

Today we're talking about "leadership within the church (particularly elders)", but like most of this letter to Timothy, while it's directions for Timothy, it's more than that – it's meant for the whole church to hear and to understand, and to apply (in the situation that we're in)...

So, he's talking about "Good Leadership", and the way he connects it into the flow of the letter, is with the concept of "provision" – the church provides for particular leaders... Last week, we were talking about widows. And widows (who are truly widows) – Godly women, who are now all alone, with no one to care for them, are to be honoured, and how is this honour expressed? By making provision for them.

And so he moves now, onto the topic of Elders (the Spiritual leaders in the church). And he says that these should be considered worthy of "**double honour**". Alright, so if the church provides for Godly women (who are now all alone and elderly and can no longer provide for themselves), this principle of **Good Provision** should also be applied to the elders, but not all elders. He says "**especially those who labour in preaching and teaching**

Now, the word translated "especially", *μάλιστα* (malista), can also mean "that is". It's the same word used back in 4:10 when he said that **Jesus is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe**. Now, that doesn't mean that even unbelievers are saved. It's a qualification statement, and so we would understand it as **Jesus is the Saviour of all people, [that is, He's the saviour of all people] ... who believe**.

And we're meant to understand it in the same way here... We don't pay all elders in the church – we provide for those who labour in preaching and teaching...

And Paul clarifies what he is saying with Scripture: ¹⁸ ... "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "**The labourer deserves his wages.**"

An elder who labours in preaching and teaching the Gospel (what we would call a pastor), should be fairly provided for.

Now, I've told you before, I'm always reluctant to talk about how a church needs to provide for its Pastor because, it could seem very self-serving. But over the years, I've had to just get over that, because my job, is to teach God's word. And when God's word addresses the matter, it's my job as a bible teacher, to explain what it's saying.

And I'm pretty happy with how Paul addresses this. Back in 3:3, he leaves us with no illusions. Paul is dead against those money-grubbin church leaders – they're not to be **lovers of money**.

But the flip-side of that, is it's not uncommon for a church, or people in the church, to want to keep their pastors poor. And that's not what Paul's aiming for either. The picture he's giving here, is "fair provision for those who serve"...

A couple of weeks ago, at Pistol Club (I'm not even sure how they got onto this topic because I came into it after it began),

but they were talking about when the plate gets passed around at church... And one bloke said that when he got married the priest had the hide to tell him how much he should donate to the church, and it was \$20, which he said was a lot of money back then. My guess is it might've been about 10% of his weekly wage... And I'm thinking,

“The priest would've spent at least a day (total) in:

- visiting with them;*
- marriage prep;*
- preparing for the marriage ceremony;*
- doing the paperwork before and after the marriage ceremony...*

*That would take at least a total of a day out of his week, **plus** the day of the wedding (and possibly the reception)... So, probably 20% of a week's work, and he was upset that the priest suggested that he should be donating about \$20....*

Anyway, all I said was, “We don't even take up an offering at our church. We've just got a box down the back, and most weeks there's somewhere between \$0-\$50 in it, because most of our folk choose to give with direct debit.

And in fact, a large portion of our income is coming from those who listen to our online ministry, and they're not even locals... They're supporting their own churches, plus they're supporting this ministry. And I find that very humbling.

Now, many churches give a message on giving, every single week (just before the offering's taken up). We don't do that, but we do talk about it as often as God brings it up in his word.

So, we have to talk about it today. Why do disciples of Jesus willingly give, to the ministry of the church? So we as the church, can do what God has called us to do:

- To provide for those in our midst who have nothing;
- To provide fair provision for those who labour in preaching and teaching the word of God; and
- to cover the costs of simply being the church.

Now, the Old Testament principle was to tithe, which was 10% of **gross** income BTW. But the New Testament principle is actually much more demanding than that. It's called sacrificial giving...

And that's what I was reminded of the other day at Pistol Club... Old mate realised that \$20 back then (probably about 10% of his income for the week back then), he would've noticed it missing... And as a non-Christian, he couldn't make sense of that.

*But you know what? As Christians, we give sacrificially. When we love God with our offering, and we give sacrificially, we **will** notice it missing, but you know what – when we notice it missing, that's when it's something that will be a significant help in the ministry of the church.*

At our last congregational meeting, we mentioned that it's probably time (after 9 years of setting up each week in various halls), it's probably time for us to look at getting a simple building to use as a church. And you know what? If we were all giving sacrificially, we could easily do that.

It's through those who **are** giving sacrificially now, that our church can now afford to pay me for 4 days a week (there's not many little churches that can do that).

Let's move on. We now move, from "Good provision" to "**Good behaviour**"

In the eyes of the world, how a church leader behaves, will either give Jesus a "good name", or more often, give Jesus a very "bad name"... And that's why it's really important, that when we choose Elders, that they be **Godly** men.

V24 says: ²⁴ The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later.

And we know what that's like, don't we??? When we first meet someone, they seem OK, but they don't turn out to be quite as nice as we once thought. The Godly veneer gets peeled back, and their sins start to show, and we see what they're really like. Sometimes a person can keep their sins hidden for years... But on the Day of Judgment, everything that's hidden will be revealed, and the Lord will judge...

But when we're choosing good leaders, this is why we don't rush in to the laying on of hands (the setting apart of someone into a particular leadership position)... And so, we come to **Good order**.

V22 says: ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

Basically what he's saying, is "*Be careful which horse you hitch your cart to*".

When a new person comes to our church, we do not rush to place them into leadership positions. We take time:

- to get to know them;
- to learn where they're at with God:
 - what they believe;
 - and **how** what they believe, shapes what they do.
 - how the Holy Spirit is transforming you to Christ-likeness

And so we look at:

- the spiritual fruit of their lives;
- their Godliness (or lack of);
- what they say / how they speak...

Some churches very quickly promote a new-comer into leadership. Sometimes they do it to tie them in, so they're committed to their church and can't go to another. We don't do that, simply because God's word says: ²² Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

You see, if we **are** hasty, and end up putting the wrong person into leadership, whatever sin / whatever godlessness / whatever wrong-teaching comes into the church, it's on us, simply because we were hasty, and didn't do what God said.

Righto, so, what about when a church **does** end up with a bad leader? (as you know, it has happened often enough).

Let's talk about "[Good justice](#)".

The biblical model, for dealing with sin in the church, is the same, whether the person is a leader, or whether they're not a leader. Leaders are **not** shown partiality because they are leaders. But nor should leaders ever be judged on hear-say or unfounded accusations.

The process of dealing with sin in the church, comes from the teaching of Jesus Himself:

If your brother sins:

- go and tell him his fault, just between you and him;
If he doesn't listen
- take one or 2 others along as witnesses
If he still doesn't listen,
- tell the whole church;
and if he still doesn't repent
- have nothing to do with him anymore

And in 2 Thessalonians 3, we learn that the purpose of shunning an unrepentant sinner, is so that they will be ashamed of their unrepentance and seek forgiveness.

And in V20 of today's reading, we learn that the public nature of doing it, is to be an example: V²⁰ ... for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

Sadly, there have been many cases, where the church has historically ignored God's word, and swept bad behaviour under the carpet. It's been a PR exercise – “We don't want anybody to know about this – nothing to see here”... And sometimes they move the offending leaders on to another location, and they do the same thing again.

Or they're quietly dismissed from leadership, move town, and they're never seen again, and nobody knows why they've gone.

The institutional child abuse enquiry has revealed some truly horrible things in many institutions, including some churches. And that never would've happened, if those churches had followed the directions clearly laid down in Scripture.

For justice to be good, it has to be:

- true – ¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.
- visible – ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.
- impartial – 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.

...

Now, impartiality and presumption of innocence (until proven guilty), has been the bedrock of our western courts, and it's a product of our Christian heritage. It comes from right here in this Scripture.

But the problem is, if certain allegations are made today, (especially of a sexual nature), the assumption has become "guilty, on the word of one witness"... And that leaves a potential for terrible injustices, when **false** allegations are made.

- *Cardinal George Pell was convicted on the words of one witness, and he had to go to 2 separate courts of appeal until his sentence was overturned by the High Court;*
- *The current Brittany Higgins case of "He said/she said" hasn't yet begun in the courts, but some media are treating it as a presumption of guilt, because one person must be believed at all costs.*

And Robyn and I have always been aware that Satan will target and accuse church leaders. I hear of prominent church leaders who get caught out in their sin. Well, they should never get themselves into that position where they are tempted.

And that's why Robyn and I agreed, that if I need to visit a young lady, I either:

- take Robyn or another lady with me; or
- I meet her in a public place (Park / Café); or

- If they turn up to visit me at my place, we've got a little table and a couple of chairs at the front door...

If everything is out in the open, no unfounded accusations can stick...

And as disciples of Jesus, that's the way we should **all** live.
Ephesians 5:3

Ephesians 5:3 (ESV) ³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

The NIV says there shouldn't even be a hint of it... As disciples of Jesus, let's never put ourselves in a position where we give Jesus a bad name because our purity is in question...

This is bigger than what people think of you or I – it's the reputation of Jesus we're protecting...

Let's move on:

Paul's been saying, "Keep yourselves pure"... But the purity that he's talking about, isn't a form of asceticism/self-denial. Some folk believe that if they drink any alcohol, that makes them impure. Some feel they can't take medicines or inoculations, because that would make them impure. And so Paul has a word to Timothy about "Good health", and he simply says

V²³ (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)

Let's wrap it up. We've been talking about leadership. But not only is it about leaders... And I want to finish with V²⁵, which is about [Good works](#).

²⁵ So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

Jesus said,

Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

As disciples of Jesus, as we follow Jesus, He will lead us into good works... And in a world of darkness, good works are conspicuous – they stand out... And yet, we don't do good works to draw attention to ourselves. The good we do, brings glory to our Father who is in heaven.

The thing is, as we quietly follow Jesus, there might be things that cost us dearly, and nobody knows about them.

- You quietly give to the poor, and you don't tell anyone, and nobody knows... God knows...
- You might go and cut the widow's lawn and given up a paid job to do it... God knows...

You see, even good works that go unnoticed, cannot remain hidden. On the day that Jesus returns, all will be revealed.

- The wicked will be punished for every sin (and every evil deed that has **not** come to light, will be revealed and judged on that day).
- Likewise, the righteous will be vindicated – every good thing that was done, that nobody knew about, will bring glory to our Father in heaven.
- And every person who has been wrongly accused, will be justified for all to see;

But the greatest thing, is our Lord, the one for whom we wait – the one for whom we toil, has come, and He will be glorified.

And so, Good Leadership, is about bringing glory to God.

- Good provision
- Good behaviour;
- Good order;
- Good justice;

- Good health;
- Good works

Not for our own glory; Not for our own self-aggrandisement... But for the glory of God.

ⁱ Matthew 18:15ff