

1 Timothy Pastor Lou DeVizia

1 Timothy 5:1-4, 8 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

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Introduction. The last section of Chapter 4 addressed the pastor's attention to his personal discipline relative to his ministry. He is an example-setter, and he is a teacher of biblical doctrine. Therefore, it is vital that he takes great care of his personal life and spends ample time and energy studying and preparing to teach. Others should be able to observe godliness (and all that it entails) in his conduct. And they should be learning God's word. Those two facets of the pastor's ministry combine to help up-and-coming disciples grow in their faith: they hear what is true, and they see it lived out. The observer-hearer takes it from there and walks before God, producing fruit as they grow. Some of them may even grow to become pastors themselves. All will learn to serve God if they apply themselves with diligence to what is necessary for their growth.

Along the way, obviously, the pastor will be regularly encountering the people of the congregation in various situations (at least he *should* be). The first half of Chapter 5 offers instruction for the pastor in relating to God's people under his care. It is not clear that Paul is *only* addressing Timothy personally here; it is a safe conclusion that *all* - pastors and congregation - should apply the wisdom of these teachings to their relationships with brothers and sisters. First, there is a short, general instruction concerning how to properly interact with people based on what stage of life-development they are in. What is common for all is a proper amount of respect and dignity. *Propriety in relationships is important to the Lord.* Then secondly, there is a lengthy section concerning widows. Both specific instruction and general principle can be gleaned from this doctrinally rich passage. The first deacons were selected to deal with widows' tables (Acts 6) and James included the care of widows in his description of "pure religion" (James 1:27). Are such admonitions to be followed without any evaluative criteria? The imprudence of doing so should be obvious. Nothing in such matters should be arbitrary or "knee-jerk." So here, *church policy* is established to efficiently manage such care; it presents a balance of familial and personal responsibility to accompany the other biblical admonishments to benevolence (this study will go as far as considering the family's role; the next study will consider the widows themselves). Pastors and churches should encourage the spiritual growth, service and fruitfulness of everyone, including widows.

1. Verses 1-2 - Respectful relationships.

- v.1a - ***Do not rebuke an older man...*** This should not be taken as a prohibition against the rebuke of a sinning brother simply because of his age, for such an interpretation would contradict what Paul soon after wrote in 2 Timothy 4:2, which makes no age-related distinctions. Paul certainly does not mean to imply that certain believers are above rebuke! Rather, in a general sense, when a young man like Timothy deals with an older man in matters of everyday life, he should be respectful of his elders. He should not embarrass or "show them up." Instead, he should ***exhort him as a father.*** How we speak to our elders *matters*. See Proverbs 16:31.

- vv.1b-2 - Following the pattern of loving respect that is commanded concerning older men, ***younger men*** should be afforded the love of ***brothers, older women*** the love and respect of ***mothers***, and ***younger women*** the love and perhaps protection given to ***sisters***. Concerning the latter, he adds a command to ***purity***; it is a great shame for churchmen to treat the women of God as objects of desire or flirtation. Holiness must prevail. Younger sisters in the modern world can help this cause with their own attention to ***modesty*** in their attire and conduct.

2. Verses 3-4, 8 - Guidelines concerning widows and their families.

- v.3 - **Honor**... Greek word is *tima*, meaning "highly value;" here the context is referring to material support. ...**really widows** - that is to say, those who meet the ensuing criteria. *Technical status* as a widow did not bring automatic financial support from the church. To be recognized as a "real" widow was to be of certain age (v.9: *sixty*; that is, essentially past reasonable likelihood of remarriage and self-support), actual worldly solitude (v.5), and faithful Christian character (vv.5, 9-10), all of which are defined in the criteria which follows.

NOTE: Paul was neither of mean spirit nor uncharitable. But he was a great example-setter by his own zealous industry, and the Lord demands the same of all Christians through the Apostle's writings (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10).

NOTE: Principle: if *widowhood* is not an automatic qualification for support, then certainly *all* should make every effort to work, exercise good financial and material stewardship, and provide for themselves and others as much as is reasonable and possible. There is liberty within individual lives and families to determine what is needful or desired, but the essential standard in view here is the *honest attempt to not take advantage of others*, even from many widows. Clearly Paul has that in view here, and his own life demonstrated it (Acts 20:33-35).

- vv.4, 8 - **piety**... Greek word is *eusebien*, meaning "respect" or "worthiness" with support in view. It is improper for **children** (first) or even **grandchildren** to not support the widows in their families and to allow them to become wards of the church (or any other institution, presumably). Paul is clear: this is a way for younger generations to **repay their parents** for all they have done for them, and it pleases **God** (and consistent with the 5th Commandment). Paul is so adamant on this point that he pronounces the failure to comply an effective denial of **the faith** and even **worse** than what he would expect from the unbelieving world, a severe rebuke (the thoroughness of this may imply that it was a problem in the church at Ephesus, where Timothy was).