

## INTRODUCTION

Consider with me a man. We will not give him a name, because he is no certain man, but could be any one of many men dotted all over the world today and through twenty centuries of history.

Most days, this man kneels in his room, nobody seeing him, praying for the congregation, as a whole, for each household, and for every individual. Sometimes he is with people during times of need, praying for them in person. On the Lord's Day, he is in the assembly, leading the congregation in prayer, or making sure that other men do.

This man reads the Bible, studies what other men have written and said about it, thinks about the needs of his congregation in particular, and prepares what he is going to say, asking the Lord Jesus to help him. When the Lord's Day comes, or some other occasion, he serves up what he has prepared, he ministers in the word; he teaches; he speaks sound doctrine, maintaining the pattern of sound words laid down by our Lord and His apostles. He proclaims the same gospel proclaimed all along, of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He commands all men everywhere to repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and so be saved to eternal life.

This church elder makes sure, week in and week out, that the congregation's worship is orderly, strictly according to what the Lord Jesus has instituted. He leads the congregation to:

- pray as the Lord has taught us to pray
- to speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in their hearts to the Lord
- to hear the reading of the scriptures, and preaching and teaching from them
- to observe baptism and the Lord's Supper rightly
- to take up an offering for the congregation's expenses

He introduces no man-made elements:

- no parading of banners, no pledging allegiance to flags
- no applauding of men, whether fathers or mothers or veterans or graduates
- no preaching by women, or others not qualified

He sets an example for the congregation in greeting one another warmly, in sharing food with a glad and sincere heart, praising God, in sanctifying the first day of the week as the Lord's Day.

He listens constantly for any hint that people are believing false doctrine. He opposes anyone who tries to introduce false doctrine into the congregation. When necessary, he takes the lead in disciplinary procedures against any member who must be expelled from the congregation.

This man, of course, is the one who, by the Holy Spirit, has been made an elder, pastor, bishop, of a congregation of Jesus Christ. Such church elder is engaged in a great work, and work essential for the salvation of sinners and the edification of the congregation. It is of great importance that his work not be hindered.

So, our Lord's apostle has laid down rules for us, His disciples, so we will know how to conduct ourselves in His house, so that the work of His ministers not be hindered.

## TEXT

1 Timothy 5:19-25 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. 20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. 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. 22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. 23 No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. 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.

## BODY

Let the work of the elders not be hindered by

### I. False Accusations Against An Elder

- A. One of the descriptions of the devil is “the accuser of our brethren,” because it is a favorite tactic of his to make accusations against God and His people
  1. remember that he accused Job of serving God only for the sake of his own skin
- B. The Bible tells us of times that the devil tried to stop the great work of building that God’s servants were doing
  1. when the high priest Joshua was rebuilding the temple, the devil accursed him before God, but God rebuked Satan, and showed Zechariah that Joshua was like a brand God had plucked from the fire, and that God had removed Joshua’s iniquity, like a man taking off filthy clothes to put on clean ones
  2. when Nehemiah was rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, the devil provoked Jerusalem’s enemies to accuse him of leading a rebellion against the king, but God gave Nehemiah the wisdom to rebuke them, and to continue his work
- C. Similarly, a favorite tactic of Satan and those men under his sway is to oppose the work of the church’s pastors by getting someone to accuse them falsely
  1. either
    - a) accusing the elder of something wicked, which he has not done
    - b) accuse the elder of something he has done, but which is not actually wrong
  2. this is very distracting to the elders, and to the rest of the congregation
- D. In order for the power of this kind of false accusation to be minimized, it must be the church’s policy not to hear an accusation against an elder except by two or three witnesses
  1. this is an ancient law from the Old Testament law of Moses
  2. being essentially just and equitable, it still serves well today, including in the congregation
  3. it applies to any member, but is especially important in dealing with accusations against elders

Let the work of the elders not be hindered by false accusations against an elder, or by

## II. Sinful Conduct By An Elder

- A. From time to time in the life of a congregation, it may come to people's attention that an elder is sinning
- B. This hinders the work of the congregation's pastors in at least two ways
  - 1. his own work
  - 2. the work of the other elders
- C. If this is an ongoing sin, of which the elder is unwilling to repent
- D. And if there are two or three witnesses
- E. Then such a man is to be rebuked before all
  - 1. fear of the Lord has been forgotten
  - 2. it will be restored

Let the work of the elders not be hindered by

-false accusations against an elder, or

-sinful conduct by an elder, or by

## III. Prejudiced Judgment About An Elder

- A. In either case, whether of false accusation brought by just one person, or of true accusation brought by two or three witnesses, judgment by the church must not be prejudiced; not because the elder is
  - 1. a relative
  - 2. a friend
  - 3. a beloved long-serving pastor
  - 4. a gifted speaker
  - 5. a wealthy benefactor
- B. Two things not to be done:
  - 1. people are not to judge before the time
  - 2. people are not to judge on the basis of party
- C. The apostle presses on us the solemnity of this matter by invoking witnesses
  - 1. God the Father
  - 2. the Lord Jesus Christ
  - 3. the elect angels

**[If out of time, stop here for today.]**

Let the work of the elders not be hindered by

-false accusations against an elder, or

-sinful conduct by an elder, or

-prejudiced judgment about an elder, or by

## IV. Hasty Ordination Of An Elder

- A. Do not be hasty in ordination
- B. This makes you have a share in a sinning elder's sins
- C. Sins might appear sooner, but might appear later
- D. Gifts might appear sooner, but might appear later

## CONCLUSION

Let the work of the elders not be hindered

- by false accusations against an elder, or
- by sinful conduct by an elder, or
- by prejudiced judgment about an elder, or
- by hasty ordination of an elder

Stephen - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - please choose

Andrew - Scripture Reading - Deuteronomy 19:15-21

Roel - Congregational Prayer

Benediction - Psalm 145:18-19

Allison - Prelude

Allison - Trinity 387 "I Love to Tell the Story" - Alex lead

Rita - Trinity 2 "God, My King, Thy Might Confessing"

Rita - Trinity 423 "Approach, My Soul, the Mercy Seat"

Deuteronomy 19:15-21 "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. 16 If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, 17 then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. 18 And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, 19 then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. 20 And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. 21 Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Calvin:

every one of them who conducts himself badly shall be severely corrected; for I understand this injunction to relate to elders, that they who live a dissolute life shall be openly reprov'd

as elders ought to lead the way to others by the example of a holy life, so, if they commit crime, it is proper to exercise severity of discipline toward them, that it may serve as an example to others

Paul speaks of crimes or glaring transgressions, which are attended by public scandal; for, if any of the elders shall have committed a fault, not of a public nature, it is certain that he ought to be privately admonished and not openly reprov'd.

Trapp:

Those presbyters that sin publicly, scandalously, as did Peter, Gal\_2:14, and those who were convicted by two or three witnesses, as 1Ti\_5:19. Rebuke before all, yet not as if they were whipping boys. {See Trapp on "1Ti\_5:1"} But if the fault be not known abroad, that rule of our Saviour takes place, Mat\_18:15-16.

Poole:

that is, that sin publicly and scandalously, so as others have taken notice of it.

Gill:

elders, guilty of flagitious crimes, and gross enormities: for these words, though they may be applied unto, and may hold good of all offenders, that are members of churches; yet they seem chiefly to regard elders, even such who sin, who continue to sin, who live in sin, in some notorious sin or another; which is evident and known, to the great scandal of religion, and dishonour of the Gospel

not only admonish once and again, but degrade them from their office, and withdraw from them, as from other disorderly persons, and cut them off, and cast them out of the church, and that in a public manner

Barnes:

That have been proved to have committed sin - referring probably to the elders mentioned in the previous verse, but giving the direction so general a form that it might be applicable to others.

Before all the church or congregation. The word “rebuke” properly denotes to reprove or reprehend. It means here that there should be a public statement of the nature of the offence, and such a censure as the case demanded. It extends only to spiritual censures. There is no power given of inflicting any punishment by fine or imprisonment. The power of the church, in such cases, is only to express its strong and decided disapprobation of the wrong done, and, if the case demands it, of disowning the offending member or minister. This direction to “rebuke an offender before all,” may be easily reconciled with the direction in 1Ti\_5:1, “Rebuke not an elder.” The latter refers to the private and pastoral conversation with an elder, and to the method in which he should be treated in such contact - to wit, with the feelings due to a father; the direction here refers to the manner in which an offender should be treated who has been proved to be guilty, and where the case has become public. Then there is to be a public expression of disapprobation.

JFB:

Not until this “rebuke” was disregarded was the offender to be excommunicated.

Ellicott:

when proved to be men continuing in sin and error, their punishment must be as marked as in the other case was the reward. The errors and sins of teachers of the faith are far more dangerous than in those who make up the rank and file of congregations, and require a more severe and more public punishment.

As the sin, whatever has been its nature, has been committed by men intrusted with a responsible and public charge, so the rebuke and punishment must also be in public

Fairbairn:

in all ordinary circumstances the same method should be generally followed; and attention was specially called to the case of presbyters only because a certain deference was due to their position, and the consequences would naturally be of a graver kind should any false step be taken

The participle being employed to designate the offending parties, τοὺς ἁμαρτάνοντας, implies more than an occasional act of transgression; it denotes persons who are given to sinning, or are known as sinners.

Hence the case of such is to be distinguished from that of those who may have been overtaken in a fault, and who should, as elsewhere advised, be tenderly dealt with (Gal\_6:1); and in the original instructions given by our Lord respecting grounds of offence among the members of His community, it was clearly implied that a quiet settlement of matters which involved a certain amount of moral blame may and often should be effected, sometimes without the intervention of any church action, and sometimes again by means of it (Mat\_18:15).

Carroll:

It is shameful the way good, God-fearing men are slandered by irresponsible reports against them. Bring the accuser to task and make him come out in the open and give his corroborative evidence, and allow the accused a chance to answer.

I must call attention to the original word here, which means, sin continually, habitually. Some preachers do sin, and keep on sinning, and do not try to stop. This is not like the case in the beginning of the chapter where an elderly man must be reprimanded. In this case, reprove him in the sight of all. We should not denounce him privately, but make our reproof in the open church, as Paul did Peter at Antioch. We should speak right out: "Here is a man in the ministry who sins and keeps on sinning, and there is no indication that he is going to stop." Let the rebuke be sharp and definite. If the public reprimand does not stop him, withdraw fellowship from him and take away his credentials.

Lilley (1901):

This injunction is derived from the old Hebrew code (Deut. xvii. 6, xix.15) and is applicable to all cases of discipline. . . Special stress is laid on the necessity of there being more than one witness, because the very judicial mention of an ill-founded charge against one occupying the position of a presbyter might cause irremediable harm to his reputation.

The participle rendered "those that sin" implies persistent sinning. It is not every sin of a Church member that should be made matter of judicial treatment.

JRY:

note how our Lord's apostle brings the OT law into the NT congregation  
see how rebuke, not beating, is the punishment in the NT congregation