

CHAPTER 5

Here the apostle,

- I.** Directs Timothy how to reprove (v. 1, 2).
- II.** Advertises to widows, both elder and younger (v. 3-16).
- III.** To elders (v. 17-19).
- IV.** Treats of public reproof (v. 20).
- V.** Gives a solemn charge concerning ordination (v. 21, 22).
- VI.** Refers to his health (v. 23), and states men's sins to be very different in their effects (v. 24, 25).

~~5:1~~ 1 TIMOTHY 5:1-2

DIRECTIONS CONCERNING REPROOFS

Here the apostle gives rules to Timothy, and in him to other ministers, in reproving. Ministers are reprovers by office; it is a part, though the least pleasing part, of their office; they are to preach the word, to reprove and rebuke, ~~5:2~~ Timothy 4:2. A great difference is to be made in our reproofs, according to the age, quality, and other circumstances, of the persons rebuked; thus, an elder in age or office must be entreated as a father; *on some have compassion, making a difference*, ~~1:22~~ Jude 1:22. Now the rule is,

- 1.** To be very tender in rebuking elders — elders in age, elders by office. Respect must be had to the dignity of their years and place, and therefore they must not be rebuked sharply nor magisterially; but Timothy himself, though an evangelist, must entreat them as fathers, for this would be the likeliest way to work upon them, and to win upon them.
- 2.** The younger must be rebuked as brethren, with love and tenderness; not as desirous, to spy faults or pick quarrels, but as being willing to make the best of them. There is need of a great deal of meekness in reproving those who deserve reproof.

3. The elder women must be reprov'd, when there is occasion, as mothers. ~~<300>~~Hosea 2:2, *Plead with your mother, plead.*

4. The younger women must be reprov'd, but reprov'd as *sisters, with all purity*. If Timothy, so mortified a man to this world and to the flesh and lusts of it, had need of such a caution as this, much more have we.

~~<500>~~ 1 TIMOTHY 5:3-16

DIRECTIONS CONCERNING WIDOWS

Directions are here given concerning the taking of widows into the number of those who were employ'd by the church and had maintenance from the church: *Honour widows that are widows indeed*. Honour them, that is, maintain them, admit them into office. There was in those times an office in the church in which widows were employ'd, and that was to tend the sick and the aged, to look to them by the direction of the deacons. We read of the care taken of widows immediately upon the first forming of the Christian church (~~<400>~~Acts 6:1), where the Grecians thought their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations and provision made for poor widows. The general rule is to *honour widows that are widows indeed*, to maintain them, to relieve them with respect and tenderness.

I. It is appointed that those widows only should be relieved by the charity of the church who were pious and devout, and not wanton widows that *lived in pleasure*, v. 5, 6. She is to be reckon'd a widow indeed, and it to be maintain'd at the church's charge, who, being *desolate, trusteth in God*. Observe, It is the duty and comfort of those who are desolate to trust in God. *Therefore* God sometimes brings his people into such straits that they have nothing else to trust to, that they may with more confidence trust in him. Widowhood is a desolate estate; but *let the widows trust in me* (~~<200>~~Jeremiah 49:11), and rejoice that they have a God to trust to. Again, Those who trust in God must *continue in prayer*. If by faith we confide in God, by prayer we must give glory to God and commit ourselves to his guidance. Anna was a widow indeed, who *departed not from the temple* (~~<100>~~Luke 2:37), *but served God with fasting and prayer night and day*. But she is not a widow indeed *that lives in pleasure* (v. 6), or who lives licentiously. A jovial widow is not a widow indeed, not fit to be taken under the care of the church. *She that lives in pleasure is dead while she*

lives, is no living member of the church, but as a carcase in it, or a mortified member. We may apply it more generally; those who live in pleasure are dead while they live, spiritually dead, *dead in trespasses and sins*; they are in the world to no purpose, buried alive as to the great ends of living.

II. Another rule he gives is that the church should not be charged with the maintenance of those widows who had relations of their own that were able to maintain them. This is mentioned several times (v. 4): *If any widow have children or nephews*, that is grandchildren or near relations, let them maintain them, and let not the church be burdened. So v. 16. This is called showing *piety at home* (v. 4), or showing piety towards their own families. Observe, The respect of children to their parents, with their care of them, is fitly called piety. This is requiting their parents. Children can never sufficiently requite their parents for the care they have taken of them, and the pains they have taken with them; but they must endeavour to do it. It is the indispensable duty of children, if their parents be in necessity, and they in ability to relieve them, to do it to the utmost of their power, *for this is good and acceptable before God*. The Pharisees taught that a gift to the altar was more acceptable to God than relieving a poor parent, ⁴⁸⁵ Matthew 15:5. But here we are told that this *is better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices; this is good and acceptable*, etc. He speaks of this again (v. 8), *If any provide not for his own*, etc. If any men or women do not maintain their own poor relations who belong to them, they do in effect *deny the faith*; for the design of Christ was to confirm the law of Moses, and particularly the law of the fifth commandment, which is, *Honour thy father and mother*; so that those deny the faith who disobey that law, much more if they provide not for their wives and children, who are parts of themselves; if they spend that upon their lusts which should maintain their families, they have denied the faith *and are worse than infidels*. One reason why this care must be taken that those who are rich should maintain their poor relations, and not burden the church with them is (v. 16) *that it may relieve those who are widows indeed*. Observe, Charity misplaced is a great hindrance to true charity; there should be prudence in the choice of the objects of charity, that it may not be thrown away upon those who are not properly so, that there may be the more for those who are real objects of charity.

III. He gives directions concerning the characters of the widows that were to be taken into the number to receive the church's charity: not under sixty years old, nor any who have divorced their husbands or been divorced from them and have married again; she must have been *the wife of one man*, such as had been a housekeeper, had a good name for hospitality and charity, *well reported of for good works*. Observe, Particular care ought to be taken to relieve those, when they fall into decay, who, when they had wherewithal, were ready to every good work. Here are instances of such good works as are proper to be done by good wives: *If she have brought up children*: he does not say, *If she have borne children (children are a heritage of the Lord)*, that depends on the will of God; but, *if she had not children of her own, yet if she had brought up children. If she have lodged strangers, and washed the saints' feet*; if she have been ready to give entertainment to good Christians and good ministers, when they were in their travels for the spreading of the gospel. Washing of the feet of their friends was a part of their entertainments. *If she have relieved the afflicted* when she had ability, let her be relieved now. Observe, Those who would find mercy when they are in distress must show mercy when they are in prosperity.

IV. He cautions them to take heed of admitting into the number those who are likely to be no credit to them (v. 11): *The younger widows refuse*: they will be weary of their employments in the church, and of living by rule, as they must do; so they *will marry, and cast off their first faith*. You read of a first love (~~and~~ Revelation 2:4), and here of a first faith, that is, the engagements they gave to the church to behave well, and as became the trust reposed in them: it does not appear that by their first faith is meant their vow not to marry, for the scripture is very silent on that head; besides the apostle here advises the younger widows to marry (v. 14), which he would not if hereby they must have broken their vows. Dr. Whitby well observes, "If this faith referred to a promise made to the church not to marry, it could not be called their first faith." *Withal they learn to be idle, and not only idle, but tattlers, etc.*, v. 13. Observe, It is seldom that those who are idle are idle only, they learn *to be tattlers and busy-bodies*, and to make mischief among neighbours, and sow discord among brethren. Those who had not attained to such a gravity of mind as was fit for the deaconesses (or the widows who were taken among the church's poor), let them *marry, bear children, etc.*, v. 14. Observe, If housekeepers do not mind their business, but are tattlers, they give occasion to the adversaries

of Christianity to reproach the Christian name, which, it seems, there were some instances of, v. 15. We learn hence,

- 1.** In the primitive church there was care taken of poor widows, and provision made for them; and the churches of Christ in these days should follow so good an example, as far as they are able.
- 2.** In the distribution of the church's charity, or alms, great care is to be taken that those share in the public bounty who most want it and best deserve it. A widow was not to be taken into the primitive church that had relations who were able to maintain her, or who was not well reported of for good works, but lived in pleasure: *But the younger widows refuse, for, when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry.*
- 3.** The credit of religion, and the reputation of Christian churches, are very much concerned in the character and behaviour of those that are taken into any employment in the church, though of a lower nature (such as the business of deaconesses), or that receive alms of the church; if they do not behave well, but are tattlers and busy-bodies, they will give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.
- 4.** Christianity obliges its professors to relieve their indigent friends, particularly poor widows, that the church may not be charged with them, that it may relieve those that are widows indeed: rich people should be ashamed to burden the church with their poor relations, when it is with difficulty that those are supplied who have no children or nephews, that is, grand-children, who are in a capacity to relieve them.

~~SENT~~ 1 TIMOTHY 5:17-25

DIRECTIONS CONCERNING ELDERS

Here are directions,

- I.** Concerning the supporting of ministers. Care must be taken that they be honourably maintained (v. 17): *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour* (that is, of double maintenance, double to what they have had, or to what others have), *especially those who labour in the word and doctrine*, those who are more laborious than others. Observe, The presbytery ruled, and the same that ruled were those *who laboured in*

the word and doctrine: they had not one to preach to them and another to rule them, but the work was done by one and the same person. Some have imagined that by the *elders that rule well* the apostle means lay-elders, who were employed in ruling but not in teaching, who were concerned in church-government, but did not meddle with the administration of the word and sacraments; and I confess this is the plainest text of scripture that can be found to countenance such an opinion. But it seem a little strange that mere ruling elders should be accounted worthy of double honour, when the apostle preferred preaching to baptizing, and much more would he prefer it to ruling the church; and it is more strange that the apostle should take no notice of them when he treats of church-officers; but, as it is hinted before, they had not, in the primitive church, one to preach to them and another to rule them, but ruling and teaching were performed by the same persons, only some might labour more in the word and doctrine than others. Here we have,

1. The work of ministers; it consists principally in two things: ruling well and labouring in the word and doctrine. This was the main business of elders or presbyters in the days of the apostles.
2. The honour due to those who were not idle, but laborious in this work; they were worthy of double honour, esteem, and maintenance. He quotes a scripture to confirm this command concerning the maintenance of ministers that we might think foreign; but it intimates what a significancy there was in many of the laws of Moses, and particularly in this, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn,* ^{<5704>}Deuteronomy 25:4. The beasts that were employed in treading out the corn (for that way they took instead of threshing it) were allowed to feed while they did the work, so that the more work they did the more food they had; therefore let the elders that labour in the word and doctrine be well provided for; *for the labourer is worthy of his reward* (^{<400>}Matthew 10:10), and there is all the reason in the world that he should have it. We hence learn,

(1.) God, both under the law, and now under the gospel, has taken care that his ministers be well provided for. Does God take care for oxen, and will he not take care of his own servants? The ox only treads out the corn of which they make the bread that perishes; but ministers break the bread of life which endures for ever.

(2.) The comfortable subsistence of ministers, as it is God's appointment that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (^{<404>}1

Corinthians 9:14), so it is their just due, as much as the reward of the labourer; and those who would have ministers starved, or not comfortably provided for, God will require it of them another day.

II. Concerning the accusation of ministers (v. 19): *Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.* Here is the scripture-method of proceeding against an elder, when accused of any crime. Observe,

1. There must be an accusation; it must not be a flying uncertain report, but an accusation, containing a certain charge, must be drawn up. Further, He is not to be proceeded against by way of enquiry; this is according to the modern practice of the inquisition, which draws up articles for men to purge themselves of such crimes, or else to accuse themselves; but, according to the advice of Paul, there must be an accusation brought against an elder.

2. This accusation is not to be received unless supported by two or three credible witnesses; and the accusation must be received before them, that is, the accused must have the accusers face to face, because the reputation of a minister is, in a particular manner, a tender thing; and therefore, before any thing be done in the least to blemish that reputation, great care should be taken that the thing alleged against him be well proved, that he be not reproached upon an uncertain surmise; “but (v. 20) *those that sin rebuke before all*; that is, thou needest not be so tender of other people, but rebuke them publicly.” Or “those that sin before all rebuke before all, that the plaster may be as wide as the wound, and that those who are in danger of sinning by the example of their fall may take warning by the rebuke given them for it, *that others also may fear.*” Observe,

(1.) Public scandalous sinners must be rebuked publicly: as their sin has been public, and committed before many, or at least come to the hearing of all, so their reproof must be public, and before all.

(2.) Public rebuke is designed for the good of others, that they may fear, as well as for the good of the party rebuked; hence it was ordered under the law that public offenders should receive public punishment, that *all Israel might hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly.*

III. Concerning the ordination of ministers (v. 22): *Lay hands suddenly on no man*; it seems to be meant of the ordaining of men to the office of

the ministry, which ought not to be done rashly and inconsiderately, and before due trial made of their gifts and graces, their abilities and qualifications for it. Some understand it of absolution: "Be not too hasty in laying hands on any; remit not the censure of the church to any, till time be first taken for the proof of their sincerity in their repentance, *neither be partakers of other men's sins*, implying that those who are too easy in remitting the censures of the church encourage others in the sins which are thus connived at, and make themselves thereby guilty." Observe, We have great need to watch over ourselves at all times, that we do not make ourselves partakers of other men's sins. "Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like thyself, but from countenancing it, or being any way accessory to it, in others." Here is,

1. A caution against the rash ordination of ministers, or absolution of those who have been under church-censures: *Lay hands suddenly on no man*.
2. Those who are rash, either in the one case or the other, will make themselves partakers in other men's sins.
3. We must keep ourselves pure, if we will be pure; the grace of God makes and keeps us pure, but it is by our own endeavours.

IV. Concerning absolution, to which v. 24, 25, seem to refer: *Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some follow after*, etc. Observe, Ministers have need of a great deal of wisdom, to know how to accommodate themselves to the variety of offences and offenders that they have occasion to deal with. Some men's sins are so plain and obvious, and not found by secret search, that there is no dispute concerning the bringing of them under the censures of the church; they *go before to judgment*, to lead them to censure. — *Others they follow after*; that is, their wickedness does not presently appear, nor till after a due search has been made concerning it. Or, as some understand it, some men's sins continue after they are censured; they are not reformed by the censure, and in that case there must be no absolution. So, also, as to the evidences of repentance: *The good works of some are manifest beforehand. And those that are otherwise*, whose good works do not appear, their wickedness *cannot be hid*, and so it will be easy to discern who are to be absolved, and who are not. Observe,

1. There are secret, and there are open sins; some men's sins are open beforehand, and going unto judgment, and some they follow after.

2. Sinners must be differently dealt with by the church.
3. The effects of church-censures are very different; some are thereby humbled and brought to repentance, so that their good works are manifest beforehand, while it is quite otherwise with others.
4. The incorrigible cannot be hid; for God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts.


V. Concerning Timothy himself.

1. Here is a charge to him to be careful of his office; and a solemn charge it is: *I charge thee before God, as thou wilt answer it to God before the holy and elect angels, observe these things without partiality*, v. 21.

Observe, It ill becomes ministers to be partial, and to have respect of persons, and to prefer one before another upon any secular account. He charges him, by all that is dear, *before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels*, to guard against partiality. Ministers must give an account to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, whether, and how, they have observed all things given them in charge: and woe to them if they have been partial in their ministrations, out of an worldly politic view.

2. He charges him to take care of his health: *Drink no longer water*, etc. It seems Timothy was a mortified man to the pleasures of sense; he drank water, and he was a man of no strong constitution of body, and for this reason Paul advises him to use wine for the helping of his stomach and the recruiting of his nature. Observe, It is a little wine, for ministers must not be given to much wine; so much as may be for the health of the body, not so as to distemper it, for God has made wine to rejoice man's heart. Note,

(1.) It is the will of God that people should take all due care of their bodies. As we are not to make them our masters, so neither our slaves; but to use them so that they may be most fit and helpful to us in the service of God.

(2.) Wine is most proper for sickly and weak people, whose stomachs are often out of order, and who labour under infirmities. *Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that are of heavy hearts*,  Proverbs 31:6.

(3.) Wine should be used as a help, and not a hindrance, to our work and usefulness.