sinfulness, and that you would show them your great gospel of salvation, that they would be astonished by your grace, and that you would grant them faith and repentance, and to turn to Christ, to believe on Christ for salvation and be saved. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.