

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's First Letter to Timothy – Part 15

I. Exposition of Chapter Five (continued).

A. Verse 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.**’” – Here, Paul quotes portions of two passages of Scripture to support the idea that elders deserve remuneration for their work of ministry. Dr. Bob Utley makes an important point concerning this:

“This is a quote from Deut. 25:4. It is also quoted in 1 Cor. 9:6–7, 14. The uniqueness of verse 18 is that the OT is quoted on the same standing as a NT quote that we find in Luke 10:7. This shows Paul’s view not only of the inspiration of the OT but of the equality of the emerging NT.”¹

B. Verses 19-20 – “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”

1. Verse 19 – “Do not receive an accusation against an elder...” – The word “receive” means; “to come to believe something to be true and to respond accordingly, with some emphasis upon the source”² The word “accusation” means; “the content of the accusation or charge made against someone”³
2. “...except from two or three witnesses.” – There must be corroborating witnesses to whatever the accusation is. In other words, it cannot be hearsay or gossip, it must be those who have actually witnessed the elder’s transgression.
3. Verse 20 – “Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all...” – The word “sinning” is very clear and means; “to act contrary to the will and law of God—‘to sin, to engage in wrongdoing’”⁴ Elders who are proven to have done so, are to be “rebuked” publically. The word “rebuke” means: “to expose, convict, reprove.”⁵
4. “...that the rest also may fear.” – Fear is not always a bad thing. When we see the consequences of sin in another person’s life, it should prompt a fear in us that causes us to examine our own lives and, if need be, repent of any sin quickly. Robert Utley writes:

“This seems to speak of public disciplinary actions (cf. Gal. 2:14; James 5:16) which some elders took against others who had (1) overstepped their authority; (2) promoted false teaching; or (3) engaged in other inappropriate actions. ‘Rebuke’ is a common term in the Pastoral Letters (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15). The ‘rest’ may refer to (1) the other house churches; (2) the other local elders; or (3) other believers.”⁶

C. Verse 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.” – The word “charge” here means; “to strongly warn”⁷ Several scholars comment concerning the strength of Paul’s warning to Timothy in that he invokes the authority of “...God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels...” A. Duane Litfin asserts:

“Why Paul punctuated his instructions with this strong charge can only be guessed. Had Timothy passively avoided unpleasant confrontations, or had he taken a strong stand in some cases but not others? For whatever reasons, Paul strongly adjured the young minister to follow through on (keep is lit., ‘guard’) these instructions without partiality (lit., ‘prejudging,’ used only here in the NT) or favoritism (*prosklisis*, lit., ‘inclination toward someone,’ used only here in the NT). The strength of Paul’s charge is underlined by his invocation of the authority of God and Christ Jesus (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1), and the elect angels, all of whom are associated with righteous judgment (cf. Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Rev. 14:10).”⁸

D. Verse 22 – “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.”

1. “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily...” – This is probably referring to the laying on of hands which is associated with appointing (or, ordaining) elders. Barnabas and Saul (Paul) had hands laid on them, coupled with prayer, before going out into the apostolic ministry (**Acts 13:3**). Timothy also received a “gift” when the elders laid hands on him (**I Timothy 4:14**).

¹ Robert James Utley, *Paul’s Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 71.

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 371.

³ *Ibid.*, 436.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 772.

⁵ Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).

⁶ Utley, *Paul’s Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, 72.

⁷ Mounce’s *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, William D. Mounce, Gen. ed. (Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, 2006.), 719.

⁸ A. Duane Litfin, “1 Timothy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 744.

2. **“...nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.”** – Taking the context into consideration, it seems most likely that Paul is saying that a hasty ordaining of an elder could make Timothy responsible for that elder’s failure into whatever kind of sin they may need to be rebuked for.

E. **Verse 23 – “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.”** – To best understand this statement to Timothy, many scholars seem to agree with the following analysis by Dr. Craig Keener:

“Most people drank wine with their meals (albeit about two parts water to one part wine, and not distilled to a higher than natural degree of fermentation). Timothy has been abstaining (apart from, we may assume, the Lord’s Supper), perhaps to avoid the criticism of those influenced by the false teachers (4:3; some *ascetics abstained from wine); Paul tells him to go back to using it. Wine was often helpful in settling stomachs and preventing dysentery (it could be used to disinfect water). Some restorative diets recommended water... others wine; medicines could be delivered with either. 5:24-25.”⁹

1. **“...for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.”** – It’s possible that Timothy was having some sort of chronic stomach problems that preceded Paul encouraging him to mix wine with his water. The word **“infirmities”**, according to William Mounce means; **“weakness’ and can also be used of a physical weakness.”¹⁰** This is not the normal word used for sickness and out of 24 uses in the NKJV, only two times is it translated sickness or disease. This is the same Greek word found in **Matthew 8:16-17** which reads;

“When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND BORE OUR SICKNESSES.’”

F. **Verses 24-25 – “Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.”**

1. The context of this points back to the warning given to Timothy about not being too quick to ordain elders.

a. **“Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment...”** – The words **“clearly evident”** mean; : **“pertaining to being easily seen and known by the public—‘very easily known, very clear, very obvious.’¹¹** The phrase **“...preceding them to judgment...”** shows that sin will eventually be judged. Of course, once a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord, their sins are forgiven and the judgment that befell Jesus on the cross is accredited to them. Yet, there is still the **“judgment seat of Christ”** which all believers will stand before to determine rewards or loss of rewards (**Romans 14:10-12; I Corinthians 3:11-15; II Corinthians 5:10**). A more clear translation of **verse 24** is as follows:

“The sins of some people are obvious, going before them into judgment, but for others, they show up later.”
I Timothy 5:24 – New English Translation

b. **“Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.”** – In contrast to some men’s sins being clearly evident, Paul now states that the good works of others are also **“clearly evident”** or, **“very easily known”**; **“very obvious.”** The phrase, **“...those that are otherwise cannot be hidden”** means that even the good works done in secret eventually come out, even if it’s at the judgment seat of Christ where rewards will be given. Gary Leggett writes:

“The meaning of these contrasts is clear. Obvious sins lead the way to judgment. Hidden sins follow men to judgment. Obvious good works are noticed, applauded, and appreciated. Hidden good works are known to God and will be rewarded. God will deal with men in a fair and equitable manner.”¹²

⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 618-619.

¹⁰ *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, William D. Mounce, Gen. ed. (Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, 2006.), 185.

¹¹ Louw and Nida, 341.

¹² *The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 901.