

The Pastoral Epistles

I Timothy 5:17-23 ¹⁷Elders who do their work well should be respected and paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, “You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain.” And in another place, “Those who work deserve their pay!”

¹⁹Do not listen to an accusation against an elder unless it is confirmed by two or three witnesses. ²⁰Those who sin should be reprimanded in front of the whole church; this will serve as a strong warning to others.

²¹I solemnly command you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and the highest angels to obey these instructions without taking sides or showing favoritism to anyone.

²²Never be in a hurry about appointing a church leader. Do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

²³Don’t drink only water. You ought to drink a little wine for the sake of your stomach because you are sick so often.

There are three terms used in the New Testament that appear to be referencing the same office of church leadership: pastor, bishop, and elder. In the context of this passage, it seems quite obvious that the elder in reference is holding that office, and isn’t speaking of an older person.

* These should “do their work well” – are serving, and have served with _____ in the position they hold

* These should “be respected and paid well” – consider them worthy of twice as much _____

(What is the double amount based upon? Chapter 5, verse 3 states that widows are to be honored, thus receiving support in all areas of need, but typically in meeting physical needs. Faithful pastors, therefore, are worthy of twice that amount.)

* These should “work hard at both preaching and teaching”

- Preaching – A means whereby God communicates to us through a man’s _____

Q. 65 Q. It is through faith alone that we share in Christ and all his benefits: where then does that faith come from?

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts (1), by the preaching of the holy gospel (2), and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments (3).

1 John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:8

2 Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25

3 Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 10:16

Heidelberg Catechism, 1563

- Teaching – A means of instruction, communicating informative truth

What is the difference between preaching and teaching?

Preaching intends to change the _____ of the listener. Teaching intends to change the _____ of the listener. – Pastor Adam

Paul goes on to quote scripture to support his teaching. _____ 25:4 is an abstract, but God-given command. It is intended that beasts of burden have open access to sustenance. It is their “right.” _____ 10:7 is in the context of Christ sending out his disciples, and He tells them that if they are offered food, to eat, and enjoy it, for they are deserving of such.

Verses 19-21 are sober instructions concerning the office too. If ongoing sin is observed in a pastor by several, he is to be publicly “reprimanded.” That is, he is to be _____ or even _____. This is for sin, not personality, style, or points of _____.

* Some examples of sins that would be grounds for confrontation would be:

homosexuality, adultery, drunkenness, dishonesty, blatantly teaching false doctrine, pride, or some other clearly defined offense against God as given in His Word.

In order to be true to the Lord in His work, Timothy was to do business without partiality. How difficult would it be to have to reprimand a staff member who is a friend, a comrade in the ministry, and a person whom you may trust deeply?

Paul then gives three solemn commands:

1. Don't be in a hurry to appoint a church leader. Who fits into that category?
2. Don't share in someone else's sin. What might those be?
3. Keep yourself innocent. What does that look like? How could that be done?

The last instructions in the passage are the source of some debate among conservative students of the Word. The “old-school” fundamentalists teach that the wine referenced in verse 23 is actually fresh grape juice, not fermented.

Paul directed Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake. The Greek word *oinos* can be understood as either alcoholic or nonalcoholic. Since Paul says that bishops should not be given to wine (I Timothy 3:2-3), it would be contradictory for Paul to then instruct Timothy to take a little wine in I Timothy 5:23. Medically speaking, grape juice would have helped Timothy's stomach, but an alcoholic wine would not. – Dr. Reynolds – Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

There is sharp disagreement with Dr. Reynolds perspective.

In that day wine was employed as a medicinal agent for many ailments. This has been true in medical practice until very recent times. Water was unsafe to drink in many parts of the world, and yet Timothy apparently was refraining from any use of the common beverage, wine, lest he might be thought of as “given to wine,” (3:3). Paul urges that the medicinal purpose was a valid use, and should not be avoided when his health called for it. However, Timothy's weak stomach is no argument for drinking liquor today. – Dr. Kent – Grace Theological Seminary