

# “KEEP YOURSELF FREE FROM SIN”

## I TIMOTHY 5:21-25

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### INTRODUCTION

These verses continue the discussion about elders in the church. In the last passage Paul had stressed to Timothy the necessity of proper honor: Elders must be honored in every way—even financially, especially if they work hard at teaching and preaching. However, it is essential that these elders maintain honor toward God’s name by remaining free from reproach caused by sinful behavior. Accusation against elders must not be received without proper evidence; but once verified, sins that are not repented of must be publicly disciplined so that others may fear and recognize the importance of godly living as well as the consequences of ungodly living.

Far too many have taken sin and its consequences too lightly—even when it involves Christian leaders. All believers are responsible to take godly Christian living seriously, but especially pastors.

**YOU MUST NOT TAKE SIN LIGHTLY, NOR MUST YOU NEGLECT GODLINESS.**

- I. THE SERIOUSNESS OF LIFE AND CHRISTIAN SERVICE (21)
  - A. Maintaining the honor of God’s name by appointing godly leaders is **serious business!** Paul gives a “solemn charge.”
    - Important witnesses observe and evaluate Timothy’s behavior—and that of the leaders they appoint or choose not to appoint: God the Father, Christ Jesus—the Son, and the elect angels.
    - These are those responsible for conducting the final judgment upon men—whether righteous or unrighteous; see II Tim. 4:1
  - B. Timothy must show neither prejudice nor partiality.
    1. No prejudice against someone before knowing all of the facts
    2. No partiality toward someone—being inclined to favor or accept without all the facts.  
**How often this admonition has been ignored in churches and ministry!**  
**Favoritism has been rampant over the years!**
- II. THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY OF IGNORED SIN (22)
  - A. One must never be Careless in the Ordination of pastors [or the re-admittance of men to the ministry after discipline].
    1. Unqualified people will cause much damage to the church and bring reproach upon the name of Christ.
    2. We must not share in the sins of others
      - Not in active participation with them
      - Not in ignoring their sinful behavior
      - Not in giving them opportunity to display such behavior as leaders and cause damage
    3. We must keep ourselves free from sin.
      - It is not enough to avoid others’ sins.
      - We must ourselves be pure and godly and be good examples.

### III. THE SLOPPY ATTITUDE OF CHRISTIANS ABOUT WINE (23)

- A. Paul is not discouraging the importance of drinking water!
- B. Nor is Paul endorsing the Christian social drinking “binge” in our culture!
  - 1. Timothy had “stomach issues”—likely caused to a large degree from the poor quality of the water he had been drinking exclusively.
  - 2. Timothy had “frequent ailments” and needed to take “medicine”, “a little wine.” Likely the water quality was poor—as is still true today in **large parts of our world**.
  - 3. The fact that Paul had to command Timothy to do this shows how seriously Timothy took the admonition to avoid alcohol due to its abuse and problems caused by its imbibing.
  - 4. The average Christian is careless, cavalier, and flippant about his relationship to alcohol.
- C. It was likely the case that alcohol was even an issue in relation to elders and deacons—this is why Paul had to warn Timothy in relation to both groups in listing their qualifications (3:3, 8).

### IV. THE CERTAINTY OF SINS’ “REWARDS” (24-25)

- A. Sins will be judged—if not in this life, certainly in the next (24)
  - 1. Some men’s sins are obvious and immediately disqualify them from ministry—pastorate; these sins “march before them,” leading the parade.
  - 2. Other men’s sins are hidden for a time; but they will “dog their steps” and cannot remain permanently out of view. They will be exposed! **“Be sure, your sins will find you out!”**
- B. Good deeds will be acknowledged and rewarded—either in this life or the next (25).
  - 1. Generally good character and behavior are evident.
  - 2. Sometimes those who are especially worthy are “invisible” to others—their godly qualities are not as obvious and not always recognized by the world or even by Christians because they are not as “flashy.”
    - The believer who has godly character and good deeds cannot remain hidden; careful evaluation by God’s standards will bring these persons to light.
    - Regardless, God will bring them out into the open and reward them.

### CONCLUSION

Life is not frivolous! It has consequences.

All persons will stand before God in judgment; even Christian servants.

Christian leaders have powerful impact upon the lives of many; they must be pure and godly examples.

Good character and behavior will be rewarded; bad behavior and character will be punished.

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