

1 Timothy 5.1-6.2

Specific instructions related to specific groups...

Instructions related to various age groups and genders – vss. 1-2

- Paul doesn't want Timothy to get the wrong impression that somehow he can be harsh in his handling of people in the congregation. It might be possible to imagine that if he must "command and teach (4.11)" that he could do so with a lack of care and tenderness.
- The differences between these instructions and typical ancient instructions regarding different age and gender groups are striking:
 - Timothy isn't just to honor older men and women, there is a responsibility to admonish them when necessary.
 - Timothy can't treat younger men and women as inferior, he must treat them as equals.
 - And of course, there is a wise instruction to guard the purity of relationships with young women.
- In summary, the spiritual good of the individual congregants is the priority (not just culturally expected honor) and there is a greater emphasis on equality (see Knight, 215).

Instructions related to widows:

- The church's care for older widows – vss. 3-10
 - The church isn't to be burdened with the care of widows if their family can do so. For the family to neglect the care of their widowed mother / grandmother is antithetical to the faith (vss. 4 & 8).
 - Those that the church does provide for must have godly character and be devoted to good works (vss. 5-6, 9-10). There may even be the implication that the supported widows may be expected to serve the church in these ways.
 - A quick excursus on: "fixed her hope on God" – All Christians should "fix their hope on God" Bultmann in TDNT says that HOPE implies 3 elements:
 - future expectation
 - present trust
 - patient waitingIt is important that all of us place all of our future expectations and trust in God and through that Godward focus be able to wait patiently in trials (see Knight, 219).
 - Widows who are supported by the church should be elderly (vs. 9a)
- Instructions for younger widows – vss. 11-15
 - Younger widows should marry and enter into the joys and responsibilities of family life (vss. 11 & 14).
 - This will go a long way in preventing certain temptations toward sexual impropriety, idleness, and gossip (vss. 11-13, 15)
- Concluding remark regarding the care of widows – vs. 16

Instructions related to church leaders:

- Provision for elders – vss. 17-18
 - Based on the analogies given in the Scriptures quoted in vs. 18, the word “honor” in vs. 17 is used in a technical sense meaning “compensation”.

Vss. 19ff seem to be characterized by caution:

- caution regarding accepting accusations against elders
- caution regarding ordaining elders
- Accusations against elders – vss. 19-21
 - This passage basically requires that Matthew 18.15ff be applied in the situation where elders are accused of sin.
 - This is a realistic recognition of at least three things:
 - First of all, elders are sinners and may need to be confronted and rebuked.
 - Second, because of the public leadership position of elders caution is needed. They may be targets of unsubstantiated accusations.
 - Third, dealing with elders in unrepentant sin can't amount to a cover-up. They must be rebuked publicly.
- Ordination of elders – vss. 22-25
 - Because of the possible consequences of unrepentant sin in the lives of church leaders it is best to not “lay hands on someone” in the sense of formal ordination too quickly.
 - It is better to let their character be revealed by time.
 - This acknowledges that sometimes both sinful character and good works are revealed best after time elapses.
 - vs. 23 – I wonder if Paul might be worried that his list of qualifications for elders and the strong words that he is using regarding the responsibilities of elders to remain pure might make Timothy hesitant to drink wine even for medicinal purposes. Consequently he gives him the all clear.

Instructions related to slaves:

- Of course, we have to recognize that this isn't the entire teaching of the New Testament on slavery, the equality of humanity, etc. We also have to be careful that we don't import our American understanding of southern plantation slavery and modern human trafficking into the ancient versions of slavery.
- Interestingly, Paul doesn't seek to dismantle an entire system, at this point, he simply calls individuals to honor God in their particular situation.
- Slaves were to honor their masters in order to honor God – 6.1
- Slaves were especially commanded not to take advantage of their masters if they happened to be Christian believers – 6.2a
- Love was to be the motivation for their honor – 6.2b