

1 Timothy Chapter 5: v. 17- chapter 6: v. 2.**Title: Supporting the Elders & Working faithfully.**

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

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

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

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.

Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed. ² And those who have believing masters, let them not despise *them* because they are brethren, but rather serve *them* because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

Introduction

We are presently dealing with a section of Paul's letter to Timothy which deals with the challenge of godly living. This godly living is worked out within the relationships of a Church family.

There had been false teaching in the Church, which had disturbed relationships.

Paul was writing to Timothy so that he could try and **correct false teaching and challenge people to live godly lives.**

Our previous message in Timothy dealt with the problem of lack of care for genuine widows within the Church family.

Paul now considers two other areas of tension within the Church.

These concern the **proper support of Elders and the relationship between Masters and servants.**

Paul's main thrust is to give clear guidelines on how a Christian Church family is to function in a manner that is pleasing to God.

There are two things Paul points out in these verses that we will study today.

These are honouring the Elders; that is God's chosen and appointed leaders in the Church.

The second is relationships in the work place.

Paul highlights servants as this was the main employer of the day.

Nevertheless, there are transferrable principles in this teaching that could be used in 21st century working relationships today.

1. Double Honour for the Elders – 5: v. 17-25.

In this section Paul points out three important things concerning the Elders in a Church setting.

- a) Elders who teach God's word and rule well should be worthy of double honour.

We have already discovered in 1 Timothy that one of the qualifications of an Elder is the ability to teach God's word.

Although this is not the only thing that an Elder should do, it is a very important and time consuming part of his ministry.

There are other places in the Bible that teach the same truth as we have here.

It is good to look up and read some other verses that support this truth.

1 Thessalonians 5: v. 12-13 in N.K.J.

¹² And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Hebrews 13: v.7, & 17. in N.K.J.

⁷ Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct.

¹⁷ Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

So what is double honour? The Greek word that is used here for the word honour is “**timee**” and could be translated as **respect**.

It sometimes refers to financial support. It is where we get our Latin word “**honorarium**” which refers to giving money to somebody to honour them.

When we get a guest preacher from another Church we give them a financial gift which we call here at O.I.C. **an honorarium**.

So God teaches us through Paul that the preaching of God’s word is very important. It is so important, that if it is done well, the person needs to be well respected.

This moves very smoothly into the next subject.

b) Teaching, full-time Elders, should be paid well for their work.

Paul supports his teaching about paying Elders by first referring to an Old Testament reference in **Deut. 25: v.4.**

The Old Testament Law taught that the oxen who threshed the grain were entitled to eat of it. The oxen must not be muzzled to prevent them from eating.

Paul’s point here is very obvious. **God required that animals who laboured to provide physical food for others were to be fed well for their work.**

How much more would God want **faithful teaching Elders, who supply spiritual food for their needy flocks, to be provided for financially?**

This means that Churches have a responsibility to provide for the financial support of their Elders.

c) Nobody should ever accuse an Elder of sin or wrong doing unless there are at least two witnesses.

There are always people eager to falsely accuse a man of God.

They do this for various reasons. Sometimes it is because they **reject God’s teaching through the Elder, and resist biblical authority.**

Sometimes it is **plain jealousy**, because perhaps God’s blessing comes through his preaching and teaching.

Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Paul all suffered from false accusations.

Paul goes back to the Old Testament to give instruction on the matter.

Deuteronomy 19: v. 15-21. (N.K.J.)

¹⁵ “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. ¹⁶ If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, ¹⁷ then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. ¹⁸ And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, *if* the witness *is* a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, ¹⁹ then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. ²⁰ And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. ²¹ Your eye shall not pity: life *shall be* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Jesus also supported this teaching.

Matthew 18: v. 15-16. (N.K.J.)

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.’

- d) Those people who sin, and this includes Elders, should be rebuked in the presence of all Church members as an example to others.

Although this rebuke for those who sin, includes everybody in the Church, in the **context of this passage** I think Paul is **challenging the false teachers in the Church. Some of them must have been Elders.**

Paul is saying that you must expose sin, particularly false teaching, within the Eldership.

The whole Church needs to know the truth about matters of discipline within a Church family.

It is not something that should be covered up.

Paul says in v. 21 that all matters within a Church leadership structure should be done **without partiality and without prejudice.**

This is why it is not easy to have close friends in a Church if you are in leadership. You are more likely to favour your friends. You also need to be careful that you bear no prejudice with regard to colour, culture or past issues with people.

- e) **Select Elders carefully – v. 22-25.**

Paul says that the best way to prevent unqualified Elders from serving in the ministry is **not to lay hands upon anyone too hastily.**

What does it mean to lay hands upon somebody?

To lay hands upon somebody in the New Testament is **connected with ordination.**

Acts 6: v. 2-7.

² Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

⁷ Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

2 Tim. 1: v. 3-7.

³ I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as *my* forefathers *did*, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴ greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵ when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. ⁶ Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

In the passages that I read, the Apostles ordained the 7 men who were chosen to serve and then Paul ordained Timothy for his ministry in Ephesus.

Later it was the responsibility of Elders to ordain new Elders.

In the context of our passage, to lay hands upon somebody was **to affirm their suitability for and acceptance into public ministry.**

Therefore, people had to be fully checked out concerning their doctrine; that is, what they believed, and also their life-style, and in the case of Elders they had to be **tested in their preaching and teaching of God’s word.**

The practice of laying on of hands had its foundation in the Old Testament.

It came from the laying on of hands upon a sacrificial animal to identify with it.

It was also used by **Moses to ordain Joshua** and to ordain the Levite Priests.

(Numbers 8: v. 5-13, & Numbers 27: v.18-23 & Deut. 34: v. 9. – not to be read out, just for reference.)

This is a very important principle for all Churches and I will be referring to this in my conclusion and application at the end of my message.

Before we leave this section on Elders I must mention v. 23 which has an important lesson for Elders and Church members.

Paul was concerned for Timothy's health. Timothy was a very good Elder and had **committed himself to be pure and spiritually healthy.**

Therefore, he must have decided like the Nazarites in the Old Testament to abstain from taking any alcohol. (Numbers 6: v. 1-3)

However, there was a problem. In the ancient world water was impure and the carrier of diseases. Paul's advice to Timothy was to drink a little wine that would help to safeguard Timothy's health from the impurity of the water.

Wine in the ancient world was used to **cleanse the body of impurities.**

It was a known fact that **red wine was a treatment of stomach illnesses caused by impure water.**

In the context of the passage, it was some personal advice for Timothy about his health.

Paul didn't want Timothy to think that having made a decision not to drink alcohol, that he was letting himself down now by drinking a little wine for the sake of his health.

Although Holiness does involve making **wise choices in our lives,** it also involves **a relationship with the Holy Spirit.** This relationship with the Holy Spirit never goes against what the Bible teaches.

However sometimes Church members can set such strict standards for their leaders that their idea of Holiness becomes legalistic and not relational with God's Holy Spirit.

In the U.K. not so long ago, a Pastor was never allowed to have any form of relaxation on a Sunday. Sometimes on a Sunday afternoon to relax and wind down from preaching, I go for a swim or a public bath. I couldn't do this in England even today.

Some Church members don't like their Pastor playing golf, or going to watch a soccer or rugby match.

I realise that sport can become addictive, or even cost too much, but a person's Holiness is not about obeying a set of rules set up by people. It is about our personal relationship with God, through His Holy Spirit.

So many Christians miss the point on personal Holiness and then move into legalism. I hope that we don't make this mistake too!

2. Relationships in the work place – 6: v. 1-2.

We now come to Paul's commands concerning relationships in the employment of the day.

Slaves were the biggest employer in the Greek/ Roman world.

In fact, the entire structure of the Roman empire depended on the employment of slaves. To understand the situation, you need to clear your mind of images of slavery.

If you come from the United States, your image might be of pre-civil war, American South.

(show slides here of slaves)

These were mainly black people who were not always treated very well.

Whatever your image of slaves, clear your mind now and discover what the situation was at the time that Paul wrote this letter to Timothy.

The seasonal work in the fields, growing and harvesting crops was done by day labourers.

They were paid an agreed sum of money for a day's work.

The people who managed these workers were actually slaves, owned by the owner of the estate.

In many large estates, slaves were cooks, teachers and skilled workers who made things that were useful tools of the day.

(show slides here)

The system wasn't perfect by any means, but it was workable and provided employment for **about 70% of the work force in the Roman Empire.**

In fact, it was a more secure job that not being a slave.

You had a **home, regular income, good food, and even security for your children who could grow up and be given a similar job.**

Most of the abuses in slavery came from the **hearts of evil men**, not from the institution itself. Sadly, the abuses, even in employment today, can be traced back to the hearts of evil men.

The Old Testament teaching never prohibited slavery, but it carefully guarded the **rights of slaves**.

Jewish slaves could not be held as slaves **for more than six years**. (Ex. 21: v. 2) however they could choose to **voluntarily remain as slaves** if they wished. (Ex. 21: v. 5-6)

Those who came into slavery with a wife and children could take them when they left. Those who were given a wife by their master couldn't take her away until she had served her 6 years.

If slaves were abused by their owners, then they could be set free. (Ex. 21: v. 26-27)

The **Religious rights** of slaves were protected. (Ex. 20: v.10)

Slaves also enjoyed the **same civil rights** as other people. (Ex. 21: v. 20)

With this background into slavery we come to Paul's teaching to Timothy on the relationships that the slaves should have with their masters.

Paul says two important things in Chapter 6: v. 1.

Slaves, in particular, "**bondservants**" are to **honour their masters**.

(Bondservants had chosen not to go free after 6 years but to remain as slaves)

The masters mentioned here would have been **non-Christian**.

The Greek word that is used here implies that it was a **respect for the person in their position and not a heart respect based upon internal feelings**.

It would be the same respect that we would give a **policeman** who had just fined us for speeding or a **prime minister** that we didn't vote for but was doing his best to run a country.

1 Peter 2: v. 18-21. In N.K.J.

¹⁸ Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. ¹⁹ For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

It is always a challenge, **especially in the work place in Japan to honour a manager who treats you badly.**

This is only really possible if the Holy Spirit gives you the grace, strength and powerful love of Jesus.

Secondly in chapter 6: v. 1 Paul says that **by our respect for the person** who has authority over us, **the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.**

What does this mean?

This means that a Christian believer's attitudes and behaviour in the work place affect how people perceive God and our doctrine.

In particular, Paul is probably thinking about the doctrine of the Gospel Message.

The word doctrine really means **what the Bible teaches**.

So in effect, **people read our lives, before they read the Bible.**

If the Christian failed to honour his master and behaved badly in his work, then his master would begin to question **what kind of God the believer served.**

They might also question the **Gospel's power to transform lives.**

Paul repeated this instruction when he wrote to Titus.

(Titus 2: v. 9-10 in N.K.J.)

⁹ *Exhort* bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things*, not answering back, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

Paul then moves on in verse 2 of chapter 6 to teach about the **relationship between a Christian Slave and a Christian Master.**

The temptation in this situation was for the **Christian Slave to expect special privileges** because of their equality in Christ with their Master.

It was not uncommon for a **mature Christian** to have to work under a **not so mature believer**.

This would cause conflict if the employer did not follow God's design for them in the work place.

So it didn't matter if the slave had a Christian employer or a non-Christian employer. The slave had to honour their master in the same way, and not to expect any special privileges for the Christian Master.

Application and Summary

1. **Elders/ Christian leaders**. - We have learnt today about honouring Elders, Protecting Elders, Rebuking Elders, especially false teachers who were Elders, and selecting Elders.

Some of these teachings need application to situations today.

Although the principle of Elders who serve full time, like Pastors, should be paid well, there are some situations where it is either not financially possible, or it is not financially needed in a situation.

In millions of Churches around the world there are many Elders in Churches who have full time jobs, or receive a good pension, and do not need to get a salary from a Church.

They can't do as much work as a Pastor would do but nevertheless they do teach and preach and serve in leadership. This is very acceptable.

There are also situations where Churches need full time Elders/ Pastors but circumstances prevent them from paying a full salary.

Some Christians believe that these Churches should not have a Pastor if they can't afford to pay one correctly.

In some cases, that is true, but in other cases, it needs careful discernment.

For all three Churches that I have Pastored, I have accepted a call to serve as their Pastor, even though the Churches did not pay me the salary that I needed to live on when I was first appointed.

One of the Churches had the money to pay me but withheld it.

Wendy had to get a job and couldn't serve fully in the Church because of this.

However later they did pay the salary that I needed to live on.

The leaders were convicted and I was paid much more than I actually needed.

In actual fact, I saved the money up and used it for O.I.C.

In the case of OIC, all the members know that I had to raise a certain sum of money privately in order to get a visa and be the Pastor of this Church 4 years ago.

The circumstances at the time within OIC prevented a fully salary payment, but there was a promise of a full salary if they were in a financial position to do so. I trusted that the leadership would do what they promised.

Through the increase in giving and financial management of our expenses, the Church was able to support me fully over 1 year ago.

Had the Church Council not chosen to do this, my savings had run out and I would have not been able to get a visa honestly and I would have been required to return home to England in January 2018.

Praise God that this did not happen.

2. **Elders need to be chosen by elders, appointed and ordained by Elders.**

Although this is a Biblical Principle, a majority of Churches do not follow this Biblical principle.

My son-in-law is a teaching Pastor/ Elder in a Church in England.

He found it strange that the Elders alone made the choice of appointing him in that position.

However Biblically these Elders were 100% correct.

Of course my son-in-law was introduced to the Church members and questioned by all the members.

He preached at the Church, but the final decision was made by the Elders.

You might ask the question why God would set a rule like this?

Well I think that God knows that good Elders recognise other good Elders. **Does that make sense?**

I couldn't be expected to recognise a good Japanese teacher, unless I was a good Japanese teacher.

Joshua worked with Moses for many years. He knew all about him and he trained him. Therefore, Moses was definitely best placed to support him to take over and lead the nation of Israel into the Promise land.

If it can be done many Churches prefer to appoint assistant Pastors to take over from senior Pastors when they retire, for this very reason.

3. Relationships in the work place in Japan

Al over the world it is well documented that the workplace in Japan is very challenging. The government is trying to change things by encouraging companies to provide better working hours, less overtime, and less obligation to do extra things, not normally required in other parts of the world in the work place.

Also due to the shortage of labour they are trying to encourage women back to work after they have had their children.

This is easier said than done, due to a lack of affordable child care etc.

The challenge for the Japanese Christian in the work place in Japan, according to our text is to behave in such a way that their Christian faith is not compromised but that at the same time they work hard and respect their manager.

This is a difficult and complex problem for many Japanese workers.

I don't profess to solve this problem here today, but we can look to the Bible to obey God's word and then at least He will honour us for doing this.

The first thing that Paul tells us is to honour the position of the manager or owner, but not necessarily honour him from the heart, as a person.

Your manager might not be a nice person, but you still need to honour him while you are working for him.

This can be done in lots of positive ways without compromising your Christian faith.

The second thing that is clear from Paul's instructions is that you are a witness for Jesus while you are working in the work place.

You can say NO to everything that the Bible prohibits.

You can also give a very good reason why you can't do the thing that is asked of you. Don't be afraid to tell your manager that you are a Christian and that is the reason that you can't do this thing, whatever it might be.

By doing this you are being a **good witness for the Christian Faith.**

Even if you lose your job, God will take care of you. He will provide for you. He will honour you. He is your Heavenly Father.

The third thing is that trying to talk wisdom with your manager can be a good thing. This is not in the text but I thought that it might help somebody.

What do I mean by talking wisdom to your manager?

Here is one example of talking wisdom.

The manager or co-workers suggest going out drinking one night.

You explain that you are a Christian and you don't normally drink alcohol.

They say come anyway and drink orange juice, you can stay sober and make sure we get home safely.

Now you have a problem!

However, you can say that if I come out tonight, I will be very tired in the morning and may not be able to do my job so well.

Therefore, it is much better if I return home, because I want to honour our director and this company.

I can then come to work in the morning fresh and ready to work hard and not be too tired to give my best.

Therefore, I will not be coming out tonight. – Be firm.

I am sure that you can ask for God's wisdom to apply **your particular situation** in order for you to **honour God and honour your company at the same time.**

It might be hard to do this but at least you can try.

May God help you to honour Him and honour your manager at the same time.