

## 1 Timothy 5:17-25

### Introduction

1. Back in chapter 3, Paul already addressed the requirements for elders and deacons
2. He returns to the topic of elders in our passage today to address another set of issues related to elders:
  - b. In verses 17-18 he addresses rewarding elders financially who serve well
  - c. In v. 19 he provides instructions on dealing with accusations of sin against elders
  - d. In vs. 20-21 he provides instructions on how to deal with elders who are guilty of sin and refuse to repent
  - e. And finally, in vs. 22-25 he cautions against appointing elders to hastily

### A. Elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor (READ 5:17-18)

1. If you remember, this same word, “**honor**” was used in v. 5:3 when referring to widows:
  - a. It has two meanings in the Bible, the first of which is honor or respect
  - b. The second meaning is financial provision, which is how Paul used it with widows
2. Paul is using it here in both senses as indicated by the phrase “**double honor**”: in other words, elders should be considered worthy of both respect and financial support (some refer to it as both honor and an honorarium):
  - a. In regard to respect:
    - 1) 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (READ)
    - 2) Hebrews 13:7, 17 (READ)
  - b. In regard to financial provision:
    - 1) V. 18 equates honor with food and wages (RE-READ)
    - 2) The first quote is from Deuteronomy 25:4 which refers to the OT requirement that oxen be allowed to eat a portion of what they thresh
    - 3) The second quote is from Jesus in Luke 10:7 and is a close parallel to what Paul is teaching here (READ LUKE 10:1-8)
3. Financial provision for those who minister on God’s behalf is reflected throughout the Bible:
  - a. In the OT Law, God mandated that the Levitical priests be provided for through the tithes and offerings of Israel
  - b. Jesus repeated this principle in the passage we just read when He sent out the 70 to preach the Gospel and told them they were worthy of their wages and to allow others to provide for them
  - c. Paul also addressed this topic in 1 Corinthians 9:6-14 and declared that “**the LORD directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the Gospel**” (READ)
  - d. Paul went on in this passage to explain why he refused financial compensation specifically from the Corinthians, but he wasn’t opposed to financial support from others and even relied upon it (e.g. Philippians 4:15)
4. Who should be given this double honor, both respect and financial provision is determined by two requirements:

- a. The first is that elders must **“rule well”**:
    - 1) This same phrase is used in 3:4-5 & 12 when describing the requirements that elders and deacons rule their households and children well
    - 2) Other translations render this phrase as **“lead well”**, be **“good leaders”** and even those who **“direct the affairs of the church well”**
  - b. The second requirement is that elders must **“work hard at preaching and teaching”** the Word:
    - 1) The literal phrase is **“especially those who labor at the Word and teaching”**
    - 2) Rather than the word **“especially”**, another way to translate this is **“that is, those who labor at the Word and teaching”** which is more likely what Paul is referring to
    - 3) In other words, he was defining what it meant to rule well as those who work hard at preaching and teaching the Word
5. Takeaway: elders who serve well by working hard and preaching and teaching the Word of God should be considered worthy of **“double honor”**—this means both respect and financial support

<p><b>B. Elders are to be protected from false accusations (READ 5:19)</b></p>
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1. Paul now moves on to how we are to handle accusations against an elder
2. This rule of not accepting an accusation unless there are two or three witnesses is not unique to elders; in fact, the Bible really affords the same protection to everyone:
  - a. In the Old Testament, a man could not be found guilty of sin unless evidence was provided by two or three witnesses (READ Deuteronomy 19:15)
  - b. Likewise, in Matthew 18 Jesus taught that before we publicly accuse a brother or sister of sinning by bringing them before elders or the church, we need to have two or three witnesses who can confirm the sin
3. Even though this same protection is afforded to everyone, it is especially important when it comes to elders:
  - a. While all of us should strive to be above reproach, it is a REQUIREMENT for elders
  - b. They are indeed held to a higher standard than the rest of the church which often makes them an easy target for false accusations
  - c. Consider Paul himself who was not only accused of all sorts of wrong doing by unsaved Jews, but wrote much of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians to defend himself against the false accusations of fellow believers
4. Notice that Paul doesn't say we shouldn't receive accusations against an elder, but rather explains what is required before receiving an accusation:
  - a. There are some denominations and churches, and even pastors, who regard pastors as untouchable and that bringing any accusation against them violates God's commands:
    - 1) They quote passages like 1 Chronicles 16:22 & Psalm 105:15 which read, **“Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.”**
    - 2) This is especially popular in Pentecostal circles and churches associated with the New Apostolic Reformation movement like Bethel and Hillsong
    - 3) But, these passages do not apply to pastors!
    - 4) They are not untouchable or above reproach when they sin as we'll see in Paul's next point

- b. With that said, we are to be careful when an accusation is made against an elder and not simply take one person's word, or worse yet accuse an elder based on gossip, rumor or speculation
  - c. We are to require multiple witnesses—a witness is someone who has personal, first hand knowledge of the sin; that's why they are called witnesses
5. Takeaway: we should be careful to accept accusations of sin against elders unless they can be substantiated by witnesses

C. Elders who continue to sin are to be rebuked publicly (READ 5:20)
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1. Paul's use of the present tense and the context indicates he was referring to elders who continue to sin after having been accused and confronted:
  - a. Elders are not sinless, nor are they perfect
  - b. Even Paul struggled with sin and he detailed his struggle in Romans 7 (READ 7:15-25)
  - c. What John wrote in 1 John 1:9-10 applies equally to elders as it does everyone else: **"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**
  - d. We can see in this verse that there is a right way to deal with sin and that is with proper confession and repentance, and while this should be true of every believer, it should be DEMANDED and EXPECTED of elders
2. Based on the list of requirements for elders from 1 Timothy 3, a Biblical argument can be made that certain sins should automatically disqualify someone from serving as an elder:
  - a. For instance sexual sins, being physically and verbally abusive, abuse of alcohol or drugs, not managing his household well and others
  - b. However, not all sins necessarily rise to this level, but they should nonetheless not be excused or ignored
  - c. Rather, when confronted and found guilty of such things, an elder should respond with Biblical confession and repentance
3. When this does not occur, and an elder continues to sin, he is to be reprovved publicly (RE-READ 5:20) publicly:
  - a. To reprove means to rebuke or admonish, to declare that what they are doing is wrong
  - b. **"In the presence of all"** means to do it publicly before the church
  - c. Paul tells us why the rebuke should be public in the very next phrase: **"so that the rest also will be fearful"**
  - d. It's not clear here if **"the rest"** refers to the rest of the elders or the rest of the church; either way, their public reprimand is to serve as an example so that maybe fear of being exposed themselves will serve as motivation to address their own sin and repent
4. Before moving on to the fourth and final principle, Paul cautions Timothy to apply these rules without bias or partiality (READ 5:21):
  - a. Grammatically, this verse applies directly to the instructions Paul just gave in 19-20 regarding how to handle accusations of sin against elders and those who are guilty of sin and refuse to repent

- b. Paul's use of the phrase "**solemnly charge**" and the fact that calls on God, Jesus, and the elect angels as witnesses to his charge to Timothy indicates the seriousness to which Paul takes these two issues when it involves (false accusations and actual sin)
- c. Both of these matters are to be handled without "**bias**" and without "**partiality**":
  - 1) "**bias**" refers to making a decision based on preference with the implication of prejudice
  - 2) The word "**partiality**" refers to favoritism
- d. When it comes to dealing with accusations of sin against an elders, false or otherwise, we are to act justly and righteously, not allowing personal feelings or favoritism to affect doing what is right

We see such injustice all the time, don't we? When accusations are made against someone we don't like we assume they're guilty, but when they are made against someone we like we assume they're innocent

- 5. Takeaway: because elders are held to a higher standard, when they sin and refuse to repent, they should be rebuked publicly as a warning to others

D. Elders are not to be appointed hastily (READ 5:22-25)

- 1. In this fourth and final principle Paul warns Timothy of the dangers of appointing elders too hastily:
  - a. Back in 3: 6 Paul warned Timothy not to appoint new converts as elders lest they become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the devil
  - b. In 3:10 he stated that deacons must first be tested before being allowed to serve in that role
  - c. Here, Paul follows this same principle of caution again when it comes to appointing elders
  - d. If he were too hasty in appointing someone as an elder ("**lay hands upon**"), he would run the risk of "**shar[ing] responsibility for the sins of others**" (22)
  - e. Paul just finished addressing the issue of elders and sin in vs. 19-21, and here provides advice on how to help prevent such a scenario from arising: not appointing someone to hastily
- 2. Paul provides two very practical reasons why being slow or patient to appoint individuals as elders (24-25):
  - a. Some men's sins are readily apparent, while others are not (READ 5:24)
  - b. Likewise, some men's good deeds are readily apparent, while others are not but will ultimately be revealed (READ 5:25)

My boss was quick to hire Hieder, who's sins were not readily apparent but came later; He was slow to hire Steve, however, who's skills were not readily apparent, but were ultimately revealed; one was a disaster while the other a God-send

- 4. Takeaway: Time if often the best indicator of whether or not someone is ultimately qualified to serve as an elder so we should not be too quick to appoint elders:

5. You may have noticed I jumped over v. 23 where Paul encouraged Timothy to stop drinking just water and include a bit of wine in his diet to help his stomach and frequent health issues:
  - a. It's not clear why Paul inserts this here since it doesn't appear to have anything to do with appointing elders, and it seems out of place
  - b. It's been suggested by some scholars that Timothy may have been completely abstaining from wine because of Paul's charge in Ephesians 5:18 not to get drunk with wine, and the requirements that elders and deacons not be fond of or addicted to much wine
  - c. Timothy may have been trying to set an example by avoiding wine altogether, but to the detriment of his health
  - d. As far back Hippocrates in the 4<sup>th</sup> century it was known that many water sources contained harmful bacteria and pathogens that could be killed by alcohol, so wine and other fermented drinks were used to prevent dysentery and other ailments
  - e. So, Paul encouraged Timothy to use some wine to address his health issues