

7/29/01

**Elders And Accountability**  
**1Tim. 5:19-21**

Paul the apostle has stated that one way that elders are honored is by being financially supported through the work God has raised up and he places a greater emphasis on the teaching elders.

Paul is dealing in this section not only with the honor that is to be given to the elders in the congregation but also the honesty there is to be in confronting an Elder who has fallen into a life of sin. 1Tim. 5:17-25

We must be sure to make the distinction between the older men of age in the normal congregation that are mentioned at the beginning of the chapter and the elders who are the leaders of the church mentioned at the end of the chapter, otherwise we will interpret and apply the text wrong. 1Tim. 5:1-2, 17-25

The elders are the leading men who God has called, directed and anointed by His Holy Spirit to represent their Lord and be responsible for the care of the sheep. 1Tim. 3:1-7

Having dealt with the matter of finances for the elders, Paul moves on to tell Timothy three other

ways of honoring elders and the office of a bishop. Vs. 19-21

- I. Timothy was to protect the elders from possible false accusations. Vs. 19
- II. Timothy was not to protect the elder guilty of the accusations but confront him. Vs. 20
- III. Timothy was to obey the instructions for accusations against elders. Vs. 21

**I. Timothy was to protect the elders from possible false accusations.**

\* “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.” Vs. 19

A. The caution was that of guarding his mind from accusations that he would hear against an elder.

1. The word receive “paradekomai” means to entertain, admit or delight in, appearing five times in the New Testament.
  - a. The word is used of those who hear the word of God and *receive* it and bear much fruit. Mk. 4:20
  - b. The word is used by the Philippians as they accused Paul and Silas before the authorities of teaching customs which were not lawful for them to *receive* as Romans. Acts 16:21

- c. The word is used by Jesus as He told Paul to flee Jerusalem because his testimony would not be received. Acts 22:18
- d. The word is used of God scourging every son He *receives*. Heb. 12:6
- 2. The word accusations “kategoria” means a formal accusation before a tribunal, appearing four times in the New Testament.
  - a. The word is made up of two words; ‘kata” meaning against and “agora” meaning public market place.
  - b. Luke uses it of the Pharisees who watched Jesus closely to find an accusation against Jesus. Lk. 6:7
  - c. John used it of Pilate when he confronted those who accused Jesus, “What accusations do you bring against this man?”. Jn. 18:29
  - d. Paul uses it in the qualification of an elder regarding a formal accusation against his children. Tit. 1:6
- 3. The person being accused is an Elder.
  - a. The word elder “presbuteros” is identifying a person in leadership in the office of a bishop.
  - b. He is one who oversees the flock of God by a call and anointing from God.

- c. He is one who has been approved by the qualifications. 1Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9
- 4. The prohibition to Timothy clearly implies the seriousness of a person accusing an elder in the church.
  - a. Too many people in the church today think more about their rights than and pushing their way around to get their way.
    - \* They have the worldly mindset of me first!
  - b. The Bible tells us that we are to die to self and to submit to the appointed leader in the church and the amount of submission is protected by only what is Biblical.
- B. The counsel was to consider the accusations only on the authority of two or three witnesses.
  - 1. The background is Old Testament.
    - a. The law required at least two witnesses, as many as three for any charge against sin to be established as a fact. Duet. 19:15
    - b. The law required the same number for any crime that resulted in the death penalty. Duet. 17:6
  - 2. The principle is embraced in the New Testament.

- a. Jesus declared it to be the number of witnesses to restore a sinning brother after refusing to acknowledge their sin and won't hear you. Matt. 18:16
  - b. Paul quotes it to refer to his second time of coming to the Corinthians to reprove them for their sin. 2Cor. 13:1-2
3. The accusation is in private.
- a. The accusers approach an elder or elders.
  - b. The accusers approach with whatever charges and evidence they possess or the lack of evidence.

### **Illustration**

Korah, Dathan and Abiram charged Moses and Aaron with exalting themselves above all the congregation and having appointed themselves as leaders when in fact God had called them! Nun. 16:1-3

### **Application**

1. The elder is open to public criticism by many just because of his position, he is very visible and has to set order and rules for the sake of the church order as they are watching out for people's souls. Heb. 13:17

\* 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.

- a. The people of God are very critical at times. The Scriptures are full of the murmuring of the children of Israel in the wilderness against Moses and Aaron.
  - b. The people of God are slanderers at times because they do not agree with the leadership or worst yet because the leadership has not agreed with their point of view.
  - c. Case in point, once in a while people get irate and accuse us of not being Christians, none-tolerant and power hungry because we do not allow children under twelve years of age in the Sanctuary, venting their arrogant carnality wanting to get their way, even though they have two other options of classes for their child or the overflow room!
- \* The majority of these types of complaints and spectacles are by women and their husband follows along!
2. The elder is one who has been proven and used in the leadership of the church and the charges are to be considered as severe, accusing his character and the church walking disorderly and as busybodies 1Tim. 5:13
- \* And besides they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.

- a. The text is describing the young widows but the principle is applicable to the people of God who often are gossips and love to run with rumors, rather than living by Matthew eighteen and sending the gossip or slanderer back to the one they are maligning.
  - b. The man's reputation is on the line and it could be destroyed, so we do not take it as a light thing.
  - b. The facts and evidence of failing morally or ethically from the Scriptures must be presented not some mere complaint that is based on personality clash or a dislike of our policies.
3. The church is the house of God a family with order from the Scriptures and policies for the good of the whole body and it's reputation is at stake in cases of accusations against an elder from those not wanting to obey the rules. 2Thess. 3:14
- \* And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.
- a. A man's family could be devastated by false and cantankerous accusations.
  - b. The people of God could be overwhelmed and it would only feed others flesh.
  - c. The witness of the church to the community would be a bad one being like the world.

***Timothy was to protect the elders from possible false accusations!***

## **II. Timothy was not to protect the elder guilty of the accusations but confront him. Vs. 20**

\* "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear". Vs. 20

- A. The confrontation is of those elders who were sinning.
  - 1. The context is "elders" not the average believer.
  - 2. The command implies that the charges were before two or three witnesses and after inquiry they were found to be true.
  - 3. The tense indicates the present tense, they would be still in their sin being charged with a habit of life, not the occasional sin.
  - 4. The elder being accused is not to be protected or covered up if in fact he is guilty of violating his qualifications mentioned. 1Tim. 3:1-7
- B. The confrontation is to rebuke the elder.
  - 1. The word rebuke "elegcho" means to bring a person to confession if not always, at least to conviction of his sin.
  - 2. The word is used by Jesus in reconciling a sinning brother, "Go tell him his fault between you and him alone and if he

hears you, you have gained your brother.” Matt. 18:15

3. Jesus used it when He said, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?”. Jn. 8:46
4. Jesus used it for the Holy Spirit, “He will convict the world of sin”. Jn. 16:8
5. The believer has the responsibility to convict the sinning person sharply. Tit. 1:13
6. The Lord convicts as many as He loves. Rev. 3:19

C. The confrontation is to be in the presence of all.

1. The context is again important, it is the sinning elder.
2. The specific “in the presence of all” is interpreted differently.
  - \* Some say it refers only before all the elders others say it refers before all the church.
3. We must interpret the text in it’s context of the extreme situation at Ephesus and the elders.
  - a. The text is not teaching that every little thing that an elder does in ministry is to be expose.
    - 1) The minor issues would be better handled in the presence of all the elders of the church.

- 2) They are fellow servants of the same office and responsibility to God and the church.
  - 3) They can deal and decide what is to be done and how it is to be handled.
  - 4) The church members otherwise would be subjected and exposed to information and details that would only serve to stumble or hinder their lives.
    - \* This is not an attempt to cover up the failure but to handle it in such a way that God is glorified and the church is protected from any unnecessary hindrance!
- b. The matter of failure by the previous church leader who were now false teachers were to be expose before all the church in Ephesus for failing according to the list in chapter three and so must it be for today.
- 1) The next verse confirms this for the sake all others, both elders and congregates.
  - 2) Paul rebuked before all the congregation for individuals in his two letters to Timothy, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, Demas and Alexander the coppersmith, he did not hid their

sin nor give them immunity. 1Tim. 1:19-20, 2Tim, 2:17, 4:10, 14

- D.** The confrontation has a purpose beyond the discipline of the elder, that the rest of the elders may fear.
1. Regarding the awesome responsibility of misrepresenting the office of an elder.
  2. Regarding the blame brought on the church.
  3. Regarding the humiliation before the elders.
  4. Regarding the embarrassment and destruction to ones family.
  5. Regarding the devastation of ones usefulness for God, if the offense is severe enough.
  6. Regarding the deception of sin to ensnare one who knows better.
  7. Regarding the vulnerability of our humanness.

### **Illustration**

One day Peter was at Antioch enjoying his fellowship with the Gentiles but when he saw some of the Jews from Jerusalem he moved over to the Jewish table, acting like a hypocrite and stumbling Barnabas, so Paul rebuked Peter publicly. Gal. 2:11-16

### **Application**

1. No elder or bishop is above reproach or unaccountable for his actions if he is living in sin and falls in reproach of the qualification. 1Tim. 3:1-7

- a. I have known of elders in leadership who have been caught in sin and it has been hidden and they have been allowed to continue in their eldership, it is wrong.
  - b. I have witnessed the protection of an elder because of who he is or due to his reputation without any consideration of the accusations nor the investigation of the truthfulness of the accusations and then the one telling the truth about the elder was labeled as wrong and the one at fault.
2. The confrontation is to be with an attitude of humility, in view of restoration not mere castigation, though there may be disciplinary actions taken if required. Gal. 6:1, Math 18:15-18
- a. The issue of forgiveness is never the problem, for immediately as confession is made that sin is forgiven and put away, regardless of the sin.
  - b. The issue of restoration is another matter and it must be determined by the position of the person who has failed, if he is a believer in the congregation, an elder or a bishop?
  - c. To simply say that their sin is forgiven and that they can continue is to say that the list of qualifications is not valid for today or that it is only applicable at the entering of the

office and not during occupying the office, a great mistake and violation to the Scriptures.

- d. To exalt talent, ability and the gifts of the sinning elders and rationalize that it would not be God's will to have him step down because the body of the church suffer the benefit of his teaching is human logic and reasoning not based on the teaching of the Scriptures.

\* Again we are talking about moral and ethical failure of his qualification not something that is minor!

- 3. The confrontation is to be public at times to instruct others. 1Cor. 5:1-6, 2Cor. 2:6-11
  - a. To not discipline an elder who is found to be in sin is to announce to the other elder that they have at least on opportunity to fail, lowering the standard of the Scriptures.
  - b. To not discipline an elder who is found to be in sin is to communicate to the average Christian that they can fail without consequences and the leadership loses authority to confront sinning brothers.
- 4. The greater the privilege the greater the responsibility and consequences. Lk. 12:48, Ja. 3:1
  - a. Everyone know this going into ministry.
  - b. Every teacher is warned of the responsibility and judgment.

***Timothy was not to protect the elder guilty of the accusations but confront him!***

### **III. Timothy was to obey the instructions for accusations against elders. Vs. 21**

\* "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing without partiality". Vs. 21

A. Paul was giving Timothy this instruction before two and three witness.

\* The same number he required for an accusation before an elder!

- 1. The first witness is God who knows and sees all things, Himself being the source of this instruction. Heb. 4:13
- 2. The second witness was the Lord Jesus Christ, who would one day judge Timothy for his stewardship. In. 5:22

\* The grammatical construction is called "Granville Sharps Law" which says that both God and the Lord Jesus Christ refer to the same person, He is both human and divine!

- 3. The third witness are the elect angels, those who are ministers to the heirs of salvation and watch over the affairs of man as opposed to those who left their first estate and were disobedient. Heb. 1:14, 1Pet. 1:12, 2Pet. 2:4, Jude 6
- 4. The word charge "diamarturomai" means to attest, protest earnestly or religiously

charge and is used in Classical Greek to call gods and men to witness.

- a. The word is used for man's witness of the gospel. Acts 2:40, 8:25, 18:5, 20:21
- b. The word is use for Timothy's accountability to what Paul was instructing him. 2Tim. 2:14, 4:1

- B.** Paul holds Timothy accountable to observe all these things he has told him.
1. The word observe "phulasso" means to guard, keep, watch, very simply obey.
  2. The particular things are the immediate context regarding elders.
    - a. He was to honor the elder who ruled well with double honor referring to finances, especially those who labored in the word and doctrine. Vs.17-18
    - b. He was not to receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Vs. 19
    - c. He was to rebuke sinning elders in the presence of all, that other elders may fear. Vs. 20
  3. The manner in which he was to do it was with character.
    - a. He was to do it without prejudice.
      - 1) The word prejudice "prokrimatos" means pre judgment or decision,

appearing only this time in New Testament.

- 2) Timothy was not to receive any accusations against an elder with personal prejudice for the elder or against the elder by his personal decision about that man beforehand, rather he was to obey the scriptural mandate for such cases based on the evidence of two or three witnesses.
  - b. He was to do nothing with partiality.
    - 1) The word partiality "prosklisis" means to lean or incline towards, to favor.
    - 2) Timothy was not to lessen the failure of an elder or make his failure worst due to his own favoritism towards either the accuser or the accused.

### **Illustration**

One day Nathan the prophet and companion of David came to him and told him of a certain man who had everything and having guest he took the one lamb from a man who loved it so, in order to feed his guest. David anger raged and said, "This man shall surly die", and Nathan said, "Thou art the man David", he was convicted and confessed his sin! 2Sam. 12

### **Application**



1. Our obedience to maintaining the high standard for elders is not an option, even as Jesus said, “If you love you will keep My word”.
  - a. The witness of the Word, the Holy Spirit and the church hold us accountable in leadership.
  - b. The word of God is to be absolute in every area of our lives because God, Jesus Christ and the angels bear witness to us or against us. 1Pet. 1:12
2. Our service for God as elders and bishops will one day be judge at the Bema-Seat of Christ and the fire will reveal the true motive. 1Cor. 3:12-15, 4:5
  - a. As an elder you want to not only start well but finish well.
  - b. As an elder you want to hear the words, Well done though good and faithful servant.
3. Our prejudices and partialities on the level of elders regarding church discipline will cause us to provoke the children of God to wrath in principle resulting in three things. Eph. 6:4
  - a. Hindering the church.
  - b. Stumbling individuals.
  - c. Lower the standard of God's word and the church.
4. God removed Eli and his sons for being in sin while serving God.
  - a. Eli’s sons for their stealing from the offerings to God and causing the people to

- abhor the service to God and their sexual sin with the women who came to the tabernacle.
- b. Eli for allowing his sons to continue in the service of God knowing of their sin.

*Timothy was to obey the instructions for accusations against elders!*

### **Conclusion**

Paul has told Timothy three other ways of honoring elders and the office.

- I. Timothy was to protect the elders from possible false accusations!
- II. Timothy was not to protect the elder guilty of the accusations but confront him.!
- III. Timothy was to obey the instructions for accusations against elders!