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1 TIMOTHY 5:1-25

Today we're going to see Paul give Timothy specific instructions about dealing with several different groups of people in the church.

The *church* is described in the New Testament by many metaphors.

In Peter's epistles,

The church is called a holy nation...
a flock...
a priesthood...

Paul called the church a temple...
a body...

The writer of *Hebrews* called the church an assembly.
In *Revelation*, the Apostle John called the church a kingdom.

The Lord Jesus called the church a vine.

But, in this passage of Scripture the metaphor that fits the context is family.

The word family speaks of intimacy, care, openness, vulnerability, transparency and most of all...love!

Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another."

Love is the backbone of the family and of the church. Some of us have very loving physical families. But, some of us don't.

For one reason or another some of us have families that have become fractured and fragmented. And especially for those of us who fit into this category, it can truly be said that we have a sweeter, more intimate relationship with those of our church family, than we do with those of our physical family.

So, I believe the concept of the church being a family is extremely important!

Sometimes, within families it is necessary to offer correction.

We know from previous lessons that all was not well within the church at Ephesus. False teachers had come into the church, and they had led others astray.

And Paul knew that if Timothy didn't learn to lovingly confront other members, they would only be more and more apt to listen to the false teachers rather than the teachers of the truth.

Sometimes we overlook the fact that within the believers' love for each other, there must on occasion be confrontation and correction.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians...

"Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?"

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Then, Paul goes on to say... “Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump.”

This doesn't mean when we see our brothers and sisters in the church sinning that the first thing we do is kick them out! NO! We're going to see from Paul today that the **first** thing we do is lovingly confront them and lovingly point out the error in their lives.

Error and sin must be addressed or, like leaven, it will permeate and affect the entire church family.

Verses 1-2...

We see how we are to confront our church family.

If the one in need of reproof or correction is

- an **older man**, the appeal to him is to be as a **father**...
- a **younger man**, the appeal is to be as a **brother**...
- an **older woman**, the appeal is to be as a **mother**...
- a **younger woman**, the appeal is to be as a **sister**...

Do you know what this tells me? It tells me that our God is a God of detail! Do you see the concern here for the feelings of these people?

What a lesson this should be for **all** of us!

We are one in the bond of love...and we should act like it!

We should truly be “so glad that we're part of the family of God...” and we should act like it!

When there is sin in the life of one of the members of our church family

- we shouldn't run around the church telling everyone...
- we shouldn't treat them “like the plague”...

but, we should lovingly appeal to them as a father, a mother, a brother or a sister...as a member of the family!

Paul has more to say about correction as it regards elders later on in this chapter, but in this **next** section of Scripture, Paul deals with widows...

Let's look first at

The Ministry of the Church to Widows

Verses 3-5... “widows indeed”

This seems to mean ladies who are not merely bereaved of their husbands, but in their bereavement they have been left without support.

We need to remember that in those days, widows didn't have pensions, Social Security, retirement benefits or retirement homes.

So, first of all, Paul tells us that the family of these widows bears a certain responsibility...her **children and grandchildren** are to “make some return to their parents for this is acceptable in the sight of God.”

Many of the early believers were of the poorer people...

And so, many of the wives who lost their husbands were left without any means of support. It was customary in those days for the local synagogue to help with the needs of the widows,

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But these widows mentioned here had left
Judaism to follow the Lord Jesus Christ...

So, it shouldn't surprise us that the first ministry to develop in the early church involved the care of widows...in fact the first deacons were chosen for the purpose of serving the widows... **Acts 6:1-4**

Well, the question comes up...did the early church take care of **all** the widows in the community? What were the qualifications a widow had to meet to receive help from the church?

She must be **without support**...

She must be **a believer**...

She must be **a committed believer**...

Verse 6...

We see an ungodly widow...one who gives herself to wanton pleasure.

Paul says this widow may be living and breathing and thinking she's enjoying life...but Paul says, "She is dead even while she lives." And this person is **not** to be supported by the church!

There's a principle found over and over in the Word of God...that people suffer the consequences of their sin.

We see it in the story of "prodigal son." When the son demanded his share of the inheritance, the father didn't run after him and try to bring him back. No! The father let him go into the far country with the hope that he would become fed up with his lifestyle and repent and come back home.

The same principle applies in the case of these ungodly widows. If the church doesn't support them, and no one else does either, perhaps they'll get fed up and desperate enough to repent and come to the Lord.

God never calls the church to support the sinful lifestyle of anyone!

Again in **verses 7-8**...**the responsibility of the family is stressed.**

We all know people who have taken care of their widowed mother or mother-in-law...some of you are doing this right now. EXAMPLE: Helen...

I believe the supreme example of the loving, caring provision for a widow was at the Cross.

Jesus, as He was dying, while He was bearing the burden of the sin of the world was also concerned about His mother's care.

And He made sure she would be cared for...

The church is made up of individuals. The church cannot do **collectively** what we will not do **individually**. We have the responsibility to look around us and meet the needs of widows.

But, Paul speaks not only the ministry of the church to the widow, but he also speaks of

The Ministry of Widows to the Church

Verses 9-10...

Here we see the mention of **"the list"**...

The sources I read **this week** agree that in the early church there was an **"order of widows"** and these widows ministered in the church...

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visiting the sick; visiting prisoners; teaching and discipling younger women; helping younger women rear and nurture their children; providing hospitality for visitors...

This list is not the list of those widows who are **eligible for support** but rather those who are **eligible for ministry!**

We see in **verses 9 and 10** those who qualify for this **“ministry list.”**

I believe what Paul is saying is that older women statistically will become widows. Older women have much to offer within the church!

We really miss out when we don't give older women the opportunity to teach younger women. Just think of what they could teach about marriage and child-rearing and living for God! I want to say again, that I commend those of you who are involved in our mentoring program.

Verses 11-12...

Well, we saw in **verses 9 and 10** who was eligible for “the list.” Here we see those who are not!

Apparently, from what we see here, in order to be put on this “list”, the widows would have to have taken a vow to **stay on the list...to remain widows.**

Paul's concern here is that a young widow, out of her sorrow for the loss of her husband and gratitude to the church for its support would have made a vow she should not make.

Paul is watching out for her best interest.

He is setting down guidelines so that she will be protected from breaking a vow she should not have made and from living the rest of her life alone.

Verses 13-14...

You know, when we look at Paul's statements about women, especially these younger widows, we're tempted to say, “Paul, you're really being tough on them.”

When women have too much time on their hands, they get into trouble...men do, too...it's just a different kind of trouble! 😊

So, the younger widows shouldn't be put on the list...they shouldn't be idle so they won't become busybodies and gossip...

Well what should younger widows do, then?

Verses 14-15...

They should get married!

(I knew a young widow once who was pondering over whether she should marry a man she had fallen in love with and one afternoon they came upon this Scripture and right away began planning their wedding.)

Verse 16...

This simply means that when no men are available, then certainly there is nothing that would preclude or exclude a believing woman from helping a widow.

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Let's just summarize what we've seen...

- the widow's children and grandchildren should support the widow...
- if that doesn't happen, then the church should support her...
- older widows are to minister in the church...
- younger widows are to get married...

Let me just say one more thing before we leave this subject.

Many widows are "fine" financially...but they **still** need our support!

The family of God needs to reach out to widows and to divorcees as well for that matter. We need to support them **emotionally and spiritually!**

Isn't it a precious thing how God brings us into each other's lives? We need to just be there, to help ease the loneliness and to help make adjustments, and sometimes just to listen!

A couple of weeks ago, we looked at elders and we see Paul addressing this subject again. Your translation may read **elders**, or **overseers**, or **bishops**. You and I would call them **pastors**.

And Paul touches on the subject of **honor** of elders
of **protection** of elders
of **rebuke** of elders
and of the **selection** of elders...

Let's look first at **the honor due an elder**.

Verses 17-18...Paul doesn't refer to money directly, but he deals with the heart attitude that would prompt the church to support their pastors with money.

Those in the congregation who truly honor their pastor will not begrudge supporting their pastors, will they? I believe God's Word is making perfectly clear that our pastors are not to have to worry about having to get a second job in order to put food on his table and pay his bills.

They have much more than enough to do...

Leading the flock...
Counseling the flock...
Ministering to the flock...
Teaching the flock and preaching to the flock...

The Old Testament principle is that the ox when working also needs to eat.
The New Testament principle is that the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Let's look next at the **protection** due an elder...

Verse 19...There are always those who delight in bringing an accusation against those in leadership.

So, Paul says, "Don't receive an accusation lightly. Make sure you have substantial evidence...two or three folks who will come forward to confirm what is being said."

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To attack someone in a position of authority in the church is a very serious matter. Those who set out to falsely accuse God's servants are treading on dangerous ground.

Psalm 105:15:

"Do not touch My anointed ones and do My prophets no harm."

Do you remember back in **1 Samuel** when Saul was hunting David down to kill him? David and his men were hiding in a cave and Saul came in to rest and while he was resting David cut off the edge of Saul's robe?

Do you remember how David's conscience bothered him about this and he said, *"Far be it from me because of the Lord that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the Lord's anointed."*

By the same token, in a fit of rage, Saul took the lives of 85 priests in one day! He took the lives of their wives and their children!

Saul dared to touch the Lord's anointed!

Saul dared to kill the Lord's anointed!

Now, let me ask you...whose life was blessed more? Saul's? or David's?

Well, let's look now at the **rebuke** of an elder.

Verse 20...

The ministry truly is a two-edged sword. Those who serve faithfully are to be **honored**...they're to be **protected**...but those who sin are to be **publicly rebuked**.

God holds the men He has called into the ministry to a very high standard. Many churches today wink at sin...if a leader falls into sin the congregation looks the other way, but this is not what Scripture teaches us to do. Our leaders are to be held accountable!

"...so that the rest may be fearful of sinning."

Verse 21...

God is saying that no one should receive preferential treatment.

These principles are to be followed. It's not an easy thing to do, but God has set down His guidelines for it.

Now, let's look at the **selection** of an elder...

Verse 22...

We see in this verse the reason that men should not be ordained to the ministry hastily.

Churches can't hire as interns all seminary students, but our church does hire some...and in everyday situations, day in and day out, these young men are able to be used of the Lord here but also, they are closely observed. Does their walk match their talk?

I believe this is the principle we see here: **Ordination should come after close observation.**

When our church ordains a man for the ministry, he goes before a council, and he's asked many questions...such as...

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What do you believe about the Bible?

What do you believe about the virgin birth? Salvation?

- the local church?
- the sovereignty of God?

What do you believe about church government?

And many more...

Why is this so important? Because if we ordain them too hastily these young men may go off into sin and we've become a partner to that...

Verse 23...

It sounds as though Timothy had taken a vow of total abstinence and Paul is simply saying, "**Take a little wine for your stomach's sake.**" They didn't have Pepcid AC and Previcid and Tums and Mylanta back then, so don't go out and buy a bottle of wine for your stomach on the way home!

Verses 24-25...

In these verses, we see four different types of would-be elders.

- 1) Those whose sins are so evident that they will be rejected without much scrutiny.
- 2) Those who have managed to cover up their sins but they will come out during the examination process.

One commentator wrote, "*These are men whose sins march right into the meeting behind them and refuse to be left outside.*"

These **first** two would-be elders, of course, are disqualified.

- 3) Those whose good deeds are evident.
- 4) Those whose good deeds are not quite so evident, but they will come light during the examination process.

Only God knows the hearts of folks. But, He has called us to be discerning about those who lead our churches. Why does God's word go into such great detail about the church and its leaders?

Do you remember the song sung by Bill and Gloria Gaither some years back...I believe it was called "The Church Triumphant". In the middle of the song Gloria Gaither presents a moving recitation in which she says, "**God has always had a people.**"

And He truly has...

He called out Abraham, and made Abraham the father of a mighty nation and claimed them from the very beginning as His very own.

He set them apart to be a holy and peculiar and sanctified people.

God entrusted to them His **Law**...and His **Word** and His **truths** and His **ordinances**. God longed for them to be the light to the other nations.

Down through the ages, God blessed them, He led them, He nurtured them, but somehow down through the ages they departed from Him. They forsook His teachings and they replaced His truth with their own traditions and they elevated and exalted ungodly leaders and finally they even rejected His own Son.

Then, Jesus established His church...and He called His church to be different and holy and set apart and sanctified. He called His church to be a vessel of honor, fit for the Master's use.

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He called the church to penetrate the kingdom of darkness with the precious light of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although God isn't through with the Jew, during this present "church age" He has called the church to be the "light to the nations" that the Jews failed to be. God has called the church to reveal the glory of Jesus to a lost world and to draw them to Himself.

God has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church and we know that His promises are "yes in Christ Jesus". They are "Yea and amen."

God **will** always have a people – **the church – the assembly, the flock, the royal priesthood, His holy nation, the Bride of Christ...US...the family of God!**

And this church is so important to Him because the blood of His bought it. And He has set down guidelines for the church for its conduct and for its leadership. He has written us a manual. We are without excuse!

He has called us to minister to each other.
He has called us to support each other and encourage and even correct each other. He has called us bear each other's burdens.

And He has called His leaders to equip the saints...to live a pure and holy and sanctified life before the Father and to be led by the Holy Spirit in all things!

And He as called us to be faithful to honor, protect, rebuke and select our leaders according to the truths we have studied today. May God help us to faithful to do that!

Next week we'll see as Paul touches on some other controversial issues within the church.