

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's First Letter to Timothy – Part 14

I. Exposition of Chapter Five (continued).

A. Verse 13 – “And besides they learn to *be* idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.”

1. “...they learn to be idle...” – The word “idle” means; “pertaining to habitually refusing to work—‘lazy, good-for-nothing.’”¹
2. “...wandering about from house to house...gossips and busybodies...” – The idea here is if they are being supported by the church without meeting the other natural and spiritual qualifications, they will have too much time on their hands for mischief. The word “gossips” means; ‘to indulge in empty and foolish talk’); of persons, *uttering or doing silly things... babbling*,² The word “busybodies” is defined as: “pertaining to meddling in someone else’s business—(being a) busybody, meddling”³ Warren Wiersbe sums it up well, he writes:

“Paul does make it clear (1 Tim. 5:13) that younger widows, if cared for by the church, would have time on their hands and get involved in sinful activities. They would get in the habit of being idle instead of being useful. They would gad about from house to house and indulge in gossip and be busybodies. There is a definite connection between idleness and sin. Paul warned Timothy against using the ‘charity’ ministry of the church to encourage people to be idle. The church certainly ought to assist those who really need help, but it must not subsidize sin.”⁴

3. “...saying things which they ought not.” – Some scholars suggest that this is not just referring to gossip and meddling mentioned first, but it is possibly referring to false teaching. Dr. Bob Utley states:

“In the context of the pastoral letters the false teachers tricking young women (cf. 2 Tim. 3:6–7), it is possible that they were spreading the false teachings from house church to house church or from Christian homemaker to Christian homemaker (cf. Titus 1:11). This is why Paul will not let them speak publicly in the house churches (cf. 2:9–15) and will not allow them to be church helpers.”⁵

B. Verse 14 – “Therefore I desire that *the* younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” - When Paul mentioned younger widows becoming “wanton” and desiring to marry in verse 11, he was not saying that marriage overall was wrong, but he was saying that it would be wrong to make a lifelong vow to remain a widow to serve Christ and then go back on it. This, he makes clear, would be a temptation for younger widows. So instead, Paul encourages the younger widows to get married, bear children (provided they’re still child-bearing age), and manage the household. By staying occupied with these things, they would not have opportunity to fall into the sins mentioned in verse 13. Regarding giving “...no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully”, A. Duane Litfin writes:

“The ‘enemy’ (or, ‘adversary’) here may refer to the church’s adversaries who looked for every chance to tear others down (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9), or to the opposition of the devil himself (cf. 1 Tim. 5:15). Perhaps Paul did not see much difference between the two (cf. 4:1).”⁶

C. Verse 15 – “For some have already turned aside after Satan.” – From this verse we discover that Paul is addressing some things that have actually occurred in the Ephesian church. It’s clear that there had been younger widows who had been drawn away from Christ and deceived by false teaching. These false teachings probably involved sinful acts relating to sex. Gary Leggett writes:

“The instructions in verse 14 are all the more imperative when Paul reminded Timothy that ‘some are already turned aside after Satan.’ It seems some young widows were appointed in the recent past to serve the churches in practical and benevolent ministry. Because they lacked the wisdom of age and experience, they fell prey to their own sexual desires (verse 11) and gave themselves over to immoral conduct. In doing so they removed themselves from the protection of the church and entered the domain of Satan.”⁷

¹ 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.

² Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 655.

³ Louw and Nida, 767.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 230.

⁵ 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), 70.

⁶ 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.

⁷ *The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 899.

D. **Verse 16** – “If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.” – This is Paul’s final exhortation to any Christian believers who had widows in their family. It’s a reiteration of what he stated in **verses 4 and 8**. The J.B. Phillips paraphrases this verse:

“As a general rule it should be taken for granted that any Christian, man or woman, who has a widow in the family should do everything possible for her, and not allow her to become the church’s responsibility. The church will then be free to look after those widows who are alone in the world.” – I Timothy 5:16 – Phillips Translation

E. **Verses 17-25** – Paul’s Instruction concerning Elders.

1. **Verse 17** – “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”

a. **“Elders”** mean: **“a person of responsibility and authority in matters of socio-religious concerns, both in Jewish and Christian societies”**⁸ William Mounce gives another definition: **“older’ and, when used with the definite article, is a common term for older men as well as for the leaders (‘elders’) in the synagogue and the church.”**⁹

- 1) We can see the term used to describe those in the New Testament who had been officially appointed (ordained) as leaders of the local church. **Acts 14:23; 20:17-18; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1.**
- 2) It’s clear from Scripture that an **“elder”** and a **“bishop”** are exactly the same when having to do with the governing of the church. The word translated **“bishop”** is the Greek word *Episkopos* which means; **“an overseer”; “a superintendent”**.
- 3) **Acts 20:17-28** is an example of this. The elders of the church in Ephesus were stated by Paul to have been appointed by the Holy Spirit to be **“overseers” (bishops)** of the flock of God. They were also exhorted to **“shepherd” (pastor)** the flock of God. So, the elders, bishops and pastors of the church at Ephesus were one in the same! **(See also I Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5-7.)**

b. **The New Testament Function of Elders.**

- 1) An Elder is to have part in overseeing the local church. **Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4.**
- 2) An Elder is to be a ruler/leader in the local church. **I Timothy 5:17.** The Greek word means; **“to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action—‘to guide, to direct, to lead”**¹⁰.
- 3) An Elder is a shepherd who tends to and cares for the sheep. **Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2.**
- 4) An Elder is supposed to protect the sheep from wolves. **Acts 20:29.**
- 5) An Elder is a person who knows how to pray the prayer of faith. **James 5:15-16.**
- 6) An Elder is supposed to be a student of the Word of God. **II Timothy 2:15.**
- 7) An Elder must be able to teach the Word. **I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9.** Knowledgeable enough in the Word of God so that he can convince those who argue against it.

c. **“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor...”** – The word **“honor”** here means; **“compensation given for special service, with the implication that this is a way by which honor or respect may be shown—‘compensation, pay, honorarium.”**¹¹ Scholars have different ideas about the phrase **“double”** honor. Many scholars state that this means **“double pay”**¹², but Gordon Fee writes:

“But it is highly unlikely that double honor means ‘double pay’ (as GNB), implying either twice as much as others who do not teach or twice as much as the widows. Rather it means ‘twofold honor,’ the honor and respect due those in such positions as well as remuneration.”¹³

d. **“...especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”** – Of course, this refers to those elders who’s primary ministry is preaching and teaching the Word of God.

⁸ Louw and Nida, 541.

⁹ *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, William D. Mounce, Gen. ed. (Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, 2006.), 208.

¹⁰ Louw and Nida, 464.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 575.

¹² *Ibid.*, 608.

¹³ Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988)