



1 Timothy - Chapter Five

Summary of Chapter Five

The beginning of this chapter is a reminder to Timothy directly, and to all disciples generally, of the need to show respect to all others in the church, particularly with regard to leaders who need to admonish others in the church or conduct disciplinary hearings.

Paul then moved on to instruct Timothy as to how the church was to deal with widows, calling for those with a believing family to be supported by them, and for younger widows to make alternative arrangements, in particular, to find a new husband. However, Paul made it clear that the church has a duty to help those in genuine need, recognising that resources were limited and priorities would need to be established.

The final part of the chapter deals with how the church should honour those in positions of leadership, with regard to appropriate remuneration for those who work hard for the church, especially in preaching and teaching. It also deals with how false accusations against leaders should be refuted and how church discipline should be handled in cases where leaders were guilty of public sin.

The section warns against the hasty selection of leaders, probably a reference for the need to replace the false teachers in Ephesus that Timothy was charged to deal with in this letter as a whole. However, the instruction for the need for discernment holds true throughout the ages.

VII. 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2a - Duties towards Believers

Earlier, Paul had addressed specific groups in the church (1 Timothy 2:1-3:13), and this section returns to doing so, although the groups are different. Honour in v.3, v.17, and 1 Timothy 6:1, serves as the connecting point for the three groups mentioned, which are widows, elders, and masters.

There is a progression in the thought, with the call increasing from 'honour' (v.3) to 'double honour' (v.17), to 'all honour' (1 Timothy 6:1). Each paragraph explains what Gospel living should look like in relation to that group.

VII.a

1 Timothy 5:1-2 -

Respectful dealing with church members by age and gender

The church is conceived of as family, as noted in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and 3:15, i.e. it is the household of God. Although the term honour does not appear in vv.1-2, it applies here as surely as it does in v.3, v.17, and 1 Timothy 6:1. Verse 1 does not prohibit the correcting of an older man but speaks of the respectful manner in which this should be done.

¹ Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, ² to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters – with absolute purity.

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Paul was instructing Timothy and all other disciples who read this letter to respect older men as they would their own fathers, something that in his culture would have been natural, sincere and ordained by God: <<*You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord*>> (Leviticus 19:32), whereas younger men are to be treated as brothers. Likewise, older women should receive the same respect as a mother would and the younger women should be seen as sisters, with no sexual desire between the man and the woman, which is intended by the statement absolute purity. This call would not prohibit the development of a relationship between a man and a woman where it is appropriate and natural for it to happen.

Paul gave further advice to Titus about these four groups of people: <<*But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine. Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behaviour, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us*>> (Titus 2:1-8).

It is clear that Timothy as the church leader was in view. Therefore, the passage is referring specifically to the way a leader might deal with those who need some form of disciplining in the church, as well as generally to how all disciples should behave toward one another. It shows that a demeaning and dehumanising tongue-lashing is never appropriate, but exhortation and encouragement, albeit delivered sternly, will always prove to be more effective in the church environment. This is especially with regard to those who are older than the leader but is good practise to be applied to all.

When reading this passage, the cultural context needs also to be considered for becoming a Christian minister did not set a man apart from the cultural norms expected, in fact he became even more closely bound to them, for to do otherwise would bring his office and the church into disrepute. Failing to show

honour to an older man, especially when rebuking him for some wrong doing, would have been unacceptable in Paul's day. In the modern church, there is just as much need for respect as ever. Good leaders are able to achieve the right outcomes with the minimum of discomfort and pain for those being admonished.

VII.b 1 Timothy 5:3-16 - Honouring widows

Providing for widows was an important role for the church from its earliest days, and the apostles had seven men appointed as deacons in Jerusalem to oversee the daily distribution of food for the Hellenistic widows who had been overlooked, as recorded in Acts Chapter 6.

The primary concern in this passage is to identify which widows should be provided for by the church, for resources are not limitless and should be targeted to maximise the impact of what is available.

Paul provided Timothy with two key indicators: not having other family (vv.4-8, and v.16); and godliness (v.5, and vv.9-15). Along the way, the duty of caring for one's family and the propriety of younger widows remarrying are emphasised. Some have suggested that an order of widows as an office in the church is in view here, but this is unlikely since the stated issue is provision for those in need.

³ Honour widows who are really widows.

1 Timothy 5:3

Really widows. The church leadership was called on to determine who were truly in need so that the church's limited resources could be applied appropriately, while at the same time undertaking a role that was deemed appropriate for the church. Paul will go on to qualify this statement but in essence he is referring to women who have no husband, no immediate family or any other means of supporting themselves.

One woman who would have come into the category as a needy widow was Naomi: *<<But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there for about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons or her husband>>* (Ruth 1:3-5).

One woman who would not fall into this category was the Samaritan that Jesus had encountered at the well in Sychar: *<<Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!>>* (John 4:16-18); for she was living with a man who would support her.

Widowhood remains an issue in the church today for it is often possible for a person, who was once part of a scene where a couple would mix freely in church gatherings, to suddenly find themselves socially isolated as a single person through the death of their spouse. After a short period of care and concern shown by others, they can easily feel pushed to the side of the church

and forgotten about. This is an issue for society generally, but a loving church should take note of such people and do all it can to keep them involved in all appropriate areas of church life, showing them that they are cared for and loved.

Caring for widows was something that was always in God's heart, and he demanded that they should receive justice: <<*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing*>> (Deuteronomy 10:17-18), and: <<*You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge*>> (Deuteronomy 24:17). God's compassion for the widow became the covenant community's responsibility, which the early church naturally took up: <<*Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food*>> (Acts 6:1), and: <<*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world*>> (James 1:27).

The present passage is the Bible's most extensive treatment of the subject. Through instructions to Timothy, Paul addressed the issue of community support for widows. At the same time, the widow is encouraged to make positive contributions to the church's ministry, serving in whatever capacity she can.

⁴ If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their religious duty to their own family and make some repayment to their parents; for this is pleasing in God's sight.

1 Timothy 5:4

First learn their religious duty. The first case that Paul addresses is a widow that has close family, i.e. children or grandchildren, who are themselves believers. If that is the case, then the church leaders should encourage them to take on their responsibility for caring for the widow. That was seen as their duty in Christ, as it had been since the time of Moses at least: <<*Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you*>> (Exodus 20:12). Not only is care for the widowed mother or grandmother a logical recompense for her faithful service to her children and grandchildren, but is the obedience to God's will that it reflects, this care is pleasing to God. Disobedience amounts to rejection of the faith; the judgment that such a one is worse than an unbeliever (v.8) is harsh, because that one has consciously broken God's law.

Paul's language would indicate that this was not just a theoretical debate but there was an actual need to address a situation in Ephesus. Since the false teachers were so opposed to marriage, it is quite possible they were also doing all they could to disrupt other aspects of family life and responsibility: <<*For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires*>>

(2 Timothy 3:6), and: <<There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision; they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach>> (Titus 1:10-11).

Make some repayment to their parents. Most parents make many sacrifices in their lives in order to raise and care for their children. Although they may do so with no expectation that the child will repay them, there frequently comes a time in life when the parent cannot manage aspects of their own life and the child, as a grown adult, has both the desire and the capability to care. This is natural in many societies and is called for by Paul to be the accepted norm in the church.

Make some repayment particularly indicates financial support or taking their mother or grandmother into their own homes and caring for her, which was quite common. The apostle Peter had his mother-in-law living in his own home, with no mention of his father-in-law: <<When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him>> (Matthew 8:14-15). The family should recognise its own responsibilities rather than expecting the church to take on the role on their behalf.

This is pleasing in God's sight. Everything that a disciple does in life should be with the intention of bringing glory to God and done according to his will: <<Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect>> (Romans 12:2).

⁵ The real widow, left alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day; ⁶ but the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. ⁷ Give these commands as well, so that they may be above reproach. ⁸ And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:5-8

Paul describes the type of woman as the real widow, as one who accepts her situation and continues to make the best of her life, for her hope is on God, that is, she becomes totally reliant in her trust and expectancy of God's sufficiency, for he has promised: <<Leave your orphans, I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me>> (Jeremiah 49:11). Although this is a mark of all believers, the widow who has nothing learns to excel in this discipline of faith. The discipline of hope finds expression in personal communication in supplications and prayers to God for help. Together, hope and prayer characterise the godly widow's personal relationship with God, the vertical dimension of her true faith.

The real widow is not the type of woman to allow her situation, as desperate as it may be, to disrupt her relationship with the God in whom she trusts, but continues in supplications and prayers night and day.

They may be above reproach. This command is primarily directed towards the family of the widow. However, as well as a natural desire for the church to care

for those in need, there is also the ongoing issue of reputation for leaders like Paul to consider. Just as surely as the widow who lives for pleasure, damages the reputation of the church that she claims to be a part of, so too the family members who do not fulfil their duty to care for their relative bring similar harm to both the church and the God they profess to follow.

Is dead even while she lives. Such a person may believe they have good things in this life but they are not only damaging their eternal future by turning away from the faith, they are actually causing damage to their spiritual life during their time on earth, which can only lead to grief. This statement does not forbid widows, or indeed anyone else from enjoying the life that God has given them. It is talking about living an inappropriate life, away from God. To live one's life in full enjoyment of God's grace, having fun and living a fulfilled life are honouring to God, as Jesus had said: <<*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*>> (John 10:10).

Worse than an unbeliever. Provision for one's own family is a spiritual issue of utmost importance. Failure to live out the Gospel in this way is tantamount to a denial of the faith. What makes them out to be so bad is that they know God, know of his provision to them and they know the commitment they have made to him when they came to faith and were baptised. By ignoring the plight of a relative in genuine need, they are reneging on the promises they had made to God.

For both the widow and the family of the widow, these instructions express the need to keep one's confession of the faith and one's conduct in harmony. In contrast to the false teaching that had been circulating, spirituality was to have practical, respectable and observable results.

⁹ Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and has been married only once; ¹⁰ she must be well attested for her good works, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way.

1 Timothy 5:9-10

Paul begins to explain what qualifications a widow must meet in order to warrant financial support from the church. Among the requirements would be that she had no other means of supporting herself in the way that her husband had done during his lifetime. That she was to be at least sixty years old was culturally recognised as an age where a person would not normally be expected to continue to work. In western culture, the state normally provides many of the needs of a widow of this age but there are still many practical, emotional and social needs that both the family and the church can provide.

Having been married only once or the wife of one husband, is the feminine form of same Greek phrase listed in the requirements for bishops and deacons, as discussed in comments made on 1 Timothy 3:2-3. Some interpreters think the point here, as in Chapter 3, is marital faithfulness. Others think that, while Paul is not discouraging a second marriage after the death of one's husband (v.14), and: <<*A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord*>> (1 Corinthians 7:39), simply as a

practical matter he wanted to focus the church's help on widows who have the fewest relatives to support them.

Her good works. The list of qualifications provides a picture of a godly older woman, something for younger women to aspire to. Anna was a good example for such younger women: <<*There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day*>> (Luke 2:36-37).

That a widow had to be attested for her good works to receive financial support as a widow in Paul's era, does not mean that the church would not offer some form of support to women who were not part of the church or not a true believer, but was in need nonetheless, for the church reaches out to all parts of the community they serve. They would no doubt have done so through some alternative type of ministry, such as those that are in operation in many churches today.

Such good works does not imply that Paul was indicating salvation through works, i.e. that the widow had to earn her reward from God, or that she should perform such good works in order to be noticed by the church, that it might then care for her. Paul clearly intended that such good works are a genuine outworking of the faith the widow has in God and the fruit of her true relationship with Christ.

As one who has brought up children did not disbar widow's who had no children but was just another measure for those who had children. In Greco-Roman and Jewish culture, family responsibilities and childcare were part of a woman's duties, but child abuse or neglect was as rife in that era as it is today. Therefore, a mother who cared for her children well, would be considered to be the type of widow who was deserving of the church's help. Another key aspect of a Christian mother is to ensure that her children are brought up in the faith: <<*Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise*>> (Deuteronomy 6:7), <<*And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*>> (Ephesians 6:4). In Paul's day it was quite natural for childless women to offer assistance to women who did have children. This can have natural outworkings in the 21st Century church too, perhaps in working in the children's church on a Sunday or assisting with child care when parents need a child minder.

A third item related to the home is the practice of hospitality, a highly regarded practice in the ancient world. Hospitality's warmth and sharing made it essential to the Christian mission and to church unity: <<*Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers*>> (Romans 12:13), and: <<*Be hospitable to one another without complaining*>> (1 Peter 4:9). It also met urgent needs and required sacrificial sharing, demonstrated by leaders first: <<*For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled*>> (Titus 1:8). Help of this sort among Christians was uppermost in Paul's mind, but given the notorious condition of inns in that day, it is easy to see how strategic an open

home might have been for the spread of the Gospel as well. Such sharing has proved effective over and over again in modern times.

Washed the saints' feet. This was a typical duty to be undertaken either by servants in wealthier homes or by the women in other households. However, Paul saw this as a willingness to serve, something demonstrated by Jesus himself, although he foresaw this as something men as well as women could do in the future for each other to show their commitment to the church through servanthood: *<<So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet>>* (John 13:14). Paul saw this as just part of the overall package of being a disciple of Christ: *<<Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are>>* (Romans 12:9-16), *<<For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another>>* (Galatians 5:13), *<<Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ>>* (Galatians 6:2), and: *<<If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others>>* (Philippians 2:1-4). Paul wanted Christian widows to exemplify this type of lifestyle, but Paul's meaning goes beyond the literal level. Figuratively, the term includes the sense of performing all manner of humble tasks for the benefit of others.

Devoted herself to doing good in every way does not simply mean serving in a church ministry or two but is the lifestyle choice of the true disciple. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit that has been discussed before.

¹¹ But refuse to put younger widows on the list; for when their sensual desires alienate them from Christ, they want to marry, ¹² and so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge.

1 Timothy 5:11-12

But refuse to put younger widows on the list. The reasons that Paul will give for this command are clearly a generalisation, for not all younger women would have acted as Paul describes. However, it seems there was sufficient evidence of such behaviour in Ephesus at that time for it to be necessary for Paul to give such an instruction. It does not seem that it should be applied quite so generally today, although there are many in the church who choose to live a so-called 'modern lifestyle'.

They want to marry, incur condemnation. These verses may at first appear to condemn remarriage; however, v.14 encourages it as does 1 Corinthians 7:39b, so

another, more specific concern must be in view here. The issue is either that these widows who are being supported by the church had pledged to remain unmarried, so that to remarry would be to renounce this pledge, or that these younger widows might be tempted by their sensual desires to marry unbelievers, thus turning away from the faith. Since these concerns are in some way prompted by the fact that some had already strayed after Satan (v.15), a grave issue must be in view. With remarriage to an unbeliever, the concern was that the wife would take the religion of her husband as was usual in that culture.

On the issue of remarriage, Paul would actually urge this rather than see those with sexual appetites become sinners through having extra-marital relationships: **<<To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practising self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion>>** (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). This would be sound advice in any generation, especially in the 21st Century where many who profess the faith think that living with a partner, or even having a casual relationship is normal and acceptable, as it fits well with the modern lifestyle in the western hemisphere at least. It is this type of behaviour that would alienate them from Christ for having violated their first pledge; that is, their promise to be faithful to Christ, although some believe that widows may have made a vow of chastity in order to serve the church in that era. Such unfaithful behaviour has always been abhorrent before God: **<<If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbour, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death>>** (Leviticus 20:10), and: **<<But they transgressed against the God of their ancestors, and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them>>** (1 Chronicles 5:25), and he warns of the ruinous consequences: **<<I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go aside with whores, and sacrifice with temple prostitutes; thus a people without understanding comes to ruin>>** (Hosea 4:14). Others see this first pledge in line with what Jesus would later say of the church in Ephesus: **<<But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first>>** (Revelation 2:4).

¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say.

1 Timothy 5:13

They learn to be idle. In the 1st Century a woman's main focus was her duties in the home and to her wider family. Without such work to occupy her, a widow might become accustomed to not engaging in the many duties a wife or daughter would normally undertake. In the 21st Century this may seem less relevant but all people need a focus in their lives and work of some type brings structure and meaning to a person's day, whether that is paid or voluntary employment, or familial duties. Again, the lack of structure or focus can lead people into idleness.

Another potential problem that Paul identified for those who do not have such structure in their life is that they can fill it in unhelpful ways, such as spreading stories they may have heard or becoming involved where they are not wanted, what Paul terms here as being gossips and busybodies, saying what they should

not say. Again, these reasons may appear to be an over-generalisation but Paul clearly had demonstrable proof of it being an issue, either in Ephesus or elsewhere that made it likely to reoccur in other places.

In the 21st Century, the church is still called to help many people in the communities they serve who are unable to support themselves. It is not appropriate for the church to judge people based on their lifestyle choices although it is probably wise for a church to target the limited resources they have to where it would do most good, always bearing in mind the reputation of the church and the God that it represents. Here, it seems likely that they were to target the resources at the most needy and grade that group by giving what they had to the most worthy within the target group. Sometimes, leadership in church calls for tough decisions to be made and it seems that Paul was doing just that.

¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us.

1 Timothy 5:14

Marry, bear children, and manage their households. This triplet is seen as typical of what would have been expected of younger women in that era, and would have been welcome advice not just in Christian society but throughout the Greco-Roman and Jewish societies as well. The woman would always have lived in subjection to her father when she was single and then to her husband, as indicated in Scripture: <<Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty>> (1 Timothy 2:11-15), <<Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour>> (Ephesians 5:22-23), <<Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord>> (Colossians 3:18), <<Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behaviour, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited>> (Titus 2:3-5), and: <<Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight. It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you. Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honour to the

woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life – so that nothing may hinder your prayers>> (1 Peter 3:1-7).

No occasion to revile us or for slander continues the theme of concern about the impact of believers' actions on the perceptions of unbelievers, which is in evidence throughout this letter and is implied again in: <<*Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone*>> (Titus 3:1-2).

The adversary is seen by some commentators as being Satan, who gets a mention in v.15, while others see it as referring to non-believers who were sceptical about the church at best and always looking for opportunities to be critical of the faith.

¹⁵ For some have already turned away to follow Satan.

1 Timothy 5:15

Turned away to follow Satan implies some form of sin rather than devil worship, which could either mean extra-marital relationships or marrying a non-believer and converting to his religion, something already alluded to.

¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are really widows, let her assist them; let the church not be burdened, so that it can assist those who are real widows.

1 Timothy 5:15-16

Relatives who are really widows. If any woman who is a believer has family that qualify as widows then Paul expects that person to render the help and support needed, rather than them becoming reliant on the church. Paul makes no stipulation that the widows to be helped here are themselves believers. However, the comment made by Paul in v.10 that she must be attested by her good works would seem to imply that such a widow was herself a disciple as well.

Although Paul has given some very specific instructions concerning a small number of needy people, at no time did he lose sight that God has a passion to seek out and save the lost, the lonely, the disenfranchised, etc. through his church. At all times, the church of Jesus Christ is to be fully inclusive and maintain a passion to help all peoples that it reasonably can and to continue to pray for all those that it cannot practically help.

VII.c 1 Timothy 5:17-25 - Honouring elders

A good leader can take a church to the places that God has ordained for it, but a bad leader can bring a church into ruin. This is like the dead church of Sardis: <<*And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your works; you have a name for being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is at the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God'*>> (Revelation 3:2).

The church in Ephesus was being torn apart by the false teachers and Paul was instructing Timothy to start to put it back together again. True leaders were to be
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appropriately honoured and supported, while the false teachers were to be severely disciplined, yet in fairness and with dignity, the mark of the true church.

Honouring leaders includes being respectful toward them, providing for them financially where applicable, i.e. those who work for the church directly or incur genuine and approved expenses on its behalf, being fully supportive of them, and being careful as to how it handles any accusations that may be made against them.

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching;

1 Timothy 5:17

Rule. The role of an elder, pastor or bishop involves having authority over others in the church, particularly with regard to preaching and teaching. Authority is God-given but is not autocratic and such rule should be implemented in humility with a servant heart.

Rule well. Paul qualified his statement to ensure that church leaders are those who undertake the work they are called to in a correct manner and do it from a servant perspective in order to bring glory to God and the overall reputation of the church.

Labour, Greek *kopiaō*, was translated as toil in 1 Timothy 4:10, and implies hard work that makes a person tired, either physically or emotionally. Such exertion in preaching and teaching calls for double honour, and would include financial remuneration (v.18) in appropriate circumstances. Double could imply ample provision, or financial provision in addition to the required respect such a person would be due.

Worthy. Paul did not actually require that pastors be paid a double amount, but he clearly indicated that pastors should receive generous remuneration: *<<In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel>>* (1 Corinthians 9:14). Paul himself never took up this right: *<<And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for my needs were supplied by the friends who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will continue to refrain from burdening you in any way>>* (2 Corinthians 11:9), stating his key reason for not taking money from this particular church: *<<Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children>>* (2 Corinthians 12:14), *<<You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God>>* (1 Thessalonians 2:9), and: *<<For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labour we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate>>* (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9).

¹⁸ for the scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain', and, 'The labourer deserves to be paid.'

1 Timothy 5:18

The command not to muzzle an ox is a quotation from the Pentateuch: <<***You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain***>> (Deuteronomy 25:4), which required an owner to allow an ox to eat of the grain he was grinding. One who works for something should be able to benefit from it.

The labourer deserves to be paid is a direct quotation from: <<***Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house***>> (Luke 10:7), and similar in concept to: <<***Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food***>> (Matthew 10:10). Thus, it seems that Paul was already referring to the written records of the statements of Jesus, i.e. the Gospels, as Scripture. It is widely accepted that Luke's Gospel was published around AD60, three or four years before Paul wrote to Timothy. The date for Matthew's Gospel coming into circulation is less certain, although Irenæus stated it was before Peter and Paul were martyred (Against Heresies 3.1.1). Peter accepted Paul's letters to have the same authority as OT Scripture: <<***So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures***>> (2 Peter 3:15b-16).

¹⁹ Never accept any accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

1 Timothy 5:19

Two or three witnesses. Accusations against leaders must not be based on unsubstantiated charges. Paul's thinking was very much based on the Law of Moses: <<***A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offence that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained***>> (Deuteronomy 19:15). Any charges brought must be presented on the evidence of credible witnesses and not like those that were brought before the Sanhedrin to testify against Jesus: <<***For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree***>> (Mark 14:56). Good churches today will have sound policies and procedures in place to ensure that leaders cannot fall foul of malicious rumour or political power struggles, while at the same time protecting the church from unscrupulous, insincere or incompetent leadership.

Never accept any accusation needs careful consideration in particular circumstances for it is possible for some unacceptable behaviour to be kept partially hidden, such as has been witnessed with child abuse in the RC church. A good leadership model would at least investigate serious charges discretely without it becoming an issue either for the leader or the church if proved to be unfounded.

²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest also may stand in fear.

1 Timothy 5:20

This passage does not apply to all leaders who sin: <<*since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*>> (Romans 3:23), and the church would have no one to lead it, if they were disbarred for being sinners! Paul was writing of ongoing sin that had either not been accepted by the leader as sin or which he has not repented of and was persisting in, having no intention of changing his ways. Also, it would have been the type of sin in which the false teachers were engaged in that was causing strife and dissension in the Ephesian church.

Of course, this does not mean that a person should be disciplined for holding a different viewpoint on certain matters of theology, provided any main stream teaching the person brings to the church is in line with that accepted as the Gospel truth. Different denominations hold differing views on issues such as infant baptism, the interpretation of the Lord's Supper, and the sequence of events at the end of the age. To bring this kind of debate into the context of these instructions about discipline would be a dangerous thing. It is equally dangerous to fail to discipline Christians known to be involved in actual sin, such as sexual immorality, marital infidelity, dishonesty, spreading rumours, or promulgating false doctrine. There are some things that church leaders can simply not ignore if they have the welfare and reputation of the church uppermost in their hearts and minds.

The ones to be rebuked in the presence of all are leaders who persist in sin, or who sin in a way that betrays the trust that the church has placed in them as spiritual leaders. Such public rebuke goes beyond the discipline procedures that apply to other church members: <<'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'>> (Matthew 18:15-20), and it reassures the congregation that disqualifying sin on the part of an elder will never be covered up or ignored.

The purpose of a public hearing is designed for the good of others, that they may stand in fear, as well as for the good of the party being rebuked, for it is undertaken in order to encourage them to come to public repentance. This is not intended as a means to destroy the character of the person being rebuked, for that would benefit no one. Under the law, it was publically undertaken to purge the land of any evil: <<*So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid*>> (Deuteronomy 21:21b).

As a result of this public rebuke, the rest may also stand in fear of sinning. This refers specifically to the rest of the elders, but it probably also implies the rest of the congregation, since the rebuking was done in the presence of all. Scripture also supports this: <<*A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of*

any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offence that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained. If a malicious witness comes forward to accuse someone 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, and the judges shall make a thorough inquiry. If the witness is a false witness, having testified falsely against another, then you shall do to the false witness just as the false witness had meant to do to the other. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. The rest shall hear and be afraid, and a crime such as this shall never again be committed among you. Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot>> (Deuteronomy 19:15-21). Such a public rebuke is intended to remind everyone concerned of the gravity of sin and its consequences.

Despite the closing words in this quote from Deuteronomy, it should be noted that in the church of Christ all rebukes and punishment, even that which may lead to loss of office or removal from the church, should always be undertaken in a spirit of true forgiveness and love. It should never be undertaken as a means of seeking revenge but restitution.

²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality.

1 Timothy 5:21

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels. Paul presented the charge of v.20 as being delivered in view of the heavenly court: <<*because the Lord your God, who is present with you, is a jealous God*>> (Deuteronomy 6:15a), thus adding a strong note of solemnity. On Paul's inclusion of angels, their involvement at the final judgment was probably in his mind: <<*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory*>> (Matthew 25:31), <<*Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, 'Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, they will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb*>> (Revelation 14:9-10).

Keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality is a call for absolute impartiality with regard to investigations and subsequent findings on any charges brought against a leader: <<*Now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the Lord our God, or partiality, or taking of bribes*>> (2 Chronicles 19:7), <<*But you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts, and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you have not kept my ways but have shown partiality in your instruction*>> (Malachi 2:8-9), <<*For God shows no partiality*>> (Romans 2:11), <<*And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality*>> (Ephesians 6:9), <<*For the wrongdoer will be paid back for*

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whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality>> (Colossians 3:25), <<My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?>> (James 2:1), and: <<If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile>> (1 Peter 1:17).

²² Do not ordain anyone hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

1 Timothy 5:22

Do not ordain anyone hastily. This passage was probably included here as Paul wanted Timothy to deal with the false teachers in Ephesus and ensure they were replaced with men more suited to the role. However, it has sound advice for all churches throughout the ages. If, out of negligence, elders appoint unqualified people into positions of church leadership, they become implicated in the future acts of incompetence or sin of those leaders. A common error in the modern church is to appoint people to church leadership based either on their personal wealth or the business and management skills they may bring to the office, rather than focusing on their spiritual gifts and calling to serve, which is the way God equips people for ministry: <<*And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues*>> (1 Corinthians 12:28), and: <<*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers*>> (Ephesians 4:11).

Do not participate in the sins of others. Just because someone else is doing something, even if that person is a church leader, does not mean that others can do likewise. Sin is sin no matter who is committing it and Paul calls on Timothy and all disciples to keep yourself pure.

²³ No longer drink only water, but take a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

1 Timothy 5:23

How this verse connects to the rest of the paragraph is not entirely clear. Drinking only water was often indicative of asceticism. In light of the asceticism of the false teachers (1 Timothy 4:1-5), Paul may be providing a qualification to the call for purity in v.22 and v.24, clarifying that there would be nothing wrong with Timothy using a little wine, emphasising here also its usefulness for the sake of his health. A popular alternative view is that Timothy had stomach problems and water sources were not always as pure as they might have been, adding to the problem, whereas some of the rougher wines would kill off harmful bacteria.

Drinking a little wine, as with all acceptable things in moderation, would also be seen as a sign of accepting and enjoying God's good providence: <<*But the vine said to them, "Shall I stop producing my wine that cheers gods and mortals, and go to sway over the trees?"*>> (Judges 9:13), <<*Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be*

grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength'>> (Nehemiah 8:10), <<You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart>> (Psalm 104:14-15), <<Honour the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine>> (Proverbs 3:9-10), <<Draw me after you, let us make haste. The king has brought me into his chambers. We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you>> (Song 1:4), <<She did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished upon her silver and gold that they used for Baal>> (Hosea 2:8), <<I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit>> (Amos 9:14), and: <<Then the people of Ephraim shall become like warriors, and their hearts shall be glad as with wine. Their children shall see it and rejoice, their hearts shall exult in the Lord>> (Zechariah 10:7).

²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous and precede them to judgement, while the sins of others follow them there.

1 Timothy 5:24

After the aside of v.23, Paul returned to the issue of carefulness in the appointing of elders from v.22. Because some sins are initially hidden and will only appear later, it is important to be patient in assessing potential leaders and appointing them to office, in order to let the quality of their lives become evident, not rushing to appoint someone for the wrong reasons.

One thing that all people can be assured of is that one day they will be called to account for all their sin, for nothing is hidden from God.

²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

1 Timothy 5:25

Good works should not be undertaken in order to make the individual noticed although there is nothing wrong with overt ministries that bring glory to God. Even the work that goes on unseen, such as the individual care of people, kind words spoken and people working for the benefit of others out of love alone, will be noticed for they cannot remain hidden: <<No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light>> (Luke 8:16).