

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 6.4.2023

PART 15 - FAMILY MATTERS

I. INTRODUCTION

1 Timothy 5:1-16

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

3 Honor widows who are truly widows. 4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. 5 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, 6 but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. 7 Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

9 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, 10 and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work. 11 But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry 12 and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith. 13 Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. 14 So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander. 15 For some have already strayed after Satan. 16 If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

II. LOVING LIKE FAMILY

- How was Timothy to address those who were causing trouble in the church and challenging his leadership?
- v1 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.
- "Do not rebuke..." - the command to Timothy is not that he shouldn't admonish, correct, or say hard things.
- Being a leader in God's church is going to require him to do those things.
- He'll have to bring correction, but his disposition, tone, and demeanor are important.
- Rebuke needs to come in the form of encouragement.
- Rebuke is typically harsh or severe disapproval or criticism.
- Encouragement is an appeal, coming alongside a person and urging them to a response or action.
- Why this tact in dealing with people in the church?
- Because Timothy is dealing with the family of God.
- And Timothy would need to adjust how he related to the family of believers by their age and gender.

OLDER MEN AND WOMEN

- This is how Timothy is to relate to everyone in the church:
- Older men, he is to treat as fathers
- Older women, he is to treat as mothers
- The senior members of the church are to be afforded the respect which is due their age.
- He is to treat them with the same affection as he would his parents.
- If he has to admonish a senior member of the church, it is not to come as a harsh rebuke but a loving exhortation.
- Even though Timothy was an apostolic delegate and functioning much like an elder in the church, there was no place for him to assume a posture of superiority or even equality and rebuke an elder.
- Timothy wasn't to appeal to his authority but to appeal to older men and women as if he were talking to his father or mother.
- We cannot forget that we are a family!

- The honoring and respect of those who are our elders is grounded in God's law.
- Leviticus 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.
- Romans 16:13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.
- That is the biblical culture we want in our church, where the older saints are honored and respected by the younger saints.
- If an older saint is to be admonished for their conduct or something they are practicing or teaching that is in error, it is to be done with an attitude of respect, just like we would show our parents and grandparents.

YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

- Timothy is to exhort and admonish younger men as brothers and younger women as sisters because they are just that in Christ.
- There is no place for condescension.
- Correction is never to tear someone down or beat them up verbally.
- It is to build people up, bring them to repentance, point them to their hope in Christ.
- Paul instructs Timothy to correct his opponents with gentleness, in the hopes that God would grant them repentance, so that they would come to the knowledge of the truth and come to their senses (2 Tim. 2:24-25).
- Brothers and sisters in Christ are your eternal siblings. That's who we are in relation to one another.
- We need to treat one another that way.
- We need to love one another that way.
- What a glorious church we will be that seeks to treat one another as fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters.
- This is why Paul writes to Timothy that he is to teach the church how to behave in the household of God—we're a family! (1 Tim 3:15)
- Romans 12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.
- We have to preserve and maintain the unity of the Spirit.
- We have to love like family. Because we are.
- It's Christ's new commandment to his disciples, "love one another" (John 15:17).
- 1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.
- I implore you all to behave towards your elders with respect, and gentleness of speech and proper deference.
- To those in your own age range, treat them with equality. If hard things need to be said, say them in love, seek to encourage and build up with any correction.

III. CARING LIKE FAMILY

- Paul now addresses a particular group and the church's responsibility towards that group.
- 3 Honor widows who are truly widows.

WIDOWS IN THE OT

- What we see in the OT was that the care of widows was very important.
- Justice for widows and care of widows was demanded by God.
- That is grounded in the fifth commandment to "Honor your father and your mother" (Ex. 20:12).
- Honor isn't just respect, it is understood to include the provision of financial support.
- God is described as a "protector of widows" (Ps. 68:5)
- He is said to "uphold the widow" (Ps. 146:9) and execute justice for the widow (Dt. 10:18).
- Exodus 22:22-24 You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. 23 If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, 24 and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.
- Every three years, farmers were commanded to store a tithe of their produce for widows (Dt. 14:28-29).
- If this is how God looked after the widow, his people were also to look after widows with the same compassion and care.
- The Jewish culture understood its duty to care and provide for widows.

WIDOWS IN THE NT

- Our Lord Jesus himself demonstrated his compassionate heart towards widows.
- He raised the only son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-15).
- He praised the generosity of the poor widow who contributed her two mites to the temple treasury (Luke 21:1-4).
- He railed against the Pharisees saying that they "devour widows' houses" while being outwardly pious and religious (Mark 12:40).

- He chastised those who under religious pretenses, would shirk their responsibility to care for their aging parents (Mark 7:9-13).
- But he truly demonstrated his heart in the care of his own mother as he commended the care of his widowed mother to his beloved disciple John (John 19:26-27).
- The early church appointed seven gifted and godly men to supervise the daily distribution to the widows so that no one group of widows would be underserved (Acts 6:1-6).
- James writes in his letter that "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27).

QUALIFYING WIDOWS FOR ASSISTANCE

- It's clear that taking care of widows is important to the Lord and therefore, to his church.
- Paul gives instructions so that the church is not in danger of over-applying its care of widows.
- There seems to be two parts to the instruction concerning the care of widows.
- One has to do with their support and the other with their service to the church.
- Widows who were to be supported by the church must qualify for that support.
- The church must distinguish between those who are in genuine need and those who are not.
- Notice what Paul writes, "honor widows who are truly widows."
- "Honor" means to give proper recognition, but it goes beyond just respect and emotional support, it also implies material care and financial support.
- Three times in this passage Paul refers to those who are "truly widows."
- And this goes to the heart of the question, "Who is responsible for the financial and material care of widows?"
- V6 She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day

Two Qualifications:

- 1. She is destitute. "Left all alone." She has no family to take care of her.
- The church's financial support should be limited to widows who are genuinely in need; they are unable to support herself and have no family to assist them.
- 2. She is dependent on God. She "has set her hope on God" and continues in prayers.
- She is godly. Her hope is in God to care for her. (e.g., Anna, Luke 2:36-38).
- It is the church's responsibility to take care of those who are truly widows.
- V7 "Command these things...so that they may be without reproach."
- This is what a family does! Look for ways you can help those who are financially destitute and who demonstrate godliness.

DISQUALIFYING WIDOWS FROM ASSISTANCE

- There were two types of widows who would not qualify for the financial support of the church.
- 1. The self-indulgent widow. The widow who lives for pleasure.
- Consequently, Paul writes, she is "dead even while she lives." (6)
- This could mean she lacks purpose, she is spiritually dead, she is separated from the life of God.
- That widow would not qualify for the church's help.
- This shows us that the church can certainly discriminate in how its resources are used to extend care to believer's who are in genuine need only.
- 2. The family-supported widow. This is the widow who has children or grandchildren who have assumed the responsibility of caring for their widowed family member.
- Now the instruction that widows be taken care of by their families is expressed positively and negatively.
- Positively, Paul writes in v4, But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.
- This is living out the fifth commandment. Children should take care of their parents.
- Thus they will be showing godliness to our own household.
- They will be repaying our parents for all of the support and care they provided for them when they were young.
- The negative side of the instruction to care for our widowed family members is shocking.
- V8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than

an unbeliever.

- Even unbelievers were expected to take care of their parents.
- For a professing Christian to not take care of their widowed family members is a denial of the faith
- Paul repeats the command for family responsibility in v16, if a believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them.

- Paul deploys four arguments for a believer's responsibility to care for their widowed mother.
- It pleases the Lord (4).
- To repay our parents (4).
- To show godliness and not deny the faith (4, 8).
- To not overwhelm the church so they may care for qualified widows (16).

- Believing sons and daughters are responsible for the care of their widowed parents even if financial assistance is not needed.
- Christian sons and daughters are obligated to provide hands on, loving care.

- It is our sacred obligation to care for the widows in our congregation.
- There is a wider application that our church needs to consider.
- There are widowers in the church, there are women and children who have been abandoned by their spouses and do not have family support.
- There are godly single moms who lack resources and need the church when their own family has failed them.

WIDOWS SERVING THE CHURCH

- Some have understood v9-15 as further qualifications and disqualifications for financial assistance from the church.
- But this section is not about support of widows but rather the service of widows to the church.
- V9 Let a widow be enrolled..."
- This was not a list of widows who needed financial assistance but rather a registry of widows capable of offering service to the church.
- There are conditions for this registration that bear a difference from the qualifications for financial support.
- Paul gives three qualifications for widows to be placed on this list.
- 1. They were to be over a specific age — sixty and above.
- 2. They had a track record of faithfulness.
- 3. They were known for their good works. Paul lists five examples of their good works, 1) she has brought up children, 2) shown hospitality, 3) washed the feet of the saints, 4) has cared for the afflicted, 5) has devoted herself to every good work.

- There is a lot of historical evidence of how widows were engaged in ministry in the early church.
- Tertullian, an early Church father of the 3rd century, wrote how registered widows gave themselves to prayer, nursed the sick, cared for the orphans, visited Christians in prison, evangelized pagan women, and taught female converts in preparation for their baptism.
- Widows who were fully supported by the church and met the qualifications for ministry, devoted themselves fully in service to the Lord and the church.

- When you see this it becomes clear why young widows would not have qualified for this registry.
- It's not that they couldn't serve in the church in some way, it's that they would not fully devote themselves to the ministry of the church.
- First, they would get restless and want to remarry as quickly as possible.
- Second, if they were fully supported, they might have too much time on their hands which would lead them to a variety of troubles and sins.
- Paul's advice was younger widows remarry, have kids, manage their households, and be godly women.

- Scripture honors widows and the church was to give an opportunity for godly widows to serve.
- Widows were given dignity and a place of ministry.

CONCLUSION

- John Stott, in his commentary on 1 Timothy, points out two lasting principles of social responsibility from these apostolic instructions:
- 1. The principle of discrimination. The church is not obligated to a general handout. The church's welfare provisions are to be limited to those in genuine need. The person's own family is the first line of support, that is their responsibility. The church's sense of social responsibility is not to encourage irresponsibility in others.
- 2. The principle of dignity. Widows, single moms, divorced women, should have the opportunity to receive according to their need, but also to serve according to their ability. Those who receive benevolence from the church should not be made to feel like they are less than in some way, but rather have their sense of dignity bolstered through the church's help.

- Timothy as a leader, was to deliver his admonishments and exhortations with proper deference to gender and age.
- In doing so, he would set an example of how a family loves.

- We are to do the same in how we relate to one another.
- In following the instructions for qualifying widows who received financial support from the church and commanding Christian families to assume their responsibilities, Timothy was setting an example of how a family cares.

- May the practicality of the instructions given us in God's Word, stir us to love and good works.
- May we excel in how we intentionally care for widows and others in genuine need.
- May the gospel of Christ provoke us to a keen awareness of the most vulnerable and needy among us, members of the family of God, who need our love and support.
- May we see the church, not as a gathering of individual people, but for what it is, a family that is to be loved and cared for.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?