

This sermon will determine the true state of your heart! At the end!

Sin caused death in all men which sometimes leaves fatherless children and widows.

What is the church's responsibility to this situation from Scripture? **4 Commands:**

1) **Help the Vulnerable:** v3; not a new concept in the NT and OT. Ex. 22:22-23, do not afflict the widow; Deut. 14:28-9, 3rd tithe practice; Deut. 24:17, justice for the vulnerable; Deut. 26:12, 3rd tithe practice; Deut. 27:19, don't pervert justice for the vulnerable; Job 24:3, God sees those who torment the vulnerable.

Honor: v3: present tense verb – to continue doing until not needed

a. The church is not a social service outreach: Jn. 12:8, Acts 3:1-6; It offers Christ.

Implications for us as believers: 1) A high and lofty view of the most vulnerable; 2) Sacrificial giving spirit to give out of own means for this ministry.

2) **Define the Recipients:** v3, "truly widows." **2 Qualifiers:** v4-5; a) they have no other means of support and; b) she is a believer in Christ in good standing in the church. V5; a genuine believer, praying patiently through her trials and rejoicing in His provision. **NOT**, v6, "she who lives in indulgence." The church doesn't give its funds to unbelievers.

3) **Decrease the Need:** v4, be responsible as individuals to repay parents and grandparents – for the reason in v4: "for this is acceptable before God." Joseph's example of Gen. 45:9-13. Matt. 15:3-9, honor your mother and father.

V8, to provide for "one's own." Would include servants and close neighbors and especially family. This verse is focused on men: mandated to be the provider for his household. Meaning: Do whatever it takes through work and prayer to help those in need for our own house. A believer's love and faith are demonstrated by helping the vulnerable in our families. V8; "provide," meaning in Gr. is to plan beforehand. V16, women provide for their families' widows as well, if able.

Love that characterizes a believer is demonstrated by providing for their family. Even pagans understood this as Paul recognizes in v8.

4) **Sanctify the Church:** trusting God for provision is a big part of developing faith. 2 places in this passage that Paul gently reminds a vulnerable person that prayer and supplication is a part of the solution to this need. V5, "continues in supplications..." V7, command "them," who are the "them?" The **vulnerable** needing basics, the **individual** prepared to suffer and sacrifice to help, the **church** who gets to help those in need, the **elders/leaders**, who are reminded of those in need.

Phil. 4:18-19: Paul thanked them for their offering and sent back God's assurance that God provides all the needs of the Gospel, basic needs, and vulnerable by faithful giving.

Further Discussion and Application

When we consider this aspect of our Christian life and caring for the vulnerable ones in our lives, what can we do proactively for those of our household concerning preparing for life's trials? What are some practical solutions for dealing with these issues before they come up?

Share 1 or 2 times that you trusted God for provision for an important issue in your life and how He met that need? What did you learn from it and how did you grow?

Discuss the 5 encouragements that Pastor Steve gave and how we might be prepared to practice them:

- 1) Being reminded of Christ's benevolence towards us and contributing to the benevolence fund that helps the most vulnerable.
- 2) Have a regular routine of praying for the most vulnerable among us.
- 3) Be a personal encouragement to the vulnerable among us and meet a need that comes up as you speak to one another if you are able by yourself.
- 4) Be part of the Member care team as the opportunity comes.
- 5) If you are in a vulnerable position, especially a seasoned-older saint, don't stay silent, let the leaders know.

Read Ps. 37:25 and Ps. 56:8. God is faithful to meet the needs of His people. How have you received God's provision in your life? How can you begin to be and prepare to be God's method of providing for the needs of the saints and the vulnerable in your life?

1 John provides a straight assessment of how our affection should be demonstrated to our brothers and sisters in Christ: 1 John 2:10-11, 3:10-11, 14, 16-18, 23; 4:7-8, 11-12, 16, 19-20, 21; and 5:2. Looking at Jn. 13:35 and the passages above, how can we love others as Christ has loved us?

Is your heart willing to care for the brethren, your own, and the most vulnerable?