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Introduction. After finishing the section of writing related to the care for and responsibilities of widows, Paul turns his attention back to something he had begun addressing earlier in the letter: elders. In view here is the treatment of them by their congregations (thus the comfortable segue from the treatment of widows). In this passage, Paul addresses: 1) teaching-elders (pastors) compensation for their labor; 2) protection from accusations; 3) impartial discipline when they are in sin; and 4) avoiding hasty decisions in appointing them. There is also what seems to be a personal and parenthetical word of advice concerning the use of wine for health reasons.

1 Timothy is about church life, and obviously leadership has a great effect on that life. Whether a church has hundreds of members and multiple elders or just a handful of people with a single leader, the choice and treatment of that leader will play a great part in the maturity and fruitfulness of that local church's ministry.

1. Verses 17-18 - Double honor: provision for the elder.

- v.17a - Elders rule the local congregations. Christ is the Head, and elders oversee His church.

- v.17b - "Double honor" refers to material support (compare to vv.3 and 16); it is not a mathematical formula as much as it is a statement of priority: good leadership in the church is worth a lot, and that good leadership primarily takes the form of good doctrine and teaching. That is why the elders who "labor in the word and doctrine" are singled out here. Some elders in the church will have other duties of general oversight, but the study, preaching and teaching of God's word is worthy of compensation by the church.

NOTE: In certain instances, it may be beneficial or necessary for a teaching-elder (i.e., pastor) to forego full compensation. But the material support of a pastor by his congregation is the biblical norm, as established here.

NOTE: This does not license the pastor to pursue wealth or extravagance, as this concept can obviously be abused. Rather, the laborer in the word should have his needs and his family's needs met.

- v.18 - Two scripture verses are quoted to make Paul's point. Interestingly, one is an Old Testament verse (obviously the OT is very commonly quoted in New Testament literature) and the other is from the New (the latter, from Luke 10:7). This is an indication that Luke, a close companion of Paul, had written (or at least researched) his Gospel at this point, and it is also a tremendous validation of the NT as scripture (a similar validation is seen in 2 Peter 3:16).

2. Verse 19 - Accusations without witnesses: protection for the elder.

- v.19 - Obviously there are vulnerabilities a pastor must face. One of those is accusations made by detractors. A pastor is not immune from scrutiny. However, since every faithful minister of the word makes enemies along the way, accusations must be thoroughly investigated before being even entertained. Here, acting on accusations from individuals without proper corroboration is banned.

3. Verses 20-21 - Rebuke in the presence of all: discipline of the elder.

- v.20 - If after the proper scrutiny and examination it is found that a pastor is in sin, he must be rebuked publicly. This process mirrors what the Lord Jesus laid out in Matthew 18:15-17. No action can be rightly taken without two or three witnesses (previous verse). If after an accusation, however, charges are confirmed with witnesses, the unrepentant sinning elder must be publicly rebuked by other church leaders. And in certain instances a sin might require his removal from his position, for he may very well disqualify himself from the what is listed in Chapter 3 of this book. In those cases, even a repentant elder must be publicly rebuked, for the discipline of everyone (that the rest also may fear).

- v.21 - In a very serious charge, Timothy is told not to exempt anyone (likely pastors in mind) from this process.

4. Verses 22-25 - Do not lay hands hastily: scrutiny for potential elders.

- v.22 - Because leadership in church carries such a heavy burden, no rush to make a decision on an appointment can be tolerated. Care and time must be taken for proper examination. To share in other people's sins likely refers to the sin of hasty, careless leadership appointments and/or the sins unqualified but hastily appointed pastors fall into (remember that one of the qualifications of pastor was not a novice, ch. 3). Haste in decision-making here could result in impurity in the church, which Timothy was to avoid.

- v.23 - Because v.22 seems to connect to v.24 thematically, this is likely a parenthetical piece of advice brought to mind by the concept of purity at the end of v.22. Timothy was told to keep pure, but that purity was not an outward, legalistic standard. Perhaps there were those who thought purity meant abstaining from certain things, such as wine. There is value to such abstinence, to be certain (avoidance of drunkenness and addiction, causing others to stumble, etc.). But because water was frequently impure in that day, a little wine - likely diluted in the water - served a purifying effect and helped Timothy with his apparent frequent sicknesses.

- vv.24-25 - These statements attach to v.22 as explanation for not making hasty leadership appointments. Sometimes, it is easy to spot an unqualified man because of his sinful behavior, but other times finer character flaws might not manifest until after given the responsibility and authority of eldership. The same can be said of good behavior: sometimes it is obvious, but other times when it is not so obvious it won't stay hidden for long. The bottom line: do not decide quickly concerning pastoral appointments, whether yes or no.