

Week Five: 1Tim 4:11—6:2

“Commands and Rules? What About Grace!?”

1Ti 4:11-16 (ESV) Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Exo 20:12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Lev 19:32 “You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

1Ti 5:3 Honor widows who are truly widows.

1Ti 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

1Ti 6:1 Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

1Pe 2:17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Jas 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

1Ti 5:21-25 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. 22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. 23 (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) 24 The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. 25 So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

6:2... Teach and urge these things.

Is this the same Apostle who wrote the letter to the Romans some years before where he said, “*You are not under law but under grace!*”? Paul starts this section saying “*Command these things...*” and he says it again, “*Command these things as well...*”(5:7). And he tells Timothy “*I am putting you in command, in charge to keep the rules and to enforce them as well...and Heaven is watching!*” (5:21) Paul knows this is a tough spot for Timothy. Not only is he young, he is an outsider, not a native of Ephesus. “*Who are you to tell us what to do, young ‘un? Paul said we are saved by grace not by following your rules.*” Paul knows this may happen. He has heard a variation of that already. “*We should sin to make grace look even greater!*” So he tells Timothy, “*Don’t let them look down on you just because you are younger. Stand your ground.*” Paul knows this is stressful, and Timothy may be a little timid. “*Just hang on until I get there,*” he says. “*Use a little wine to calm your stomach. Watch yourself, watch your teaching, and don’t forget that you have been given a gift. So read the Scriptures in public and be the best example you can be to those who are watching you.*”

So why did Paul write the Romans that we are not under law but under grace? I think because in Romans 6 Paul is considering the issue of authority, as in *Who are you*

going to serve? Yourself or Christ? And if we are serving Christ then we are not under the Mosaic system any longer. We are under the new King. I think John said it best in his prologue to his Gospel, which Paul couldn't quote this because John didn't write it for until 30 years later. Here is what he said: *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (Jn 1:17)* See? Moses was the head guy when the Law was in force, but now it's Jesus. He is greater than Moses and his rule is one of Grace. It is grace through Christ that informs us, teaches us and tells us how to behave in a way that best honors the family name of His Father. And there is the point of it all—*Honor*. That is Paul's real topic. How do we best *honor* the one who is our Lord? How do we please Him and not ourselves?

Paul uses the word honor several times. Honor widows, honor elders, honor masters. What does it mean? *HONOR*. It has to be important. It made God's Top Ten list—the Ten Commandments. It is the first word in number Four: "*HONOR your father and mother...*" Honor means ascribing value to something or someone, to hold in high esteem. It is how we value what we truly worship. It is a huge "tell". It tells others around us what we think is most worthy of our time and effort. As Americans, we no longer see family honor as a high value. It is the individual we value. Family name no longer matters as much. We do not seek the "blessing" of our parents as we go forth to pursue our dreams. Our success is our own and not a reflection of our heritage.

But Paul doesn't see it that way. We are Christians. That is a reflection of the family name. We have been placed in that family at a very high cost. And we did not earn a place in God's family, and we did not keep any commandments to get in. We honor and obey them *BECAUSE* we are in. That is true of Israel. God redeemed them and rescued them from Egypt and then He gave them the Law. They did not keep the Law so they could *BE* rescued, they keep the Law because they *ARE* rescued. Then God said: "*Now GO and represent me to the nations.*" In other words, be my priests. Except they didn't. They failed. They got it all turned around. How are we doing? Do we value things the world values. Do we honor people the world honors? How valuable are widows and orphans to banks and corporate America? But how valuable are they to our Father? Psalm 68:5 says, "*Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.*" And "*He upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked He brings to ruin.*" (Ps 146:9) Paul sees the value of widows, of slaves and of the poor. One day the rich and the powerful of the world will see it, but it will be too late for them. And they will see the very people they oppressed upheld and honored by the God of the Universe. "*Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*" (Lu 6:20) The Lord Jesus will bring justice to those He values and loves.

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. (5:1-2) I pondered this command and I thought "*How can Timothy change anything if he can't rebuke anybody?*" But if we look at it more carefully we can see he is not telling Timothy what to say, or what not to say, but how to say it. And it's not just about older men, but everyone. Treat everyone like they are family. That is what the church is! Fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. *Do not rebuke* means do not rebuke them as if they are strangers but as the members of your family who the Lord values—highly values. Rebuke in a way we saw Jesus do it with his disciples. Remember when Jesus told Peter "*Get behind me Satan!*"? Too harsh? Maybe. But in light of what Peter wanted, to prevent Jesus from going to the cross, was the same thing Satan said to Jesus when he tempted Him. "*Bow before me and I will give you all the Kingdoms*

NOW.” (Lu 4:6-7) No need for that crucifixion business! Jesus had to correct that thinking before it spread to the other disciples. This is what Timothy has to do in Ephesus. He has to stay on target. “*The aim of our charge is love...*” (1:5) God corrects us because He loves us. Just as Jesus loves Peter.

The Roman Empire was a world without any formalized state-organized social welfare, much like America and Britain were before World War II. Widows on their own faced total destitution and often died of starvation and exposure because there was no one to care for them. Then the Church was born. The Jerusalem Church picked up the task of caring for those with no means of supporting themselves, particularly widows. Sometimes when a widow became a Christian, their own family would cut them off. The church became her family and the leaders had to figure out a way to care for her. The Apostles appointed the first deacons to care for the widows in the church, as Luke tells us in the book of Acts. I think Luke wrote this because helping someone who's destitute may seem trivial compared to The Apostles Teaching! And most in the early church really thought Jesus was returning any day, so why bother with the physical stuff. Paul, like the early Jerusalem Church, sees the balance. He is concerned about our behavior as he is about doctrine. Paul's concern for widows is directly tied to his theology and to his proclamation about Jesus. The world must see a family that reflects that message.

It is not very hard to imagine how problems in dealing with so many needs might creep in. We really do need Policies and Procedures. Any organization does, even families. Policies are the commandments. Procedures are the methods. What is the best way to carry out our commandments, our mission? Paul has placed Timothy in authority over the leaders of the Ephesian Church. He is really functioning as a modern day bishop, though that concept didn't come into the church until the next century. He has to use his power with gentleness and wisdom. Paul has already told him he has to tell some men that their teaching is all wrong, and many of them are older, richer and more powerful than he is. He has to correct their behavior and attitudes. This is very, very difficult. You can just hear “*Oh YEAH? Who are YOU?*” Anybody who would find this easy or enjoyable would probably be more dangerous than the men they were correcting!

So Paul is telling Timothy as he approaches older men to think how it would be to correct his own father. How do you tell him gently but clearly that something has to change? For younger men, how can you speak to them like your own brothers? I realize in some families there could be horrible memories of mistreatment, even brutality. Not everyone comes from a family where there was love between brothers. But Paul knows Timothy well enough to know that's not the case. And that is important. Know the person we are making a leader, an elder. Paul makes that point. *Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others...*(5:22) People come to the church with baggage. They need to work that out before they are ready to lead. When it comes to women, Paul wants Timothy to think about his mother and his sister. Treat them with respect and deference, but make sure they know the Policies. And be cautious. The little phrase “*with all purity*” is an obvious warning about the power and the danger of sexual attraction. Think Romeo and Juliet. We all understand how attractive a young woman can be to a young man. Timothy has to be very careful. He has to guard his mind. That is where purity starts. Purity does not begin in the body. That is where the hormones are (and that is the way God created us). Our hormones will drag us down if not corrected by the way we think, by our

commitment to our goal. *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1:5)* Real love is staying loyal to that aim.

Now comes the instructions on how to care for the widows, who are truly widows. It takes money. And because the love of money is always a danger, as Paul will say later, there will always be people who will try to “game the system. The local church never has an unlimited supply of money. That is a good thing. God wants us to learn to be good stewards of money, to use it wisely, and only support those who are truly in need. So the commandment is clear: Honor our parents and support widows in need. That is our Policy. How do we carry that out and implement it fairly? Here are Paul’s Procedures in a more modern format:

- 1 Widows who are alone with no family living—
Full Support based on the following:
 - a. she was married to one man and faithful in her marriage
 - b. her children, when they were living, had a good reputation
 - c. she is known for hospitality to the needy and the poor
 - d. she is known for her service to other Christians
 - e. she is known for being helpful to all
 - f. she must be over 60 years of age
 - g. she is morally above reproach
- 2 Widows who have living children or grandchildren—No Support
- 3 Widows who are under 60—No Support
 - a. marriage is recommended
 - b. find employment if marriage is not desired
 - c. remain celibate and morally above reproach
 - d. eligible for full support after age 60 if all criteria are met.

I do not think we could strictly apply these Procedures to 21st century America. The Policy does apply, because that is the commandment: *Honor the widows*. The Procedures would not apply in every century and to every culture. Paul wants Timothy to learn to think and act wisely. For Americans in 2022 age 60, though right for the first century, might seem too young. Our retirement age is 65-70 and many work well beyond that. And widows with children or grandchildren may need some extra support today since many families no longer live in close proximity, and may be alienated completely. What is the wiser course?

One thing Paul is clear about; if a child or grandchild has the means to support an elderly relative and does not do it, *then ...he (or she) has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (5:8)* Worse? How can one be worse than the person who is still lost in the darkness? It is worse because this shows a lack of loyalty, not only to our own family member, but to Jesus, the one who gave His all for us. The denial of faith is disloyalty to Him and a denial of our duty to “*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.*” (Ex 20:12) True joy and fullness of life come to those who are obedient—not to Moses but to Jesus, the greater Moses.

What about older men? Men who are perhaps widowers and beyond working age? Men who are above reproach qualify to be the elders, as we saw in chapter 3. Paul says if they are teachers as well as leaders they deserve “*DOUBLE honor*” which means double pay. Paul backs this up with two quotes, one from Moses and one from Jesus—Law and Grace. One is about *oxen not being muzzled while it treads out the grain (Dt 17:6)* and *The worker deserves his wages. (Lu 10:7)* When Paul talks about

money he knows the danger. Money is a god, an idol for many. It is empowered by greed and greed begets envy, envy begets resentment and angry people do mean things. Like lying about the leaders. Greedy men, whether rich or poor, bring accusations fueled by jealousy. *"Why should he get double pay for reading books and teaching a few classes when I can barely get by?"*

Paul also knows accusations can be valid. And there is a commandment for that! Paul applies it to the church. Accusations will only be accepted *if two or three witnesses agree. (Dt 19:15, Mat 18:16)* Notice Paul's sources again are Moses and Jesus. But what about collusion? What if all of the witnesses are friends? And they are all lying? It doesn't end there. It takes three witnesses to bring the charge. After that comes the hearing before the entire assembly. All the evidence must be heard and weighed. The elder may be guilty. This is painful! It is much better for the church to disqualify a candidate than to disgrace a leader. This is why Paul warns Timothy to be careful about who he ordains in the first place. This is not only to protect his reputation, but to protect the public reputation of the church. If the elder is guilty of the accusation, then Paul says *rebuke him publicly so that the rest may stand in fear. (5:20)* Hopefully that means fear of the Lord, because *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10)* We desperately need this kind of wisdom, grounded in respectful honor for our Lord, until Jesus comes *to deliver us from the present evil age (Gal 1:5)*

Paul's final command is to Timothy personally, but before we get to that, Paul gives one final instruction to the slaves in the church. He tells the slaves to serve their masters like brothers. The Body of Christ is a family. We must treat each other as family, no matter what our status or station. Love them as fellow Christians. Paul doesn't say it here, but this would apply to the masters as well. Treat the slaves as brothers and love them as brothers. When Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians he was more direct: *Masters...stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and your Master is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Eph 6:9)* In the church, masters and slaves are equal before God, equal servants of the King. These are probably the same masters Paul wrote to before. Now several years later, there may be the danger of a slave revolt in the church. Paul knows this is not the time for that. His final line is *Teach and urge these things. Do not forget: "The aim of our charge (our teaching) is love..."* Masters and slaves—love each other. People are not property.

Let's go back to Paul's final words to Timothy. This is very personal and very serious. Look carefully at what Paul is doing. He is calling *"three witnesses; God, Jesus and the holy angels" (5:21)* to stand with him as he gives Timothy his final commands on how to lead this church. There are real temptations confronting even the most godly men. The temptations are not sin. Giving in to them is. The consequences can be often swift, but sometimes slow. But, in the end, nothing will be hidden and the witnesses never sleep. Timothy is young, maybe timid, and may have some physical ailments. These are weaknesses to be sure, but Paul knows human weakness does not hinder the power of the Gospel. Jesus told Paul *"My power is perfected by weakness!"* to which Paul answered, *"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."* (2Cor 2:9) My weakness gives the Glory where it is due—with God Himself. He warns Timothy: Do not show favoritism (a veiled warning about taking bribes). Do not choose a leader who is not thoroughly vetted, because sometimes sin is hidden. Keep your heart pure. Duane Litfin in his comments on 1 Timothy says this:

*All people are heading toward judgment, carrying with them either their sins or their good works. For some, their sins or good works go before them and are obvious to all. For others their sins or good works trail behind, hidden from view, becoming known only later.*¹ I am closing with this thought because, along with Timothy and Paul, we will all stand before the Judge when Christ returns. But that judgment is much different for those of us in His Church. Jesus is the Judge. But He is also our Savior. He is *FOR US*, because He died for us. He will not rule against us, because He bore all that stands against us. We are cleared of all charges! And our good works? Our Father created us for these. As His children, our works done in His service for His honor are the joy of our inheritance. Paul said that in his first letter to Ephesus: “...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10) And looking back we will see them and marvel at how He worked in us. We will see the results that we do not see from this side of judgment. And He will reward us for the toil and the effort we exerted, but we will turn around and praise Him for the strength He gave us. It is grace for grace! Amen.

Father, We ask for the willingness to honor you and to please you most of all. Then we ask you to turn our hearts to honor the people to whom honor is due, like our parents, our modern day masters in the workplace and our pastors and ministers in our churches. We want to lift them up to you in prayer. We want to thank them and show our gratitude when it is due, and we want to help them where we are able. In doing this we hope to look back someday with you by our side so you can show us what marvels you worked through us. It is then we will kneel before you, Father-Son-and Holy Spirit, and honor you forever. That is our great privilege. Amen.

My resource for many of the ideas in this paper are from Tom Wright's *New Testament For Everyone. The Pastoral Epistles. 1 Tim 4:11–6:5* Westminster John Knox Press 2011

¹ Walvoord, J. and Zuck, R. (Editors) *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* Duane Litfin Ph.D. New Testament Victor Books. 1st Edition. July 1983