

1 Timothy 5:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Well reported of for good works (ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς μαρτυρουμένη, en ergois kalois martyroumenē)—'having a reputation for good works.' Martyreō means to bear witness, testify—her good deeds are publicly known. Paul lists five examples:

If she have brought up children (εἰ ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν, ei eteknotrophēsen)—raised children well. **If she have lodged strangers** (εἰ ἐξενოდόχησεν, ei exenodochēsen)—practiced hospitality. **If she have washed the saints' feet** (εἰ ἁγίων πόδας ἔνιψεν, ei hagiōn podas enipsen)—performed humble service. **If she have relieved the afflicted** (εἰ θλιβομένοις ἐπήρκεσεν, ei thlibomenois epērkesen)—helped those in distress. **If she have diligently followed every good work** (εἰ παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ ἐπηκολούθησεν, ei panti ergō agathō epēkolouthēsen)—devoted herself to every good deed.

These qualifications describe a lifetime of faithful, humble service. The enrolled widow has proven character through decades of practical godliness—raising children, showing hospitality, serving humbly, helping the suffering, pursuing every opportunity for good. She deserves honor and support.

Historical Context

Foot washing was a menial task usually performed by servants. That a widow personally washed saints' feet demonstrates humility and sacrificial service. Hospitality to traveling teachers and believers was essential in the early church (3 John 5-8). The widow's lifetime of good works—often unseen and unappreciated—qualifies her for the church's sustained care in old age.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul emphasize humble, practical service (like foot-washing) over spectacular deeds?
2. How does a lifetime of faithful good works demonstrate genuine faith?
3. What modern equivalents to 'foot-washing' demonstrate humble, Christ-like service?

Interlinear Text

ἐν ἔργῳ καλοῖς μαρτυρουμένη εἰ ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν
for work good Well reported of children if she have brought up
G1722 G2041 G2570 G3140 G1487 G5044

εἰ ἐξενόδοχῆσεν εἰ ἁγίων πόδας
children if she have lodged strangers children if the saints feet
G1487 G3580 G1487 G40 G4228

ἔνιψεν εἰ θλιβομένοις ἐπήρκεσεν εἰ
she have washed children if the afflicted she have relieved children if
G3538 G1487 G2346 G1884 G1487

παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ ἐπηκολούθησεν
every work good she have diligently followed
G3956 G2041 G18 G1872

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 6:18 (Good): That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

Titus 3:8 (Good): This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Acts 9:36 (Good): Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

Romans 12:13 (Holy): Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Matthew 5:16 (Good): Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Titus 2:7 (Good): In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

Luke 7:44 (Parallel theme): And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

1 Peter 2:12 (Good): Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Titus 3:1 (Good): Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

2 Timothy 3:17 (Good): That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.