

## Honorable and Accountable Leadership

1 Timothy 5:17-21 ESV

Lord's Day – September 18, 2022

### Hear “The Word of God” from 1 Timothy 5:17-21

<sup>17</sup> *Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.*

<sup>18</sup> *For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”*

<sup>19</sup> *Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.*

<sup>20</sup> *As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.*

<sup>21</sup> *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.*

We have been journeying through the series – ‘How one ought to conduct in the household of God’ in our study of The Living God’s Word, through the letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus.

[Theme] The Gospel of Jesus Christ draws a sinner to believe in him unto salvation and eternal life. This conversion will result in a **practical and visible change in the lives of those who believe it**.

These letters/epistles (Timothy and Titus) are often referred to as “pastoral epistles”, and thought that the theme is the ‘church order’ and the qualities mentioned are to those who aspire/desire to the ‘office of overseers/pastors/elders and deacons’, but it’s only a part under the overarching purpose, that **the true gospel**, in contrast to false teaching, **will always lead to godliness that results in orderliness in all those who adhere to it**. Because, in the hearing of the gospel of Jesus Christ, (the good news) it is the divine act of The Holy Spirit, which initiates, invokes, causes, effects a change in a person, not by the ability of their own.

One of the key evidences in the lives of those, effected by the gospel is **sincere faith**, enables to live a practical living in their homes, in Living Gods church and is seen in the communities.

#### 1) Visible demonstrable devotion (2) Visible practical living (3) Visible practical conduct

[Goal] The goal of these “Pastoral Epistles” is to conduct orderly worship that flows out, as an evidence of their sincere faith. And that faith in action, leads them to follow through the instructions, the prescriptions (NOT restrictions) and the directives preserved in God’s Word. These directives are for us to follow as his children and to direct us as his servants, to obey him in the light of his revealed Word, for our spiritual growth and maturity.

**Apostle Paul begins** Chapter 5 with some elements of what might be considered a household code in reverse; the initial words identified those to whom obligations were owed rather than those who had various duties within the household. (Encourage the older man as you would as a father DONOT rebuke, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and younger women as sisters in all purity – AS YOU WOULD DO AT HOME).

Household codes customarily describe the respective responsibilities of the members of the household as in *Titus 2:2-5* – <sup>2</sup>*Older men are to be sober-minded, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.* <sup>3</sup>*Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good,* <sup>4</sup>*and train the young women to love their husbands and children,* <sup>5</sup>*to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*

The Pastor/Elder ‘s household code exhorts the members of the community to treat various groups of people in the household of God, in appropriate and familial fashion. Respectable Dealings with Church Members by Age and gender, IN ALL PURITY - 5:1-2.

His exhortation on the treatment of widows in the community was so extensive as to virtually constitute a rhetorical digression within the exposition of his household code.

### Let us now look through today’s passage: Verses 17 – 21

I have divided this portion of the passage in to two

- 1) Honor Church Leaders – V17-18
- 2) Accountable Church Leadership - V19-21

## Honoring Church Leaders – V17-18

Here Apostle Paul in his exhortation to Timothy, turns his attention to the elders, especially those who labor in word and teaching.

***<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.***

The Elders of whom Paul writes are not the “older men” in verse 1, rather they are the overseers whose qualifications we have looked in *1 Timothy 3:1-7*. Here Paul as he gives the directives treats elders in much the same way as he treats the widows.

Not all widows are to be supported in the community; *only those older and left alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day (1 Tim 5:5) and furthermore, not less than sixty years of age, wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works; if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work (1 Tim 5:9-10)* are to be provided by the church community.

So, it is with the elders. This is the direction that Paul gives about the support of the ministry of the church. He says to Timothy that the church has the responsibility to make adequate provision for the elders who have a particular function and especially elders who teach and preach God’s Word.

One thing that stands out in this text is the Paul says, “***The elders***” in v17 – plural. Notice that it indicates that there is not going to just be one elder in a local church. There’s going to be a multiplicity or plurality of elders in a local church. This is important because some churches have an entrepreneurial model, where one man oversees the whole church, this is also called as Moses Model. That should ring a bell to you of many such so called leaders, pastors, preachers, prophets, apostles, etc.

However, the New Testament presents a shared leadership model. There is no one man rule or show. Shared leadership is important because it provides accountability and encouragement. The one leader model is full of difficulties. There are more temptations towards spiritual pride, more spiritual attacks, and more susceptibility to loneliness and depression. A shared leadership model is not only good for church, but it is good for the leaders. The burden of shepherding a local church is great. This is not a burden for one to bear, but is for multiple, shepherding together.

The primary role of elders is “providing effective leadership” for the church. This includes vision setting, overseeing finances and ministries, and caring for the sheep/flock, among other things. But it also includes “teaching and preaching” (v17).

Notice also that this verse has a condition for some sort of evaluation of the labor of pastors/elders in the church. “***The elders who rule well***”, Paul says they are to “***be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching***”. These are the elders who rule well, and they work hard. “Work Hard” can be translated “to work to the point of fatigue and exhaustion”.

Working hard in responsibilities of pastors/elders demands lot of hours. The pastors/elders responsibilities include and not limited to studying the word of God, meditating upon the scripture passage, much praying, allowing the Holy Spirit to quicken the ministers heart, cleanse and renew his heart, soul and mind, doing house visiting, weekly elders meetings, sorting out any issues, ministering to the brothers one-one among many other responsibilities. The role of shepherding is never exhaustive and so requires many hours. And so, Paul gives directive for those pastors/elders who rule well, are to be compensated well, meaning generously.

How generously? Notice the word ‘Honor’ is something rendered to someone, or something based on the recipient’s worth or value. The word itself can mean esteem or dignity; it can also mean payment or wages. When Paul says treat the elders with *double honor*; he is very well suggesting that the elders who manages well deserves double pay. Paul talks about honor (respect) and the material support of hardworking pastors/elders in the church, and he says the elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor.

Perhaps you may have friends that are part of other churches that do not have full-time ministers, and they don't have them by conviction. They may not believe that there ought to be such a thing as paid pastors/elders but rely only self-appointed ministers.

There are other churches that believe, pastors/elders (ministers) should survive off the bare minimum, they say the minister should be living by faith, solely trusting God for the welfare of his family, and not be fully compensated by the local church. To them a pastor should never own homes, have nice cars, and their children shouldn't attend private school. I had one friend say that if a pastor was driving a nice car and not a van to pick up lot of people, then he wouldn't be attending that church.

Now it is true that the ministers should not serve in the ministry for money. We have studied one of the qualifications for the elders is that they should be '*not a lover of money (not be greedy)*' - 1 Tim 3:3; and ministry is not a place for increasing wealth and luxury. 1 Tim 6:7-11 - "*For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these things we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs*".

Pastors/elders should be very sacrificial; however, the congregations should be generous as well. God does not just care for the sheep/flock; but also, the shepherds. 1 Thess 5:12-13 - "*We ask you brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves*" and in Gal 6:6 - "*Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches*".

You will remember, Paul in his ministry sometimes receives the support from the churches and sometimes he refuses. The churches that thought and were holding that over his head as if Paul's only motivation was gaining money, in the city of Thessaloniki he would just be a tent maker and supply his own support 2 Thess 3:8 - "*nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate*". But from other congregations that joyfully supported he happily received support from them Phil 1:5 - "*because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now*" and in 4:15 - "*no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only*".

<sup>18</sup> **For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."**

Furthermore, Paul substantiates his directive in v17 with v18, directly quoting from Deuteronomy 25:4 - "*You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain*"; Paul also cites the same in 1 Cor 9:8-11, particularly v9 - "*For it is written in the Law of Moses, "you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain" is it for oxen that God is concerned?*" and from Luke 10:7 - "*for the laborer deserves his wages*".

Paul uses these verses as a support for why pastors/elders who rule well and especially those who labor in teaching and preaching should be paid adequately, generously. [Note: In 1 Corin 9 Paul did not claim the right to be supported by the congregation for himself but commended such a generous and adequate support be the norm for the church].

Often, I hear some say, we give our tithes and offerings to other ministries outside the church such as the poor and struggling. Sure, they should support those needs and all other good causes (as we heard good works/deeds - "*has cared for the afflicted*" - 1 Tim 5:10), but don't neglect giving to the church. Our tithes and offerings provide for the various ministries of the church.

In 2 Chronicles 31:4-5 - This is Hezekiah "*He commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the LORD. As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything*".

Each Lord's Day we have an open opportunity to show our gratitude through our offerings to our King of Kings and Lord of Lords Jesus Christ, who gave himself up, to be hung on the cross, paid the penalty for our sin, the ransom for many who believe in him.

*2 Corin 9:6-7 - The point is this: "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver".*

On the contrary in *Nehemiah 13:10* - "*I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field".*

And so, Paul is saying there is to be a ministry in the church devoted solely to the work of ruling, preaching, and teaching, and that when that is blessed case in the local congregation, the congregation is to support them. **How generously?** Those who rule well, and work hard are WORTHY of DOUBLE HONOR.

### **Accountable Church Leadership – V19-21**

<sup>19</sup> ***Do not admit a charge (accusation) against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.***

This is second of his directives in this section. Paul is saying to Timothy that pastors/elders must be protected from all false accusations. He says, no unsubstantiated accusations are to be entertained against pastors/elders. False accusations or unsubstantiated charges are lies and Satan is a liar, father of lies (Jn 8:44) and a great accuser and works though accusing God's people night and day (Job 1:9-10, Rev 12:10, Rms 8:33).

Paul says, "*Do not receive any accusation against elders except on the basis of two or three witnesses*".

Again, this directive comes right out of Old Testament *Deut 19:15* - "... *Only on the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses shall a charge be established*". This is primarily for the protection of the person being accused falsely with baseless allegation or a charge that could only be confirmed by the person bringing the charge.

Paul is applying the same principle here to protect the pastors/elders against false accusation without two or three witnesses other than the person bringing the charge.

What could we learn in the light of this passage? Obviously, we learn how to proceed in case of any charge that is brought against pastors/elders - only when the accusations are factual; otherwise, we should not entertain them. But there is also something else, dear brothers and sisters.

One of the ways we (congregation) minister to our pastors/elders is by protecting them from degrading and false accusations. Obviously ministers, both pastors/elders are put in circumstances where they are highly visible and tragically vulnerable to the adverse actions of the enemy, the disorderly, the ill-willed and to whispering gossip. The human tendency to believe the worst sadly persists, even in the church, and the accusation soon will spread like wildfire through gossip, as if it has been already proved. It would be rather easy to make an unsubstantiated charge against the pastors/elders, and Paul says only the charges with two or three witnesses are to be considered in the process of discipline of the pastors/elders.

A few examples of those who were falsely accused in the Bible are:

- Joseph, in Gen 39 was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and was thrown into prison
- Nehemiah, in chapter 6 was falsely accused of declaring himself a king over Jerusalem. The accusers even sent an open letter to every town, people got to read it, even before it made its way to Nehemiah
- Our own Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels, Mk 14:56 was falsely accused by his own people, before the Sanhedrin council many testified against him falsely that lead to his crucifixion

The remedy is never listen to any gossip about leaders, or even to a serious accusation, if it only comes from one person. We need to be realistic about the church. The church, the local church is never going to be perfect, until the age to come is here. We must remember there are always going to be issues and problems, and even serious sins. That doesn't mean we become complacent about those sins, but it does mean we live in a fallen world, and the fall has impacted the church as well. So, Paul gives us a reality check here, even as he tells us all charges must be substantiated by two or three people if it is to be considered.

<sup>20</sup> *As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.*

Paul now continues his charge to Timothy and gives another directive in verse 20. This is with disciplining the elders. We must be cautious in accusing, but if the charge is substantiated, we must have the courage to rebuke them publicly. As part of Church's ministry, pastors/elders need to be held accountable, because they "*must be above reproach*" - 1 Tim 3. Pastors/elders are not perfect and therefore need to be challenged when they persist in sin.

Notice, it is those pastors/elders who persist in sin (who continue in sinning) must be rebuked publicly. This may seem ungracious, sounds harsh, and stressful, but must be done "so the rest may stand in fear" - both leaders (pastors/elders) and congregation, that the godly fear be upon both the leaders and the congregation. So that the others should be scared to death to commit that sin or continue in sinning, that brings shame to the individual and their family members, to the church and its congregants and most of all, the name of our Lord is blasphemed among gentiles - Rms 2:24.

Sadly, it's so shameful, hurtful, painful, and devastating when we get to hear so and so a great leader has committed sin. In the last couple of years alone, a great many leaders have fallen to their utter shame. Their fall was so greater than their great success. It is so because they have assumed to be the center and the focus of their ministry's. Such a burden is too wearisome to bear and soon enough it will fall to their utter shame. The common theme in every one of those great falls is those leaders have embraced entrepreneurial model, distanced themselves away from being accountable to no one. This is a great recipe for disaster.

Leadership accountability is very important, must be desired and embraced, by every minister, because it's such a gracious gift and a blessing from above, as instructed by Paul, for the pastors/elders must keep a watch on one another, so to be accountable and being mindful always that the name of our God must be glorified and lifted high. And for this very reason we believe and follow the biblical model of plurality of elders.

<sup>21</sup> *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.*

Paul continues his charge to Timothy with yet another directive in the process of disciplining the fellow pastors/elders. And the directive is that pastors/elders ought not to be biased in their disciplinary actions and no favoritism/partiality. He says, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God, and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality".

Now you can imagine elders being tempted and swayed in many ways to soft-pedal the admonition of the fellow elders. There would be a variety of reasons to do that; the relationships with one another, and the influence of another, and could be the fear of that the ministry would fall, there may be a tendency to downplay the seriousness of a particular sin. That is why, Paul says to Timothy, no bias, and no favoritism. And Paul reminds Timothy that he and the congregation is in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels.

This reminder of Paul, as he instructs Timothy is both a gracious and a fearful reminder. It is a gracious reminder because God was so gracious to Timothy in the manner, he saved him, in and through the finished work of Christ Jesus on the cross, which was "*seen by the Holy (elect) angels*", *proclaimed among the nations and believed on in the world* - 1 Tim 3:16. It is also a fearful reminder because it is not only in the presence of the congregation that is watching him, but it is in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels that Timothy must give an account as an elder in doing the hard-work, heart-breaking work of church discipline.

Lastly a reminder to all those who desire to be pastors/elders/overseer always remember - *Acts 28:20* - "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" and again in *1 Timothy 4:16* - "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." And for everyone in the congregation, always remember - *Rms 14:12* - *So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God*; and again *2 Corin 5:10* - *For we must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the presence of his Holy Spirit with us guide and lead us to be his humble servants and to follow him until his return.

-----Discipleship Questions-----

**SERMON TITLE:** Honorable and Accountable Leadership – 1 Timothy 5:17-21 ESV

**HEAD:** These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. In the light of Sunday's sermon, what does Paul mean by "the elders who rule well" and "who labor hard"? *1 Timothy 5:17, Romans 12:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:12*

**HEART:** These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. What is the Church's responsibility for those who "labor in preaching and teaching"? 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Luke 10:7, 1 Corinthians 9:9-14, Galatians 6:6
3. Why is it important to not entertain an accusation against an elder unless there are multiple witnesses? *1 Timothy 5:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Proverbs 22:1*

**HANDS/HABITS:** These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. What are some practical ways that we as servants of our Lord Jesus Christ and Christ-following families can do to 'rule well' and 'work hard'? 1 Thessalonians 4:11, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Colossians 3:23-24