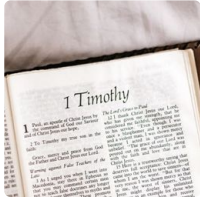


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1 Timothy 4:5 - 5:18



1 Timothy - Steve Gregg

In this intriguing discussion of 1 Timothy 4:5-5:18, Steve Gregg offers insights on various matters including bodily exercise, asceticism, and supporting widows. He draws from the text to discuss different heresies that arise when one places too much emphasis on either extreme, and highlights the importance of recognizing the labor of church leaders and supporting those in need within the community. Throughout his talk, Gregg offers practical advice and a fresh perspective on the complex issues presented in the text.

Transcript

Let's find obnoxious and offensive, but no one can say that it's ungodly for people to eat such things. No one can say it's perverted to do so, because every speech of God is made for that purpose. And he says, nothing is to be refused if it's received with thanksgiving.

And verse 5 says, for it is sanctified, that is set apart, made holy, like the holy bread given to the priests. All food becomes holy by the word of God in prayer. Now, by the word of God here, I think he means by, not by sitting at opening your Bible and reading a passage from the Bible at the dinner table, but I think it means by the declaration of God.

And that declaration is found in the lips of Jesus. In Mark chapter 7, where he said, it is not what goes into a man's mouth that makes him unclean, but what comes out of a man's mouth makes him unclean. And Mark says, when he comments, or when he quotes that, Mark makes his own comment on it, and he says, thus Jesus declared all foods clean.

Um, let's see, that is verse 19, Mark 7, 19. Jesus makes a statement that nothing that goes in your mouth is going to define you. And in verse 19, at the end it says, thus purifying all foods.

They say, thus Jesus, in his statement, made all foods clean or pure. And so Paul says, it's declared by God, the word of God, speaking of Christ himself, has sanctified all foods for eating. And of course by prayer, you ought to pray over your food, especially in those

days, when of course animal food could be very unsanitary or whatever, and even today it's not a bad idea.

Okay, so, while the Bible does not forbid people to be vegetarians if they choose to for health reasons or whatever, it is certainly a doctrine of demons to teach that one is more godly if he's a vegetarian. Okay, let's see, you were a Christian, right? Yeah. Um, whenever there's a hint in that general area, I'm sometimes not sure what you mean.

Would that include human flesh? No. Why not? I was just, I mean, just curious. I mean, it's not that you killed somebody to eat them.

I mean, being on the mission field or something like that, I mean, there's a possibility you might have. Well, let me say this. The only time that I could even think of being remotely legitimate to eat human flesh is if you're in one of those rare occasions that you sometimes read about, where people are in an airplane crash up in the snow in some remote area, and everyone's dead but you, and you're starving to death, and people have been known to eat the bodies of people, you know, they're not responsible for their death, and they're just nourishing to eat it.

I can't imagine. Most would agree that that's barbaric, that that's not Christian and so forth. But I must say, I don't know of any actual scripture that forbids the eating of human flesh.

It seems to go without saying. Because if eating of human flesh is permitted, it almost implies it's permitted on the same basis as eating animal flesh is, and you raise animals to kill them and eat them. And, you know, you don't, you weren't even allowed to eat an animal that you just found dead.

You know, under the law, you were supposed to kill it yourself and drain out the blood and make sure it was all treated right. And therefore, to eat an animal required that you kill it yourself first, and obviously you wouldn't be allowed to kill a person to eat it. So, I don't know.

I personally, I don't think that a person who, in a survival situation, eats the flesh of somebody that was killed in the accident to survive, I don't think they've done any kind of unforgivable sin. I don't think that, you know, we can say, well, they can't be a Christian if they did that. That certainly isn't named in the Bible as a special class of sins or anything.

They're terrible. But at the same time, it just, it goes against our sensitivities in such a way that I couldn't do it in clean conscience. And whatever you can't do in clean conscience is a sin for you.

I suppose some people might be able to do it, and we would not really be able to condemn them for it on the basis of some passive description. Okay. The practical issues

get raised in this class.

Okay. 1 Timothy 4.6. I think it's really good. You've tried it? No, that's why.

Oh. He says it's really good. I don't know.

Okay. I hear him say that. 1 Timothy 4.6. If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of good doctrine, which you have carefully followed.

There's really not too much that needs to be commented on, as long as you look carefully at each phrase there. It's got a wealth of valuable things in it. It suggests, of course, that the good doctrine and the words of the Christian faith are nourishment to you spiritually, but that's a concept we're familiar with from a number of places in the Bible, the likening of the word God to that which nourishes us spiritually.

He says if you instruct the brethren, you'll be a good minister. That's obviously what a minister ought to do, a good servant. And then he says in verse 7, But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself rather to godliness.

For bodily exercise profits a little. But godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that is now, and that which is to come. Now, what are old wives' fables? Of course, we don't know exactly.

We know from other passages in the pastoralism that there is some kind of heresy, some particular heresy that is concerning Paul. We know that there are men teaching this heresy, and there is some indication there may be some women teaching it as well. This might be one of the indicators, that he would identify these wrong teachings as originating with old wives, old biddies, whose children are grown and gone, and they've got nothing else to do but sit around and gossip and make up doctrines.

And that might be one of the main reasons why Paul is so adamant not to let the women teach. But it's not the only reason. Again, we might be using the term old wives' fables in a way like we talk about old wives' tales, which doesn't really mean that they're literally tales that were made up by old wives, although I imagine that expression literally did mean that when it was first formulated.

Nowadays, we just mean it as an unreliable remedy for something. But in all likelihood, Paul didn't have the same idiomatic expression in his language, and he probably meant it quite literally, that it was old wives, old women, that were promoting some of the untrustworthy material that was available, and he should reject that material. And it must be related somehow to bodily exercise, because bodily exercise profits a little.

But he doesn't say that in order to affirm the value of bodily exercise, but rather to make a contrast between that which profits a lot. Bodily exercise, no one can deny that bodily

exercise profits in some ways, but not in eternal ways. Now, you weightlifters and so forth probably think, yeah, there's a scripture for you, it's good to lift weights.

That's probably not what he means by bodily exercise. He's probably not talking about athletic-type exercise for the sake of health, fitness, wellness, or athletic competition. He's probably talking, because after all, I don't know of any religion in ancient times or modern times that has made that a religious matter.

You know what I mean? I mean, he's obviously saying, reject these wrong religious notions. And whatever they are, they have something to do with promoting the value of bodily exercise. I don't know of any religion, ancient or modern, that has said that bodily exercise, of the sort that we think of it, you know, pumping iron and stuff, you know, swimming laps, running laps, that that is somehow, you know, cross-continuous.

Although I did once see a magazine published by a spa, which was owned and operated by Christians, and all the articles were written by Christian Musclemen and bodybuilders, and it was sort of supposed to be a ministry to, you know, Christian bodybuilders. And I only saw one issue, and I guess they didn't think I qualified for the mailing list. Anyway, the interesting thing was that all the articles were written by guys who were weightlifters, and, you know, in great shape, had pictures of them, you know, in very modest poses.

And the thing that offended me most about it was, a couple of the articles talked about, they justified building their bodies big because their body was the temple of the Holy Spirit. And they said, you know, my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and I want the Holy Spirit to have a lot of room to move. You know, I mean, I thought, boy, I mean, if their lifestyle were not carnal, at least their thinking is.

Because to say that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, obviously is not trying to speak of some spatial relationship. I mean, which part? Is it in the stomach? Is it in the lung? You know, where does he live in there? You know, I mean, what organ does he reside in? Obviously, that's not what Paul means. Paul means that God inhabits you in your soul.

You know, your body, your soul inhabits your body, and as your soul and spirit are joined with God's spirit, he is, you know, present with you, in you, whatever language you want to use. He's not, certainly the Holy Spirit is not more at ease in a body that is broader than in a body that's narrow. You know, and that was actually suggested seriously by one of these articles.

Another article said, he says, I was in church the other day, and I was trying not to be judgmental, but he says, I couldn't help noticing that the girl standing in front of me while we were singing hymns had wide hips, and that she was overweight by a good 20 pounds. I had to really struggle with making a judgment of her, thinking, how can she

worship the same God I do, and have those wide hips like that? I thought about writing to him, saying, maybe she doesn't worship the same God you do. Anyway, I must confess that if anyone ever taught that bodily exercise is a spiritual thing, in the sense that this kind of bodily exercise is a spiritual thing, it was them.

But I don't know that anyone else, or any serious or major group has ever taught that. So when Paul says, in a way, just almost belittle the value of bodily exercise in contrast to spiritual things, he's probably talking about the discipline of the body in ascetic practices. He has earlier talked about abstaining from marriage, abstaining from food, and so forth.

It suggests a certain kind of ascetic disposition, that to discipline your body by fasting frequently, sleeping on a hard bed, abstaining from certain foods, and just being hard on your body, that's probably the bodily discipline and bodily exercise he really has in mind. More like religious asceticism rather than bodybuilding or something like that. He says, I have prophets a little.

That's interesting. He admits that there is some value in it, whereas in Colossians chapter 2, when he talks about the same kinds of things, he doesn't give them much value. In fact, he says they have no value when it comes to suppressing the simple nature.

But they have some value temporarily. They do keep you out of trouble. You know, you're not going to be a glutton if you have a strict diet.

You're not going to get addicted to pleasure if you're living a life restrained from that. If your disciplines have to rise early, that's got some value. Not eternal value.

Those are not the things that matter to God. God's not going to judge you eternally and reward you eternally on how early you got up in the morning, how much you ate, or those kinds of things. Yes? Can you explain how verse 7 and 8 are related? Do you think that these older women were teaching these kinds of things? I think so.

I think it's probable that old women were among those. I don't think they were the only ones. I think men may have been there too.

Actually, you know, there may have been two heresies. One might have been Jewish legalism, which he says men were promoting. There were men of the circumcision.

You hardly speak of a Jewish woman as of the circumcision. Those men who wanted to be teachers of the law and so forth, and he talks about Jewish fables elsewhere. Here we read of old wives' fables.

It might be wrong for us to do what scholars often do, which is try to homogenize all these statements as if there's one heresy that takes them all into consideration. There

may have been some Judaizers who were represented mainly by men, that Paul was speaking against on the one hand. And on the other hand, some women who were somewhat more Gnostic in their orientation, more ascetic.

And that's possible too. I mean, certainly there's no reason to say that one city could only have one heresy. There could be several, and Paul is aware of them all.

So it's a good possibility that this asceticism idea, that ascetic self-discipline, was somehow going to promote godliness in you. Whereas Paul said earlier in chapter 3, verse 16, godliness is not from asceticism, but from God manifesting himself in your flesh supernaturally. But the men may have been teaching Judaism, and so that's a good possibility.

I don't know whether that's the case. But he says godliness, unlike the bodily disciplines of asceticism, is profitable for all things. Not just temporarily, it's not just a little bit profitable.

It's entirely, in all respects, profitable to be godly. Having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Now the suggestion is that bodily exercise might profit you in this life.

It might keep you out of trouble temporarily, if you have strict rules for your life. It may, and that's okay, in a sense, as long as you don't impose them on others. It may keep you healthier.

I mean, there are some little temporal, in-this-life kind of benefits that may come from it. But godliness is better because it does the same for you in this life, and it does something for you forever, too. In other words, the bodily discipline is not really advocated here.

He's saying, of the two, you've got a choice. You can have that that profits you only in this life, or that which profits you in this life and the next. Real godliness, which is not based on strict ascetic disciplines in your life.

That is not to say that Christians should not discipline themselves. The Apostle Paul himself said in 1 Corinthians 9 that he had to profit himself and keep his body under. That is, he had to make sure his flesh did not rule him.

But that's different from putting yourself under very strict self-denial in unusual ways. Okay, verse 9. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe.

Now, I won't focus too much on who is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe, although I brought that up before us seemingly to go against the Calvinistic

doctrine of limited atonement that suggests that God is potentially willing to save everybody, and therefore the atonement must be available to all. But only those who believe really experience his salvation. Now, the Calvinist has an answer for this.

The Calvinist says the Savior of all men doesn't mean Savior of their souls so much. It's just that he helps everybody. He sends his rain on the just and the unjust, and causes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

And in one respect or another, God has done good things for all men, but especially he's done good things for us who believe. So the Calvinist has a way of getting around this. However, it seems to me unlikely that he means Savior in two different senses in the same verse.

That is, in one sense, he's in natural ways, he's a Savior of everybody, but in spiritual ways, of us. At any rate, Paul stresses that we suffer reproach because we trust in the living God, and it is that trust in God, not personal self-discipline, that we look to as the means of godliness. Godliness does not come through bodily exercise or bodily discipline.

It comes through trusting in God and nothing more. Paul stresses that in all his epistles. Verse 11, These things command and teach, Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Now, by the way, let no one despise your youth may seem to be in conflict with his instruction to Timothy not to appoint a novice to the office of elder. But we should understand that Timothy's youth is in the flesh merely. He's a young man.

He's not really a young Christian comparatively. He's probably been an associate of Paul for 15 years or more. He's a rather mature Christian, relatively speaking.

I mean, quite mature, and more than most. He got saved very early in Paul's ministry, and therefore there were very few people in the Western world who had been saved more, I mean, most people had been saved more recently than Timothy had. And therefore he was very much an elder in his own right, though he was not an old man.

When I said it's good for elders to be old men because their children are raised, Timothy didn't have children to raise. He was apparently like Paul, unmarried, and therefore old age wouldn't add to his qualifications in that respect. He was old in the Lord, and therefore the fact that he was physically not very old, probably 30 or in his early 30s, should not be used to disparage his authority.

After all, he was representative of the apostle himself. But he was to demonstrate his authority, not by pushing us or commanding people to obey him, but simply by being an example. That is the way of a shepherd, is to go ahead of the sheep and to let the sheep see where you're going to follow.

Be an example to them of the right place to be and the right way to go. And even a young person can do that by being a good example in those areas he mentions. You know, faith, conduct, spirituality, love, purity.

Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. Now, I like to read. And I don't know if Paul is just, you know, setting Timothy free to spend a lot of time reading on his own.

It seems more likely, though, that reading here means public reading of the scriptures. The reason I say so is because the other things have to do with his ministry to the church. Doctrine and exhortation means teaching and exhortation.

It seems to me that Timothy was told to basically fill the pulpit with these three activities. Reading the scriptures, exhorting the people, and teaching. Now, reading the scriptures would be particularly important in a day when people didn't have their own Bibles.

People couldn't go home and read the scriptures on their own. There weren't Bibles available. But Timothy, and churches in general, probably had some copies of Old Testament scriptures.

And probably some of the epistles of Paul were to be read in this way, too. But instead of expecting people to read their Bibles at home, which they could not do, they would come to church and it would be read to them. Which is still not a bad idea, even though all Christians have Bibles at home now in America, most of them don't read them.

So it wouldn't be a waste of time if a pastor got up on a Sunday morning and said, we're just going to read through 1 Peter today, without comment. Because I know you people haven't read it. But unfortunately, that is the case, because actually, the public reading of the scriptures wouldn't be anywhere near as necessary if Christians would read their Bibles at home.

But in Paul's day, there was no option. People couldn't do that. So public reading of the scriptures is almost certainly what's meant here, an expectation of teaching.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of my hands, or the hands of the predator. In 2 Timothy, he says, my hands, here, when he talks again about his gift. Meditate on these things, give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, continue in them, for in doing so you will save yourself and those who hear you. You'll stay, in other words, out of harm's way, if you keep yourself busy about the things God's given you to do. You'll avoid drifting off like others have from the faith.

You'll, in a sense, save yourself. Now, meditate on these things may refer to all the things Paul can say, or maybe to the prophecy mentioned earlier. Because it's said in chapter 1, verse 18, that Timothy should be mindful of the prophecies previously made over him, concerning him, that by them he may wage a good warfare.

And so, perhaps by meditating on the prophecies that have been given to him, it would make him stronger in his faith and his resolve. We do not know what the gift was. When he says, do not neglect the gift that is in you, it may simply mean the gift of being an apostolic assistant.

It may mean some specific gift, like teaching or prophesying or something like that, although he's never exhorted to prophesy, so it probably isn't prophesying. He is exhorted to teach and preach, it may be related to that, or it might be something else. We don't know what gift is in him, but at the time he was ordained and sent out and prophesied over, apparently, a gift was bestowed upon him, and Timothy needed to be reminded not to neglect it.

Over in 2 Timothy, chapter 1, he again has to be told not to neglect it. Apparently, he was chronically neglectful of his gift, because he says in 2 Timothy 1, 6, Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. Apparently, when the Presbyterian enlister laid hands on Timothy, so did Paul.

So the Presbyterian and Paul's hands were laid upon him, and he received some gift at that time, which he is exhorted to not neglect and to stir up. Well, we're going to have to quit there. We may have more to say about 1 Timothy.

1 Timothy, chapter 5. Now, Paul gets very practical here, and I should say through the rest of 1 Timothy. He talks about money, essentially. Not right away, but before we get very far into chapter 5, by the time we get to chapter 3, I mean verse 3 of chapter 5, we are talking about money.

Now, that's not the only thing he's talking about. There are other issues involved, but he gives specifics as to financial priorities and financial attitudes, which Timothy, as a leader in the church, needs to help give some direction about. Money is a concern, even for people who are spiritually minded.

I don't say it's a thing to worry about, but it is something that we must be concerned to be good stewards of. Many people feel that money is something very dirty and very anti-spiritual, but actually money is a very spiritual thing. Money is something that is generated by labor.

Labor occupies time, and your life consists of time, basically. So, the time you spend in labor, producing money, is God's time. You are God's person.

Your time is His time. Therefore, whatever is produced through the use of your time is

God's also. And money is really a symbolic representation of a good portion of your time.

Probably, once you're out in the working world and have a full-time job, it'll be approximately a third of the hours of your life will be spent in doing things which may have no greater spiritual benefit than to produce money. Now, if you're fortunate enough to be in a job that is directly ministry-related, or even if it's what would seem like a totally secular vocation, but you have opportunity to witness, or certainly to be a witness in that situation, there are other spiritual compensations for being there. But the main reason you go to a job, as a Christian or as a non-Christian, is basically to support yourself and to generate income.

And therefore, when you receive a paycheck, that paycheck represents about a third of your life, about a half of your waking hours. And therefore, if your life is a spiritual thing, if your time and body belong to God, then that money, which is produced by God's body and God's time, is God's money. And therefore, it's something sacred and consecrated to God as much as anything else.

Now, the Church, generally speaking, is supported by the gifts of Christians who have worked and earned money. And therefore, the Church has the responsibility, once the monies have come in, to use that money in a way that is truly the way God would have it used. It is not the Church's money, it is God's money.

Just like those who have given it, have given it not because it's theirs, but because it's God's. And the leaders of the Church, obviously, in the nature of this case, are in the position to decide how monies are dispersed once they have come into the cotton pot. Now, we know that in the early days of the Church, in Acts chapter 2, people would sell their land and their goods, and they'd bring the money to the apostles.

It was not so that the apostles could live handsomely, but so that the apostles could distribute the money according to the priorities that God would have for the use of it. In that case, in Acts chapter 2 and also in Acts chapter 4, it would appear that virtually all the monies that were given went to the relief of the poor. It is probable, and it is not stated to be so, but it is almost certain, that some of the monies went to the support of the apostles, the preachers.

Because they didn't even have time to administrate after a while, because they were so busy preaching, it seems clear they didn't have time to go and fish for a living and preach. It seems clear that, as Paul said later in 1 Corinthians 9, those that preached the gospel should have their living from the gospel, and it seems likely that the apostles did receive their support out of the funds that were given to the Church, but probably because they too were poor. And the funds were given to the poor.

Now, people might be poor for a number of reasons. One is that they're working at a job that just doesn't generate enough money to support their needs. Another might be that

they're incapable of working, either because they're disabled, unskilled, sickly, or busy about the Lord's business.

The apostles would be in the final category. They simply could not go out and hold a job, because they were so busy doing the things that God had told them to do, that it precluded their going out and doing anything that would pay. And therefore, they, like any other people who were poor, were poor and should be supported by the Church.

Now, it's important to understand this. I don't think we ever find anywhere in the Bible that suggests that Christian leaders should be salaried. We do find in this very chapter, in 1 Timothy 5, that church leaders should be supported.

But supported in salary is not the same thing. I don't think it was a positive development. When becoming the pastor of a church became a paid and salaried position, I don't say that to blast any pastor who's receiving a salary.

I'm just saying that that development, which I don't believe existed in the early church, was not one that had positive consequences. Because as soon as the role of pastor began to be viewed as a paying position, then people at least had the opportunity to begin thinking of pastoring as a career, like any other career, which should be salaried similarly to the salaries of people who had similar responsibility in the world. I mean, a person who runs a corporation tends to have a higher salary than the persons who are under him in the corporation.

And it is often thought that since a pastor, at least under the present system of things usually, runs a church, that he should have a salary, if the church can afford it, he should have a salary comparable to the persons in an analogous role in the world, if the church can support it. Now, it is also a stark reality that most churches deal with, unless they're mega-churches, that most churches don't have the kind of money to pay their pastors what a CEO of a corporation would be paid. But then small corporations, you know, CEOs have to take smaller salaries, too.

The point is, many people assume that if the church has the money, they should pay the pastor something like what the leader of a wealthy corporation would receive, and that the pastor's lifestyle should be, you know, something like that befitting a person who leads a corporation. Now, this may not be true if the church you're in, and more power to you if it is not, but it is only too frequently the case that the role of pastor is seen as a job, a paid position, and people might even be able to move into it because the pay is not too bad in a good-sized church. And I believe there are a number of people who are in the pastorate for that very reason.

There are certainly people who are in the pastorate because, it certainly isn't because they're Christians, because there are many pastors who are not. Liberal churches, where the pastors officially deny the virgin birth of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the second

coming of Jesus, the fundamentals of the gospel, are denied by many pastors. You have churches, and one says, well, why in the world are there pastors then? I mean, I've met pastors who simply are unbelievers in the biblical sense.

And you say, well, what in the world made them go into the ministry? And I don't know what made them go into the ministry. Maybe a humanistic sort of philanthropy that they thought, well, they can do good for humanity by teaching brotherly love, and the church is a good forum for that. Or, some of them may be in it for the money, whatever.

The point is that in the early church, the leaders of the church, I believe, were volunteers. I don't believe that they charged. I do believe they were supported, but they were supported not because they were in a salary position, but because they volunteered their time so freely they had no opportunity to earn a living, and therefore they were poor.

They were poor, and the church has an obligation to support the poor. Now, these days, there's a totally different philosophy that is generally held in the church, and that is that regardless of whether the church is poor, or the pastor is poor, or anyone is poor, the members of the church ought to give a set amount. Usually 10% is advocated to the local church for the support of the local church.

Many Christians do not tithe, but an awful lot of them live with some kind of sense of low-grade guilt or condemnation because they don't, because they somehow feel like they're supposed to. And Christians need to get back in touch with reality and realize that there's not a reason in the world, biblically, why a person should pay 10% of his income to a church if that church is fat, and if the money for the church are not being used for the things that God said Christians should use their money for. Supporting an opera building, or big salaries for the staff, or whatever.

These are not the kinds of things that God ever showed any interest in not being used for, and we have to realize that both the individual Christian in his giving, and the church leaders in their distribution of monies that are given, are going to have answer to God for the stewardship of money that was never theirs in the first place, but was God's. All the money that a Christian earns from the time he earns it and gives it to the time that the church leaders distribute it, all that money is God's from start to finish. Therefore, anyone who has any role in the distribution of that money is stewarding God's money, and will have to give an account for his stewardship.

Someday God will call every Christian to account for how they used whatever was entrusted to them, and it's a very scary thing to think about, really. I mean, Jesus intended for it to be scary. He talked about a steward who was, you know, he wasn't dishonest, he was just kind of a poor manager, and maybe he was dishonest, he was slothful and so forth, and he misused his master's goods and he didn't turn them to the prophet his master wanted him to, and he was cast out into outer darkness where

there's weeping and gnashing teeth.

That sounds like a parable calculated to instill fear. Fear of having to give an account for stewardship wrongly exercised. Jesus told another parable in Luke 16 of a steward whose master heard that he had wasted his goods, and he fired him.

And so, Jesus inclines us to believe that stewardship is an issue which will be of great importance when we stand before God. You were saying that the church elders back then were probably involved. Even in today's modern church, they still took that idea that obviously whoever's going to be leading the church isn't going to be working a full-time job, and therefore is going to be poor, so we should support them.

Isn't that just the same concept? A similar concept. The difference is the degree of support and lifestyle that a pastor lives at would be, I think, somewhat different if the support that was given to him was considered to be on the same basis as support for the poor. Rather than seeing him as an important executive, and therefore should have a salary and perks and so forth that reflect his importance in the corporation.

It may be a fine point. And actually, my preference is that the support comes not from the conference of the church, but from individual donations, from individuals. Because it says in Galatians 6, for example, Let him who is taught in the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

That sounds like there's sort of an individual reciprocalness there. It's not that the person gives the money to the church and the church pays the pastor, but that a person who has received spiritual benefit from the teacher personally helps to support the teacher. And frankly, although I don't know that I could say that's a requirement that it must be personally between the persons, in fact, the other day I made a statement that indicates I would certainly be flexible, but I would see as allowable in that respect as to whether the church pays the salary of the pastor, or whether it's individuals out of gratitude freely on occasions as they feel moved by God to do so, they just kind of help support the person that's benefiting them spiritually.

I would say we'd have to allow for some flexibility and policy on that, and that's why I do not set myself up as the judge of persons who have a different arrangement. But I personally prefer to think that my support comes from people who have received something under my ministry. I don't feel comfortable with setting out a mailing list to people who have never even sat under my teaching and saying, we have a valid ministry over here, would you help support it? There's thousands of people out there doing that very thing, setting out a mailing list to people who don't even know them except through the mail, and all they know of them is their appeals for money.

And while I don't want to get off on a tangent, we haven't even gotten into the text yet, but I'm trying to lay a groundwork here. What I'm saying is, we should be aware of the

priorities of the distribution of the church money. And it seems to me, as I read the book of Acts in the early days, the priority was to do what Jesus said with the money, namely, support the poor.

When Jesus told the rich young ruler to follow him, there was one thing he had to do first, and that was sell all he had and give his money to the poor. Jesus didn't ask that he give it to the infant church, which was Jesus and his disciples. He didn't ask for the money to be given to him.

But there were some people supporting him and his disciples. There were women who had substance, who on a regular basis supported Jesus and his disciples. But we have every reason to believe from the evidence of Scripture that despite this support, Jesus and his disciples still lived a fairly Spartan existence.

They were still not living fat. I mean, Jesus had to borrow a penny to show someone Caesar's face on it. Jesus had not where to lay his head, he said.

The evidence is certainly that both Jesus and his disciples, and even the disciples in the time of the book of Acts, lived at rather a poor level. So that, you know, they were not given... Even Jesus, the most important of all members of the church, as if we could put it that way, he did not take a high salary, though he was supported as a man whose activities kept him perpetually poor, and therefore should be supported by money. But when he told the rich unruly to give all that he had away, he didn't say give it to Jesus' organization.

So that Jesus and his disciples could distribute it, he just said give it to the poor, directly. And so I would say that the church should be concerned about two priorities in their giving. And they are both reflected in chapter 5 of 1 Timothy.

One, those persons who are poor as a result of some misfortune, and widows are the category that represent those who are poor as a result of misfortune. He talks about the church's need to support the widows. Widows are the classic example of the unfortunate, at least in that society.

A widow is very vulnerable, and as we know in the prophets, they were often taken advantage of by corrupt rich people. The widow was poor due to circumstances beyond her control. She was simply in a disadvantaged circumstance.

But then there were the poor who were poor because they had made a choice to serve God in ways that take them away from their profitable vocations. Men who could go out and get a job in the world and be supported, perhaps they didn't even have a comfortable level, but who had put that aside in order to serve the church. And they are poor for a different reason.

They are poor not because of disadvantage in their life, or because of circumstances

beyond their control, but by choice. They have chosen a vocation which calls them away from the ability to support themselves and therefore should be supported. These are two categories of poor in the church.

Those who are poor because of disadvantaged circumstances, and those who are poor because they are servants of the church and that service has called them away from profitable labor. And so we see the church is exhorted to honor both categories of the poor. Now, in our day, the poor would have to also include missionaries.

And in Paul's day it was that way too. I mean, the Philippian church sent Paul gifts, although he never solicited gifts. They sent him gifts when he was in prison because he didn't have any way of supporting himself, whereas he usually did support himself by making tents.

When he was in prison he couldn't, and so they sent him gifts. To support missionaries, this is a little bit like supporting the clergy. I mean, supporting the elders or whoever is teaching.

Anyone who is in full-time ministry, and that ministry is such that they cannot support themselves, should be supported and highly esteemed for their work's sake. And also widows and other disadvantaged people should be supported in the church. So Paul sets these as priorities and gives some very practical instructions about how to decide about who to support, who not to support, and so forth in chapter 5. In chapter 6, we also have some of the most extensive teaching about money and the love of money, and therefore about lifestyles in any of Paul's writings.

And so money, or the distribution of money, or the accumulation of money, or attitudes toward money, priorities and giving and so forth, are fairly central in chapters 5 and 6. Although the first two verses do not reflect this. The first two verses of chapter 5 say, Now it's quite clear that the basic division in the congregation that Timothy is to observe is the division between older and younger. There are older men and older women.

They are to be treated as fathers and mothers. There are younger men and younger women. They are to be treated as brothers and sisters, since Timothy is a younger man himself.

He should treat the younger class as brothers and sisters of his. And the older class, he should treat with the kind of respect that's owed to parents, to a father and a mother. Now when he says, the same word that's translated elder, elsewhere.

And it would seem that this may be the only place in 1 Timothy where the word presbuteros means literally the older man, without respect to whether he holds office or not. The word elder, presbuteros, appears in the sense of an officer or an elder of the church, even later in this chapter, in verse 17. And it certainly had that meaning in

chapter 3. So we can see that in this epistle, for the most part, presbuteros speaks of an official position and function in the church.

Whereas on this one occasion, it really just means an older man. And we know it does, because it's in contrast to younger men and older women and younger women. And it's clear Paul is breaking the church into four categories, basically divided at the point of age.

And he continues, he talks about widows. There's older widows and younger widows. Now older is over 60.

Younger is under 60. That's the dividing point at this point. In different cultures and different times in history, elderliness has been defined differently, obviously.

Jacob was well over 100 years old. He said that his life had not been that long. He said that my years had been few compared to those of my father's.

He didn't consider himself to be really that old, although he was old. He was elderly. He felt like his years had not been that numerous compared to those of his ancestors.

In Paul's day, as in our own, really, three score years and ten, or 70 years, was considered an average lifespan. And as it says in the psalm, the average is three score years and ten, and if by reason of strength the person lasts another ten years to age 80, that's not inconceivable, but fairly exceptional. And so, elderliness, in Paul's mind, at least with reference to widows, began at age 60.

And so when he says older men and older women, and younger men and younger women in verses 1 and 2, he probably has the same dividing point, although we could say that anybody who is significantly older than yourself, it is a matter of respect and deference that you should honor them as you would honor your parents, in a sense. He says, don't rebuke an older man. The word rebuke here is not the same as the word rebuke in verse 20, where he says, those who are sinning, rebuke.

In this case, in chapter 5, verse 1, the word rebuke is a Greek word that means to deal harshly with, and therefore implies disrespect. Do not treat an older man with disrespect. Don't arrogate yourself over and be disrespectful toward an older man.

In verse 20, the word rebuke does not have anything to do with disrespect. It's a different Greek word, and it simply means to correct, to bring adjustment and correction to a person. And by the way, verse 20 is talking about elders also, those who are sinners, elders who are sinning, rebuke.

But you don't rebuke an older man in the sense of to show disrespect, but you may rebuke him in certain situations. If he's an elder of a church and sins, he needs to have a public correction made. We'll talk about that later.

Now, Paul moves from this into a discussion of the widows, and it's not entirely clear whether there was an order of widows that served the church, and even were regarded as having made some kind of a formal pledge analogous to marriage. That is, they were widows, and they determined they would never marry again, and therefore they'd be married to Christ, they'd be married to the church. And they would serve the church day and night, like old Anna did in the temple, day and night with prayers and fasts.

They would have made that kind of commitment, were to be supported by the church just as a husband would support a wife. But younger widows were not encouraged to make that commitment, because they were still young enough that remarriage to a man was likely or realistic to consider, and therefore they should not be supported. Now, this does not mean that a younger widow who was needy shouldn't be helped.

The apparent meaning is there was a class of widows who had made a certain commitment. Not all would agree with this, not all comments would agree, but there seems to be enough evidence in the passage, especially in view of the fact that he says if a younger widow makes this commitment and then gets married afterwards, she brings damnation on herself because she's violated her first pledge. It sounds like there's some kind of a very serious and solemn pledge that is made and is in view here.

Widows would make, certain widows would make this pledge, and it would be violated if they ever married again. Now, there's nothing intrinsically wrong about a widow remarrying. In fact, Paul says, I urge the younger widows to remarry.

And he said it very clearly in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, that anyone who's a widow, he suggests they might be happier to be single, but there's no sin in their remarrying as long as they've remarried a Christian. So, when Paul talks about the younger widows should not be added to the list, because if they remarry, they bring damnation on themselves and they violate their pledge, it makes it clear that being added to the list, being an enrolled widow, had some carry with it an obligation to not remarry. It was a special situation, a special kind of commitment, very much like being married to the church.

And that if a woman made that pledge, she was expected to remain unmarried as if she was married to Christ. So, the widows who were enrolled widows in that category were supported probably by a regular stipend, a regular kind of ongoing support, even as a husband would support his wife on a regular basis, so the church would simply be pledged to the perpetual support of these widows. This does not mean that a younger widow, who fell on hard times, could not receive assistance from the church, because the church was to assist all poor people, and that would include younger widows if they were in need.

But it was not to be assumed that a young widow would be just under the constant support of the church, because as a young woman, she might be able to remarry, she

might be able to do some kind of work in exchange for her keep or something, she might be able to be a midwife or a housekeeper or do something like that. If she had some way of supporting herself, or even if she could support herself some of the time and not at other times, or that she could not for a while but later might marry and not be in support anymore, then she should not be enrolled. As long as there's a possibility of remarriage for her, she should not be added to this list.

She could be financially relieved if she was in a hard situation, like any poor person could be. But she would not simply be put on the roll to be regularly supported by the church perpetually, because she had not made a commitment like that of the widows who were enrolled. I remember being a little confused about this once earlier in my ministry, because we had a woman in our church in Santa Cruz whose husband had abandoned her.

She was not a widow, but she was in the same situation. She had four or five children and her husband walked out and she was poor. She needed her rent paid and so forth.

She could not go out and get a job because she had kids to support, but she could not afford to pay child care. Of course, we did not want her to leave her children and have someone else. The church thought it was best for her to stay with her children, and that's why the church paid her rent on a regular basis.

We used to wonder, is this a violation? Obviously, she's a little bit like a widow, but she's younger. She's not 60, and yet the church pays her rent on a regular basis. We kept doing it because she was needy.

I've come since that time to realize there didn't need to be any kind of conflict in making that decision. Though she was not over 60, there's no reason why the church shouldn't support her as long as she was needy. The point is, she should not be enrolled and have it thought for the rest of her life that she's now going to be in charge of the church.

The church can just write it into their budget that from now on until the day she dies, they're going to pay all her expenses. That's what the church should not do and did not do, but to deal with her on a month-by-month basis as long as her neediness continued. Of course, if it was possible, she might remarry, in which case the church wouldn't have to support her anymore.

But anyway, there's no need for confusion here. The point is that the widows that Paul is talking about here principally on his class of widows who have been enrolled as apparently full-time servants of the church, and there's much evidence of that within the passage as we go through. He says, honor widows who are really widows.

And really widows doesn't mean their husband really is dead. But the contrast is any widow has a dead husband. But the widows who are really widows are widows who don't

have any other relatives who will support them.

I mean, they are really destitute. Yes? I said about the widows, you know, if they're praying, if they're whatever, you know, diligent. What about the poor? Is there, I mean... The poor in general? Yeah, I mean, is there some sort of... that we have to see that they're really dedicated to the Lord? No, I think not.

Those who are to continue night and day in prayers are the really destitute widows who are added to the role. They can afford to continue night and day in prayers because the church supports them for that very purpose. Their time is totally available to the church and to the Lord.

But people who are supported simply because they're poor, whether they're widows or otherwise, are not necessarily put on the constant salary or constant support of the church, and therefore they're not necessarily expected to behave as widows who are on the role. I mean, they may work full-time and simply not generate enough money to support themselves, or they may have children they're raising, which takes up all their time, and they can't just spend their whole time praying and fasting. They've got work to do.

It's just not... it's a work that does not generate enough income to support them, and therefore the church helps them when they find themselves in that need. I guess what I mean is there's a lot of people out there that we could give money to because they're poor, but there's no spiritual... Okay, well, this is looking at the Christians more particularly. Realize that in the book of Acts, when people sold their possessions and so forth, and distribution was made to the poor, it was the poor Christians.

It was Christians who were poor. They didn't go out and relieve all the poverty in Jerusalem or in the world. They had a first obligation to relieve the poverty of those who were their brothers and sisters.

And Paul says something like that in Galatians chapter 6. There is a certain prioritizing that is suggested here. In verse 10, Galatians 6.10 says, Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially those who are of the household of faith. Now, here's the priority.

Our special obligation is to do good to those who are Christians. Now, we may be in a position, as we have opportunity, after all the needs of the needy Christians have been met, also to do something for needy people who are not Christians. The Good Samaritan story certainly tells us that to do kind things and to be generous and to sacrifice for people who are not even of your kinsmen, not even of the same faith as you, is a praiseworthy thing to do.

The thing is, there is an obligation first to see that the children are fed before you cast

the bread to the dogs, you know, as it were. And that's what Jesus said to the Syrophenician woman, you know, the children must first be fed. It's not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs.

And in a sense, I mean, without seeming to be, you know, chauvinistic or toward the even, there is a sense in which that applies toward the children of God first being fed by God's money, you know, and then let the dogs have whatever scraps of what is over. There is a prioritizing there. If we are supporting the poor non-Christians, and there's poor Christians who are not being relieved, there is a misuse, I think of it.

I mean, if there are missionaries on the field serving God day and night, and their needs are not being met, and they have to come home because they can't stay there, and yet we're out trying to relieve the poor of Ethiopia, you know, there is a misuse of God's money there. Not that God isn't concerned about the poor of Ethiopia, but He is even more concerned about the poor who are out there doing His will. And since we don't have the opportunity to relieve all the world's poverty, now it may be that the Western world has enough resources that if redistributed, they could relieve the world's poverty, but the Christians don't have enough money among themselves to relieve all the world's poverty.

It seems clear that our giving must first go toward the support of those who are doing the will of God, and then if there's anything left over, if we have opportunity, then we can do something for others as well. And I don't mean to say that we should never give one penny to an unbeliever until we've made sure that every believer in the world's needs have been met, but it does mean that if we know of a believer and an unbeliever who are in need, we certainly should give to the unbeliever, and if we can't supply the need to both, then we should prioritize giving to the believer, because the Church's obligation is to provide for its own brethren first and foremost. So, we're talking about godly poor.

Now, of course, the widow who's enrolled is, you know, exceptionally godly in the sense that she spends her whole time in devotions and prayers. Other Christian poor maybe aren't at liberty to spend their time that way, but because they're brothers, they should be supported. But only, I should say, relieved.

Supported is one thing. Relieved is another thing. And maybe that's the difference between a supported clergy and not.

You know, when we talk about, you know, do you believe in style or clergy? I believe in relieved clergy. I think if the clergy are poor, or are vulnerable to becoming poor because they're serving God without faith, then they should be relieved. I don't know that salering them or putting them on the rolls like these widows is really what the Bible says to do.

Maybe, I mean, that's, I suppose, what the question is. Anyway, let's just look at this

word honor. The word honor here simply does not mean what it seems to mean here.

You know what honor means. Honor means to respect or to esteem or whatever. And even in these epistles, many times the same word honor, *timē*, in the Greek, means to give God honor and glory.

It's used in that way. Here, however, and in verse 17, there seems to be a strong case to be made for honor being reflected in giving money. This would not be the only cases in the Bible where that use of the word is, but it would be an unusual use of the word.

But there certainly seems to be that implied. Honoring widows means to relieve them. And that's clear because the contrast is, you're only supposed to honor widows who are really widows and don't have anyone to support them, any family members.

But verse 4 contrasts it. If any widow has children or grandchildren, and therefore is not what Paul calls a widow indeed, she's not really destitute, she has others who might be concerned for her welfare, then let them first learn to show piety at home and repay their parents. For this is good and acceptable before God.

So repay suggests helping to support them. After all, your parents supported you when you were incapable of supporting yourself. Now you should support them when they are incapable of supporting themselves.

Likewise, he talks about this to be the case so that the church should not be burdened by their support. So it's clear that the widows who are truly destitute, the widows indeed should be honored in the sense of supporting. Likewise, in verse 17 where it says, let the elders who rule well be kind of worthy of double honor, it would seem to also imply financial support, since he goes on to quote the scripture in verse 18, you should not multiply oxen while it treads out the grain, a scripture which Paul quotes also in 1 Corinthians 9 in a context where he's talking about the minister's right to be financially supported or relieved.

And he goes on also to quote Jesus at the end of verse 18 here, the laborer is worthy of his wages, a statement Jesus made in Matthew 10, why he indicated that the disciples should be able to expect their financial needs to be met as they go. So, the context of verses 17 and 18 certainly implies that the honor he's advocating to elders is financial in nature, and certainly the honor due to widows in verse 5, as the context goes on to explain, sounds like it's, the term honor is being used in the sense of to honor them in the sense of meeting their needs. By the way, we know that Jesus even seemed to imply this as a meaning of honor.

When in Matthew chapter 15 and in Mark 7, which are parallel to each other, Matthew 15 and Mark 7, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their esteeming the traditions of the elders above the word of God, and the example he gave was, he says, for Moses said, honor

your father and mother, and he that curses father and mother let him die to death, but your traditions say, if a man has some way that he might benefit his parents, he has some possession that might be to their advantage to give them, but he doesn't want to do it, and he dedicates it to God instead, so that he's no longer obligated to give anything to his parents, then he's free from obligation. He says, thus you're a hypocrite. Now, he's implying that the man who does not relieve his parents when he has something to give them that they need, physically, tangibly, is violating the claim of honor your father and mother.

So, while honoring your parents is not limited to, you know, paying for their support when they're old, it certainly includes it. So, Jesus himself gives us grounds for extending the concept of honor to including financial support, and that's exactly how Paul uses it here. The church gives financial support or honor to the widows who have no other source of financial support, but those who do have another source, the church has enough for to support, it should not be forced to support people who have others to support them, and that would include the children and even nephews and nieces of widows.

If they have grandchildren, children, relatives of any sort, those children should first show piety, prove their Christianity, in other words, at home. This means that Christianity is seen not only in the public worship service, but the way you conduct yourself in the duties of family living. And he implies very strongly, that one of the duties of family living is that children and even grandchildren should take upon themselves the responsibility for the care of aged, destitute widows.

Now, in our own day, of course, our society has things arranged. Most people who are widowed have some kind of pension, there may be social security, there may be retirement benefits, and Christians in our society are not as much under pressure to really lay out funds for the support of their elderly parents and grandparents, as was the case in the day before there was welfare. If you didn't support them, the church would have to do it.

Today, neither the church nor the children, sometimes, have to pay. Though I do think that doesn't let us off the hook entirely. For example, if my mother was made a widow, if my father died and my mother was still going to live some time, she would have some money.

She would be more in a position to support me than I would be to support her, as a matter of fact. They're fine. They're financially well off.

But it may be that she would need special care. Maybe not expensive medical care, but such care requires a lot of attention and time and care. And that care could only be had professionally by spending a great deal of money in some kind of a nursing home or something, which maybe her funds wouldn't cover.

It's quite clear that as a son, I ought to repay my mother, I ought to repay my parents, by not ever requiring her to go into such a situation. Or even if she could afford it, it might not be where she wants to live. I mean, many old people do not like to live in nursing homes and would rather live with their children.

Now, some would rather live in nursing homes because they don't want to be a burden to their children. But the point is, it should not be considered a burden to children. If my mother needed constant attention, and she did not prefer to live in a nursing home, in fact, I would prefer that she didn't live in a nursing home.

I'd rather have her come live with us. It would cramp our style. But hey, I cramped her style for a lot of years.

I mean, she gave up her freedom for 17 years to keep me alive, and I owe at least that much to her. And that's what Paul's saying. The honor of parents suggests that any Christian would understand that he has this kind of an obligation to repay his parents.

And any Christian who doesn't, Paul indicates, is in pretty bad shape a little later on here. Okay, Eric? Pretty soon, okay, yeah. Mary, okay.

You've got two mother-in-laws. Bring them both in. If necessary.

If necessary. If you have two widowed mother-in-laws who have no other means of support, cannot live on their own or whatever. Two mother-in-laws.

Two mother-in-laws. If they were open-hearted enough with two women under one roof, having three would be hard. But the point here is, of course, very few persons would be in that exact situation, because even if both your mother and your mother-in-law are widows, you might not be the only offspring.

You and your wife might not be the only offspring of those two women. I mean, you might have your mother, and your wife's mother might live with one of her other children or something. Or, even if that isn't the case, it's very unlikely on a present day that these women would be totally lacking in social security or life insurance benefits or some kind of pension.

But if that situation arose, of course, yes, a Christian ought to be willing to take them both in. Amen. Okay.

So, let them show their piety or their true Christianity at home, that is, in their family relationships, by repaying their parents, for this is good and acceptable before God. Verse 5, Now she who is really a widow, and we know that that means she doesn't have any children or grandchildren, and let alone trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. That is apparently a job description of what the enrolled widows did.

They don't have any children or grandchildren to support them, so the church supports them. And now they're free to truly devote themselves to God. It may also imply that even apart from any consideration of the church's support, the one who is the most destitute is the most desperate in prayer.

I mean, a person who is really alone in the world is really more dependent on God and tends to be more prayerful. It is actually, in some respects, a benefit devotionally to a person's life to have no arm of the flesh to lean upon and to have only God to lean upon. He may be suggesting that, you know, a widow who is really poor and really has no visible means of support is going to be a prayer warrior.

She's going to draw closer to God because she's got no other choices. But in contrast to that, she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. Now, that means, apparently, there's a deadness toward God.

There's a spiritual lifelessness that comes along with an increased amount of luxury and opulence and affluence. And so the woman who's really needy is a woman who's probably going to become skilled in prayer. And if she's put on the rolls of the church, she can spend all of her time in prayer.

And this, of course, is like that of, I mentioned, Anna, old Anna I mentioned in Luke chapter 1. An old widow who had been widowed for, what was it, 60 years or more. And she spent her whole time, night and day, in the temple praying and fasting and so forth. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

And these things command that they may be blameless. Who are they? They who are the children who ought to repay their parents, or the widows who ought to be spending their time in prayer, or the church who ought to be supporting widows. I'm not sure who they are.

All those persons have really, at some point, been in view in the previous verses, but maybe everybody involved. And the church ought to follow these procedures and have these expectations, so that everybody involved will be blameless. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and in the context that this does not mean his children and wife, but his widowed mother or grandmother, and especially those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Now, basically he says in verse 4 that a person ought to support his mother or grandmother if she's in need. Now he says, not only ought they to do it, if they don't do it, they are no longer a Christian. They have denied the faith.

And the faith is to be understood as the whole doctrine, a sound doctrine, the whole code of conduct that Christians accept as normative and orthodox for a Christian. A person who will not support an aged widow who is related to him is simply not a

Christian. They may have been one, but they've denied the faith.

And later on, in 2 Timothy, Paul says, if we deny him, he'll deny us. So, they are actually worse than an unbeliever, perhaps in two ways. One, he might simply mean that what they are doing is worse than what even good unbelievers do.

Even good unbelievers have enough common decency to support their widows, their mothers. They have enough family loyalty. It would be similar, perhaps, to what he was saying in 1 Corinthians 5, about the church tolerating a man living with his father.

He says, even the unbelievers, even the heathen, know better than that. This is reproachful even among heathen. You guys are allowing a kind of behavior which even heathen know better than to do.

And he could be saying that you're worse than an unbeliever, because you'll find unbelievers who do support their widows. A Christian who doesn't is doing something worse than what even good unbelievers would do. But he also may be saying that having denied the faith, you're in worse condition than you were when you were an unbeliever.

You're worse than an unbeliever, because anyone who denies the faith is in a worse condition than someone was before they were even a Christian. We get that also from 2 Peter 2. He says, it's better that they had not known the way of salvation, the way of righteousness, that after they had known it, they turned from it, from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them, according to the true proverb, a dog returns to his own vomit, and it's sound having been washed to a wallowing in the mire.

That's 2 Peter 2, verses 21 and 22. Why is it better to have never known the truth, or never become a believer, than to have known the truth and become a believer and departed from it? Partly because before you were a believer, presumably you had a certain level of ignorance, and therefore a certain degree of innocence. Once you've been a believer, if you deny it, you're turning your back on what you know is true.

There's a higher degree of rebelliousness. There's a higher degree of culpability, of responsibility for what you know. And it's more of an act of rebellion than an original unbelief was.

And therefore there's a hardening of the heart that takes place in denying the faith that may not have been present before you came into the faith. And you're in worse condition yet. At any rate, Paul does not give any slack at all to a dishonoring son who will not support his needy parents.

He does not even allow that they are even Christians. Do not let a widow under 60 years old be taken into the number, that means enrolled as a special class of widows, 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 lost strangers, if she has watched the saints speak, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work, but refused the younger widows, for when they began to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith, faith there is understood to mean a pledge they've made, that they have broken, they've broken faith. 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.

Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully, for some have already turned aside after Satan. But 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 in trouble, really widows indeed. Now, there are some qualifications for a woman who wishes to be enrolled as a widow.

She must be over 60. Why? Well, as he points out in verses 11 and following, younger than that, he considers they may still be marriageable. Now, it's not inconceivable that even a widow who's 60 would be marriageable, but it's less likely, and you've got to have some kind of standard.

So, he felt like 60 and above, they're not likely to be as attractive as mates, for one thing, they're certainly not able to bear children, and they can't promise an awful lot of years of companionship, more, and as far as sexual attractiveness, they are not at their peak in that area at age 60 and above, and therefore, they are less likely to remarry. But younger widows than that, some of them may even be able to bear children, although most have reached menopause by that age, but you've got to make a cutoff date at some point. And, you know, they're just more, they have more hope of finding a husband, and they should not make some kind of an irreversible pledge comparable to a marriage pledge to the church and to Christ, which would put them under the continual support of the church, but also obligated to serve the church single-heartedly without ever turning away to even be married again.

They shouldn't make that pledge, because as young women, they might be subjected to temptation greater than they anticipate at the time when they think they want to do this. By the way, he says, some have already turned aside after Satan, which may suggest that previous to this time, some younger widows than 60 had been enrolled and have done this very thing that Paul knows about. They've already done this, and that's why he's now making new instructions.

Don't let them in if they're younger than 60. That's a safeguard there. Now, you can relieve them, of course, in their times of crisis and need, but don't add them to the enrolled widows, because they are still young enough that they may have an option of marriage, and they still may have strong desires to marry.

After 60, a woman might still have strong desires to marry, too, but it's considered that she has less time to endure singleness left, and less prospects of marriage, and even in many cases, she may even have less of those kinds of desires that lead younger people to praise marriage. So he makes this distinction in age. Now, another qualification for her is that she has been the wife of one man, verse 9. Now, we encounter this same problem of interpretation when we talk about elders having to be the husbands of one wife, and deacons also.

No doubt, whatever the wife of one man means here is the same as whatever husband of one wife meant elsewhere. That is, does that mean in a lifetime, or does that mean at once, or what? Well, it's a hard thing to determine, but I would say this. What Paul describes as the qualifications for an older widow would certainly be desirable for any woman who might find herself later in age being an old widow, wanting to be enrolled.

Therefore, what we read up here, being the wife of one man, reporting for good works, bringing up children, and so forth, those qualities are the very things that younger women ought to be trying to develop in their lives so that when they are older, this can be said of them. I mean, when we see what the qualifications are for a widow to be married, it has a lot to do with what she was like when she was younger. And therefore, while maybe no one here is in the category of an old widow, even what he says about the qualifications for an old widow should be an impetus to younger women, saying, well, this is apparently what is the standard that women are supposed to be.

Paul felt like if they hadn't been this way, they should need to be added to the list. Now, the point I want to make here is that he advocates the younger widows to remarry, as we see in verse 14. If having been the wife of only one husband means in a lifetime she could have only been married once, then by advocating the younger widows to marry, he's actually putting them in a hard spot.

Because if they obey him here, and then their second husband dies before they do, then they would not be qualified to be added to the list when they're old enough to be. And he's really putting them at a disadvantage, which does not seem likely at all to wish to do. He's not trying to punish them.

He's not trying to disqualify them for later benefits. And since Paul advocates remarriage of younger widows, it's clear that he does not think that a second marriage under every circumstance is wrong. And therefore, when he says the older widow should have been the wife of only one husband, it seems likely that it means she should only have one legitimate husband at a time.

She should not, for example, have been unfaithful to her husband. She should not have divorced her husband and remarried without grounds or whatever. But if she had only one husband at any given time, that is, maybe she was married and her first husband died, and she remarried, that's legitimate.

She still can be said to be the wife of one husband at a time. And that is how I think I came to understand the requirement of elders being the husband of one wife. We quoted from some of the early church documents that interpreted that to mean he shouldn't be a polygamist.

So also here, it does not mean, as I understand it, that the widow must never have had more than one husband under any circumstances in a lifetime, because that would exclude even a woman who had been a younger widow and remarried under Paul's instructions, and now was an older widow. You understand what I'm saying? I understand it's kind of tangled. I'm saying that if we try to decide what it means to have been the wife of only one husband, Paul's own instructions here later on would seem to suggest he's not saying that in a lifetime a woman can only have had one husband regardless of circumstances, but he's saying that she should have been a faithful wife to her one husband, and if she later had another one husband who was faithful to him, it would not be a violation, necessarily, of this.

Certainly a person could read that differently, but if we suggest that she should be disqualified because she's had in her lifetime two legitimate husbands, one who died, and then her second husband who now has died, then Paul is penalizing people for doing something that is not wrong, that he himself says is okay to do, and that is remarrying. So, all I'm going to say is that when you look at the qualifications in verse 10, younger women should be urged, and I should say inspired, to say this is what apparently Paul thinks younger women should be doing, because by the time they're older, their history has to reflect these activities. Reported for good works, earlier on, Paul said that a woman professing godliness should be adorned, not with outward adorning, but with good works.

Chapter 2, verse 10, which is proper for women professing godliness. If she has brought up children, it's quite obvious, Paul said back in chapter 2, in verse 15, that the woman will be saved in childbearing, and even later here, he tells the younger women to marry and even bear children and manage the house, so this is what he considers younger women ought to be doing with their youth. Then their children can take care of them.

Then their children can take care of them. I mean, there's such a short-sightedness these days. I have some very close relatives who have chosen to remain childless, though they've been married for years, they've just chosen to remain childless.

They are pretty, they're Christians. They're hip and jet-setters and so forth, and their children would just cramp their stomach. They've got no place for it.

They're athletic, they're involved in, you know, wholesome Christian entertainment on a regular basis, they both hold jobs, and the couple, you know, the husband and wife both hold jobs. It just wouldn't work for them to have children. But they're so short-sighted, it seems to me.

Although, of course, they may have retirement benefits and social security benefits when they're old, yet when one of them dies, the other is going to be left in a very lonely situation, at the very least, and possibly in a financially difficult situation, because their parents and grandparents will be dead in all likelihood, who may have bailed them out of some situations in their younger years. They will have friends, no doubt, but their friends their own age will be in similar circumstances. And it's just setting yourself up for a real bad situation.

Now, some families, despite the fact that they want children, have never had any, and they become widows indeed, and then the church is there for their support. But when people take this circumstance on themselves, it is usually out of, it seems, selfishness. They don't want to cramp their lifestyles while they're young, and yet they don't anticipate how much their lives will be cramped when they're old, because they have no children to support them.

Yes? Would you see that there would be any requirement or burden on a sibling of such a person, if they got old, you know, say like my brother, if my brother's a Christian, and he grows old and doesn't have any kids, you know, to help my brother? I don't think Paul would suggest that there's the same kind of obligation there. He talks about repaying your parents. It suggests that you have an obligation to your parents due to what they have done for you.

Your brother has not done for you what your parents have done for you. But at the same time, any needy person should be the object of your pity, and if he's a Christian, all the more so. And I would say if you're in the position, you would want to support your brother.

I mean, if my siblings were in that position, I would want to support them. Of course, I don't have any extra money, but I'd be glad to take them under my roof. I'd be glad to make sure that they had as much as I had.

But I wouldn't say that that translates from this into an obligation in that situation. There's different principles involved here. What if your brothers and sisters took care of you more than your parents did? I mean, yeah, your mom delivered you and stuff like that.

I think the idea is that you should have some appreciation for those who've done good deeds to you. Your parents are the most obvious ones, but brothers and sisters who've sacrificed for you, obviously. I mean, there's a place of, you know, you ought to do what you can to relieve them.

But I'm just saying that the brother-sister blood relationship does not carry with it automatically the same kind of obligations that a parent-child relationship does. I'm not suggesting that brothers and sisters shouldn't support their needy brothers and sisters.

It's all the better if they do.

I think it's a very godly thing to do. But this is not advocating that obligation. This is talking about a different kind of situation, a different kind of obligation.

What if the families were set up in those days that weren't extended families? Very commonly, yeah, very commonly. What do you say? Several generations would live under one roof. Wouldn't it be more likely that he didn't need to support brothers and sisters? Because, I mean, it says those in his own household.

Well, brothers and sisters, though, usually didn't. I mean, they may not live on the same property. But the mother and the grandmother and the great-grandmother, as we all happen to be a lot of the same time, might be living in the home of one of the great-grandchildren.

But the great-grandmother might have a whole bunch of great-grandchildren spread all over the place if she doesn't live with them. You know, several generations can't live under one roof if they have a lot of children. I mean, you can just work that out mathematically.

If you have five or six kids and then all of them have five or six kids, then a few generations from now, you're not going to fit all those people in one house, or even probably one neighborhood. So, yeah, I don't think he presupposes that you're going to be living with your adult and aged brother and sister. But in that situation, it might be very common to live with your aged wife.

I mean, aged son and your aged mother and grandmother. You sleep in separate beds from me and old man. Right, of course.

Okay, going on here, I just say, notice that the role of a woman, the role of any woman, of a younger woman, is described in the qualifications of the older widows, because they are to be women who did these things when they were younger. Namely, they brought up children, they were hospitable, they brought strangers into their homes, they served the saints, they washed their feet, as it were, they relieved the afflicted so their hand, you know, they generously gave to the poor. This is a description of a godly woman.

Now, of any age, especially younger women can rear children, when you're too old to do that, you can still wash the saints' feet, you can still relieve the afflicted and so forth. But the point is, here is a good job description of godly womanhood. And we have many job descriptions of godly manhood and womanhood in the Bible.

This is a fairly comprehensive one of womanhood. Now, he said, don't put on the younger widows because we went over that. They may yet wish to marry, and if they do, after they've made some kind of a pledge of enrollment, it is almost like committing adultery.

They'll bring condemnation on themselves because they've cast off their first pledge. They've proven themselves unfaithful, they've broken faith. Besides that, if you're supporting these young women, they often don't have the proven character that the older women have, and they just tend to have time on their hands and not as much devotional character, and they may just end up going around in gossips, and Paul is not speaking hypothetically.

He knew of some cases like that already, he said in the verse between, some have already turned after Satan. In other words, some have already, we've seen this already in a few cases, that the widows, if they're not old and really thrown upon God, if they're young, energetic, but just get a stiff end from the church, so they've got all their time on their hands, apparently some of them still may be going about looking for a husband or whatever, just kind of stay in social circles and go about from house to house, and you know, they've just, they become gossips and so forth. He says, therefore, those younger widows, let them marry.

Now, some women might say, that's easy for Paul to say, let them marry. There's an awful lot of women who'd love to get married, the problem is that no one has asked them. And I feel really, I feel very sorry for women in that position.

I mean, women who for some reason are not attractive to the men in their circles or whatever, and they've just never been, never been pursued, never been approached. But I guess there are men in that category, too. I mean, there are men who long to be married and so forth, and cannot or have not had the opportunity yet.

Paul is not putting a stigma on those who have not the opportunity to remarry, or would like to, but can't, but he's saying that women who are young enough to remarry should still have that be their object, rather than saying, well, I guess I'll just stay unmarried and be supported by the church, and just kind of be a social butterfly and go about from house to house and gossip. She should make it her aim, of course. Obviously, she may not be able to do so if she doesn't have the opportunity.

But it should be her aim not to remain unmarried at that point, but to seek a new family, life, and to do the things that a woman should do. And he says, again, in verse 16, that anyone who is able to relieve or has needy relatives like that should do so, so that the church would not be burdened, and then the church can devote itself to helping those who really don't have anyone else to help. And, to tell you the truth, if you ever are in a position of neediness, and you thought about coming to the church and asking for financial help, you might consider this, that there are people who are really, really needy.

Maybe you're one of them, but if you're not that needy, I mean, if it is possible you could go out and get a job, if it is possible that you could tap some other resource than the church's funds, then that would certainly be the better thing to do, because there's

plenty of people who have no other resources to tap, and who are unable to work, and the church certainly can keep its coffers empty just taking care of all the people in that category, it would seem. Okay, now going on, verse 17. Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor.

Again, honor seems to have relevance to support, although double honor does not necessarily mean twice as much money as the widows, for example. You know, the widows get honor, but the elders get double honor. I think probably what is implied here is the double honor is respect that is due to their office on the one hand, and that's one honor, and their financial support is the second aspect of the honor that's due to them.

There's a certain respect due to them as older men, and as church leaders. Over in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, in verse 12, Paul had said, We urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, who would basically be the elders of the church, and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Now, the church members are told to esteem highly those who nurture them in the faith, and that's an honor that is due to them because of their work, the work they do.

But there's a second honor due to them, and that is financial support, or relief, or whatever. Making sure that they are not forced out of the noble work that they're doing by being compelled to go out into the workplace to support themselves. That is what I understand to be double honor.

I don't think it means twice as much money. I think that their financial relief is one part of that double. The mere respect that is due to them for the office they hold and the work they do is the other part.

And especially those who labor in the Word and Doctrine, which tells us several things. All elders rule. That is the gift of ruling, as being an elder.

They lead the church, but not all rule as well as others. Those who rule well should receive special respect and honor for doing their job as they ought to do it. And especially those who labor in the Word and Doctrine suggest that not all elders are teachers.

Some, no doubt, have other leadership duties, and the gift of teaching resides more fully in some than in others. And a special honor and support is due to those who are spending their time in preaching and teaching. Some translate that in preaching and teaching, in Word and Doctrine.

For the Scripture says, you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. I pointed this out earlier. That actually is a quote from Deuteronomy 25.

And Paul quotes it elsewhere also, in 1 Corinthians 9, verses 7-9, where he's talking

about the need for those who minister to be supported in the ministry. So it's clear that he's talking here about financial support. An ox, while it was working, should be able to be fed.

It should not be deprived of eating that which is the product of its labor. It should be fed so that it can continue working. And so you shouldn't muscle the ox, but you should be able to forbid it to eat.

And to receive and receive and receive from full-time ministers, and never to put food in their mouths, as it were, is to really be short-sighted because that person...