

Fact Sheet for **“Elders and Bondservants”**
1 Timothy 5:17-6:2

Pastor Bob Singer
07/15/2018

Paul had given Timothy instructions early in this letter as to how he ought to conduct his own life and ministry. Then he gave instruction concerning various groups within the church. We took some of these last week and we will take the last two today.

Elders (5:17-25)

¹⁷ ¶ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

When Paul wrote of elders he was not just referring to those who are identified in our culture as pastors. He was referring to all those whom the church identifies as elders.

¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

The first quote is from Deuteronomy 25:4. One of the churches Paul wrote to was what we might call today a problem church. It was the church at Corinth. When you outline 1 Corinthians it is quite obvious that Paul had before him a list of problems in the church and he dealt with them one at a time. 2 Corinthians was written soon afterwards and Paul was still dealing with problems in the church. One of those problems was that there had been rumblings about the legitimacy of his apostleship. And Paul gave an extended defense of himself in 2 Corinthians 10-13. But there is a hint of this in 1 Corinthians 9 also. They questioned Paul's motivation for ministry. He steadfastly refused any financial remuneration from the congregation. What was his real motivation then? Paul wrote that it would have been quite proper for him to receive financial remuneration from the church, and he quoted this same verse. What was his motivation? Read 1 Corinthians 9:18-19. But it was obvious that this did not put an end to the rumblings.

Paul's 2nd quote in 1 Timothy 5:18 was not an exact quote and probably referred to such passages as Leviticus 19:13 and Deuteronomy 24:15, or perhaps to Jesus' own teaching (Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7).

¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

This is based on Deuteronomy 19:15, and is the thought behind a well-known but often misused verse (Matthew 18:20). The context of that Matthew passage is church discipline, not prayer.

Churches can err on both sides of this. And unfortunately in my pastoral experience I have seen both. Churches, to their own detriment, can ignore well substantiated accusations against an elder. On the other hand a single, uncorroborated voice has led to the dismissal of an elder.

²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

First, think about how this would fly in our current legal climate. Again, I have seen many bad and a few good examples of this

²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

Angels are associated with the righteous judgment of God (Luke 9:26; Mark 8:38; Matthew 25:31; Revelation 14:10). Avoid prejudging. Avoid partiality.

²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

Be careful about whom you choose to be an elder in the first place. And then Paul warned Timothy to keep himself pure.

²³ ¶ (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)

The ESV places this verse in parentheses to indicate this is a side comment by Paul. This verse may seem a little disjointed or out of place here in Paul's letter. It seems that Timothy was inclined to associate the purity Paul wrote about in the previous verse with total abstention from wine, which led in Timothy's case to some medical problems. Remember that the water in that day did not come from the city water department.

²⁴ The sins of some people 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.

Remember that all of us are heading for judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). An eternity with Christ is secure for the Christian, but we will still stand before his judgment seat.

Bondservants (6:1-2a)

^{6:1} ¶ Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

^{2a} ¶ Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things.

A Final Comment (6:2b)

^{2b} Teach and urge these things.

Pay attention to the last few words of verse 2. What do they refer to? These words just don't refer to bondservants. They refer to everything from 5:1-6:2... older men and women, widows, elders, bondservants. To this list you could add many more. Paul gave just a sampling of God-honoring relationships in the church. This letter to Timothy is all about character and godliness. These are some examples of God-honoring relationships.

God-honoring character will result in God-honoring relationships. And this must of course begin with a relationship with Jesus Christ. Make sure you are right with God there first.