

1 Timothy 5:1-17

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 July 2015

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 01] Beneath the cross of Jesus, his family is my own. Once strangers chasing selfish dreams, now one through grace alone. How could I now dishonour the ones that you have loved?

! Beneath the cross of Jesus, the children called by God. That's the theme in many ways of 155. Last week, do you remember? We looked at churches as families, particularly there in verses 1 and 2 of chapter 5.

And he wants you and I to see today that if we really belong to the Lord Jesus, then sitting around you are your mothers and your fathers in Christ and your brothers and sisters in Christ.

It's a great reminder as we come to the table. But then he went on in verses 3 to 16 that we saw how serious Paul views this. What it really means for you and I to treat each other as family.

And especially in the case of older women and widows. It means serious responsibility, sacrificial love, and thoughtful systems. To make sure that those who are in genuine need don't miss out on genuine care.

[1 : 07] And so having talked about older women in verses 1 to 16, we find that from verse 17 to the end, Paul speaks about older men. Or currently elders.

And then quickly we see what Paul has got to say to slaves in chapter 6 verses 1 and 2. But as we come to this section, we've got to keep that big theme in mind.

Paul is driving this unrelenting commitment to the church as a family. He believes the church is precious to God as children are precious to a father.

He believes that those who exercise authority in church life ought to be protected so that they can exercise that authority properly. But also those elders must be held to a proper account.

And we see the significance of their responsibilities. He believes whatever else a relationship you might have outside of the church, even if it's slave master, even if it's employer and boss, in the church, men and women are first of all brothers and sisters.

[2 : 13] They are family. And if we are family, we ought to act like it. That's Paul's fundamental conviction. We're going to look at the two sections. There's no real points this morning. First elders and then slaves and then some application.

So look at verse 17. You see he picks it up. Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour. Especially those who labour in preaching and teaching. Now the word elders there is exactly the same word as is used in verse 1 for older men.

But there can be no question what Paul is talking about. He's talking about those men in a church family who exercise leadership within the fellowship. He describes them as elders who direct the fellowship.

And he acknowledges that some, though not all of these elders, will be engaged in directing the church through the preaching publicly of the word. Public preaching of the word. But what does he mean by those who lead the church are worthy of double honour?

I'm hearing someone once preach on this verse and saying that what the double honour means is that the preacher should have double pay. Now I think there is a very strong argument for that.

[3 : 27] But certainly not from the Bible. Alright? Get that out of your mind. It doesn't matter. That is what he's talking about here. It seems to me he's talking about the double honour of two things. Respect and payment. That's why it's double honour.

It's pretty simple. There have been books written on this verse. Whole theology is based on it. I don't agree with that. I think it's two things. It's talking about honour and payment. It's what he goes on to speak about.

He goes on to speak about honour. Which is for all elders and payment which by necessity isn't for all. He tells the church how to respect their elders and to make sure they get paid properly.

So I think that's the double honour that he's talking about. Paul assumes not all will get paid. Just as he assumed earlier on in the chapter. Not all widows will receive support.

That is based on the belief, isn't it? Very clearly that the church cannot sustain. And the church doesn't have unlimited resources. So as with widows in the previous section.

[4 : 25] Paul suggests how should we make that distinction. How should we distinguish between those elders they pay and elders they don't. Well he says they should give double honour payment and respect to those who lead well.

And especially to those who devote themselves to feeding the church family with the ministry of God's word. He underlines it with two quotes. The first quote is from Deuteronomy 25.

It's in the Old Testament law. You see this there in verse 18. You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain. It was originally a command.

The New Old Testament ox who worked the field was properly rewarded for his work by being allowed to eat along the way. It's a great comparison isn't it between preachers and oxes.

So people like me devote themselves to the ministry of the word so they should be able to eat along the way. The second quote is incredible. The second quote is from Luke's gospel.

[5 : 25] Do you see that? The neighbour deserves his wages. Jesus speaks of those disciples deserving to be supported. They're supported by those who take the message of the kingdom too.

I think it's really significant isn't it? Paul is writing probably about AD 60. And the gospel of Luke or at least an early form of it is regarded as a scripture. I hope you notice that.

Here are words written by a man called Luke for sure. But they are words that are ultimately inspired by God. It's AD 60. And Luke's gospel is really the scripture.

But whatever the case the significant thing here is Paul believes that it was first established in the old covenant law. And then it's reaffirmed by the Lord Jesus. That those who labour in the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

Now we know again isn't it? This section of 1 Timothy is part of a book. 1 Timothy. Where told in 1 Timothy elders should not be men who love money. But nevertheless it's saying to you and I their basic needs should be provided for.

[6 : 36] And this is part of what Paul means when he says elders should be properly honoured. Now again the implications are not very hard for you and I to see. It's one of the reasons why we ask people to give financially.

To support the ministry they receive here at IPC. And so if you are a member of the church here and you are giving without putting much thought into it.

Well actually you're not giving at all. And I would have thought these verses raise some questions don't they? Paul says the elder who directs the affairs of the church well they're worthy of double honour.

And it's still in that context that Paul shifts tack a little bit. Can you look at verse 19? Here he moves on from elders and wages to consider elders and sin.

Look at verse 19. As for those who persist in sin. Well verse 19. Do not bring a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

[7 : 33] And again do you see what Paul is doing? He draws on the Old Testament principle. And once again it is affirmed that the Lord Jesus himself reaffirms it. But here Paul applies it in a particular context.

And he is looking for protection of church leaders against mischievous accusations. He knows that church leaders are vulnerable to this sort of thing.

Sometimes leaders because of their decisions or teaching have upset or offended church members. In fact I would want to argue about that. I would want to argue that so strongly.

I would want to say that leaders who never do that are not Christian leaders. There should always be someone in church upset or offended.

I mean that's probably fair. Sometimes people just want to see their elders undermined. Kind of tall poppy syndrome. There are times out there, I don't know whether you know this, there are times when people invent things.

[8 : 34] Or they twist the truth in an effort to overthrow an elder's leadership. And Paul insists that elders, leaders be guarded against that. By the unwillingness of a congregation to brook an accusation against an elder unless it's accompanied by more than one person.

That is not to say, that is not to say that serious claims against an elder shouldn't be investigated. But Paul is simply saying an elder at church like anybody else ought not to be presumed guilty without any evidence.

Paul calls for elders to be seriously protected in this way. But he also calls for elders to be held seriously uncomfortable. That is the flip side. And so this position of leadership means that they need to be respected and honoured for the exercise of a weighty responsibility.

But so they also ought to be properly disciplined if they fail in the exercise of that weighty responsibility. Look at verse 20. He says, Now I don't think that Paul is saying when a leader, when an elder falls into any kind of sin, it should be mentioned publicly.

If that was what we did, church would go on for a long time, wouldn't it? Every Sunday morning. It's more likely, I think, that Paul is referring to sin which can seriously undermine a leader's reputation.

[10:08] And we saw in chapter 3 and chapter 4, do you remember how important it is a leader's reputation is? Nor do I think that it's talking about a leader who has sinned in this way, but is properly and genuinely sorry and repentant.

There are times when a leader's sin ought to disqualify him from further leadership, even when there's repentance. But that isn't always the case. I don't think Paul is calling for public rebuke whenever there is serious sin.

But I think it's consistent with the rest of the New Testament that what Paul is talking about is when somebody who is in leadership is unrepentant of their sin. And they need to have their repentance publicly exposed for their own sake, but for the sake of the fellowship as well.

I hope you noticed that the public rebuke, can you see that, is for the sake of others in the presence of all, so that the rest of them may stand in fear. Paul probably there means other elders.

Although the public rebuking of an elder would no doubt have a kind of strong effect, a solitary effect on everyone who heard it.

[11:25] But the absolute minimum that Paul is talking about here is when an elder is rebuked, he wants other elders to take notice. He wants us to make sure that the serious responsibility leaders carry are before the attention, not just of the one who has failed, but of those who share a similar burden.

And that logic is embedded, it is built into 1 Timothy. Leadership in the Christian church is primarily about character.

It is significantly to do with the setting of a good example. And here is why moral compromise is so momentous. You will know that whenever a politician falls into public disgrace, the debate rages, doesn't it, over whether that person's private life is a matter for public scrutiny.

Surely people can do what they want in their private life as long as they're competent in their political job. What that person does in their own time, well, is it even relevant to their public role? But in the Christian church, understand this, there is absolutely no doubt that what a leader does on their own time is absolutely relevant.

The distinction between an elder's private life and public life shouldn't even be made. Because the way that an elder leads the church is by modelling the Christian life as much by any other means.

[12:52] So that the instance his example isn't worth following, his ability to do the job that he's been asked to do is completely undone.

And that is why Paul calls here for an expression of whole church accountability. Because the elder in reality is accountable to the whole church. Of course, this has got really big implications for us in the church.

There are those here who have been entrusted with Christian leadership in one form or another. And I firmly believe that these principles are the right principles to follow if an allegation is made against an elder.

Unless that accusation can be substantiated, we ought not even to entertain it. Because if an accusation of unrepentant and serious sin is brought and it's corroborated and the leader refuses to repent, then we ought to express the leader's sin publicly.

And if that moment ever comes, can you look at verse 21? Here is Paul's how you do it. He says, Despite the very great temptations there's going to be at that time, the temptation will, one, be, it'll be to soften the stance, won't it?

[14:19] Through friendship. We've known this man for years. How can we do this? Or the other is the stiffen stance. We feel so angry, we feel betrayed.

Now I want to publicly thank God we've not had to do this in this congregation. And I thank God because I think, as you reflect on this passage, you see something of the immense grief and pain and damage that this brings to a fellowship.

And so I want to plead with you. I want to plead with you to join me in praying that God will spare us from ever having to go down this track. And please pray for the leaders, the elders in this congregation, that we would be people who live with unchecked integrity.

Who set a good example every day of our lives. I'm grateful, I know many of you pray for me and pray for us as elders. I'm very grateful. Pray that we would be leaders of uncompromised character. Pray that we would be kept from sin that can destroy ministries in moments. And that God, by his spirit, would produce the character of Christ in us.

[15:34] There is no better prayer to pray for me or any other Christian leader. As I've studied 1 Timothy 5, the terrifying implications of failure are not lost on me.

And they make my prayers more fervent. Imagine, I can take you to congregations where this has to be done and the damage that it causes. So pray.

Well, Paul goes on to this lead then to talk about the appointment of leaders. Can you see how it flows? The logic in the passage. Look at verse 22. Verse 22. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others.

He's speaking of commissioning someone. You see it, isn't it, when we appoint an elder. We lay hands on them. You set somebody aside from leadership. And here Paul is telling Timothy, be slow to make leadership appointments.

Let someone be appointed who is not fit to carry the mantle of leadership. Somebody who's not ready to set an unwavering example.

[16:31] And Paul makes it clear here that if Timothy was to make a rash appointment, there's a sense in which he shares in their sins by putting them in leadership in the first place.

Can you see that? If Timothy gets this wrong, he's guilty of impurity himself. Look at verse 22. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others.

Keep yourself pure. And that is a word of warning, isn't it? That is a word of warning to all of us as we make elder appointments. But it ought just help us that the process of calling someone into leadership, it seems slow, doesn't it?

So somebody talked to me about with Stuart Cashman and the kind of presbytery exams and candidates and credentials exams and filling in papers. Why is it so slow? It's slow because God tells us to be slow.

It's slow for very good reasons. And then you'll notice we have in verse 23. I do think verse 23 is a digression. Never trust the preacher when he says that. But I do think verse 23 is a digression.

Timothy thinks of, Paul thinks of Timothy's poor health and he says, have a glass of red.

[17:44] All right? It's a regular medicinal drink. It's a lovely reminder of the historical setting, isn't it? The real human authorship and friendship there is between Paul and Timothy.

So let me say to you, Paul is not anti-alcohol and neither should you be. He's just anti-excessive alcohol. That's a digression. In verse 24 he comes back to the point he's making about elders. Verse 24. Therefore, the sins of some people are conspicuous. Going before them to judgment, the sins of others appear later. Some also good works are conspicuous. Even those that are cannot remain hidden.

And what I think he's saying to you guys, when we go to evaluate somebody for eldership, in the case of some people, their sins are going to be obvious. Their reputation precedes them.

But with others, their sin is not obvious at all. They're more hidden. In some ways, their sin kind of leaves a trail behind them. And sometimes it's not until later that you discover what people are really like.

[18:50] And the implication here is this. Time and care ought to be taken to find those things out before an appointment is made. We shouldn't be hasty on the laying of hands.

And in verse 25 he's supporting the exhortation. He's saying, normally a good man's good deeds is good character. Well, it's hard to hide. The good that people have done, well, it's pretty discernible. But even if it remains hidden, it's impossible that it will remain hidden forever. Again, very practical, careful investigation needs to be done to see what kind of service the potential leader has already given.

And ultimately, God will reveal it and raise a light. Paul is saying to you and I that the character of leaders should be sensitively tested before they are called into positions of significant responsibility. And in all of this, what is Paul's concern? His concern is the health of the church, God's family. And that concern is still being articulated in verses 1 and 2 where Paul turns to slavery.

[20 : 01] And Paul turns his attention to the relationship of slave and master. And at first you think, where does this come from? How is this applicable?

Well, it's consistent with the pattern of relationships. Think about how we've seen the pattern of relationships. He's been talking about people who should be honoured. So widows should be honoured.

And then elders. And now slave masters. So shocking, isn't it? And the pattern of chapter 5 where why is it said to slaves but nothing is said to masters.

Can you see that? Maybe there's 1 and 2. Nothing is said to masters but about how they treat their slaves. But the slaves are talked to. And again, I think that's consistent with the pattern of what we've seen in 125.

So in verses 3 to 16 of 5, about how widows, Paul doesn't speak about how widows should treat others in the church.

[21 : 03] He talks about how we should treat widows. In verses 17 to 25, he doesn't talk about elders treat the flock. He talks about how the flock, the people, should treat elders. It's not because those things don't matter.

It's clear from other places from Paul that they do. But here, Paul's focus, if I can put it like this, is the upward payment of respect. Not the downward service of those with authority.

So we mustn't conclude that Paul has got no opinion on how masters should treat slaves. It's just not his aim here to talk about that. And I think we should bear in mind that already one time in this letter, Paul has made an unambiguous statement about slave trading.

Just flick over the page of chapter 1, verse 10. Look what he lists as a sin. A sin that is opposed to the truth of the gospel. Trading in human beings.

Can you see that slaving is against God's law. And it's sinful and unholy. So you must remember that. Paul is not here tacitly approving slavery.

[22 : 09] He is simply acknowledging that in the church family where he was talking to, slavery was there. There were slaves in his day. There were slave people in his church.

And they have a duty to respect those who are over them. And Paul knew that advocating resistance or rebellion against masters would only bring more suffering on themselves.

And it would do damage to the cause of Christ. And so at the same time he calls on slaves to do themselves a favour. And to do the cause of Christ a favour by honouring their master.

So let me read to you verses 1 and 2. That all who are under a yoke as bond servants regard their own masters as worthy of all honour. So that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

Those who believe in masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers.

Rather they must serve all the better. Since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. He uses the word yoke in verse 1.

[23 : 11] To underline the fact that slavery is no picnic is it. To put it mildly. Paul knows that having respect for a master who treats you harshly or even cruelly is extremely difficult.

But that is what he asks them to do. And if they are Christians they ought to honour. They ought to seek those who are in authority over them. As a way of honouring God's name and commending the gospel.

But then in verse 2 Paul changes his attention, doesn't he? To a smaller group of slaves who've got Christian masters. And here he sees that the slaves they face a different temptation. My boss is a Christian they say.

And the temptation is to be complacent in respect. The temptation is to take a more casual relationship for granted. The temptation to live and work as if the master did not have authority over them.

And Paul says if that is the case then the servant should serve even more diligently. Because the one you are serving is not only your master but verse 2 they are your brother. And so this is a radical thing Timothy.

[24 : 20] To teach those who find themselves in this situation. Now with these two verses I think the relevance is harder for you and I to see. But I hope it is plain. But it is that Paul's concern for

relationships within the Christian family is unrelenting.

He wants the church to be seen as family. And he wants the church to act like one. And in Paul's concern both last week with the widows and this week with the elders and slave masters.

Is that family relationships are strengthened by respect. By respect being paid to the ones who are worthy of it. He wants to see honour given to those who are worthy of it.

He wants to see honour given to those whom God expects it to be given to. So let me try and draw some application. What is the major theme of these verses? I think if you're going to sum it up. I think the one word that sums it up is honour. Honour. To be honest honour is not a word that we use in our society very much is it.

[25 : 31] So we might go into court and we might say yes your honour. Or we might hear it mentioned on New Year's Day in the New Year's honours list. But it's not a concept that you and I think about very much is it?

But the Bible is pushing you and I as Christians to accept the concept of honour. And the Bible pushes you and I to see that there are certain people who are worthy of honour.

They are worthy of our deference. They are worthy of our respect. They are worthy of being treated differently for who they are or what they do or the authority they have.

And the particular interest Paul has in 1 Timothy 5 and 6 is those who are over us under God. Do you see that? They are over us under God.

They are over us in that they've got a particular authority or responsibility over us. And he's especially thinking of church leaders and the masses of slaves. But the principles apply in other ways I think.

[26 : 36] To those who are over us in the workplace. To even the police who have been given authority over citizens in general. To politicians who have been elected to rule over us.

For the children, for their teachers who are over them. Now I describe them as those who are over us under God deliberately.

Because we've got to remember, haven't we, that all human authority is at one level derivative. Of God. God is the ultimate authority.

In his sovereignty, those who are over us are over us according to his will. Your boss is your boss according to the will of God.

And we ought to bear that in mind as we contemplate how we treat them tomorrow morning. By saying they are over us under God, I'm also reminding us that nobody has final authority over us.

[27 : 34] Except God. It is ultimately to him, isn't it? That we owe our ultimate loyalty. And that is why all our thinking about honour in human relationships.

Needs to take place in the concern to honour God above all. Because at the end of the day, God is far more deserving of our honour than anybody else.

He is the one who made us. He is the one who rules our world. He is the one who will one day judge us. And he is the one who is active in staggering grace. Staggering grace to rescue us from sin and wrath.

This life that Paul is talking about this morning, it makes no sense at all without Jesus. It makes no sense without Jesus' call to redeem and refashion people.

And remake us according to God's will. He is worthy of it. He deserves our honour like nobody else. And it is in seeking to honour him that we will be at our best in honouring others.

[28 : 41] It is as we obey Paul's instructions here that we honour God by the way that we relate to our Christian family. By our unflinching purity if we're leaders.

By the way that we respect those in authority to us. And so we commend his word to the world around us. Do you remember that big theme of 1 Timothy?

God decides that all people, all kinds of people be saved. He is the saviour of all, of all kinds of people. And so it is with those words that I want to conclude this morning.

By urging you and I and IPC to be a body of people. To be persons of honour. Not so much honourable people, though that is good.

But to be honourable people. But to be honourable people. Not so much someone who is worthy of respect, although we ought to be. But somebody who respects those who are over us under God.

[29 : 45] And who respect the God who is over all. I hope that is what you want for yourself. I hope that is what you want for our church family.

Paul wants us to live an honouring life. And above else, a God honouring life. A life that brings glory to the one who watches over us and sees our hearts.

And he says here, do you see how serious it is? Do you see how serious it is? He says, I charge you. I charge you in the sight of God.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels. I charge you to keep these rules without prejudicing. Doing nothing from favouritism or partiality.

Let's bow our heads.