

NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVER'S – Sunday 9th March 2025 am

TITLE: “Godliness in God’s Family” TEXT: 1 Timothy 5 verses 1-16

SERIES: “Guarding the deposit” Pt 16

Scripture references from the ESV

1 Timothy 5:1-16 Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers,² older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.³ Honour widows who are truly widows.⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.⁵ She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day,⁶ but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.⁷ Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach.⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.⁹ Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband,^[a]¹⁰ and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.¹¹ But refuse to enrol younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry¹² and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.¹⁴ So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.¹⁵ For some have already strayed after Satan.¹⁶ If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

There are many practical details about the new church plant that are a bit nerve-racking, but one of the key areas that is a matter for prayer is how to be church. The church certainly needs good doctrine and teaching, but how it functions as a church family is also vitally important.

The church is not described as being like a family - it is a family.

Paul tells us that ...we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, (Romans 8:16b-17a). If we are in Christ, we are not only made clean by his work on the cross, we are adopted into his eternal family. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not just a legal adoption but also means that we receive the eternal love of God and will never be separated from him.

We are to reflect this in our local church but how do we do this?

Timothy was a newly appointed leader of the church in Ephesus and was very likely a young man in his thirties. The pressure of pastoral responsibility would have been immense. Paul's letter to Timothy was intended to ensure that he knew **how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1 Tim 3:15)**. As the leader, Timothy needed to know this, but the message is important for all of us so that we can know how we are to relate to one another.

We need to show godliness in God's family.

Timothy clearly had issues to deal with. People looked down on him because he was young. There was false teaching by some of the older men. Some of the women were trying to undermine the leadership of the church. Even the good things, like the care of the widows in the church, were taking too much time and becoming more prominent than the message of the gospel.

This is a very real issue. There are often areas of disagreement in church life, where there are different opinions about many things varying from the interpretation of scripture to what activities we spend time on in the church, and how important any of those are.

The dreadful consequence can be that the gospel is sidelined.

We can lose our focus on what is most important, instead letting the intellectual debate or church politics become the centre. Then we find that our delight in God and that, though we are united in the gospel and in Jesus, that unity is all but gone. We fail to reflect the gospel family that we are called to be. These tensions must not be ignored, but have to be dealt with in a way that keeps Christ at the centre. What does this look like in practice?

- 1. Godliness in God's family is loving (vv1-2).** We are to relate to each other as a family! Within our church, we have fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, but do we view them as who they are in relation to us? Our fellow believers in the church are family to us in a way that unbelieving relatives are not, and they can teach, encourage and correct us when necessary. It can be hard for a younger person to

interact in this way with older men and women, and Paul offers guidance to Timothy (and to us) about how to do this.

- He is to speak to them as he would speak to a father or a mother.

Timothy is to adopt the posture, tone and respectfulness he would use in speaking to a parent. For any of us, even when we are speaking to someone of a similar age or younger, we are not to talk down to them, but to encourage them as brothers and sisters. An older person is to be spoken to respectfully, but equally, they should speak to those who are younger in a way that encourages them and nurtures them, as a father or mother would.

All of this takes time and effort. It requires us to spend time with one another outside of the confines of the programmed activities of the church. It requires us to see each other as the family God has called us to be. Then, when things get messy as they often do, we can work through the issues lovingly with our family members, building one another up in love.

Godliness in God's family is loving

2. Godliness in God's family is practical (vv3-16). The issue of caring for widows seems to have dominated the church in Ephesus, and it was right that they should see this as being of high importance. There are many references to the care of widows throughout scripture, and in the early church we can see that practical steps were taken for their care. **Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists^[a] arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers,^[b] pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. (Acts 6:1-3)**

The instruction to Timothy is to honour those who are truly widows. In Roman culture, it was normal to look after parents, so for believers to do less than unbelievers actually means that they are denying their faith (v8 above). Their actions would not match their words. We often look to our biological family for practical help, but we should expect something similar from from our church family, and always be looking at how we can

serve one another in practical ways. Our own widows can easily be forgotten. We need to take up the challenge of serving one another well. This does not necessarily require a church wide initiative, though it is good to have some structures in place, However, in many cases, there is a place for each one of us to take the initiative individually as we see practical needs we could meet.

Godliness in God's family is practical

3. Godliness in God's family is wise. This whole section of the letter to Timothy shows the wisdom that is to be applied. The church in Ephesus was caring for widows but it had gone overboard in that care! There were too many widows being supported by the church welfare system, some of whom might not even have been believers! (vv6). All this had probably come from a loving heart, it was not practical and it certainly was not wise. There are so many things that a church can do, but if we were to do all of them (or even half of them!), everyone would be exhausted, and seeds of disunity and discontent would be sown.

Paul gives Timothy some clear directives (vv5-8):

- The widows must be real widows – those who have been left completely alone and have no financial support
- The widows must be godly – those who love the Lord, and are not just trying to get free support
- Families should support their own members.

All of this would reduce the burden on the church, and was both wise and practical.

In addition, Paul looks at the way in which some of the widows can serve to build up the church (vv9-15). Where they are older widows, and thus less likely to remarry, there was room for them to show love, practical help and wisdom. Those who were young enough to remarry were encouraged to do so, to avoid falling into idleness and foolish talk.

- Paul is protecting the whole church by this directive.

In this way, care for widows did not sidetrack the church from the gospel. Rather, it pointed to a way in which godly widows could serve and build up the church, reflecting the gospel and their Saviour in their actions.

Godliness in God's family is wise

Jesus is our model.

We cannot do any of this without his leading. We are co-heirs with him. He is counted as our older brother. He cares for his church and he is the fount of all wisdom. We will not always get this right, as a church or as individuals, but we have a God who is leading us and always does what is right by his church.

- We need to pray that we will know more of his love and more of his wisdom as we work out in practical ways what it means to be his church.
- We need to pray for our elders as they make decisions that affect the whole church.

Please pray for wisdom that comes from God as the elders make those decisions

Please pray that the elders will truly love God's church as they lead us.