

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## A Study of Paul's First Letter to Timothy – Part 13

### I. Exposition of Chapter Five (continued).

A. Verse 5 – “Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.”

1. “Now she who is really a widow, and left alone...” – Again, this emphasizes that one who is “really a widow” is one who has no family who can give her help.
2. “...trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.” – In this portion, we see that part of the qualification for being “really a widow” is her spiritual life. First, she places her “trust in God”. The word “trust” means; “an attitude of looking forward to, usually, a trusting, confident hope (Lk 24:21; 1Ti 4:10); expect, look forward to something happening”<sup>1</sup> So, this describes a woman who has learned to look to God as her provider, no matter what her circumstances. Her trust in God is seen in her prayer life. Greek scholar, Kenneth Wuest, writes:

**“The word ‘supplications’ is *deēsis* (δεησις), and refers to a prayer that is the expression of one’s personal needs. ‘Prayers’ is *proseuchē* (προσευχη), ‘prayer addressed to God.’ It has an element of devotion in it.”<sup>2</sup>**

3. This also suggests, that if a widow is not living a godly life, they will receive no assistance from the church.

B. Verse 6 – “But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.”

1. “...who lives in pleasure...” – The word “pleasure” means; “to indulge oneself excessively in satisfying one’s own appetites and desires—‘to live indulgently.’”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Robert Utley writes:

**“Because of the cultural situation this may refer (1) widows turning to prostitution as a means of making a living or (2) the sexual exploitation by the false teachers (cf. 2 Tim. 3:6). This seems to be a very stern warning (cf. v. 15) and some have modified it by saying it simply means self-centered living.”<sup>4</sup>**

2. “...is dead while she lives.” – If she’s a genuine Christian, this wouldn’t mean that she’s spiritually dead in the sense of not being saved. This would mean that she’s a carnal believer (**I Corinthians 3:1-3**). Paul warns believers that to be “...carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (**Romans 8:6**). This could be referred to as “temporal death” in that it is a temporary condition of the believer in that due to walking in the flesh, he reaps results contrary to the abundant life Jesus came to bring us. **Romans 8:6, 13; Luke 15:24, 32; James 1:15; Revelation 3:1. (Also see Galatians 6:7-8)**. Warren Wiersbe writes:

**“It has been my experience in three different pastorates that godly widows are ‘spiritual powerhouses’ in the church. They are the backbone of the prayer meetings. They give themselves to visitation, and they swell the ranks of teachers in the Sunday School. It has also been my experience that, if a widow is *not* godly, she can be a great problem to the church. She will demand attention, complain about what the younger people do, and often ‘hang on the telephone’ and gossip. (Of course, it is not really ‘gossip.’ She only wants her friends to be able to ‘pray more intelligently’ about these matters!) Paul made it clear (1 Tim. 5:7) that church-helped widows must be ‘blameless—irreproachable.’”<sup>5</sup>**

C. Verses 7-8 – “And these things command, that they may be blameless. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

1. “...these things command, that they may be blameless...” – Paul commands Timothy to “command”, which means; “to transmit a message, to order”,<sup>6</sup> the believers to do that which he has mentioned, namely, honor widows (**v. 3**) and discern, and treat appropriately, those who are really widows according to the guidelines given (**4-6**). The word “blameless” means; pertaining to what cannot be criticized—‘above criticism, beyond reproach’<sup>7</sup>

**“Give these instructions to the church so that no one will be open to criticism.” – I Timothy 5:7 – NLT**

2. “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” – These are strong words from the Apostle Paul

<sup>1</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 80.

<sup>3</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 768.

<sup>4</sup> Robert James Utley, *Paul’s Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 67.

<sup>5</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 229.

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Louw and Nida, 435.

and, therefore, shows the heart of God for believers taking care of their families.

- a. "...household..." means; **"belonging to a house or family, domestic, intimate: belonging to one's household, related by blood, kindred"**<sup>8</sup>
- b. "...denied the faith..." – The word "denied" means; **verbal renounce knowledge or relationship (Mt 10:33; Lk 8:45); deny, disown, repudiate, the focus of possibly non-verbal denial**<sup>9</sup> This may be a rebuke concerning a particular situation in the Ephesians church. If a believer is not taking care of their family, when they have the ability to do so, they are not living up to the faith that they claim to adhere to. The Bible says that **"...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2:17).**
- c. **"...worse than an unbeliever."** – The idea seems to be that even the average unbeliever knows enough to take care of their family. Dr. Bob Utlely states:

**"I believe this refers to the person's witness in the community (cf. v. 7; 3:4–5), not to their salvation. Even unbelievers help their own families. However, there are other texts which use this same term 'deny' and imply a total rejection of God (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12; Titus 1:16; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 4). In context this may somehow be related to the actions or teachings of the false teachers "who fell away from the faith" (cf. 4:1)."**<sup>10</sup>

D. Verses 9-10 – **"Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work."**

1. These verses include more qualifications to be included as **"really a widow."**
  - a. **"Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number..."** – Concerning this, Warren Wiersbe writes:

**A woman of this age was not likely to get remarried in that day, though sixty is not considered that 'old' today. Perhaps the verb 'taken into the number' gives us a clue. It literally means 'to be enrolled and put on the list.' The word was used for the enrollment of soldiers. The early church had an official list of the names of qualified widows, and we get the impression that these 'enlisted' women ministered to the congregation in various ways. (Remember Dorcas and her widow friends, Acts 9:36–43?) Paul probably would have told us if they had been officially ordained as deaconesses."**<sup>11</sup>

- b. **"...the wife of one man..."** – This is the same idea that was given concerning bishops (3:2) and deacons (3:12) regarding them being **"the husband of one wife."** Most scholars seem to think that this is referring to being a **"one man woman"**, meaning, being faithful to her husband.
- c. **"...well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work."** – A. Duane Litfin gives a good summation:

**"She must be well-known for her good deeds. As illustrations of the kinds of things he had in mind, Paul cited five examples, which characterize godly women (cf. 1 Tim. 2:10). The examples span the realms of home, church, and community, and include child-raising, hospitality, washing saints' feet (humble service; cf. comments on John 13:1–15) helping people in trouble, and various other kinds of good deeds. The women on the widows' roll must be those whose reputations for godly living are well known"**<sup>12</sup>

E. Verses 11-12 – **"But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith."**

1. **"...the younger widows..."** would refer to any widows younger than sixty years old.
2. **"...when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ..."** – The word **"wanton"** means; **"to experience strong physical desires, particularly of a sexual nature"**<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 439.

<sup>9</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*.

<sup>10</sup> Robert James Utlely, *Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 68.

<sup>11</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 229.

<sup>12</sup> A. Duane Litfin, "1 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 743.

<sup>13</sup> Louw and Nida, 291.