

CARING FOR WIDOWS

1 Timothy 5:3-15

INTRODUCTION

- David Lloyd-George once said, “The true test of a civilization is the way it treats its old people.”
- It's thought about 5 per cent of Australians aged over 65 suffer elder abuse, and the majority of this is committed by the victims' relatives.
- In many ancient cultures, the killing of the elderly, often by their own children was common practice. It is termed “senicide”.
- The word of God teaches that the elderly ought to be honoured, respected and supported in their old age.
- In particular there is one group of the elderly that God singles out for special care, and those are the widows.
- Widows are highly regarded in the sight of God.
- Israel was commanded to make provision for the widows (Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 24:19-21)
- God comes to the defence of the widow, and is called “a judge of the widows”. (Psalm 68:5; 146:9; Malachi 3:5)
- God will judge those who oppress widows (Exodus 22:22-23; Deuteronomy 27:19)
- There are many examples in the Bible of the proper treatment of widows: Job (Job 29:13); Ruth (Ruth 2:18); Elijah (1 Kings 17:8-24; Luke 4:25-26); the Lord Jesus (Luke 7:11-15; John 19:26-27); the early church (Acts 6:1-6; 9:36-42)

- In James' definition of "pure religion", he includes: "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction". (James 1:27)
- The basic thought of the word "widow" is that of loneliness.
- There are three types of widows in this passage:

The worthy widows
 The well-off widows
 The wanton widows

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE WIDOWS (5,9,10)

A. Desolate (5)

1. The word indicates "solitary" and "alone"
2. She has no family to support her
3. She is poor and in need of help

B. Devout (5)

1. She trusts in God
 - a. She has been regenerated by faith in Christ
 - b. She lives a life characterised by faith in, and dependence on God
2. She constantly prays
 - a. She is free to devote her remaining days to God (1 Corinthians 7:33-34; Luke 2:36-37)
 - b. She takes advantage of the opportunity God has given her

C. Mature (9)

1. She must be over sixty years of age
2. The reasons for this are given in verses 11-15

D. Faithful in marriage (9)

1. She is “the wife of one man”
2. She has not been divorced and remarried (1 Corinthians 7:10-11)
3. She lived virtuously in conjugal fidelity to her husband (Proverbs 31:10-12)

E. A testimony of good works (10; cf. Matthew 5:16)

1. Brought up children
 - a. This may be her own children or children she has taken in
 - b. The woman’s first duty is to keep the home (Titus 2:4-5)
2. Lodged strangers
 - a. She is hospitable (1 Peter 4:9; Hebrews 13:2; Acts 16:15)
3. Washed the saints feet (Luke 7:44)
 - a. This indicates a humble heart of service
 - b. The Lord Jesus set this example (John 13:14; Philippians 2:5-7)
4. Relieved the afflicted
 - a. She cares for the sick and needy (Acts 9:36,39; Proverbs 31:20)

5. Diligently followed every good work (cf. Acts 10:38; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8)

II. THE CARE OF THE WIDOWS (4,7,8,16)

A. The family's role Note "nephews" means "descendants", particularly grandchildren (Judges 12:14)

1. Show piety (respect) (4)
 - a. The fifth commandment is binding as long as the parents live (Exodus 20:5-6)
 - b. Contrast this with the Jews' "corban" (Mark 7:9-13)
2. Requite their parents (4)
 - a. This is "good and acceptable before God" (cf. Romans 12:2; 1 Timothy 2:3)
3. Provide for one's own (8)
 - a. Refusal to do so is a denial of the faith (cf. James 1:27)
 - b. Even unbelievers provide for their own (2 Thessalonians 3:10)
4. Relieve their own widows (16)

B. The church's role

1. Honour the widows (3)
2. Take them in (9)
3. Relieve the widows (16)

III. A CAUTION TO THE WIDOWS (6,11-14)

A. Casting off the faith (11-12)

1. Being led by fleshly desires
2. In opposition to the will of Christ
3. “Damnation” can mean “condemnation” (1 Corinthians 11:29)
4. They depart from the faith (cf. Revelation 2:4)

B. Ungodly behaviour (6,13)

1. Living in pleasure (6)
 - a. It is not wrong to have pleasure in life (1 Timothy 6:17)
 - b. It refers to riotous, luxurious living; lavish, wanton excess (James 5:5)
 - c. She is dead while she lives (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:1)
2. Idleness
 - a. Idleness is condemned throughout Scripture (Proverbs 19:15; 31:27; Ecclesiastes 10:18; Matthew 20:6; Romans 13:11; James 4:14.
 - b. Idleness was one of the sins of Sodom (Ezek. 16:49).
 - c. Idle words will be judged (Matthew 12:36)
3. Busybodies
 - a. Idle hands are the devil's workshop (2 Thessalonians 3:11)

- b. Gossipers (Proverbs 18:8; 11:13; 26:20-22)
- 4. The woman should fulfil her role as keeper of the home (14)
 - a. Marriage and childbearing will deliver from these sins (1 Timothy 2:15; Titus 2:3-5)
 - b. Marriage is honourable in all (Hebrews 13:4)
- C. Reproach on the name of Christ (14-15)
 - 1. The believer must live so as not to bring reproach upon the name of Christ (Titus 2:5)
 - 2. When professing Christians sin it gives the enemy occasion to blaspheme Christ (2 Samuel 12:14)
 - 3. We are to “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:10)

CONCLUSION

All these things were to be taught to the church, that they may be blameless (1 Timothy 5:7)

Can you say that you are walking before the Lord, blameless?