EXPOSITION OF I TIMOTHY  

Message #28  

I Timothy 5:1-2  

There are many metaphors in Scripture used to describe God’s Church. One of the metaphors, which are obvious from these verses, is the metaphor of a family. The Church is comprised of many different types of people with different genders, different ages, different economic levels, and different levels of spirituality. When you take a group this varied and put them into a local church and say, “There, now function together for the glory of God!” there will be moments of friction.

No church is a perfect church because every church is comprised of people like us and we all are imperfect. There will be times in church life when there is tension, frustration and even sin, because we are a family and that is the way family life is. Now sometimes things can be overlooked, after all, “Love covers a multitude of sins” (I Pet. 4:8). But there are times when things must be addressed. There are times when a leader must confront people. In fact, if a church is to become a pillar and support of the truth, it cannot be a place of total toleration. There are times when it must be a place of confrontation. In fact, confrontation is a key part of real Biblical love.

IF THE CHURCH OF GOD IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH OF GOD, IT NEEDS LEADERSHIP THAT WILL CONFRONT FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE PROPER WAY.

Three ideas become clear from these verses: 1) There are times when family members are to be confronted by leadership; 2) There are right ways to handle the confrontation; 3) If a church is a place of total toleration, it will never become a pillar and support of the truth.

Now in the local church of Ephesus, there were many family problems.  
1) Some were straying from the truth. 1:6  
2) Some were shipwrecked in their faith. 1:19  
3) Some women were not submissive to God’s authority. 2:11-12  
4) Some were being seduced by demonic doctrines. 4:1  
5) Some widowed women, both older and younger, were moving toward an ungodly sensuality. 5:6, 11  
6) Some were devoting themselves to success rather than to God. 6:17-19

Make no mistake about it, a family member who continues in sin is to be rebuked in the presence of all (5:20).

Two verbs apply to all people named in verses 1-2. The verb “Do not sharply rebuke” is a very strong and very unique Greek verb. This is the only place in the N.T. where this word is used. This word speaks of a violent rebuke, one that violently strikes at one to punish them. There are times when rebukes must be made, but they should not be made in a violent manner.

The verb “appeal” is one that means to continually come alongside of one with an attitude that calls them, summons them, and admonishes them to get back on the right path.
The approach of leadership must first be to come alongside of the erring brother or sister in an attempt to call them back to the path of righteousness.

Now before we look at the verses, a couple of observations may be made:

1) There are rare instances when sin must be immediately confronted and one immediately put out of the church (I Cor. 5:13; Rev. 2:20).

2) Typically before this happens there should be an appealing confrontation and a time for repentance with the object being restoration.

CATEGORY #1 – How to handle confrontation of an older man. 5:1a

The words of Richard Lenski are wise here—“Age does not make admonition unnecessary” (p. 653). The word “older man” is the Greek word prebuteros, which is used so many times in this letter to refer to elders of a church. In this case the word is singular and is used in regard to a man’s age.

When situations arise which demand confrontation of an older man, he is not to be violently or sharply rebuked; he is to be appealed to as a father. In other words, when confrontation of an older man is needed, the one confronting must come alongside the man and appeal to him as he would his own father.

There can be absolutely no doubt that God wants older men honored. In fact, God says this is a key part of reverencing Him (Lev. 19:32). There can also be no doubt that God wants fathers honored. He said to this very church of Ephesus that living a long life hinged on obeying this commandment (Eph. 6:1-3; Gen. 20:12; Deut. 5:16).

When it comes to confronting an older person, it is always to be done in a spirit of honor and respect. When elders are not respected, society is not right with God (Lam. 5:12).

CATEGORY #2 – How to handle the confrontation of a younger man. 5:1b

The younger man is also not to be violently treated, but he is to be treated as a brother. The N.T. has much to say concerning the brotherhood of believers. For example, no man can be walking in the light and hate his brother (I John 2:9-11). There is to be a love for the brotherhood (I Pet. 2:17). We are to demonstrate a brotherly love continually (Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1). And when a brother sins, he is to be confronted (Matt. 18:15).

Luke records some very important words of our Lord which gives us good counsel concerning the confrontation of a younger man—“If your brother sins, rebuke him and if he repents forgive him” (Luke 17:3).
Two observations may be made:
1) If a brother sins, he is to be rebuked.
2) If a brother repents, he is to be forgiven.

Now even when a brother is under discipline and fellowship has been severed, he is still to be considered a brother (II Thess. 3:14-15). When we rebuke a brother in Christ, we must always remember he is a brother and not an enemy.

**CATEGORY #3 – How to handle the confrontation of an older woman. 5:2a**

The assumption of the verse is there will be times when older women need to be confronted. When those times occur, the confrontation must be handled in the utmost of Biblical integrity and the older woman must be treated as one would treat his mother.

The same kind of respect and honor due a father is also Biblically due a mother. Now Timothy already had the utmost respect for his grandmother and his mother (II Tim. 1:5). They were instrumental in him coming to faith in Christ.

It is also important to realize that one of the last things Jesus Christ did before He died was to see that His own mother was cared for (John 19:26-27).

**CATEGORY #4 – How to handle the confrontation of a younger woman. 5:2b**

There are two things Paul wants to make clear about rebuking a younger woman:

1) She is to be appealed to as a sister.
2) She is to be appealed to in all purity.

Timothy could not show partiality just because a woman was young and pretty. Sometimes he would have to confront a younger woman. But he must appeal to her in all purity.

The words of John MacArthur are right on the money on this point: “There are few things as evil as a pastor who sins mentally or physically with a young woman he had been helping spiritually. This is nothing less than incest in the spiritual family” (p. 190).

Nothing can make or break a pastor quicker than his conduct with women, especially younger women. It is imperative that a minister maintain total purity in his ministry with members of the opposite sex.

J. Vernon McGee observed nothing will bring spiritual deadness to a church quicker than leadership that is immoral. If a church is going to become a pillar and support of the truth of God, it needs a pastor and elders and deacons who are pure in the way they deal with people.
Now we may remember that at this point in time Timothy is a younger man (4:12). There is no record that he is married. There would be times when he would need to privately confront younger women and when those moments came, he must maintain total Biblical purity with them.

H. A. Ironside said, “. . . never act toward any young woman in a way you would not like some other man to behave against your own sister” (p. 116).

If the church of God is to become a pillar and support of the truth, things will have to be confronted. But there is a right way and a wrong way to confront. If the right way is followed, regardless of the outcome, God will make the church become all that it should become.