The Epistle of 1st Timothy

Chapter 5

We have studied, in this letter, the particular Church, and its leadership. Timothy is to get the Ephesian Church organized, but first this church must look to its faith and what they believe. The Church must first believe. Believe, what? Believe what the Apostles have been teaching them, and that of Jesus Christ dying for their sins and then Rising from the grave to assure their eternal life; and then stand on sound doctrine that the Apostles teach, and to eliminate that which does not lift up Christ as Lord and Savior. The Church must look at its relationship with God, and as in any solid relationship, must learn good communication skills; that is prayer and how to pray, or how to effectively communicate with God. This is a young Church and Timothy is to make it as an example to all the other budding Churches as they spring up.

Paul then gives Timothy the direction of setting up the order of authority and leadership in the Church. As with any business or organization, there must be leadership, and any successful organization has leadership that operates on experience, that has the success of the business and the welfare of the people employed in their business uppermost on their minds. So, Paul sets the requirements for that leadership, from Elders (or Overseers) (and in this case possibly the head Pastor/teacher of this Church) to the Deacons, or the folks who do the grunt work within the church, explaining the experience factor, and the desire of the people who wish to become part of the leadership.

Now that we have a Church that is doctrinally sound, and has the proper, experienced leadership in place, the next thing the Church and the people and leadership must be on the lookout for is the coming apostacy in the Church. Too many times in both business or in the Church, we can get too lackadaisical in our approach or develop too many ideas on our own regarding supposed doctrine, or listen to too many outside the assembly who offer advice on what you doctrine should contain, and the church begins to take wrong turns, and as we can see, there are so many things that can split a gathering through quarreling or divisive activities, or drive people out of the assembly, with these attitudes. This letter stresses the unity of the believer including the leadership. We must, at all times, be on the same page, always with the same message.

So, with this in mind, Paul will explain how we are to treat each other in all fairness. Many times, as we watch various Churches, we note young adult churches cater to the young and forget the needs of the elderly, they are young and physically active, but the needs of the infirm are left wanting. The older congregations may see to the needs of the elderly but the young are left wanting. What we are seeing today in many, many churches is the louder band music with new songs for young folks, and the organ or piano with the traditional hymns of the older generations and this creates separating factions in the Church. So, what is the answer? Different worship services for the young and the old?

A] 1 Timothy 5: 1 & 2; (read)

1] “*Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.”*

What we now have, after establishing the chain of command, is the beginnings of the Church, and now, Timothy how do we implement these measures, and bring the people into unity of thought? Using the word ‘rebuke’ which would mean to correct, this is saying, “*Now Timothy, you must correct the thinking of those who go a bit off the rails in doctrine, and how should this be done?”* That is what this passage is explaining, Timothy and those who are in this authority or capacity, are not to, so much, correct a man, (meaning to just flat out say ‘no you’re wrong) but to respect the older man’s thought, but then explain that there is a better way of thinking this, and you encourage his learning to greater understanding, that is also correction, but handled differently and a lot more respectfully.

The same can be said for young men, not to lord it over them, but to patiently explain things, approach all with a desire to teach, and raise up in the student an eagerness to learn. For older women, there is that respect idea again you respect their thoughts and ideas regardless of how off the wall they may be, and the younger women, as we treat the young men with gentleness in teaching; and when we also teach the younger women we teach with authority, but respect and we treat young women with a chaste heart, and pure thoughts. We don’t want to make Christianity a fearsome thing, but one of agape love. What we want to do as a teacher, is present the subject with careful thought and a joy that is infectious, and that becomes contagious to the student.

B] 1 Timothy 5: 3 through 8; (read)

1] “*Honor widows who are really widows.”*

Ohhh, we are going to get into it now! First regarding widows in general, women whose husbands have died, and we must recognize the plight of women in general today in any free society, as opposed to women in these societies back then. In Acts 6: 1, the plight of the Hellenistic widows was brought to light as they were being slighted by the Jerusalem leadership, so what we glean from that is the early Church assumed support of these ladies who had no means of support after their husbands died. Many widows might have been younger and would available for a second marriage is that were possible. And still able to care for themselves.

But as in any society, when the husband dies, and they die usually much earlier than the wives, the growth of the widow population will begin to swamp any congregation. Who takes care of them? Paul is making Timothy face a reality, usually in a family there are children and the children rightly should be taking care of mom when dad dies, this is probably what he is referring to. When we have a new church with limited resources, the Church MUST be judicious in its financial responsibilities.

2] “*But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.”*

There you go, as Paul is saying, a widow comes to you begging for alms, see whether or not she has children and other family and send her to them that they fulfill their duty to family. Sadly, today, many children are far too busy in their careers and home life to allow for taking care of a single parent, and the establishment of retirement centers to place widows (and some widowers).

3] “*Now, she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.”*

In the story of Ruth and Naomi, we come across Naomi who through no fault of her own becomes a widow in a foreign country, and as she had two sons who in better days could take care of her, but they both die and all she is left with is a foreign daughter-in-law, Ruth, who assumes the responsibility, of caring for her. In coming back to Naomi’s home country, Ruth continues her care, but the other in-laws, will see to her needs too.

Paul is stating, that there are those women who through death lose their status of wife and have no visible means of support, usually because sons die too. Life was precarious in those days and there were quite a few needy widows with little to no family. They were totally dependent on God, thus were on their knees often. These are the gals we take care of.

4] “*But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.”*

If you go to see to a widow, and find her living it up, or living comfortably, you can rest assured she does not need anyone’s help, and in this scenario, she is best left to party on her own. Apparently she can afford it or has those around here who can help her support her lifestyle. This is stewardship, friends. Let her be responsible for her own actions.

5] “*And these things command, that they may be blameless. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those in his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*

What is stewardship? Responsibility for what one has. This is what the Church must be. WE are the Church, thus WE are responsible for ourselves, our families, and those around us, this is what God expects us to be, don’t you think? That is good stewardship of what we have. IN our families we see to the needs of each member, and teach the next generation that same responsibility, and with the Church family, we do the same thing.

C] 1 Timothy 5: 9 through 16; (read)

1] “*Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man--”*

This is sounding tough, eh? What we apparently are reading here is Paul acknowledging that widows under the age of sixty, are still capable of working and supporting themselves, after a fashion. Again friends, unless there is a very large gathering where the financial picture of the group is strong, one must be a wise steward of what little moneys are generated in the small group, so Paul is explaining to Timothy, that those folks who can earn a living should earn it, and then put at least some monies into the coffer, for those who need it most. Then, those who qualify, are able to avail themselves to it. Bet you didn’t realize that from the get- go, church fiscal issues were really important.

Paul goes on to set other requirements, where these needy widows had honorable marriages. Remember this Church is made mostly of Gentiles who were most probably raised in heathen religions and had lifestyles not compatible with the new Christian movement, and led less than honorable lives. In other words, do these needy widows actually qualify and that includes a repentant lifestyle. Sadly, we know today, we can’t help everyone.

2]--“*well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has followed every good work.”*

Wow! We're talking Mother Teresa here, it sounds like. However, the basic of this is, has she led that life, as a Gentile, that exhibits a caring of those around her? Or has she been a lazy wife, and not supportive of her late husband, but now expects everyone else to support her? My question on this verse, is, if she brought up children, where are they and why can’t they take care of her? Today, as we have raised up independent children, and they have moved away for good reasons, what is the responsibility these children have? Must she have to move from all she knows to be with them to be cared for by them or be placed in a retirement center only to see grandchildren on holidays? That is the conundrum for today.

3] “*But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith.”*

Now we must recognize the fact of different cultures and different mores. What we are discussing here is ladies still of childbearing age but who are left without a husband yet fertile years ahead of them and bearing children is the honor of a woman in that age. So, young widows will still be seeking that future, ahead of their devotion to Christ. (Remember that culture of those times.)

4] “*And besides they learn to be idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not.”*

Young widows, when they were married, they took care of the husbands needs and the household, but when hubby dies, they wind up with time on their hands, and time on one’s hands can lead to getting involved in things that need not be done or not doing anything at all, or becoming the neighborhood gossips.

5] “*Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.”*

Are we seeing in this whole passage what Paul is leading up to? How do folks outside the fellowship, view the fellowship, seeing how we treat each other, but at the same time showing true responsibility in all our actions, showing stewardship in our all our financial activities, and in dealing with a wide variety of people, does this give them the fuel to denigrate who we are? What kind of witness do we present to the world? Therefore, let the young widows remarry, have their children and show themselves to be that responsible adult worthy of being the honored wife and mother and a gift to the community.

6] “*For some have already turned aside after Satan. If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the Church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”*

Again, it come down to responsibility doesn’t it? If a family has a widow, the family takes care of the widow, that then takes the burden of caring for individuals from the Church and places it squarely where the real responsibility lies. And Paul accepts the fact there will BE those widows who do NOT have anyone, and these, the Church is now able to help. It is amazing how much time Paul has spent explaining the plight of widows to Timothy isn’t it? But for a young man to understand the widows’ plight even though He might be somewhat familiar with maybe a grandmother who was a widow but cared for, what to do in a church full of them. Young pastors , on taking the responsibility of a new church, will be faced with these scenarios and do they teach this in the seminary? I do watch as my grandson has assumed his first full time church and see his growth in the minutia of the little church issues as they rise up.

These are not harsh directorates, but practical rules for any successful enterprise. If WE have a Church constantly in a debt it cannot pay, the Church will fold, because it cannot perform all of its responsibilities. It becomes split between teaching and striving to financially lift itself up by whatever means are available. Too many churches , today turn to the world, for support and become beholden to the world for their support and the world now controls them. “He who holds the purse, controls the nation, the industry or the house”. (Meyer Amschel Rothschild) Do you see the point?

D] 1 Timothy 5: 17 through 25; (read)

1] “*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain’, and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.”*

At this point, Paul switches gears and now burrows into the leadership of the Church itself. This little section has to do with value of the man. Pastors and Church workers were paid, and Paul quoting from Deuteronomy 25: 4 and Luke 10: 7, is telling Timothy, it is well and good to properly pay the worker what he is worth. Pay the Pastor because it IS God’s work he is doing. However, there are Pastors out there today who are purportedly doing a work for God but in reality are doing it for themselves and the fortune they reap. Big difference.

2] “*Do not receive an accusation against an Elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning, rebuke in the presence of all that the rest may also fear.”*

This is the case where you must have all your facts together before you bring any accusations against any worker of God. Innuendo destroys too many good people senselessly, and is, in-itself, a sin. If there is a real problem and there can be, Pastors or Elders or Deacons are not exempt from falling prey to temptation, and should be brought to the seat of correction, and be made to face their accusers, and must suffer the punishment or correction in public. Why publically? Because the Church must recognize, and those who are involved in the church must recognize, that the Church and it’s people are the representation of Jesus Christ to an unbelieving public, and if there are strikes against the Church that shows Jesus Christ in a bad light this becomes a dishonor of Christ and the Church will be accused before the Throne in heaven. Do you see the point?

3] “*I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Elect Angels, that you observe these things without prejudice and doing nothing with partiality.”*

There is a problem in churches these days that folks take sides based on friendships and allegiances, and rarely do people make decisions without preconceived ideas of guilt or innocence. Actually, it is not limited to just the Church but in life. “Timothy, You are to remain above the fray, and deal with issues with clarity and let nothing be preconceived.”

4] “*Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, not share in other peoples’ sins; keep yourself pure.”*

Let not be hasty in laying hands on someone who is not ready for the position or task at hand. This is regarding the laying on of hands for those in ministry. If they are not ready, wait until they are and you are sure, don’t compound the problem just because others may want a particular person to be installed before their time.

5] “*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake, and your frequent infirmities.”*

I love this one, apparently Timothy is a teetotaler, but has some sicknesses and is being told to drink a little wine which will help to settle your stomach. This kind of hints that Timothy has faint confidence and suffers, as a consequence, a case of the burps or maybe light ulcers or just recurring unsettled tummy. And let’s face it, assuming the responsibilities that are ahead of him, could lead to a greater case of ulcers.

6] “*Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.”*

God will judge a man’s sins immediately, others will take a little longer, like at the judgment. Keep this in context, Timothy stays above the fray, and it is God’s call then, not his to make. By the same token, God rewards those He will reward, now or in heaven. How many folks look for their reward now, and seek recognition when it is God’s to give, and not man?