

I Timothy 5:17-25

Commentary: Instructions regarding the role of Elders

Paul's focus now turns from the treatment of widows in the church to the individuals that hold the office of Elder. The members of the Ephesian church were called to give "honour" (v17) to those that occupied the office of Elder, while those that held the office were instructed on their role and responsibility to the church in fulfilling the office of Elder. Previously, in chapter 3, Paul listed the necessary qualifications of an Elder, now he addresses the function of the Eldership as rulers and teachers of the Word of God in the local church.

False teaching had permeated the church in Ephesus, indicating that those that held the position of Elder were failing to exercise their responsibilities as rulers and teachers of sound doctrine. This situation had deteriorated so significantly that Paul included in his instruction to Timothy the appropriate disciplinary actions for those straying Elders.

Comprehension Questions:

Carefully read through I Timothy 5:17-25 and then attempt to answer the following question.

- 1) What is the primary role of the Eldership in the local church (v17)?

Read 1 Peter 5:1-4 then answer the following question.

- 2) What is promised to Elders that rule well?

While many translations use the term "double honour" (v17) to describe what Paul states the Elders are owed, the Greek term more naturally refers to money rather than respect.

- 3) What is Paul teaching here regarding compensating Elders for their work (v17-18)?

- 4) Given this, what is the monetary responsibility of the members of a local church today to their Elders?

Members of the church were only authorised to bring accusations against an Elder on the basis of two or three witnesses (v19). This instruction conforms to the Old Testament principle found in Deuteronomy 19:15 and the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 18:16.

- 5) Why is it necessary to address accusations against an Elder in this manner?

6) Why does Paul instruct Timothy to deal with the continuous private sins of Elders in a public forum (v20)?

7) What instructions does Paul give Timothy personally in v21-23?

The instruction given by Paul to "*lay hands suddenly on no man*" (v22) refers either to not appointing immature believers to the office of Elder or to avoid too quickly reinstating a fallen but repentant man to the office of Elder.

8) Why was it so important that Timothy not "*lay hands suddenly on no man*" (v22)?

Paul instructs Timothy to "*no longer drink only water but use a little wine for thy stomachs sake*" (v23). This was not an instruction about socially drinking alcohol, but a statement of health advice!

9) For what specific reason was this instruction given to Timothy (v23)?

10) What insight does this give us about Timothy's health?

v24-25 further emphasises the importance of not hastily appointing Elders, but rather, exercising caution and patience in order to reveal a potential Elder's suitability for the role.

11) Some sinful behaviour isn't publicly evident. What does Paul say will eventually occur if individuals persist in sin (v24)?

12) Likewise, what can be expected of those that persist in good works (v25)?