

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 1 TIMOTHY 5 (PART 2)

1 TIMOTHY 5:17-22 - ADDITIONAL ELDER INSTRUCTIONS

V. 17-18 - REGARDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR ELDERS

"DOUBLE HONOR" - A PASTOR SERVING THE CHURCH WELL, ESPECIALLY THOSE "WORKING HARD AT PREACHING AND TEACHING" OUGHT TO BE HONORED BY THEIR CONGREGATION - GENERAL HONOR IS IMPORTANT BUT PAUL IS NOT ~~JUST~~TALKING ABOUT CARDS FOR PASTORS APPRECIATION SUNDAY. HE IS INSTRUCTING THAT THE CHURCHES SHOULD FINANCIALLY SUPPORT THEIR PASTORS - AND TO DO SO IN A WAY THAT IS NOT STINGY.

"DON'T MUZZLE THE OX":

DEUTERONOMY 25:4 - "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.

PROVERBS 12:10 - A RIGHTEOUS MAN HAS REGARD FOR THE LIFE OF HIS ANIMAL, BUT EVEN THE COMPASSION OF THE WICKED IS CRUEL.

THE PRINCIPLE THAT GUIDES THIS IS THAT YOU HAVE AN ANIMAL WORKING FOR YOU AND THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO EAT THE CROPS IN THE FIELD AS THEY WORK THE FIELD TO PLOW. SOME FARMERS WOULD PUT A MUZZLE ON THEIR OXEN, COVERING THEIR MOUTHS TO PROHIBIT THEM FROM EATING THE CROPS ALONG THE WAY. THIS MIGHT DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO IS TRYING TO BE EFFICIENT AND SHREWD WITH THEIR CROPS AND THUS THEIR RESOURCES, BUT REALLY IT'S DESCRIBING SOMEONE WHO IS STINGY AND POTENTIALLY CRUEL. NOT ONLY IS A WELL FED OX GOING TO DO BETTER WORK, IT IS A WAY TO SHOW LOVE FOR THE ONE WHO IS HELPING YOU.

"LABORER IS WORTHY OF HIS WAGES" - TWO OLD TESTAMENT VERSES APPLY:

LEVITICUS 19:13 - 'YOU SHALL NOT OPPRESS YOUR NEIGHBOR, NOR ROB HIM. THE WAGES OF A HIRED MAN ARE NOT TO REMAIN WITH YOU ALL NIGHT UNTIL MORNING.

DEUTERONOMY 24:15 (ESV) - YOU SHALL GIVE HIM HIS WAGES ON THE SAME DAY, BEFORE THE SUN SETS (FOR HE IS POOR AND COUNTS ON IT), LEST HE CRY AGAINST YOU TO THE LORD, AND YOU BE GUILTY OF SIN.

HERE WE SEE A PRINCIPLE ABOUT THE SIN OF WITHHOLDING PAY FROM SOMEONE WHO IT IS OWED. JEWISH FARMERS/LANDOWNERS SHOULD PAY THE PEOPLE WORKING FOR THEM IMMEDIATELY AND NOT WITHHOLD THE HONEST WAGES GAINED FOR HONEST WORK. IT WOULD BE SINFUL TO MAKE THE PERSON WORKING FOR YOU EVEN MORE BEHOLDEN TO YOU THEN THEY ARE. THIS PRINCIPLE IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR SOMEONE WHO IS POOR WHO LIKELY NEEDS THE MONEY FOR IMMEDIATE NEEDS.

IN THE SAME WAY, PAUL DESCRIBES THE CARE THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD HAVE FOR HER LEADERS. MANY CHURCHES ARE UNWILLING TO SUPPORT THEIR PASTORS IN A GENEROUS WAY FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS: UNDERVALUING THEIR IMPORTANCE, WANTING TO HAVE A MEASURE OF CONTROL OVER THEIR LIVES, AND GENERAL LACK OF FINANCIAL GIVING OVERALL.

PAID PASTORS/ELDERS PROBABLY SHOULDN'T BE THE RICHEST PERSON IN THE CHURCH, BUT THEY ALSO SHOULDN'T BE THE POOREST. AS WE ALL KNOW FINANCIAL CONCERNS CAN BE SOME OF THE GREATEST STRESSORS ON A PERSON AND FAMILY - PAUL IS ADVOCATING A SYSTEM WHICH ALLOWS THOSE LEADING THE CHURCH TO BE AT PEACE IN THEIR ABILITY TO PASTOR SO THEY CAN FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANT TASK AT HAND.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF INSTANCES WHERE A PASTOR WOULD NOT BE FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED AND PRACTICALITY SPEAKS TO SOME OF THOSE TIMES AS WELL, BUT THIS SECTION IS ABOUT THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE FOR THE CHURCHES THAT TIMOTHY HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO MANAGE.

V. 19-20 - CONFRONTING ELDERS

THE NEW TESTAMENT GIVES SOME CLEAR GUIDANCE ON HOW TO CONFRONT A BROTHER/SISTER WHEN THEY HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU - HERE WE HAVE SOME SPECIFICS AS THEY RELATE TO AN ELDER/PASTOR. THE PRINCIPLE HERE IS THAT ACCUSATIONS AGAINST AN ELDER NEED TO BE LEGITIMATE AND NOT PETTY (TWO-THREE WITNESSES NEEDED) AND ALSO TAKEN SERIOUSLY (REBUKED IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL).

Q - WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS? WHY DO YOU THINK THIS STANDARD IS GIVEN FOR ELDERS?

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BECAUSE OF THEIR ROLE, ELDERS WILL OCCASIONALLY BE UPSETTING SOMEONE FOR VARIOUS REASONS. PERHAPS THEY SPEAK OF SIN AND SOMEONE IS CONVICTED, MAYBE THEY SPEAK OF GOD'S HOLY STANDARD AND SOMEONE IS OFFENDED. PERHAPS THEY ARE DEVOTED TO A TIMELY TASK OR NEED AND SOMEONE ELSE FEELS NEGLECTED. WHAT IS THE CHURCH TO DO ABOUT THIS? SHOULD EVERY COMPLAINT BE HEARD - PERHAPS. BUT THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP SHOULD TAKE IT SERIOUSLY WHEN THERE IS A PATTERN OF SIN IN AN ELDER AND ALSO WHEN THERE IS A WIDER AWARENESS OF A SIN (THUS THE TWO-THREE WITNESSES REQUIRED).

A CHURCH ELDER IN SIN SHOULD NOT BE QUIETLY REMOVED AND THEIR SIN HUSHED AND COVERED UP. INSTEAD THEY SHOULD BE DEALT WITH IN A MANNER THAT OTHERS TAKE SERIOUSLY THEIR OWN HOLY LIVING. THIS IS A DIFFICULT TASK, AND CAN BE DONE POORLY WITHOUT PRAYER AND WISDOM. BUT THOSE WHO REPRESENT CHRIST AND GOD'S WORD ARE HELD TO A HIGH STANDARD - ONE THAT BRINGS WITH IT DOUBLE HONOR AND BLESSING, BUT ALSO THE POTENTIAL FOR KNOWN REBUKE WHEN IN SIN.

IN LIGHT OF THIS HIGH STANDARD, PAUL ADDS A FINAL INSTRUCTION ON THIS...

V. 21 - THIS IS ALL SERIOUS

IT'S LIKELY THAT THIS ENTIRE SECTION IS IN VIEW WITH THIS. PAUL IS EMPHATIC TO SAY "THESE ARE NOT MY WORDS, THEY ARE GOD'S! THESE ARE NOT JUST GOOD TIPS - THEY ARE TO BE HEARD AND OBEYED IN LIGHT OF GOD'S VERY PRESENCE! TIMOTHY AND OTHER CHURCH LEADERS ARE TO NOT TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS BUT BE DEPENDENT ON GOD'S WORD AND SPIRIT TO SHEPHERD HIS PEOPLE.

CHRISTIAN LEADER, YOU STAND BEFORE GOD - WHAT ~~HE~~ WANTS IS PREEMINENT. ONE MUST NOT ALLOW ONE'S OWN BIAS OR PARTIALITY TO INFLUENCE GOD'S WORK.

V. 22 - AVOID QUICKLY ELEVATING SOMEONE

"LAY HANDS ON SOMEONE" AT TIMES DESCRIBES A MINISTERING PRAYER BUT ALSO IN THIS CONTEXT SPEAKS OF SOMEONE BEING ORDAINED OR SET APART FOR MINISTRY WORK.

Q - WHY WOULD SOMEONE POTENTIALLY BE ELEVATED TOO EARLY?

PAUL STRESSES THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS RESPONSIBILITY BY TELLING TIMOTHY THAT IF HE APPOINTS AN ELDER WHO IS NOT QUALIFIED (BASED ON THE STANDARDS OUTLINED IN CHAPTER 4), TIMOTHY IS PARTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SINS THEY WILL COMMIT!

1 TIMOTHY 5:23 - A PERSONAL WORD ABOUT TIMMY'S TUMMY

THIS IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF HOW UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT GENRES OF THE BIBLE CAN HELP US UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE. IS THIS A COMMAND FOR THE CHURCH TO FOLLOW OR IS THIS A PERSONAL NOTE FROM PAUL TO TIMOTHY ON A MATTER SPECIFIC TO A SPECIFIC SITUATION? IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN TAKE AWAY FROM THIS?

I THINK A TAKE AWAY FROM THIS IN CONJUNCTION WITH EARLIER DIRECTIONS IS THAT CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL AND CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO ABSTAIN FROM ALCOHOL COMPLETELY. OF COURSE DRUNKENNESS, EXCESSIVENESS AND ADDICTIVE DRINKING IS SINFUL AND WRONG - BUT SOME TEACH THAT ALL ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS WRONG. THAT WOULD APPEAR TO GO AGAINST PAUL'S DIRECTIVES TO THE CHURCH IN THIS FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY.

1 TIMOTHY 5:24-25 - EVIDENT AND HIDDEN SINS & GOOD DEEDS

Q - SOMEONE WHOSE SINS ARE "EVIDENT", HOW SHOULD WE ENGAGE WITH THEM?

I WONDER IF IT DEPENDS ON A FEW THINGS. IS THIS PERSON A PROFESSED CHRISTIAN? IS THIS PERSON WORKING HARD TO OVERCOME THIS SIN? IS IT EVIDENT TO THEM? THESE THINGS CAN POSSIBLY PLAY A ROLE IN HOW ONE INTERACTS WITH A PERSON WHO IS SINNING.

THIS IS AN INTERESTING CLOSING THOUGHT FOR THIS CHAPTER. PAUL IS SAYING: "SOME PEOPLE'S SINS ARE OBVIOUS, AND OTHERS ARE HIDDEN. IN THE SAME WAY SOME PEOPLE'S GOOD DEEDS ARE OBVIOUS, WHILE OTHERS ARE HIDDEN." I THINK WE CAN GLEAN TWO THINGS FROM THIS THOUGHT.

1 - GOD SEES, KNOWS AND IS THE JUDGE.

2 - WE DON'T ALWAYS SEE OR KNOW AND ARE NOT THE JUDGE.

IT'S GOOD TO KNOW WE DON'T ALWAYS KNOW THE FULL STORY OF SOMEONE. SOME PEOPLE LOOK GOOD ON THE OUTSIDE BUT HAVE HIDDEN SINS. SOME PEOPLE DON'T APPEAR TO BE SERVING THE LORD YET ARE IN AN IMPORTANT AND REAL WAY, THOUGH UNKNOWN TO OTHERS. IT'S GOOD TO REMEMBER THAT WE DO NOT POSSESS ALL KNOWLEDGE, WE ARE NOT GOD. ASSUMPTIONS AREN'T WISE. IN A SENSE, IT'S A GOOD REMINDER THAT EACH OF US STAND BEFORE CHRIST INDIVIDUALLY AND ARE ULTIMATELY ACCOUNTABLE TO HIM.

HOWEVER, THIS SECTION ALSO HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE FAMILY MODEL THAT THIS CHAPTER INTRODUCED AT THE BEGINNING. HOW DO YOU REALLY KNOW HOW SOMEONE IS DOING? YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW THEM AND SPEND TIME WITH THEM. SOMETIMES PEOPLE WILL SURPRISE YOU - BOTH GOOD AND BAD! BUT GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS AND SOUL CONNECTION WITH LOVING BROTHERS AND SISTERS CAN HELP YOU - EVEN WHEN THE HELP THEY PROVIDE SEEMS HARD.

DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE THAT ASKS YOU HOW YOU'RE DOING AND REALLY WANTS TO KNOW? ARE YOU THAT PERSON FOR ANYONE? DO YOU HAVE ANYONE IN YOUR LIFE (PROBABLY OTHER THAN A SPOUSE) WHO CAN OBSERVE THAT YOU'RE NOT DOING YOUR BEST? ARE YOU THAT PERSON FOR ANYONE? DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE WHO MAKES YOU A BETTER CHRISTIAN WHEN YOU ARE WITH THEM? ARE YOU THAT PERSON FOR SOMEONE? DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND WHO YOU CAN CONFESS YOUR SINS TO? DOES ANYONE HAVE YOU AS A FRIEND LIKE THAT?

BEING CLOSE TO SOMEONE RUNS THE RISK OF THEM HURTING YOU - THAT'S A REAL CONCERN FOR MOST OF US. BUT, IF OUT OF FEAR OF BEING HURT YOU DECIDE NOT TO GET CLOSE TO A SISTER OR BROTHER, YOU ALSO WILL NOT EXPERIENCE LOVE - FOR LOVE REQUIRES CLOSENESS TOO. AS CHRISTIANS, WE HAVE THE UNIQUE GIFT OF BEING FULLY KNOWN AND LOVED BY GOD - WHICH FREES US TO BE ABLE TO DRAW NEAR TO OTHERS TO LOVE THEM AND BE LOVED BY THEM.

IN A FAMILY, WE WILL HURT EACH OTHER AT TIMES - AND ALTHOUGH WE WANT TO MINIMIZE THAT AND REPENT, AND WORK TOWARDS RECONCILIATION IN THOSE UNFORTUNATE TIMES, WHO WE ARE IS NOT DEFINED BY OTHER'S LOVE - IT'S DEFINED BY AND SEALED IN GOD'S LOVE. RELATIONSHIPS, THOUGH RISKY, SURE...ARE SOME OF THE SOURCES OF GOD'S GREATEST BLESSING AND GOOD IN THIS AGE.

HERE'S A CHALLENGE FOR US TODAY: BE A GOOD FRIEND. BE A GOOD SPIRITUAL SIBLING. MOVE PAST WHAT OTHERS SHOULD OR CAN DO FOR YOU AND THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR OTHERS. SHARE LOVE. SHARE TRUTH. SHARE CHRISTLIKENESS. THINK OF WAYS TO MAKE OTHER PEOPLE BETTER FOR GOD. DON'T KEEP SCORE. GIVE PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT. MAKE THE FIRST MOVE. LET GO OF YOUR PRIDE. MAKE THE CALL, WRITE THE TEXT, HAVE THE CONVERSATION. FIGHT FOR PEOPLE IN PRAYER AND IN GENERAL.

WE NEED EACH OTHER AND WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER. IT'S EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY'S JOB TO MAKE THE FAMILY THE BEST IT CAN BE. MOM AND DAD MIGHT PLAY A MORE SIGNIFICANT ROLE AT TIMES — BUT THE CHILDREN HAVE A PART TO PLAY TOO. AS CHILDREN MATURE IN A FAMILY, THEY CAN, THEY SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE OVERALL DYNAMIC OF THE GROUP.

WE'RE A FAMILY - THAT'S NOT JUST A CUTE METAPHOR, IT'S GOD'S DESIGN FOR HIS PEOPLE NOW AND THE WORLD FOREVER.