

**Fight the Good Fight**  
**1 Timothy 5:17-25 (Week 15) 02/15/2026**  
**Elder Rules**

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

***<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." <sup>19</sup> Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. <sup>21</sup> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. <sup>22</sup> Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. <sup>23</sup> (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) <sup>24</sup> The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. <sup>25</sup> So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden. (1 Timothy 5:17-25)***

### **Introduction and Review**

- Paul's first letter to Timothy is **sometimes** treated like a manual for running a church.
- It is much more than that, of course,
- But parts of it do sound like they belong in **a book on church rules**.
- **This is especially true of chapter 5,**
- As we saw last week, it begins **with family rules**...
- Instructions for how church members are to treat one another as family,
- as Fathers, Brothers, Mothers and Sisters.
- It continues with a large section on how the church should select and care for true widows.
- And today, at the conclusion of **chapter 5**, Paul gives rules for how we are to treat our **church leaders, which he calls elders**.
- Now as we've seen in previous studies, the word **elder** is the Greek *presbyteros*,
- it literally means **older or senior**.
- The Jews used it to refer **to members of the Sanhedrin** (their ruling council).
- And in the **NT** it is one of several words used interchangeably for **leaders in the church**.
- In fact, **elders**, is the word we use for **our leaders at Bridges**.
- Those leaders would include me, as the paid teaching elder (or Pastor),
- as well as those who volunteer their time and efforts as **elders**.
- **Chuck Hiroto, Sean Cadd, Don Lee and Gary Astfalk**.
- Together we make up the elder team, **or elder board**.
- I would also add **Pastor Brian** to this list, even though he's not an elder,
- He has many **leadership responsibilities** in the church.

- So, **those are the Elders at Bridges.**
- But Paul's instructions here in **1 Timothy 5** are not primarily for the elders but about the elders.
- In **Chapter 3** he listed the qualifications for an **overseer, an elder.**
- But here in **chapter 5**, his **instructions are directed to Timothy as always...**
- **And also, to the entire church.**
- These are **rules for how the church** is to relate to their elders!
- And they seem to break down into **three basic rules** for **church-elder relations.**
- **First**, Paul gives instructions for...

## 1. Honoring Elders

- In **verse 17** we read...

***17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. (1 Timothy 5:17)***

- Here Paul is **explaining what sheep owe their shepherds.**
- And I know this could be **self-serving. Hey Guys Give ME Double Honor!**
- But, as always, my prayer is that God will empower me to explain and apply the word of God as accurately as possible. **OKAY...**
- Now from **this verse** we not only understand our need to honor our elders,
- But we get some clues about **what elders actually do.** Paul begins with the words...

### ***Let the elders who rule well...***

- Elders "**rule,**" that word in the Greek includes both the ideas **of presiding over**, being in charge.
- And **caring for, giving attention to.**
- So, elders are **spiritual leaders**, managing and caring for God's family.
- And as you can imagine **this involves many things.**
- Like teaching the word of God, **protecting the church** against heresy or sin.
- Praying for the church and its members as we engage in work of the gospel.
- Giving leadership and vision for the church's future.
- And Caring for the congregation's **physical, emotional and spiritual needs.**
- Now to one degree or another, all the elders, **as well as Pastor Brian**, do all these things.
- But Paul specifically highlights one type of elder.
- All the elder engage in ruling, but there are also...

### ***those who labor in preaching and teaching***

- Some elders **focus their ministry on the word of God.**
- In the contemporary church we call these **elders Pastors.**
- They are usually **paid members of the church staff...**
- who are called to **labor in preaching and teaching.**

- We saw the word “**labor**” earlier in **chapter 4** where it was **translated toil**.
- It means working hard, **even to the point of fatigue**.
- Pastors are to labor over, **preparing, preaching and teaching the word of God**.
- **Now** as we saw in **chapter 3**, all elders should be **able to teach**
- But, for most **that is not their primary job**.
- They often have (had in our case) full-time jobs outside the church.
- We’re blessed with **mostly retired elders** who have all kinds of time **to rule the church**.
- To govern and care for the spiritual affairs of God’s household.
- **So, we’ve seen what elders do! Ruling, caring, preaching, teaching.**
- But Paul’s main point here is to instruct the church about honoring their elders.
- And that **some elders deserve...**

### **double honor**

- But first let’s just look at **honor...**
- **In Greek it is the word (timē Tea-May)** and was often used to refer to a stipend or an allowance.
- This meaning is seen in the English word “**honorarium**,” which is a gift given to a minister for teaching on a special occasion, **such as a wedding, a funeral, or even preaching outside his normal Sunday service**.
- **Honor** was also used in this way earlier in the chapter, when Paul tells **Timothy to**

### **<sup>3</sup> Honor widows who are truly widows. (1 Timothy 5:3)**

- So, the kind of **honor** he has in mind certainly includes **financial support**.
- As with widows, the church has a responsibility to make sure the needs of their elders met.
- Now in **most churches** today, the role of elder is a voluntary unpaid position.
- However, if an elder became destitute, like the widows we talked about last week.
- The church would have a responsibility to care for their needs.
- And this is especially true for those who labor in **preaching and teaching**.
- So, with that in mind what is **double honor?**
- Well, some scholars think this refers to their pay rate.
- **Teaching elders (Pastors)** should be paid twice as much as **other elders**.
- And since our ruling elders get zero dollars, I should get double that.
- Or possibly Paul means that **elders in need** should **receive** twice as much as widows.
- Because most of them have families to support.
- However, it seems unlikely that “**double honor**” refers mainly to a **church’s salary scale**.
- There’s another kind of honor that may explain what Paul has in mind,
- for “honor” can also mean reverence or “**respect**.”
- Elders who do their jobs well are worthy of our respect.
- They deserve **honor** as well as an **honorarium**.
- Therefore, they are “**worthy of double honor**”

- **Respect** for elders can come in many different forms.
- It starts **with how members of the church speak to and about them.**
- Honor also includes receiving **an elder's counsel** and even his correction.
- As the Author of **Hebrews** tells us...

***17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)***

- Another form of respect is encouragement.
- Few things are more helpful to **an elder or anyone in ministry** than specific words of encouragement for a job well done.
- Honor can also take a tangible form.
- A thoughtful gift can be another way to show respect for an elder.
- But this does not mean that elders should think they deserve special treatment, or gifts.
- Paul has already warned them not to be greedy.
- In fact, a man who loves money is ineligible to become a teaching elder at all.
- He must...

***3 ...not be a lover of money. (1 Timothy 3:3)***

- But it is not the church's responsibility to teach their elders,
- Or specifically in our context their paid Pastors, to be content by giving them the gift of poverty!
- When a church doesn't pay its Pastors a decent wage, **it is in disobedience to the will of God.**
- **Paul continues...**

***18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." (1 Timothy 5:18)***

- Here Paul gives **two examples**, both of which come from **the farm**.
- The first is a **direct quotation** from **Deuteronomy 25:4**.
- When an ox, a **beast of burden** is helping with the harvest,
- he is entitled to a mouthful of grain every now and then.
- He deserves a share of the proceeds.
- Plus, the ox will work longer and harder if he gets something to eat.
- And what is **fair for oxes (oxen) is certainly fair for Pastors**.
- **They, too**, should be given enough to live.
- The second quotation may come from **Jesus himself**.
- When **Jesus sent his disciples out two-by-two**, he told them not to take any money with them.
- Instead, he said...

***7 ...remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. (Luke 10:7)***

- Pastors are like farmhands: **they deserve room and board** in exchange for hard work.
- And this has always been the case **when it comes to God's people.**
- **The Levites of the OT** were supported so they could **devote themselves to God's Word.**
- In **2 Chronicles** we read...

***<sup>4</sup> ...[King Hezekiah] commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the Law of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. (2 Chronicles 31:4-5)***

- Churches do not need to pay their Pastors in **oil and honey**, but the principle is still valid.
- **Every Pastor** should have his basic needs adequately met.
- Otherwise, **he may become distracted from his true calling and hard work.**
- Paul makes this principle **very clear** not just here in **1 Timothy** but in several other letters.
- To the **Corinthian Church** he begins with a reference to **the OT...**

***<sup>13</sup> Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?***

- And then he **applies it to the church...**

***<sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:13-14)***

- And to the Church in Galatia, he simply wrote...

***<sup>6</sup> Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. (Galatians 6:6)***

- **So clearly the church is responsible for meeting the financial needs of its Pastors.**
- And to that end, **the ruling elders** should ask **their Pastors** if their needs are being met.
- A good & wise rule of thumb to follow is that **a Pastor** should receive roughly the average wage of the **people in his congregation.**
- If the church is poor, then the Pastor should expect to receive less.
- And if a church is small, this may also impact its ability to compensate their Pastors.
- Often times a small church will **have Bi-Vocational Pastors**, who are only paid part-time but work another job to meet the needs of their family.
- But in any case, to the best of a church's ability,
- their Pastors should receive a decent, living wage.
- So, Paul has made it clear **that elders** are to be honored, even doubly so.

- But that is not true of all elders...
- Instead of Honor, some elders need discipline! (2<sup>nd</sup> Point)

## 2. Disciplining Elders

- As we've seen the elders who deserve double honor are **those who do their work well**,
- which suggests that there **might be elders whose work is sub-par**.
- And whose **lives may be causing difficulties** in the church.
- **In fact**, this was a **problem in Ephesus**.
- And so, Paul turns to the need to **Disciple Elders**.
- Timothy must deal with these rouge elders,
- But Paul begins with some parameters on their discipline... **Verse 19...**

***19 Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:19)***

- These instructions explain how to handle most **grievances** against an elder.
- And it might sound like **elders get special treatment**,
- However, the Bible always insists that it takes **at least two witnesses** to convict someone.
- In the **OT book of Deuteronomy**, the Law states...

***15 A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. (Deuteronomy 19:15)***

- And in **the NT** book of 2 Corinthians Paul writes...

***1 ...Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. (2 Corinthians 13:1)***

- And with regards to **church discipline**,
- Jesus applied the **same rule to everyone in the church**, not just to elders...

***16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. (Matthew 18:16)***

- But here in 1 Timothy there is something unique about elders.

***19 Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. (1 Timothy 5:19)***

- Two or three witnesses are required, not just for a conviction,
- but before an accusation can be admitted at all.
- **And why might that be?**
- Well, I think the wisdom of this command is that it puts a stop to the "he-said, she said or he-said, he-said" king of accusations.

- Accusations that in many cases cannot be proven one way or another.
- But can result in gossip and the destruction of a reputation **and damage to the church.**
- If a church member is dissatisfied with an elder,
- They may seek to stir up trouble by slandering or accusing him.
- And even if the charge ultimately proves to be unfounded,
- the elder's reputation and that of the church will be tarnished.
- This is why every elder should be presumed innocent until he's charged by several people
- and then gets a fair hearing. As **John Stott** wisely observes,

***Adherence to this biblical principle would have silenced many a malicious talebearer and saved many pastors from unjust criticism and unnecessary suffering. (John Stott)***

- This does not, **however**, mean that elders or Pastors are above the law.
- Quite the opposite, for the fact that they receive special protection from accusations makes their sins all the more reprehensible: **Paul continues...**

***<sup>20</sup> As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. (1 Timothy 5:20)***

- Now a little explanation of the word **rebuke** is in order here,
- Because **in verse 1 of chapter 5 Paul** wrote...

***<sup>1</sup> Do not rebuke an older man... (1 Timothy 5:1)***

- But now he is saying to rebuke an elder (who is often an older man).
- A contradiction you say. **Well NO.**
- Because even though the **same English word (rebuke)** is used in both verses.
- They are not **translating the same Greek words.**
- In **verse one**, if you remember from last week,
- Paul is saying do not rebuke (**beat up with words**) an older man.
- But here in verse 20 rebuke is a different word that doesn't mean to beat up with words,
- It simply means to confront, admonish, tell a fault or reprove.
- So, there is definitely a need to confront & correct the elder but not to beat him up with words.
- And what this means is that if the charge against an elder can be proven,
- his sin should be brought out into the open.
- However, public rebuke ought to be a last resort.
- **First** an elder should be reprovved privately, especially if the sin itself is a private one.
- But if an elder refuses to repent of his sin, if he persists in sin.
- He should be treated the way Paul treated **Hymenaeus and Alexander**, who Paul confronted.
- But they would not repent, so for their own good and the good of the church they were...

***<sup>20</sup> ...handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. (1 Timothy 1:20)***

- These men received severe discipline for their unrepentant blasphemy.
- Now in the church today (at least in the west), discipline of elders or church members in general has almost gone **the way of the Dodo...** extinct.
- This is, at least in part, due to the nature of the modern church.
- Unlike Ephesus where there was ONE Church of Ephesus.
- Today, if someone is confronted with their sin, they can, and often do,
- Just go down the street to another church.
- So even if one church is willing to practice proper discipline, the offending party can escape.
- I'm sorry to say that this escape from discipline has happened in the history of our church.
- And may have contributed to a culture of ignoring sin.
- But the **problem is that when sin is ignored,**
- or when people just move to another church, never receiving any kind of discipline.
- Then it seems that you can get away with sin.
- But regardless of what the response of the elder or church member might be to discipline,
- The other elders must care enough to confront, to follow Paul command to.

***rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.***

- When a sinning elder is rightly rebuked (corrected/reproved) in front of the entire congregation,
- then **“the rest”**, the rest of the elders, and the congregation **will be warned not to sin.**
- Literally, they will **“stand in fear,”** fearing not only the consequences of sin,
- but also, God himself, who is perfectly holy and should be feared by every sinner.
- In the **OT** the punishment of idolaters was meant to have the same FEAR effect.
- In **Deuteronomy 13** we read...

***<sup>10</sup> You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>11</sup> And all Israel shall hear and fear and never again do any such wickedness as this among you. (Deuteronomy 13:10-11)***

- Now in the **NT** the discipline will not be **as final** and includes a chance for the sinner to repent.
- Handing them over to Satan so they might learn the consequences of their sin and REPENT.
- So, employing discipline to cause **“the rest”** to fear committing similar sins is a principle found in both in the Old and New Testaments.
- Now, Timothy may have been a little afraid himself when he read the apostle's instructions.
- The reason Paul wrote to him in the first place was to tell him to...

***3 ...charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, (1 Timothy 1:3)***

- Timid Timothy had some discipline to carry out. He may have been tempted to lock himself in his study, hoping his problems would simply disappear.

- But problems in the church never go away all by themselves, so Paul gives him a solemn warning:

***21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. (1 Timothy 5:21)***

- When it comes to **church discipline**, Timothy must be fair, even-handed.
- On the one hand, he must handle each case without prejudice,
- being careful not to entertain an unfair accusation, **even if he thinks it might be true.**
- There must be **evidence of two or three witnesses.**
- **And on the other hand**, he must not sweep things under the pews just because the man accused is a fellow elder.
- **Elders, Pastors** may not play favorites.
- An accusation against **an elder must be judged solely** on the merits of the case.
- Anyone who's ever been involved in a dispute in the church knows how difficult it is to avoid choosing sides.
- It was the same in Calvin's day, **for the great Reformer confessed:**

***There is nothing harder than to pronounce judgment with complete impartiality, so as to avoid showing undue favor, or giving rise to suspicions, or being influenced by unfavorable reports, or being excessively strict and in every case to consider nothing but the matter in hand. (John Calvin)***

- So, to **help Timothy and all Pastors and elders** remain impartial,
- Paul gives a reminder that **every act of church discipline** is carried out...

***in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels***

- Here we are taken to the throne of God,
- where the Father and the Son judge the whole world according to the strictest standards of justice.
- With them are the elect angels **God chose to remain unfallen** by his sovereign grace.
- These divine messengers are mentioned as a reminder that one day there will be a judgment to end all judgments.
- Jesus said,

***31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (Matthew 25:31)***

- And this final judgment will be completely impartial,

***7 ...for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes. (2 Chronicles 19:7)***

- And to the Romans Paul is very clear...

***11 For God shows no partiality. (Romans 2:11)***

- God does not show any favoritism; he is absolutely fair.
- At the final judgment, therefore, he will give each person exactly what he or she deserves.
- **Those who trust in Jesus Christ will be welcomed into the presence of God,**
- **As John 3:16 proclaims...**

***16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)***

- But those who refuse to repent of their sins will face only a fiery judgment...

***26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26-27)***

- So, **in verse 21** when Paul writes...

***21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. (1 Timothy 5:21)***

- I think his point is that given God will render **perfect justice at the end of history**,
- And that God the Father and God the Son and the elect angel are looking on...
- then Timothy and the other church leaders must **seek similar justice in the present.**
- Whenever a judgment is called for, the church ought to give the judgment God himself would give,
- **without partiality or favoritism.**
- **Because** one day even the elders who render judgment must appear before the throne of Christ **to account for their actions.**
- So, we've seen rules for honoring and discipling elders. And finally, Paul turns **rules for to...**

### **3. Selecting Elders**

- Now I'm going to briefly look first at verse 23, which comes in the midst of selecting elders,
- But how it relates to the passage is unclear,
- That's why the ESV puts parentheses around this statement,
- It's like Paul jots it down out of the blue.

***23 (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) (1 Timothy 5:23)***

- Maybe Paul inserts this here because of the turmoil in the church was stressing Timothy out.
- Pastoral ministry was giving him a bad case of indigestion,
- and he needed to take some wine **for medicinal purposes**, to look after his health.
- Addressing those who would use this verse to **justify their own use, or abuse of alcohol...**
- 4<sup>th</sup> Century **Ambrose of Milan** wrote...

***We must drink then not for the sake of pleasure, but because of infirmity, and therefore sparingly as a remedy, not in excess as a gratification. (Ambrose of Milan)***

- As always, the Bible is **careful about the use of alcohol**.
- Of course, Christians are allowed to drink wine (yes, wine!).
- As we've seen...

***4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, 5 for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:4-5)***

- So wine is to be “received with thanksgiving,”
- provided that it is “**made holy by the word of God and prayer**”.
- In fact, the only people (in Scripture) who forbid the use of wine are **false teachers**.
- However, believers who are tempted to **flaunt their Christian liberties** should notice Paul's exact words: “**a little wine.**”
- **And to the Ephesians he says...**

***18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, (Ephesians 5:18)***

- **Moderation is called for.**
- Christians (including elders and Pastors) are not commanded to be **teetotalers**,
- but they are not allowed to become drunkards, either.
- Okay, now we can get to **Paul's main point about selecting elders. Backing up to Verse 22...**

***22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (1 Timothy 5:22)***

- The “**laying on of hands**” usually is a confirmation (by the church) of the call to ministry.
- We've already seen this in the life of Timothy...

***14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. (1 Timothy 4:14)***

- When Timothy was called into ministry, the council of elders and Paul laid their hands on him.
- **This was confirmation of his call.**
- Now at Bridges it has always been our practice to lay hands on our missionaries when we sent them out.
- But when Don Lee became an elder, he pointed out that we should do this for elders as well.
- And so, since then, we've added **laying on of hands** to our elder confirmation ceremony.
- And **this confirmation** is not to be taken lightly.
- If a church is not careful about **who they select as elders**, it's liable to have a mess on its hands, which is exactly what Timothy, with his false teaching elders, had in Ephesus.
- Now in the past, over the last 17 years that I have been the Pastor,
- There've been a few elders selected who should **not have been elders**
- (none of which are currently attending Bridges).

- Which was part of the problem, these men hadn't been at the church long enough,
- and they were not really committed to the ministry here.
- And as I reflected on how and why they were selected there was a certain amount of hast involved.
- The elders at the time felt we needed a larger team,
- and so, a **few men were selected** that probably should not have been.
- Now fortunately, **this hast** didn't result in a great mess, **no great sin or church scandal**,
- It did however cause discouragement within the elder team when these men left the church.
- And so, one of the lessons I've learned the hard way is...

### ***Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands***

- Take your time in selecting elders.
- I guess I should have taken Paul's word for it.
- Because when you are not in a rush you can
- Make sure the man is not only qualified based on what we looked at in **1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1**.
- But that he is truly committed to ruling in this Church,
- **Meaning he is called to manage and caring for the people and ministry of Bridges.**
- Then he can be considered for leadership.
- He can be brought before the congregation.
- He can be **examined as to his life and doctrine**.
- And once he has the approval of the current elders,
- His selection can be brought to a vote by the members.
- And if he receives 2/3 or more votes,
- The current elders can lay our hands on him, and he becomes an elder at Bridges.
- That's our process of elder selection.
- But no matter how this process takes place in the churches, it is a serious matter.
- Not only for the man who is selected, **but also for those who select him**.
- For in this **process** Paul tells Timothy do not...

### ***<sup>22</sup> ...take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (1 Timothy 5:22)***

- This may simply mean that Timothy needs to be careful not to fall into the sins of the elders who need discipline.
- But in the immediate context, it also seems to suggest, that Timothy bears a certain spiritual responsibility for the men he (as the Pastor) selects.
- If his elders fall into sin, **it will be a reflection on his ministry**.
- He will be implicated (take part in) the sins of others.
- And the best way for him to keep his hands pure, is to refuse to lay them on men who are not qualified to become elders.

- Another good reason to proceed with caution is that a person's suitability for ministry is not always **immediately obvious**: Verse 24 & 25...

***24 The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. 25 So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden. (1 Timothy 5:24-25)***

- The sins of some are obvious...

***The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment***

- Some people are such blatant sinners that they can be ruled out for leadership from the outset.
- Timothy will be able to spot them right away.
- They're headed for judgment unless they repent from their sins and come to Christ in faith.
- Paul continues...

***but the sins of others appear later.***

- Other sins are much less conspicuous; some sins take time to surface.
- But eventually, when the difficulties in the church come,
- or when there is trouble in a man's family, **the sin will come to light.**
- Therefore, don't be hasty, take time to discern whether a man is really qualified to be an elder or not.

- This principle can be applied positively as well as negatively...

***So also good works are conspicuous***

- True godliness shines like the sun.
- Thus, there are some candidates who obviously belong in the ministry.
- They not only have strong gifts; they also have servants' hearts.
- But not every good work is equally obvious, **but**

***even those that are not cannot remain hidden***

- Good works done in secret are still known to God. To apply this to elder selection...
- some men who **do not have** obvious gifts for pastoral ministry **will eventually realize their potential.**

- So, Paul wants Timothy to give them time.
- Don't dismiss them just because you don't see their good works right now.
- He should not rule out a man who may later develop into a good elder.

- So, to summarize, there are four kinds of people in the visible church.
- Another 4<sup>th</sup> Century Theologian **Jerome** described them as follows:

***Certain persons sin so deliberately and flagrantly that you no sooner see them than you know them at once to be sinners. But the defects of others are so cunningly concealed that we only learn them from subsequent information. Similarly the good deeds of some people are public property, while those of others we come to know only through long intimacy with them. (Jerome)***

- And in context the application is **don't be hasty in selecting elders.**
- But these verses also bring **about a practical question for each one of us.**
- **What kind of person are you?**
- **Generally, the church doesn't have people who openly flaunt their sins.**
- But the question is, what will people **find out about you in days to come?**
- Will your sins catch up with you?
- Or will people discover that you are much godlier than they ever expected?
- Some sinners will not be found out until the day of judgment.
- But they will be found out in the end, be sure of that.
- **In the light of God's justice all of their sins will be revealed.**
- But happily, many good deeds will also be brought to light on that day.
- In this life some worthy Christians seem completely overlooked.
- Yet they've received the grace that is to be found only in Jesus Christ.
- In the strength of His grace, they quietly perform many good works.
- And one day all their good works will be revealed to the praise of God's glory.
- There's a wonderful illustration of this in **The Great Divorce by C. S. Lewis.**
- In the story a man travels to the outskirts of heaven, **where he sees a most magnificent woman.**
- All around her are dancing lights, with Spirits scattering flowers,
- and boys and girls singing beautiful songs.
- The **visitor imagines her** to be some famous person from earth:
- "Is it? . . . is it?" I whispered to my guide.
- "Not at all," said he. "It's someone ye'll never have heard of.
- Her name on earth was **Sarah Smith**, and she lived at **Golders Green.**"
- "She seems to be . . . well, a person of particular importance."
- "Aye. She is one of the great ones.
- **Ye have heard that fame in this country and fame on Earth are two quite different things."**
- So, as we live our lives today, in this world **we should keep our eyes on eternity.**
- Because many things will look **very different** when we stand in the presence of God.
- Now that's a personal application from those final verses.
- But the main and very clear application comes from the **elder rules** that Paul gave to Timothy.
- We must seek to rightly honor, disciple and select those men who lead and care for OUR church.
- So would you pray with me to that end,
- that at Bridges Church we as individuals as church leaders and as a congregation will,
- by the power of God's Spirit follow these rules.
- That we might have elders who lead us and care for us the way God intends!
- **Let's Pray**