Prayer Study #495
1ST TIMOTHY 5
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

1 Timothy 5 Amplified Bible (AMP)

Proper Relationships in the Body

5 *Do not sharply reprimand an older man, but appeal to him as [you would to] a father, to younger men as brothers,* ***2*** *to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters, in all purity [being careful to maintain appropriate relationships].*

As a leader, you must confront and hold others accountable. Any rebuke, however, should be couched in love and must seek to help the offender, not to hurt. In the Body of Christ, older people should be treated with affection and respect. Younger men and women should be looked on as brothers and sisters. Our relationships with the opposite sex must be characterized by the above qualities but also marked with purity.

Widows

3 *Honor and help those widows who are truly widowed [alone, and without support].* ***4*** *But if a widow has children or grandchildren [who are adults], see to it that these first learn to show great respect to their own family [as their*

religious duty and natural obligation], and to compensate their parents or grandparents [for their upbringing]; for this is acceptable and pleasing in the sight of God. ***5*** *Now a woman who is really a widow and has been left [entirely] alone [without adequate income] trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.* ***6*** *Whereas she who lives for pleasure and self-indulgence is spiritually dead even while she still lives.* ***7*** *Keep instructing [the people to do] these things as well, so that they may be blameless and beyond reproach.* ***8*** *If anyone fails to provide for his own, and especially for those of his own family, he has denied the faith [by disregarding its precepts] and is worse than an unbeliever [who fulfills his obligation in these matters].*

In these verses Paul gives advice specifically concerning widows. We think there were two classes of widows that Paul is mentioning here. First, there are those women whose husbands have died. Secondly, there are women whose husbands have put them out. In the Gentile world a man could have as many wives as he wanted. Christianity, however, did not allow for polygamy. When a man who had been a polygamist was converted to Christ, he was expected to choose the wife he wanted to keep and to send all the others away.

Jewish law had always been very clear about widows. Widows were to be provided for by the synagogue, if they had need. At the time of marriage the Jews required that a man put up provision for his wife in case he died.

The Church continued this benevolence towards widows. In fact, the first office holders of the new Christian religion were deacons, and their main function was to care for the widows.

The Church, however, was not responsible for widows or older people who had children who were able to support them. Many of these early churches had been under Greek law, which made sons and daughters legally bound to support their parents. If they did not, they lost certain civil rights.

The question of widows was not one sided. The widow was expected to live a life of prayer and not of pleasure and self-indulgence.

Paul ends this section by exhorting the head of the family to provide for his own family. He says that the husband who does not do this is worse than an unbeliever.

More on Widows

9 *A widow is to be put on the list [to receive regular assistance] only if she is over sixty years of age, [having been] the wife of one man,* ***10*** *and has a reputation for good deeds; [she is eligible] if she has brought up children,*

if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the feet of the saints (God's people), if she has assisted the distressed, and has devoted herself to doing good in every way.

Support for widows was very important to the early Church. The Church set up certain protocols for dealing with widows. The widows must be at least 60 years old. The widow must have been married to only one man and have a reputation for doing good deeds. She must be the mother of children.

In those days children were often seen as a misfortunate accident. When a child was born, he was brought and placed at the feet of the father. If the father wanted the child, he would stoop down and pick him or her up. If he did not want the child (and many did not), the father refuse to pick up the baby and walked off. The child was literally thrown out. Sometimes these abandoned babies would be picked up and raised by evil people. If the baby was a female, these guardians would raise the child up to be prostitutes for financial gain for the guardian. If the baby was male, the guardian would raise him up as a slave or as a gladiator.

The Christian Church saw this as an opportunity to rescue these children before unscrupulous people got involved. They would

raise these children in a Christian home. They urged their widows to give a home to these abandoned children.

A widow was expected to show hospitality to strangers. As we have already learned, the Inns of those days were flea infested, overcrowded and places of immorality. The lack of good places to stay allowed Christians to take people from out of town into their homes and be a good witness to them.

A widow was to wash the feet of Christian people. To wash a person's feet was the job of a slave. Paul is saying here that widows must be willing to accept the humblest of tasks in order to serve Christ. Barclay comments on this: "The Church needs its leaders who will be prominent in its work, but no less it needs those who are prepared to do the tasks which receive no prominence and little thanks."

A widow was expected to assist the distressed and to go about doing good wherever and whenever she could. This was a day of widespread persecution of Christians. Therefore, it was dangerous to help suffering believers. Paul is showing us here that we must stand by those being persecuted, thus identifying with them and even opening ourselves up to persecution.

The Church heavily relied on the Apostle for their direction and doctrine. The Apostolic

Constitution was one of the early documents that the Church followed. This document has much to say about widows:

A. They must be careful what they say, never sharing what is confided to them in secret, and they must always be ready to communicate the Gospel to others.
B. They must not be church hoppers, and they must not be constantly popping in and out of the houses of the neighbors.
C. They may accept the charity of the Church, but they should be grateful for what is given and never greedy.
D. They must not be lazy or become dependent on others but must do all they can to help themselves.
E. They must not be envious or jealous.

Younger Widows

11 *But refuse [to enroll the] younger widows, for when they feel their natural desires in disregard of Christ, they wish to marry again,* ***12*** *and so they incur condemnation for having set aside their previous pledge.* ***13*** *Now at the same time, they also learn to be idle as they go from house to house; and not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies [meddlers in things that do not concern them], talking about things they should not mention.* ***14*** *So I want younger widows to get married, have children,*

manage their households, and not give opponents of the faith any occasion for slander. ***15*** *Some [widows] have already turned away [from the faith] to follow Satan.* ***16*** *If any believing woman has [dependent] widows [in her household], she must assist them [according to her ability]; and the church must not be burdened [with them], so that it may assist those who are truly widows [those who are all alone and are dependent].*

This passage concerns younger widows who had made a vow during a time when they were full of sorrow over the death of a husband. Their vow was that they would not re-marry but remain a widow for the rest of their lives in order to devote herself and her life to Christ. The problem came up, however, when, after overcoming their grief, they wanted to renounce their vow so that they could marry again. The early Church saw this as breaking a vow to Christ and frowned on this.

Women in those times had almost no trade or profession open to them. One of the only acceptable jobs to make money was prostitution. Of course this was not accepted by the Church so the widow either had only two options: to remarry or to dedicate her life completely to the service of the Church, which was then obligated to provide for her.

Paul worried that those women who could

find no respectable work would become idle and lazy, gossipers and busybodies, often giving Christianity a bad name in public.

The Church was and is concerned with how its members, male or female, act in public. When the believers do not follow the guidelines of the Word, as these widows were not following it, they allowed the world to give a bad name to the Church. There is a famous quote that describes how the actions of the Body of Christ in not following the Word gives a bad taste in the mouth of non-believers:

Concerning Elders

17 *The elders who perform their leadership duties well are to be considered worthy of double honor (financial support), especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching [the word of God concerning eternal salvation through Christ].* ***18*** *For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain [to keep it from eating]," and, "The worker is worthy of his wages [he deserves fair compensation]."* ***19*** *Do not accept an accusation against an elder unless it is based on [the testimony of at least] two or three witnesses.* ***20*** *As for those [elders] who continue in sin, reprimand them in the presence of all [the congregation], so that the rest will be warned.* ***21*** *I solemnly charge you in*

the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels that you guard and keep these rules without bias, doing nothing out of favoritism. ***22*** *Do not hurry to lay hands on anyone [ordaining and approving someone for ministry or an office in the church, or in reinstating expelled offenders], and thereby share in the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.*

Paul gives practical advice regulating the Church:

a. Elders are to be honored and properly paid. (Even Jesus said that the laborer was worthy of his hire-Luke 10:7). The elders worthy of this honor are those who preach and teach the Word of God.
b. The Bible emphasizes that no one should be condemned on the basis of a single witness. There should be at least two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15) before an accusation can be brought to a trial. In latter times the Church insisted that these two or three witnesses must be Christian believers. This was to prevent malicious non-Christians from making up a false charge against to Christian believer just to put down the Church.
c. Those who persist in sin, even after warnings, are to be publically rebuked. The Church must never give the

impression that it is condoning sin.

d. Timothy is specifically warned not to lay hands on someone too quickly. I believe there are three applications to this. First, the Church must not be too quick to ordain someone to any office in the Church until they have been tested and tried. Secondly, the early Church had a custom of laying hands on sinners who had repented and returned to church. Paul is telling Timothy not to be too quick in receiving someone back who had brought disgrace to the Church. Timothy needed to give the person time to show he had genuinely repented and was determined to live according to Biblical principles.

23 *No longer continue drinking [only] water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.*

This is a very controversial verse. Many point out that the water in those days was often contaminated and the wine had a very small alcohol content. Some, such as David Wilkerson, believed that wine in the New Testament times was non-alcoholic but what we would call grape juice. At any rate, Paul is giving Timothy some advice about his health, telling him to drink a little wine for his stomach

sake. The Lord wants us health and well so that we can do the work of the ministry.

This verse does not give anyone a license to drink to excess but merely approves using wine in a medicinal way. E.F. Brown states his opinion on this issue: "It shows that while total abstinence may be recommended as a wise counsel, it is never to be enforced as a religious obligation." Nevertheless, I personally err on the side of abstinence.

24 *The sins of some people are conspicuous, leading the way for them into judgment [so that they are clearly not qualified for ministry]; but the sins of others appear later [for they are hidden and follow behind them].* ***25*** *Likewise, good deeds are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be hidden [indefinitely].*

There are sinners whose sins are obvious and clearly causing problems in their lifes and relationships. Then there are those who have a façade of blameless virtue but have secret sin. We must constantly remind ourselves that God sees and knows everything and one day will expose those who refuse to repent.