

Family Matters
I Timothy 5:1-25

The Bible is like no other book in its scope and comprehensiveness. It teaches us how to enter into eternal life and how to live our daily lives. It instructs individuals and nations. It speaks of heavenly realities and earthly realities. It has no rival. But people cannot fully profit from the Bible unless they are born again new creations in Christ. Neither will we profit fully from the Bible if we do not believe it is the inerrant Word of God.

This morning, as we look together at I Timothy 5, we will continue to observe how the Apostle Paul mentors a young pastor by the name of Timothy. What he says to Timothy has far reaching ramifications for all of us living in 2020. Paul begins by giving Timothy counsel about how to treat people, old and young, male and female. The specific context is how to treat fellow believers – but there is application for how to treat unbelievers as well. Let's read verses 1-2,

“Do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father. Treat younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.”

As a pastor in the Church at Ephesus, there were times when Timothy had the unpleasant task of trying to bring correction to someone who had stepped off the path that God has laid out for us. This is not solely a task for elders and pastors. Any Christian who sees a brother or sister in Christ doing what God says is wrong, has a responsibility to lovingly approach that person concerning this issue. Why? Because sinful behavior hurts the

person who does it, hurts the people who have been sinned against and grieves God. **Leviticus 19:17**, says the following about loving our neighbor, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.” To watch a blind person heading for a deep hole and say nothing to him, is an act of hate in God’s sight. Yes, we are our brother’s keeper.

And so young Timothy was to approach an older man who was doing wrong, as he would approach his own father. But first, we must establish the proper attitude of a young person toward an older person? **Leviticus 19:32** tells us, “You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God” In our culture today, the elderly can be ridiculed and viewed as unnecessary. That is wrong.

Secondly, if Timothy was to approach an older man as he would his father, how does the Bible say we are to treat our parents? The Fifth Commandment is to honor our father and mother. And so if we see our father doing what is wrong, how do we approach him about it and still show honor? Here is one approach: “Dad I love you and want what is best for you. Because you have taught me right from wrong, I believe you already know that what you are doing is wrong. Is there anyway I can help you make this right?”

Friends, we cannot live the Christian life properly if we do not have a clear conscience. In order to have a clear conscience, we must confess our sin to God and to the person we wronged. If we took something which belonged to another, then we must restore it. This is easier to do if we

only took money. But if we have slandered a person's character, that is much harder to restore. So be careful little tongue what you say.

Timothy was to treat young men as his brothers [to deeply care for them] and older women as he would his mother [to honor and respect them]. And he was to treat young women as he would treat his sister – to which Paul adds – “in all purity.” This means Timothy was to view young women first and foremost as people – made in God's image and of inestimable value; and Christian young women – as his sisters in Christ. Secondly he was to view all young women as – women, whom he was to relate to only in appropriate ways – never in inappropriate ways. The Bible says we are to flee fornication because the body was not made for sexual immorality. If we treat sexual immorality lightly, then our values are light years away from God's values. **I Thessalonians 4:3**, speaks clearly about this, “For this is the will of God . . . that you abstain from sexual immorality.”

Friends, pornography is a major problem in our churches today – even among pastors. It is something that is easy to get into – and very hard to get out of. If you are struggling in this area, there is proven help, which has already enabled thousands of men and women to escape this bondage. The leaders of this church are not here to shame you. We are here to help you. Let us do that.

The next issue the Apostle Paul addresses, has enormous ramifications for our culture. Let's read verses 3-16,

“Honor widows who are truly widows [in this context honor means to

financially support].⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God [Did you know that when storks grow old and can no longer fly, their children feed and groom them? People should be able to match the kindness of storks].⁵ She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day,⁶ but she who is self-indulgent [only looking out for herself and pleasure] is dead even while she lives.⁷ Command these things as well, so that they [widows] may be without reproach [Paul now repeats the importance of family members and relatives helping their own family in time of need].⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. [But what if a widow has no biological family? This is what Paul addresses next].⁹ Let a widow be enrolled [a qualified widow could become a part of the church's paid staff] if she is not less than sixty years of age [if she is younger than sixty, she should still be able to provide for herself. If she cannot, there are additional qualifications to meet] having been the wife of one husband [literally a one man wife. Which means when she married, she died romantically to all other men. One of the qualifications of an elder is to be a one woman man. I have seen men and women who have never been divorced who do not meet that qualification. Their eyes roam all the time. Another qualification is] ¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works [Paul now lists a few]: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints [just as Jesus was willing to do], has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work [what Paul says next can be misunderstood].¹¹ But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith [or former pledge, which was to fulfill ministries in her church which only a widow could properly carry out. Being put on the list and being financially supported – was a serious commitment].¹³ Besides that, they [uncommitted, spiritually lax widows] learn to be idlers [people who have too much time on their hands], going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not [that kind of behavior will

destroy a church].¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander [what Paul says next shows that he was not speculating on the damage unruly widows could cause].¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan [and so again Paul states].¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.”

Nothing Paul has said originated in the New Testament. The Old Testament Scriptures have much to say about helping the poor and needy, the widows and orphans. The book of Ruth illustrates many of the principles Paul just cited. When Naomi lost her husband and both of her sons while they were sojourning in Moab, she became a destitute widow. But her daughter-in-law Ruth, vowed to take care of her. When Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, in the land of Israel, one of God’s provisions for the poor is laid out in **Leviticus 19:9-10**,

“When you [farmers] reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest.¹⁰ . . . neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.”

It was this provision for the poor that Ruth followed and God led her to the field of a bachelor named Boaz, who was also a relative of Naomi. And the responsibility of relatives was to help family members in need. And because Ruth and Boaz took their responsibilities seriously, God provided for Naomi and Ruth – as well as arranging a marriage between Boaz and Ruth – which ultimately produced King David. Good things happen when we follow God’s ways.

Let me plant a thought that I would like you to ponder. When God formed the Jewish people into a nation and laid out Israel's laws and form of civil government, would that not have been a good time for God to command civil leaders to provide for the poor by means of taxation? The slate was clean. God could have easily put that into His laws. Why didn't God do that? Because it is not a good idea. It goes contrary to other laws God did put into place.

And so in verses 3-16, Paul speaks of relatives taking their responsibility to help needy family members. Friends, there were people in Paul's day who would rather dump that responsibility onto the church. Today we have many people who are eager to dump their responsibility to the poor, upon the state. Both are equally wrong.

The Apostle Paul now turns to another subject that is loaded with applications for us today. Please follow as I read I Timothy 5:17-18,

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor [more pay], especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages.’”

Listen to a Scottish commentator's conclusions drawn from these verses,

“Anyone who works deserves his support, and the harder he works, the more he deserves. Christianity has never had anything to do with the sentimental ethic which clamors for equal shares for all. A man's reward must always be proportional to a man's toil.”

And I would add, that a man's reward will also be proportional to his God-given talent. **Proverbs 22:29**, declares, “Do you see a man skillful in

his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.” Socialism clamors for equal shares for all. Free market maintains that the person who works hard and skillfully should be honored with more responsibility and greater pay. The pace setters for free market are those who work hard. The pace setters for Socialism, where everyone is paid the same amount no matter how little they do – will be those who do the least amount of work. God’s blueprint for people who work hard and make a good living, is for them to voluntarily and personally be generous to those who need their help.

In I Timothy 3:1-7, one of the qualifications for being an elder is to be above reproach. What happens when an elder fails in that area? Let’s continue reading and making applications from verses 19-20,

“Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.”

The requirement for two or three witnesses comes from **Deuteronomy 19:15**,

“One witness is not enough to convict a person accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

God would rather have a guilty person declared innocent than for an innocent person to be declared guilty. If the necessity of two or three witnesses is ignored, then more innocent people will be declared guilty. If we are putting innocent people into prison, it is because the people we have placed into authority do not meet the qualifications for civil leaders –

which is to fear God and follow His rules [Exodus 18:21].

I pity any church that has an elder living in sin without rebuke; or an elder who promotes and defends what God says is wrong. That church will suffer serious consequences. Let's continue reading verses 21-22,

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging [or prejudice], doing nothing from partiality. ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.”

Why does Paul call upon elect angels when he gave this charge to Timothy? Because elect angels are very involved in the affairs of life and churches. When God has to judge a people or nations, angels are always a part of carrying out that judgment.

What does Paul mean when he tells Timothy not to be partial to certain people, or hasty in the laying on of hands? Laying on of hands was involved in (1) ordaining elders into office and (2) in officially declaring that a person was restored after he had sinned and repented. This is why fallen pastors, who have repented of their sin, are usually required to have a set period of time in which to prove they have genuinely repented. To put a pastor hastily back into ministry who has not genuinely repented of his sin, will do catastrophic damage. And to make an unqualified person an elder, will not do a church any good either.

I was reading an early church father, who lived in the days of the Roman Empire, who spoke of the contempt and prejudice against slaves by the general population of his day. But he said that among followers of Christ – there were slaves appointed as elders in the church because they

met the qualifications.

Let's finish by reading verses 23-25, where the Apostle Paul says to pastor Timothy,

“(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) [I think we have all heard people say they only drink wine for medicinal purposes. Paul was telling Timothy he needed to do that because he knew Timothy well and deeply cared for him].²⁴ The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later.²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not – cannot remain hidden.”

I have seen some people who have been made pastors or missionaries, because they are good speakers and have the gift of gab – and not because of proven character. There are some missionaries who raise support much easier than others – who are actually more effective out in the field. I remember the story of two different missionaries who went to the same country and ministered there for about ten years. Because of corrupt politics and civil unrest, both missionaries were forced to leave that country. One of the missionaries was flashy, with lots of charisma – and had built a large church with hundreds in attendance. The other missionary chose to put his energies into discipling the people who had made commitments to Christ. He had a far smaller church than the flashy missionary. After both men left the country, the missionary who had built a large church, heard that his congregation melted away and the building was abandoned. His people had watched their pastor do everything and they themselves had not grown in Christ. The other missionary, who had made mature disciples for Christ, heard that those disciples were busy

making other disciples for Christ and the number of Christians in that country was growing. Who was the better missionary?

I believe Biblical, heart-felt preaching is extremely important. But a pastor cannot make disciples for Christ from the pulpit. In **Acts 20:20**, Paul testifies as to how he pastored in the church at Ephesus, “. . . I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house.” If you are not a part of a small group, the pastors of Living Hope Church, urge you to do so. Let’s pray.