

## **Let them Repay Their Parents – 1st Tim 5:1-16**

Adult children owe to their parents once their parents are physically and /or financially incapable of caring for themselves. This topic has particular relevance to our culture today due to the aging demographics of our population. And no institution will be more greatly affected than the church because the scriptures declare that care of widows is the very essence of religion. James 1:19-27 God is the author of religion and religion properly understood is one of the most significant ministrations of His grace to the world in the world. Religion is intended to be useful to God and to our fellow man. Thus we will demonstrate the true character of our faith to God and man by how well we fulfill our duties toward the aging population.

## **Not the State's Job**

The care of widows specifically and the elderly in general has been delegated by God and in His wisdom, He has left the state out of this duty. Many problems result when the state seeks to usurp responsibility and authority in this area. 1) - Usurpation Means Abrogation of Legitimate State Duties In (1 Tim 5:16), Paul tells Timothy that the widow's roll needs a firm gatekeeper. Some widows are to be refused. Why, so that the church is not burdened in such a way that its duty of relief to true widows is compromised. In a similar fashion, the state's act of charity to a widow invariably results in an abdication of the duties that God has assigned to it. 2) – Usurpation Encourages More Abdication - Those legitimately charged with the duty of care are encouraged in their abdication. If the state collects a double, triple or quadruple-tithe from us, calls it a tax, and justifies its thievery by pointing to the growing demand for their services to the elderly and the poor, how much greater will be our temptation to regard the state as the provider of first and last resort for those inconvenient people in our lives who are no longer capable of caring for themselves? This is an old temptation - Jesus faced it with the Pharisees who were excusing the duty of Jews toward their parents by virtue of gifts given to the church instead. Mark 7:1-13 - Though the accomplice in the abdication is the church in Jesus' time and not the state as it primarily is today, the sin and the outcome are the same. Men are encouraged to shirk their duties toward their parents and are offered a justification in doing so by virtue of their rendering some form of sacrifice to the erring government (be it the church in the form of a tithe or Corban or the state in the form of a tax). We prefer an impersonal duty toward the state or church that can be quantified and has boundaries. The actual needs our parents may face are unknown. This seems too burdensome to us. 1 John 5:1-3 –God's commands are not burdensome. Mark 7 also demonstrates the severity of the sin of failing to care for our aged parents. Jesus equates the neglect of a parent with the violation of the 5th commandment. And this violation warrants the death penalty. Honoring your mother and father is the first commandment with a promise – that it will go well with you and that you may live long on the earth. But do we really believe the promise when it comes to the final duties we owe to our own parents? 3 - State is incapable of making moral distinctions.

In 1 Tim 5:9, Paul tells us which widows are to be refused. God in His wisdom commands us to refuse care to widows whose lives are not characterized by faithfulness toward God in their calling. Women who reject this principle in their youth are to be rejected in their later years when in need of the very services they refused to render when God had granted her strength and means. This is because God will not be mocked. The state seems to specialize in being mocked when it steps outside the boundaries established by God. Private institutional care providers – are a symptom, not a solution. We have communicated to the elderly that their very existence is a burden. The scriptures teach us that there is glory and value in all phases of life. Proverbs 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength, And the splendor of old men is their gray head. Old men are a treasure of wisdom and experience and young men need them around to gain wisdom. The same is true of women. Titus 2 – we are told of all the wonderful ways that older women are to bless younger women (and society at large) by teaching younger women how to be busy at home, how to love their husbands and their children.

Elderly sometimes too willing to distance themselves from family There are many elderly who are all too happy to remain at a comfortable distance from their families. This too is a sin. There are no phases in your life that you are released from ministerial duties to pursue your own life of pleasure. You are not allowed to practice “useless religion” at any phase of your life. As long as God gives you strength and breath, you have a duty and calling to minister in some capacity. Contrast Psalm 92:12-15 – The righteous shall still bear fruit

in old age. They shall be fresh and flourishing with 1 Tim 5:3-6 – Honor widows who are really widows, but she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. Private Institution As a Hireling – A hireling can never perform the service of love that is the most fundamental need that our parents will have. We like to think of all problems in purely material terms. But our parents will need love more than physical things and love cannot be bought at any price. John 10:11-16 – Hirelings do not care. At best they do not care. At worst, they prey upon their charges. Love Means Sacrifice. There is no easy way to love someone. There are only obedient and disobedient ways. John 15:9-13. By loving others, our joy is filled.

### **The Extended Family – Caretakers of First Resort**

1 - The scope Paul says to honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home. So, we owe this duty to our parents and grandparents. But we mustn't interpret such texts like the lawyer in the parable of the good Samaritan. Luke 10:25-29. Jesus says to love your neighbor and the lawyer responds "but who is my neighbor?" Jesus turns the tables on the lawyer and indicates that the proper question to ask is not "who is my neighbor, but rather who can I be a neighbor to. His answer of course defines neighbor in the broadest of terms. We shouldn't ask only "who is my mother and grandmother, but rather "Who can I be a child or a grandchild to in their infirmity and age." 2 – The Gravity – Worse Than an unbeliever. Paul declares that anyone who intentionally avoids this duty is worse than an unbeliever. The neglect of our parents is a standard of care that is far below the standard that even pagans subscribe to. Philo, Aristotle and Plato all declared high standards of physical and spiritual care for our parents. 3 - Be Persistent Not all of your parents are going to go along quietly with your plans to care for them in their elder years. But they didn't impose this obligation upon you, God did. So be persistent. We have a wonderful example of this sort of persistence in the person and book of Ruth 1:6-18 Ruth was very persistent and rejected the entreaties of her mother-in-law to think of herself and her future first. Ruth was blessed for her faithfulness to this duty to mother-in-law. 4 - The Means Everyone who seeks to do this will incur some incremental level of living expenses. Deut 14:28-29 - Care for the elderly is a part of your tithe. (Every third year.) By extension, this text dealing directly with a local community wide obligation is worth of consideration for personal application of the tithe when circumstance require you to care for your own. think it is unrealistic to consider.

### **Behold Your Mother**

John 19:25-30 The very last thing our Lord does before dying in the flesh is to make arrangements for His mother. His mother is cared for in such a way that she will be in the disciple's home. Only after He has properly cared for His mother does the scriptures declare – all had been finished. We should resolve and pray to fulfill our duties as well.