

Honor Those Who Rule Well – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy regarding elders, including matters of compensation and sin
2. aim – to cause us to desire to honor those who lead us well, especially in spiritual matters
3. passage – 1 Timothy 5:17-25

b. outline

1. Instructions Regarding Compensation (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
2. Instructions Regarding Sin (1 Timothy 5:19-25)

c. opening

1. the problems of preaching **systematically**
 - a. sometimes you are forced to preach passages that are *difficult to understand* – passages that are hard to interpret or appear irrelevant to a modern audience
 1. this method forces you to deal with the “*whole counsel of God*” – you can’t skip the hard stuff
 - b. sometimes you are forced to preach passages that are *difficult to apply* – passages that directly impact the life of the church or (some of) its members
 1. this method forces you to be aware of such realities and to *seek the wisdom of God*
 - c. sometimes you are forced to preach passages that are *directly related to you as a preacher* – passages that define what it means to be a preacher in a full-time sense of the word
 1. this method forces you to be *self-aware* of what it means to do the job
 2. this method forces you to help your people to understand the *realities* of the ministry
2. the point of the **chapter**
 - a. Paul has *pivoted* here into more specifically “practical” matters (from the beginning of **chap. 5**)
 1. first, issues of **conflict** that will arise as Timothy does his job
 2. second, issues of **benevolence** that Timothy must be aware of as part of his job (**2 calls**)
 3. third (**now**), issues of **leadership** that will need to be addressed as Timothy does his job

I. Instructions Regarding Compensation (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

Content

a. the ruling role of elders (v. 17a)

1. elders = a plurality of men from within the local church who are charged with the spiritual oversight of the flock, a group of men who guide the church as shepherds towards greater spiritual maturity
 - a. **i.e.** a group of men accountable for the souls of the congregation (**Heb. 13:17**)
“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”
 - b. as already discussed in “The Qualifications for Leadership – Part 1” (12/2/2018)
 - c. however, Paul *does* add some “finesse” to the reality of elders here that he considered important
2. **question:** does Paul intimate here that there are multiple *classes* of elder in the church (**i.e.** those who “*rule*” and those who do not; those who have *authority* vs. those who do not)?
 - a. there are some denominations who see a difference between ruling elders and other classes
 - b. **answer:** it is *unlikely* that Paul is (in fact) distinguishing between different classes of elder here:
 1. there is no class or type distinctions for elders ever mentioned in **1 Tim. 3** or **Titus 1**
 2. the word “*rule*” can be translated “*manage*” or “*lead*” or “*devote themselves*” (**see 1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12**; in fact, this is the only place in the ESV where this word is translated “*rule*”)
 3. the word “*especially*” implies that those who “*labor in preaching and teaching*” are a *subset* of the larger body of elders (**i.e.** one distinction is between their *efforts*, not their *class*)
 4. the construction of the sentence indicates that Paul was distinguishing between elders who rule “*well*” versus those who do *not* – a distinction of quality of *effort*, not quality of *position*
 5. the context (**from v. 19 down**) suggests that Paul was distinguishing between elders who hold to their role in holiness versus those who are found to be sinful and ineffective (**see below**)
3. Paul insists that the church must give “*double honor*” to those who lead and guide the flock effectively
 - a. **because that is what the church is all about** – the church is a place where the people of God are led to spiritual maturity, *sanctified* as a people through the application of *discipline*

- b. **it should be the natural desire of the people of God to honor those who have been called by Christ to aid them in this growth, to recognize their importance in spiritual matters**
 - 1. **IOW:** not just honoring them for holding the title (i.e. kissing their rings), but honoring them for doing well the work of spiritual discipline, being trustworthy to lead us to Christlikeness
 - 2. **IOW:** giving them “double honor” because we recognize that their work will be difficult – shepherding sheep is *hard work*, but we honor their effort to fight against our resistance
- b. the compensation of elders (vv. 17b-18)**
- 1. part of the “double honor” is to **compensate** those who “labor in preaching and teaching”
 - a. it would appear that Paul considered full-time, compensated teaching-elders to be a “normal” part of the polity (structure or government) of the church *from very early on in its history*
 - 2. the *typical arguments* given against compensation for full-time teaching-elders:
 - a. no ministers should be compensated (or only mildly compensated) in the church because *all* Christians are designated under the Holy Spirit as ministers, and, if the work of the church were “equally” spread out amongst all the believers, there would be no (or little) need for paid leadership
 - 1. the church in **Acts 2** provides a model for church-life (informal, communal, etc.)
 - 2. the picture of Paul as a tent-maker provides a model for this kind of ministerial life
 - 3. the effect of money on the church down through time (i.e. the “filthy lucre” of **1 Peter 5:2**)
 - b. some *logical responses* to these arguments against compensation:
 - 1. the flawed *presupposition* that all ministry is *equal in effort* (as in importance; **naïve**)
 - a. the “high” view of preaching inherent in **1 Timothy 3:17** contradicts this view
 - 2. the flawed *contention* that the “infant” church of **Acts 2** is the *superior* model of the N.T.
 - a. that church required *deacons* by **Acts 6** and the establishment of elders by **Acts 15**
 - 3. the flawed *assumption* that Paul is *the example* for elders to follow
 - a. Paul was *never an elder* – he was an itinerant missionary apostle (**see below**)
 - 3. the *biblical support* for ministerial compensation (**1 Corinthians 9:1-14**)
 - a. **why 1 Cor. 9:** Paul quotes there (in v. 9) the same O.T. passage he does here (in v. 18)!!
 - b. **thesis: the church is commanded to fully compensate the elders who preach full-time, and it should desire to do so with great generosity because it honors the gospel of grace**
 - 1. **vv. 1-2** – Paul’s *authority* over the church (as an apostle) was being questioned
 - a. specifically, he was not *acting* as other leaders over the church had been acting
 - 2. **vv. 3-6** – Paul *admits* that he made certain decisions (which was his right to do)
 - a. one of which was to *not* accept any compensation, although he *had a right to it*
 - 3. **vv. 7-12** – Paul lays out his *first* biblical argument for this *right to compensation*
 - a. quoting from **Deut. 25:4** – that the ox has a right to eat some of the grain he treads out
 - 1. and, Paul adds the examples of soldiers, vineyard planters, farmers, plowmen, threshers, etc. who all benefit from the work they do in sowing and planting
 - b. in **1 Tim. 5:18**, Paul *adds a quote from Jesus himself* (**Matt. 10:10**) for this *same right*
 - 1. Jesus instructs his disciples to accept *only food* as compensation for their efforts
 - 2. but, Paul interprets it that those who preach the gospel *should expect* compensation
 - 4. **v. 13** – Paul lays out his *second* biblical argument for this *right to compensation*
 - a. that God had established a *precedent* in the compensation of the Levitical priests
 - 5. **v. 14** – Paul states the command *outright*: the church is “commanded” by the Lord to *fully* compensate those who “proclaim the gospel” – or, who “labor” in preaching and teaching
 - 4. the *importance* of ministerial compensation (**1 Corinthians 9:15-18**)
 - a. **question:** why did Paul *refuse* compensation, even though it was his *right*?
 - 1. **v. 15** – Paul refused in order to allow him something to *boast in* (i.e. a *greater reward*)
 - a. he was *commanded* to preach this (he had no choice)
 - 2. **v. 18** – Paul refused in order to *demonstrate* to the infant church *the gospel of grace*
 - a. **them receiving something for free is mirrored in Paul giving them something for free**
 - b. **question:** why should the church *desire* to be generous in the support of its teaching-elders?
 - 1. because it is the *natural response* of a people who have received a *free gift from God*
 - a. **contra the old “adage”:** “the best preacher is one who is poor and humble – Lord, you keep him humble, we’ll keep him poor!” (**thank you that this is not true here!!**)
 - b. such a statement is *horribly sinful*, for it indicates someone who does not understand *grace*
 - c. **e.g.** the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (**Matthew 18:23-35**)
 - 2. because it is part of a *healthy “selfish” relationship* between the elders and the congregation

- a. the desire of the congregation *should be*: we want these men to teach us, to lead us, to shepherd us, to *drive* us – so, we cannot let them worry about anything else but us, so we will make sure that all of their material needs are met so they can stay truly focused on us
- 3. because it is part of the *sybiotic relationship* between the elders and the congregation
 - a. for an elder that strives under the qualifications of **1 Tim. 3**, this kind of attitude from his congregation *drives him* to work harder to meet their *real needs*