

NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVER'S – Sunday 16th March 2025 am

TITLE: “Godliness in God’s leaders” TEXT: 1 Timothy 5 verses 1-16

SERIES: “Guarding the deposit” Pt 17

1 Timothy 5 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, ² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.³ Honour widows who are truly widows. ⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. ⁵ She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, ⁶ but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. ⁷ Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. ⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.⁹ Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband,^[a] ¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. ¹¹ But refuse to enrol younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry ¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. ¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan. ¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain”, and, “The labourer deserves his wages.” ¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. ²³ (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) ²⁴ The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgement, but the sins of others appear later. ²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

Sadly, over the past few years, we have heard many stories of fallen leaders in the church. This begs the question of how we are supposed to regard church leaders, and often there are two opposing ends of the scale.

- a) **Leaders are regarded with veneration and treated almost as celebrities.** Leaders can be put on a pedestal and be viewed as untouchable and unknowable. They appear on Sundays and at church events, and are very good at leading and preaching, but apart from that no one knows much about them or their family. They are protected because of how gifted they are and how useful they have been to the church.
- Their accountability is generally low, but they are held in high esteem because of their office.

This can lead to many problems, resulting in church splits and closures as we have heard of or read about.

- b) **Leaders are treated with suspicion and derision.** With good reason, many people are more suspicious of church leaders than before. In particular, the younger generation are looking for authenticity and access to those in leadership. Even if people are not suspicious, they often poke fun at the leaders, or speak in a way that is dishonouring behind their back. People lack respect for their office.
- Their accountability is high but respect for their office is low.

They are ineffective leaders because they cannot lead effectively when they are not trusted or respected.

Paul's letter to Timothy on how the church is to function includes instruction on how the leadership is to be treated.

In his leadership, Timothy experienced problems with people looking down on him because of his youth. He also had to deal with false teachers and women trying to undermine the leaders. The centrality of the gospel was getting lost.

- How people regarded the leadership of the church in Ephesus definitely fell into the suspicion and derision category.

Paul understood that this needed correcting if the church was to flourish and so gave instructions to deal with this.

1) **We are to regard elders with double honour (vv17-18).** This instruction primarily applies to pastors who are dedicated to the preaching and teaching of the local church. It would be hard to do this job well if you had other employment outside the church.

Pastors are to receive honour in two different ways:

- a) **We are to honour him financially (v18).** It is right to support such men financially. Paul is affirming payment for works of service. That includes spiritual service in the same way as those serving in secular jobs are paid. In this church, that is carefully thought through and not taken for granted.
- It is helpful to see that as a way of honouring those who serve us in preaching and teaching, rather than just as paying them a salary.

We are not really employing a Pastor. Rather it is the rightful honouring of the work he has been called to.

- b) **We are to honour him with due respect.** Respect for Timothy was at risk because people looked down on him due to his youth. Paul called the church congregation to respect timothy's leadership. They were not to gossip about him, or undermine him behind his back. They were not to disrespect his authority and act in disobedience.

We are to treat our pastor and all the elders (whether or not they are paid) with respect. We are not to talk down to them, talk behind their back or undermine leadership decisions, even when we disagree with a decision. We can speak to an elder about our thoughts, but once the decision is made, we are to respect it and respect them.

We do not blindly honour our elders simply because they hold that office.

- We honour Brian, Clive, John, Stephen, Steven and Tim because of their labours.

A Pastor's work is endless. In addition to the hours of preparation for sermons every week, there is prayer for the church and its members, as well as for his own heart, as he seeks to lead and serve the church. Then there is much pastoral care (emotionally, physically and mentally draining) to carry out. There are many meetings to lead and a responsibility to keep up with all that is going on in the church.

- No pastor does this perfectly. Whoever he is, he is still a sinner in need of a Saviour, and a good pastor knows that.

A man undertaking this role is worthy of double honour

2) We are to keep our elders accountable (vv 19-21). How do we protect the church from elders who lack the necessary character and integrity to serve in that role?

- We are to act with caution and courage.

We must have systems in place which hold them to account, but equally we need to avoid constant suspicion and an undermining of our leadership. In the Ephesian church, there were people who were gossiping and casting aspersions on the leadership. It is necessary to call people to account when there has been wrongdoing, but it is easy to destroy someone's reputation with false accusations.

- A pastor's profession depends on his character. If he is falsely attacked on that basis, he may well lose everything but his salvation. We are not to gossip or undermine the leadership

Paul's wisdom still applies today. If there is an accusation, all charges should be substantiated by two or three witnesses. If there is an issue, it is important that you tell someone. We must hold elders to account (**v20**). It is for the benefit of the whole church that any lack of integrity in the leadership is dealt with.

- Elders are to be held to a higher standard and are to administer discipline fairly, without any partiality (**v21**)

Within any leadership team, there can be a temptation to close ranks around their fellow members and protect a leader who should actually be removed.

When dealing with such issues, Paul reminds us that he is laying this command on the elders **in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels (v21)**.

God is watching. It is his church and not ours.

To be an elder is a privilege and not a right. A person might be a great preacher, with excellent leadership skills, and get on well with everyone. Anyone who persists in sin should have the privilege of eldership removed.

It is character that is the crucial element for an elder

If there is an issue, please speak to another elder or to our safeguarding officer. You may not always have two or three witnesses, but by reporting your experience, you help to build a picture which will protect our church and potentially others as well.

In holding our elders to account, we are doing the work of protecting the reputation of Christ's church as it

seeks to reflect Christ to the people around us. This is no small thing.

If the elders are compromised in any way or are seen to be set above everyone else, then the gospel is compromised.

We are all equal under Christ.

Our elders are also sinners saved by faith alone

However, they have been appointed to an office where much is asked of them in terms of character. We are all equal before Christ, but the elders are to be held to a higher standard because of their office.

We are to regard our elders with honour and hold them to account

3) We are to choose our elders carefully and slowly (vv22-25). If someone new turns up in church and they are charismatic, with good Bible knowledge, and people generally get on well with them, there is often a suggestion that they could be involved in leadership. Yet Paul urges caution (v22). The church is to have a careful screening process. If an eldership appoints a person whose character was compromised in an earlier role, they are in effect partners in that sin. Paul wants to protect the church from godlessness in the leadership of God's family.

Paul loves this church, and he loves Timothy. He wants Timothy and the leadership to flourish within the church and lead it well. He wants to be sure that Timothy will do what is necessary to take care of himself (v23), rather than taking the strict line of the false teachers.

- Paul is not telling the church off. He is advising them with wisdom in a loving tone. He advises them that they are to be careful in choosing new elders (vv24-25). They are to do this slowly and keep an eye out for sin. Sin can often appear later, when a person has settled in, and there has been opportunity to learn more of their character. Discernment is needed. There are people who can hide sin well, and in any case, some sins are subtle and underlying. Prayer and time are needed. A western view of leadership often draws us to the most charismatic and powerful person, but

Church leadership must reflect Christ, who came to serve and is humble and gentle.

Taking care when appointing elders can avoid many of the leadership issues that are currently troubling churches.

Elders are to seek to be led by Christ in all things.

We are to treat them with respect as elders and as our fellow brothers in Christ.

We are not to venerate them, but to honour them.

- We give thanks to God for the elders he has given this church, and for the way he has protected BBC throughout its history.
- We need to pray for our elders, and support and care for them, as they pray, support and care for us.