

Gospel Informed Character

1 Timothy 5:17-6:2

Double honor (financial stability) -> in the work of ministry

OT example: Deuteronomy 25:4 Do not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain.

NT example: The words of Jesus Luke 10:7 Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they offer, for the worker is worthy of his wages. Don't move from house to house.

1 Corinthians 9:7-14 For it is written in the law of Moses, **Do not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain.** Is God really concerned about oxen? **10** Isn't he really saying it for our sake? Yes, this is written for our sake, because he who plows ought to plow in hope, and he who threshes should thresh in hope of sharing the crop. **11** If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it too much if we reap material benefits from you? **12** If others have this right to receive benefits from you, don't we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right; instead, we endure everything so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ.

13 Don't you know that those who perform the temple services eat the food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the offerings of the altar? **14** In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel.

Elders / Pastors / Shepherds / Ministers - are to be supported by those they are ministering to.

Good leaders should be cared for and treated well.

vs. 19-20, However, not all leaders are good and they too must be dealt with.

1. Accusations against an elder must be supported by two or three witnesses.
2. For those who sin (our found guilty) the matter must be dealt with publicly (appropriately).

Matthew 18:15-17 "If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. **16** But if he won't listen, take one or two others with you, so that **by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established.** **17** If he doesn't pay attention to them, tell the church. If he doesn't pay attention even to the church, let him be like a Gentile and a tax collector to you. Within Paul's instruction you have guardrails for protection of elders and warnings to elders.

vs. 21, Humanity can be difficult - learn to discern the motives of others and promote accountability.

Timothy, you must deal with the false teachers.

- Through the power of the HS, treat people fairly.

Cling to reasonableness and fairness.

Don't prejudge, resist taking sides, you as well as the church are standing before the heavenly counsel.

We must be people of justice and truth-telling.

Main concern: The erring elders who, as false teachers, are having considerable influence in the community.

Humans can be very quick to act on a need for revenge, a desire to humiliate and shame.

None of this is narrow path Kingdom living.

Jesus is not in the camp of humiliation and shame.

vs. 22, Character

Question: How do you continue to grow as a person of character? In what ways do you build within your life reasonableness, justice, and humility? Are you a person who is willing to have the hard conversation? Why or why not? How does your life promote accountability?

vs. 23, take care of yourself

vs. 24-25 -> time is a tremendous equalizer (referring back to vs. 22)
Slow process of character evaluation will pay dividends.

Chapter 6:1-2

Slavery was Rome's main energy source.

It is faulty thinking to try and equate first century slavery with modern day employment.

"Slavery - a means of securing and maintaining an involuntary labour force by a group in society which monopolizes political and economic power." ~ Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*

Trying to make NT slavery more palatable by describing it as gentler than modern slavery is choosing to disregard truth.

Paul did not view people as property.

- He upheld the imago dei given to every human.
- He addressed the issue at the very place that he identified he could make the most difference through his teaching, within the household.

How would Paul address the issue of free persons as well as enslaved persons within the family of God (the church)?

Paul firmly believed that the cross really did reconfigure all social relationships.

vs. 1,

Issue #1 - Slaves who have unbelieving masters.

Show their masters honor.

Why? So that God's name and Jesus centered teaching will not be mocked (blasphemed).

OT reality -> Israel often failed as an example of a people belonging to God.

Joseph - fleeing the advances of Potiphar's wife

Daniel - refusing to bow to an idol.

Both were faithful under the yoke of slavery!

- Asking a believing slave to honor their unbelieving master is not implying that the slave should do any and everything their master wanted.
- The goal is to live in such a way before their masters that they are drawn to the truth, grace, and restoration of Jesus.

vs. 2,

Issue #2 - Believing masters and believing slaves (both followers of Jesus)

Treat your masters with respect.

Why? Because you can view them as your brother.

- Within the Kingdom of God the power dynamics have changed.
- As the church begins to live out the gospel in the dynamics of human relationships it will then begin to dismantle and erode the oppressive structures of society.

Galatians 3:27-28 For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. **28** There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Paul, within his framework, is doing whatever possible to dismantle slavery (another clear example is Philemon).

"A question behind all questions for the Black Christian is, Did God intend our freedom?"

The Christian narrative, our core theological principles, and our ethical imperatives create a world in which slavery becomes unimaginable. The Bible, taken in its entirety, remains a light in a dark and broken world."

~ Esau McCauley, *Reading While Black*

Question: Are you living your life in such a way through the power of the gospel that you are experiencing the dismantling of the oppression around you?

I'm not being hyperbolic. Seriously, how do we join the great cloud of witnesses in pushing back darkness in this broken world? What does it mean for you to be a child of the light?