Restoring Biblical Eldership, Part 2
1 Timothy 5:19-21
54-41

Let's open our Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 5...1 Timothy chapter 5. I mentioned to you last week as we began a look at verses 17 to 25 that this was a hard passage to preach because it really speaks about the role of the pastor and the elder and I just wanted you to know that I don't give this message in any sense as self-serving. My intent is not to gain anything, to receive anything. Your over-abundance of generosity to me is deeply appreciated already. But it is a difficult passage to preach from the standpoint that basically I'm here telling you how you ought to treat me and others like me who pastor and lead in the church of Christ. And I refresh you again by saying I hope you understand my heart in this is to teach you the Word of God and to have you continue in the loving way in which you have expressed your response to me and to our pastors and elders here. And also beyond the walls of this church, to give instruction to other churches and other people as to this same issue of how we treat those that God has placed in leadership in the church.

Now today's message and the focus of what we look at today in another sense is also equally difficult to preach because while part of the text calls for honoring the one who is over you in the Lord, part of the text calls also for exposing the sinning pastor or the sinning elder. And so it's a two-edged sword we look at in this text, and it equally brings a certain amount of anxiety to my own heart because what I'm in effect saying to you is that if I ever sin a sin and the category of sins is very large, if I ever continue in some sin, that I'm asking you to do to me exactly what this text says to be done, and that is public exposure. On the one hand, there is the call for honor to a faithful man. On the other hand, there is call for exposure to an unfaithful and sinning man. And so, both of them, in a sense, are difficult words and thoughts to be found in the mouth of the preacher himself, and yet very necessary.

Now as I mentioned to you last time, as we come to chapter 5 verses 17 to 25, we are reminded that Timothy is in Ephesus. And the Ephesian church has really declined greatly. It has found itself in behavioral inconsistency with the revealed Word of God. It has abandoned its great glorious and wonderful beginnings where Paul was the founding pastor. It has begun to sink into the morass of immorality and also false doctrine. That is primarily related to the decline in its leadership, for a people is always the product of leadership. And so in this particular epistle as Paul writes to Timothy, he is saying, "Timothy, I've left you Ephesus and these are the things you have to do. And one of them that is absolutely vital is to restore a biblical eldership. You've got to deal with leadership in that church and that is not an easy thing to do. You must attack at the most difficult point, the point of leadership."

Serious doctrinal problems, serious behavioral inconsistencies that plagued the church at Ephesus were related to a decline in the character and the teaching of their leadership. And even today, theological error, biblical misinterpretation, disregard for the high and narrow walls that bound biblical godly morality are directly the result of failure in leadership in the church of today. And whatever

message Paul gave to Timothy for restoring a biblical pastorate or eldership then needs to be given today as well. Those godly men who lead and feed and protect and guide and set an example for the church are the key upon which humanly speaking that church develops. And Paul is very explicit in this passage. He calls for very specific attitudes toward the eldership, the pastorate.

Now as I said last week, the church's ability to reach the world, to be a channel of the grace of salvation, the church's ability to be a powerful pure Christ-revealing organism is directly related to the character and the content of its leadership. It's essential.

This past week I had an occasion to preach down in Dallas. And as a follow up to that wonderful opportunity, I preached to thousands of pastors down there, a pastor was saved. He called me the next morning at 5:30 in the hotel and said, "You've got to help me, I'm lost." He was a pastor who was sitting in the section of pastors being honored for having the most baptisms, the most conversions, and the fastest growing church percentage wise. Saturday night he came to the conclusion that the real need of his life was salvation. He was going through the motions.

I suppose we could say that restoring a biblical pastor would certainly begin with the pastor getting saved if he hasn't been. But assuming that, for the sake of the text, assuming that the man is a man who knows Christ, that's not where it ends. There are many other things that need to be considered in the matter of biblical pastoring and biblical eldership. And Paul lays out the proper attitudes that the congregation is to have toward those who lead them.

Number one, and we saw this last time, verses 17 and 18, Paul calls for honoring elders. He says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially the ones who work hard in preaching and teaching for the Scripture says, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain and the laborer is worthy of his wages." Now Paul begins by saying the church is to honor the elder/pastor...elder being a term referring to spiritual maturity, pastor simply pointing out his ministry of feeding the flock. The same word, or a different word, rather, overseer referring to the same man means his leadership. So he is a mature godly man who feeds and leads the people, as you know.

Now if he does it well and if he works hard in preaching and teaching, he's worthy of double honor. After all, he says, "Doesn't Deuteronomy 25 teach us that an ox who treads out grain is to be rewarded by being allowed to eat? And doesn't the New Testament, Luke 10:7, tell us that a man who works is worthy of his pay? And if you feed an ox that crushes the grain, and you feed a servant that does his work, then the one who preaches and teaches the Word of God with excellence and great effort ought to be honored as well. And honor then implies not just respect but remuneration.

So, the first principle of a biblical eldership is you have a plurality of godly men who are honored by the congregation in terms of respect and in terms of needed remuneration. That's the basic thought of that first point in verses 17 and 18...honoring pastors, honoring elders is very basic and a man's respect and a man's remuneration is tied to the excellence of his work and the effort in the toil that he makes. That's what the text is saying. And so we begin then by honoring elders.

A second point comes in verse 19. Let's call this protecting elders, or protecting pastors. And it's certainly an extension of the idea of honoring them. Part of honoring your pastors and elders is this whole matter of protecting them, insuring their safe and proper treatment. After all, to put it in a proverbial sense, pastors are forever and always on the hot seat, right? And there are always people

who would line up to falsely accuse a man of God. And they will be falsely accused for many reasons. Some people will resent their calling. There are people who just carry around a lot of resentment, it may be personal, it may be general. But because of that resentment they may desire and design to falsely accuse a man of God. Sometimes it's due to people rejecting their teaching. Someone doesn't like what someone teaches, they take a different view, they react negatively against it and perhaps in their anger, in their hostility they begin some kind of campaign to falsely accuse and discredit the man of God. Sometimes it's because people resist biblical authority. They resist biblical teaching and they strike out for revenge to one who has called them to accountability before God or who has brought them feelings and real feelings of guilt. Sometimes it's nothing more than envy and jealousy because a ministry is being blessed. Sometimes it's because a person, and maybe all the time in one way or another, it's because a person becomes a pawn of Satan and his emissaries to discredit and tear down what God wants to do.

So, one way or another, and perhaps often a combination of motives that we've talked about put together, might result in men being falsely accused. And it's a sacred trust to be in the ministry. And the effectiveness of that trust and the effectiveness of that ministry is largely dependent upon a man's integrity, upon his believability, upon his consistency, upon his purity and holiness and virtue of life. And if he can be attacked at that point and discredited, if he can be shredded so that people don't trust him anymore, the net effect may be to totally end his ministry.

I think about, for example, the most devastating things that came against Jesus were not physical things, but accusations that He spent all of His time with drunks, prostitutes, and wicked people. That was an attempt to accuse Him of those same things. They said He was a glutton and a wine-bibber and they said He was possessed with a demon. All of that in an effort to discredit Him falsely.

Now because this is a very real issue and because the enemy comes against any faithful servant of God, Paul gives Timothy instruction in verse 19 in this regard...let's look at it. Verse 19, "Against an elder, or pastor, do not receive an accusation, except when on the authority of or by the force of two or three witnesses." Now, first of all, please notice it says against an elder, that's what we're talking about here. When someone sets out to accuse an elder or a pastor, he says do not receive that. The word receive means to entertain, to consider in your mind. And what he is saying is just flatly reject it, don't even investigate an unsubstantiated accusation made against a pastor/elder. It ought to be ignored.

To put it simply, one of the best ways you can protect your pastors and elders is with a deaf ear to accusation. It's that simple. When a man is placed into spiritual leadership, he has to anticipate that hateful, jealous, sinful people will falsely accuse him to try to ruin his ministry. And people can and often will say anything and everything. This is standard behavior with reference to spiritual leaders. I went back in the Old Testament this week, just kind of tracking through some of the leaders of the Old Testament period and found that one after another of the great heroes of the faith in the Old Testament were beset by false accusation. It was standard fare. I think particularly of Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Nehemiah and many others as well. You come in to the New Testament, Christ was crucified under false accusation, Paul under false accusation, defending himself again and again and again in his epistles.

It is standard approach of the enemy to discredit. You see, men's ministries can be brought to a halt due to no fault of their own, but due to the fault of people who will listen to a false accusation. And so that discrediting of that man comes totally unrelated to reality in his own life. The word accusation, by

the way, kategoriasounds like category, it comes from two words, agorawhich...it's the word for Agoura, down the road here, the town, it means a meeting place, a public place, a marketplace, and kateis against, so it is to say something against a person in a public meeting place. That is to bring a formal accusation. And when someone comes to bring a formal public accusation against an elder or a pastor, we are not to listen to that. We are not to entertain that. We are not to investigate that. Trapp, that Puritan writer who has so many good things to say, has a little statement that I think is just right to the point, he said this, "Truth has always a scratched face." Truth has always a scratched face...what does it mean? It means that people react against truth. And when a man is a truth teacher that does not mean that he is going to have an absolutely impeccable reputation among all people all the time because truth always has a scratched face. And the difficulty in ministry is being able to distinguish between...between gossip and false accusation and lies and reality. If Satan can't cause a man to fall into sin, if Satan can't cause a man to stumble into evil, then Satan may cause some who more willingly will stumble into evil to become a coterie of false accusers, the net effect of which is to discredit the man as if he himself had sinned. You understand that? And so the insulation of the man of God against that is a deaf congregation in the sense of hearing accusation. Very important.

Notice back in verse 19 again...against the elder or pastor you are not to entertain any kind of formal public accusation. The word "but" should be translated "except when," and the word "before" has the force of "by the authority of two or three witnesses." The only time you ever even entertain it doesn't mean it's true, but the only time you would ever even entertain it would be when it comes to you with a force of two or three confirming witnesses.

In other words, it isn't one person who has some kind of act of aggression against man of God. I can only tell you personally because this is of such tremendous concern to me and because people can and do say anything and everything that if a person comes to me with some kind of accusation against a man of God, my first reaction is always to deny that. I will not accept that. I'm sorry, I cannot believe that, I cannot accept that. Until it would be confirmed significantly by two or three whose confidence I would trust and then properly investigated, a deaf ear is the best thing you can turn to someone who falsely accuses.

Now the intent of two or three witnesses is simply confirmation. It goes all the way back to Deuteronomy 19:15 where no accusation against a person is to be upheld apart from two or three confirming credible witnesses. Matthew chapter 18, you remember when we have an outline of how to discipline a fellow Christian, if you find one in sin you go to him, if he doesn't hear and repent then you take two or three witnesses in order that they might confirm that sin and confirm either his repentant or failure to repentant...to be repentant attitude. So two or three witnesses involved in an accusation situation is an old approach. It's simply the confirmation of viable witnesses. And so we are never to receive any accusation against a pastor, we're not even to entertain it or to investigate it or to look into it, we are to shun it, to shut it off, to end it unless it has been confirmed by two or three significant and credible witnesses.

Pastor/elders are never to be at the mercy of frivolous evil accusers. And they're not to be having to go around to their people justifying themselves to people who are eager or willing to believe such lies.

Now I'm not saying that we are to be beyond accusation, if accusation is legitimate. I am saying we are to be beyond successful accusation if accusation is illegitimate...if it is false. And the danger of

this is tremendous. I personally believe in my own heart that one of the greatest benefits of this church to me is the fact that through the years you have been so protective of me and you have honored me so faithfully. In other words, I know...I know it and you know it, too...that I have been under attack and continue to be under attack and have been falsely accused and continue to be falsely accused rather regularly, almost weekly. But the one thing that sticks in people's craw is that people outside find it very hard for people inside to agree with that. And I think it's been your confidence and your prayers and your support that has been such a tremendous encouragement to me. And furthermore, I want you to know that this is something that any man who is in the ministry constantly prays about because you know you're tremendously vulnerable to false accusation. So I thank you for your goodness in that area and I thank God for His Holy Spirit putting a stop to things before they can get started.

But in spite of false accusation I want you to know the ministry is a joy. And being falsely accused puts you in good company because the Lord was falsely accused also. And as Hebrews 12 says, if I can put it in the first person, "I have not yet suffered unto blood," like He did. But in protecting leadership in the church, the first line of protection is a deaf ear to accusation. Don't even think about it.

And let me say a word to those who might accuse. You must be very careful when you accuse someone who is in the ministry. You must be very cautious to speak against a godly leader. Let me give you just a little insight into this matter of caution. Turn in your Bible to chapter 24 of 1 Samuel...1 Samuel chapter 24. The background of the story is that Saul is king but a rejected king, rejected by God, he'll never be a part of the kingly line, he'll never produce the Messiah from his loins. Saul is a rejected sinful king. The anointed king who is God's choice is a young man by the name of David. And, of course, Saul and David are adversaries in the very real sense...both really in a role of king, Saul the present but rejected king, David the future but anointed king. And Saul is very much hostile toward David and wants to take his life.

And in the midst of that hostility a very very interesting situation happens in 1 Samuel 24, verse 1, "It came to pass when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, it was told him, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi." So Saul wanted to go get David, eliminating his enemy. Took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel. This would be the finest of soldiers. "And went to seek David and his men on the rocks of the Wildgoats." Engedi is a desert place, jagged mountains. "And he came to the sheepcotes by the way where was a cave." Now here's Saul, he's going down toward Engedi, he's got three thousand crack soldiers with him to attack David. "He comes to a cave and Saul went in to cover his feet." Now that little phrase is an Old Testament euphemism for a visit to the men's room. Now I don't want to get too deeply into this discussion, but in those days what happened was you took your robe and just kind of threw it out as you crouched down. And that's what was known as covering your feet, and we'll leave it at that. And it says in verse 3, this is Saul, this is the king who goes into the cave to be indisposed for a few moments. "And David and his men were staying in the sides of the cave." So this men's room is occupied and it's occupied with David and his men.

Well, the men of David standing around the sides of the dark cave knowing the king is there in that incredibly vulnerable position, they could pounce on him and kill him in an instant. And the coup would be over and David would be king. They said to him, "Behold, the day of which the Lord said unto thee," this is it, "Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thy hand that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee." This is it, they said, this is unbelievable. Here he is, in incredible

vulnerability and all alone. "Then David arose and cut off Saul's head." Is that what it says? "Cut off his skirt of his robe." He snipped off a little piece of the fringe of his robe. "It came to pass afterward that David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt." Now there you have a very conscientious guy. He's feel guilty because he cut his robe. His heart smote him because he cut off a piece of his robe. "And he said to his men, The Lord forbid..." You know what he did? He snuck up on this guy and he just cut his robe and then snuck back and Saul didn't even know it. "But he says, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him seeing he is the anointed of the Lord."

That's amazing sensitivity, isn't it? I mean, that's like saying don't even step on the pastor's toe. Incredible. But it symbolized something to David, in his heart there was a hostility toward Saul and he could have taken his life but he backed off, even cutting his robe, that small act of hostility seemed to him to be sinful because this was, after all, the man who was king because the Lord anointed the man, the Lord did make him king. "So David restrained his servants with these words." He wouldn't let them kill Saul. "And permitted them not to rise against Saul. Saul rose up out of the cave, went his way." This is really amazing. "David followed him, went out of the cave and when he got a little ways away he said, Saul, my lord the king, and when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed himself."

Can you imagine that? He wanted...he had done a disservice to the king by cutting his robe, he wanted to do what was right, he wanted to bow in the presence of the king, so he waited till he got out of the cave, turned and bowed to him to show him the proper respect that was due to a man anointed by God to be the king of Israel. Incredible. "And David said to Saul, Why do you listen to men's words saying, Behold, David seeks your harm?" Why do you believe those lies? "Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the Lord had delivered you today into my hand in the cave and some bade me to kill you but my eyes spared you and I said I will not put forth my hand against my lord for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover my father...see the skirt of thy robe in thy hand, for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in my hand, and I have not sinned against thee, yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and you and the Lord avenge me of you, but my hand shall not be on you."

Now this is an attitude that says, "I don't touch the Lord's anointed." You know what happened a little later in the story. Saul got in the middle of a losing battle and decided that he wanted to take his life. And so, he got the assistance of a an Amalekite to help him in his suicide and he leaned on his spear and died.

In 2 Samuel chapter 1, notice this, David interviews this man that did that. And he says in verse 11, "David took hold of his clothes and tore them and likewise all the men who were with him and they mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son and for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel because they were fallen by the sword." So David is weeping even at the death of Saul. "And David said to him...this is the servant who had assisted Saul in taking his life...How were you not afraid to stretch forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" How could you do that? "David called one of the young men, said, Go near, fall on him...that means attack him...he smote him so that he died. And David said to him, Your blood be on your head for your mouth has testified against you saying I have slain the Lord's anointed." While the guy is there and the blood is coming out of his body and he's dying, David says you're getting this because you touched the Lord's anointed. Even though Saul was a sinful man there was a tremendous sense of

the sacredness of the Lord's anointed. Great seriousness must be considered in attacking any faithful servant of the Lord. So when you set out to falsely accuse God's servant, you're walking on treacherous ground..."Touch not Mine anointed," Psalm 105:15 says. Zechariah 2:8 basically refers to touching God's anointed being equal to sticking your finger in God's eye. It irritates it.

So, that is a perspective that helps us understand that we are not to falsely accuse. And when someone does falsely accuse, we are not to listen to that and be party to one who wants to touch the Lord's anointed. The parallel isn't exact because Saul was a sinful man who was rejected by God but still if David's spirit was a spirit of kindness toward a sinful rejected king, what should be the spirit of the church toward a faithful honored servant of God? To bring a false accusation is to put yourself in a very serious situation. Even a genuine sin on the part of Saul, a genuinely sinful life did not warrant someone taking that man's life. And so where you have righteousness you have protection doubly so.

Let's go back to 1 Timothy then. And we want to be cautious then before we would ever speak against the Lord's anointed. And secondly, we want to be very very reluctant to listen when someone does speak in such a way.

So, the first point then is elders are to be honored and pastors ought to be honored. The second point, they are to be protected. And I want you to know, beloved, that the great burden in my heart, the great desire of my heart is to raise up a generation of godly men who are worthy to be honored and worthy to be protected. That's really the ultimate objective in the Master's Seminary, to produce those kinds of men who are worthy of honor and worthy of protection.

But now we come to the double-edged sword. What about the man who sins? What about the pastor/elder who sins? And the accusation is not false, it is true. It is in the mouth of two or three witnesses and when investigated found to be true. What about that? That takes us to point three, rebuking elders. And again this is a very strong word...an exceedingly strong word. What it basically says is there's absolutely no immunity for sin. Protection up to a point and the point is sin. When it gets to the point of sin, there's no protection. There is tremendous vulnerability. Notice verse 20, "Them that sin," and them refers to the elder in verse 19, the elders, the pastors, "the ones that sin," and it's a present participle, "the sinning ones," and let me say that the sins are not categorized here. We could say that the most devastating public sin is sin of immorality and there are myriad illustrations of that. But it could be a myriad of other sins as well. In fact, if you want to know the category of sins, all you have to do is go back to 1 Timothy chapter 3 and reverse everything. You could start out in verse 2 by saying he's not a one-woman man. He doesn't exercise self-control, a lack of self-control is a sin. He's not moderate. He is not good in his behavior. He's not committed to the love of strangers. He drinks too much. He's impatient. He's a fighter. He's covetous. He doesn't handle his home well.

It could be any of these things. What a man does with his children. what he does with his wife, what he does with his home, what he does with his money. How his reputation exists in every dimension of life is at stake in this matter, any kind of sin. And I want to make that clear because there's just no way that you could be partial for one sin as over against another. Anything that is a sin which that man continues to practice and continues to do is reason for him to be included in "them" that sin.

Now what do we do with them that sin? Here's the two-edged sword. "Rebuke before all." Would you please notice here that we don't have a lot of steps of discipline. It just says rebuke before all. When

an accusation has been made, it's been confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses and investigated, if it indeed is proven to be true he is to be publicly rebuked. The word rebuke, elenchomeans to expose, to bring to open conviction, to correct, to reprove. And the idea is public, before all. There's no exegetical base for limiting the all to just the elders, the other elders. There's no contextual base for limiting it to just the elders. If it says all it means all. If it was intended to be kept from the congregation it would have said be sure the congregation doesn't find out. But when it says rebuke before all it means exactly that. And there is no either exegetical or contextual reason to limit the all in any way. It simply means one who is found to be sinning is to be exposed before everyone. There's no where to hide.

Once a pastor/elder's guilt is established, he is to be publicly exposed. The sin of one in that position is more serious and to be punished more severely because its implications are greater. If you're the model of spiritual life, if you're the model of godliness, if you're supposed to be the example and you do not live the example that pleases God, then the culpability is very severe. It's interesting to me that even in Leviticus chapter 4 when God was laying out the law for the sin offering, He made one offering for the mass of people and the sin offering, that was a female goat, and for the rulers, a male goat. Their sin was set apart by a unique sacrifice from everybody else's as a way of identifying the uniqueness of a sinning leader. And here there's not even a process involved. Once the sin is determined to be true, then a public exposure takes place. That's a very very strong thing. If I were to entertain sin in my life on a continual basis and to be judged to be truly sinning in whatever area of sin, then what should happen to me is that I should be publicly exposed for that sin. It should be a public rebuke before everyone. I would lose my right to serve as a pastor/elder and be removed from that service.

You say, "Well what if the man repents?" That's not the issue. At this particular point, nothing is saved because the credibility is forfeited. In other words, let's say a man was extorting money in the church and it was found out, 99.9 chances out of a hundred the man would instantly repent, say, "I'll never do it again," if he thought that would let him stay where he is and nobody would ever find out publicly. But that serves no good at all. If the man has been found to be in a pattern of sin, then he is disqualified by 1 Timothy chapter 3, he's no longer blameless so he's out of the ministry anyway and he is to be publicly rebuked for his sin because there has to be some explanation about why he's out. Understood? And when that isn't done, let me tell you, confusion reigns supreme. When you try to sneak some pastor or elder out the back door and not explain to the people why he's leaving, all you're going to do is create problem upon problem upon problem.

One classic illustration of this, a church, a familiar and wonderful church that I know of had a man on their staff. They were moving him from one office to another and digging out some of the stuff in his closet they found a copy of every issue of Playboy magazine since the first one. The board met on this and felt it would be too devastating to the church and the man and his family if they said anything. So he quietly left town. The pastor suffered repercussions for years and years of people who despised the pastor for pushing this man out of the church with no good reason. And being under instructions never to tell anybody why the man left, he suffered all the slings and arrows of the hate of people who blamed him for something he couldn't talk about.

Furthermore, the man who was expelled from the church went somewhere else. And to this day has a high-profile ministry, I don't think anybody knows what went on.

What is gained by that? Absolutely nothing. What is lost by that is you put a man of dubious

character in a continuing ministry because you're afraid to say the truth about the man because you're more concerned to protect the man than you are to protect the name of the Lord God whom he says he serves. It's a skewed perspective. And the two-edged sword of ministry is if you're faithful and you serve well and you give great effort and you do your best in the preaching and teaching, you're to be honored and protected and the other side of the sword is if you get into sin you are to be taken out of ministry and publicly exposed.

You say, "But that's...boy, that's pretty painful for the man." That's right. But it's also a pretty good restraint on the others. That's what it says. Look at verse 20, "You do this in order that others also may fear." Other elders...other elders, for that matter, other people in the congregation who could be also disciplined for their sin. But the other here is really directly tied to the elders. When an elder is publicly disgraced for his sin, a pastor is publicly disgraced for his sin, that's going to put a healthy fear in the heart of others. And you have to understand, people, that no one is perfect, not an elder, not a pastor, no matter how capable they are, is absolutely perfect and totally able to control every dimension of his life in absolute and utter godliness...independent of any other restraint. That's not so. We need the insulation of a high level of accountability and there needs to be a healthy fear of God. And if the church would ever get back to a biblical eldership, where it honored men who were worthy of honor and protected men who were worthy of protection and rebuked men who were worthy of rebuke, it would begin to insulate the ministry from people who filter in to it and hide in the ministry with all their sins. And the result of it is an emasculated ministry and a weak church. Somewhere along the line we have to decide whether we're going to protect the man or protect the God the man says he serves. For if we have a God who tolerates sin, then we have defamed the name of God.

Others is the word loipos...loiposreally, and it means the rest. So what he's saying is those that sin are publicly exposed in order that the rest...the rest in what sense?...the rest among any class being discussed, and that has to relate this word to elders. The class being discussed is sinning elders. The rest of the sinning elders will fear. They will be in a healthy respectful concern over being disgraced publicly and losing their ministry. Obviously a public rebuke would affect them, and it would affect everybody, so it would extend to the whole congregation.

It's wonderful to serve the Lord out of love, but we also have a balance and fear, don't we? Proverbs 9:10 and it's repeated several times in Proverbs says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of...what?...of wisdom." Spiritual wisdom begins with fearing God. It begins with fearing the Lord. Peter says, 1 Peter 2:17, "Fear God." Christians in Revelation 19, I think it's verse 5 are said to be those that fear Him. We need that healthy fear. Acts 9:31, I think it is, says the whole church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria was walking in the fear of the Lord. And believers are to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, Hebrews 12:28. Paul wrote to the Ephesians and said, "We are to love each other, we are to minister to each other, we are to care for each other, we are to do all of the things that are implied or explicitly stated in Ephesians and all of in the fear of God." We are to purify ourselves, cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, effecting purification, 2 Corinthians 7:1 says, in the fear of God. We need a healthy fear.

I remember meeting a man who was having all kinds of personal problems, one of which was excessive drinking. And his wife said, "You know, somebody has got to expose him." He was pastoring a church. And she said, "Will you meet him?" I said I would be happy to. We set up an appointment for lunch and when I went to the place, he was sitting at the bar drinking. And I said to him, "You know, you're going to have to be exposed because this cannot be tolerated. You cannot

be a drinker and a drunkard and all the other things that he was indulging in along with it, materialism." I said, "You can't do that and be in the ministry."

And then he began to cry and he said, "Oh, I don't want to lose my ministry." That church exposed him. He settled into another situation and now he's back on top doing whatever he's doing. And he managed to find a place where people didn't have a standard so he can still minister.

But that shouldn't be. When there's a man that's disqualified, if the church of Jesus Christ was really behaving the way the Lord would have it behave, when he went out one door he couldn't find another door to go in. You say, "You mean there's no restoration?" I'm not talking about restoration, I'm talking about ministry as a pastor/elder. He ought to be loved. Hopefully he could stay in the same congregation, be loved, nurtured, restored to a place of usefulness to the Lord. But it's doubtful that he could ever be a pastor and an elder again, depending, of course, on the nature of the sin and its extent. But there needs to be an acknowledgement that the two-edged sword of ministry is, "Yes you have honor, and yes you have remuneration, and respect and protection, but when you fall into sin there is also the demand made that you be publicly exposed."

Boy, if the church did this, what a purification this would be. I mean, the world is so suspect of us anyway, aren't they? Sometimes we do it to ourselves. You know, when you see some guys out there who name the name of Christ and call themselves ministers of Christ who do what they do, is it any wonder the world is suspicious? Is it any wonder they want to falsely accuse the ones who don't deserve being accused because so many do deserve being accused? You know, it's hard for me to even fathom...the things that I heard this week, Oral Roberts particularly on the news saying, "If you don't send me eight million dollars, God's going to kill me." Now I've heard of fund raising technique...that is ludicrous. You know what basically is being done there is a man is putting the ultimate guilt trip on people by saying if you don't send me your money you will be the cause of my death. What kind of a trip is that to put on people? By the way, I read in a magazine the other day that he is scheduled to be the guest speaker at a big conference that's going to occur after his supposed deadline. So I don't even think he believes the whole thing. The whole thing is just so much showmanship. And it's disgusting when things like that are brought to bear upon well-meaning and trusting people to be told that they...that God is in a box, if we don't send our money to some man by a certain date, God is going to kill that man, is absolutely stupidity. But people buy into that.

And then what happens is the extrapolation of that is that we all get thrown in the same pot. And people question everybody's credibility. If the church ever got its act together and had a purged and purified eldership, can you imagine the impact of that? You say, "Well how do you do that?" Well you've just got to start where you are. And I don't mean to pick just that one thing out, but that's been all over the news so I'm not saying anything that everybody hasn't heard.

I recently talked to a lady, she said, "You know, our pastor left." I said, "Oh, I'm shocked to hear that," he was a good friend. "Why?"

"Well, they found out that he had a relationship with a woman."

"Oh," I said, "I can't believe it. When was this?"

"Oh, it ended five years ago." And she said, "You know, it was five years ago, they shouldn't have

put him out, it's been five years."

But, you see, that's a typical attitude. I don't care if it was five years ago. An ongoing relationship that just because it isn't found out, once you find it out doesn't mean...Oh, well, boy, you're pass the statute of limitations. See. It's over.

A friend called me from the midwest to tell me about a situation in the church where they had found their pastor in some sin, gross sin. He said, "What do we do?" I said, "You go next Sunday, make a public announcement for the whole church. Tell them what the sin was and tell them he's no longer the pastor and tell them to pray for him and call him to repentance. Tell the whole church." And he did and God's blessing that.

There has to be that double standard...I don't mean double in a negative way, I mean in a positive way...yes, honor for the one who deserves it, and rebuke publicly for the one who deserves that.

Now this takes courageous action. I mean, who is going to do this? You say, "This is...boy, I mean, I don't want to get into this. And, boy, what about the poor guy, he's such a nice guy and he's served the Lord and he's been in the church and what about his poor wife and what about his poor kids? We want to be sympathetic and we don't want to create a problem. Oh, we might get sued." You hear that one all the time. This is pretty common stuff. And so everybody just sort of backs away..."It would make a scandal in the church and people would wonder about the church, we don't want to, you know, create any problems, people might leave, you know, lots of folks liked him and they'd be offended if we did that." So we do nothing.

So just in case you're tempted to do nothing, verse 21 comes like a thunderbolt. "I charge you," he says to Timothy, knowing that Timothy is somewhat timid and a little bit intimidated since he is the Lone Ranger in the midst of the whole bunch of false leaders. He says, "I charge you, I thoroughly admonish you," is what that means, "I solemnly earnestly declare to you before God who is the judge of all the earth and Christ Jesus to whom all judgment is given and the elect angels who are the instruments and agents of judgment," boy, this is a heavy-duty group here. "I admonish you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels that you observe to keep," it means to keep, "these things without...watch this...without preference and without partiality." He says, "I'm telling you to do this and I'm telling you to do it because God is watching, Christ Jesus is watching and the holy angels are watching. And I call you to do this in front of God the eternal judge of the earth, in front of Christ to whom all judgment is given, in front of the elect angels, that is the holy angels, the unfallen angels, who are both spectators of the church and agents in judgment and I call you before the holiest of the holies of heaven to do this."

Why? God is concerned with the purity of the church. Christ is concerned with the purity of the church. The holy angels are concerned with the purity of the church. The elect angels, those who were chosen to eternal glory and holiness, along with serving God are waiting to see your obedience. That's the issue. They're waiting to see your obedience.

Now who you going to please? You going to worry about the community? You going to worry about God? The church still tolerates false teaching. It tolerates sin. And one of the grossest sins is false teaching. And another one that very few people talk about is money problems in the church. The church can tolerate all this and so save its reputation among men and lose its reputation in heaven.

It's to be done without prejudice...proskrimatos, without preferential treatment. In other words, you shouldn't say, "Well, you know, he's such a nice guy, everybody likes him." On the other hand, it shouldn't be done with partiality, that means, "I can't stand the guy, let's really dump it on him." It's done without trying to protect someone you prefer and without trying to expose someone you don't prefer. It's to be done with accuracy and integrity, unprejudice and impartial, but it's to be done and it's to be done because all of heaven is watching that it be done.

That's pretty strong stuff. I don't know...I don't know any way to say any stronger than the way Paul said it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that when you find a pastor who sins, all of the holy beings of heaven demand that you do a public exposure. That's hard.

You remember back in Matthew 18 when the discipline pattern was given there for how we confront each other with sin. It said, "Don't be afraid to do this," in effect, "because what's being done on earth has already been done in heaven, and where two or three of you are witnessing to that sin, there am I, says Christ, in your midst." So heaven is making the judgment that discipline needs to be done. Christ wants to enact that discipline. And that's why you ought to go ahead and do it in Matthew 18. Here he says you ought to go ahead and do it because all of holy heaven is waiting for you to do it. Are you going to protect the holiness of God or are you going to protect the reputation of a earthly organization?

So, in understanding the biblical eldership, we see that there's two sides...great privilege, great potential for honor, great accountability, great potential for dishonor. The honor is great. I'm telling you, folks, there's nothing like it. There is nothing to even come close to compare with the joy and the thrill of being in the service of Christ among loving, caring, respectful people, it is the greatest, the highest, the most sacred wonderful thrilling privilege imaginable. But on the other hand, the potential for dishonor is monumental because when a man has represented God and named his name and been honored and respected and falls into sin, the disgrace is great...it's great. And I really believe if churches would go back to this, we could insulate some men from sinning so easily because they think they can always get around it.

We need to restore a biblical eldership and men who are worthy of double honor because of the excellence of their leadership, because of the tremendous diligence of their preaching and teaching and because their lives are holy. And were you to check in to any area of their life...their marriage, how they treat their children, how they raise their children, how they are with their community, how they take care of their money, if you were to look in any area of their life, their attitude, you would find godliness. That's the kind of men we need in the ministry. If we could ever get back to that, we would see the glory of God in the church. Instead churches tolerate sin and demagoguery and unbiblical leaders and ungodly people, sins and they just don't do anything about it. They treat moral failure with indifference rather than courage. Public rebuke is almost absolutely unheard of. And all we ever hear about is a sort of a hue and cry of let's be loving to people. Well let's be loving to God. Our society is in to prosperity, not purity, it's into comfort not confrontation. But the church has to be into purity and confrontation, if need be.

Now since it's so vital that we honor elders, protect elders, and rebuke elders, the one last point that Paul wants us to understand now is how to select them. And we'll do that next week. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, thank You again this morning for this hour of worship. Thank You for being here with us. We

want to be the church that pleases You. We want You and the Lord Jesus Christ and the holy angels who are beholding Your grace in the church to see and praise You for what is going on here. We want to honor those that are over us in the Lord, esteem them highly for love's sake because of their work. We want to submit to them for they care for our souls as though that...as they that must give account and we want them to do it with joy and not with grief. We want to pattern our lives after them. Father, we want to respect them and support them and protect them from false accusation. But, Lord, also we want to protect Your holy name and the purity of Your church. And should there be, God, forbid, some discovery of sin, grant us the courage as we stand in full view of the trinity and the holy angels to do what You have asked us to do that others may fear and turn from sin because the price is so high. God, give us that kind of leadership in Your church across this world, then shall we know a real revival, not the lying false so-called revival that we see being created by perhaps even well-meaning people today, but a real revival in a pure church. And help us, Lord, to do all we can here to live that out.

We would pray, Lord, that we would never have cause to have to publicly expose a pastor here, an elder because we would have such a healthy fear and a healthy love for You that that would not happen. Thank You for the people who are this church, for all that You've done, even as we embark on a new year, we do so with great anticipation of the joy of what is ahead of us. And, Lord, for every spiritual need of every life this morning I pray, meet every need, every spiritual need, every physical need, whatever they might be. We pray for the Savior's sake. Amen.

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