

# Honor Those Who Rule Well – Part 2

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy regarding elders, including matters of compensation and sin
2. aim – to cause us to desire to honor those who lead us well, especially in spiritual matters
3. passage – 1 Timothy 5:17-25

### b. outline

1. Instructions Regarding Compensation (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
2. Instructions Regarding Sin (1 Timothy 5:19-25)

### c. opening

1. the problems of preaching **systematically**
  - a. passages that are *difficult to understand* – passages that are hard to interpret or appear irrelevant to a modern audience (you can't skip the hard stuff)
  - b. passages that are *difficult to apply* – passages that directly impact the life of the church or (some of) its members (face them and seek the wisdom of God)
  - c. passages that are *directly related to you as an elder* – passages that define what it means to be a part of the eldership of the church (be self-aware and teach the congregation about it)
    1. Grace Fellowship Baptist church is *overseen* by five (5) elders, in accordance with the polity outlined in the New Testament (**introduce the five men**)
    2. as elders, we meet regularly (monthly?) to discuss and pray over the life of the church (its finances, administration, membership, leadership, ministries, issues, vision, and direction)
    3. **providence**: the elders are planning to meet *today* – as I preach on the topic of elders now!
2. the point of the **chapter**
  - a. Paul has *pivoted* here into more specifically “practical” matters (from the beginning of **chap. 5**)
    1. issues of **leadership** that will need to be addressed as Timothy does his job
      - a. the importance of giving *double-honor* to those elders who manage well
      - b. the importance of compensating those who “*labor in preaching and teaching*”
      - c. (**now**) the importance of dealing with sinfulness amongst the elders
    2. **remember**: the key word in **1 Timothy 5:17** is “*well*” – those who manage well are worthy of double honor, but what do we do with those *who do not lead well*?
  - b. **Paul knows that elders are not perfect (sinless), and will experience great temptations (particularly due to their position), meaning they may fall into great sin, diminishing their ability to lead the church – the church needs to be prepared to deal with such realities**

## II. Instructions Regarding Sin (1 Timothy 5:19-25)

### Content

#### a. principles regarding the handling of sin (vv. 19-22)

1. **principle #1 (v. 19): the church must apply proper judicial standards in addressing sin in the life of an elder, standards which are consistent with biblical norms**
  - a. the **multiple witness** mandate of the Mosaic law
    1. common to Judeo-Christian jurisprudence and the basis of Western Civilization
  - b. namely, no one can be convicted of a crime (or sin) *only* on the basis of a single accuser
    1. **IOW**: one is *innocent until proven guilty* by a preponderance of evidence; one cannot be declared guilty by only a single “unsubstantiated” accusation
    2. **note**: this seems to be lost now in our culture as *accusation* and **victimhood** supersedes proper application of this principle
  - c. this principle is defined **generally** in **Deuteronomy 19:15-20**

*“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.”*
  - d. this principle is applied **specifically to murder** in **Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6**

*“If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.”*

- e. this principle is applied *to reconciliation* in the church by Jesus in **Matthew 18:16**  
*"But if he does not listen [to you], take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses."*
  - f. this principle is applied *to unrepentant sin* in the church by Paul in **2 Corinthians 13:1**  
*"This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them ..."*
  - g. this principle *causes issues in the "mock trial" of Jesus* in **Matthew 26:59-61**  
*"Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, 'This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'"*
  - h. thus, *like all others*, elders cannot be convicted of sin simply on hearsay or gossip or rumor or a single accusation – **IOW**: the church is to assure that the elders are "protected" from slanderers
    - 1. **note**: this is why a **plurality of elders** is essential – a single teaching-elder (pastor) in a church is subject to the *whims* of the congregation *with little direct, peer-to-peer support*
  - 2. **principle #2 (v. 20): the church must be willing to publicly rebuke any elder that "persists" in sin, in order that the whole church may see the gravity of it and make proper adjustments**
    - a. **in essence**: the "other side" of the coin from the previous principle
      - 1. **i.e.** elders are not to be "flippantly" accused of sin, but they are to be dealt with *harshly* if they are (in fact) properly convicted of having sinned *and remain unrepentant*
    - b. this is probably the reality that Paul has in mind in using the word "well" in **v. 17**
      - 1. **since the primary purpose of the church is to be a place where those who belong to Christ are disciplined in holiness, those who lead that process (the elders) must themselves demonstrate this reality in their own lives**
      - 2. **i.e.** elders must be held to a **higher standard** as they demonstrate what they are teaching
    - c. **however**: the "higher standard" must include (by implication here) an opportunity for *repentance* and *reconciliation* as a means of *demonstrating* how sin is to be dealt with by the congregation
      - 1. Paul uses the word "persists" – in using this word, Paul is *assuming* that the elder can (and should) repent – those *who do not repent* must be *publicly* held up for trial and/or dismissal
  - 3. **principle #3 (vv. 21-22): the church is never to operate on the basis of prejudice or favoritism when it comes to dealing with sin in leadership or even in appointing elders**
    - a. for Paul, this is the *greatest possible principle* that he could set before Timothy in regards to elders
      - 1. he issues a "charge" = an emphatic warning; a solemn testimony; an earnest exhortation
        - a. most often translated "*testify*" – to swear to something as true; to "take the stand" and swear that something is true – here, to place a solemn command *as a great truth* upon another
        - b. **IOW**: Paul says to Timothy that he *must* do something that is *inherently* true and good
      - 2. he issues this charge "*in the presence*" of witnesses = before an audience that is able to judge *truly* whether Timothy is acting as he must:
        - a. before "God" = before the *omniscient* eye of the Triune God, who sees all and knows all
        - b. before "Christ Jesus" = the One granted the authority to judge all things as right and true
        - c. before "*the elect angels*" = the audience of supernatural beings observing all that God is doing to his great glory, especially in the church (**as in Eph. 3:10**)
    - b. for Timothy, he is to "*keep these rules*" (**i.e.** holding elders accountable to sin without allowing them to be flippantly accused of it) without:
      - 1. "*prejudging*" = without assuming guilt or innocence *in advance* without proper review
      - 2. "*partiality*" = without any sense of *prejudice* towards one person over another
      - 3. "*hasty in laying on of hands*" = quickly ordaining men just because they "seem" like the right guys or because they have a great influence in the church body (**i.e.** they are "important")
      - 4. "*taking part in the sins of others*" = fostering a "mob" mentality when dealing with something important in the church, like the sin of an elder or a push for a "new direction" of leadership
    - c. for Timothy, he is to "*keep yourself pure*" – he is to "rise above" the fray when it comes to dealing with significant matters in the eldership – don't play favorites, don't act on prejudice – be faithful to the purity of the church and the reputation of the church before the world
- b. **a note involving purity (vv. 19-23)**
  - 1. **parenthetical note (v. 23): a personal suggestion to Timothy regarding his "frequent ailments"**
    - a. why Paul includes this note *here* is open to much speculation
    - b. however, the context *strongly suggests* that Paul is "qualifying" what he means by "*keep yourself pure*" – **i.e.** "pure" does not have to mean a strong **ascetism** in life
      - 1. ascetism = a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from sensual pleasures to pursue spirituality
      - 2. based on **4:3**, this kind of lifestyle was (apparently) being "pushed" by some in the church
      - 3. so, it *could be* that Paul is simply nudging Timothy to avoid *some* of that ascetism in order to provide relief from a particular "*stomach*" problem – **i.e.** total abstinence from alcohol (which was by *prohibition* of the ascetics) was not helpful to Timothy, but a hindrance to his health

**c. the reality of judgment (vv. 24-25)**

5. **conclusion (vv. 24-25): all sin will eventually come to light, along with all good that is done**
  - a. this is an **eschatological reality** – when Christ finally and completely consummates his kingdom upon the earth, all behavior (good or evil) will be revealed before him and he will judge all things
    1. the “conspicuous” sins will be even more obvious; those done in secret will “appear later”
    2. the “conspicuous” good works will be even more obvious; those hidden will not “remain” so
  - b. **IOW:** while the church may get some things wrong in dealing with sin or appointing leadership, in the end Christ will right all matters as he judges all things perfectly (both hidden and visible)
  - c. **Christ Jesus is watching – he knows our sin and he knows our good deeds – he knows the difference between those who truly belong to him vs. those who do not**
    1. **e.g. read Rev. 20:11-15** – the deeds recorded in the “books” will determine who is saved and who is not – for those who are saved, the deeds recorded will be **evidence** that they trust this Christ by faith; for those cast away, the deeds recorded will be **evidence** that they *never* actually trusted in Christ, but only in their *self-righteousness* and *self-justification*
      - a. those names written in the “book” show evidence in the “books” that they belong there
      - b. our lives **reflect** (in the end) whether we really belong to this Christ (or not)