

**1 TIMOTHY 5:1-2**  
(Reading: Titus 2:1-15)

**The Minister & God's Family**

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ...

I caught my mother-in-law chuckling over an item that she had just read in one of the many and varied magazines and newsletters that I get as a minister.

It was an item where one of the staff in the major Pentecostal church in that city was relating a rather surprising incident.

That incident was that they had been served morning coffee one day by no less than the Senior Pastor himself!

That had stunned her because it just never happened.

Well, my mother-in-law, who was visiting with us, found this so strange.

She had always had a close relationship with her minister.

She then said, "I get served morning coffee by the senior pastor every morning I'm here!"

Congregation, in a day and an age where much of the leadership within churches has become taken over by a business methodology these words in our text are quite superfluous.

When you have management levels equating major business corporations within churches there is really no interaction at all between the 'Senior' pastors in their executive offices and the 'clients' who pass through the lower floors of the building.

And pass through is certainly an accurate phrase.

When you have an 80% turn over in just 18 months you can't say that there are committed relationships being built up.

In fact, this has permeated the Christian church to the degree that more than 50% of all professing Christians have changed churches.

And that's not because they've shifted location, either!

You see, they don't feel at home anymore within a particular church.

Something has upset them.

And because they don't know how to deal with that concern, or because the church treats them as simply a 'customer', they simply go somewhere else.

Or they don't go anywhere at all any more!

This is where the text is helpful.

Take a look at the words of our text.

You consider each of the four different types of people pictured.

What are they together?

Ah, you say, this is a family.

This is describing the different adult ages and genders.

But where do you find these reflected in our society?

How are each of these types treated in this way within the community around us?

They're not, are they?

In fact, the way these different ages and genders are treated today couldn't be further away from this!

Old men are rebuked harshly, even beaten up; younger men are alienated; older women are left all alone in retirement villages; and younger women are treated as sexual objects.

And that's exactly the same ideology which has come into modern Christendom.

They have become caught up with the bold and the beautiful also.

Their promotional material has the ever-smiling and good-looking pastor and his wife.

The apostle Paul couldn't be more different than the model used in church leadership today.

He who couldn't speak well, who apparently didn't look that nice, and who would write these long and involved letters, just wouldn't have fitted the image.

But, congregation, he was something many of those leaders today aren't!

You see, Paul was a pastor.

He related to people personally.

He knew them all by name.

And he always prayed for them.

It's with that perspective that we must approach these words this afternoon.

And added to that is the fact that here these are God's words.

Here what is stated is God's pattern for how we are to be His Family together.

Think about it: The family is a natural institution.

It is one organisation we are all a part of somewhere and somehow.

So let's see from how we should treat members of our own families how the minister is to treat the different members of God's Family.

And as we do that let's realise this is the way we should all be with one another in God's household.

I mean, if it doesn't start with us how will those who aren't believers come to see?

Our first aspect in this is to see that **GOD'S MINISTER RESPECTS OLDER MEN.**

This is because verse 1 begins with older men.

That order in itself is important.

For throughout Scripture the older men, or ‘elders’ as some translations put it, are the dispensers of wisdom and judgment.

These are those spoken of in Proverbs as gathering together at the gates of the city to provide help in deciding legal and other matters.

In fact, isn’t that where we find the husband of the wife of noble character in Proverbs 31?

There it says in verse 23, “Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.”

There are two aspects raised in connection with the older man in verse 1.

The first is described negatively.

For there Timothy is told **not** to rebuke an older man harshly.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. in Palestine Jewish tradition and teaching was clear about the great respect that should be given to older people.

Actually, that was the case across the known world then.

Older people were treated with the utmost respect.

That’s why we might well wonder how it could ever be that Timothy could rebuke an older man?

But it’s that very context of the older men having a significant influence on proceedings that could lead to Timothy becoming quite upset with them.

He could become quite arrogant in trying to preach God’s Word and pastor to His people.

He might have raised his voice, lost his temper, or otherwise have been disrespectful to an older man.

How many of us haven’t spoken ungraciously of older people driving their cars at a somewhat slower speed than the limit?

Young people can be rude to those older, often without even realising they’re doing that.

And they do that every time they don’t actively think about those around them.

This is where the second aspect to this point comes in.

Because rather than rebuke an older man harshly Timothy is to exhort him as if he were your father.

Let me take you back to driving on the road behind that older person.

You’re frustrated he’s going slower than the speed limit.

You flash your lights and honk your horn.

You’ve got places to go and things to do.

At the first opportunity you overtake him, and in a way that almost cuts him off.

You frighten him.

But as you go past him you notice it’s Granddad – in his new car!

How do you feel now?

You were pretty stupid, weren't you?

And you'll deserve every bit of the telling off you'll get later – or the cold shoulder you'll suffer for many months.

That was a wrong reaction.

A wise response would have been to be patient, realise that older people do drive slower, and your getting upset is only going to make unnecessary tension.

If there is an issue you need to raise with an older man you need to do that by talking to him as though he was your own father.

This is the 'exhorting' which comes next in verse 1.

For now you see that older man as if he were your own close relative, which in the church he is!

As any minister will tell you, there does come a time when you need to raise concern with an older man.

Perhaps his doctrine is astray or he has been agitating in the congregation.

You'll be surprised how often that can happen from those older men.

In fact, I had one senior gentleman in his 90's place the same critical letter in my letter box every week for months because of an issue he wasn't happy about.

But it wasn't worth directly confronting him over it.

Instead the elders and I visited, especially an older elder who could speak Dutch well and slowly guide him.

The letters stopped and he became a lot less critical.

Leviticus 19 verse 32 is clear about how we should regard those older amongst us.

It says, "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God."

When you do that you'll be surprised at the response.

Getting next to them and privately appealing to them can make them realise you're exactly not what they expected from a young man.

If that older man is a gracious believer being sympathetic to him can only be for the good.

That man could become a help in a young man's ministry.

**So, GOD'S MINISTER RESPECTS OLDER MEN.**

**And next we see how GOD'S MINISTER BEFRIENDS YOUNGER MEN.**

I spoke earlier of how many young men in our society are alienated.

With the rise of feminism and the fall in traditional values, young adult men can be at quite a loss out there.

And this is where the Gospel does make quite a difference.

In fact, this is the reason why I believe that in a few years time the only effective leaders will be Christian men.

And that's exactly because of what we hear about here.

For it's in the community of faith, the church, that young men receive exactly what they need.

Now, I know I'm saying this while millions of dollars have recently been thrown at programmes to try and help connect young men with their families and their communities.

But that will always be humanly impossible while there are no true father-figures for them to bond with.

And that's one of the sad consequences when a nation leaves its Christian roots and marriage is down-graded while other deviant relationships are openly promoted instead.

Young men need mentors.

In a faithful church they have them – first through fathers committed to bringing up their children to believe, and then also through ministers and elders who also show the way to true manhood.

Timothy is to be such a mentor.

He is not to boss those younger men around.

Rather, in the words of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5, verses 2 and 3, he is to be a shepherd of God's flock that's under his care and so not lord it over those entrusted to him.

As Peter goes on there, he is to be an example to the flock.

And what better way to do this than to treat a young man as your very own brother?

That implies not only a responsibility for him but a relationship that cannot be dismissed.

There is no excuse for him not helping him.

He's family.

Congregation, we have a helpful lesson here from what Paul instructs Timothy.

You see, a valuable way for a young man to spend his time is to help those younger than him.

By spending time and encouraging those who are going through what he's been through there a valuable building up going on.

And especially when that is Christian mentoring.

Then the connecting is for the very best reason of all.

Then there's a looking to the Lord together.

Paul describes this process in his letter to Titus chapter 2, verses 6 till 8.

There he writes, "...encourage the young men to be self-controlled.

"In everything set them an example by doing what is good.

"In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us."

This is biblical mentoring.

This has God's blessing.

Next we see how Timothy is to treat older women.

In the words of our third point, here we see **GOD'S MINISTER HONOURS OLDER WOMEN.**

As we consider this part we note first of all the place of the Christian mother.

In Timothy's own case he had a grandmother, Lois, and a mother, Eunice, who were terrific examples of Christian faith at work.

So blessed were they that Timothy himself is brought up in the faith and came to confess it for himself!

This is what we read about in Paul's second letter to Timothy chapter 1 verse 5.

And it's what we see throughout Scripture and church history.

Godly mothers are prime instruments in God's hands to bring about the salvation of their children.

Whether it's Hannah the mother of Samuel, Monica the mother of Augustine, or Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles, amongst others, they certainly have an important place.

Indeed, how often hasn't it been the mother who was the spiritual one, the one praying for their children every day?

We see something of the same in Jewish mothers today in a secular way.

They are often stereotyped but that stereotype isn't far from the truth.

Indeed, I have met such a Jewish mother!

And didn't she want her son to do his best!

There was no avoiding her active and involved interaction with her son's study and future career prospects!

Added to this is the honour that was given to a Jewish mother throughout history.

Not only does she look after the home and care for the children, she also has the spiritual education of those children in her hands.

True enough, the fathers and older boys went to the Synagogue on Friday evenings, but for the other children, and for the rest of the time, she's busy in her teaching work.

Right throughout the book of Proverbs this work she does is mentioned.

As is also the honour she must have because she does it.

In the words of Proverbs 15:20, "A foolish man despises his mother."

And he does!

Because the foolish man is the unbelieving man.

He is the one who turns away from the spiritual teaching of his mother.

Now, some say Jesus didn't honour His mother.

But they misunderstand the way Jesus relates to his mother.

They say that He shows He despises her for her naivety as to His mission on earth.

Yet from Luke 2 we know that in fact as He grew up He was perfectly obedient to His parents.

And that certainly didn't change when He became an adult.

For what He does is the appropriate honour for his mother.

In John 2 when the wine runs out at the Wedding in Cana and his mother seeks his help he honours her by replying very respectfully, "Dear woman, why do you involve me?"

Later when His mother and brothers wanted to see Jesus while He was busy teaching, He uses it as an opportunity to emphasise the importance of our spiritual family.

When He is told His mother and brothers want to see him but are unable to get in because of the crowd, He says in Luke 8 verse 21, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's Word and put it into practice."

In a previous congregation I pastored there was a lady who had been greatly involved with her congregation and different mission causes.

She spent much of her time and energy and money doing God's work in those areas.

And she was able to do it because she and her husband hadn't been able to have children.

They had married quite late.

As she had become old and frail and was in a rest home she shared with me her loneliness.

She missed having a family.

So I said to her, "But you're my mother!"

I showed her from these very scriptures what she was meant to be for me.

And from then on when I visited or rang I would say, "It's your son here" and she would laugh.

She was great reassured by this.

Congregation, GOD'S MINISTER HONOURS OLDER WOMEN.

He gives them a special place.

And then we see, in the fourth place, GOD'S MINISTER VALUES YOUNGER WOMEN.

Now I use the word "values" for a special purpose.

Because today society has devalued younger women.

While it may believe it has turned the world around so that young women have every opportunity for the future it has actually put them in a box they shouldn't be.

In reality today young women are trapped.

The problem is that many Christian leaders have not helped them out of that trap.

Rather than guiding them to see how free they are in the gospel they place man's rules on top of Scripture and so many young women feel they have to do things which are against their very nature!

We can think here of the whole ‘women in office’ issue being played out in many denominations.

We can think of how girls are pushed to find their “true” selves in fulfilling careers.

I mean, how many of the women among us haven’t felt somewhat demeaned at some point because of that ubiquitous question regarding your employment vocation?

And we can think here of how many clergymen have abused their position of trust with these young people.

Too often they have misused their position as a power to manipulate these tender souls.

Don’t think here only of the cults and sects.

Many pastors have ended up divorcing their first or second wives and marrying the pretty young thing who had been so keen to serve her Lord in the church office or in some other function.

For a minister could see a young woman as a sexual object.

Through a sense of the power in his office, or a sensual worldly influence, he can demean her.

He can fail the simple test of this text in dealing with that particular part of his congregation.

Because he doesn’t treat them like sisters.

Think about it: Would you have sex with your sister?

The very thought is absolutely repugnant.

And just as much in the society we live in.

Well, at the moment anyway!

Treating younger women as sisters means they’re part of the family.

They’re not then objects to be used or abused – rather they are something very precious to you.

They are those you care for in a very special way.

Here we see why the phrase ‘absolute purity’ is used.

Because that is exactly what you would want to guard in your own sister, or daughter, isn’t it?

This is why it is good advice that when a minister or elder visits a young woman that he should go with someone else – perhaps his own wife, or another elder or woman.

There may be nothing wrong with what he’s doing but everything should be completely above board.

In Paul’s second letter to him, Timothy is warned about this in chapter 2 verse 22.

There he’s exhorted, “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

This is where the modern trend towards personalised counselling can lead to the devil's temptation into evil.

That's why, as members of a family, we have to be very much open and accountable to each other.

What kind of family can stay together if there isn't that transparency?

And isn't it in a family that the older and more mature help those who are younger and weaker?

That's what love does.

Because it seeks out what is the best for the other family member.

It's also here where the words of Titus help to fill out what's briefly noted here.

Because there it speaks of older women leading younger women.

That would solve a lot of those counselling situations which go bad.

The wise use of a mature older Christian woman can be a real blessing to these younger women.

Above all, dear believers, let the Spirit of Christ be in you as you interact with all brothers and sisters in the Lord.

As Paul says in Philippians 2 verses 3 till 5, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

Congregation, that's what needs to permeate all our relationships with the Church of Christ.

If it's His Church shouldn't it have His Spirit?

Amen.

PRAYER:

Let's pray...

O Loving Heavenly Father, we thank You again that we are Your children.

You have adopted us as Your very own through faith in Jesus Christ – Your Son and our Saviour.

Help us to show we're in Your family by the way we relate to each other.

Help us to respect older men, befriend younger men, honour older women, and value younger women.

Please grant us Your Spirit to follow Your way.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ who perfectly showed us this way, we pray, Amen.

