

1Tim 24-06-19b

We're in 1 Timothy, we're in the closing verses of chapter 5, moving toward chapter 6, and Paul has talked about these elders who rule well, being counted worthy of double honor. This isn't just Timothy, Timothy is the pastor, he is to communicate this to the group, that there is more than just Timothy, there are some unknown number of elders who are doing their job well. They are overseeing, they are administering, they are ensuring the smooth function of various elements of the fellowship and they are to be appreciated for that.

Those who labor in the word and doctrine are to be especially appreciated and supported and encouraged in that way. Scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain and the labor is worthy of his wages. Notice he doesn't say, for the scripture says, honor the king, honor the high muckety muckfalutting guy because he's up on a pedestal, he's wearing robes, he's surrounded by a holy aura and a glowing halo.

What is the guys who labor in the word and doctrine, what are they compared to? It's an ox going around in a circle, moving the upper millstone, crunching the grain against the lower millstone, he's doing a service function, it is not glorious, he's not to be rendered some form of celebrity, he's an ox. All he's got to do is keep turning that circle, but while he's turning it, he gets to stick his nose down and eat some of the stuff that falls off the lower millstone. He gets some stuff that the people who sweep it off the grinding mechanism don't get.

He gets some that's just for him, and it's a little special privilege that is compensation for being the ox, but he's an ox. He's not glamorous, he's not glorious, he's not to be held in some special status so that he is called reverend, to be revered, he's an ox. And the other comparison here is the laborer.

He's the sweaty guy with a sickle out in the field, cutting the grain, stacking the sheaves, bringing in the sheaves after they're cut, singing the song, bringing in the sheaves while he's doing his sweaty day labor. He's not a nobleman sitting at a fine table, he's not a Pharisee being seen in the streets and at the temple, lifting his gaze toward heaven as he drops money into the treasury. He's a worker bee, as I have said so many times.

He's a lance corporal, slinging chow in the mess hall, gotta do it well, gotta do it faithfully. If there's a little bit of extra dessert left over in the back when you're done, you get that because you've been working all night, or all day, or whatever the meal time is. There are a few little perks that come with being the guy that transfers the food from where it started to your plate.

But there is no special gravitas or weird kind of supernatural attention that should be paid. It's the same kind of attention you would pay to appreciate your folks or appreciate anybody else who does a wonderful service faithfully. Thanks a lot.

I'll pray for you. If you need something, I'm there to help you. And to not let it go unappreciated or unnoticed, but not to make more of it than it is.

People don't celebrate the ox as he's going around and around munching on what he can pick up off the floor. And that is the specific divinely inspired illustration that is given here. Or the laborer, sweating all day in the field.

Appreciate it. It's a wonderful, useful service, but it's not glamorous and it shouldn't be treated in a weird way. Do not receive an accusation.

This is the other side. If you're going to honor them, honor them as you would anyone who does a good job at an assigned task. But if somebody says, not only is he not turning the stone, he's chewed off his straps and he's running off a bullet in the china shop instead of being the ox grinding the grain.

If there is an accusation, it needs to be well established. Remember, again, this is useful in a fellowship, it's useful in a family, but it stands in for any situation where a charge is raised, an allegation is made, someone is malfunctioning. Not to react emotionally, not to respond in a knee-jerk fashion with anger or retribution or any other preemptive kind of action.

Take time, gather evidence, consider carefully. If you are the one in a position, also leave the decision making and the judgment, the adjudication to those whose job it is to do. This happens in circles of fellowship where one wife is talking to another wife who's talking to a third wife and, oh, did you know that so-and-so's husband is stepping out and, oh, she's so miserable and, you know, we ought to really make him pay in some fashion.

We'll damage his reputation. We'll out him for the rascal that he is. And that is not the wife's role or place when she's not in that family.

If something needs to be done because this affects the fellowship or it affects the community in some fashion, wives can let their husbands know. Their husbands can get together and decide if something needs to be done and if the answer to that is yes, then what should it be? But observe the God-given structure and chain of command. Do it prayerfully.

Do it humbly. Do it carefully. Take your time.

Gather evidence. Don't do it hastily or peremptorily. Be careful.

Be humble. Some you can pull out of the fire hating the garment spotted by the flesh. That means don't contaminate yourself in the process of trying to deal with somebody else's malfunction.

And the specific example is here in this rather large fellowship of believers in Ephesus. So do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all.

If it is determined that there is a malfunction, don't do some kind of fan dance. Let the congregation know an accusation was received. The elders have looked into it.

There is validity and here is what we have done. You will not be seeing brother so-and-so in this elder function anymore. He abused his authority.

He was careless. He was sinning in some way. These are the steps we have taken.

Be confident that the remaining leadership is doing their job correctly. Anybody who fails in this way is going to be dealt with in this way. We will not tolerate sin in the camp.

It will be dealt with. This needs to happen in families. It needs to happen in marriages.

It needs to happen in fellowships. Anywhere where there is an elder function, it needs to be taken to those who bear authority before God. Let them make the decision.

Let them prayerfully and humbly execute the judgment that pertains thereunto and then communicate it and move on. That is the example. Paul says in verse 21, I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels.

Isn't this an interesting way to emphasize how important carrying out this responsibility is? Paul says, I charge you, here is who is watching and evaluating your response. I have given you this information. Now that you have it, you are responsible for it and you are either going to succeed or fail in applying it and putting it into practice.

God the Father is going to know whether or not you do. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to know whether or not you do. The unfallen called angels of God, the messenger angels, the service angels, the guardian angels, the ones who enter and exit the throne room and carry out God's will and functions as you see it most clearly in the book of Revelation and to some extent in the book of Ezekiel and Daniel and Isaiah and other places.

This is an example, a teaching point in the same way that the congregation needs to know and be informed and aware and chided in some cases by example. Even the angels of God are observant of this. Observe these things without prejudice, no special care just because somebody has had a hard time, just because somebody is not economically as well off, not because someone has a specific ethnicity, background, handicap, hardship, history.

Without prejudice, fair, impartial, holding to an objective standard that has been given by God and you don't get a pass for what human beings would grant an exemption for. Without partiality, you don't exempt people because they're rich and you're afraid you're

going to lose their support for the group. You don't exempt the poor because well, they've got a hard time of it so we'll give them a pass.

It doesn't matter, rich or poor, powerful or weak, master or slave, Jew or Greek, it doesn't matter. Doing nothing with partiality, without prejudice, notice this is emphasized, there are many ways to get this wrong. Well, there's mitigating or an extenuating circumstance, no there's not.

You either do the job or you don't, you're either faithful or you're not, you are either doing good or you are sinning. And it doesn't matter that depriving you of your former privilege and function is going to create some problems, that's too bad. Without partiality, without prejudice, therefore stave off such problems by not laying hands on anyone hastily.

This is the ordination or the recognition, the assigning of someone to such a function. Laying out of hands was done to publicly acknowledge that this individual has this assignment, has this delegated responsibility and authority. It's a delegated authority, the Marines are quick to tell you you can't delegate responsibility, but you delegate authority and you can hold people accountable.

And the fact that they are given an assignment, you are in charge of the distribution for the widows, you are in charge of ensuring that we are honoring those who have genuine needs and that it is done impartially and done carefully as it was done in Acts chapter 6. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins. You don't promote them hastily, you don't demote them hastily. Keep yourself pure, whether you are promoting or demoting, whether you are binding or loosing, whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and keep yourself pure.

Don't become embroiled, don't be an accessory after the fact for either promoting someone who doesn't have the strength to handle that promotion or to try to suffer with someone who is weak and sinning and in the course of trying to comfort and encourage them you end up sinning. This happens so frequently with male pastors who counsel women whose husbands have abused them or left them or they are in other ways some sort of distress. Their sympathy extends to trying to rebuild a woman's self-esteem and in so doing they want to assure them that they are attractive, that they are a wonderful person and a line is crossed and you enter into sin by failing to respect boundaries and what is proper.

Keep yourself pure. This is specifically for a pastor who has the opportunity by his position or an elder who by his position has the opportunity to have close contact, intimate contact with someone. I say there is the opportunity.

It should not become intimate contact, certainly not male-female. Keep doors open, have more than one person there. Keep things open above board, respectful distance.

Keep yourself pure. But it applies to all of us in any situation where we are rubbing elbows with, having contact with other people. If you are married, your friendships with other people should respect your married status.

And if there are ladies, if there are unmarried ladies or married ladies, you get together, there are social occasions, there is a work environment, there is some sort of club or hobby or whatever else. People are lonely and flirtatious. You have got to be Joe Straight Arrow all the way, all the time.

Ladies the same. Don't use your feminine advantages to cause someone to stumble. Be respectful.

Keep a distance. Stop something at the point that it looks like it's a little bit more than it ought to be. If someone puts their arm around your shoulder, pick their hand up and take their arm off of your shoulder.

If you find yourself putting your hand around somebody's shoulder, get your hand back off of there. Keep yourself pure. Do not enter into sin.

Somebody else may be weak. You need to be strong. Somebody else may be unaware that what they are doing is creating a potential problem.

You're supposed to be the aware one, the strong one, the mature one. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. So it kind of gives a double meaning to verse 22, to not lay hands on anyone hastily.

In verses 24 and 25, some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment. Some people right away, you say, boy, that's a situation, and it's not just men. Some people's weaknesses, some people's failures are evident, and you know you're walking into a minefield to deal with them.

Those of some others follow later. You don't find it out until after the fact. So be careful with everybody.

Don't leave an opportunity open just because you don't know that someone's got an area of weakness or an area of sin. Likewise, verse 25, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. Sooner or later, the quality that defines character and actions is going to be revealed.

That gets us to chapter 6. Let as many bond servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor. Notice, not all masters. It's their own master.

Look at the situation of service, of indemnity, of indebtedness, of this master-servant relationship, this boss-employee relationship, whatever it may be, whatever form it may take. It is personal and individual. If you're a slave, you don't have to honor all masters.

You honor your master. Women who are married to their husband are to honor their husband, not all husbands. Those bond servants who are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor.

Honor as we have studied it tonight. This is respect, attention, being careful, praying, doing what is done, what is asked heartily as unto the Lord, not unto men, seeking to do what the Lord Jesus asked His followers to do. If a Roman soldier who has the right to force you to carry his pack a mile, carry it too.

Go above and beyond where and when it is appropriate. Why should you do this? So that the name of God and doctrine, notice, it doesn't say God and His word, it's God and His doctrine will not be ill-spoken of, blasphemed. Remember what doctrine is? What's the difference in the word and doctrine? If I have the words of the Lord Jesus and I am keeping them, my actions, my applications are policy.

They are doctrine. This is what I typically do. This is the reflection of my identity in Christ and if I'm a slave, I'm a good one.

I am an exceptionally good slave. I can be counted upon. I don't badmouth my master.

I don't disrespect him. I don't make faces when he's not looking because I do what I do as unto the Lord. For whatever reason, God has put me or left me in this situation.

He's got a reason. I may not know what it is, but if He's made me a slave, I'm going to be the best slave there is so that God and Christian practice, Christian policy, the outcome of having God's word is not ill-spoken of. We've had this over and over again.

Do not let your good be spoken of as evil. Those who are in the church and leadership should have a good reputation on the outside. Our lives ought to draw people, not repel them and to meddle in other people's business and try to legislate morality and force your notions of righteousness on the general population is off-putting.

Now sometimes pursuing and reflecting righteousness will be off-putting. What's the difference? I do what I do as unto the Lord. If you find that off-putting, that's on you.

If you find the fact that our community is horrified by abortion and none of us practice that, if you find that off-putting, that's on you. But if I say I am going to go beyond voicing an opinion and indicating that this is a life that is precious in God's sight that has gotten underway by whatever means, but if you choose to snuff it out, if you choose to commit a murder, if you choose to do any other acts of crime, we're against crime, but I am not coming after you. I'm not going to try to change your life.

I will speak up. If I've got to vote, I'll vote. If I've got the opportunity to write a letter to a congressman, I will do it.

But I'm not going to make Christianity odious and off-putting by forcing my standards on people who don't believe in them, don't understand them, and don't like being forced. I don't want the secular world forcing its standards on me. Why would I force my standards on them? I will support what is right.

I will speak up for what is right. To the extent that I am granted influence in terms of a vote or representative government, I will certainly do that. But I am not going to go make myself a stench in the nostrils of others and have my good spoken of as evil.

A lot of the Christian world does not understand this. The name of God and His doctrines should not be blasphemed by what I do. If what I do ends up with God's word, God's doctrine, and God's character and person being blasphemed, then I need to carefully revisit what I'm doing.

Verse 2, those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren. You say, well, who's them here? Those who have believing masters, let those servants with believing masters not despise their masters because they are brethren. Meaning, well, you're a believer, you ought to cut me some slack.

You ought to go easy on me. You ought to give me the soft job and give the non-brethren servants the bathroom cleaning and the manure shoveling and the hard, dirty work. I should get special treatment.

Didn't we just see that these things are to be done with impartiality and without prejudice? In the same way, slaves should expect impartiality and no prejudice, pro or con, when they have a believing master. Things should be fair. What is the testimony going to be to the other slaves if the master says, well, you go to church with me, so, you know, soft stuff for you.

You get a day off, you get a free ride, you get special treatment. What kind of testimony is that? Well, it's terrible. God and his word, his doctrine, are going to be blasphemed by other slaves.

Well, I guess if you join the master's club, you know, maybe I ought to feign some sort of Christian interest so that I'll get the easy stuff as well. Let those servants not despise their masters because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. The best way I can honor a believing master is to be the best possible slave there is.

Teach and exhort these things. That's why we're leaning hard on them tonight because it's just an example. This applies in all kinds of arenas, all kinds of relationships, all kinds of ways.

Ladies who are believers and they are married to a husband to whom they are enjoined by the word of God to submit should do so cheerfully because it is beneficial. To do

otherwise is to potentially have God and his doctrine blasphemed. Well, we're believers, we, you know, we're, there is no Jew or Greek, there is no male or female.

I should have just as much say as you do and just as much respect and honor and, you know, we should be equal partners 50-50 right down the middle. And by the way, if a husband and wife want to work things out between themselves that way, God go with you. What we do, we do as unto the Lord, but the assignment of role and function is to be the head as the husband and to be submissive and supportive as the wife.

That's God's design. Men didn't make this up. If the Lord Jesus can be submissive to God the Father, not my will, but thine be done.

That's a pretty good example. Verse three, chapter six. This is where, in my view, chapter six really should have begun.

If anyone teaches otherwise, otherwise means otherwise than what is contained in the entire fifth chapter and even beyond, but especially what we've just covered. If anyone teaches otherwise, doesn't just believes and lives otherwise, but influences, exhorts, encourages people to do something other than this. Oh, you know, that was the ancient patriarchal day.

We've outgrown that. We're smarter now. Don't do that.

That's not right. That was cultural. That was conditional.

That was the Greek and Roman culture. And, you know, look what rascals those people were. You know, God destroyed the Roman Empire because they thought this way.

And, you know, it was just at the local time. It doesn't apply anymore. It's the exact opposite.

It not only applied then and now in the churches, but it applied then and now in a much broader context. These are emblematic. They are parabolic in the sense that they are representative.

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to these wholesome words, these words are upbuilding. They are nourishing. They get us into the very center of God's will, maximum speed down the very middle of the narrow road, headed for the straight gate to life.

That's what these words do. These words that should turn into doctrines. If someone teaches otherwise and does not consent, because why? These words, these wholesome words are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not Paul. Oh, Paul had a thing about women. He wasn't married.

He didn't understand. He had a thing about masters and slaves. He was indifferent.

And, you know, look at Philemon and Onesimus and the rest of it. If they do not consent to wholesome words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine, which accords with godliness, you start with the words and you move to the doctrine, the application, the outworking of this policy-wise, practice-wise. And it accords with godliness.

It accords with godliness. Verse four is going to diagnose it. But what is this godliness? We've seen it.

Great is the mystery of godliness. Back in chapter three, we have touched on this a few times. What is godliness? Godliness, this is a life that is prioritized, has as its purpose and goal, pleasing in God's sight, beneficial to those that God brings into contact with us.

It has a vertical component, but godliness has its own set of characteristics. So what are those characteristics? You have the subjection to authority. This is godly.

You go to Romans 13. We saw this several weeks back. 13.

1. Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. There is no authority except from God. Authorities that exist are appointed by God.

Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

The authority is God's minister to you for good. If you do evil, be afraid. He doesn't bear the sword in vain.

He is God's minister and avenger unto wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore, you must be subject not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. Because of this, you pay taxes.

They are God's ministers, attending continually to this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their due. Taxes, customs, fear, and honor.

Owe no one anything except to love one another. This is a distillation of godliness. So, to give you a quick summary of godliness.

Number one, godliness is inextricably linked to faith and knowledge of the truth. Titus 1.1, writing to Titus, Paul, a bondservant of God, notice bondservant there, same word we just had, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's chosen and the acknowledgement of the truth, which accords with godliness. Faith and acknowledgement of the truth.

Remember what happens to those who did not like to receive a knowledge of the truth? God is going to send them a strong delusion, and never more so than the latter days. Faith of God's chosen and the acknowledgement of the truth, which accords with eusebia, godliness. So, if we want to be godly, we need to be people of faith, consistency, dedication, and acknowledging the truth, receiving the truth.

Number two, godliness is going to be reflected in our righteousness. 1 Timothy 6.11, we're coming up on it here in our chapter. You, O man of God, flee these things, which is coming up.

The intermediate between where we are and where we're going in verse 11 are pride, knowing nothing, obsessed with disputes and arguments, useless wranglings, rich, falling into temptations and snares, perdition and so on. You, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. So, godliness is linked with and woven into righteousness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness, i.e., having the fruit of the Spirit is godliness.

It's associated with contentment. 1 Timothy 6.6, godliness with contentment is great gain. When we pray for kings and those who are in authority, in 1 Timothy 2.2, we saw this earlier, we pray for them so that we can lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

So, our peaceable lives, our reverent, respectful lives, rendering honor to whom honor is due, this is godly. 1 Timothy 4.7 and 8, we saw this, reject profane and old wives' fables, exercise yourself toward godliness. Like having a good conscience, we saw that Paul had to effort, he had to endeavor, he had to strive to maintain a good conscience.

We have to strive for godliness. It's not automatic. I can't just sit soaking sour, hear a Bible class a day, and I will be godly.

That's the Word. Intake of the Word is critical, but it doesn't finish the process. The Word comes in, doctrine, practice, application comes out.

So, reject profane and old wives' fables. Don't get the wrong content into your head. Exercise yourself toward godliness.

Bodily exercise profits a little. Godliness is profitable for all things. So, strain, work for godliness.

We saw 1 Timothy 3.16, great is the mystery of godliness. It's all focused on God's revelation of Himself through Christ. Therefore, we should, point 7, reject ungodliness.

We're going to see this in Titus 2.12. We are taught that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. The Word that we take in should become doctrine that is expressed out. Denying ungodliness

and worldly desires, stuff any unbeliever can do, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

So, godliness with contentment is great gain. These words should produce doctrine in us that creates the practice and the perpetration and the living out of righteousness, which accords with godliness. That is chapter 6, verse 3. So, what happens if you reject those words? If you are refusing to consent to these wholesome words of the Lord Jesus Christ, what happens? Well, that description picks up in verse 4, and that's what we will pick up next time.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for this wonderfully clear description, this guidance that, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, can enable and empower us to live beyond our own strength, beyond our own power, beyond our own desire, which is insufficient in and of itself to create godliness in our lives. We thank you that you have granted to us not only what we should do, but also the power to do it.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, God the Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts in a way that does enable and empower us to will and to do for your good purpose. And we pray that as a result, your glory will be reflected. Our desire to honor you and honor those that you have appointed to positions of authority will be reflected in our lives, and others will be drawn to the light, drawn to the Lord Jesus, and through him to yourself, all to his glory and to yours.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.