

1 TIMOTHY

January 22, 2023

1 Timothy 5:17-25

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” ¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. ²³ (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) ²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. ²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden. ¹

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

Throughout history there have been those who have stood firmly on narrow places, with power, position, and influence. These leaders have had books written of them, movies depicting their stories, and some have been lionized by many. Currently, there are over 60,000 results on Amazon when you search for books on leadership.

Leadership sells. Names like Covey, Maxwell, and Sinek have become synonymous with modern-day leadership in businesses and organizations. Add to that every winning coach in a popular sport and the leadership books continue to grow.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Ti 5:17–25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

In the church, the baptism of business and sports leadership practices has led to a subculture of Christian leadership that sells to a clientele who longs to lead...but you know like Jesus did. Thus, the mash-up word servant-leadership has been born.

Certainly, there are needs for leaders in business, education, sports, and even the church. Biblical leadership is essential, and many have sought to help churches find the right people for the right positions so that the local church may thrive.

Sounds good...but still reeks of baptized business practices at times when means the starting line is often less biblical than desired. Sadly, this can mean that the finish line is a leadership that looks the part but hasn't the call.

In this section of Paul's directive to Timothy...all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he delves into how the church should care for and provide for the elders, but understand the word for elders here is not the term for older people in the church, but is the term presbuteroi, or presbyters...where the Presbyterians derive their name, and it is the equivalent for the term pastor today.

DOUBLE HONORING THE ELDERS

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

The term for elder originated in the Jewish synagogue and referenced the ones who supervised the work within the synagogue.

The understood focus is the pastor/shepherd/overseer/elder of the church. In this case Timothy and other elders who may be called. Yet, the question centers on what this "double honor" means.

It is clear that that Paul intentionally positioned this portion of the letter after all the delineation as to whom should serve as pastor and the requirements. Then the not-so-subtle passage regarding how the members of the church must not be allowed to look down upon Timothy due to his youth. Again, not just about age, but about character.

There has been a strange development among pastors and ministry leaders over the centuries. Some have pushed back against any payment or honorariums with rightfully-positioned feelings that they are working for the Lord and shouldn't be paid. Yet, according to scripture this is not God-honoring and is a culturally-formed false humility fueled by guilt.

Then, there are those who have wrongly become rich on the backs of donations by godly people, creating a prosperity-fueled false gospel led by false teachers, in false churches...to the denigration of the true work of God and the church.

So, here, with our biblical worldview glasses on, we see that the pastor of the church who fulfills the character and practical guidelines expressed in earlier chapters, who lives with integrity, morality, and leads well and teaches prayed over, gospel-saturated, right doctrine to the gathered church...is due a DOUBLE HONOR.

What is this double honor?

1. Worthy of respect
2. Worthy of financial remuneration

Thus, the oft-quoted theme, said jokingly, but with a hint of truth, statement that churches have said for decades regarding paying their pastors "God will keep him humble. We will keep him poor." is far from biblically right and actually, based on this is heretical and evil.

Respect is earned and pay should be appropriate. Both can be dealt with wrongly, but positionally, the role of pastor of the local church is a

position that should be respected, and the man should experience provision from the congregation.

Now, we'll park there for just a moment before all the reasons not to respect a certain pastor come to mind. It may be too late, but let's remain in the good for now.

A godly man, called by God, placed in a location to shepherd a flock whose names are known by God is to be a man of good repute, fulfilling all the requirements listed in this letter prior. Timothy was such a man. The church was to recognize this.

It is easier, especially in today's world of pain and stories of misused positions and power-hungry sinners to leave no benefit of the doubt and to begin in a hole when it comes to respecting a pastor.

Seriously, how many news stories of abuse, theft, misuse of power, and even lawsuits between pastors and churches have been told in recent months? How many times do we, church people, Christians, faithful sons and daughters of God, hear or read of such and are not surprised at all? We live in an era where in a listing of the 15 least respected professions in America, clergy comes in at number 13!² And that was in 2017 in one survey. I doubt we've risen in the ranks.

But Paul says the godly pastor is due a double honor. Respect and pay.

“You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,”

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4 here. This teaching referenced that as an oxen was treading the field, they were allowed an occasional bite of grain. The principle is clear, as the work is being done, care for the worker is offered.

² <https://www.insidermonkey.com/blog/15-least-respected-jobs-and-most-untrustworthy-professions-in-the-world-608564/?singlepage=1>

Paul also quotes Jesus from Luke 10:7 here by saying “**The laborer deserves his wages.**” This too is an Old Testament teaching, affirmed by Christ. The message is clear – pay the pastor. It’s clear to the pastor as well – take the honorarium.

The focus here, as affirmed in Paul’s letters to the Corinthian church as well, is on the elders who are regularly preaching and teaching within the church – not all elders.

Now, I don’t think the pastor should be the richest man in the church. He shouldn’t strive for more money, larger homes, more cars, or other such things. The love of money is the root of evil and pastors are as susceptible as anyone. However, the pastor should also not be the poorest man in the church and struggling to pay bills and feed his family based on what is provided by the body. It certainly is a fine line and to be clear, I am blessed and thankful for how FBC has provided for me and my family over the years.

So...this is not a veiled message in a sermon to get a pay raise. This is a clear message in a sermon based on the Word of God that states clearly that those who serve the church as elders, as pastors, are due a double-honor.

DEALING WITH ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ELDERS

¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Accusations will come. Some are fluff and to be ignored. Gossip always appears in the church.

He states that a charge against an elder without evidence and corroboration is not admissible. Some balk at this because so many have secretly sinned and harmed others via their position and evidence and witnesses may be hard to come by, but given time, patterns are revealed. This one verse gives a starting point to dealing with accusers. Victims

should not be ignored. Accusations should be addressed, but empty accusations (which also occur) need not be a driving force for dealing with pastors.

DISCIPLINING THE PASTOR

But...eventually, real problems are revealed and the church must respond.

Even if the issue is so hard to believe. Character (both good and bad) eventually rises to the top. Respect the position, but what if the person has abandoned God's requirements and disqualified himself from the position?

Paul goes there quickly.

Paul knows that the sinful nature of man will lead some to seek the office of pastor without the calling of God, for self-focused gain. Some who begin well will be taken out by the evil desires of the heart. Sinners sin and sin must be addressed. In the case of pastors...the double honor also means a doubly-focused response.

Let me tell you what the church is NOT to do. If the pastor is found to be habitually sinning, to be harming the flock, to be teaching heresy, to be addicted to immoral acts, to be a lover of money, to be a power-broker for self-gain, to be one who could not chaperone a youth trip, to be one whose home life is opposite of what is portrayed, and more...the church is NOT to dismiss him quietly so he can go to another church down the street, or in another town, or a few states away, to do the very same things.

Doing the right thing is bigger than protecting a brand.

So, God gives Timothy and the church of Ephesus guidelines that resonate today.

²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

DON'T RUN AHEAD

And now, a portion of the passage that is convicting for me. Why? Because as I read and study this, the Holy Spirit has revealed that there have been times in my ministry where I was too quick. In fact, there have been times in our church history where we have been too quick. Not in every case, thankfully, but in just a few.

²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. ²³ (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) ²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. ²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden. ³

David, are you saying that we have license and ordained some men who should not have been?

Yes.

How can you say that?

Because some have proven themselves to be immature in the faith, not men who counted the cost, those who met a rudimentary list of requirements, but not the biblical testing required. There have been those who have abandoned the apparent call because it did not pay well, their family didn't want to be in ministry, or the schedule and work proved too challenging. Some have abandoned their responsibility with their

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (1 Ti 5:17–25). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

spouses and children. Some have fallen into adultery. Yes...there are those whom we (I) have rushed too quickly to set apart for service.

The warning doesn't say wait forever, but the clarity is there – pray, test, question, pray, serve, pray, seek, then set apart for service.

Apparently, the first century church was no different than the 21st century church when it came to a dearth of qualified and called leaders. Yet, the warning is clear – don't get impatient and become hasty in your positioning people as leaders, especially pastors.

PASTOR – TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

I am now of the age where I no longer fit in the “young pastor” category at meetings. I have more years in the pastorate than many in our network. I have more years in the same church that most in our denomination. I never thought of myself as the older sage...but it seems that I'm sliding into that.

The older I get, the more I realize that the pains of age, the health issues that come, and the wearing out of the body is something that hits pastors as well as others.

I also recognize that as a young pastor I longed for godly men to speak into my life. I found some, but not many. Perhaps that is why I spend so much time with new pastors, church planters, and men serving in pastoral ministry. I'm no Paul, but I know every Timothy needs one.

You can see Paul's love for the pastor here in this strange little verse that many with memberships in the wine of the month club claim as their life verse.

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

It could be that the attempt of Timothy to be liked by all in the church found him abstaining from wine because of the myth lovers and heretics who were teaching to abstain from marriage, good food, and anything else that brought any semblance of pleasure in life. These liars were calling bad what God called good. So, maybe Timothy with his stomach issues had been taking a little wine but had stopped for well-intentioned, but wrong reasons.

Point – not anything about wine, but everything about health. Paul lovingly says “Take your vitamins. Eat well. Rest. Take care of yourself. You are important to God and me. So goes the shepherd...so go the sheep.”

LIVE HOLY, RIGHTEOUS, REDEEMED, AND FORGIVEN

²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. ²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

The pastor is not perfect. Only Christ is. Yet in our being made perfect, and in accordance to God’s Word, he calls pastors to shepherd the flock, to serve the Lord and his people, to rightly divide the Truth, to teach well, to love fully, to pray continually, to study deeply.

There are wolves out there disguised as sheep...and as shepherds, but know this, godly character will be seen. Just as sin will eventually be obvious, so too will the God-centered, integrity-laced, morally-right, good works of the saints of God.

Thank you church for letting me shepherd you. Forgive me for my failings and pray for me as we move forward to impact one another and this world for good, and ultimately for God.