

Dealing with (Potentially) Sinning Elders

1 Timothy 5:19-21

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Elders are to be treated neither better nor worse than any other Christian in matters of discipline over sin.

- 1) For the good of the sinning individual
- 2) For the health of the church, Christ's body
- 3) For an uncompromised witness to the world
- 4) For the protection of innocent people from the consequences of sin
- 5) For the glory and honor of our holy God

I. God's long-standing principle has been: sin must be established by multiple witnesses.

One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime, the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. The judges must make a thorough investigation... (Deuteronomy 19:15-18a)

A. If it is a minor offense or sin, can it simply be forgiven in love?

A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense. (Proverbs 19:11)

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3:13)

B. We need to keep short accounts with one another so that no root of bitterness springs up between us.

If the offense cannot or should not be overlooked, then...

C. The Lord Jesus has prescribed the necessary steps to deal with sin issues.

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. (Matthew 18:15)

¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ (Matthew 18:16)

II. Sinning elders are to be publicly rebuked that others may fear sin and its repercussions. (v. 20)

Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold
is the rebuke of a wise judge to a listening ear. (Proverbs 25:12)

A rebuke impresses a discerning person
more than a hundred lashes a fool. (Proverbs 17:10)

If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (Matthew 18:17)

Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. (James 3:1)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:19)

“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:18-20)

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. (Matthew 7:1-5)

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father’s wife. And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been

doing this? For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.” (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:26-29)

The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. (1 John 3:8-10)

“Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.” (John 7:23-24)

The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you. The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:18-21)

III. Church leaders are very solemnly enjoined to be impartial and fair in such disciplinary matters. (v. 21)

“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

“Do not go about spreading slander among your people. (Leviticus 19:15-16)

These also are sayings of the wise:

To show partiality in judging is not good:

Whoever says to the guilty, “You are innocent,”

will be cursed by peoples and denounced by nations.

But it will go well with those who convict the guilty,

and rich blessing will come on them. (Proverbs 24:23-25)

“So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.” (Malachi 2:9)

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (James 2:1-4)