

1 Timothy 5:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

Analysis

But the younger widows refuse (νεωτέρας δὲ χήρας παραιτοῦ, neōteras de chēras paraitou)—'reject younger widows' from the official widow roll. Paraitomai means to refuse, decline, avoid. **For when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ** (ὅταν γὰρ καταστρηνιάσωσιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, hotan gar katastrēniasōsin tou Christou)—'when they feel sensual desires in defiance of Christ.' Katastrēniaō means to become restless, feel strong desires, grow wanton.

They will marry (γαμεῖν θέλουσιν, gamein thelousin)—'they desire to marry.' This isn't condemning remarriage (which Paul recommends in 5:14), but the problem of enrolling young widows who pledge devotion to church service, then abandon that commitment when romantic desires arise. They break their 'first faith' (5:12)—likely a pledge of celibate devotion to ministry.

Paul isn't criticizing natural desires for companionship but protecting both young widows and the church from broken commitments. Better not to enroll them than have them pledge lifelong service and later abandon it for marriage.

Historical Context

Some young widows apparently took vows of celibate devotion to church service (similar to later orders of deaconesses or nuns). But sexual desires, loneliness, and desire for family could make such premature commitments difficult to sustain. Paul

wisely counsels against enrolling women under 60, when remarriage is less likely and the commitment to celibate service more sustainable.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Why is lifelong commitment to celibate service inadvisable for younger widows?
2. How can churches balance supporting widows with wisdom about human nature and desires?
3. What does this passage teach about the legitimacy of remarriage for younger widows?

Interlinear Text

νεωτέρας	δὲ	χήρας	παραίτου·	ὅταν	γὰρ
the younger	But	widows	refuse	when	for
G3501	G1161	G5503	G3868	G3752	G1063
καταστρηνιάσωσιν					
they have begun to wax wanton against		τοῦ	Χριστοῦ	γαμεῖν	θέλουσιν
G2691		G3588	Christ	marry	they will
			G5547	G1060	G2309

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 5:14 (Parallel theme): I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

Hosea 13:6 (Parallel theme): According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.

Isaiah 3:16 (Parallel theme): Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:

1 Timothy 5:9 (Parallel theme): Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

1 Timothy 4:3 (Parallel theme): Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

James 5:5 (Parallel theme): Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

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