

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 5:18-20 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: God-instructed Treatment Of Elders, Pastors, And Ministry Leaders

BACKGROUND:

- - From our previous study of 1 Timothy 5:17, we see that the elders have been given authority by God to direct the affairs of the church.
- - And the people in the church are to maintain the same regard as God has for those elders, pastors, and ministry leaders who direct the affairs of the church well.
- - So, God says that those elders, pastors, and ministry leaders who direct the affairs of the church well deserve your double honor.
- - Now, let's examine other ways that God says elders, pastors, and ministry leaders are to be treated.

READ: 1 Timothy 5:18-20, with v.17 for context

v.18 (quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4, Luke 10:7)

[Lesson Question: How does verse 18 pertain to verse 17, and thereupon what are the ramifications for the people in the church?]

SECTION POINT: The elders, pastors, and ministry leaders deserve to be compensated for directing the affairs of the church.

- - As a matter of deserving of double honor, the elders, pastors, and ministry leaders deserve to be treated with due corresponding appropriateness.
 - - They are deserving of fair wages just like everybody else because they are doing the work of the ministry.
 - - In the same way that animals are to be compensated or allowed to eat the food (grain) they are working to process, elders, pastors, and ministry leaders are to be compensated or allowed to partake in benefits from their work in the church.
 - - Failure to appropriately compensate elders, pastors, and ministry leaders is a direct violation of this God-given instruction and borders on being worse than the mistreatment of work animals.
 - - Common decency dictates that "the worker deserves his wages", which unquestionably obligates the recipients (the church) to make timely, appropriate, and adequate compensation to its leaders who direct the affairs of the church.
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v.19 - READ (cf. Deuteronomy 19:15)

[Lesson Question: What ramifications would be expected if the conditions of this directive are not followed? (v.21)]

SECTION POINT: God forbids that any unqualified accusation be brought against an elder, pastor, or ministry leader.

- - Each elder, pastor, and ministry leader serves God by serving the church.

- - As a leader in God's program, an elder, pastor, or ministry leader is naturally a target in dual capacities of being out in front leading and of being an active worker of God's Kingdom producing tangible results.
- - The Kingdom of Darkness deploys ongoing direct opposition to everything and everybody in God's program, especially those persons who are actively producing results.
- - So naturally, the Kingdom of Darkness targets and launches every assault it can against results-producing leaders and workers in God's program, using whomever it can whenever it can as its agents through whom to accuse and verbally attack.
- - In protective response, God instructs that church people are to be selectively restrictive in what "accusations" or "complaints" to "entertain", and what ones to outright refuse to consider or "receive". (Strong's #2724, #3858)
- - Accusations that can be considered must be brought by at least two witnesses.
- - By necessity then, the two (or more) witnesses must personally have knowledge of or personally witnessed the evidence that is the basis for the accusation.
- - Furthermore, the evidence must be credible, applicable, and serious enough to be worthy of such important consideration that brings into critical question and examination the honor that the elder, pastor, or ministry leader deserves.
- - Any accusation that fails to meet these requirements must be immediately dismissed.
- - To allow the advancing of an unqualified accusation is a clear and direct violation of this instruction by God.
- - Allowing an unqualified accusation to advance also extends by default some credibility to the accusation, thereby assisting the Kingdom of Darkness in successfully bringing an un-substantiated accusation against an elder, pastor, or ministry leader.
- - Furthermore, questioning the elder, pastor, or ministry leader about the situation relating to the unqualified accusation is likewise a clear and direct violation of this instruction by God, and it splashes dishonor upon the targeted elder, pastor, or ministry leader as well as cooperates with, fortifies, and advances the attack tactic and objectives of the Kingdom of Darkness.
- - Informing the elder, pastor, or ministry leader about an unqualified accusation made against him may give some credibility to the accusation, depending on the manner in which the person is informed, who else is informed, and how the person reacts.
- - Essentially, God is saying that the elder, pastor, or ministry leader 'deserves the benefit of the doubt' - deserves to be assumed and treated as innocent unless qualified evidence is brought forth against him.

v.20 - READ

[Lesson Question: Compare this directive from God in verse 20 with the various dynamics of how this kind of problem is usually handled in churches and ministries.]

SECTION POINT: All elders, pastors, and ministry leaders who have sinned are to be held directly and publicly accountable to the whole church.

"Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly,"

- - Even though they are suppose to be spiritual role models because they direct the affairs of the church, some elders, pastors, and ministry leaders behave in a sinful manner that is substantial enough to warrant a response from the church.

- - When a church leader has sinned and there are at least two credible eyewitnesses, God's directive is to confront that church leader in "public", "in front of all". (Strong's #1799, #3956)
- - This matter is not to be dealt with exclusively in a secretive, behind-the-scenes closed-door meeting attended by select powerbrokers in the church.
- - No, the entire church is to be included to observe this confrontative process.
- - Logically, one rationale for exposing this confrontation in public is because elders, pastors, and ministry leaders are public figures, conducting their ministry activities on the behalf of the entire church, representing the entire church, and always modeling godly behavior that reflects the teaching and values of the church. Therefore, when an elder, pastor, or ministry leader commits an offense, a sin, this adversely impacts and affects the entire church, all of its people, all of its ministry functionings, and its witness to the surrounding community.

"are to be rebuked"

- - In the original Greek, the instruction from God here is that the elder, pastor, or ministry leader who sinned is to be "reproved", meaning "to voice or convey disapproval of; to find fault with"; "to prove to be wrong or in error; to refute decisively; to cause to be ashamed"; "to reprove gently but earnestly; to counsel (another) against something to be avoided; to caution; to remind of something forgotten or disregarded, as an obligation or a responsibility". (from Strong's #1651, with *AHD* - 'reprove', 'confute', 'admonish')
- - Obviously, the seriousness of the sin that was committed and the reaction of that elder to being confronted publicly will influence the sharpness of the reproof that is delivered, perhaps even escalating into a rebuke.
- - Regardless of the intensity of the public reproof, the pertinent facts will need to be disclosed for everyone to hear.
- - In other words, the sin of the elder, pastor, or ministry leader must be exposed, confronted, and reproved openly - publicly in front of the entire church.

leader against leader - for mutual accountability

- - One critical aspect of this public reproof of an elder, pastor, or ministry leader is that some person or group must investigate the alleged sin, determine its validity and seriousness, initiate a meeting of the church, and conduct a reproof in the church meeting against the offending elder, pastor, or ministry leader.
- - But the structure of power in a church does not allow merely anyone to perform such actions. Usually, only the head pastor and the head elder have such power and authority to proceed with such an action.
- - Therefore, to proceed with a public reproof of an active elder, pastor, or ministry leader will require pitting leaders in a church against one or more other leaders in that church.
- - Consequently, elders, pastors, and ministry leaders who fail to or refuse to proceed with a public reproof of one of their fellow leaders who has sinned is in direct violation of this instruction from God in verse 20.
- - God wants that the sin of an elder, pastor, or ministry leader be exposed and confronted publicly, so the natural result of this God-given instruction is that leaders in the church will and are suppose to take reproofing action in public against another one of their fellow leaders who has sinned.

- - Essentially, undisturbed unity and harmony in the church are to be temporarily set aside in order to reestablish God's high priority that every one of His leaders in His church are to be "above reproach". (v.3:2)
- - And so God has instituted that the elders, pastors, and ministry leaders in the church are to openly, actively, and mutually hold each other accountable to behave righteously, in accordance to what God requires of all the leaders in His church.

"so that the others may take warning."

- - All of the people in the church, and the workers, and the leaders should be confident and respectful and fearful that God is very serious about His requirement that all of the leaders in the church are to conduct themselves righteously. (Strong's #3062)
 - - God intends the each elder, pastor, and ministry leader be implanted with respecting fear in this regard. (Strong's #2192, #5401)
 - - Real fear of being publicly reproofed for sin is to motivate righteous behavior in every elder, pastor, and ministry leader. (Strong's #2443)
 - - In God's sight and at His instruction, no elder, pastor, or ministry leader is to be exempted from this public reproof for having sinned. (v.21)
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IMPLICATIONS:

- - Be aware that there is a difference between sinning, and doing a ministry job poorly or inadequately or lacking Spirit-giftedness or lacking personality traits expected for that ministry functioning.
 - - The criterion cited here only pertains to committing a sin, so extra care needs to be exercised to discern and distinguish between these two conditions.
 - - Similarly, extra care needs to be exercised in not using the public reproof of an elder, pastor, or ministry leader as an excuse to illegitimately drive out that leader from the church.
 - - There are proper ways to remove an elder, pastor, or ministry leader from their job position in the church, and resorting to an improper way of or reasons for removal will ultimately be adversely accountable to God.
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BIG IDEA: Elders, pastors, and ministry leaders are to be paid fair wages and shielded from unqualified accusations, but yet they are to be held accountable by the whole church when they have sinned.

APPLICATIONS:

- - Is this church (or this ministry) managing its finances properly and equitably, according to its policies that have been established to govern its operations? Or are there deviations, or irregularities, or favoritism that are being instituted, and perhaps in secret? (see v.21)
- - Are there any persons who are on the payroll that should not be? And are there any persons who should be on the payroll but are not? Does nepotism or cronyism determine who gets paid and who does not?

- - Does this church (or this ministry) pay fair wages? Or are wages inappropriately low, essentially taking advantage of the workers?

- - How are accusations handled in this church (or this ministry)? Has anyone been trained and designated to biblically handle and implement actions that stem from accusations made against any elder, pastor, or ministry leader in this church (or this ministry)?

- - Is there an underlying assumption of guilt when a ministry person is questioned about an accusation that has been made against him or her? And is the identity of the accuser protected, even though there is no second witness to corroborate the allegation?

- - When an elder, pastor, or ministry leader falls into sin, is the matter dealt with publicly - as directed by God in verse 20? Or is the matter kept quiet to avoid embarrassment and to uphold the reputation of the church?

- - Who is to take the lead in implementing public reproof if the head pastor or the head elder has sinned?

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - When overwhelming evidence exists and multiple witnesses affirm that the jealous incompetent pastor has unjustly treated, verbally abused, driven out of ministry, and publicly disgraced a highly effective ministry worker, what should the response be by the people of that church or ministry? What should be the response of the other leaders in that church or ministry? What would you do in response? Be honest and realistic in your answer.

- - For a large well-funded church, apart from paying salaries to its full-time staff, is it appropriate to pay salaries to some of its part-time workers but not to other part-time workers who devote the same or even more time and level of proficiency in serving the church? For example, are the musicians worthy of a part-time salary but Bible lesson teachers are not? Or are personal secretaries to each of the pastors worthy of a part-time salary but a professional counselor who assists the counseling pastor is not? Contemplate carefully before answering these questions.]

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