

1 Timothy 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

Analysis

Them that sin rebuke before all (τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας ἐνώπιον πάντων ἔλεγχε, tous hamartanontas enōpion pantōn elenche)—'those who persist in sin, rebuke in the presence of all.' Hamartanō is present tense—ongoing sin, not a single lapse. Elencho means to rebuke, convict, expose. **That others also may fear** (ἵνα καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ φόβον ἔχωσιν, hina kai hoi loipoi phobon echōsin)—'so that the rest may fear.'

This likely refers to elders who persist in proven sin. After proper investigation (two witnesses, 5:19), public rebuke serves two purposes:

1. holds the sinning leader accountable,
2. warns others against presuming on grace. Phobos is healthy fear/reverence—recognition that sin has consequences.

Public rebuke seems harsh, but it's necessary when leaders persist in sin after private confrontation.

Leadership positions carry greater accountability (James 3:1). Public sin requires public correction to protect the church's holiness and deter others from similar sin.

Historical Context

Church discipline followed Jesus' pattern (Matthew 18:15-17): private confrontation first, then increasing publicity if repentance doesn't occur. Elders

who sinned publicly or persistently required public rebuke. This wasn't cruel shaming but necessary accountability—maintaining standards for leaders and warning others. The early church took holiness seriously, recognizing that tolerance of sin corrupts the whole body (1 Corinthians 5).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why must persistent sin among leaders be rebuked publicly rather than handled privately?
2. How does public rebuke 'create fear' in a healthy way—what kind of fear is intended?
3. What balance is needed between protecting leaders from false accusation (5:19) and holding them accountable (5:20)?

Interlinear Text

τοὺς ἀμαρτάνοντας ἐνώπιον πάντων ἔλεγχε ἵνα καὶ οἱ
G3588 **Them that sin** G264 **before** G1799 **all** G3956 **rebuke** G1651 **that** G2443 **also** G2532 G3588

λοιποὶ φόβον ἔχωσιν

others **fear** **may**
G3062 G5401 G2192

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 4:2 (Parallel theme): Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Deuteronomy 13:11 (Parallel theme): And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Acts 5:11 (Parallel theme): And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

1 Timothy 1:20 (Parallel theme): Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Titus 1:13 (Parallel theme): This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

Acts 5:5 (Parallel theme): And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

Acts 19:17 (Parallel theme): And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

Deuteronomy 19:20 (Parallel theme): And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.

Deuteronomy 17:13 (Parallel theme): And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

Leviticus 19:17 (Sin): Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.