



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1st Timothy 5:1-16

“The Widows”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we again turn to Thee with thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the ministry of the word of God to us through the spirit, and we pray, Lord, that again as we study the Epistle of 1 Timothy that the spirit may teach us the things that will help us in the understanding of Thy word. We commit the hour to Thee and we commit each one present to Thee for Thy ministry after Thy will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our study is in 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 1 through verse 16, and I am sure that if you have read these verses you have noticed that this is a very unusual section in the Pauline writings. And there come before us some subjects that are not presented in any other part of the Pauline epistles, nor in the New Testament itself. Paul's concern now turns primarily to the administrative side of the work of the local church. And it is evident as you read these verses which have to do with the widow primarily, that the church does have a social function, but it is of course a limited function. It is not the churches duty to feed the world. But it is the responsibility of the believers to care for the less fortunate members when other responsibilities are not or cannot be met.

The subject of “The Widows,” is for the most part an unknown subject, even to those who have studied the Bible for a little bit. Two things, it seems to me emerge from these verses that have to do with them. First of all, the church must learn to distinguish between her widows and the widows of the relatives. In other words, there are responsibilities that we each have for the widows in our own families, but there are some who are widows who are unable to be cared for in any other way than by the local church. And so we must learn to make distinction between the widows that are the proper responsibility of the local church and the other widows that are the responsibility of their relatives. That the apostle sets forth for us here.

And then another thing which is, I think, probably the strangest to us at least, thing in these verses is that it's evident from chapter 5 of 1 Timothy that in the city of Ephesus and in the local church in the city of Ephesus, there was an officially recognized order of widows. And evidently there was a role in which their names were placed. They were known to the congregation. The conditions for entry into this relationship of the widows are set forth in holy Scripture and furthermore, the duties that belong to those who make the choice are there and the duties also of the widows themselves.

So the apostle gives us some information that's a little bit different from almost anything else in his writings. He evidently, incidentally, approves of this order of widows and so we want to read it with that in mind. Now will you take your New Testaments and turn to 1 Timothy chapter 5 and will you listen as I read the first 16 verses of this 5th chapter, 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 1 through verse 16. Beginning with verse 1,

“Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, (that really should be grandchildren) let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed,

and desolate, (that is, has been left alone) trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things command, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, (now evidently Paul distinguishes here between relatives that are more distant than relatives of one's immediate household, they both are included) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Let not a widow be taken into the number (that is enrolled as a widow) under sixty years old, having been the wife of one man. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse: (that is refuse to allow them to be enrolled) for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they will marry; (now that will is the will of wish, they wish to marry) having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will (now this is the will of will) I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, rule the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan. If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.”

Now the apostle begins this section that has to do with widows with a word concerning the rebuke of an older man or persons who deserve censure. You can see as you read 1 Timothy chapter 5, just having finished chapter 4, that the tone of the apostle changes with the 5th chapter and now he's going to deal with different classes of people giving young Timothy some advise and instruction from his old apostle.

First of all in the 1st verse of the 5th chapter he gives a kind of general rule that pertains to the relationship between members of the local church. “Rebuke not an elder,

but exhort him as a father.” Now it’s evidently from this and the words that follow that affection and respect and brotherliness are the order of the day for relationships between people in the local church.

Now in case some of you are worried because I have said brotherliness, we could say sisterliness too, in the light of what the apostle has said. Rebuking is a very difficult thing to do, and the apostle nevertheless in spite of that exhorts Timothy with reference to rebuking. And when he says, “Rebuke not an elder,” it’s evident that rebuke is a proper thing, but he is limiting the rebuking. I think it was with reference to a missionary who later became the head of a school that someone said that she rebuked with her arm around the persons that she rebuked. That is a good attitude for a person who wants to rebuke. But Timothy now is exhorted not to rebuke an older person. The French have a phrase, “If you’ve had but the knowledge, if age had but the power.” Don’t rebuke an elder, but exhort him as a father. Now when he says, “Rebuke not an elder,” he does not mean an officer of the church. In the 17th verse he will speak about the offices of the church. “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor.” The reason that we know that in verse 1 the elder is not the official, the man who has responsibilities in the church, but simply an older person, is because of the words that follow, “Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger women as sisters, with all purity.” So in verse 1 he speaks simply about older men. In verse 17 and following he will speak about the officials of the church.

So the exhortation then for Timothy is do not rebuke an elder but exhort him as a father. When you speak to him and desire to criticize him, do it as you would a father. That is, with affection and respect. So they are to look then at the individuals with reference to the ages and experience of the people that are involved.

Now I think all of that is very plain, but there is one phrase that needs comment. He says, “The elder women as mothers, the younger women as sisters,” and then he adds,

“With all purity.” Now that little expression, “With all purity,” is of course especially necessary because of Timothy. Timothy exhort an older man like a father would. Exhort the younger men as if you were their brother. Exhort the elder women as a mother and the younger women as if they were your sister. But knowing the penchant for youth and the temptations of youth he adds, “With all purity,” with respect to the younger women.

And that is a very practical little piece of advice that every ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ should pay great attention too. It's evident that as you look over the history of the Christian church, and also the history of the church today, that many of our young men and younger men have fallen just here because of the temptations of youth. Looking back on the immediate history of the Christian church, I am sure that many of you in this audience know of individuals, gifted men of God with spiritual gifts, who have run aground in the ministry of the word of God due to this type of failure.

I remember in a city in the south in the United States a few years ago there was a man who was one of the outstanding ministers of this particular community, and people all over this city of considerable size went to hear this man expound the word of God because he was one of the few in that area who was expounding the Scriptures. But as is the case with so many, he had difficulty with the church secretary and as a result, emblazoned on the front pages of the local paper some time afterwards were the unusual relationships that had developed, and I think if my memory serves me correctly he was the object of some bullets by the husband of the church secretary. And that of course was on the front page, an evangelical and orthodox man and “Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon; lest the uncircumcised Philistines here,” but I believe he even attended for a semester or so at Dallas Seminary many, many years ago.

There are a number of you young men who are in the audience and who are planning to ministry the word of God and these little phrases that the apostle adds are phrases with a great deal of wisdom attached to them. I know about twenty years ago I was in London, Ontario where Bill McCrae is now for a week of meetings at a local

church. The man who was the pastor of the church is now president of one of our Christian colleges and a very fine man. He told me of an experience that he had when he was pastor of this particular, the Wortley Road Baptist Church of that city of which I was holding the meetings. He said that he had learned early in his ministry that a Christian ministry must be exceedingly careful in his relationship to women.

He said that one day as he was walking out of the church some morning about ten o'clock or eleven o'clock, he had had an interview with a woman and the church was small enough so that they didn't have a church secretary, but he had had an interview with the woman and he was showing her out the door of the church and he happened to come outside the front door of the church and was saying good bye to her as a member of the church passed by who had been extremely critical of him. And he said it was not but just a week or two afterwards until the rumor had circulated around and had finally reached him that he was engaging in activities with this particular woman that were not according to Scripture. He said, “I learned early in the ministry how careful a person has to be in his relationship with members of the opposite sex.” So I think that little phrase is very important, “The younger as sisters, with all purity.”

Now, having said a word about rebuking and the exhorting that is necessary, the apostle now turns to the question of the widows. And first of all he will speak about the widows on relief. Now the church inherited evidently a very fine tradition from Israel and I think that that probably was based upon the commandment in Exodus chapter 20 verse 12 in which, remember, Moses had said, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” In Israel there developed out of this particular commandment a great sense of responsibility for the members of one's family. And then in Judaism there developed a great deal of care for the older people, and specifically the widows. And since the early church was made up almost entirely of Jewish people in its earliest days, it's not surprising that we should find

in the traditions of the early church as reflected in the Apostle Paul’s writings this unusual care for members of one’s family.

What is a widow indeed? “Honour widows that are widows indeed.” Now Paul doesn’t define the expression “widows indeed,” truly widows, but as you look at the context of verses 3 through 8 I think you can say there are two things that characterize the “widow indeed,” that is, that makes her truly a widow according to the apostle’s meaning. First of all she must be a person who is in need. A rich widow is not in view here. A “widow indeed” is one who has temporal needs. And then second a “widow indeed” is one who has a Christian record of service, so that these two qualities are to characterize the widows who are truly widows who are to be honored. They have needs, and they are also individuals who have in their past life manifested a record of acceptable Christian service. The general rule is honor them.

Now I think the honor implies not only the honor of respect in the light of the context, but it also implies financial aid. Notice the 17th verse, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, specially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” And then he goes on to say, “For the Scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.” So in the light of the use of the term, “honor” means not only in the sense of give respect to, but aid them financially. So honor the widows that are widows indeed. That’s the general rule.

Ignatius one of the earliest of the Christians after the time of the apostles in the New Testament church who wrote at least by about 112 B.C. for that was about the time that he was martyred. He said in one of his epistles, “Let not widows be neglected, after the Lord be Thou their guardian.” In other words, the Lord has the primary responsibility ultimately, for the widows and the care of the widows, but after the Lord it is your responsibility, Ignatius said, to care for them.

Philo one of the Jewish men of this same relative time has spoken on the subject of taking care of widows and has said that one should take care of widows because even

the storks take care of the elderly.” Now I didn't know this about stork life. Not knowing a great deal about stork life, having had only two children. [Laughter] Philo goes on to say that when an old stork becomes unable to leave the nest that the young feed the old one and take care of them. And he goes on to make the application that if in the animal world this takes place how much more in the relationship of people.

Why should we honor the widows? And why should we honor the elderly? Well in the first place, it is an honoring of the recipient and when a person cares for that person it is an expression of respect for them, and it also is the admission of the claims of love in the repayment of obligations that are ours because we have been cared for by them. It's a thoroughly Christian thing, as far as the apostle is concerned for young people to take care of their parents.

Now parents take care of their children. And the apostle has some words to say concerning that. But he also has some things to say concerning the children taking care of their parents. And it is a repayment of obligation that is ours because of the care that is expended upon us. I would think that it would be a reproach for the faith that you possess if in your own family there are elderly people who are not cared for by you as a Christian. It is the part of honoring them for their age and especially for the blessings that are yours as a result of them. And I would imagine that in Believers Chapel that this should be a characteristic of the ministry of the people who belong to this particular testimony and affirm their faith in Jesus Christ. “Honor the widows that are widows indeed.”

Now then, having said that, which is something of a general rule, the apostle addresses himself to a few cautions. They are cautions in the application of that rule. “But if any widow have children or nephews (or grandchildren), let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.” It is the responsibility of the children to engage in pious activities with reference to the members of their own family, first of all that's good and acceptable before God.

“Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.” The genuine widow then is described by family circumstances in the 5th verse, she’s “desolate.” She’s described by her character. She continues in supplications and prayers night and day.

Now the fact that that term “prayers” is in the plural would seem to indicate that what is referred to is public prayer, not private prayer. I think we would say continue in prayer, and most of commentators agree. They affirm that since this is the plural the chances are that what is referred to is the public meetings of the church. So in order to qualify as a widow indeed one must have the experience of Christian good works and included in that attendance at the meetings of the saints in which the prayers are customarily made. “She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusts in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.”

One thinks immediately of Anna probably one of the most famous of all the widows referred to in the 2nd chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Remember in this 2nd chapter of the Gospel of Luke verse 36 and 37 we read,

“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. (There’s the illustration of the widow who was a widow indeed) And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”

Now then the widow indeed is a person who is described by family circumstances, described by character and then in the 6th verse the apostle contrasts her with the merry widow, if I may use that term. “And she that lives in pleasure is dead

while she lives.” So there are widows who are not “widows indeed.” Those that live in pleasure and in luxurious ways, that’s the force of the apostle’s language, they do not qualify. But those who are in need and whose Christian service is admirable, they qualify as “widows indeed.” The apostle goes on to say, “She’s dead while she lives,” the uselessness of a life that is lived for personal pleasure, “dead while she lives.” It’s a beautiful illustration, of course, of what it is to be dead in sin and yet alive, physically alive, but dead really.

Now the apostle says, “And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.” In other words, Timothy instruct people in these things, charge them. As speaking for the apostle I’m charging you tonight. “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” Notice, the church’s responsibility begins when the relative’s responsibility ends. Notice that carefully, “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

So it’s the responsibility of the individual to care for members of his own family. Now when individuals cannot care for the widows that are members of their family then it becomes the responsibility of the church to take care of them. The reason the apostle evidently gave this instruction is because the early church did not have a great deal of money. And they could not afford to have a lengthy list of widows that they cared for. It was the responsibility of the individuals to care for their own widows, but when that was impossible then it was the responsibility of the church to undertake the responsibility of caring for the widows who are “widows indeed,” believing widows with a record of Christian service who were in need. Now I think that’s Believers Chapel’s responsibility. After the responsibility of the individuals has been exhausted and widows are unable to be cared for by anyone else, then those that are truly widows, “widows indeed,” become the responsibility of us in the local church.

There are churches that attempt to do this. There is, for example, a denomination which has a list of widows which they publish, which are theoretically the responsibility of the entire group. That’s scriptural. Now it would seem to me, in the light of the apostle’s statement here that it would be proper for Believers Chapel to have a list of widows who are “widows indeed.” I don’t know of any such list. So I attack the elders for not having a list. So we’ll have to do something about that perhaps. Maybe I won’t be able to persuade the rest of the elders that this is scriptural, but it seems to me in the light of Paul’s statement here this is something that’s a genuine concern of a local church.

Now then we turn to the widows in the Lord’s service. And this is something I think that is different. The commentators differ at this point. Some of them believe that the apostle is speaking about the same thing. Now it is true he is talking about widows, but it seems to me that where he is talking about here in verse 9 through 16 is an official group of widows who had certain responsibility in the local church. So I’m going to entitle this section, “Widows in the Lord’s service.” Evidently an official group of women is in mind, and the reason that I think that this is required is because a specific age limit is set for enrollment in this particular group, and then furthermore we know from the history from the church immediately after New Testament times and through the next two or three centuries there existed an order of widows who did carry out spiritual ministry in the local church.

So it would seem then that this is what is referred to in the Apostolic Constitutions which is a document which had to do with church life in the 4th century. Specific reference is made to an “ordo viduarum.” Those of you who know Latin know that means an order of widows. That seems to be what the apostle is referring to when he says in the 9th verse, “Let not a widow be taken into the number,” that is be enrolled, “Under sixty years old , having been the wife of one man.” So, her qualifications are referred to here, first of all. He goes on to say, “Well reported of for good works; if she

have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.”

Now let's look at these qualifications because they reveal a great deal about the things that meant something in a practical way in the early church. First of all, they had to be at least sixty years of age. Why sixty? Well, because in ancient times sixty was recognized as the age when a person becomes an old person. Now they weren't any more realistic than we are today. [Laughter] A person is an old person long before they reach the age of sixty. If middle age is thirty-five, which is biblical, remember seventy is a normal life span unless by reason of strength you may have eighty years. Middle age is thirty-five or forty. Old age, it seems to me, is reached long before you reach the age of sixty. But nevertheless that's the age which they thought was old age. Now some of you are really happy because you're not yet sixty. You're still in your fifties. And some of you have just begun your fifties. Well I want you to know in another ancient writing in the *Didaskalia*, the age in which a person reaches old age is cited as fifty. So we've eliminated now everybody who has reached thirty-five.

The widows had to be sixty years of age. Now why sixty? Well I'm sure that practically everybody in this room knows the answer to this because this age is specially suitable for concentration on spiritual things. When you reach sixty that's when a lot of other interests begin to fade. So the apostle writes, “Let not a widow be taken into the number provided she has reached the age of sixty.” So that's the first requirement. She has to be sixty years of age.

Now he also says something about her married life. She should have “been the wife of one man.” Now, what does that mean? Does that mean that she should have just one husband or one husband at a time? Well now, of course, if this is a widow then if it says that she is to be a person who has been the wife of one man, then it must mean one man in her lifetime. Now that expression, I'm concentrating a little attention on it because that construction as you will remember in case you were here when I spoke on the

requirements for elders, that same expression is found over in chapter 3 verse 2 with reference to the qualifications of the elders except that the sexes are changed. And it is stated concerning the elder, that he “must be blameless, the husband of one wife.”

Now, the same kind of construction in the Greek text is found as is found here when she should be the wife of one man or one husband. Now, since the reference in chapter 5 verse 9 is clearly to one husband in her lifetime because she’s a widow, then using the same reasoning and going back to chapter 3 verse 2, we must conclude that an elder has to be the husband of one wife in his lifetime. In other words, it’s not a reference to a person who may have had two wives at once. He’s not eliminating Mormons for example, but he is really saying that an elder is a person who should have only one wife in his lifetime.

Now that means then that an person who has been married and divorced and married again cannot be an elder. It means that a person whose wife has died and he has remarried cannot be an elder according to the apostle’s requirements. “The husband of one wife,” just as “wife of one husband” means one only in the lifetime. They attached a great deal of importance to fidelity, and also a great deal of importance to purity in the relationship between the sexes and no relationships that would suggest any other thing were permissible in the leadership of the local church.

Now, remember it’s perfectly alright and perfectly lawful for a person whose wife has died to marry again. There is nothing wrong with that at all. This is a matter of qualification for elder. It does not mean that a person whose wife has died and he has married again has sinned. It means simply that he is not qualified to be an elder. That’s the application of the apostle’s specific statement. Now, here, of course, it does not mean that a woman who has had more than one husband has necessarily sinned. It just means that she’s not qualified to be enrolled in this group of women who are widows in the Lord’s service.

Now I know that we are rather in our society inclined to think that this is a very strange thing, but I've already talked about it, and I'm not going to repeat the things that I said. These are suitable to the day in which the apostle lived, and they are certainly suitable to our day. Tonight, just before I came to the meeting, I was listening to one of the programs on TV, and I really wasn't listening. I walked through the room, in which the TV was on, and I heard this statement, and it shocked me, and I stopped and listened. And a woman who was an official with our own city here had said that statistics in Dallas County now show that eight out of ten people who get married in Dallas County will at one time or other get a divorce. That's an amazing thing, eight out of ten. I stopped. I was shocked. I thought it was only about five out of ten, eight out of ten, she said. And she went on to extol the virtues of being able to do that.

Now the apostle's words are that the widow should be the wife of one husband. And then a third requirement, not only age wise, not only with reference to a married life, but now in the 10th verse he states that her social life must be of a certain character. “Well reported of for good works.” She must have already done Christian service attested as good. In other words, she be a member of this company of widows, this order of widows, she must have had a history of good Christian works. “Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children,” I don't think incidentally this means that the widow had to have children, but if she had children she should have brought them up properly, “If she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers,” hospitable, “if she have washed the saints' feet,” it was the custom to wash the feet of individuals who came to visit you or for any kind of social gathering as you entered into the house because of the dusty and dirty roads of Palestine, it was the custom for servants, if one had servants, to wash the feet of the visitors, and so the expression “to wash the saints' feet,” is an expression of humility and an expression of hospitality also. “If she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed

every good work,” that is all kinds of good work; she should be characterized by humble Christian service in order to be enrolled in the order of the widows.

Well what about the young widows? And that the apostle deals with in verses 11 through 15. “But the younger widows refuse.” Now again this passage reflects the society of the times. “The younger widows refuse,” do not allow the younger widows to be enrolled among the order of the widows. It’s an interesting expression here, “The younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they wish marry; having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.” What’s the meaning of the expression “their first faith?”

One of the translations translates this as having turned aside from their first or early troth. I was amazed, a modern translation using the word *troth*. That’s so old that most people don’t even know what *troth* means. The reason I know is because in the marriage service, the traditional marriage service, it’s often found. “And thereto I plight thee my troth.” That’s what is said to my wife many years ago, a few years ago. [Laughter] “Thereto I plight thee my troth.” Now because of our society I’ve even changed the line in the marriage service and now it’s something like “And to this end I pledge thee my faithfulness.” I was amazed when I saw this word troth because it is a word that has the sense of something that is solemn, something of a vow. And the translators sought to catch that idea of a vow by the use of the term troth. And that gives us a clue I think to what is meant here when it says that “they have cast off their first faith,” or troth in the 12th verse.

You see evidently it was the custom for Christian young women whose husbands died when they were very young occasionally with perhaps the illustration of Anna in their minds. Anna had been married evidently as a very young woman. She had lived with her husband for seven years, Luke tells us. She had been eighty-four years a widow. She was a very old woman. Eighty-four years she had been a widow. She had lived with her husband just seven years. But she was characterized by a total committal to the Lord

God. And of course, Anna was known by her testimony well in the early church and evidently it was often that case that young widows in the loss of their husband and in the condition in which they were frequently would make a vow to give themselves to the Lord for the remainder of their lives. But then after some years when the experience had passed by them, now they felt that they wanted to be married again. But they had made that vow, a very solemn vow. And so the apostle is evidently speaking to that point, the vow. It's not that they have cast off their first faith in the Lord. It's that they have cast off their first pledge. That is their pledge after the loss of their husband to give themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord for the remainder of their lives. So this passage then has to do with the relationship that a widow might enter into after the death of her husband when she was very young.

Incidentally there are illustrations of this in the early church, and it was the case of the widows that they regarded the Lord as their new bridegroom. So they gave themselves to the Lord in a kind of marriage ceremony in which they took him now as their bridegroom since they had lost their husband and they became of course his wife. So, “The younger widows refuse for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they will marry; having judgment, because they have cast off their first faith.” So a person who has made these vows and now turns from them, the apostle speaks of as having condemnation. But it is something that they have brought upon themselves so he urges them now to go ahead and get married if they have lost their husbands while they are young. So, the younger wives, widows refuse, and besides they learn to be idle.”

Incidentally there are about for reasons here for excluding these young women as widows. The first one has to do with the fact that their relationship physically is such that they tend to want to get married again, the sexual reason. This advice evidently is based on the experience of these foolish vows. And we must remember too it was almost impossible in the ancient world for a woman to make a living honestly. It's not as it is in our day when a woman can make a living. Now I know that the ladies are screaming

about not making a sufficient living. And that may well be true. I don't want to pass judgment on that. But any woman who has normal talent and intelligence can make a living in our society honestly, but in ancient society it was practically impossible. It was either be a prostitute or be cast upon someone else. So you can see why the apostle states these things because it really came down to an honest woman, it was either become the responsibility of the church as a young widow or to marry.

Now the apostle gives another reason why the young women ought to marry. He states in the 13th verse, “They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.” In the words of Bob Theme, “They tend to develop that disease known as Alexander Graham Bellitis” because of idleness. There may be more involved in it than that. One of the commentators has said that the word translated busybodies, it incidentally is a word that is used in the context of Acts chapter 19 which has to do with magic arts, it may be that the apostle is alluding to the possibility that an idle woman may get involved in magic and spells and what we would call exorcism and things like that too. There were those possibilities. That seems very remote to me, so I don't think that's probably what Paul had in mind, but nevertheless some have thought that is what is in mind. Being idle they do tend to fall into these traps.

In the 14th verse he expresses his mind. He says, “I will therefore,” and this word, incidentally is a word that is a very strong word and so the apostle is expressing his mind on the point. He is saying, “I will,” I decree, “Therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, rule the house,” now we must say a word about that. “Rule the house,” that, I'm going to interpret that. [Laughter] To “Rule the house,” it seems to me means to keep and orderly household. I think that's what is meant. Incidentally that's not my interpretation only. That's the general consensus of the commentators at this point. To “Rule the house,” is to run an orderly household.

Now that is the responsibility of the ladies. It is their responsibility to keep things in order in the house. That means to keep a good house. It means that one who has this responsibility should have an orderly kitchen. The house should be, [Loud Noise] [Laughter] now if I believed in the spirits that [Laughter] might be an objection. I wasn't even waxing vehement or anything like that. [Laughter] We've had trouble tonight. Are we getting this on tape tonight, incidentally? I was wondering about it for a little while there. That means that the woman should have the kind of house with reference to which her husband would be proud to have visitors come in at any time and see it. So ladies, that's what the apostle is referring to. The younger women should marry. They should have families, ideally. They should have an orderly household.

“To give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” Let me give you an illustration of this from experience. There are, and I'm sure that some of you know illustrations of this, there have been some women who have come to faith in Jesus Christ and have been so thrilled with spiritual things ostensibly that they have wanted to attend every meeting that it is within their physical power to attend. And so as soon as husband is ushered out of the house in the morning, usually without breakfast or having prepared his own, they quickly dress and attend the morning Bible class. And this has continued Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and the result is the home is left in a shambles. The relationship with the husband becomes strained. Prayers are requested that the husband may be converted when one of the reasons that he has not been converted is because the wife is running off to Bible classes and other kinds of meetings and not managing her household as she should. That is extremely important. And ladies let me exhort you. If you have become a Christian, wonderful, if you desire to attend the Bible classes, that's great. But your responsibility to your husband and to your children, to your household is of the greatest importance, and it may just be that the bettering of those things by reason of your relationship to Christian may be the means of the conversion of the persons that you hope you can win in other ways.

Now the apostle said that if you are young you tend to be idle, to wander about from house to house, to be talkative and busybodies. So he recommends that the younger women marry, but men, does marriage curtail a woman's talkativeness?

[Laughter] That's a question I am not wise enough to answer. In the 15th verse, this are just little questions, exegetical questions that arise in the course of the discussion.

[Laughter] In the 15th verse the apostle says there are, “Some who have already turned aside after Satan.” So again he has had experience of younger women who have fallen into this, younger widows, who have fallen into this very thing.

Finally in the 16th verse he says, “If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them,” that is, aid them, “And let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.” Striking thing about this 16th verse is that in the Greek text, the text says that if any believing woman have widows, let them aid them and let not the church be charged. The responsibility, according to the text, falls on the believing woman. Isn't that interesting? It refers to the female who has a widow as a member of a household, evidently not a real close relative, perhaps even a friend or a servant who is yet a widow, and the responsibility rests upon her to provide in order that the church may relieve the widows that are widows indeed.

Well you can see then from this we may draw one great general principle, that the society of the church is responsible to protect its weaker members, if the family cannot do its duty. But it is the first responsibility of the family. If the family cannot then it is the responsibility of the local church to care for the believing who have great need. This has been a rather strange section hasn't it? And yet is it nevertheless part of the apostle's instructions to young Timothy. And a lengthy section is devoted to it. So it evidently is of great importance. We're going to close with a word of prayer now.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the ministry of Thy word and we praise Thee that in the Scriptures we have these very important down to earth ethical matters that are

brought before us, and we do pray that in Believers Chapel and in the other churches represented here there may be obedience to the injunctions of the Apostle Paul which have come to us in holy Scripture. And Father if there should be some in the audience who have not yet come to faith in Jesus Christ, by which there comes life; we pray that Thou will bring to their minds and hearts the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus for the sins of sinners upon the cross at Calvary...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]