

SOUND WORK IN THE CHURCH

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the **Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.**

Summary and Historical Background

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy in order to establish the principles on which the local church should function (3:15). Here Paul spoke of the church's responsibilities to three distinct groups within the local church. First, the church had a responsibility to show proper respect to the men and women, regardless of their age (5:1-2).

Second, Paul clarified the church's responsibility toward widows within the church (5:3-16). This was a major concern to the early church and resulted in the origin of the office of deacon (cf. Acts 6:1-7). Apparently, there were numerous widows who were unable to support themselves and consequently were dependent upon the church. Those truly destitute and unable to receive any other support were "widows indeed" (5:3, 5). Fiscal responsibility limited church support to this group. Paul stressed the responsibility of the children and grandchildren to care for their family's widows (5:5, 16). Then Paul restricted those widows who would be "taken into the number" (5:9-10). The "number" most likely referred to those older widows who were given permanent church support because they had no other support and were worthy of it. The younger widows were not to be enrolled on this list but were advised to remarry (5:11-15).

Third, the church's responsibility towards its elders (pastors and his assistants) was stated (5:17-25). Faithful elders were to be rewarded financially as Old Testament principles were applied to them (5:17-18). An Old Testament principle also was applied to elders who were accused of wrongdoing (5:19). Furthermore, elders who fell into sin were to be publicly rebuked as an example to all (5:20). Paul concluded by stressing the carefulness a church should take when choosing its elders (5:22-25).

I. The Church's Care for Its Members — 5:1-2

A. Elderly Men — 5:1

5:1a — "Elder" - Refers to a man of old age rather than to a pastor.

"Rebuke not" — Do not use violent or harsh words; literally means "to strike." Treatment of older people should be respectful.

"Entreat" — Admonish gently as though speaking to one's own father. Both verbs refer to all four age groups.

B. Younger Men — 5:1

5:1b — When they do something in a wrong way or commit some sin, they are to be admonished as brethren, not with contempt, but with concern as a member of the family.

C. Elderly women — 5:2

5:2a — If any of them need to be admonished, it must be done with respect as to a mother.

D. Younger Women — 5:2

5:2b — If they need correction, they should be admonished with pure actions from a loving heart even as a sister would be treated.

II. The Church's Care for Widows — 5:3-16

A. Classification of Widows — 5:3-6

1. Widow indeed — 5:3, 5

5:3 — This refers to a widow who has no children and is destitute of help.

"Honor" — Has the idea of giving financial support to her. If she has no family to take care of her, the church should show respect to her by giving her financial help.

5:5 — "Trusts in God" - She continues night and day in supplications for God to meet her needs and in prayers to have communion with Him.

2. Widow with children — 5:4

5:4 — "Nephews" - This would refer to grandchildren.

"Show piety at home" — The children and grandchildren are responsible to care for her to keep a good testimony before unbelievers.

"Requite their parents" — Children and grandchildren are to repay their parent for the care that they received from when they were young. This is God's plan for the care of parents.

3. Widow who lives in pleasure — 5:6

5:6 — "Pleasure" - She does what pleases her. She is self-indulgent and wastes her money on pleasures that last for a mere moment and then are gone. She does not seek God's will for her life because she finds no pleasure in Him. She prefers to pursue her own pleasures. A widow that lives for her pleasures is spiritually dead.

B. Charge to Be Given — 5:7-8

5:7 — The importance: the congregation was to be given this charge (or instruction) about widows so that the testimony of the church would not be harmed.

5:8 — The indictment: those who would not care for their own widows, relatives and especially immediate family, were worse than unbelievers.

"Provide" — "To think ahead" so that preparations are made for a need which could come. Unbelievers care for their own, so believers should do as much and even more (cf. Mt 5:46-47; 1 Jn 4:7-8).

C. The Enrollment of Widows — 5:9-16

This enrollment refers to those who were to receive permanent support from the church.

1. Those to be enrolled — 5:9-10

5:9 — Physical requirements: (1) she was to be at least 60 years old. By then she would have proved herself and would not be looking for a husband; (2) she was to be the wife of one man, that is, morally pure in her marriage relationship - not divorced and remarried. If her husband died, remarriage was permitted and encouraged (cf. v. 14).

5:10 — Spiritual requirements: She was to have maintained a good record of godliness having brought up children - faithful as a Christian mother; lodged strangers - hospitable to travelers; washed the saints' feet - hospitable to the believers; relieved the afflicted - kind to those in need; diligently followed every good work - thoughtful and kind in many ways (cf. Acts 9:36-39).

2. Those to be refused — 5:11-16

5:11-12 — The widows under 60 years of age were not to be placed on the roll for permanent support, because they were not ready. First, they may falter in their faith (or pledge). It appears that a widow took a pledge to be devoted to Christ alone before they were put on the

roll and given support by the church.

"Wax wanton" — They may grow restless and seek to remarry.

"Against Christ" — If they remarry, they would break their pledge to be committed to Christ alone.

"Having damnation" — They would have judgment against them and have a guilty conscience.

"Cast off their first faith" — They would reject their first faith (pledge) when they marry.

5:13 — Second, their Christian conduct might fail. If they received full support, they would be idle and could easily become gossips and busybodies.

5:14-15 — The recommendation in the light of these facts was to encourage the young widows to remarry so they could bear and raise children and, thus, re-establish a Christian home. In this way, the devil would have no occasion to speak against their testimony. They had learned through their past failures. Some widows had been supported and then turned after Satan (probably through marrying an unsaved man).

5:16 — The rule was repeated: if any believer had a widow in their family, they were to support her. Then the church would have the necessary money to support those who had no other means of support.

III. The Church's Care for Elders (Pastors) — 5:17-25

A. The Care of Elders — 5:17-18

1. The exhortation — 5:17

5:17 — "Elders that rule well" — This refers to pastors and their assistants that do a good job of leading and teaching their congregations.

"Double honor" — It probably refers both to added respect and extra remuneration. Money is inherent in the word for "honor." This is proved by the examples given in the next verse (5:18).

"Especially they who labor" — Refers to those who give themselves totally to the work of preaching and teaching.

2. The examples — 5:18

5:18 — "The ox" - an ox which worked in threshing the wheat was not to be muzzled but be allowed to eat of the grain that it threshed (Deut 25:4). This is an appropriate use of the verse because all the regulations in Deuteronomy 25 refer to dealings with people except this one about the ox. It is very likely the Holy Spirit also had men in mind when He inspired this verse.

"The laborer" — Jesus said that the worker was worthy to receive his wages (Lk 10:7). The principle of this verse shows that elders must be respected as honored members of the church family and should be treated with loving care. It has been suggested that the elders should be given a salary at least equal to the average income of the members of the church where they are laboring.

B. The Correction of Elders — 5:19-21

1. Receiving an accusation — 5:19

5:19 — The church should not hear any accusation against an elder without two or three

witnesses (cf. Deut 19:15; Num 35:30).

2. Rebuking an elder — 5:20

5:20 — When an elder is properly accused and found guilty, he should be rebuked before the whole church. The purpose for a public rebuking is that others may fear to sin when they realize the punishment. Some limit the "others" to the pastors.

3. Refusing partiality — 5:21

5:21 — Timothy was to guard against showing partiality toward any individual. All were to be treated fairly and justly.

C. The Choice of Elders — 5:22-25

1. Be cautious — 5:22a

5:22a — "Lay hands" - Refers to ordaining an elder. Other elders identified themselves with the one being ordained by laying their hands on him. Approval of a man for leadership in the church was serious and should be done very carefully.

2. Be consistent — 5:22b-23

5:22b — If Timothy carelessly or hastily took part in an ordination of a man who later proved to be unworthy, Timothy would have identified himself with that man's sins. So Timothy was reminded to keep his own life pure by not approving men hastily for leadership in the church.

5:23 — "Use a little wine" - Paul was advising Timothy that wine could be used for medicinal purposes. There is no way of knowing whether this wine contained any alcohol or not, because the Greek word also refers to grape juice. Some research has shown that grape juice is more effective in combating some sicknesses than alcoholic wine. This command does not commend social drinking.

3. Be concerned — 5:24-25

5:24 — Some men's sins are known openly, but the sins of others are not known until an examination is made. Timothy was advised to be thorough in his investigation before he approved the ordination of anyone.

5:25 — Also, some men's good works are openly known, but others' are not known until their lives are examined. This is why it is also important that a good man who desires ordination is carefully examined ahead of time, so that his good works are well known, lest he be refused.