

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's pray...

[1Ti 5:17-25 NKJV] 17 Let the **elders** who rule well **be counted worthy of double honor**, especially **those who labor** in the word and doctrine. 18 **For the Scripture says**, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer [is] worthy of his wages."

Now, you might remember from our study last week, that Paul exhorted Timothy and the church to honor widows who were really widows – those who didn't have family members to take care of them, the burden belonged to the church –

The church was responsible to meet their financial needs of their basic necessities and in return, the true widow was to live the rest of her life faithfully in service to the church.

Paul says they were supposed to continue in supplication and prayer day and night.

That is how the church was to treat true widows with honor.

How were they honored?

By the church meeting their needs.

Now, Paul turns his attention to how the church is to treat elders – those individuals who make up the leadership in the church.

For the most part, this would be the pastor of the church.

And Paul's instruction to Timothy is, if the church needs to honor true widows, then the pastor needs to be honored double.

Not all pastors, only those who rule well – and those who labor in the Word of God and in teaching the Word of God.

And I want you to pay special attention to the word labor.

There are individuals who will come to church and look upon the person standing in front of the pulpit and say, I can do that.

All he has to do is stand in front of the room and read a bible verse or two, crack a few corny jokes, talk about current events and maybe mix in an illustration here and there and then tie it all up with a life lesson.

And unfortunately, in many churches this Sunday morning, this is what occurs.

There will be church services this morning where the bible will not even be opened.

We have a friend who was looking for a church service later in the day on Sunday because of work – and she attended a church in Sahuarita – and she said that after worship, the pastor went up to the pulpit and gave a 15 minute summary of the movie, "Finding Dory" and used a scene from the movie to provide a life lesson for the church.

That's it.

No word of God, no bible reference, no gospel, no Christ crucified.

Church, a teacher is supposed to teach God's Word accurately, to represent God's ideas well.

The goal of teaching God's word is to help others understand.

It can involve working at the original languages – learning what the actual text is saying.

It can involve learning history and culture – understanding the historical background to a passage, understanding the culture and context of the times that a book or passage was written.

It can involve working to help those in the church apply the passage to their lives.

It's teaching in a way that can be understood.

But most importantly, teaching ought to be a labor of love.

I had you make a note of the word labor, because Paul uses the same word to describe the ministry he was called to.

[1Co 15:10 NKJV] 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God [which was] with me.

[Gal 4:11 NKJV] 11 I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

[Philippians 2:14-16 NKJV] 14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or **labored in vain.**

The Greek word that is used for labored in his letter to Timothy and the other churches is the word for toil – meaning long strenuous work leading to physical or mental exhaustion.

For those pastors – they are deserving of double honor

Honored for the role they fulfill as elders / pastors.

Honored for their doing of the work they are called to do - well.

And to make his point, Paul quotes two bible verses here in verse 18 – one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 25

The Book of Deuteronomy is a retelling, a retelling of the law and of the covenant to the new generation that was going to inherit the Promised Land.

So when we get to chapter 25, Moses is giving God's instructions to the Children of Israel regarding a bunch of practical manners.

And in the middle of all this instructions, as we will see, he gives this instruction on taking care of Oxen???

[Deu 25:1-4 NKJV] 1 "If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that [the judges] may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, 2 "then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. 3 "Forty blows he may give him [and] no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight. 4 "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out [the grain].

That is the bible verse that Paul quotes in 1 Timothy -

Seems out of place right????

It is not church –

You see, in verse 1-3, God is telling His people, that if someone is convicted of doing something that is deserving of a beating – and the judge finds him guilty and sentences the individual to be beaten - then that person must be first be beaten in the presence of the judge that delivered the sentence and then the number of blows is limited to forty.

The reason that the individual had to be beaten in the presence of the judge was so that he would have some accountability for the sentence that he just pronounced – if he had to be a witness to the beating – he might be more inclined to show mercy.

The reason that the blows are limited to forty is because forty in scripture is the number of testing –

in fact, in scripture we find that once we get to the New Testament times, the Pharisees and the Scribes are so concerned that they might have miscounted the blows – that they limited the number of blows to 39.

That is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians that five times he received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.

So what does this have to do with verse 4???

What does this have to do with oxen?

When the Children of Israel brought in the grain, they would find flat ground near a windy (on top of a hill) and they would lay the grain on the ground, then they would attach multiple oxen side by side and they would force the oxen to move in unison over the grain

As their hooves crunched into the grain, the wind would blow the chaff (the outer skin) away.

I have a picture -

Show picture

Now, one of the common practices of the pagan nations – all of the ites that lived in a round the Promised Land, was that they would muzzle the oxen so that as they worked – they wouldn't start munching on the grain and eating the harvest.

A pagan looking at the oxen of the Children of Israel without a muzzle would then go up and ask, "Why isn't your oxen muzzled?" and the response would then be," Because our God is a kind God who cares about the wellbeing of the ox.

In the same manner that He cares about the wellbeing of the individual who is charged and sentenced to a beating.

If your going to force your oxen to labor for hours – then you ought to allow it to stop and munch on some of the grain.

The New Testament verse that Paul uses in Luke 10:7

You can read it on your own time – Jesus, when He sends out the seventy, he instructs them to allow folks to show them hospitality by taking them into their homes, and feeding them.

After all, they would be working hard and would have earned their "wages".

Some think the church should not support pastors and staff, and that the paid ministry is an abomination – they say that the church instead should be using the money to support the needy.

This is an attractive way of thinking; but it isn't Biblical.

If the needy (that is, the truly needy) are worthy of honor, then those who properly rule and teach in the church are worthy of double honor.

The Mormon church is proud to say that they don't pay their bishops –

Paul says – it's ok, not because he says so – but because the scriptures say so.

19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

Anybody can bring up an accusation against anyone else.

And sometimes that person will be the pastor or the leaders of the church.

And usually what happens is that someone becomes bitter at the pastor – maybe they felt that they didn't receive the recognition that they deserved or maybe they felt they were overlooked for a position in ministry and then they will start to slander and spread lies about the pastor.

Paul tells Timothy that everyone deserves the benefit of the doubt, and we should be slow to believe an accusation until it is corroborated by more witnesses.

The phrase “two or three witnesses” comes from another principle established in the Law of Moses.

(Deuteronomy 19:15 NKJV) “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

Notice that Paul is not giving the “elder” any more benefit than what everyone deserves.

He is not telling Timothy that 6 witnesses are required when an accusation comes against a pastor.

2 or 3 – the same like everyone else.

Elders and pastors are human beings, and they will sin just like everyone else.

They need their share of rebuking and repenting like everyone else.

But because they are in the frontlines of God’s army, they will also face more attacks than anyone else, including attacks of slander.

20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

Turn with me to Matt 18

[Mat 18:15-17 NKJV] 15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell [it] to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

So, Jesus here provides the same principle that Paul is giving to Timothy.

The difference when it comes to an elder or a pastor that has fallen, that rebuke occurs in front of the entire church.

Elders are to set an example.

And sometimes that example involves being rebuked.

The act of a public rebuke ought to put fear and trembling into anyone that is involved in ministry.

Unfortunately, many churches choose to sweep the sins of the leaders under the rug – However, Paul says, “We may not like when their sins are exposed or we may not like that they are made public – but public rebuke is necessary so that the other elders in the church and the congregation as a whole, may fear.

[Ecc 5:7 NKJV] 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words [there is] also vanity. But fear God.

The fear here speaks of respect or reverence toward God.

That is why it's done in public – to demonstrate that sin is not taken lightly by either the elder or the congregation.

Once again, this is done to begin the process of restoration – the elder might not be restored back to his previous position but at least he would be able to have fellowship within the church.

21 I charge [you] before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.

Here in verse 21, Paul is referring to the idea of rebuking an elder.

And the charge here is that Timothy must make these decisions according to God's word and not allow how his feelings toward that person get in the way.

“As God, Jesus & the angles are my witness – I'm telling you to do this!”

This is how important it is.

“Timothy – don't let favoritism for certain guys weaken your resolve to do the right thing here.”

“If an elder gets wonky, you try to straighten him out but if he digs in his heels,

It doesn't matter if he's a friend – Call him out!”

And the reason that Paul says this is because he knew some of the elders in Ephesus that were causing trouble.

He knew them because he appointed them and knew them to be likeable guys.

Remember, Paul spent three years as a pastor in Ephesus.

He'd already prophesied over them, warning them some would depart from the Faith, now they have.

And even though it's hard seeing someone who served God go off into error – they still must be identified and called out.

22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

Paul here is speaking from first hand experience.

As we read the book of Acts, Paul would show up in the city, preach the gospel, start a church and then he would move on to the next city – appointing someone to lead the church.

Some of those that he left behind – they didn't turn to good.

That is why back in chapter 3 – Paul tells Timothy that one of the requirements for an elder was that they could be new to the fellowship / they couldn't be a new believer.

They needed to be in the fellowship long enough to evaluate his character and maturity.

So here Paul reminds Timothy of the importance of making sure that the elder has a tested, proven character.

Just because the individual seems like a good fit – don't lay hands on them right away.

Sometimes, there are individuals who simply seek a title.

They show up at a church, if after two years, they don't have a title – they move on to the next church.

Subsequently, they never had it in their hearts to serve the church – they just wanted a title – so then the church suffers.

If we truly have a servant's heart – we will serve the body with or without a title.

I believe the idea is that some people can fool you about who they are.

If you raise them up too quickly, you may get a nasty surprise.

You "share" in their sins because you've promoted them.

You may not be guilty of doing what that other person is doing, but if you put them into leadership, it makes it look as if you condone the sin.

23 No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

There are some people who mistakenly think that going to the doctor and taking prescriptions or over the counter medication – that it somehow points to a lack of faith.

After all,

God can heal any condition from anyone – have you not prayed to God that He may heal you?

Sometimes God heals directly

God sometimes chooses to heal us through medicine or through our doctors.

And sometimes, God chooses not to heal us until we are up in heaven

I am pretty sure that Paul prayed for Timothy's condition time after time – but when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, God had chosen not to heal Timothy from his stomach and other infirmities.

Therefore, Paul tells Timothy to take a little wine to alleviate his infirmities.

Paul didn't lack faith –

The Holy Spirit empowered Paul to heal other individuals. But not Timothy -

BTW, do you recall who is the individual who accompanied Paul in many of his missionary journeys – Dr. Luke.

24 Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding [them] to judgment, but those of some [men] follow later. 25 Likewise, the good works [of some] are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

There are 2 kinds of people here – Those qualified & those disqualified to be elders.

Each of them is further divided into 2 categories, the obvious & the not so much.

Some people are very open about their unrepentant sin, and they don't hide anything.

(Obvious)

Their sins are leading them straight into God's judgment.

Some people's sins aren't so obvious.

They do a good job covering them up so people don't see it.

You won't see their sin unless you give it some time – this is another reason why Paul tells Timothy not to be quick on laying hands on individuals.

And the same things goes for good works –

Sometimes, it is clearly evident that someone is qualified to be an elder – by his fruit

And other times, one needs to have a little time of fellowship before the fruit become apparent.

These folks try to keep their good deeds quiet.

Yet even these folks have character traits that will eventually show that they are a good person doing good things.

The point is Timothy was to be patient and he was to use godly discernment is choosing leaders in the church.

But church, this application goes beyond choosing church leaders.

Think about all the decisions that we make in haste.

Think about all the decisions that we make without seeking godly discernment –

I believe that one of the reasons we don't seek godly discernment is because we already know what the answer is –

May we seek His will – instead of our own.

Amen

Let's pray...

