

1 Timothy 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

Analysis

Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith (κρίμα ἔχουσαι ὅτι τὴν πρώτην πίστιν ἠθέτησαν, krima echousai hoti tēn prōtēn pistin ēthetēsan)—'incurring condemnation because they have abandoned their prior commitment.' Krima means judgment, condemnation. Atheteo means to set aside, reject, nullify. Prōtē pistis is 'first faith'—likely not initial faith in Christ but their first pledge or commitment (to celibate service on the widow roll).

The problem isn't remarriage itself (Paul recommends it in 5:14), but breaking a commitment made to remain single for church service. Young widows who enrolled, pledged celibate devotion, then abandoned that vow to remarry have broken faith. They've nullified their commitment, bringing judgment (shame, broken trust) on themselves and the church.

This warns against hasty commitments. Better not to make vows than to make and break them (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5). The issue isn't remarriage but faithfulness—keep your word, or don't make promises you can't sustain. Character includes reliability and follow-through.

Historical Context

Some interpreters see 'first faith' as initial faith in Christ, suggesting these widows apostasized. But context favors understanding it as the commitment made upon enrollment—a pledge to devoted service. Breaking such vows damaged both personal integrity and the church's credibility. The early church took vows

seriously—your word mattered. Modern culture's casual approach to commitments would horrify Paul.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What 'first faith' have the younger widows abandoned—initial Christian faith or a specific vow?
2. Why is breaking commitments (even well-intentioned ones made hastily) so serious?
3. How can we balance not making rash vows with making appropriate commitments to serve God?

Interlinear Text

ἔχουσαι	κρίμα	ὅτι	τὴν	πρώτην	πίστιν	ἠθέτησαν·
Having	damnation	because	G3588	their first	faith	they have cast off
G2192	G2917	G3754		G4413	G4102	G114

Additional Cross-References

James 3:1 (Parallel theme): My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Galatians 1:6 (Parallel theme): I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

1 Corinthians 11:34 (Parallel theme): And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

1 Peter 4:17 (Parallel theme): For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

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