DO NOT BE HASTY IN THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

I Timothy 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

Laying on of Hands

This phrase is used in connection with healing (Acts 28:8), in connection with Jesus blessing children (Matthew 19:13-15) and in connection with the reception of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapters 8&19.

In none of these situations does there ever seem to be a time of waiting to see if the laying on of hands would be appropriate. And since in the Old Testament and in the New Testament leaders were appointed by the laying on of hands, and since the general context to this point has been instructions about Elders, that would seem to be what Paul has in mind.

Numbers 27:18-20 So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him.

Numbers 27:21-23 He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the LORD. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in. Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him.

Acts 13:2&3 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Since the first qualification to be an Elder (I Timothy 3:2) is to be “above reproach,” and another qualification (I Timothy 3:7) is to “have a good reputation with outsiders,” and since I Timothy 5:22&23 talks about some sins not being obvious immediately, it seems obvious that Paul is telling Timothy not to put someone, especially an Elder, in a position of leadership in a hasty manner.

Do Not Share in the Sins of Others

I Timothy 5:22 Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

Eli condoned sin by making his sinful sons priests, even though they were totally unfit spiritually, thus showing favoritism (Verse 21). I Samuel 2:12(NASB) Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD.

I Samuel 2:29 “Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?

I Samuel 2:32b “Although good will be done to Israel, no one in your family line will ever reach old age.

I Samuel 3:34 “And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phineas, will be a sign to you – they will both die on the same day.”

Keep Yourself Pure

Vine’s Expository Dictionary says the word translated pure means, “pure from defilement, not contaminated.” Eli did not do the things his sons did, and he even reproved them, but because he put them in office knowing what they were and allowed them to stay there knowing what they were doing, he was contaminated by their sin. The judgment upon his family was directed primarily at him, not at his sons.

Stop Drinking Only Water

I Timothy 5:23 Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

Mark 7:15 “Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”

I Thessalonians 5:6-8 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Vine’s Expository Dictionary defines “sober” as “free from the use of intoxicants.” Wine was not made by a distilling process, but by allowing grape juice to ferment at room temperature. It was usually mixed with four parts water as a means of killing things in the water that would cause digestion problems.

Some Sins Are Not Obvious

I Timothy 5:24&25 The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever.

This seems to be the reason we are not to be hasty in the laying on of hands.

Luke 3:19&20 But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

John 6:70&71 Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one you is a devil?” (He meant Judas, the sone of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

John 13:21-24 After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.” His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple who Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

John 13:25&26a Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas.

Philemon 24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

2 Timothy 4:10a For Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

Matthew 6:1 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Of you do, you will have no reward from our Father in heaven.”

Things to Think About

Leaders must not be hasty in laying hands on spiritual leaders, and in doing so become accountable for the sins of others.

Timothy was encouraged to add a little wine (probably to the water he drank) to counteract his frequent digestive issues.

All of us are commanded to be sober, free from the use of intoxicants.

Some people’s sins are obvious, others are well hidden, often until they die.

We are to do our good deeds in secret, but even good deeds done in secret cannot remain hidden forever.