



1 Timothy 5:17-6:2a

A Bunch of Instructions, a Bit of Wine, and a Biblical Name for It All

Epiphany (Observed)/Baptism of Our Lord – January 8, 2017

This morning's sermon text is 1 Tim 5:17–6:2. Please turn there now; if you are using the pew Bibles, it can be found on page 993. 1 Tim 5:17–6:2. Hear the Word of the Lord:

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.

Let's pray: Our Lord and our God, now as we hear your Word, fill us with your Spirit. Soften our hearts that we may see your ways. Fill us with your light. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

This morning we return to our series in First Timothy. In mid-December, we considered Paul's instructions about the care of widows in the first half of ch. 5. First Timothy 5:17–6:2 contains instructions about two other groups of people in the church at Ephesus¹—the elders of the church and slaves. It will be helpful right off the bat to give a brief running commentary on these

instructions, before zeroing in on a question that might seem tangential but which I think can help us get a feel for what Paul is up to overall in this letter to Timothy. I believe there's a clue in today's passage that opens up a larger concern for the letter as a whole.

The bulk of our passage is clearly given to how the church ought to behave with *those in the office of elder*. In particular, Paul has three categories of people in view: elders who serve well; elders who (at least potentially) serve poorly; and elder candidates. With respect to elders who serve well, Paul exhorts the church, in v. 17, that they should consider such ones worthy of "double honor." He clarifies his point in the next verse, v. 18, saying, "The worker is worthy of his wages."² Paul calls the church to give financial support to those who labor as elders, particularly those devoted to preaching³ and teaching in such a way that keeps them from other gainful employment. Those who shepherd well are deserving of the "honor" of financial support.⁴ In fact, Paul says they are worthy of "double honor." I think that's simply a colloquial way of saying "supported generously."⁵ The church should be generous in its honor, its support, its wages to elders who lead well. In our context, we can appropriately expand this beyond elders to church staff more generally. (Since I have a personal stake in this area, let me take this opportunity to thank you for doing just this here at Grace, and, more specifically and recently, for your kind and very generous Christmas gift for the church staff!)

Paul refers to elders who serve well. But we might ask, What about elders who *do not* serve well? Being the helpful chap that he is, Paul addresses just such ones in vv. 19–21. Rather, he speaks of Timothy's responsibilities to those elders who at least *potentially* are not serving well. Paul gives instructions concerning the receiving of accusations against elders, and what to do when such accusations are proven true.⁶ As Paul says in v. 19, accusations against elders are only to be entertained "on the basis of two or three witnesses"—two or three who have witnessed the sin in person. This is the clear, consistent, and completely wise condition given throughout Scripture for entertaining accusations of sin.⁷ There are times, Paul assumes, when such conditions are not only met, but the accusations that are received are found, upon examination, to be truthful. In such cases, if and when the sinning elders refuse to repent but persist in their sin, then, Paul goes on to explain in v. 20, Timothy must "rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear." That is to say, the unrepentant elder is to have his sin brought to light before "all" (that is, all the congregation) in order that "the rest" (that is, the rest of the *elders*) may be sobered up to the consequences of unrepentant sin.⁸

Weighing accusations and rebuking sinners is a grave and weighty matter, so Paul solemnly charges Timothy in v. 21 to take great care to follow these instructions without any hint of bias or

prejudgment before seeing the facts of the case. And Paul urges this “in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels”—that is, before the court of heaven gathered for the final judgment.⁹ The time is charged and serious. The Creator and the Judge and the whole host of angels chosen as witnesses have gathered for eschatological judgment. Timothy must act in accord with the very justice and equity of the court of heaven.

In vv. 22–25, Paul turns our attention to a simple instruction about accepting candidates to the office of elder.¹⁰ Don't accept candidates too hastily. Slow down to examine. If Timothy too hastily accepts people into the office of elder, without due diligence to examine their lives, very likely some will prove no match for the pressures of the office and the snares of the devil and the world and they will jump into sin while serving as elders. In such a case, Timothy would share responsibility for the havoc and disgrace such sin would wreak on the church, and for the sinning elder's own failure in that office. Paul does not want Timothy thus to “take part in the sins of others.” So he says, slow down; be diligent and methodical. And just as Timothy must take care to be impartial in examining accusations against elders back in v. 21, similarly here in v. 22 Timothy must take care to keep himself pure as he examines whether or not elder candidates are on the path of purity and holiness and maturity.¹¹

Timothy and the church must take care and be on-guard from unwisely rushing into accepting anyone to the office of elder. And Paul gives a couple reasons why such guardedness is wise in vv. 24–25. On the one hand, Paul says in v. 24 that some sins are not immediately apparent on a superficial examination, but only show themselves through time.¹² Lest Timothy and the church accept one who is good at concealing sin, Paul counsels slowness in the examination process. But interestingly, on the other hand, Paul says in v. 25 that some people's “good works” are not as evident on first glance as they might prove to be through time and with careful consideration,¹³ which makes sense since true humility and piety does not flaunt itself to be seen. The humble, the truly pious, those growing on the path of righteousness may not be as evident on first glance as they are with careful examination. So Paul not only wants Timothy to guard against too hastily accepting one who isn't up to the task, but he also wants Timothy to guard against too hastily passing by those who would, in fact, be good and faithful servants in the office of elder.

Our passage ends with Paul's counsel to slaves about their disposition toward masters, which appears in the first two verses of ch. 6. Paul spends much less time on this matter than he does on the treatment of elders. In a word, Christian slaves who have Christian masters must *honor* those masters.¹⁴ They must not disrespect and deny and desert their believing masters. The

slaves in the church at Ephesus may very well have felt that coming to Christ meant they were no longer bound to their earthly responsibilities.¹⁵ Paul tells slaves (and all of us) that coming to Christ does not release or remove us from our earthly responsibilities; but it does transform our outlook on them and our pursuit of them. In Christ, slaves must honor their believing masters all the more, offering to them "good service,"¹⁶ kind labor, worthy work. Why? Because, Paul says in v. 2, they are "believers and beloved" and, indeed, "brothers." It is recognizing our identity as covenantal family in Christ that points our dispositions and behaviors toward fellow believers in the right direction.¹⁷

To sum things up, in 1 Tim 5:17–6:2, Paul gives instructions concerning elders who serve well, elders who (potentially) do not serve well but are hardened in sin, elder candidates, and how Christian slaves are to treat their Christian masters.

Having briefly surveyed Paul's expectations for the church in our passage, I want to take a step back and ask more of a big-picture, theoretical question, which might seem to be far removed from our text this morning. But I believe and will try to show that our text invites a question like this from us; and I also believe that such a question can open up for us the overall message and joy of First Timothy. The question is this: when Paul's instructions about elders and slaves are understood and actually implemented, when the church life and order that Paul seeks is lived out, what would you *name* the life that comes about as a result?

How we name things is a remarkably important and powerful matter. Naming was, in fact, one of the first and greatest responsibilities given to Adam in the garden. Remember that? God placed him in the garden and charged him with naming all the animals. Naming reality aright is right at the heart of our created purpose and responsibility.

And whether we name things rightly or wrongly has tremendous impact on our lives, on our outlooks and actions. This week I read *The Silver Chair* by C. S. Lewis in his Chronicles of Narnia series. Are you familiar with the story? A good portion of it is spent underground, as the main characters, Jill, Eustace, and Puddleglum, fight to rescue Prince Rilian from an evil enchantress holding him captive in a subterranean prison. Near the story's end, they've freed Rilian, escaped one threat after another, and have just about made it back to the surface of the earth. They are walking down a dimly lit tunnel. And they see a strange blue light coming from a hole overhead. Jill is lifted up to peer into the hole and see what she can see. But to the other's great dismay, she cries out and is pulled away into the hole by someone or something. In their panic, Puddleglum and Rilian hoist Eustace up to the hole, and when Eustace sticks his head out, he

sees many creatures running toward him. Understandably, Eustace fears for his life and slashes his sword at them. But it is a mistake. Those rushing toward him are Narnian friends, who were delighted to discover Jill coming out of the depths of the earth and who are rushing to Eustace's aid, seeking to dig him and the others out to life and safety.

Now think about the different names that Eustace below-ground would have given at first to that experience, and that Jill who was safe above-ground would have given it. While Eustace was underground, he would have named the experience "abduction of Jill" and "attack from enemies." But for Jill above ground, the only proper name for the experience was "rescue." Two different names for the exact same experience. And the names given resulted in wholly different outlooks and actions: the name Eustace gave to the situation gave rise to fear and the drawing of his sword in defense; the name Jill gave to it gave rise to joy and hope and gratitude. How we name things really matters. It has an incredible impact on how we live life. So returning to 1 Tim 5, when Timothy acts fittingly in response to Paul's instructions

concerning elders and slaves, when the church lives in accord with Paul's word, what would you name that life? Here's what I would name it: the beginning of new creation. What's taking place in the life of the church, what's experienced within the order that Paul commends for the church, is the outbreaking of new creation. Indeed, the church simply is the beginning and microcosm of the new creation which will be fully consummated when Christ returns.

And I believe Paul gives us a small clue toward this in our passage. Many of you likely noticed how, in surveying our text, I conveniently skipped Paul's word of advice to Timothy in v. 23. But that word is what likely grabs most of our attentions. Right in the middle of giving instructions to Timothy about the assessment of elder candidates, Paul tells Timothy, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments." In itself, there's nothing really difficult about the verse. Timothy apparently had some stomach problems and frequent bouts of illness, and Paul tells him to have a little wine to help ease and soothe the pain. The medicinal and soothing capacity of wine was well-known in the ancient world.¹⁸ Paul gives Timothy personal advice for pain relief.

The difficulty here is not understanding Paul's advice, but understanding why Paul includes it in this letter at all. Why waste the precious parchment and ink on it? And why say it right *here*?¹⁹ The ESV puts the verse in parentheses, because it seems like a digression. In fact, if you take v. 23 out and read v. 22 straight into v. 24, the passage reads *more smoothly*. Verse 24 is logically

tied directly to v. 22. Paul's word to Timothy about drinking a little wine interrupts the flow of thought. It sticks out like a sore thumb.²⁰ Why does Paul include it here?²¹

There are at least two or three viable reasons why Paul might have included this advice here.²² I want to propose just one: I think Paul brings up wine in 5:23, in part, because wine is a theologically loaded biblical symbol. In particular, wine appears throughout Scripture as an image and symbol of the new creational eschatological age.

Scripture repeatedly describes the last days, when God will make all things new, as an age overflowing with wine. In Gen 49, for example, Jacob prophesies that a ruler will arise from the line of Judah, one to whom the obedience of all peoples shall be owed. When this ruler arises, he shall, Gen 49:11 says, "wash his garments in wine and his robes in the blood of grapes"—which is sheer lunacy when you consider how much time it takes to make wine and how expensive wine is. But the point is that the coming ruler will usher in an age of abundance, an age of new creation when the lack and limitation of the present world will be transformed into unthinkable fruitfulness. And the great symbol for this new creational age is wine in such abundance that we wash our clothes in it.

Even more clearly, Isa 25:6 declares that in the age to come, "The LORD of hosts will make for all peoples, a feast of rich food, a feast of *well-aged wine*." For Isaiah, the coming age, the age when death will be defeated and all nations will stream to Israel's God, is rightly described as a great banquet, with wine in abundance. And surely the most vivid prophecy of the new creational age as an age of abundant wine is found at the end of the book of Amos:

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; *the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it ... they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine.*"

The transformation of this fallen, broken world into a new creation of abundance and feasting and joy is what the people of God have always longed for, what the Scriptures hold out as our truest hope. And again and again, wine is the great symbol used to depict that hope. Wine repeatedly appears as a symbol of the new creational age, of the transfiguration of the very good creation of God into its appointed ends. It is a fitting symbol for numerous reasons, one of the most obvious being that wine is the sweetness of the grape which grows naturally in creation, transformed (crushed and raised anew, as it were) into celebratory drink.

And I suggest that Paul is tapping into this well-known symbolism and expectation, giving Timothy and us a little hint about what time we are living in, what reality we are a part of as the church. Wine is a clue to help us recognize the full wonder of the church realities Paul instructs us about. Paul has already brought the end-time context into view in v. 21: God and Christ and the elect angels have gathered in the court of heaven to begin the final judgment. The end is breaking into the present.²³ The old is passing away; the new has come. We are in a new era. Therefore, Timothy, *no longer* drink only water.²⁴ You may have done so in the past, but the past is giving way to the future. Drink a little wine, a little sign of God's great, long- expected work of new creation, for that work has begun even in the present. We are living in the last days, the days of God's great new creational work of transforming the old into the new. If the church takes to heart Paul's instructions about elders and slaves and masters, and *lives* them out, then the name we can rightly give that life is the beginning of new creation.

In fact, the in-breaking of new creation is, I believe, what 1 Timothy as a whole is about: 1 Tim 5:23 is just the tip of the iceberg. The whole letter declares that what God is doing in the church is the beginning fulfillment of his purposes in creation, the making of creation into the newness God purposed it to be. In and for and through the church, God is beginning to transform the first and old creation into the new creation he intended to make it all along.

Consider, for example, the very middle of the letter, 3:14–16; let's turn to that crucial passage now. First Timothy 3:14–16 is the structural center of the letter, the purposefully placed hub around which everything else Paul says revolves. Here Paul proclaims “the mystery of godliness” in our common confession—namely, that Christ was revealed in the flesh (that is, he was incarnate as a man, and suffered and died as a man), and that he was vindicated by the Spirit (that is, he was resurrected from the dead by the power of the Spirit in a glorious, transformed, new creational body). The resurrection is the heart and hub of the entire letter. And if Christ has really been resurrected from the dead, then the new creation has begun. Part of the very dust of the ground, a human body, has been raised and transfigured into the glorified reality that God meant for his creation to become from the outset. The end is beginning. Echoes are giving way to true music. Foreshadows are finding their home in the true realities they were meant to point to and prepare for. As Paul says in 2 Cor 5:17, “If anyone is in Christ, then new creation has come.”²⁵ It has broken out; it has begun in the present. Paul writes this letter in that joy and confidence and zeal. And he writes to call Timothy to rejoice in the beginning of new creation, to live more deeply into it, and to fight for it and protect it.

Where is this new creation breaking out in the present? In the "household of God." In God' house, the church. In vv. 14–15 of ch. 3, Paul makes plain that he writes to Timothy so that we may know how to behave in the house of God.²⁶ And this is his lead-in to the great confession about the resurrection of Christ, the beginning of the new creation. The house of God is the place where the resurrected Christ causes the new creation to break out most clearly; it's where God's new creational work is most focused; it's where God promises to provide a foretaste and microcosm of the fully consummated new creation that we await.²⁷

The church is the beginning of the new creation, the fulfillment that the first work of creation looked forward to. And if so, then it makes much sense to find in God's first work of creation paradigms for helping us understand church realities. This is, in fact, what Paul does throughout this letter. At the end of ch. 2 Paul recalls the order of the creation of Adam and Eve to help the church know how its corporate worship as male and female should be ordered. As we saw a few weeks ago, earlier in ch. 5 the creational reality of family is the paradigm that prepares us to live into the new creational reality of the church as our covenantal family. In 4:3–4, Paul says that God created all things, food included, "to be received with thanksgiving by *those who believe and know the truth.*" Who is that? That's the church. The church, God's household, is the people who fulfill God's purposes in creation by receiving creation with thanksgiving and praise. The church is the place where every good created thing of God is "sanctified by the word of God and prayer," where it all comes to the fulfillment it was created for. The church of the risen Christ, the house of God, is the beginning of the new creation.

So Paul's concern in ch. 5 for mundane things like care for widows, financial support of elders, and respect for masters flows from his great desire to taste and experience new creation. More generally, the things Paul has been seeking throughout this letter—a church filled with prayer; stocked with faithful, servant-hearted leadership; feeding on a healthy diet of truthful instruction; and full to overflowing with abundant love from pure hearts, good consciences, and sincere faith—all this is rightly named as the beginning fulfillment of the new creation.²⁸ That is, I suggest, a proper and needful name for the life lived in the house of God.

As we said earlier, naming reality aright has tremendous effects on our outlooks and postures and activities. Remember how a wrong name led to a wrong outlook and action for Eustace. But the right name can transform wrong outlooks and actions. That's what Paul is giving to us with his subtle clue in 5:23, the mention of wine, and in this letter to Timothy as a whole. He's giving us a right name for the life of the church: the beginning microcosm of new creation. And if that's a right and needful name for the life of the church, then how might that transform our outlook and

action? Let me offer two suggestions to consider in our remaining time, one having to do with *exultation*, and one having to do with *evangelism*.

First, naming and knowing the life of the church as the beginning of new creation helps us to heed Paul's words with wonder and exultation rather than begrudgingly or half-heartedly or out of a joyless sense of mere duty. We can read Paul's exhortations about the treatment of elders and masters, and think that were dealing with some rather unexciting logistics, some pretty mundane and workaday things. They are mundane, workaday realities, but God doesn't mean for us to take them up joylessly or begrudgingly. He doesn't want us to think about his instructions for the church as some lifeless law that we must follow out of a sense of bare duty. He means for us to wonder at the fact that he *cares* about the mundane and gives the mundane as a place and opportunity to experience his great work of new creation in Christ. These exhortations about ordinary, workaday realities are actually invitations to experience the end of the ages breaking in upon us. Here in the church we get to taste what life is all about, the meaning of creation, the beginning fulfillment of the purpose for why you and I and place and time and material creation and vocation and responsibility and society and culture and all things exist. How good is God that he grants us now in Christ the opportunity to taste and experience the fulfillment of creation, the beginning of new creation, the beginning of resurrection life! Mindless duty and begrudging conformity to rules be gone forever! Let us enter into this life with joy and wonder and thanksgiving and praise and sure hope that what God is beginning in the church now will surely be brought to full and cosmic completion at Christ's return. Naming the life of the church as the beginning of new creation being worked by God helps, first, to fuel our exultation and wonder and joy as we seek to live into this life.

And second, naming the life of the church aright as the beginning of new creation helps, I believe, to fuel our passion for and practice of evangelism. It's interesting how attentive Paul is in this letter to how the unbelieving world views the church. In our passage, Paul wants slaves to honor their masters, "so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled" in the world. In 5:14, Paul is concerned that the behavior of some widows might "give the adversary ... an occasion for slander." The church can, through sin and chaotic pursuits and disunity, bring upon itself the reviling of the unbelieving world. But Paul is equally sure that the church, when it lives into the order and peace and goodness and love that he calls for in this letter, will be strangely intriguing and even attractive to unbelievers. For example, in 3:7, Paul not only expects elders to not bring disgrace to themselves and the church; he also says they "must be *well thought of by outsiders*." Paul *expects* outsiders to think well of godliness. Paul *expects* the place where

godliness is breaking out, the church, to be strangely *appealing* and *attractive* to outsiders.²⁹ Indeed, what could be more attractive to the still broken and fallen world, desperately in need of true life and wholeness, than seeing true life and wholeness beginning to be lived out in the house of God? As a microcosm and foretaste of the new creation, the church is offering a dead world a taste of true life, a world confused about its identity an invitation to become what it exists to be—the place where God dwells and Christ and life and love and joy and peace reign.

Now to my mind, evangelism is a matter of inviting people to experience this life and peace and goodness and fulfillment. Sometimes “evangelism” is talked about as though it were giving the right answers in debate, having convincing arguments about the deity of Christ, or the need for forgiveness, or the existence of God. And we can be shy or even fearful about bringing up the name of Christ in conversation with unbelievers because we might not *say the right thing*. Speaking about God well to unbelievers *is* important in evangelism; but what if we thought of evangelism less as providing airtight arguments and more as offering heartfelt invitations? Where to? To the house of God. To the beginning of new creation. To the place where God is uniquely present to save and heal and convict and transform. What if evangelism were less, “I can prove that you are a sinner in four arguments,” and more, “Come with us, and taste and see that the Lord is good”? The Lord *is* good. The life he gives us and guides us in *is* good. It is the beginning of the life we were created for; it is the life all of us creatures would want if we were in our right minds. Invite people to experience it.

Invite them to gatherings of believers. Invite them to experience the Word prayed and fellowship around in small group settings. Invite them to be involved in our church life, indirectly but meaningfully, by simply asking them if there is anything we as a church can be praying for them—and tell them we *are* praying that the Lord would draw them to himself. And, I think most importantly, invite them to see what a corporate worship service is like.³⁰

I find myself assuming at times that unbelievers would never be interested in what we do as a church. But why on earth should I think that? This is where new creation is breaking out. And at the heart of the new creation is the presence of the Lord. This, the life of the church, the beginning of the new creation, is where the Lord is uniquely present by his Spirit! Nothing interesting or attractive here? The presence of the Lord is the best of all treasures; enjoying his presence is the very meaning and fulfillment of life.³¹ So invite unbelievers to come and taste it. Naming the life of the church as the beginning of new creation gives us confidence and fuel for evangelism because it helps us to recognize that what God is up to in the church is a *desirable*

work to be a part of inasmuch as being what we were created to be and flourishing as we were created to flourish is desirable. It's something worth inviting others to.

This past week the church global celebrated Epiphany, the commemoration of the coming of the magi to see the Child, the Lord Jesus, as a sign of the mission to all nations that Jesus came to launch. May we here today join in that mission, inviting those who still do not know Christ to come and taste and see that he is good, to come experience, in small but true ways, what life as it was meant to be is like. We need the Lord's help—both to experience this life that is already ours in Christ, and to be filled with the joy and love it takes to want to invite others to it. So to that end, let's pray together in conclusion, as our Lord himself taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer. Join with me:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

NOTES:

¹ 1. The bulk of chs. 5–6 is devoted to instructions regarding particular groups of people within the church: widows in 5:3–16, elders in 5:17–25, slaves in 6:1–2, and the rich in 6:17–19 (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 304, 325). In addition to these groups, Mounce includes “people of different ages” in 5:1–2, but it seems to me that those verses are in the nature of context-setting for his instructions concerning widows.

² Interestingly, Paul seems to be quoting a word of Jesus from Luke’s gospel, which Paul apparently attributes to *Scripture* (“for the Scripture says” in 18a). Mounce thinks that the second quotation is not connected to the Scripture citation formula in 18a (*Pastoral Epistles*, 311), but I am not so persuaded (for a preferable proposal, see Johnson, *Timothy*, 278). For most critical interpreters, that “Paul” would refer to the words of Jesus as “Scripture” (or that “Paul” would know Luke’s gospel in such a way as to refer to that gospel as “Scripture”) is an indication of the non-Pauline character/late dating of the letter; however, the conclusion is an unnecessary inference from the text and is based upon many uncertain variables (e.g., that Luke’s gospel was written late, that the term “Scripture” *could not* have been applied to the words of Jesus even by the 60s, that the phrase is indeed a quotation of Jesus and not in fact a paraphrase of OT instructions such as Lev 19:13 and Deut 24:15 perhaps influenced, whether consciously or not, by traditional Jesus material). Johnson notes that the cluster of OT citations and allusions and language appearing in this section bears on the important question of authorship of the letter (*ibid.*, 286). But, in my opinion, more interesting and important to inquire into than the questions of authorship and dating is the theological use of the law and of Jesus’ words in conjunction with it in this passage.

³ On this sense of λόγῳ in v. 17, see Johnson, *Timothy*, 278, who nevertheless opts for the more “conservative” rendering “in speech,” given our general ignorance about the specific duties of elders in the early church. The distinction between elders who rule and those who labor in preaching and teaching is more apparent than real—though μάλισσα is translated as “especially” in most English translations, it can also be used to introduce appositions which is the best way to take it here (see also 4:10; 5:8; cf. 2 Tim 4:13; for discussion, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 308).

⁴ Mounce points out that most likely the idea of an honorarium rather than a regular salary is in view here; several factors contribute to this, a key one being that it is unlikely that the Ephesian church has sufficient wealth to provide regular salaries (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 309–10). Johnson, *Timothy*, 277–78, is especially forceful that the proper translation of τιμή is “compensation/payment.” The idea of the passage is clearly about financial remuneration, so τιμή in v. 17 has the sense of monetary support, but to translate the term simply as “compensation/payment” is not preferable to “honor.” Discerning the verbal link with both 5:3 (on which, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 304) and the Fifth Commandment is, I believe, important to the overall sense of the passage and the situation in the church (note, e.g., that the term προΐστημι in v. 17 is a term literally at home in the sphere of household economy [see 3:4, 12]; note also our previous sermon on 1 Timothy and the discussion of the word “honor” in 5:3).

⁵ See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 309. As Mounce notes, the numeric significance may be present if we divide the “honor” due elders into the two areas of “respect” and “remuneration.” It is interesting that though handling money and the love of money seem to be major problems at Ephesus and/or major concerns of the false teachers (see 3:3,5, 8; 6:10; and for discussion, see *ibid.*), nevertheless Paul’s expectation for church in its financial support of elders is generosity.

⁶ The logical connection between vv. 19 and 20 is implicit but discerned easily enough. Some kind of assertion is assumed between vv. 19 and 20, such as the following: only receive accusations under certain scripturally defined conditions (v. 19) > when those conditions are in place and, generally, accusations are received against an elder (assumed between vv. 19–20, perhaps in a private intervention) > then, specifically, for those who prove guilty of any accusation ... (v. 20, perhaps in a public gathering as a second stage of discipline). For many interpreters, v. 20 actually goes on to speak of another topic entirely besides accusations against elders—namely, church discipline more generally for any “sinners” in the church; however, this does not sufficiently account for the anaphoric nature of the article τοὺς that opens v. 20.

I take the whole section, vv. 17–25, as addressing church responsibility toward elders and not various and only loosely related topics. On the unified subject matter of vv. 17–25 more generally, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 312, and esp. 304–6. It is noteworthy that many of those interpreters who see in this section disparate, or only loosely connected, instructions also operate with form critical assumptions about the piecemeal nature of the letter as a whole (see, e.g., the list of proponents cited in Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 304; note also the comments about the placement of the solemn charge in v. 21 made by Johnson, *Timothy*, 280).

⁷ I am persuaded that Paul is alluding, in particular, to the requirements of Deut 19:15–20 here; see also Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 305, citing the more thoroughgoing thesis of J. W. Fuller.

⁸ Significantly, in these verses the line between an elder serving well (v. 17) and one not serving well (v. 20) is fairly clear—it is the line between elders who are faithful to the Lord and elders who *sin* and refuse to repent. Apparently for Paul, serving well is measured not by standards of human success and achievement but by holiness and the pursuit of God vs. the pursuit of idols.

⁹ On the (eschatological) lawcourt setting of v. 21 (“in the presence of ...”), see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 315–16; Johnson, *Timothy*, 280. That the angels are “elect” most likely means that they are the angels chosen as God’s agents of and witnesses to his great eschatological judgments, rather than simply non-fallen angels since the term ἄγγελοι itself is sufficient to indicate non-fallen angels (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 316).

¹⁰ Again, I am persuaded that Paul still has *elders* squarely in view and that the laying on of hands referred to is for installation into the office of elder (or possibly also restoration to that office for those elders who have been removed from office for sin but have subsequently repented; see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 316, and also 313). I do not think Paul is speaking of the restoration of sinners in general, as has sometimes been proposed.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹² The “judgment” referred to here in v. 24 is best seen not as the eschatological judgment but as the judgment concerning one’s fitness to be an elder which Timothy is to make with all wisdom and care (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 320). (The judgment of v. 24 may, however, be viewed as an echo of or a foreshadowing or in accord with the eschatological judgment; note v. 21.) The metaphorical language of v. 24 portrays the sins of some “going before” them in the sense of “heralding” their unfitness to be elders, thus making the decision (judgment) for their fitness for the office quite easy (*ibid.*, citing Bernard’s language of heralding; cf. Johnson, *Timothy*, 282, who captures the sense well).

¹³ Contra Johnson, *Timothy*, 277, 283, who takes the referent of “those that are not” as bad deeds. For discussion, see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 320–21, who points out most significantly the comparison and obvious parallelism between 25a and b.

¹⁴ I consider the whole of vv. 1–2 as focused on intra-church relationships (just as all of ch. 5 is focused exclusively on intra-church relationships). That is, I do not see a shift from “masters in general” in v. 1 to “believing masters in particular” in v. 2. Verse 2 clarifies what v. 1 addresses.

¹⁵ We can understand Paul’s words here as related to his counsel to slaves in 1 Cor 7. Johnson thinks, in particular, that the slaves in the church at Ephesus felt that their covenant kinship relationship trumped and therefore terminated their slave-master relationship, taking the first ground clause in v. 2 (ὅτι ἀδελφοί εἰσιν) as giving the reason for the slaves’ disrespect rather than the reason for Paul’s prohibition on disrespect (*Timothy*, 284). I lean in the other direction, viewing the two ὅτι-clauses in v. 2 as basically parallel and giving the reason not to despise and for serving all the more.

¹⁶ “Those who benefit from the kind service” (οἱ τῆς εὐεργεσίας ἀντὶ λαμβανόμενοι) are most likely the believing masters. Both Mounce and Johnson note that the term “act of kindness/kind service” (εὐεργεσία) being applied to a (socially) inferior slave acting beneficently to a (socially) superior master may be used subversively by Paul, indicating that transformation is taking place even as old social structures abide in the present age (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 329; Johnson, *Timothy*, 284–85, 290).

¹⁷ Somewhat similarly, Johnson notes that the notion of “honor” ties the circumstances of slaves together with Paul’s directives concerning both elders and widows (*Timothy*, 285).

¹⁸ It is also acknowledged in Scripture, for example, in Prov 31:6.

¹⁹ Johnson frankly admits, “This sentence is altogether mystifying” (*ibid.*, 281).

²⁰ It’s positioning may be all the more noteworthy if J. P. Meier’s thesis is correct that v. 23 forms the center of a chiasmic structure (see the layout and citation in Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 306).

²¹ It would seem to fit better, for example, at the very end of the letter, where Paul typically includes logistical details among his parting words (see, e.g., the ending of 2 Tim). I suppose it’s *possible* that it just popped into Paul’s mind for no apparent reason and he jotted it down first thing before he forgot it; but this seems highly unlikely to me. Everything else in this letter appears to be very purposefully thought out and arranged. What Paul says and where he says it and how he says throughout this letter to Timothy has the feel of intentionality and deliberateness; it would

be quite strange for Paul to break that pattern in this one place in the letter. Johnson rightly (to my mind) comments, "If Paul is simply giving personal medical advice, then nothing much further can be said: Timothy had a weak stomach, and Paul recommends a little wine. But nothing else in this letter has been without rhetorical point, even the elements of personal paraenesis" (*Timothy*, 281). In any case, *lots of things* surely came to mind to Paul as he was writing this letter, and he didn't include them all. Paul could have added all kinds of pieces of personal advice, which would have been helpful to Timothy. He could have told Timothy to get enough sleep at night; or to meditate on this or that passage of Scripture to grow in personal piety; or to be sure to catch a few sunrises every month to behold true beauty and to stir up praise to God; or to wash hands before eating. All that would have been helpful advice for Timothy. Paul doesn't include any of it. But Paul does tell him to drink a little wine for his stomach, and we are left to ask *why*.

²² The most common proposal is that Paul is clarifying the nature of the "purity" he has in view, which he has just mentioned in v. 22; it is not a "purity" that simply exacerbates Timothy's pain and ailments. Such a clarification, so the proposal goes, is especially necessary given the ascetic inclination of the false teachers in Ephesus (see 4:3). I think this proposal is viable, and can stand alongside the proposal I am offering in the body above. Johnson, *Timothy*, 281–82, proposes additionally a parabolic function for the advice.

²³ Note more generally Mounce's comments on the eschatological time in which the church finds itself, which redefines the nature of our (slaves' in 6:1–2) social status and relationships (*Pastoral Epistles*, 330).

²⁴ The temporal adverb *μηκέτι* is, I believe, a significant indicator that Paul is thinking in (salvation-)historical terms. Timothy had *formerly* been drinking only water but that time, Paul is saying, has past; a new time, the time of "a little wine," is dawning. Mounce notes the temporal concern and focus in Paul's words, but asks instead after *why Timothy had previously been abstaining from wine*, concluding that it was to distinguish himself from the false teachers who, according to Mounce, were drunkards. The only basis Mounce offers for this last assertion is (a mirror-reading of) 3:3 (see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 318–19). Mounce's proposal rests too much on 3:3, while at the same time pressing 3:3 beyond what it can be reasonably used to demonstrate. Mounce seeks to provide a first-century historical context that stands *behind* the counsel, whereas I want to understand a potential salvation-historical significance and intention *in* it. In any case, Paul does not give any indication that he is concerned with *why* Timothy had formerly been restricting himself to water, but only draws upon the fact *that* he had been and is contrasting that former circumstance with the new counsel he is presently giving.

²⁵ The NIV is, in my opinion, the only major English translation to get the sense of this verse right. The protasis of Paul's conditional statement is not an assertion that the individual in Christ is a new creation (as most English translation imply), but simply the cry "new creation!" A wooden gloss would be: "If anyone is in Christ, new creation!" (εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις).

²⁶ The word is simply *οἶκος*, the regular term for "house." The common gloss "household" can be too easily taken as simply a reference to people/family, and in this way the full significance of the term is short-circuited. Though obviously related to a family metaphor, the term *οἶκος* here calls more (or at least equally) to mind a *structural* reality (note the language of "pillar" and "support/foundation"). See further the following note.

²⁷ To call the church God's *house* is, I believe, already a hat-tip to the church's identity as a microcosm of new creation. The Bible has a habit of speaking of God's work of creating the cosmos with the language of construction. In Job 38, God asks Job, "Were you there when I *laid the foundation of the earth*? ... Who determined its *measurements*—surely you know! Or who *stretched the line upon it*? On what were its *bases sunk*, or who *laid its cornerstone*?" God views his own work of creation as a building project. Psalm 104:5 is one of several texts that describe the earth as having been set upon "foundations." First Samuel 2:8 speaks of the "pillars" that support earth. In Isa 40:22, God creates the cosmos by "stretch[ing] out the heavens like a curtain and spread[ing] them like a tent to dwell in." When God created the universe, he was building a tent, a dwelling place, a house (for most of the texts cited here, and for the overall thought about the OT depiction of God's work of creation, see Peter J. Leithart, *A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament* [Moscow, ID: Canon, 2000], 43–44). Over and over, that's how Scripture speaks of the work of creation. So when Paul names the church the "house of God," he's implying that the church is another work of creation, another house for God to dwell in. God's first building program of creation as a house is the paradigm for God's end-time building program of new creation as the house of God.

²⁸ Importantly, I say "the *beginning* fulfillment," not "the full and consummated fulfillment," because we live in the overlap of the ages. We are in an already-not yet age. We are in an age of "a little wine," not the age of wine streaming from the mountains. The new creation has already broken out in the resurrection of Christ, but it is not yet fully consummated. For that we await the return of Christ and the final establishment of the New Jerusalem. And importantly, until that happens, the realities and order of the first creation still abide. This is, I believe, part of why Paul addresses slaves at the beginning of ch. 6. Mounce rightly raises the question of why Paul includes an address of slaves in his paraenesis, noting that it is typical for Paul (and other NT writers) to address slaves in their paraenetic sections (*Pastoral Epistles*, 325). That may be, but it is equally true that Paul also elsewhere typically addresses

husbands and wives and children and parents in conjunction with slaves and masters (e.g., Eph 5–6; Col 3; cf. 1 Pet 2:18–3:7), which he does not do here; of that triumvirate, Paul in 1 Timothy singles out only one, and really only one half of one (he addresses only the responsibility of slaves not those of both slaves and masters). Mounce adds that there is good reason to think there was some contextually specific problem or need in Ephesus with respect to slaves and their relations with their masters that Paul felt compelled to address (this is true both of the directives concerning widows and of those concerning elders) (ibid.). That may be, but it raises the question of what was fueling the “disrespect” of the slaves for their masters at Ephesus. It seems that the coming of Christ and the initiation of the new age and order raised confusion about how to posture one’s self toward the abiding old order (again, 1 Cor 7 proves to be the closest parallel text).

We live in the overlap of the ages, the already-not yet time, so that both orders abide together. This is an extremely weighty and difficult matter to attend to, raising all sorts of challenges and questions. For introductory comments, focused on the issue of slavery, see Johnson, *Timothy*, 288–90. For a dense and thorough-going exploration of the theological and ethical ramifications of the resurrection and the already-not yet of the new creation, see Oliver O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

²⁹ In my opinion, the most important text in this regard in 1 Tim is 2:1–4. There Paul asserts that the church’s “peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” is “good and pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” And, as I read the passage, the reason why the church’s life (or its godliness, by way of shorthand) is well pleasing to this God is because it is, at least in part, the church’s godliness that attracts all people and draws them to truth and to God.

Additionally, the crucial central text of 3:14–16 again proves instructive, as it places at the center (both of the letter and of the church life commended by Paul overall) the mission of proclamation of the resurrected Christ to the nations (3:16). To consider evangelism this morning is not a creative tangent or rabbit trail away from 1 Timothy, but is right at the heart of what this letter to Timothy is after. And, thinking on a broader biblical storyline level, it is perhaps not insignificant that in the immediate contexts of the OT passages we pointed to above, which anticipate the new creation through the symbol of “wine,” the drawing in of the nations to Israel’s God and King is a central concern (see, e.g., Gen 49:10; Isa 25:6ff.).

³⁰ It seems that Paul, at least, assumes that the church is inviting and welcoming unbelievers into corporate worship gatherings (see 1 Cor 14:23–25).

³¹ And, in any case, we can be unshakably confident that the presence of the Lord is greater and more powerful than the unbelief of any of our friends and family and neighbors—that is, the presence of the Lord is powerful to *overcome* unbelief.