

How to Treat Your Pastor – 1 Timothy 5:17-25

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Recap

1. It's been a couple weeks since our last study in 1 Tim, so let's do a quick review.
2. Paul left his young associate Timothy in Ephesus to sort out some issues in the church while he sailed west to help the churches there.
3. Paul's plan was to meet back up with Tim but knew he might be delayed, so he wrote this letter to both encourage Tim & give some guidance.
4. Most of what needed work in Ephesus was their **relationships**.
 - a. They needed to know how their faith in God impacted their treatment of each other.
 - b. How does being a Christian **edit our relationships**?
 - c. How does following Jesus **alter our interactions**?
5. Being born again **changes** the way we understand & relate to God.
 - a. It **must also** change the way we understand & relate **to one another**.
 - b. When Jesus becomes Lord, His mastery is over **EVERYTHING**, not just some tiny subset labeled "religion".
 - c. If your Christianity is just for Sunday mornings, but not Monday afternoon & Friday night, it's a sham.
6. God isn't fooled by our coming here, singing songs, smiling benignly, & passing out blessings while at home we mistreat our family.
7. The rule is **Love**: First for God, then for others.
 - a. Paul breaks it down & describes some specifics.
 - b. He gives details for dealing with different groups.
 - c. That's what we looked at last time –

1 Timothy 5:1–2 - 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.

- d. In the next section he tells Timothy how to deal with **widows**.
8. Then, beginning w/v. 17, it's **elders**.
- #### B. Leaders for the Church
1. The Church **needs** leaders. **Any group**, if it wants to **accomplish** something more than just hanging out, needs leadership.
 2. In the NT, there are 3 words used to describe what turns out to be the same leadership office & role: **Elder, Overseer, & Pastor**.
 - a. They refer to the same person & ministry because they're used interchangeably.
 - b. **Elder** refers to the man's **character**; He's spiritually **mature** w/a proven reputation for wisdom.
 - c. **Overseer**, translated '**bishop**' refers to his **spiritual authority** as one who's **called by God** to lead.
 - d. **Pastor** is the same as **shepherd** & speaks of his 3-fold task to **lead, feed, & protect** the flock of God.
 3. Because of the crucial role these leaders play, Paul tells Tim about them.
 - a. In ch. 3 he gave a list of criteria to use in **selecting** them. We went over it in some detail.
 - b. Paul spent says much on elders in this letter because it was from their ranks the biggest problems came.
 - c. Some of them had gone off into false teaching & led many astray.
 - d. But not all of them. There were still some good men serving as elders.
 - e. The problems with **errant** elders had created **unnecessary problems** for the faithful so Paul told Timothy how to deal with it.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 17-18

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

1. The situation in the early church was similar to the way it is in many places today.
2. When the Gospel first came to a city, a church would be planted & begin with just a handful of people.

3. But as those first believers grew in grace, others came to faith & the church grew.
4. While they met first in someone's home, soon they were meeting in 2, then 3, 4, a half-dozen houses.
5. **Each** of these house churches was led by an elder who taught & led the worship.
6. But in many cities like Ephesus, the church grew to several hundred, even a few thousand.
7. They continued to meet in homes & were led by house-church elders, but they also gathered frequently in large open areas to hear the preaching & teaching of those elders who were **especially gifted**.
8. As time passed, those men were looked to train & counsel the **other** elders.
 - a. They went from house to house; teaching, leading, & building up the Body.
 - b. Their ministry was so in demand, they could no longer perform the work by which they'd supported themselves & their families.
 - c. They had to quit their jobs as masons, tanners, merchants, & olive-growers & work full-time as pastors.
9. Those elders who worked hard & did well in leading the church ought to be paid to do so.
10. That's what **double-honor** means. // Double-honor is **respect & remuneration**.
 - a. As Peter says in his first letter, because elders have been appointed by God, those they lead ought to respect them.
 - b. Paul says this respect should find expression in providing for them.
 - c. But only if they **lead well & work hard**, which is what the word **labor** means, in Word & Doctrine = Preaching & Teaching.
11. This stood in contrast to those elders that had gone off into error & had had to be rebuked & removed.
12. But other pastors had stayed the course, refusing to get caught up in the enticing words of the errant.
 - a. These faithful men had proven themselves to be a steady hand on the wheel of the ship as it sailed through stormy seas.
 - b. They worked hard at studying the Scriptures, preparing solid messages that helped people grow.
 - c. Whether they preached to a large crowd or from house to house, they worked hard at it.
 - d. And people were deepened in their knowledge of God & experience of His grace as a result.
13. That's what the pastors & elders aim for here at CCO. We want to lead well.
 - a. We pray for wisdom & grace to make wise decisions.
 - b. We work diligently as we prepare to preach & teach.
 - c. In fact, Next few days; vacation, to pray & seek Lord for direction.
14. And you know what – you all have been **wonderful** at doing your part of showing honor.
15. It's a great privilege to be a pastor here.
16. There are some aberrant groups & cults who don't support their leaders.
 - a. They think this makes them superior.
 - b. All it does is **further remove** them from the counsel of God's Word.
 - c. I agree with the cults; they **shouldn't** pay their ministers.
 - d. They obviously **AREN'T** laboring diligently in the Word & Doctrine!
 - e. If they **WERE**, they'd realize their cult is goofy & quit!
17. To prove Paul **meant** financial support by 'double-honor', he adds -
 - 18 For the Scripture says, "*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,*" and, "*The laborer is worthy of his wages.*"
 - a. First he quotes Deut. 25:4, then something Jesus said in Luke 10:7.
 - b. In 1 Cor. 9, Paul repeats this quote from Deut. & adds – "Does God really care about oxen?"
 - 1) Yes, of course! It would be cruel to stick an ox in harness & make it walk in a circle for hours as it turns grain into flour, and not let it stop to enjoy some of the fruit of its own labor!
 - 2) So, if God **is** concerned for an ox, **HOW MUCH MORE** is He's concerned about people employed in full-time ministry? Pay them!
 - 3) Their diligent work is producing fruit in your life & others so, reward them!
 - c. What's interesting is Paul's referring to Luke 10:7 as **Scripture**.
 - 1) Luke was Paul's friend.
 - 2) But his Gospel had already become accepted as an authoritative source of God's Word.

B. Vs. 19-21

1. Now Paul deals with accusations made against an elder -

¹⁹ Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from 2 or 3 witnesses.

2. While it's the calling of God that **qualifies** a man to be an elder, what ensures his ability to do so as far as **people** are concerned is his **character**.

- a. If that's in doubt, he can do nothing because no one will, or should, listen.
- b. The enemy knows this, so uses gossip & attack to discredit good elders.

3. Paul tells Tim – so us, don't give **any** attention to an accusation made against an elder unless it's **verified** by a 2nd & preferable **validated** by a 3rd witness.

4. So, if you hear Pastor [Fred] is having an affair, what do you do with that? Nothing!

a. Paul says, **“Don't receive it.”**

1) That is, you don't talk about it **with the person** who told you.

2) You don't tell **anyone else**.

3) And you don't go looking for **either** verification or refutation.

b. But, if **another witness**, not someone who heard the accusation from the same place as you, but someone in a position to **know**, verifies the report, then there's cause for concern.

c. If a 3rd such witness adds additional confirmation, follow up is needed.

d. That follow-up is in v. 20 -

²⁰ Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

5. This means elders **who continue to sin**.

a. An man may have a moral lapse, fall, & be repentant.

b. His error likely means he needs to step down. He no longer meets the criteria for being an elder found in ch 3.

c. But his **repentance** means he doesn't need to be rebuked publicly.

6. What Paul refers to here are elders who're **continuing** to sin.

a. They've been confronted & shown they're in error yet reject the call to repent.

b. They've **rationalized**, made up excuses; you know all the dodges people use when they have to justify what they know is wrong.

7. Paul says, **“Call 'em out!”** Don't agree to disagree & let them quietly sail off into the sunset.

8. Announce to the congregation they're in sin & though they've been confronted, **remain** unrepentant.

9. Sadly, this is something the modern church has been reluctant to do because it doesn't want to face scandal & the embarrassment it brings.

10. But the church can't let its reputation trump the holiness of God.

11. There are too many cases of pastors & elders who are serial adulterers, or who use ministry as a way to get rich.

12. Their sin is discovered but instead of being publicly rebuked, they're quietly shuffled off to someplace else, **any** place else, where they do the same thing all over again.

13. [Tom Brock]

14. An erring elder is to be publicly rebuked by the other elders. This puts them in fear of ever being in that place themselves.

a. It's best to obey God out of love. But if not love – fear works too!

b. Better fear than sin!

15. This is so serious **& difficult** Paul needed to press home for Tim how important it is so he writes -

²¹ 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.

16. “As God, Jesus & the angles are my witness – I'm telling you to do this!”

a. “Timothy – don't let favoritism for certain guys weaken your resolve to do the right thing here.”

b. “If an elder gets wonky, you try to straighten him out but if he digs in his heels,

c. It doesn't matter if he's a friend – Call him out!”

17. Paul says this because **he knew some** of the elders in Ephesus who were causing trouble.

a. He'd appointed them & knew them to be likeable guys.

b. Paul had spent 3 years in Ephesus & had worked with these men.

c. He'd already prophesied over them, warning them some would depart from the Faith, Now they have.

- d. It breaks the heart of pastors like Paul & Timothy when they see what used to be good, effective servants of God go off into error.
- e. Guys you once counted as friends; a brother in the Lord.
- f. You've reasoned with them, shown them where they've gotten off.
- g. But they claim they've got a side deal with God, an exemption, a special arrangement.
- h. As hard as it is – these guys have to be identified & called out.

C. V. 22

²² Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

1. This **adds** to something he'd said in 3:6 > that an elder can't be a novice; new to the faith.
2. Here, he can't be **new to the fellowship** either. He needs to have been around long enough to evaluate his maturity & character.
3. Paul had learned this hard way – by experience.
4. Reading through Acts we see him coming to a city, preaching the Gospel, starting a church, then moving on a few weeks later.
 - a. Yet before he left, he appointed elders to lead the church.
 - b. How well can a man who's been born again for a month or 2 lead?
 - c. This is why Paul began leaving Timothy, Titus or one of his others assistants behind for a while.
 - d. It was their task to provide leadership until **elders could** be appointed.
5. So here Paul reminds Tim of the importance of making sure an elder has a tested, proven character.
6. If he were to lay hands on & so commission an elder simply because he seemed good without proper investigation, Timothy could be guilty of authorizing what turned out to be a fiend!
7. Those Tim ordained would reflect on **his** leadership.

D. V. 23

1. This mention of purity moves Paul to add a personal word of advice for Timothy.

²³ No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

2. Though this verse seems out of context, it's a wonderful little mark of the close relationship between Paul & Timothy.
3. They'd spent a lot of time together & what I see here is a fun little jab Paul makes at his friend.
4. It's an inside joke.
5. Wine was the staple drink of the Roman world.
 - a. People generally didn't drink water because it was unsafe, just as it is in many places today.
 - b. What they did to make water safe was to mix it with wine.
 - c. Depending on the region, they added enough wine for the alcohol to kill off the parasites or mask an unpleasant flavor.
 - d. This meant travelers like Paul & Timothy would drink wine in one place that was mostly water, while in another it was mostly wine.
6. Being a Christian meant staying sober, so Paul stayed alert to his consumption to make sure he never slipped into overindulgence.
7. Tim's tolerance to alcohol was lower & had decided that even though it was risky, we'd drink only water! No wine whatever.
8. Okay, so imagine how this went.
 - a. The 2 are in some city & have had dinner at someone's house.
 - b. Later that night, Timothy gets a stomach ache.
 - c. Paul says, "Well of course! That's what water in a place like this will do to you. Next time drink wine." // "No Paul! No wine for me." // "Okay, then stop complaining!"
 - d. That scene was probably played out many times & got to be a joke between them as Tim bugged Paul about wine & Paul shot right back about Tim's belly-aches.
9. Here in his letter, as he's mentioned Tim's well-known commitment to remaining pure, he says, "You can stay pure & still drink a little vino because you're doing it to stay healthy, not get snookered.
10. On the contrary Tim – you **can** drink **precisely because** you're so careful to **NOT** get buzzed.
11. People who quote this verse as justification for getting plastered fool no one.

E. Vs. 24-25

1. Paul now returns to the selection of elders. This links to v. 22 where he warned Tim to not be hasty in

appointing them.

2. They need to be **investigated & evaluated** first, because . . .

²⁴ Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding *them* to judgment, but those of some *men* follow later. ²⁵

Likewise, the good works of *some* are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

3. There are 2 kinds of people here – Those **qualified & disqualified** to be elders.

4. Each of them is further divided into 2 categories, the **obvious** & the **not so much**.

5. Among those **disqualified** to be elders, some are for **obvious** reasons.

a. One of the qualifications for being an elder in ch. 3 is that they are **above reproach**.

b. Some people have a questionable reputation that **precedes** them.

6. Others look good, but once you get to know them, you realize there some issues that disqualify them.

They treat their wife poorly // They have a problem w/anger or profanity // They are terrible w/money

7. Others are **well-qualified** to be elders & everyone knows it.

a. That's how we go about choosing elders here.

b. We don't make elders – we look for them. [Explain – Who's "elding"?]

8. Last, Paul mentions those who are qualified but it takes a little time & fellowship before you see their fruit.

a. Some fruit is **bright** & the taste is **explosive** – Lemon & Mangoes

b. Other fruit is more subtle – Guava & Kiwi

III. CONCLUSION

A. Some Follow After

1. While all we've looked at today is needed as we consider the crucial role of leadership in the church, Paul says something in v. 24 I want to end with today.

2. This applies to **all of us** whether in leadership or not. // He says -

Some people's sins are obvious. They can't hide them; everyone knows about them because they've been exposed and already assured their judgment. But the sins of others follow later.

3. They've managed to keep them secret, **so far**. They've hidden it, **to date**.

a. The anger & rage only come out at home w/the spouse & kids.

b. The foul mouth is limited to work.

c. The alternative life on the web is still a secret & you're good at covering your tracks by clearing the cache, cookies & history.

d. Your mate is oblivious to that adulterous tryst you're carrying on.

4. You think you are so clever & that you're getting away with it.

5. No! You're a fool! A colossal dupe with a massive bull's-eye on your forehead.

6. You are just one more stupid tool the devil is setting up for slaughter.

a. He **starts** by telling you, you can keep your sin secret & get away with it. No one will know.

b. You can have your fun, then end it whenever you want; before it all goes south.

c. But from the start, his plan is to rope you in, then when you're knee deep & trapped, to shine the light on you for all to see. Exposure & shame are his goal.

d. He wants to make you just one more of his trophies in his long war with God.

e. But – If you'll repent, right here & now, you can instead be a trophy of God's grace.