

1 Timothy

I. Introduction

A. **1 Timothy 5:22-23** . . . Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin. [23] No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

B. Pray

II. We bear partial responsibility for bad leadership if we help put ungodly leaders into leadership positions.

A. [22a] Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others . . .

1. This first part of **vs 22** is a challenge to translate from the Greek into English. And though I prefer the way the NASB translates it, there is another translation that is equally good, and favored by such respected Bible translations as the ESV, the NKJV, and the NJB. Therefore, to be fair to you, I am going to present both options even though I am using the NASB translation for today's teaching.

a. ESV: "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others." The ESV turns this part of **vs 22** into two separate exhortations – which are in essence:

(1) Don't be careless as to who you put into leadership.

(2) Don't participate in or keep silent about the sins of others, whomever they may be.

b. The NASB presents this part of **vs 22** as a single exhortation, which in essence says: Don't be careless as to who you put into leadership because you will bear part of the responsibility for the ungodly ways they behave and carry out their duties **and** you will bear part of the responsibility for the sins of their followers which result from their leadership.

2. I prefer the NASB translation because it drives home the truth that those who put leaders into a position of leadership share responsibility for the sins they commit as a leader, for the spiritually unhealthy influence they have on their followers, and for the sins their followers commit as a result of following these leaders.

3. In other words, we – that is you and me – we bear at least part of the responsibility for the sins of our leaders and those they lead **if**–

- a. we put people into leadership who, according to the Bible's stated standards, do not belong there,
 - b. and **if** we do not speak to a leader who we observe sinning,
 - c. and **if** we do not publicly rebuke a leader who does not change his ways after having been talked to about it.
- B. It is possible you are tired of hearing about this since you have heard about it several times already in our study of **1 Timothy**. However, I believe there is a great need to hear this message, for two primary reasons.
1. **First**, we need to hear this message because of the number of scandals in just the last two years among pastors, elders, church leaders, and leaders of Christian organizations.
 2. **Second**, we need to hear this message because of the number of Christians who lack concerned discernment when putting spiritually unqualified leaders into positions of leadership, and the number of Christians who naively or unwittingly follow unqualified leaders.
 3. In other words, the problem is not just the number of leaders who should not have been put into leadership, it is also the number of believers who follow spiritually unhealthy leaders.
 4. And so to urge us to have a godly concern for the spiritual health of the church, **vs 22** tells us to be careful who we put into positions of leadership, because if we put Biblically unqualified people into positions of leadership, we will bear part of the responsibility for the ungodly and spiritually unhealthy ways they behave and carry out their duties.

III. [22b] Keep yourself free from sin.

- A. The idea here is that those at the top who bear the greatest responsibility for who is put into leadership, are to take seriously their responsibility to keep **themselves** free from sin.
1. Though this is what should be expected of any leader, it is a necessary exhortation for at least two reasons common to leaders in every walk of life, not just the church.
 - a. The first reason is pride.
 - b. The second reason is the ease with which a leader can allow an inflated sense of importance to exempt them or the busyness of the work to distract them from honestly examining, condemning, and correcting their own ungodly, hypocritical, unfair, or self-serving behaviors.

B. The problem of church leaders and pride:

1. There are those who want a leadership position because they believe they can do a much better job than the one or ones currently in leadership. Most of these are not seeking the good of the church, but self-glory.
2. There are those who want a leadership position because it makes them feel important and/or powerful. These are not seeking the good of the church, but a sense of well-being, importance, and the satisfaction of accomplishment.
3. There are those who, when they get into a leadership position, take on a sense of superiority – which often leads to an arrogant, above the law attitude. Such as these see themselves as God’s solution to fixing or building the church, while ignoring their own spiritual condition and growth in godliness.
4. **Proverbs 16:18**, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”
 - a. The reality is, pride is personally costly in that it damages our character. In other words, it is self-destructive, in that it makes our life worse, not better.
 - b. And though pride not only brings destruction and stumbling into the leader’s life, it does significant damage in the lives of those who follow a proud leader.
5. Therefore, the scripture exhorts leaders, and by extension the rest of us, to keep ourselves free from sin – which includes pride.

C. The problem of overlooking one’s own ungodly, hypocritical, unfair, and self-serving behavior:

1. Church history confirms that many leaders have been caught in some position ending sin, or have ended up damaging the work they led because they did not pay proper attention to themselves or take the time to do what is necessary to keep themselves from sin.
2. For example, it is common for a church leader – and especially a pastor – to get so focused on leading the church and working with the people that they neglect their own behavior and overlook the things in their life that need correcting, or need removal and replacement.
3. It is also common for a church leader to think that since he is a leader, he doesn’t have to answer to anyone. Sadly, some have allowed this thinking to open the door to sin. Sadder still, some have

used this thinking to continue sinning until they get caught in some indiscretion or abuse of power or immoral behavior.

4. The point I want to get across is that none of us have completely defeated our flesh, none of us have overcome all our sinful desires, none of us completely and perpetually love what God loves and hate what God hates, and none of us is free of the devil's temptations or the pressure to conform to the world – including the pressure to conform to worldliness in the church.
 - a. Therefore, to maintain whatever spiritual growth we have attained, we must remain vigilant against our own sinful, selfish, fear-based, and prideful inclinations.
 - b. We must remain vigilant against the devil's temptations and the pressures to conform to the ways of the world that have been and are being brought into the church.
 - c. We must continue to honestly and sincerely judge ourselves to see how we measure up to God's word and how we compare to the righteousness, love, and service to God of Jesus Christ.
 - d. And as a church, we must work together to help and encourage each other to remain on the narrow path, and especially so when one of us – be it a leader or otherwise – is facing trying circumstances or seems to be straying in attitude, word, or deed.

IV. Addictions. Not every Christian gets healed. Some have prolonged sicknesses and some have sickness until death frees them.

- A. [23] No longer drink water exclusively, but use **a little wine** for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.
 1. In **1 Timothy 3:3** and **Titus 1:7**, we read that a church leader is not to be addicted to wine. Without question, any addiction has a life altering effect on how we live and is hard to overcome. Therefore, it appears Paul is seeking to guard against an addiction in Timothy's life by urging him to use just **a little wine** as a form of medicine for his stomach troubles and other ailments.
 2. Are you aware of how easily we humans get addicted to things that gratify our desires, soothe our fears, dull our pains, comfort us in our distresses, compensate us for our losses, or give us a sense of well-being even as we continue making choices and behaving in ways that work against our good?
 - a. And though you may think alcohol and drugs are the two major addictions we must fear and avoid, they are not our only enemies when it comes to addictive behaviors.

- b. For example, I have never had a problem with alcohol or drugs. Yet as I have gone to war against some of my sinful pursuits and selfish habits, and have sought to drive them out and replace them with godliness, it has felt like I was fighting an addiction because of how tenaciously they held on and how hard and long I had to fight to drive them out.
 3. So what is my point? Beware of addictive behavior in relation to such things as alcohol, prescription drugs, video games, surfing the internet, food, sex and pornography, buying things, hoarding things, accumulating money or possessions, perfectionism, having to win, wearing the latest fashions, controlling others, needing to feel important . . . and this list can go on.
 4. These things may make you feel good in the moment, but the resulting good feelings can get a grip on your life that is hard to break free of. In addition, these good feelings bring with them forms and amounts of destruction that alter how you live and deal with life.
 5. Therefore, beware of what you give yourself to. Only use a little wine, not for personal pleasure or the gratification of your desires or the dulling of your senses, but for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.
- B. The second point to be made from **vs 23** is that not every Christian gets healed. Some have to endure prolonged sicknesses, and some have to bear ill-health in one form or another until death frees them.
 1. If you are experiencing a prolonged illness or some debilitating handicap or recurring ailments, then it is probable there isn't any explanation that makes the affliction seem non-existent or so tolerable that it has no effect on your life.
 - a. It seems Paul saw Timothy's ailments as enough of a problem to necessitate drinking a little wine.
 - b. And it seems Timothy's stomach issues and frequent ailments were not the result of sin in his life, for if they were, the solution would have been to deal with the sin, not drink wine.
 2. The point is, not all illness or physical troubles are the result of some specific sin we've committed or practiced. I do believe it is always wise to consider that possibility, but it is equally unwise to assume our own sin has to be or is always the cause.
 3. Therefore, how should we think and what attitude should we have when living with ongoing sickness, disease, some handicap, or

something else that is relentlessly difficult – for which we can find no underlying sin as the cause? Interestingly, mindset and focus are the two primary things God’s word addresses in relation to this issue.

- a. Focus: **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**, “Therefore we **do not lose heart**, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. [17] For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, [18] while we **look not** at the things which are seen, but **at the things which are not seen**; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- b. Mindset: **Romans 8:18**, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
- c. Mindset/Focus: **James 1:2-4**, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. [4] And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”
- d. Focus: **James 5:11**, “We count those **blessed who endured**. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the **outcome** of the Lord's dealings, that the **Lord is full of compassion and is merciful**.”

C. There is no pleasure in suffering. Pain is painful. Suffering is difficult and wearying.

1. Yet the spiritual growth and resulting rewards that are gained by going through such suffering – with God and with a godly attitude – change the suffering from something to be endured into something to be valued and thankful for.
 - a. However, it is not in our nature to be thankful for the suffering. What is in our nature is the longing for relief.
 - b. And yet, if we open ourselves to the blessing side of suffering, if we focus more and more on drawing near to God – clinging to Him and depending on Him for the strength to endure, if we maintain an attitude of thanksgiving for His continued provision and protection and for His presence and love in the midst of our suffering, if we fellowship with Him the best we can – given our physical ailments, and if we look at eternity as God’s ultimate solution, then we will progressively enter into a depth of

relationship with God that is so satisfying and fulfilling that it can make the suffering seem worth it.

2. Does this change the pain that some Christians endure for years? No. But it does change the way we see God, and the way we endure the pain because of the presence of God, because of a growing and deepening fellowship with God, and because of the peace and joy that comes from His presence, our confident trust in Him, and our intimate fellowship with Him.

V. Conclusion

- A. **Psalm 145 ...** [3] Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. [9] The LORD is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works. [14] The LORD sustains all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down. [18] The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. [19] He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.