

I TIMOTHY 5:17-25
RESPECT FOR ELDERS!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Timothy chapter 5 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's first letter to Timothy.

In our last study we focused on – ***RESPECT FOR THE FAMILY!***

Keep in mind that I am not speaking of your biological family but your new birth family or the family of God. That is not to say we are not to respect our biological family, but that is just not the focus here.

Specifically, Paul is speaking of how we are to deal with sin among the brethren, how we are to treat them. In other words, we are not to ignore sin, but we are to deal with it. And we are to deal with it with the idea of restoration and not destruction. We are to love them but not condone their sin.

As we continue on in our study here in I Timothy chapter 5, Paul is going to deal with – ***RESPECT FOR ELDERS!***

And here, specifically, he is talking about respect for the office of an elder in the church.

Now you may be thinking, ***“Hey, I am not a pastor or elder nor will I ever be. So what does this have to do with me?”***

First of all, you need to know what is to be done when an elder is out of line. But there is more and that is a great question and I like what Ray Stedman had to say about this. He wrote,

In this section from First Timothy 5 the Apostle Paul again turns to admonitions and instructions concerning the elders of a church.

Many of you will never be elders, so you are already thinking, “This is not for me; it’s boring stuff.” But remember that, in these passages, the apostle is dealing with the divinely-given machinery for the proper functioning of a church.

As we have already seen in Chapter 3 of this letter, a church that is functioning as its Lord intends is a uniquely powerful body. Paul calls such a church, “the dwelling place of God and the pillar and bulwark of the truth.”

This is where you find God in any age; it is where God lives. A church is also the display base for and the defense of the truth in a confused and bewildered world; it is where the mistaken and illusive ideas of men are corrected.

I am not talking about a building; I am talking about people - it is people who are led by elders. So to give our attention to elders is an important matter.

To get a church operating as it ought to is more important than maintaining good schools, or electing strong officials to office, or building a sound economic base in this country; it is far more important than developing our natural resources or controlling crime.

All of those things are very important; millions of dollars and many, many hours are devoted to them, yet with all my heart I say that they are less important than getting a church functioning the way it ought to.

History confirms that, if a church functions the way it ought, all of the things above will begin to occur. This nation is testimony to that fact among the nations of the world. Because a nucleus of godly men and women sought to walk righteously before God, all the things that we say make up the genuine American way of life - as far as that has been in existence - have followed.

This is important for all of us to understand just as it was important for the church in Ephesus to understand, not just Timothy!

As we look at leaders, as we look at those who oversee the spiritual care of the church, there seems to be a loss of respect. Some of that is because of the way some leaders behave but in spite of that, there is a correct way to deal with those leaders that are doing wrong, and it doesn't change the fact that we are to respect them.

Let me share this with you. This article is from Duke University, and they are writing on the decline of respect for church leaders. They are telling us,

Americans have significantly less confidence in their religious leaders than they did a generation ago and more than two-thirds would prefer they not dabble in politics, according to a new book by a Duke University professor.

This loss of confidence patterns similar declines in respect for leaders in government, education, banking and other walks of life, and may help illustrate why fewer Americans are themselves interested in joining the clergy, says Mark Chaves, a Duke professor of sociology, religion and divinity.

Chaves' research found that between 1973 and 2008, the percentage of people with great confidence in religious leaders declined from 35 percent to less than 25 percent.

“The American public has lost confidence in leaders of all sorts,” Chaves says. “But the loss of confidence in religious leaders has been more precipitous than in other leaders. There used to be a surplus of confidence in religious leaders that is no longer there.”

- <https://bit.ly/3PGq02j>

That was from 2011 and the next report is looking back at 2022 and just listen to how ministry has affected leader's lives. We are told,

The overall health of pastors in the U.S. has declined markedly since 2015, with increasing numbers who say that they face declining respect from their community and a lack of true friends, according to a recent study.

Data collected by faith-based organization Barna Group as part of its Resilient Pastor research showed a significant decrease in pastors' spiritual, mental and emotional well-being, as well as their overall quality of life, between 2015 and 2022, the group announced last week. . .

Pastors also noted that recent years have taken a toll on their physical health, with 22% describing their physical well-being as poor or below average in 2022, compared to only 7% in 2015. While 24% said their physical health was excellent eight years ago, only 9% said the same last year. . .

Pastors who described themselves as "emotionally or mentally exhausted" jumped from 21% in 2015 to 32% in 2022, and those who described the respect they receive from members of their community as excellent dropped from 22% to 10%.

The recent report dovetails with another poll that Barna released last March that showed the rates of burnout among pastors had risen dramatically within the past year, with a staggering 42% of ministers wondering if they should abandon their vocation altogether amid unsustainable stress and loneliness.

- <https://bit.ly/48EA5FC>

Those are sad statistics. So what has happened? What has changed so that many leaders are leaving the ministry, they are burned out?

I think it is a lack of respect for what they do. People expect pastors to do everything. And yes, people want to get involved and yet, when there is work to do, they drop the ball and it falls right back into the lap of the pastor and yet, they complain that the pastor does too much. Go figure!

What do people look for in a pastor?

Let me show you and you will see what I mean, what they expect a pastor to do.

After much searching, these are the guidelines for the perfect pastor. And just to let you in on a little secret, I failed on the first one. But listen anyway. These are what the perfect pastor is all about.

He preaches exactly 20 minutes and then sits down.

He condemns sin, but never steps on anybody's toes.

He works from 8 in the morning to 10 at night, doing everything from preaching sermons to sweeping.

He is 36 years old and has been preaching for 40 years.

He is tall on the short side, heavy-set in a thin sort of way, and handsome.

He has eyes of blue or brown, (to fit the occasion) and wears his hair parted in the middle - left side, dark and straight, right side, brown and wavy.

He has a burning desire to work with the youth and spends all his time with the senior citizens.

He smiles all the time while keeping a straight face, because he has a keen sense of humor that finds him seriously dedicated.

He makes 15 calls a day to church members, spends all his time evangelizing non-members, and is always found in his study if he is needed.

Unfortunately, he burnt himself out and died at the age of 32.

Now we laugh at that and yet, many times what is expected of leaders, of pastors is not practical.

Here in I Timothy chapter 5 we have some guidelines on how leaders should be treated, and I have broken down these verses into the following main points. They are,

FAITHFUL SERVICE – I TIMOTHY 5:17-18

LEADERSHIP CORRECTION – I TIMOTHY 5:19-21

RAISING UP LEADERS – I TIMOTHY 5:22

PHYSICAL PROBLEMS – I TIMOTHY 5:23

BE OBSERVANT – I TIMOTHY 5:24-25

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Timothy chapter 5, beginning in verse 17 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word, and we look at this topic of
– ***RESPECT FOR LEADERS!***

I TIMOTHY 5

VERSES 17-18

Keep in mind that the focus here is – ***FAITHFUL SERVICE!***

And in regard to this faithful service, we see that Paul speaks of elders, and with that he is speaking of both shepherds or pastors and elders who were in charge of the spiritual aspects of the church. Keep in mind that deacons dealt with the physical aspects of the church.

And listen to how one writer speaks of this transition from supporting widows to supporting elders. He wrote, *“What I have been saying about the support of widows reminds me of another question of Church finance: they payment of presbyters. Equity and scriptural principles suggest that they should be remunerated [compensated] in proportion to their usefulness.”* (White)

Now, from this text, it seems like some elders were not teachers, but let me also say this, all pastors must be teachers, they are to bring the Word of God to the people.

I don’t think that is what Paul is saying here that some elders were teachers and others were not. I think that all elders need to be teachers of the Word of God because they are dealing with the spiritual aspects of the church.

The focus is on **“... especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”** In other words, their focus is teaching while some of the other elders fill in from time to time.

And how are they compensated for their labor? Paul says that they are **“... worthy of double honor ...”**

Now when Paul speaks of **“double honor”** what is he speaking of?

He is speaking of their pay for their service to the Lord, as the church is able.

Some argue that the church should not pay a pastor.

I, of course disagree, not because I want to be paid, but Paul was paid, and again, listen to what he says, **“For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’”** I Timothy 5:18.

The idea was that it would be cruel for the farmer to bind the mouth of the ox and prevent it from eating some of the grain while it pulled the threshing sled over the sheaves, after all, the ox was doing the work.

Thus, to refuse to support those who provide spiritual food is just as unjust and heartless as it would be to muzzle an animal or refusing to pay a hired man!

We even see this played out in the Old Testament as the people supported the priests who were serving in the Tabernacle and then in the Temple.

Today, I think this has gone in the wrong direction, where pastor's, leaders are paid millions of dollars. Is that really needed?

I don't think so.

Now you may be thinking, "*Pastor Joe, you are just jealous of what they make!*"

No, I just need enough to pay the bills and the church has been kind enough to do that. I am so blessed that I no longer have to work outside the church to help support my family. It has been over 15 years since I left my nursing job and just serve here at the church alone.

Here's the thing, listen to what Paul tells Timothy in I Timothy 6:6-10, "**Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**"

Stayed focused on the work that God has for you and not the profit you can make. Because, if your love for money is more than your love for God, you are going to be in trouble, and we see that many times with church leaders, their greed for more and more money and things!

One more point and that is Paul, in verse 18, quotes out of Luke 10:7, and says that it is part of the Scriptures, God's Word! He said, "**For the Scripture says . . .**"

Peter, in II Peter 3:15-16 tells us that Paul's letters are part of the Scriptures, God's Word!

And Paul in I Corinthians 11:24 quotes once again from Luke 23:19 attributing it to the Scriptures!

Today many try to negate the New Testament writers, but these letters show that they were already considered part of the Scriptures and they were circulated and read in the various churches!

So, those who are – ***FAITHFUL IN SERVICE*** – are to be taken care of. And that is the key – ***FAITHFUL SERVICE!*** If they are not teaching the Word of God, then they are not faithful and they should not be in the ministry, let alone paid!

Not what if leaders need to be corrected?

That is what we will look at next – ***LEADERSHIP CORRECTION!***

VERSES 19-21

Make no mistake about it, those in leadership are targets for Satan's attacks; it is like a big bull's eye that is painted on their chest!

In other words, you strike the shepherd of the church, and the sheep will be scattered, and Satan is very good with that tactic or method!

And thus, Satan uses gossip, he uses idle words to bring leaders down, especially pastors.

Let me show you what I mean.

There is an old story about a pastor who was trying to defend himself against criticism.

He said, ***“There’s a story going about that I told my wife not to go to a certain church that has wild meetings. They say my wife went anyway, and I dragged her out of the church by her hair, and I hurt her so badly she had to go to the hospital. Let me respond to these accusations. First of all, I never told her to stay away from that church. Second, I didn’t drag her out by her hair. Third, she never had to go to the hospital. Lastly, I’ve never been married so I don’t have a wife.”***

And that is Paul’s point, before you believe anything about a leader, check out the story you were told with more than one witness, don’t believe everything you hear!

On the other hand, if accusations are substantiated, then it needs to be acted upon. And folks, I am not talking about trivial things; likes and dislikes, people’s opinions, I am talking about sin, false teaching, heresy, and that is what Paul is talking about!

I like the way that Barclay put it as he said, ***“Nothing does more harm than when some people are treated as if they can do no wrong and others as if they could do no right.”***

And Clarke reminds us, ***“The reason of this difference is evident: those whose business it is to correct others will usually have many enemies; great caution, therefore, should be used in admitting accusations against such persons.”*** How true that is!

But again, let me say this. Leadership in the church does not shield a person from accountability; in fact, they are more accountable. But Paul puts in the protection of more than one witness to protect the leaders! Which is so important.

John Calvin, in his commentary on I Timothy, explained some reasons why people are so quick to receive an accusation against a pastor when perhaps, they should not.

He wrote, *“The more sincerely any pastor strives to further Christ’s kingdom, the more he is loaded with spite, the more fierce do the attacks upon him become. And not only so, but as soon as any charge is made against ministers of the Word, it is believed as surely and firmly as if it had been already proved. This happens not only because a higher standard of integrity is required from them, but because Satan makes most people, in fact nearly everyone, over credulous so that without investigation, they eagerly condemn their pastors whose good name they ought to be defending.”*

Calvin also pointed out that this is a spiritual attack on the leaders, *“It is indeed a trick of Satan to estrange men from their ministers so as gradually to bring their teaching into contempt. In this way not only is wrong done to innocent people whose reputation is undeservedly injured, but the authority of God’s holy teaching is diminished.”*

Be careful, be warned!

Now here’s the thing. If a pastor or elder is guilty of immoral behavior, illegal activity or the like, he is to be rebuked publicly.

Now that seems harsh, and it is. But leaders are to be held to a higher standard and as this is done it will encourage other leaders to not go down that path and it will weed out those who are thinking about going into a leadership position, maybe they will think twice about what they are getting into if they are not willing to walk the walk!

But let’s not forget that the whole idea with discipline, be it a leader or a lay person is their restoration and not their destruction or some kind of revenge! We don’t want to drive them away but to restore them.

Remember what Paul said in Galatians 6:1-3, **“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”**

The idea here is with the restoration it is like setting a broken bone and when it is healed it will be stronger than it was before. That means to set a broken bone you have to get close to that person and be patient and tenderhearted when you deal with their sin.

Now if a leader is in sin, then they will need to be removed from that position. That is just the way it is.

Also, don’t think you are better, that you are something because by the grace of God we stand!

In I Timothy 5:21 Paul is charging Timothy to do these things and to do them correctly, do not show favoritism!

As leaders serve the Lord, there is a great responsibility, and in all that they do, they have to be above reproach, they are to do what is right.

And thus, as leaders serve, they are also to do so without **“prejudice”** and **“partiality.”**

James tells us in James 2:1-9, **“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil**

thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors."

Also, there is to be no partiality according to race or gender as Paul tells us in Galatians 3:28-29, **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."**

Jesus is not a respecter of persons but treats us all fairly, according to our role in the church, in life.

Thus, as leaders we are to set the example. And as we live out our faith, not being perfect, but to be above reproach, they will follow our example.

But if we show prejudice or partiality towards a leader's sinful actions, then how in the world can we correct anyone in the church? We will not be able to.

Clarke sums it up like this, ***"Do not treat any man, in religious matters, according to the rank he holds in life, or according to any personal attachment thou mayest have for him. Every man should be dealt with in the church as he will be dealt with at the judgment-seat of Christ."***

Yes, there needs to be correction for leaders who are in sin or teaching heresy and the like
– ***LEADERSHIP CORRECTION.***

The next point that Paul makes to Timothy is – ***RAISING UP LEADERS!***

VERSES 22

If you have been here at Calvary Chapel for some time you know that I do not place people in leadership positions, elder or pastor positions too quickly.

Some of you may be wondering why I don't, and the answer is really simple.

I want to see if they can serve without a title, I want to observe what God is doing in their lives and those who I do ordain, I am only recognizing what God has done in their lives and He has raised them up and I am just acknowledging that.

Have I made mistakes in the past?

Sure, because it is hard to know the heart of a person and sometimes when they are in that position, they do less than before they had that title! Or all they want to do is argue.

Again, I error on the side of not raising people up until I am sure because it is a lot harder to remove someone from ministry, it is a lot messier than not raising them up in the first place.

And I look for what we read in I Timothy 3, the qualifications for pastors and elders in the church.

The reason for that is simple. If you are not living that life now, not perfect, but if you are not living that life now, when you are placed in a leadership position, that will not change and many times it just gets worse.

As we have seen in our study of I Timothy chapter 3, you don't put someone in leadership positions, as an elder or pastor because they are wealthy, have a big influence in the community. It is not the outward actions, but the heart and if their heart is right with God, then the way that they are living out their faith will be manifested. It doesn't matter if they are rich or poor, highly educated or not. It is a heart issue and only God knows the heart and He shows where that person is at.

One person put it like this. He wrote, *“A man said to me recently about an elder in another church: ‘He’s a good man and he’s almost honest.’ That does not qualify a man as an elder. An elder ought to be an honest man, not almost so.”* (<https://bit.ly/45oWi7K>)

I think that sums it up pretty well for us. And notice that Paul is admonishing Timothy to live a pure life, to be an example.

As a pastor, if you are looking for others to raise up in the ministry, you better keep your life in line with God!

And I pray that over the years you have known me, I have been an example to you of living out my faith in Christ. I pray that I have encouraged you in your walk.

Now, when Paul said, **“nor share in other people’s sins”** what is he speaking of?

There could be two ways to look at this.

He could have been warning Timothy not to let himself get drawn into the sins of others who were trying to accuse another in the church with hearsay or out of vindictiveness, especially a leader.

But, when you look at the context here, it would seem that Paul is maybe warning Timothy of the dangers of ordaining a pastor or elder too soon and before long they are living an immoral lifestyle and Timothy would be responsible, in part, for whatever sins and damage that this person may bring to the church.

I tend to lean more in this direction, that this is what Paul was speaking of, but again, both can apply.

Here's the thing. Don't take a position of leadership in church unless you are prepared to be honest, pure, and loving in your lifestyle.

Leadership is a privilege, and with privilege comes responsibility. God holds teachers of His truth doubly responsible because we who lead are in a position where we can either draw people toward Christ or drive them away from Him.

This is illustrated in the life of the famous author Mark Twain.

Church leaders were largely to blame for his becoming hostile to the Bible and the Christian faith.

How did that happen?

As he grew up, he knew elders and deacons who owned slaves and abused them. He heard men using foul language and saw them practice dishonesty during the week after speaking piously in church on Sunday. He listened to ministers use the Bible to justify slavery.

Although he saw genuine love for the Lord Jesus in some people, including his mother and his wife, he was so disturbed by the bad teaching and poor example of church leaders that he became bitter toward the things of God.

Indeed, it is a privilege to be an elder, a deacon, a Sunday school teacher, or a Bible club leader. But it is also an awesome responsibility. Let's make sure we attract people to the Savior rather than turn them away.

That is why leadership is so important, because you are dealing with people and in dealing with people you are representing God before them.

So that is the idea about – ***RAISING UP LEADERS!***

As we read on, we will be looking at – ***PHYSICAL PROBLEMS!***

VERSE 23

As you read this verse it seems out of place in regard to what Paul has been saying so far, but it is not!

Timothy was probably abstaining from any alcohol to be an example, but he suffered from some kind of gastro-intestinal problem, we might call it Montezuma's Revenge!

The reason for this was that the water supply was not pure, it was contaminated, and you know what can happen if you drink the water in Mexico!

Thus, if wine was used, the fermentation process would eliminate some of these harmful bugs in the water and it would help Timothy out.

So Paul tells Timothy it is okay to drink a little wine!

And as you do read this it seems like Timothy was a sickly person or possibly, he was sickly due to this gastrointestinal problem, he had these "**frequent infirmities**" or illnesses!

But in saying all that and seeing how sick Timothy seemed to be, let me ask you this. Why didn't Paul name and claim a healing for Timothy?

Because it was not God's will for Timothy or Paul would have touched Timothy and healed him.

It was not a lack of faith or some sin in Timothy's life, as some would have you believe!

And folks, God does heal miraculously today, but He also uses medicine, doctor's and-so-on to help us in the conditions we have!

Remember that Paul prayed three times for the thorn in his flesh to be removed from his life, whatever it may have been, and the Lord told Paul, "**My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.**" II Corinthians 12:9. In other words, not all are healed.

But what happens often is that these faith healers make you feel guilty when you are not healed and you become disappointed of not being healed or seeing a loved one not healed. It can destroy a person's faith. Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

Listen to what one writer had to say. He wrote,

Even back then I was searching for hard evidence of God as an alternative to faith.

And one day I found it – on television, of all places. While randomly flipping a dial, I came across a mass healing service being conducted by Kathryn Kuhlman. I watched for a few minutes as she brought various people up on the stage and interviewed them. Each one told an amazing story of supernatural healing. Cancer, heart conditions, paralysis – it was like a medical encyclopedia up there.

As I watched Kuhlman's program, my doubts gradually melted away. At last I had found something real and tangible. Kuhlman asked a musician to sing her favorite song, "***He Touched Me.***" That's what I needed, I thought; a touch, a personal touch from God. She held out that promise, and I lunged for it.

Three weeks later when Kathryn Kuhlman came to a neighboring state, I skipped classes and traveled half a day to attend one of her meetings.

The atmosphere was unbelievably charged – soft organ music in the background; the murmuring sound of people praying aloud, some in strange tongues; and every few minutes a happy interruption when some would stand and claim, *“I’m healed!”*

One person especially made an impression, a man from Milwaukee who had been carried into the meeting on a stretcher. When he walked – yes, walked – onstage, we all cheered wildly.

He told us he was a physician, and I was even more impressed. He had incurable lung cancer, he said, and was told he had six months to live. But now, tonight, he believed God had healed him. He was walking for the first time in months. He felt great. Praise God! I wrote down the man’s name and practically floated out of that meeting.

I had never known such certainty of faith before. My search was over; I had seen proof of a living God in those people on the stage. If he could work tangible miracles in them, then surely he had something wonderful in store for me.

I wanted contact with the man of faith I had seen at the meeting, so much so that exactly one week later I phoned Directory Assistance in Milwaukee and got the physician’s number.

When I dialed it, a woman answered the phone. *“May I please speak to Dr. S_____,”* I said.

Long silence. *“Who are you?”* she said at last.

I figured she was just screening calls from patients or something. I gave my name and told her I admired Dr. S_____ and had wanted to talk to him ever since the Kathryn Kuhlman meeting. I had been very moved by his story, I said.

Another long silence. Then she spoke in a flat voice, pronouncing each word slowly.

“My . . . Husband . . . is . . . dead.”

Just that one sentence, nothing more, and she hung up.

I can't tell you how that devastated me. I was wasted. I half-staggered into the next room, where my sister was sitting.

“Richard, what's wrong?” she asked. ***“Are you all right?”***

No, I was not all right. But I couldn't talk about it. I was crying.

My mother and sister tried to pry some explanation out of me. But what could I tell them?

For me, the certainty I had staked my life on had died with that phone call. A flame had flared bright for one fine, shining week and then gone dark, like a dying star.

- Philip Yancey, *Disappointment with God*, pp. 38-40

Please understand that healing is based on the will of God and not our will.

Now that may seem like a copout, but it is true.

Now let me also say this, it is God's desire that all are to be healed!

I know, some of you are getting a little nervous with talk like that. But it is very true.

No, I am not getting into the name it claim it, blab it grab it, miracles for money theology.

Listen closely to what God says and I will show you that God does heal all those who trust in Him.

In Isaiah 53:5 we are told, **“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”**

I am speaking of spiritual healing for all who come to Jesus. That is the most important healing that can happen in our lives.

You see, with physical healing, we may be healed but, in the end, we will eventually die.

And yes, one day these physical bodies will be changed, we will get new bodies for our spirit and soul to dwell in that will never get sick, never fade away!

Paul, put it like this for us in Romans 8:18-23. He tells us, **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

Like I have said, one day, when we are received up into glory, we will have bodies that will never get sick, never move towards disorder, will never break down, fall apart, die, they will be eternal as compared with these bodies we have today, which are like tents, only temporary dwelling places for our spirit and soul to dwell in.

But God is preparing a mansion for us, a permanent dwelling place for our spirit and soul to dwell in.

You see, when you approach this life, which is only temporary, with a heavenly, eternal perspective, there is peace!

I am not saying that it is always easy, but you can rest in the Lord.

“But Pastor Joe, you don’t know what I am going through. This illness has made me incapacitated. I can’t do anything, and I really don’t want to do anything. I just want to die!”

It is not easy, and I am not saying you are weak in the faith as you are going through these times and struggling. But let me share with you this encouraging story from someone who knows what it is like to feel pain, to suffer, to have an illness that has her paralyzed.

We are told,

In the summer of 1967, Joni Erickson and her sister rode their horses to the Chesapeake Bay to go for a swim.

The result was tragic. Joni dived into shallow water, struck her head on a rock and became a quadriplegic. She is paralyzed from the neck down.

During two years of often painful rehabilitation Joni learned how to paint with her mouth, and what this disability meant for her faith.

At times Joni was angry with God, demanding to know why he let this happen, even at times wishing she hadn’t survived.

But in the years since Joni has learned that it is in her weakness that God’s strength can shine through.

She has been a source of enormous blessing to people all over the world as she shares the faith that sustains her.

At first Joni found it impossible to reconcile her condition with her belief in a loving God. But one night Joni became convinced God did understand.

The catalyst was a good friend who said to her, ***“Joni, Jesus knows how you feel. He was paralyzed. He couldn’t move or change position on the cross. He was paralyzed by the nails.”***

The realization was profoundly comforting.

“God became incredibly close to me and eventually I understood that He loves me. I had no other identity but God, and gradually He became enough,” stated Joni. *“I prayed for healing and truly believed it would come. The Bible speaks of our bodies being glorified. Now I realize I will be healed; I’m just going through a forty or fifty year delay, and God stays with me even through that.”*

- Joni and Friends’ website, Joni’s books

That is Paul’s point in Romans, we groan in these bodies of flesh and blood awaiting the day of redemption when our spirit and soul will receive a new body to dwell in.

But until that time, don’t let your illness, your pain, your suffering drive you, let the Lord lead you as He is the Great Shepherd!

For Timothy, he was to drink a little wine, which means it was fermented to get rid of the bacteria in the water to help his stomach condition.

Timothy had – ***PHYSICAL PROBLEMS!***

As we finish up this morning, we are going to be looking at our last point – ***BE OBSERVANT!***

VERSES 24-25

Keep in mind the context here, the appointing of elders, church leadership, dealing with sin in the family of God. In other words, Timothy was to – ***BE OBSERVANT!***

And here’s the thing. Some people are better at covering their sin than others.

So just by looking at what they are doing can be deceptive.

Watch and pray before you raise leaders into the ministry.

On the other hand, good works are clearly seen, they are not hidden, and it is also important to watch for them in people's lives.

Thus, take it slow; wait on God for discernment before leaders are raised up!

Winston Churchill said, *“Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.”*

That may be a common response to truth, but it places those who respond like that on the road to tragedy and destruction. There is no way to love and follow God without loving and following truth. The two cannot be separated. And if you are a leader, you need to love God according to the truths of God found in the Word of God and that applies to every single one of us!

Let me remind you the reason God has placed leaders, pastor/teachers in the church today, they are for, **“the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ - from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”** Ephesians 4:12-16.

May the leaders equip the sheep to go and do the work of the ministry!

Think of it like this as I begin to wrap things up.

We have all seen geese fly together in their impressive formations.

Where are they going? They are flying to a warmer climate. In doing so they often cover thousands of miles before reaching their destination.

Have you ever studied why they fly as they do?

It is fascinating to read what has been discovered about their flight pattern as well as their in-flight habits.

Those in front rotate their leadership. When one lead goose gets tired, it changes places with one in the wing of the V-formation and another will fly point.

By flying as they do, the members of the flock create an upward air current for one another. Each flap of the wings literally creates an uplift for the bird immediately following.

One author states that by flying in a V-formation, the whole flock gets 71 percent greater flying range than if each goose flew on its own.

Not only that. But when one goose gets sick or wounded, two fall out of formation with it and follow it down to help and protect it.

They stay with the struggler until it's able to fly again.

The geese in the rear of the formation are the ones who do the honking. I suppose it's their way of announcing that they're following and that all is well.

For sure, the repeated honks encourage those in front to stay at it.

As I think about all this, one lesson stands out above all others: it is the natural instinct of geese to work together.

Whether it's rotating, flapping, helping, or simply honking, the flock is in it together . . . which enables them to accomplish what they set out to do.

The church is the body of Christ, and we are to be working together as we are moving from an earthly home to a heavenly home. That means leaders, pastors, elders, those who are working in the role of deacon's or helping with the physical care of the church, all the various ministries are working together, not separately, but for the betterment of the body of Christ here at Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc.

May we never forget that one ministry is not more important than another. We are to work together and yes at times even honk to encourage others on, to continue moving forward!

Pastors, elders in the church are important because they are helping to guide the church and lead the church and thus, we are to have – ***RESPECT FOR ELDERS!***