

Week of October 15 - 21

Caring for Widows and Elders, i.e., Pastors (Timothy 5)

Widows

Paul tells Timothy the church should take care of women whose husbands have died if they don't have anyone else to help them. But if they have children or grandchildren, these are the ones who should take responsibility, since kindness should begin at home, supporting needy parents. This pleases God very much. The church should care for widows who are poor and alone if they're looking to God for his help and spending time in prayer, but not if they're spending time running around gossiping, seeking only pleasure, and thus, ruining their souls.

But anyone who won't care for his relatives when they need help, especially those living in his own family, has no right to say he's a Christian. He is worse than the heathen.

A widow who wants to become one of the special church workers should be at least sixty years old and have been married only once. She must be well thought of by everyone because of the good she has done. Did she bring up her children well? Has she been kind to strangers and other Christians? Has she helped those who are sick and hurt? Is she always ready to show kindness?

Younger widows shouldn't become members of this special group because they are likely to disregard their vow to Christ and marry again. They will stand condemned because they broke their first promise. Besides, they are likely to be lazy and spend their time gossiping around from house-to-house and getting into other people's businesses. I think these widows should marry again and have children and take care of their own homes. Then no one will be able to say anything against them. I'm afraid some of them have already turned away from the church and been led astray by Satan.

Pastors (and Elders)

Pastors and elders who do their work well should be paid well and highly appreciated, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching. The Scriptures say, "Never tie up the mouth of an ox when it is treading out the grain. Let him eat as he goes along!" Please don't listen to complaints against the pastor unless there are two or more witnesses to accuse him. If he has sinned, he should be rebuked in front of the whole church so no one else will follow his example. I command you in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and of the holy angels to do this whether the pastor is a special friend or not. All must be treated the same. Never be in a hurry about choosing a pastor. You may overlook his sins, and it will look as if you approve of them. Be sure that you stay away from all sin. By the way, this doesn't mean you should completely give up drinking wine since you ought to take a little sometimes as medicine for your stomach because you are sick so often.

Remember that some men, even pastors, lead sinful lives. Sometimes you can do something about it, but sometimes only the judgment day will reveal the truth. Yet, everyone knows how much good some pastors do even though their good deeds aren't known until long afterward.

Warning against False Teachers and Paul's Final Charge (Timothy 6)

Paul asks, "Do you want to be truly rich? You are if you're happy and good. We didn't bring any money with us when we came into the world, and we can't carry a single penny out when we die. We should be well satisfied without money if we have enough food and clothing. But people

who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil-minded. The love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love for money, bringing sorrow to their lives.

"Timothy, run from all these evil things and work at what's right and good, learning to trust him and love others and to be patient and gentle. Fight on for God. Hold tightly to the eternal life God has given you.

" I command you to fulfill all God has told you to do so no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ returns. Christ will be revealed from Heaven by the blessed and only Almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone can never die, Who lives in light so terrible that no human being can approach him. No man has ever seen him nor ever will.

"Tell those who are rich not to be proud and not to trust in their money, but their pride and trust should be in God who always richly gives us all we need. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. It is the only safe investment for eternity!

"Timothy, don't fail to do these things God entrusted to you. Keep out of foolish arguments with those who boast about their "knowledge" and prove their lack of it. Some of these people have missed the most important thing in life. They don't know God. May God's mercy be upon you.

1 Peter Overview

The first of three letters written by Peter is addressed to several Rome areas where Peter had previously preached during his journeys. Peter said that the people in these areas were chosen by God to hear the Word and be saved. He was an ignorant fisherman who trained three years under Jesus. His letters deal with doctrine and weighty subjects such as election, foreknowledge, sanctification, obedience, the blood of Christ, the Trinity, God's grace, salvation, revelation, glory, faith, and hope. He was no ignorant fisherman.

Being Faithful through Suffering (1 Peter 1)

According to his foreknowledge, Peter says God chose men long ago through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has been at work in men, cleansing them with the blood of Jesus Christ.

We live in the hope of eternal life because Christ rose from the dead. God reserved the gift of eternal life for His children. And God will make sure you get there safely to receive it because you are trusting him.

These trials you are facing are only to test your faith. It's being tested like fire tests gold and purifies it, and your faith is far more precious to God than gold. If your faith remains strong after being tried in fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory, and honor on the day of his return.

"You love him even though you have never seen him, and you trust him, and now you are happy with the joy that comes from Heaven. Your reward for trusting him will be your salvation.

"The prophets didn't fully understand it. They wrote about it and had many questions as to what it meant. They wondered what the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about telling them to

write down events which, since then, have happened to Christ, that is, His suffering and glory. They wondered when and to Whom this would happen. They were told these things wouldn't occur during their lifetime, but much later, during your time. Now, this Good News has been announced to us, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit Who spoke to them, and, strangely, even the angels in Heaven would like to know more about it.

"Obey God because you are his children. Be holy in everything you do, just as the Lord is holy. He said, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'

"Your heavenly Father to Whom you pray has no favorites but will judge you with perfect justice. Act in reverent fear of Him until you get to Heaven. God paid a ransom to save you from the impossible road to Heaven your fathers tried to take. The ransom He paid was not gold or silver, but with the lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God chosen for this purpose long before the world began, but only recently brought into view.

"Your trust can be in God who raised Christ from the dead and gave Him glory. Your faith and hope can rest in him alone. You can have love for everyone because your souls have been cleansed from selfishness and hatred when you trusted Christ to save you. You have a new life which wasn't passed to you from your parents. This new one will last forever since it comes from Christ. Our natural lives will fade like grass does when it becomes dry, like a flower that droops, but the Word of the Lord will last forever. His message is the Good News that was preached to you.

The Living Stone and a Chosen People (1 Peter 2)

Peter tells the Christians to rid yourselves of malice and deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborns, crave pure spiritual milk so you can grow up in your salvation. As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once, you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

I urge you to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. Submit yourself to every authority instituted among men to punish those who do wrong and commend those who do right. It is God's will that you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men by doing good. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil. Live as servants of God and show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

It is commendable if a man bears up under pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? To this, you were called because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

"He did not sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he didn't retaliate. When he suffered, he made no threats. He bore our sins in his body on the

tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Husbands and Wives (1 Peter 3)

Even Peter tells wives to be submissive to their husbands, so if any of the husbands don't believe the Word, they may be won over without words by their wives' behavior when they see your purity and reverence. Your beauty should not come from outward adornments, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight, for this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Speaking to husbands, Peter says be considerate as you live with your wives, treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gift of life so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

"Finally," Peter says, "All are to live in harmony with each other, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Don't repay evil with evil or insult with insult but with blessing,

"Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear what they fear.' Set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to answer everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. Do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through Whom He went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it, only eight people were saved through water. This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into Heaven and is at God's right hand, with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him.