

The Treatment of Elders and Prospective Elders in the Church

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Introduction

Brethren, if there is any section of the Pastoral Epistles which deserves much careful consideration by our Visiting Elders, District Officers, Synodical Officials, and college and seminary professors, it is this section of I Timothy 5.

Why is this section so important? The answers will become apparent as we proceed, but first, in a general way, we can simply note that Paul is writing to Timothy as a man entrusted with keeping watch over the doctrine and practice in the churches of his area. Timothy is to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine." (1:4) He is to look for men with certain qualifications (chap. 3) to be bishops, or overseers, of the flocks. In this section Paul tells Timothy how to deal with these men in their office, in other words, how to deal with the men we call "servants of the Lord" today. We get the impression that Timothy is to be much like the men whom we today have entrusted with the solemn duty and responsibility to screen candidates for the ministry, and to a large extent, determine who is fit to enter the office of the holy ministry, and who is fit to remain in that office: That duty is a most serious one, as we shall see. In this section Paul will cover the evaluation of candidates, the ordaining or installing of candidates, the honor due a faithful servant, and the discipline of an unfaithful servant of the Word.

While these words seem to apply most directly to our called and elected officials, they really apply to all of us who are in the public ministry. We were once evaluated as being fit for the ministry. By God's grace we were called into that most holy office, in spite of our individual faults and failings. Now how are we to act in that office? What do we have a right to expect from the people we serve if we are faithful? What ought we to expect if we are *not* faithful to our high calling as God's spokesmen? These questions are also taken up in this section. May this exegesis increase our appreciation of the sacred trust committed to us as servants of the Word and officials of our church.

I.

V. 17, 18 – "Let the elders who rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in practice and teaching, for the scripture says, 'You will not muzzle the ox while threshing', and, 'the laborer is worthy of his reward.'"

Paul urges Timothy to see to it that the "elders who rule well" be given "double honor." Who are these "elders" who "rule?" The word *πρεσβύτερος* basically is used in regard to age and means, "the older, or elder, of two." Thus Jesus uses the word in the Parable of the Prodigal when He speaks of "the elder son." The word can also mean "older" people, as in v. 1 of our chapter. In vv. 1-16 Paul spoke to Timothy about treating "elder" and "widows" in the congregation. The context indicates that in those verses elder means "older man." The Jews applied the term "elder" to various classes of dignitaries, since such high offices were conferred only upon the old men in a day when older people were revered for their experience and wisdom. Thus, in Acts 4:8 Peter addresses "the elders of Israel."

Among Christians, the term "elder" was used as a title for certain workers in the church. We will point to just a few familiar passages. In Acts 20:17 Paul calls the "elders" from the church at Ephesus for a farewell meeting. During that meeting he tells them, (v. 28) "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (ἐπισκόπους) to feed the church of God...therefore watch and remember (v. 31)...that so laboring ye ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (v. 35) Here we see some of the duties of elders: to feed the Church, to watch against false prophets, to strengthen the weak; to remember the words of Christ and teachings of Paul. Acts 14:23 tells us that these elders were "ordained" (KJV), or literally, "chosen or appointed," in every church on Paul's first missionary journey. James wrote in 5:14, "Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him..." (For other use of the term "elder" in this way see Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22ff; 16:4; 21:18; Titus 1:5; I Pet. 5:15)

We see that the elders in the early Christian Church were involved in the ministry of the Word. There were several in some congregations (Phil. 1:1). Just how they divided the ministry of the Lord among themselves is not told us. The contention today that the "one-man pastorate" is the only God-ordained office in the Church, does not agree with Scripture's description of several elders working in the congregation, all doing the work of the ministry. Today, the parish pastor does correspond closely to the "elder" of Scripture, but teachers, professors, called synodical officials also labor in the Lord's service.

The "elders" of Ephesus were also called "overseers, or bishops," in Acts 20 (above). In Titus 1:5-7 Paul lists the same qualifications for elders that he listed for overseers, or bishops, in I Timothy 3. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that the terms "elder" and "overseer, or bishop" are interchangeable. They are called workers in the Lord's vineyard.

As elders, or overseers, these men are to "rule" Paul says. προεστῶτες is a perfect participle of προϊστημι which means to stand first, take the lead, hence, to rule. The elders are to be leaders of their flocks. They are not to rule as tyrants. Peter warns elders against this in his first epistle, (5:2,3), "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof. . . neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." Elders are to be shepherds, feeding and guiding the flocks. Have you ever seen a shepherd with a whip, mercilessly beating his sheep, forcing his will upon them? It doesn't sound like much of a shepherd, does it? Neither is the elder to rule in such a domineering way. The elder is to rule "well" Paul says, to lead in whatever duties are placed upon him, and to do so faithfully.

Those elders who do this "well" are to be accounted worthy of "double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." What should the faithful servant of the Word expect from the flock over which he has been placed? Should he really expect anything at all? Or should he only "look to the Lord" for his reward and not to the flock itself? "Well done thou good and faithful servant" are words we all hope to hear from our Lord when we meet Him face to face, but does that mean that we are to receive no uplifting words, no expressions of thanks for a job well done while on earth? Hardly. Paul says that those who rule well are worthy of διπλῆς τιμῆς, double honor. Faithful service deserves some recognition from the people served. The faithful work of a called worker should not be taken as a matter of course. Congregations who have such faithful workers should be grateful for the blessings God has given through them. No doubt Paul was aware, however, that Christian people, still hampered by the flesh, could be very remiss in this. Some may believe that the pastor is on "easy street" - paid for working one or two days a

week. Or they may feel that if any honor is to be bestowed, it should be by means of the funeral sermon. Until that time, keep the preacher humble by neglecting any tokens of thanks or honor, Hendrickson makes the comment, "Is it surprising that so many ministers suffer nervous breakdowns? And that there are several who were doing their work conscientiously?" Paul foresaw such problems. He urges Timothy to stir up the congregations to appreciate their elders. Don't our Visiting Elders and District Officials have the same duty today? Isn't it their business to know what is happening in the congregations under their jurisdiction and to stir up these which are remiss in honoring their faithful servants?

Now what does Paul mean by "double honor?" There have been several interpretations:

- 1) Twice as much honor as the widows in the first part of the chapter
- 2) Double pay - but *τιμῆ* means "honor," not pay
- 3) honor plus pay
- 4) one honor as a brother, another as an elder
- 5) honor as an elder, extra honor as serving well

Both Lenski and Hendrickson take the latter position. However, Lenski says that the matter of wages as part of the honor due for serving well does not enter in at all. He claims that the following v. 18 is only used to show that as an ox deserves gain, and a laborer pay, so an elder deserves honor. Hendrickson, on the other hand, does not completely disregard suitable wages as part of the extra honor due an elder since Paul does use passages dealing with wages to prove his point here (v. 18). I agree with this view.

The office of elder itself deserves honor. That is shown in v. 1 where Paul tells Timothy not to receive any accusation against an elder, unless 2 or 3 witnesses can bring that accusation! The office of elder itself deserves that much honor! Double honor should be given when the office is fulfilled "well." What form that honor will take will no doubt vary from congregation to congregation: special anniversary celebrations, special gifts, the attitude of the people toward their called workers, the attitudes they instill in their children, etc.

The fact that Paul uses two passages from "the Scripture" which speak of wages to back up his argument indicates that suitable wages should not be ignored as part of the double honor. What sort of honor is shown to the called workers when they must be dressed very poorly, while their people are decked out in the finest? What sort of honor is shown the office of the ministry when the parsonage or teacherage becomes a run-down eyesore while the members of the congregation on are living in new houses? What honor is shown to servants of the Lord when they must scrimp for every nickel, while tacit parishioners go through money like water? Again, Timothy, the overseer's overseer is to see that elders who rule well are given what they deserve for that service.

Especially, Paul says, those who "labor in preaching and teaching" deserve special honor. (Evidently, all the elders did not do this, some worked on other phases of the ministry.) The word *κοπιᾶω* means a) become weary, tired b) work hard, toil, strive, struggle. Those who "work hard" in preaching and teaching are especially to have double honor. This reminds us that the work of the ministry is work, hard work and labor. Much of it is blessed work, but in a sin-cursed world, spreading the Gospel of Christ is no easy task. Men who wish to be faithful servants must be prepared to work longer hours than other men, to deny themselves and their families quite often. The pastor's wife's lament might well be: Laymen work from sun to sun, but the pastor's work is never done, Such is the work of the ministry especially in regard to preaching and

teaching, for this is the heart and core of all our efforts, to lead people to Christ and keep them in the faith through Word. Preaching and teaching deserve much labor on our part.

Here the word *λόγος* appeals without the article. Arndt and Gingrich's lexicon renders this "preaching," explaining that context must determine how *λόγος* is to be translated. Here preaching and teaching go together. Most modern translations use "preaching." The KJV renders "the Word." Lenski translates "Word and teaching" without the article, but doesn't explain why. In II Tim 4:2 Paul writes, "*κήρυξον τόν λόγον*" using the article, "Preach *the* Word." It seems that "preaching" would be better in our passage.

Of course, the preaching and teaching of faithful elders will be done on the basis of the Word. Those faithful in the preaching and teaching are worthy of double honor in God's sight. God's criterion for judging the elder is not: how many communicants does he have, how fast is his church growing, how many current books he has read, how much he has written, how many civic organizations he belongs to, or how active his social life is. The Lord is more interested in how faithfully he has labored in preaching and teaching.

V. 18 - We've already referred to this verse. Paul quotes first of all from Deut. 25:4. He used the same reference for I Corinthians 9:3-14 where he laid down the principle, "They which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" The second passage he quotes seems to be Luke 10:7 (Matt. 10:10 is also similar.) This seems to indicate that the Gospel according to Luke had already been written and Paul calls it "Scripture," giving it equal authority with the Old Testament.

We note a great principle which Paul invokes here. The Scriptures settle every matter for the Christian. Do the elders who rule well and labor well really deserve "double honor?" Look at Scripture, Paul says, those who work deserve to be supported for that work. They deserve honor for their office and their faithful service.

II.

V. 19 - This begins a new section dealing with the discipline of elders who have been unfaithful to their calling. In the first place, Paul warns Timothy, *Against an elder, do not receive a charge except on the basis of two or three witnesses.*

It has been said that "to be in a prominent position is to be exposed to criticism and unjust accusation." Paul says that this would also be true of the ministry. Many unjust accusations might be made by people who didn't "see eye to eye" with the pastor, who didn't like his haircut, or his sermon delivery, or his bedside manner. Timothy should beware of listening to accusations unless (*ἐκτός* with *εἴμη*) it be (*ἐπί*) on the basis of, or upon, the testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses. The dignity of the elder's office must be guarded. Suspicion and conjecture should not hinder the course of the Gospel. To act on mere suspicion might seriously jeopardize a man's ministry. A faithful worker might easily become discouraged to learn that charges were being entertained on pure hearsay. Timothy is to have at least 2 or 3 witnesses before he even looks into the accusation!

The demand for 2 or 3 witnesses is made throughout Scripture (Deut. 19:5; Matt. 18:1; II Cor. 13:1; Rev. 11:3). Jesus himself offered more than one witness to His authority in John 8:16-18 and 5:31-38.

V. 20 - But now, what if a charge against a servant of the Word has sufficient support to be entertained? And what if investigation by Timothy proves the charge to be valid? Paul shows that the office of the ministry does not render the transgressor immune to discipline. Far from it!

In fact, Paul speaks of a strong form of discipline for the offending elder. "Those who are sinning, rebuke before all, that others also may fear." The office of elder calls for more than the private rebuke between Timothy and the offender - it calls for a public revealing and rebuke of the offense, and for a wholesome purpose, we might add, "that others also may fear."

Three questions arise in regard to this verse: First, what sins does Paul refer to as justifying such a rebuke before all? Secondly, what does this "rebuke" include? Is expulsion from the ministry included? Thirdly, who are the "all" who hear the rebuke, the elders or the entire church?

Commentators differ widely in their views regarding these questions. Several do a good job of avoiding them altogether. Kretzmann takes the sins to be offenses, such as adultery, drunkenness, and other great offenses against morality. Lenski says that such grave sins are not meant here for they would call for removal from office, not just, a rebuke, and they would have to come before the whole congregation not just the elders. So Lenski takes the "all" to be all the elders, as does Kretzmann and Hendrickson.

We might note that *ἀμαρτάνοντας* is a present participle and can be translated, "keep on" or "continue sinning." This is not just a one-time offense, a slip by the elder. Timothy sees the situation continuing. Is it false doctrine, false practice, adultery, drunkenness? What does it matter? They are all sins, and the sin has given public offense so that 2 or 3 witnesses have brought the charge (v. 19) and the charge has been proven!

Now the discipline of the erring elder is to be carried out in the form of a "rebuke." The word *ἐλέγχω* means first of all "bring to light," hence, to "rebuke" or "reprove". Christ uses it in Matthew 13:15, also speaking of church discipline, "show him, his fault." Tiny proven sin of the elder is to be brought to light and, rebuked before all: Remember, this sin has given public offense. In the light of Matthew 13, I believe that if the Visiting Elder sees an offense others do not see, confronts the elder, and leads him to repentance, no public rebuke is needed, or if the elder, coming to his "pastor's pastor" confesses a sin he knows he has committed and repents of that sin, a public rebuke need not be made, for the matter is already settled.

Will the rebuke before all include expulsion from the ministry? Here I believe that Timothy would have to use some of his Christian common sense. Has such great offense been given that the man, even though repentant, could not continue in the ministry? Or is it a point of false doctrine or false practice which (rather unfortunately) may not have been noticed by as many people and of which the elder has repented and, promised to amend? Each case, I would think, would have to stand on its own merits.

But each case should be rebuked before "all", no matter what the offense. The rebuke should be public. The honor and holiness of the ministry demand it. Now, who are the "all?" Most commentators take this to mean all the other elders, for they will profit most from this in being led to be on guard themselves against such sins. I'm going to go out on a limb, however, and say that to me the simple sense of "all" here would be all the congregation, or synod, or whoever has called this elder to serve in their midst. This should also cause the members of the church to fear lest they fall into sin when they see how Satan can deceive even an elder! They should not glory or gloat, but be on guard themselves and fear, lest they also fall for the wiles of the devil.

Whichever interpretation we may favor of the word "all," one thing is sure. Public offense by the elder is a most serious matter. It should not be covered up, it cannot be wished away; it must be dealt with by the men who fill Timothy's shoes today and have been given the responsibility. For the good of the ministry these men must take the bull by the horns and get to

the bottom of accusations made against a pastor or teacher under their jurisdiction. For if a sin has been committed, it must be rebuked and the offender brought to repentance and the others warned! No one is immune from this discipline whether he be a kindergarten teacher or synod president.

V. 21 – To emphasize the seriousness of these matters, Paul goes on, "I charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels that you observe these things without pre-judgment, doing nothing with partiality." Paul begins this verse with a solemn charge or declaration to Timothy. He as much as puts Timothy under oath as he calls upon God, Jesus Christ, and the elect angels to witness his solemn charge. In II Timothy 4:1 Paul again gives a serious charge to Timothy. He is not to take his duties lightly.

God is to witness the solemn charge for He will hold men accountable on the Last Day. Jesus, also, for the Father has given judgment to His Son (Jn. 5:22) . Why are the "elect angels" also called upon to witness this charge? First; these are the angels who are and remain with God in heaven for eternity. They are the opposite of the angels who according to Jude 6, "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitations." Thus Paul calls the angels of heaven, the elect, chosen, angels. The office of the ministry is exercised in the sight of God and these angels who are spectators of what happens here on earth (I Cor. 4:9), are concerned about order in the church (I Cor. 11:10), and are the "ministering spirits" which minister to the "heirs of salvation." (Heb. 1:14)

While the departed saints are not conscious of what happens here on earth (Is. 63:16), the angels are! They also are closely connected with the final Judgment (I Thess. 1:7; Matt. 24:31-33; 25:31) Therefore it is fitting for Paul to call upon them as witnesses of his solemn charge.

The charge itself is that Timothy must be completely impartial in the case of disciplining an erring elder. He is not to be influenced by personal likes and dislikes. "There is no respect of persons" with God (Col. 3:25), neither should there be any with Timothy as God's representative. All outside influences should be spurned. Only the facts of the matter should be considered if a God-pleasing decision is to be reached.

Isn't this the great difficulty for us as men? Friends, fellow-workers, relatives, highly-regarded men in our synod may be accused - yet, the man in Timothy's position is to be influenced only by the facts. He is not to pre-judge. He is not to be influenced by friendships or personal likes or dislikes, for this can spell ruin for the church. "Buddy-ism", Hendrickson points out, "Can destroy a denomination." He goes on to say that "corruption generally begins at the summit. The man in the pew does not know what happened while he slept. When he wakes up - if he ever does - it is generally too late."

Our own contemporary church history gives us several examples of this, as we all know only too well. Lack of impartial discipline has led to many troubles in the Lutheran Church. The charge, therefore, is very grave - no partiality! The word *πρόσκλησις* is literally the inclination of the scales from side to side, or bias. Whether or not he is a personal friend of the man, Timothy must remain impartial to do justice to his office and the office of the elder. Certainly, those who fill Timothy's shoes today, will also want to earnestly pray when such cases arise, "Thy Will be done!" Much is at stake - the Church in all ages will do well to take Paul's solemn charge to heart.

III.

V. 22 - The matter of discipline of an elder has been discussed and so Paul moves on to another topic, but one which is somewhat connected with what he has already said. As the old saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." This holds true of the public ministry also. Paul reminds Timothy that not just everyone is qualified to be in that ministry: "Do not lay hands speedily upon anyone, neither have a share in sins belonging to others; keep yourself pure."

Laying on of hands is an ancient ceremony (Acts 6:63; 13:3; I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6) which was used in various ways. For example, in Mark 10:15 Jesus put his hands upon the little children to bless them. In the Acts and Timothy passages listed above it refers to the installing of men into offices in the Church. It is symbolic and accompanies the prayer of the Church that God will bless that person. We have retained the laying on of hands in confirmation and installation and some orders of Baptism.

Here, Paul urges Timothy not to be too hasty in installing men into the office of elder. Every candidate should be properly examined. Does he fit the qualifications Paul lists elsewhere (chap. 3)? Does he have a firm grasp of true Christian doctrine? Proper examination should be given lest any installed into office later prove totally unfit for the ministry. Paul suggests that if Timothy were lax in this, he would become a partner of other men's sins. He must bear part of the responsibility for later difficulties if he has been too hasty.

Certainly, we can make a number of applications to our own day and our own synod. There is justification of our 8 to 12 year training course for pastors and teachers, How many, entering these programs with great aspirations have dropped out along the way, deciding that the ministry was not for them? Doesn't history show that when the requirements for entering the ministry are relaxed, and candidates are given little training or examination, the Church will suffer? Our college and seminary professors, the Assignment Committee, and those in charge of colloquies would do well to keep these words of Paul in mind, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." Be sure he is qualified first (one might add; no matter who his relatives are!). This is to be the first consideration.

Paul is not just speaking of the times Timothy will personally take part in the installation ceremony. The picture we get is that Timothy is responsible for all the elders in his area. If he has been faithful in examining; the candidates, he will not become a partaker of their sins.

The warning, "keep yourself pure," is also most fitting for a man in Timothy's position. If he is to require blameless lives of the elders, he himself must be free from blame. Purity and discipline can be maintained among the rank and file when there is purity and discipline among the leaders. This applies to congregations as well! Impurity will destroy the effectiveness of a called worker in a congregation and silence his rebukes to others. Impurity will have the same effect on Timothy's influence over elders.

V. 23 - This verse is a parenthesis in which Paul makes a personal remark to Timothy regarding his health. Yet, this does also apply to what Paul has said in regard to Timothy keeping himself "pure". By this Paul did not mean a false abstinence (also warned against in 4:3). Paul avoids extremes in his ministry, neither total abstinence, nor drunkenness. He tells Timothy, "Drink water no longer, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses." Lenski suggests that Timothy may have been drinking only water and abstaining from wine to avoid any remote possibility of being accused of drunkenness. (Remember how the Pharisees accused Christ of being a "winebibber" in Matt. 11:19). But the waters of the near-east were, and still are, often so contaminated that drinking of water alone could be hazardous to a person's health. That was one reason for the use of wine as a common table drink. Paul suggests

that Timothy no longer drink water, but drink a little wine. This would be better for his health and his frequent illnesses.

Hendrickson says that Paul speaks of using wine only as a medicine here, not as a beverage when he says, "Drink no longer water?" The 5th Commandment is to be regarded when something is harmful to the body. In this case, wine would be less harmful than water.

I believe the Concordia Commentary is correct when it points out that this passage does not condemn every temperance movement, nor does it only speak of wine as a medicine. We realize the many evils connected with over-indulgence in strong drink. At the same time, "all things" belong to the Christian and can be used for the glory of God (I Cor. 10:23,31). This little personal aside by Paul to Timothy is a witness to true Christian liberty and does stand against any who simply claim that alcohol itself is sinful and harmful to the body. Timothy was urged to partake of wine, but not to overindulge!

The subject of a pastor's health could make up another paper. Let us simply say here that good health is a definite asset in a calling as demanding as the ministry. Proper eating, exercise, and rest are essential to good health. We practice good stewardship of our time when we take a little time out of our schedules for these things.

V. 24 - Paul is back to the subject of verse 22, the ordaining of candidates for the ministry. Perhaps after reading Paul's solemn charge to "lay hands suddenly on no man," Timothy was thinking, "How can I fulfill such a great responsibility? How can I be sure about who is suitable for the ministry and who is not?" Paul comforts Timothy with the next two verses in which he says that Timothy's job will not really be that difficult if he only exercises due caution. "The sins of some men are perfectly clear, leading forth into judgement, and some they follow close after. Likewise the good works are manifest and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."

Paul is stating some general truths with an application to the ordaining of unworthy or worthy men for the office of elder. Timothy was to make his judgments with great care, for they would, after all, be human judgments, and we humans can easily err in judging others. Timothy was not to make his judgments on reputation alone - it could be slander. Timothy is to look at the facts. The evil deeds of some would be clearly seen even before the examination took place, Paul says. It would be very evident from what Timothy observed in the lives of these men that they were not fit candidates for the ministry.

The sins of some others might be hidden, not so readily apparent, but as one commentator put it, "Their sins walk right into the meeting behind them and refuse to be left outside." Careful questioning on Timothy's part will reveal that these also do not have the proper qualifications for the ministry. If Timothy does not find a candidate fit for the ministry, the whole section we are studying leads to the obvious conclusion: that man must be refused admission into the office of elder.

Timothy's comfort then is that the man unfit for the ministry will, in the course of time and examination, show himself to be unfit. This seems to indicate that Timothy should form a close relationship with this man. Of course.. in an exceptional case of hypocrisy and deceit, God will have to be the final judge, and Timothy cannot be blamed for the man's later sins.

We can aptly this to our own colleges and seminary. The more intimate contact the professors and presidents of these institutions can have with their students the better. For only then can they get a good picture of the whole person, his strengths and weaknesses, his conduct and his attitude toward the ministry. We must always remember that the filling of pulpits and classrooms is not the end for which we are striving, but the building and edifying and uplifting of

the Body of Christ is to be our goal as we train our pastors and teachers. Thus Paul emphasizes careful examination of all candidates.

V. 25 - Here Paul cautions Timothy against being too hasty to condemn those whose good works might not at once be apparent. This warning is just as in place as the first warning against approving too hastily. The fruits of faith produced by various Christians are not always apparent in the same degree. Timothy will have an easy time judging some candidates for the ministry - their good works will be known far and wide. Others perhaps, chose to be out of the spotlight serving the Lord in less obvious ways, yet still serving well. Examination by Timothy will also bring this out, their good works "cannot be hid."

Therefore, Timothy need not be fearful of refusing a good man for the ministry; though he may not have been "the shining light of the senior class." Kretzmann's comment is worthy of note, "If this care in the selection of able candidates for the holy office were at all times exercised, it would undoubtedly result in raising the dignity and worth of the ministry to a much higher level than it occupies at the present time."

Today, as the enrollment at our synod's worker-training schools increases won't we want to thank God for sending more laborers into His harvest, but, on the other hand, won't we also want to remember His qualifications for an elder and His directions for careful examination of candidates for this office? We dare not be so intrigued by the "numbers game" that one day we find our pulpits and classrooms filled, but filled with those who were not properly examined as candidates for the ministry.

In his commentary, Hendrickson analyzes Timothy as a rather timid and reserved person (I Cor. 16:10 and II Tim. 1:7), yet a very dependable person. For in spite of his timidity, youth, and frequent illnesses, Timothy was willing to leave home for dangerous mission journeys, difficult errands, and the great responsibilities Paul entrusted to him. Thus, Paul has now encouraged young Timothy to exercise due caution, not to be afraid to examine candidates thoroughly; and then to ordain those who are qualified.

SUMMARY: Through the Apostle Paul we have seen how highly God regards the office of elder in His Church. It is a sacred office for which candidates are to be carefully examined before their installation. It is an office deserving honor of itself, and one which deserves double honor when the man who holds it has been faithful especially in preaching and teaching. Yet, at the same time, the honor of the office of the holy ministry demands a stern, public rebuke when an elder has caused public offense with his sin.

May we all retain the high regard for the office of the ministry which Paul has sought to instill in us with these verses of his first epistle to Timothy.

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Pulpit Commentary
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Analysis of forms

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|-------|---------------|---|
| v. 17 | - προεστῶτες | perf. part of προίστημι - stand fast |
| | - κοπιῶντες | part. of κοπιάω - grow weary, toil |
| | - ἀξιουσθωσαν | pass. inv. of ἀξιάω - account |
| v. 18 | - ἀλοῶντα | part. of ἀλοάω – thresh |
| | - φιμώσεις | fut. of φιμώω – muzzle |
| v. 19 | - παραδέχον | impv. of παραδέχομαι – receive |
| v. 20 | - ἔλεγχε | impv. of ἐλέγχω – reprove, rebuke |
| | - ἔχωσιν | subj. of ἔχω – have |
| v.21 | - φυλάξῃς | aor. subjunctive of φυλάσσω – keep, observe |
| v. 22 | - ἐπιτίθει | impv. of ἐπιτίθημι – place upon |
| | - κοινώνει | impv. of κοινωνέω – share in |
| | - τήρει | impv. of τηρέω – observe, keep |
| v. 23 | - ὑδροπότει | impv. of ὑδροποτέω – drink water |
| | - χρῶ | impv. of χράομαι – use |
| v.24 | - προαγουσαι | part. of προάγω – lead forth, go before |
| v. 25 | - κρυβῆναι | aor. pass. inf. of κρύπτω - hide |