



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Timothy 5: 17-25

“More Instruction About Elders”

1 Timothy

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our text this evening is 1 Timothy 5. We'll look in verses 17 through 25.

First, let's have a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You for the time that we have to gather again this evening and to come here and study Your word. We pray You bless us as we do that. We look into the details of the church, a subject that was very dear to the heart of the apostle. And we learn through our study this evening certain of those details in how the church is to be governed, the relationship of the congregation to the leaders and the kind of conduct that is to be engaged in by all. And we pray that You bless us as we study these things.

We pray that You would bless this assembly, that it would be shepherded by godly undershepherds under the leadership of Jesus Christ and that the congregation would respond well and that it would be nurtured well not only by the men whom you have appointed as leaders of this assembly, but most importantly, through the spirit of God that He would give all of us a desire to live lives of obedient service to You in whatever position we occupy. We all are believer priests. We all have our responsibilities. And we pray that You would bless us with a desire to serve You faithfully.

So bless our time as we study these things. And we pray that You would bless not only those of us meeting in this room, but the others who are meeting, the young people and bless those who teach them. May it be an enjoyable and profitable time for all of us this evening. And we commit our

time to You. Bless our time of study. And then bless our time of prayer afterwards as well. We commit the evening to You.

We pray these things in Christ’s name. Amen.

[Message] 1 Timothy 5, beginning with verse 17, “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shalt not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’ Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evidence, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.”

Earlier in the book, in chapter 3, Paul gave instruction on the overseers of the church. And here, in chapter 5, he gives instruction on the elders of the church. The two names refer to the same office. We see that in Acts 20, for example, when both of these words are used of the same group of men, the elders of the church at Ephesus, who came to Miletus to say farewell to the apostle Paul. In Acts 20:18, they’re called the elders. And then in verse 28, Paul states that the Holy Spirit made them overseers. So these refer to the same group of men. And the fact that Paul comes back to this subject after he dealt with it at some length in chapter 3 shows the importance of this subject, the subject of the elders, the leaders of the church, to the apostle Paul.

The word overseer describes the nature of the ministry that the elder enters into. He watches over the congregation. The word elder describes the dignity of the office. It speaks of age. It’s a word that generally means an

older person, elderly person. It was used, for example, at the beginning of this chapter in verse 1 of chapter 5. But, here, it clearly means the elder in the sense of the officer of the church, because these are those, Paul says, who rule. So he’s speaking of the elders, the overseers of the church. He uses different words for different context. The word overseer was appropriate to the subject of chapter 3, because, there, it had to do with the qualifications and the responsibility of the office. And, here, the word elder is appropriate because it deals with the right response of the congregation to those who hold the office, a response that should be befitting the dignity of that office.

The first thing he says in verse 17 is that, “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” Ruling is the function of the elder. And that word doesn’t have the idea of ruling with an iron hand as an authoritarian, but it has the idea of general supervision. And we see that as the sense or the meaning of this idea of ruling, of governing the church and other places in the New Testament. One example is Hebrews 13 in verse 17, where the author of Hebrews writes that they keep watch over the souls of the congregation.

And so you get the picture of a shepherd as one who looks out over the flock and gives general supervision. I’ve used the illustration before. I think it’s appropriate, but while my exposure to shepherds is very limited – very limited – I did watch a shepherd periodically when I was student over in Israel. That time – that was 20 years ago – there were Arab shepherds right there on the campus – one of the campuses of the Hebrew University. And I would watch him periodically. And about all he did was stand there and watch over his sheep. And every once in a while, one would kind of wander off, and he would throw a rock at it, or he’d yell at it. But that was pretty much his job. It wasn’t dealing with every one of the sheep. He wasn’t making them eat. He was there just watching them, making sure that they got to the pastures and making sure they got home that night. In fact, he would herd them right through the parking lot. Then, I could look out the window and see this flock of sheep come through the parking lot.

So I think I learned a little bit about what the idea of the shepherd is.

He's not one that deals in the details of the lives of all of those in the assembly. He gives general supervision and watches out, keeps that which is dangerous from entering the flock, and brings them to the right places. And that's just what the shepherd is to do, and that's just what the elder does. He keeps watch over the souls of the congregation. I don't want to make it sound like he doesn't do much. He does a great deal, and he's to be vigilant in that, and it is to be something that he is constantly attending to, the souls of the sheep, watching to make sure that things are going properly. And, of course, sometimes, that will involve very personal involvement in the lives of individuals as they wander off or as they find themselves in various difficulties.

It's a big responsibility, and all of the elders are responsible to do that, but there is a division among them. All rule, but Paul says that some work hard at preaching and teaching. So there are two kinds of elders. All have spiritual gifts, as every believer in Jesus Christ does. Every member of the assembly, every member of the congregation has a spiritual gift. If you're a Christian, you have a gift, and it's to be used. You all have an office. Every one of us is believer priests, and so we are to function in that office as well. And that's true of every elder. Every elder is a believer priest. Every elder has a gift and is to be using those gifts. And every elder to be keeping watch over the souls of the sheep. But some have the gift of pastor teacher. And those who work hard at that ministry of doing shepherding and teaching are worthy, Paul says, of double honor. They're worthy, certainly, of appreciation. And, evidently, not all congregations appreciated the elders who were fulfilling their responsibilities well, because Paul felt the need to instruct Timothy to instruct the congregation at Ephesus to do that.

The author of Hebrews did the same. And, evidently, he found something of a problem in this way, because in Hebrews 13:17, he writes, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls." And then he adds, "Let them do this with joy and not grief." Well, it's easy for the congregation to give the elders grief and not joy. It's very easy to grumble against leaders. And we know that if we read our Bibles. If we've

studied the Bible at any length, particularly the Old Testament, you see Israel doing that. Grumbled continually against Moses and against Aaron. They grumbled in the wilderness against the Lord. They were grumblers, and we can see something of ourselves in that. So if we read our Bibles, we know that it's a tendency of God's people to grumble. And if we look at ourselves, we know that that's the case. That's just human nature.

Well, perhaps that was the problem at the church at Ephesus. And so perhaps to correct that or simply Paul is encouraging the congregation to do something that they'd overlooked. Paul says that elders who work hard, who work well are worthy of double honor. There are a number of different opinions on the meaning of that expression double honor. Some interpret it in terms of pay. Others interpret it in terms of appreciation. And others of both pay and appreciation. The Lutheran commentator, Lenski, interprets honor as appreciation alone. And he supports that from the Jewish synagogue and the elders that were in the Jewish synagogue. And he states that they did not receive pay. He doesn't really give any support for that other than it would have been impractical to pay the elders, because there were so many of them.

But since the word honor is used in the earlier context, the earlier part of the chapter of the widows, and it's used in the context of financial support, that seems to be the meaning in part, if not in whole., for this world honor. And that's supported very clearly, it seems in verse 18 where Paul gives the basis for his instruction. He cites Scripture. “For the Scripture says – ” and then he quotes two passages, and the first passage is Deuteronomy 25:4, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.”

The threshing floor was a piece of ground, usually in an area that was exposed to the wind. Occasionally, you'll see people in the Middle East doing this today. I was in Egypt years ago, and we were on a bus. And we went by this Egyptian farmer, peasant who was out there with his ox, and the ox was threshing. It was going around in a circle, and it would pull this threshing sledge, which he either grinds the wheat up or it cuts it up, chops it up. And then if it's in the place where there is a breeze, a wind, and they will winnow the wheat at that point. But the idea is this ox goes around in a circle

and is threshing. And there's grain at its feet. Pagans would muzzle their oxen so that they couldn't eat the grain that had been threshed. But the law stipulated that an ox was not to be muzzled. It was to be allowed to eat of the fruit of its labor. And it shows the kindness and the generosity of God and the kindness and the generosity of the Israelite toward his animal.

And Paul draws a principle from this that he applies to God's workmen, those who labor in the Lord's work. They have a right to partake of the fruit of their labors. Now, that's the point of the next quote as well, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." That is a verbatim quote from Luke 10:7. And this is interesting for a reason aside from the point that Paul is making here, but Paul and Luke were very good friends, as we know. Luke wrote the third gospel, the Gospel of Luke. And it's reasonable to assume that by the time Paul writes this, he has access to that gospel. It's reasonable to assume that Luke has finished it by this time and that Paul was quoting from it.

And what makes that significant is that Paul includes that with his statement about Scripture. He includes that as a reference to Scripture. Later on in the next book that Paul wrote, 2 Timothy 3 in verse 16, he says, "All Scripture is inspired by God." When we study that, we know Paul must mean the Old Testament. It was the completed canon of Israel, and certainly he had that. And that was the main Bible of the early church. It had the Old Testament. It studied the Old Testament. But during that time, the New Testament was being formed. The canon was being completed, and by the end of Paul's life, he had, it would seem the Gospel of Luke as well as many other texts of Scripture. And so this would indicate that not only is Paul referring to the Old Testament as being inspired, as being God breathed, but the New Testament as well. So we can draw the principle from that that our entire Bible is God breathed, it's inspired, and because it's God breathed, because it's inspired, it's inherent, and it is sufficient, it is reliable for faith and practice, for all of the things that it addresses. What we know about God is absolutely reliable. The way we're to live before God in relationship to one another is absolutely reliable. Paul wrote that. He was referring – in 2

Timothy 3:16, he’s referring to what he’s writing here about elders and about the congregation.

The purpose, though, of the quote that he gives here is not that. It is to support from both testaments that the man who spends all his time in the work of the ministry should be supported by the congregation. It is a privilege for all of us to be able to do that, to support the Lord’s work. And it is a privilege for even those of us who are supported in the Lord’s work to do that, because we, too, are ministered to by others in the congregation and in various ways, not only by teaching but in other ways as well. And so those who are worthy of double honor are not excused from also sharing in that responsibility.

And I can say that this congregation has been very faithful in doing that. I listen to Dr. Johnson’s tape on this text, and he made the same point. He pointed that out Believers Chapel may be deficient in some areas. He didn’t list any of the areas. But we can be assured that we are deficient in many areas just because we’re what we are. We’re fallen creatures who’ve been redeemed by the grace of God. And so we have our frailties and our failures. But this is one area where he could testify that Believers Chapel has done a very faithful job in response to the Lord’s commandments. I can say the same thing. We have been very faithful. In fact, I can remember years ago before I was even in seminary, but involved in the church, hearing what others had said about Believers Chapel – men who had visited the church and spoken. Believers Chapel had a reputation at that time for being a very generous church, and I think that that has been maintained.

Well, financial reward is the principle idea that Paul is stating here in this instruction about double honor. That, of course, should never be a reason for a man entering the ministry. Man enters the ministry to serve the Lord. And I’m hesitant at this point, because Dr. Johnson, he made the point, and I make the point to every one of us who are in the ministry, we’re all believer priests. We all have a function. But some men do take on this particular responsibility as elders of preaching and teaching. No one should ever enter the ministry for some personal gain, for financial gain or for what may be

perceived as the prestige of an office. Some might think it's a prestigious position to be a minister, to be able to stand before a congregation and speak. There are all kinds of motives that go on in the mind of an individual. There's only one motive that should guide a person going into the ministry. That is to serve the Lord and to serve His people and not the financial concerns or anything else. But the church has the responsibility to support those who teach, those who minister. That is Paul's main point.

But giving honor does seem to have the idea of showing respect as well. And I think that we could see that at least implied in the next verse, in verse 19 where Paul states that the elders are not to, “Receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.” Well, the law made a similar safeguard for the Israelites. They couldn't be convicted of a crime unless two or three reliable witnesses testified against the individual. And here an accusation against an elder is not even to be entertained unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. At a minimum, Paul is protecting the church leaders from what one commentator termed frivolous complaints that are periodically made – sometimes not periodically, but frivolous complaints that can be an annoyance and be a hindrance to the ministry.

Well, I say at a minimum that's what Paul is doing, but more importantly, this is a protection against slander. And, of course, the evil one, who is our enemy, is a slanderer, and he will try to destroy the reputation of church leaders. I think we heard about that last week. And that is the case. When a man is doing the work of the Lord, an attack will take place. And there are many ways in which Satan can bring an attack against the Lord's work. One way is in terms of slander. And there are people who spread lies. There are people who are chronic liars. There are people who get even with people by doing just that.

I watched a program on the international news the other day, and it had to do with cell phones in the Philippines and the problem they have with a **peck no** messages. And so the problem is people are spreading rumors on these cell phones and then puts it on the internet. And they interviewed one guy in particular who said that when he gets angry at someone, he may send

out 100 false rumors on that individual in a day. And he was a student who'd been dismissed from a university because he'd been slandering his professors. And well that's interesting. There are people who make a practice of lying. And if they get angry, they'll lie. They'll spread rumors. Well, we shouldn't be surprised by that, because that's what the evil one does. He's a slanderer. And so these things happen.

People like that get into the church just like tares that grow up in a wheat field. And the greatest protection from malicious talk is a circumspect life. Give no occasion for gossip. And a man who's in this position, who is an elder or a deacon, but any Christian – we can apply this across the board, but certainly for an elder, that person ought to live a very careful life. But even a perfect life, there's no guaranty against lies and gossip. The Lord was falsely accused of all kinds of sins from drunkenness to blasphemy. He was innocent of everything, but His enemies laid false charges against him. So knowing human nature and the wiles of the devil, Paul drew upon the wisdom of the law for this rule pertaining to accusations against the elders.

But alas, elders do sin. And so when the accusations are true and are supported by credible witnesses, action must be taken. And Paul explains that in verse 20, “Those who continue in sin,” he writes, “rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.” So when an elder does lapse into sin, he is to be punished, and he's to be punished severely. He is to be publicly dealt with, not privately.

Now, there is question as to what this means, he is to be rebuked in the presence of all. Does it mean all the congregation, or does it mean all the elders? And it's not clear. Certainly, there are occasions when an elder is going to be – if that is the case, if he's caught in a continuing sin will be brought before the congregation as would any member of the congregation who is being dealt with in discipline. But the fact that Paul says, “So that the rest will be fearful of sinning,” seems to refer to the elders, the rest of the elders, and that this speaking of here is a rebuke before the elders. And the purpose is to keep them from falling into sin. So he's to be made an example of before the elders for that purpose, for a correction, not only of himself but

as a preventative kind of correction for others that they won't fall into sin as well. So with the sense of appreciation at the congregation is to develop and to show toward elders, the elders as well are to develop a sense of humility and certainly know that they are frail and that they can fall. Pride goes before destruction as Proverbs 16:18 states. And if the elder doesn't cultivate a spirit of humility, then he will perhaps be humbled in this way.

Now, these instructions had been given to Timothy, and he is to introduce them to the congregation. And he also is to practice them. And you can imagine that that could be difficult for someone like Timothy, really anyone. But Timothy was relatively young, as Paul has described him, maybe fairly timid, because he has to encourage him to do this work that he's been assigning him to do. And so this instruction could be difficult for him, particularly if discipline would involve a personal friend, or discipline would involve an older man, an elder of some authority and position.

As I said, Paul understood human nature. He understood it quite well. And so in verse 21, he solemnly charges Timothy to carry out this instruction. It might be difficult, but he must carry it out. All of the instruction that he's given, but this instruction particularly here regarding the elders, he's not to show favoritism. Verse 21, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.” If Timothy or the other elders see a sin among the group of elders and were to sweep that matter under the rug, were to ignore it some way, avoid it because of the difficulty of dealing with it, they'd ignore the problem with a friend, then it would spell disaster for the church and for the person who was to be corrected.

The church, as Paul had told us, in chapter 3 in verse 15 is the pillar and support of the truth. If sin in the church is tolerated, then the sin will grow, just like leaven, as Paul told the Corinthians. It will expand. Sin does not just stay small and quiet. It will expand. It will have an influence, and it will have an effect, and, ultimately, it will undermine the work of God. And so Paul is adamant about this. It must be dealt with regardless of who that individual is. An esteemed elder or a personal friend, it's got to be dealt

with.

So Paul, to impress that on Timothy that this is a solemn duty, charges him before Christ and the angels to do it. The angels, we're told in other places, observe the church. They know what's going on. Paul says that in 1 Corinthians 4:9, and in 1 Corinthians 11:10. And they observe what takes place. And so Paul calls upon the whole heavenly realm as a witness, to be a witness against Timothy, to be a witness against the elders in case they do not carry out the duty that they have been given to bring about correction and purity in the church. It's very important. As I said, this is a subject of the church that's very dear to the apostle Paul. This is what he did. He went about establishing churches. And he cared very deeply for all the churches. He carried the burdens of the churches in his heart. He was very concerned that they be governed well.

But, having given this instruction on discipline, a lot of trouble can be avoided if precautions are taken from the very beginning. And that's what Paul advises in verse 22, “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.” Paul must have seen this as a real problem, because in chapter 3 in verse 6, he gave very similar counsel. In regard to the qualifications and the appointment of elders, he said a new convert was not to be recognized as an elder. So a novice is not to be placed in a position of authority. And here he says, “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily.” Be very careful about this.

It's a natural tendency, I think, for people to do that – to do that if they see someone who is gifted, someone who shows enthusiasm for the things of God, someone who has a winsome personality. There are many different reasons that people are commended to us, and we're attracted to them, and we see gift in them. And the tendency is to put them in a position of leadership immediately. They're gifted. They have a good personality. They have good convictions or whatever might be the case. And so we rush to give them responsibilities. But being well-liked, even having a gift and skill in using that gift, those are not the qualifications for the position of elder. They can help, of course, in that ministry. But those don't fit a person necessarily for

that office. The qualifications, again, are listed in chapter 3. And underlying those qualifications is that of maturity. That is what must be seen in a person who's recognized as an elder. There's great wisdom in moving with deliberate speed, not rushing into things. And that is particularly true with the recognition of church leaders. Give a person time to develop and demonstrate that he is a person that God is raising up for that particular position, a position of authority.

So a man being considered for elder should be thoroughly examined. That person should be well-known – well-known in terms of his character and his doctrine. And if a person is given time to mature and develop within a congregation that will be known. These things will be known. But then I think also he should be examined. He should be talked to. He should be asked – questions should be put to him along these lines, what he believes. In so doing, a thorough knowledge of that individual will be obtained. Paul ends the verse with a rather abrupt personal charge to Timothy, “Keep yourself free from sin.” And what he means by that is he is to recognize men who are pure, and he's to keep himself pure in the process. He's to keep himself free from sin.

Verse 23, the personal advice continues with some instruction pertaining to Timothy's health, “No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” Commentators have puzzled over the connection between this verse and the previous. It may be that there is no connection, that Paul is simply giving some needed advice to Timothy, and he interjects it at this point. But it may have to do with the last statement that Paul made about keeping himself free from sin, because Timothy may have been very concerned to do that. I'm sure he was. And to avoid even the appearance of sin and the accusation that he might be lingering beside the wine, Timothy might have taken the extreme precaution of abstaining from wine altogether and drinking only water. And so for the sake of his health, Paul advises him to use a little wine. And the reason for that is the water in the orient was often unsafe. And we know about that if we've traveled to foreign lands, you must be careful about the

water that you drink. And so that’s probably what Paul is referring to here, that water could be bad for his health. And Timothy evidently had a weak stomach and was subject to attacks of dysentery.

Wine was an ancient remedy for indigestion. One of the better commentators on *The Pastoral Epistles*, J.N.D. Kelly, cites some ancient references to that. He cites Hippocrates and Plutarch on the medical benefits of wine. Plutarch called it the most useful of drinks and the pleasantest of medicines. Proverbs 31 in verse 6 states, “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter.” So Paul was advising that. Paul was advising Timothy to substitute a little wine for water. And the medicinal use of that is indicated here in the words that he uses, “Use a little wine.” In other words, make use of it. That’s different from saying, “Enjoy some wine.” And has a practical connotation to it. Plus, it’s clear from the context, he says, “For your frequent ailments.” So this is medicinal use.

That’s not to say that it’s wrong to enjoy a glass of wine. I don’t think that it is. I don’t think that Christ had any scruples about drinking wine. If you think He did, then read John 2. It seems rather clear that he didn’t, since the first miracle that He performed was changing water to wine. But also it’s worth noting that Paul says a little wine and not a lot. The Bible is very clear on condemning drunkenness. And whether or not one drinks wine or not is a matter of conscience. The Bible certainly doesn’t command us to drink wine, and we’re not instructed to do it. If you don’t want to drink wine, and you have scruples about it, that’s fine. Others should respect you for that, and you should do what you believe that the Lord would have you to do.

Now, following this personal counsel, Paul comes back to the subject of elders and the selection or the ordination of elders. And we read verse 24, “The sins of some are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after. Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.” In other words, there are good men in the world, and there are bad men in the world. Some are obviously bad and would never be considered for the office. Their sins, he says, are evident. And I think he mentions that – mentions the obvious in

order to get to the point that not everyone’s sins, though, are evident. Not every bad man’s sins go before him to judgment – are obvious to everyone. Now, their sins don’t go before them. They follow after.

Now, some have explained that as meaning that they won’t be exposed until they come to light at the judgment seat. And, of course, that’s true. But I’m not sure that that idea would be particularly helpful for Timothy, and he would have known that. I don’t know that that would have been particularly helpful for him in this process of recognizing elders. I think it’s more likely that Paul means that in time, a man’s true character will become known. And this is the reason for not laying hands upon an individual quickly, that eventually a person’s character is going to be known. And if that is a bad person who’s not evidently bad, then eventually, that person’s character will come to light. A tree is known by its fruit, and the fruit of an evil man will manifest itself in time. It will follow after.

Now, the same is true of a good man, a qualified man. Some are quite evidence. In other words, we know who they are. Their good characteristics, their good qualities are very evident to all of us. There’s no doubt about that. Others, though, will be known. They cannot be concealed, Paul says. Their characters and their ability will be manifested just as a tree that produces fruit in its season. In time, the gifts, the abilities, the character that may not be all that apparent in a young believer or in someone who is not known well, that person’s character will become known just like a tree that has its season of bearing fruit. And we all have our seasons. And we will bear fruit in time if we are patient, and if we’re diligent. And in God’s time, we develop and we’re known. So we all need to be patient and faithful. We all need to be patient and faithful in our lives, in the way we live our lives, the way we relate to one another, and in carrying out the work that God has given us to do. But Timothy and the elders, those whom Paul is addressing, are to be patient toward others, toward those who might be recognized as being elders. They are to proceed with caution.

None of these instructions, of course, are foolproof. And men who are not fit for the office can come into that position. They come into the

churches, and we don't recognize them immediately. Jesus had Judas. Now, the Lord was never fooled by Judas. There was never a moment when He thought Judas was genuine. He knew from the very beginning. When He chose him he knew the kind of man he was. And He exposed him without naming his name in John 6:7. He said, “One of you is a devil.” He knew from the beginning. But still, good men have had their Judases. Good men have had men who have betrayed them. You can read their lives. Calvin had experiences – men he trusted, men who served with him who turned out to be not such faithful servants. I'm sure it's true of most every man. They've experienced betrayal. And those things are going to happen. There are good precautions to take. And we should take those precautions. As I said, they're not foolproof. And that fact makes it all the more important to be careful.

And when those individuals do – they are exposed, when that happens, when they fall into sin, or they're discovered to be continuing in sin and not fit for the office that they occupy, then we are to apply the instruction that Paul gave and be very diligent in doing that, to protect the purity of the church. The office of elder is very important. And its integrity, its purity is essential for the purity of the church. Paul indicates its great importance, as I said, by the fact that he's come back to this subject. Dealt with it in chapter 3, but before he concludes the letter, he deals with it again, because this is very important. So the congregation must see it as important.

The congregation is not passive in these things. It must address elders with respect, not bring a false charge, and be very careful about the charges that it brings. But when it sees a failure, it must bring that before the elders and do it in the proper way. And what the congregation should be doing particularly if we can take this term honor to have not only a financial meaning but also that of respect, appreciation, it is to be praying for the elders diligently, constantly, because they are made of dust just as everyone else. And they need the prayers of the saints because they face a great deal of pressure from the evil one. And so that's what we're to be doing. May God help us to do that, to be diligent in our duties as believer priests and those of us who are elders to be diligent in the responsibilities that God has given to

us.

Well, let's conclude with a word of prayer before we, again, look to the thrown of grace. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for your goodness and Your grace. And we thank You for this epistle that Paul wrote in which he gives Timothy instruction on the church and how it is to be governed and how things are to take place in the household of God, which is the pillar and support of the truth. And we pray that we would manage the affairs of this assembly in a wise and orderly way, in a way that pleases you and in a way in which the truth will go forth clearly. So to that end, Father, bless the congregation, bless all of the members of this assembly, all of the believer priests with a sense of earnestness about who they are and what they're to be doing. Bless the elders and the deacons with the great sense of responsibility that has been laid upon them that we would do the ministry well in a way that pleases You and will be a benefit to this church and this church will be a benefit to the unbelieving world around us. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.