



# 1 Timothy

(For access to all available commentaries and written sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

**If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows. 1 Timothy 5:16**

There is a dispute in texts as to whether this says "If any believing man or woman," or if it says, "If any believing *woman*." Apart from this, the issue remains the same. The church was not to be burdened with what the family could attend to. This follows along with the words of verse 5:8 then. Paul is stressing the importance of the care of one's family, in particular needy widows, instead of passing it along to others. He is speaking to believers, and they are to pay heed to his word. As he is an apostle, his words were considered authority. As they are written, they continue in that same authority beyond the church at Ephesus to all churches. They are prescriptive, and they are expected to be attended to.

When a believer (woman/man or woman) has widows, "let them relieve them." This specifically means "to support them." There is no exception given by Paul. If there is a need, the need is to be met by the one who the Lord has placed in the position of nearness to the widow. They are to ensure the widow is cared for. As he then says, "and do not let the church be burdened." To ignore this responsibility means that the church will then receive the burden. If it is a compassionate church as it should be, the people will ultimately pick up the tab, even if it causes an unnecessary weight to fall upon it. But this should not be the case. Instead, the church has another, greater responsibility which is "that it may relieve those who are really widows."

This is referring to the widow who is "really a widow" of verses 3-5. Such a person has no one to tend to her. The church would certainly want to help such a poor, pitiful soul with its resources. The number could be larger than expected because the admonition to care for

one's widow is to believers. However, there could be believing widows whose only family were non-believers. In that case, there would be no authority by Paul to command the family care for them. If they had no desire to do so, she would be "really a widow" even though she had a family. This is why Paul is so adamant about the care of widows by believing family. He isn't writing arbitrary rules, but rather he is looking at the circumstances of the world in which we live realistically. The church can only do so much, but it would do what it could for those who were truly in need.

Life application: It is not uncommon for people to come to church and ask for help from the church, but quite often this puts an undue pressure on the church. For those looking for assistance, there should be the careful consideration of other options for needs to be met before asking the church, or individual members, to carry a weight which is not at all their responsibility.

**Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 1 Timothy 5:17**

The words of this verse are highly debated, and so they must be taken in context as to whom he is speaking of. The word "elders" can be referring to the aged in the congregation, but that is not the only intent of the word. In Israel, it was used "to denote the body of men that presided in the synagogue" (Albert Barnes). Others agree with this, and it is the logical extension of everything Paul has been saying. The church is a body led by men, regardless of their age. Instead, "elders" here is a positional word. It is those who rule and have authority. It is these who are to "be counted worthy of double honor."

Those who rule within the church have a very tough job. They are not simply dealing with paper, numbers, valves, electric wiring, laying bricks, or a host of other jobs which are routine and stable. Instead, the church is a dynamic organism which changes constantly in its makeup, and which is comprised of individuals. Each individual has personal needs, each person has complicated emotions, and so on. For an elder to deal with all that comes his way, especially in matters of religion, there is a high level of stress at times. Because of this, Paul would ask that these leaders be given "double honor." The term, based on the next verse, certainly indicates monetary compensation, but it is not limited to that. And the word "double" is not strictly intended in its literal sense. Instead, it indicates "more honor."

With this understanding, he completes the verse with, "especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." Studying, preaching, and teaching the word is the highest responsibility any person could have. In taking the word of God, and explaining it to those within the church, there is the truth that this person has become, in a very real way, responsible for the souls of those under him. If he teaches incorrectly, their lives may be completely erratic and chaotic.

Or, they may never come to a saving knowledge of Christ. People in a congregation, especially before the modern printing press, were wholly dependent on what they were told. There may have been one copy of Scripture in an entire town.

Even today, people who have ten copies of the Bible in their home may have never read it even once. People commit their trust in what is stated by teachers, and they follow closely to what they have been taught, even if it is completely wrong. This is a real problem, but it is one which exists and cannot be ignored. Therefore, sound teachers are an especially important commodity, and they are to be given the proper honor for their efforts. This is stated by Paul elsewhere, such as in 1 Thessalonians –

“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,<sup>13</sup> and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.” 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13

Life application: When dealing with people, especially over spiritual matters, great divisions, great anger, and great bitterness can arise. People want to know if dogs are going to heaven, if the rapture will happen on a certain day, if one can lose their salvation, and etc. In such questions, most people have already decided on the answer, and it is usually based on emotions. When they ask an elder for an answer, they are not usually looking for an answer, but an affirmation of what they want to believe. When they hear something contrary to what they want to believe, they get upset and often nasty. This is a common thing, and it is debilitating to always be second-guessed by those who actually have no idea except one formed in their own minds. Understanding this, it is good to give elders the honor of their position. They have probably already received their daily dose of grief by the time you get to them.

**For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” 1 Timothy 5:18**

Paul, referring to the preceding verse, now provides scriptural support for the “double honor” which is to be provided to the elders who rule well. He cites Deuteronomy 25:4 in order to make his point. He notes that even animals which were engaged in labor were not to be muzzled as they tread the grain which had been harvested. They were to be treated with respect and were to be allowed to benefit from their labors. If this was so with an ox, then how much more should those who ruled the congregation well, especially those who labor in word and doctrine, be allowed to participate in the fruits of their labors. To get an even fuller understanding of Paul’s intent here, one should refer to 1 Corinthians 9, where Paul cites this same verse and further explains it –

Do I say these things as a *mere* man? Or does not the law say the same also? <sup>9</sup> For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about? <sup>10</sup> Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things? <sup>12</sup> If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more? 1 Corinthians 9:8-10

One can see that those who sow spiritual things for others should be allowed to reap material benefits from their efforts. After this, Paul continues with, “and, the laborer *is* worthy of his wages.” Because he uses the conjunction “and,” he is saying that this next citation is also *graphē*, or Scripture. However, there is no match to his words to be found in the Old Testament. Where it is to be found is in Luke 10:7, which says, “And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages.” This is also loosely cited in Matthew 10:10 in the words, “for a worker is worthy of his food.”

What seems to be the case, is that by this time the synoptic gospels were already considered as authoritative words of Scripture. In other words, Paul’s citing of them means that they were considered as having the same authority as the Old Testament. Others disagree and say that this was a proverbial saying of the time. However, Paul does not cite proverbial sayings as “Scripture.” One other view is that the words of Christ had, by this time, become an oral tradition which was considered as Scripture, and this was Paul’s intent in citing it this way. This is found, for example, in Acts 20:35 which states –

“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

The problem with this view is that Paul doesn’t say that they are simply “the words of the Lord Jesus” as in Acts, but here in Timothy he calls them “Scripture.” Therefore, it is a good indication that the gospel of Luke, which was compiled not much earlier, was already considered an authoritative source concerning Scripture.

Life application: Although the dating of the New Testament books is debated, there is a good certainty of when most of them were written. These dates can be determined by internal evidences found in the books themselves, and in other areas of the New Testament. A thorough study of these things will demonstrate that we have a sure word that is reliable, and that tells us accurately about the things it proclaims. Let us conduct our walk with this confidence, and be assured that we have our faith in God’s true and complete revelation of Himself.

**Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.**

1 Timothy 5:19

Paul's words of this verse are to be taken in context with the previous verses. An elder here is not simply an "older man" as was noted in verse 5:1. Rather, it is speaking of one in a position in the office of elder of verses 17 & 18. This is the subject under discussion, and he is continuing with it now. These words then are specifically being given to protect those in leadership from slanderous attacks and the like. Therefore, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder," is specifically to be considered in this way. The elder is one in the church who is in a position of teaching, instruction, authority, and so on. But Paul doesn't stop there. He completes the sentence with, "except from two or three witnesses."

If someone came forward and made an accusation against someone who had already met all of the requirements of the office (which he has already laid out in the epistle), then the accusation was not even to be considered without additional support, meaning two or three witnesses. This individual has gone through the entire process for ordination, he has met the requirements, and he was duly installed. This would have included an investigation which interacted with many people. For one to come forward, make an accusation, and destroy that work by himself was not to be acceptable.

But, if an accusation was confirmed by more than one, then an investigation could proceed. This precept was a part of the law and culture of the Jewish people. It was given in Deuteronomy 17:6 concerning the death penalty. It was given in Deuteronomy 19:15 concerning any crime. It is cited in John 8:17 by Jesus, and Paul states it as a precept in 2 Corinthians 13:1. Though it is a part of the Law of Moses, Paul has carried it into the New Covenant as a protection for the people of the church as well.

The reason for this should be obvious. Anyone who bore a grudge against another could make up anything he wanted about that person and simply lie about it. In bringing discredit upon the person, it would then lead to discredit upon the faith. And this may be the underlying motive as well. It is the desire of the enemies of Christ to do whatever they can to harm the Christian faith. Accusing an elder is an easy way to do this.

Further, if a person has betrayed the office, having two or three witnesses who can substantiate the offense would be a valuable means of having him removed. As is seen in church hierarchies, there is often an unhealthy protection of true offenders. This is not limited to the Roman Catholic Church, but they are a great example of this. The high level of perversion among priests and bishops is hidden away by the Pope and his minions at the Vatican. But this should not be. The precept goes both ways. It is to secure an elder against

unjust accusations, but it is also a precept which is intended to ferret out miscreants, and offenders of the Christian faith as well.

Life application: The sad state of accusations being levied against godly men is on the increase. As the world devolves into perversion, faithful preachers will continue to be attacked by those who want their perverse agendas to succeed. However, the sad state of protecting perverse people within the church is also something that has been on-going for centuries. An entire system of perversion has been built into many major denominations. These things need to be called out by the faithful, and highlighted to show the contrast between true Christianity, and that which is false.