

I Timothy 5, Sermon #7

Turn to I Timothy 5

Let us return to where we left off last Sunday

- We began a 2 part series on the Elders

They are the spiritual leaders of the church

They have several names that they go by, but they are the same person. The Elders are sometimes called pastors, shepherds, and overseers.

And, starting in verse 17—we have three major points to our outline

- First – The provision for the Elders, vs. 17 & 18
- Second – The discipline of the Elders, vs. 19 – this is where we left off
- Third – The selecting and appointing of Elders, vs. 22

I have entitled this series “The Elders and the Church”

I Timothy 5:17

Let us stand for the reading of God’s Holy Word

I Timothy 5:17-25

Let us pray

You may be seated

The Elders and the Church

II. The Discipline of the Elders – three main teachings:

First, Elders are to be protected from false accusations – vs. 19

God's second caution was that Timothy do everything openly and aboveboard.

Vs. 20 – Sin must not be hidden.

God does not mention what kinds of **sin**. The context indicates that the sin is serious. It is “sin” – and not merely a leadership blunder or a minor shortcoming.

Any **sin** that has caused an Elder to violate the qualifications listed in 3:2-7 would be grounds for a **rebuke in the presence of all**.

Our judgments are to be governed by facts, evidence, and witnesses—not rumors.

How should an Elder be treated if an accusation of sin is found to be true?

If an Elder is guilty, then he should be rebuked before all.

God instructs, then, that an elder who is guilty of sin is to be rebuked before the church.

There are no elaborate steps of discipline to be followed.

- An accusation is made and confirmed, then investigated.
- If found true, the Elder is publicly rebuked.

This is to be done before all. Vs. 20

- It means everyone, Elders, and the entire congregation.
- A sinning Elder has nowhere to hide.

There must be an answering to the assembly regarding that sin.

- God has entrusted them with leadership

A spiritual leader's sin must be treated with great concern because it has grave ramifications; it can lead more people astray and can cause the unbelieving world to mock God, the church, and the Gospel.

Rebuke - conveys the ideas of exposure, correction, and reproof.

The sins of a man in a leadership role are more serious, and are to be punished more severely (James 3:1).

Whether or not he repents is not the issue.

Since his credibility is forfeited, he is disqualified from the ministry in either case.

He must be publicly rebuked so the people understand why he is no longer in leadership. Attempts to hush things up and allow a sinning Elder to leave quietly often create the chaos of misunderstanding in a congregation.

Only when the discipline is made public is there any chance of controlling and squelching the divisive forces in a church: rumors, gossip, and misinformation.

The major point is that an Elder's sin must be publicly exposed, not swept under the carpet.

To rebuke sinning leaders is not easy, yet God requires it because holiness in the church must be upheld.

The purpose of discipline is restoration, not revenge.

- Our purpose must be to save the offender and the church, not to drive him away nor allow sin freedom.
- Our attitude must be one of love and tenderness; sorrow, not self-righteousness.

No pastor or church member is perfect, but that should not hinder us from striving.

- The ministry of a local church rises and falls with its leadership.
- Godly leadership means God's blessing, and that is what we want and need.

Verse 20 says that this needs to be done publicly – why is that?

One of the reasons an Elder is publicly rebuked is not only for the Elder but also for the church's benefit. It says that others may fear, vs. 20.

Public rebuke fulfills an important purpose!

- This is what happens to me if I make the same choices as he did.
- When one Elder is publicly disgraced because of sin, that puts a healthy fear into the hearts of the leaders.
- It also puts that same fear into the hearts of the congregation (Matt. 18:17).

(Acts 5:11) Ananias and Sapphira. When they lied, that punishment brought great fear upon the congregation.

The fear that we would experience includes not only the fear of sinning, but the shame and embarrassment of public exposure.

To see the sin of a fellow Elder publicly exposed before the church – God uses this as a powerful deterrent to keep people, especially church leaders, from sinning.

All of us know what it is to see someone else whom we love and respect, publicly censured.

Whenever a person has public responsibility, he must accept the weight of that.

As it is today, it is too often true that when a sinning pastor is found in one church, he just moves and finds another place to go.

To allow sinning Elders to resume ministry before they have erased all vestiges of dishonor and distrust defies Scripture and implies that God tolerates sin.

Those who repent are to be forgiven and accepted by the congregation.

- That does not mean, however, they are to automatically be restored to ministry.

- Depending on the severity of the sin, they may be permanently disqualified.

Folks, to publicly rebuke a sinning Elder takes great courage.

No part of Christian ministry is more difficult than investigating and disciplining sin.

One can easily think of a thousand excuses for evading the discipline of a church leader. At heart, we are cowards, afraid to take action.

Knowing the human propensity to avoid such harsh realities, God dramatically charges Timothy and the church to comply with His instructions.

The absolute seriousness is underscored in verse 21:

- All heaven is concerned with the purity of the church.

Timothy is to execute “these principles” justly and righteously.

So, lest he be tempted to shirk that responsibility, God commands Timothy in verse 21 to do this without:

Preferring one before another – that means without bias/prejudice.

And, secondly, verse 21c – doing nothing by partiality.

- That word literally means to lean toward somebody, to be partial, leaning to show favoritism.

Showing “partiality,” “favoritism,” or “preferential treatment,” to prominent leaders is a common practice in the world.

- No one is to receive preferential treatment.
- In other words, the Elders are to be treated indiscriminately.

Timothy is to treat everyone the same.

Timothy is to obey the Word no matter what his personal feelings might be.

- He should act without prejudice and partiality.
- To show either prejudice or partiality is to make the situation even worse.

Despite this forceful appeal to act, the public discipline of church leaders has been, until recently, almost unheard of in most churches.

Sadly, the predominant reason churches are beginning to discipline sinful pastors is not because they fear and honor God, but because of the proliferation of multi-million dollar lawsuits against churches by people who have been hurt and abused by sinning pastors.

The failure to publicly discipline church leaders demonstrates a grievous lack of love for God and His Word.

No matter how difficult or unpleasant such discipline may be, we must “maintain these principles” in obedience to God.

When it comes to the matter of disciplining Elders:

- They are to be protected/shielded from false accusation
- Secondly, if they are found guilty, they are to be publicly rebuked, and
- Thirdly, this is to be done without preferential treatment.

I. Providing for the Elders

II. Disciplining the Elders

III. In this last section, God talks about selecting and appointing Elders.

In verses 22, God teaches Timothy about how to best avoid future problems with church leaders.

God says, Lay hands suddenly on no man. When we put our hands on, it is approval.

We are saying that they are suited and approved for God’s ministry. We are endorsing them.

Moses laid hands on Joshua.

- Work up front saves work later on.

Vs. 22A

Lay hands suddenly on no man.

- God is saying that we are not to be hasty in choosing Elders.
- Quick appointments create more serious, long-lasting problems.
- Time and testing are still the best principles to follow when appointing church leaders.

The proper examination of deacons and Elders is precisely where many churches fail.

The examination process takes time and effort, and many churches are too busy or fail to see the importance of it.

The best way to prevent unqualified Elders from serving in the ministry is to **not lay hands upon anyone too rapidly.**

We know the existing Elders in a church laid hands on the incoming Elders (I Tim. 4:14). Therefore, the responsibility falls upon the elders of the church for this examination and selection process.

Many times a person is zealous or active - The next thing you know, in no time at all, he is in a church position of leadership.

- Unfit, unproven men have been appointed too quickly to positions of spiritual leadership.

And scripture warns against this.

Verse 22b, c – warns of the possibility of fellowshiping, partaking, sharing with him in his sins.

The laying on of hands creates a bond between two parties:

- The people, who appoint by the laying on of hands, share in the sins or

success of the one appointed.

- If an unfit person is appointed to leadership and sins by creating division, teaching false doctrine, or acting immorally, those who appointed the leader “share responsibility” for those sins (II John 11).

The more we understand the responsibility of appointing people to positions of leadership in the church, the more we will exercise reservation, thoughtfulness, and prayerfulness in our appointments. Holy caution regarding this procedure.

One good reason to encourage the practice of the laying on of hands is that it creates an observable, personal, and tangible sense of responsibility and fellowship between the parties involved.

Hastiness in selection could put the wrong man in, and if he is rotten, then the people who put him in are partakers of his sin results and are dirty with him.

If we hastily sanction someone into the ministry when he is not fit, not qualified in his family, personal life, character, business, and he goes out as a leader and tears up a flock, we are jointly responsible.

Therefore, the church needs spiritual wisdom and guidance in selecting its officers. We must be very careful that I Timothy and Titus 1 are met.

To lay hands upon someone is to set them apart for ministry.

- It must not be done quickly.
- Thorough investigation must precede appointment.

To fail to do so leaves the church liable to share responsibility for the sins of others.

- By exercising proper caution in the matter of choosing pastors, Timothy would **keep** himself – What? Vs. 22. PURE.

That’s why the Bible says, keep thyself pure – those who are in the process.

Then, Paul gives a personal comment to Timothy.

Verse 23 is probably the best known verse in all of this chapter.

This verse has nothing to do with appointing Elders, but it does refer to Timothy's purity as an Elder in keeping himself pure.

We will look at this issue next week.

After the personal comment, God returns to his main emphasis of selecting Elders.

So how can Elders decide who is in or out?

God supplies the answers to that. Not only the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3, but God gives 2 arenas (vs. 24).

Vs. 24 – says that **the sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment.**

Some are obviously unfit to serve as Elders and can be rejected out of hand.

- Their sins rush in before them like heralds announcing their guilt in advance.

Some men's sins are so obvious that no one would think of appointing them to office, thus no evaluation for appointment to leadership is necessary.

- Their "sins" precede them, that is, they show in advance of any formal examination that the man is utterly unfit for a position of spiritual leadership.

Second, vs. 24 - **for others, their sins follow after** them

The sins of some men are not easily seen until the man's character and conduct are examined.

God assures Timothy that the "sins" of these men will be exposed at the time of their examination. They come to light during the church's assessment process.

- Their sins march right into the meeting behind them and refuse to be left outside
- God is not the only one who can see sin—men can too, if they take the time to investigate.

Some men's sins are obvious. Some are not so obvious.

Vs. 25

The good works of some men are obvious before any examination is made.

These men are easily identified as men who are fit for church eldership.

Some men's good works are not obvious, but upon examination their good deeds become apparent:

There good works will come to light during the examination process.

Some men's works are seen and some are not but their good works will find them out.

Such men will be found qualified to serve as Elders.

The church desperately needs qualified men to serve as spiritual leaders.

- Their lives must meet the standards of 3:2-7, and their ministries those of 4:6-16.
- The church's responsibility to them is to honor and protect them, rebuke those who sin, and, above all, to be very cautious in selecting them.

The Elders and the Church

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Them that sin.

Every one of us sins. God see all and one day we all will be publicly exposed.

There is only one way to get rid of sin.

The leaders of the church are important and we must follow God's Word:

In protecting

In investigation if necessary

In selecting