



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Timothy 5:17-25

"A Further Word About the Elders"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we are again thankful to thee for the privilege of the study of the word of God, we thank thee for Paul's letter to Timothy and for the very interesting and important information that the older apostle communicated to his young legate and we thank thee for its application to us today and we pray that when we study the Word we may by the Holy Spirit understand and be given the motivation and enablement to be able apply that truth to our own lives as it does pertain to them. We commit the meeting to thee we pray thy blessings upon each one present and may the needs we each have be met through thy word, for Jesus sake. Amen

[Message] We are turning to first Timothy chapter 5 verse 17 through verse 25 and our subject tonight is a further word about elders. And I do need to make an announcement: There will not be a meeting of this class for the next two weeks so would you mark that down on your calendar, we will not be meeting this class for the next two weeks. My wife and I will be going back to Tennessee and Alabama to check out Jimmy Carter [Laughter] and find out if it's true that he does actually believe in something [Laughter] so we will be going on a little brief vacation for a little while. I'm sorry I will miss you but we will not have class for the next two Wednesday nights.

Now, if you have your New Testaments let's turn to first Timothy chapter 5 verse 17 through verse 25 and I think since we have I hope plenty of time for this section tonight I'd like to read it through once and then we will discuss the verses consecutively after we have read it through. The apostle, remember, has given his charge to young Timothy in the first chapter he has in the second and third chapters particularly spoken of the conduct of the local church. Centering attention on such things and the place of women and the teaching ministry, which they may have under certain circumstances and then he has spoken about the elders and the deacons and the qualifications for office. And finally, at the end of chapter three or perhaps beginning at chapter four he has been dealing with specific passages of scripture that deal primarily with the conduct of young Timothy himself, whom we have been saying is an apostolic legate a representative of the apostle Paul. He has just spoken about the widows in the church and now in verse 17 he takes up the subject of the elders again.

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine for the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain. And the laborer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. Drink no longer water but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thy frequent infirmities. Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before judgment; and some men they follow after. In like manner also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hidden."

[Message] The apostle returns to the subject of the elders. Now, you'll remember that last time the fifth chapter began with the clause rebuke not an elder. What we said as we expounded these verses last time that the term elder in 1Timothy chapter 5 and verse 1 refers to an old man and not a church official. That seems to be evident from the words that follow: "But exhort him as a father and the younger men as brethren, the elder woman as mother, the younger as sisters with all purity." So he speaks of the different age groups in the local church. Therefore, the term elder there is probably a reference to an old man, but since the term also may refer to a church official we have this ambiguity at times and so we have to make up our minds what in view the old men simply or the officials, and here it seems plain that the officials are referred to because he says let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor. In other words, we're talking about elders in position and not elders in age. The apostle speaks primarily on the two verses which begin the section of the rewarding of elders. Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor especially they that labor in the word and doctrine.

Now, there are a number of points here that we need to have emphasized I think in order to be clear about some doctrinal matters that are touched upon in this verse. First of all, I want you to notice that this text is one of the basic text of affirming the position that there are two types of elders in the local church: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor specially they who labor in the word and doctrine". Well, let me put it this way the elders form one body all of the elders rule. But some elders, it is evident labor in the word and doctrine, some elders have gifts of ministry, gifts of ministry may be for example: The gift of an evangelist; the gift of teaching, that is referred to specifically in 1 Corinthians chapter 12; the gift of exhortation which is it would seem a gift in which a person labors in the word and doctrine; and the gift of pastor teacher, referred to in Ephesians chapter 4.

Now, many of you in this audience know from previous studies that the term pastor in the New Testament is really the term that means shepherd. It is never used of

anyone but the Lord Jesus in an individual since. He is the shepherd of the church. But the term pastor-teacher, I'm using that in a sense of a hyphenated term because of the Greek construction of Ephesians chapter 4 that term is in reference to a spiritual gift that a man may have. Now, a man may be a pastor-teacher and not one of the elders. It is possible for a man to be a pastor teacher and be disqualified for some reason for serving as an elder according to the qualifications that are set forth in chapter three so it is possible for a person who has had the gift of pastor-teacher to not necessarily be an elder, but it is also possible for a man who has the gift of pastor-teacher to be an elder in that case he would be an elder who rules for all elders rule but he would also labor in the word and doctrine. So you can see there are two types of elders or at least it is possible to make a division in the one body of elders. Those who rule include all of the elders but there are some who may have spiritual gifts of ministry and labor in the word and doctrine.

Now, this is a position that is not unique with me it is a position that has been held for hundreds of years in a Christian church and many of you if you grew up in a Presbyterian church you know that what I have just said is thoroughly in harmony with the book of church order most of Presbyterian churches who do make this distinction, speaking of elders and then teaching elders, all elders are ruling elders but some have gifts of ministry and are teaching elders.

Now, you can see from this as a necessary out growth of this that this text definitely is contrary to the position that there is only one elder in a local church; who is the minister of the church; who has organizational authority in the church. As a kind of president of the corporation as I've said so often. You can see from this that if it is true that an elder may exist in the local church who does not labor in the word and doctrine it destroys the position that the elder is necessarily a man who labors in the word and doctrine as "The Pastor" of the local church and necessarily is the authority in the church. Incidentally, as I mentioned when we were studying the third chapter that type of church

polity would of course lead inevitably and consistently to potpourri in the local church, because if there is one elder who is the minister of the church if he is the only elder then authority rest with him because discipline rest with the elders. The elders are those who are qualified in scriptural teaching to exercise discipline that is ultimate authority.

Ultimate power in the local church rest with the elders and if there is one elder who is the minister of the church then he has ultimate power in the church and thus we have one man rule in the church.

This text it seems to me is a very plain and clear refutation of that position. The position of the New Testament is that the local church is governed by a body of elders, a plurality of elders; all of the elders rule, some of them may have additional gifts of ministry of the word of God as is set forth here.

So the apostle then says, "Let the elders that who rule well be counted worthy of double honor." Now, that is inclusive of all of the elders. That's a very interesting expression and I'm going to just tell you what I think about this I do not know of any church in existence that really carries out that first clause completely. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor."

Now, what is double honor? Well, from the context verse 18: "For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain. And the laborer is worthy of his reward." It would seem that financial remuneration is in view. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor." So if we have elders in the church and they rule well, they do their job well, according to the apostle Paul they are worthy not only of the honor and respect of their position for we as members of the local church are subject to them. Incidentally, one elder, I happen to be one elder in this church, one elder is subject to the body too, so I'm subject them just as you are subject to them. So that is the honor that we render to them. They do their job well we honor them as men who under God do their job well. But they are to be reckoned worthy of double honor Paul says. So that would seem to mean that we should give them financial remuneration.

Evidently, in the local church in Paul's day the elders were often men who did devote their whole time to the ministry of the local church, not necessarily in ministering the word but in shepherding the saints. Now, I happen to know a man in North Carolina who does this and he is in full time Christian ministry using that term in the sense in which the church uses it. Actually, everybody is in fulltime ministry of course. But using it in the sense in which it is often used a man that does not work at a secular job for a living this man that I know does this he devotes his entire life to the shepherding of the flock. As a matter of fact, he has shepherded more than one flock. He has devoted himself to it, it would seem to me the he would be a man who would be referred to here in this text. An elder who ruled well and devoted himself to it and gave himself so wholeheartedly to it that I know that somebody is helping him and the ministry in order that he may be able to carry out his shepherding. He does not do a great deal of preaching.

But evidently in the early church there were men who gave themselves to this kind of work who did not do a great deal of preaching but shepherded the flock of God and we really need them like that too. We need men like that in Believer's Chapel, men who are willing to devote themselves to the flock of God.

Double honor, that term honor suggest the term honorarium and the honorarium is a term that is referred to the money that a congregation gives to a man who preaches. Honorarium it is expressive not only of thanks for the ministry of the word but it is also a reward and is not a bad word here because it includes both of the aspects of honor respect as well as, financial reward. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor." Give them an honorarium when they do their work well, especially they that labor in the word and doctrine.

Incidentally, there is a principle abroad in the world that you can express as the British do equal shares for everybody. You can recognize of course that is bears some relationship to principles of socialism. The bible does not stand behind that kind of

principle. One commentator said, "It's inconceivable that a distinction should be made between those who serve in the church. Unfortunately, the apostle had not read that commentary which was written just a few years ago. He said, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor." He didn't say all the elders, he said let them that rule well. He did not think that it was a principle unsupported by Christian doctrine to reward a man for excellence in his work in the Lords work so let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor that principle of reward according to work is a biblical principle and if we don't do the job well we shouldn't expect equal shares for everybody, that is destructive of labor on the human side. Of course, men should not labor for financial reward, but then we should reward those who serve well.

Now, to support this principle the apostle states in the eighteenth verse for the scripture saith, "Thou shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain." He refers here to an Old Testament passage in Deuteronomy chapter 25. Why don't we turn back to it it's an interesting passage in it's own right, Deuteronomy chapter 25 and verse 4. This is a series of passages in the book of Deuteronomy in which certain regulations concerning holiness and mercy are expressed.

Let me read beginning at verse 1 while some of you find Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy chapter 25:

"If there be a controversy between men, and they come under judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. And it shall be, if the wicked men be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: (that's why they gave forty stripes less one in order to take care of failure in mathematics) lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes then thy brother should seem vile unto thee. (remember Paul says

thrice he received forty stripes save one) Thou shall not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the grain."

It was the custom in the treading out of the grain to take the oxen and to have the oxen tied to a post, this was done in several ways but this was one way they were tied to a post and they were made to trample out the corn but they were not muzzled because they were working and since they were working God laid down this merciful provision that they could stop and eat of the grain that they themselves had treaded out.

Now, Paul sees in that the next illustration the mercy of God and you may remember the in the ninth chapter in first Corinthians he uses that text again to justify giving to those who minister the word of God so you shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain and because the oxen was involved in work he had the right to participate from the fruits of that which he was doing. And the same thing is true in the spiritual sphere the apostle says the man who is ministering in the word and doctrine has a right to sustenance from the work that he is doing and he supports it with another text and the laborer is worthy of his reward. That statement is a statement which was uttered by the Lord Jesus in the gospel of Luke chapter 10 and verse 7.

Now, here is an interesting thing there are two interesting things about this but I want to speak about one for a moment which really is not too closely related to what we're talking about in first Timothy but since it is related to the nature of the inspiration of the word of God I want you to notice it.

Now, you know that in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16, Paul has written: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Now, notice the text, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Now, you have heard me say that the doctrine of scripture that is today under attack in the church of Jesus Christ is the doctrine of Holy Scripture. The doctrine of Holy

Scripture is under attack within the evangelical church there is a great struggle going on over the inerrancy of Holy Scripture. Is the bible truly without error in it's teaching or is it a book that does contain error but yet at the same time is an infallible rule of faith and practice for us? That particular struggle is probably the struggle within evangelicalism.

But in a little broader since frequently when you speak to people about the inspiration of scripture if they know something about the bible and they say do you believe in the inspiration of the word of God and you say, "Yes." And they say, "What text of scripture supports that?" You say, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable." But then the friend replies, "Where is that?" You say, "It's 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16." And they say, "What was Paul referring to when he said, all scripture?" And you say, "Well, he was referring to the Old Testament." "All right, the Old Testament was inspired but what about the New Testament? If Paul referred to the Old Testament there then what about the New Testament inspiration?" "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, Old Testament." He refers to Timothy, as you know there, and the things that Timothy learned when he was child, before large sections of the New Testament was written.

Now, I want you to look at this text here and this is incidentally that of course is a question we cannot solve in twenty or thirty minutes in a class like this that's not the purpose of this particular class. But I want you to notice an interesting thing that bears upon that question. Notice the eighteenth verse says, "For the scripture says thou shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain." Now, from what part of the bible does that come? Why, Deuteronomy, we just looked it up didn't we? Now, the second, "And the laborer is worthy of his reward." Now, what part of scripture does that come from? Well, it comes from Luke. Now, if it comes from Luke then the passage has said, "For the scripture saith thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain and the laborer is worthy of his reward." The term scripture, it would appear, therefore is used by Paul to

refer to a passage that is used by Deuteronomy and also a passage from the gospel of Luke which part of the New Testament.

So here we have one text in which there are passages in the Old Testament and from the gospel of Luke that are put together under the one term of the scripture. So if second Timothy is written after first Timothy and most of us would agree that second Timothy is written after first Timothy; when Paul says all scripture is given by inspiration of God, it's not at all definite and certain that that expression in 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16 refers only to the Old Testament. Whatever is called scripture; whatever is scripture is inspired of God.

Well, now, say there are many other things we can say about this as a matter of fact it is possible to take this last part of verse 18 a little differently from the first part. I won't go into all of the arguments pro and con except to say that I am not persuaded by objections to what I have said I do think that Paul when he said, "For the scripture saith thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out he grain and the laborer is worthy of the reward," he understood by scripture the passage from Deuteronomy and the passage from Luke.

Now, there are some students who say, "Well though, the expression the laborer is worthy of his reward is like a little proverb, and the Lord Jesus uttered it as a proverb and the apostle Paul uttered it as a proverb too. Like, our God is a consuming fire that can be considered a proverbial statement so this was just a proverbial statement and the Lord used it and Paul used it and it really didn't come from Luke in Paul's mind but it just came as a proverb which was in constant use and the Lord happened to use it and Paul happened to use it." Now, that's true because in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 Paul quotes this same passage: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain." And there he argues the same point that he argues here and in that passage he says he got it from the Lord. So Paul learned the force of these passages from the Lord so it is evident then that

the apostle regarded the term scripture in this case it seems to me as inclusive of the book of Luke as well as the book of Deuteronomy.

Now, one might say to me, "Well, I grant them that the Old Testament's inspired and that the book of Luke is inspired, but what about the rest of the New Testament?" Well, to get the answer to that you'll have to attend the theology class this Fall [Laughter] and we'll deal with some of those other questions.

Now, then the apostle has said that we ought to give the elders double honor because the scripture says you shall not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain and the laborer is worthy of his reward.

When I was speaking to some of the students at the seminary in a course in the Old Testament and the New Testament, one or two of them are here. This text, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn is quoted twice by Paul. And when I was teaching this course about ten years ago and the use of the Old Testament by the apostle Paul one of the students who had a good sense of humor said, "Dr. Johnson, do you think that since the apostle Paul quotes this text in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 and again in 1 Timothy chapter 5, that it might have been his life verse?" And I said, "No but I imagine it was the oxen's life verse [Laughter]."

So the apostle then from scripture argues that those who labor in the word ought to receive support from those who are the beneficiaries of their teaching. That's a biblical principle and that is applicable to every one of use that's applicable to you who hear the ministry of the word of God, and some of you in this audience do minister the word of God. It's applicable to me who spends a great deal of his time ministering the word of God. But when I hear the word of God and am blessed by the word of God and built up through it, it is my responsibility also to give in support of those who minister to me out of the spiritual things that God has taught them. That's a biblical principle, it's one of the, to me one of the great blessings of life that Believer's Chapel; I think. There many ways in which we do not as a congregation measure up to what the New Testament says about

us here. We have many reasons to be humble and repentant and to seek the face of God for the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives as a local church but I do think in this respect those who attend the Chapel have done well in their response to the ministry of the Word, may it continue to be so.

Well, having spoken of the rewarding of the elders the apostle goes on now to speak of the correcting of the elders. "Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses." Now, you might think that this was something unusual you could accuse somebody else with only one witness, but an elder requires two or three witnesses but you know when you read the Old Testament you'd find that you couldn't accuse anyone whether he was elder or not except before two or three witnesses. Well, someone might say, "Well, what's the point of this then?" Well, it's just simply that elders come in for a great deal of criticism they stand out because of their position and they are frequently the objects of accusation and so the biblical principle is repeated with reference to them because it is so often disobeyed with respect to elders because elders stand out in the congregation. So against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses.

Incidentally, in Jewish law this was practice with a great deal of, to use one of my friend's words, specificity. If for example in a Jewish law court a charge or accusation was brought against a man and he was hailed before the judges if only one witness was offered in support of the charge it was always dropped the defense did not even have to answer because two or three witnesses were required and in the Mishna you'll find specific instructions concerning them they were very careful about that kind of thing so against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses.

Now, you can see that this is a rather important thing for a happy church life. Incidentally, in the rules and regulations which we discern from the study of history of the local church following New Testament time you will find that this also was a church rule, elders were not to be accused except before two or three witnesses and if this were

practiced it would do away with a great deal of malicious talk in the assembly of the saints and be sure of this my Christian friend that that malicious talk or that idle talk will come up before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses one witness is not enough, two or three.

Paul continues, "Them that sin." Now, of course, them that sin by itself could refer to any believer but probably in the context it refers to elders. "Them that sin, (that is the elders that are sinning) rebuke before all." Now, that does mean (I don't think) to drag the elder in before the whole of the congregation unless the sin is a sin against the whole of the congregation. It means rebuke before all the elders. "Them that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear."

Now, there's nothing wrong with a little publicity given to sinners nothing wrong about that at all and in the case of the elders if the elders have sinned they should be rebuked before all the elders and in the case of members in the congregation there are occasions when they must be brought before the whole of the congregation the church should never be an organization that abhors evil. So them that sin, elders, rebuke before all the elders so that the others may fear.

Did you notice when presidential candidate Jimmy Carter was speaking in his acceptance speech the other night about Nixon, said that Paul Harvey said that we now have a presidential candidate who doesn't have an accident [Laughter]. Did you notice that when Mr. Carter was accepting that one of the largest bits of applause came when he spoke about the need for impartial justice? Well, that's in the church is what Timothy is told here, "Them that sin rebuke before all that other's also may fear I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that thou observe these things without preferring one before another doing nothing by partiality." So in the disciplining of elders there is to be no partiality and of course these principles pertain to discipline in the church at large and of course as the church practices these principles of no partiality as citizens in the community they are to support the same kind of principles of course and

we too should be for no partiality in the execution of justice in the society of which we are a part. That's not necessarily a vote for Carter incidentally.

Now, then, the apostle comes finally to the ordaining of the elders. Oh, by the way I do want to say something about Mr. Carter [Laughter] now, this is a word of counsel. Just tonight I was told that in a certain bible class in this city there were a number of people in the bible class who were saying making statements like this, "Well, since Mr. Carter is a Born Again Christian I am going to vote for him because he's a Born Again Christian." Now, this is word of advice this has no scriptural authority behind it at all it's just a word of advice and first a word of opinion. [Laughter] First of all that principle of voting for a Christian as over against a non-Christian to my mind is suspect. I feel that as a citizen I should vote for the man who I am convince has the qualities and capacity and abilities to serve in that office acceptably and there are many Christian who don't qualify at all. I wouldn't, this country would be in a terrible mess if I were President, but I'm a Christian.

Now, the principle of voting for a Christian is not a very good principle necessarily. I don't even apply that to plumbers or carpenters [Laughter] or lawyers or doctors. I want the lawyer who is a good lawyer and the doctor who knows his medicine and I want a plumber who knows plumbing. I don't look for a Christian plumber I look for a good plumber. If there is a good Christian plumber and a good plumber well, then I'll select that good Christian plumber, but I'd rather have the good plumber over against a questionable Christian plumber [Laughter]. And I could give you some examples of this too but I won't [Laughter].

Now, I said I was going to say something else I wanted to say something else because I don't want people in Believer's Chapel to be gullible because I didn't say something you can go ahead and be gullible after I said this that's your responsibility. But now, in Time Magazine it was reported a lengthy lead article on Mr. Charter among other things that he was a religious man that he was supposedly a Born Again Christian, that's

always put in quotes. Incidentally, these newspapermen don't know a thing about that [Laughter] but it was said that among the favorite theologians of Mr. Carter were, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr. Now, I want to say this, any Christian born again or not, [Laughter] any Christian who has, as his favorite among his favorite theologians Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr is not much of a Christian. Cannot possibly be. Those men are anti-Christian, anti-Evangelical Christianity should say. So anybody who has those men as his favorite theologians is not a strong evangelical Christian. So I got that off my chest [Laughter] that's my lecture on politics [Laughter].

We were talking about partiality. Now, in spite of this Christians of course must stand on the side of the principles of the word of God. Some of the things that Mr. Carter said the other night we would all support, I'm sure we'll here the same things next month in Kansas City.

Well, let's go on to read about the ordaining of the elders. "Laid hands suddenly on no man neither be partaker of other men's sin keep thyself pure." He has warned against prejudice and against partiality now he warns, one of the commentators says against participantly, "Lay hands suddenly on no man."

It was incidentally a practice in the early church a principle in the New Testament church when an individual who had been out of fellowship with the local church and under discipline came back into relationship to the church and to the elders confessing his sin. It was the practice of the church in those days to take before the congregation and for the elders to lay hands upon him and to pray over him as he was received back into fellowship in the local church. So it is possible that the apostle referred to something like this. But almost all of the reference in the New Testament and the laying on of hands have to do with commendation or ordination so it is much more likely that Timothy is being told that they should not recognize an elder participantly in the local church. The local church should be exceedingly careful about the recognition or ordination of an elder

in the church. Lay hands suddenly on no man neither be partaker of other men's sins keep thyself pure.

Incidentally there's great deal of stress on the word thyself in the Greek text. Keep yourself pure, be careful about the elders be careful about recognizing elders there should be the most intense investigation, careful observation over a period of time of men before they are recognized as elders in the local church. A great deal of harm in the local church would have been avoided if elders had been chosen in the scriptural way instead of looking down the congregation and seeing the leading businessmen or the wealthy men or men who had influence in other ways and saying it would be nice to have them as elders of the church and the spiritual condition and the spiritual experience taking second or third place in the qualifications of elders.

What shall we do with the statement: "Drink no longer water but use a little wine for thy stomach sake and thy frequent infirmities." One might wonder why the apostle addressed this to Timothy to start with and one in studying this particular epistle I think would be interested in discovering why it is that the apostle finds it necessary to say to Timothy do not be a water drinker, that's really the force of the passage. Do not be a water drinker but use a little wine for thy stomach sake and thy frequent infirmities. What lies back of this? Probably two things lies back of this, first of all, the practices of the Gnostics and the Jews.

Remember in Jewish teaching in the Old Testament a Nazarite vow could be taken and in the Nazarite vow a person vowed that he would not drink any wine, any alcoholic beverage so that would be that kind of influence in Judaism. Then in Gentile life in gnosticism it was also frequently true that teetotalling was practiced, and so it is possible that Paul addresses Timothy out of the background to which he had been exposed and says be not a water drinker; that is, do not adhere to ascetic principles which the Gentiles or the Jews may have regarded as something that all Christians should follow. Don't be a water drinker, now being a water drinker was an expression of an adherence to an ascetic

regulation. Be not a water drinker, that's one thing that may lie back of this. The other thing that lies back of this is Timothy's own personal condition.

Evidently, Timothy was a person who did have physical ailments. In ancient times the beneficial effects of wine as a remedy of many things were widely recognized for example one of the commentators has written, "The beneficial effects of wine as a remedy against dyspeptic complaints as a tonic and as counteracting the effects of impure water were widely recognized in antiquity and modern travelers in Mediterranean countries have confirmed its value for the third at-any-rate for these purposes." Anyone who has ever traveled to Mexico knows something about Montezuma's revenge, and so it's not surprising that wine might have been used to avoid that type of thing. This commentator goes on to say the author of Proverbs advises its use for maladies of both body and soul. And Hypocrates, whom all doctors know his work on medicine, recommends moderate drafts of wine for a patient for whose stomach water alone is dangerous. And Plutarch, another ancient author not too far from Old Testament times, states that wine is the most useful of drinks and the pleasantest of medicines.

So the apostle is telling Timothy then knowing is spirit knowing his physical condition, do not allow ascetic rules to so grip you that you fail to take a little wine because of the weakness of your body. Drink no longer water, don't be a water drinker but use a little wine for thy stomach sake and thy frequent infirmities. I want you to notice he is not however, saying that Timothy you may drink all the wine you want. This is not a text in support of wine drinking as an avocation [Laughter]. Even the way that Paul words this is evidence of it he says use a little wine.

Now, if we have a glass of wine we don't say I'll use a glass of wine use connotes that it is being taken for a specific purpose. Now, I don't think there's anything in the bible that says you cannot drink a glass of wine, as far as I know there is nothing against that. There is a great deal in the bible of course, against drunkenness from any source. So the Christian in his practices must heed what scripture says and follow scripture entirely.

Avoiding legalistic taboos, but on the other hand avoiding occasion for the weaker brethren to be disturbed and upset and that is one thing that I cannot give you any advise on because you must follow what you think is the teaching of Holy Scripture. So Paul tells Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach sake and his frequent infirmities.

And finally he concludes with: "Some men's sins are open beforehand going before to judgment and some they follow after." Now, he is still talking about the ordination of elders probably in this text and he is emphasizing the fact that waiting is necessary because sins of individuals are often hidden for a long time. He states, "Some men's sins are open beforehand." Everybody knows about them they are easy to see you can easily discern such and such a person is not qualified to be an elder. But others they follow after, in other words, their sins are not discovered until much later so one must be careful. In like manner also the good works of some are manifest beforehand and they that are otherwise cannot be hidden that is they may be hidden for a long time but ultimately it will out so both the evil practices of individuals will ultimately been seen and the good works of many that are not seen will ultimately be seen. So wait use caution in the exercise of the selection of elders. God does not pay every Friday, but at the end he always pays.

Well, I think you can see that from the amount that the apostle has spoken about the office of elder that it is a solemn thing to be an elder and it is a solemn thing to consider the choice of an elder in a local church. But there is great solace from a job well done. From our standpoint we ought to do our part by praying for the elders, by honoring them especially when they do their work well.

Let's close our meeting with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] We are grateful to thee Lord for the privilege of the study of Holy Scripture and we recognize that these matters that the apostle wrote young Timothy about are matters that concern us, each one of us individually. Help us Lord to follow the

teaching of Holy Scripture. To honor the elders that rule well. Especially they that labor in word and doctrine and enable us also Lord to carry out biblical discipline for the sake of the health of the church. If there should be some here tonight Lord who do not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we pray that the Holy Spirit may remind them of the Savior who came to offer his life a propitiation for the sins of sinners and we pray that if the Holy Spirit has wrought conviction of sin they may flee to him...

[TAPE ENDS ABRUPTLY]