

1 Timothy 5:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

Analysis

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth (ἢ δὲ σπαταλῶσα ζῶσα τέθυνκεν, hē de spatalalōsa zōsa tethnēken)—'but she who lives in self-indulgent pleasure is dead even while living.' Spatalaō means to live luxuriously, indulge in pleasure, live wantonly. Tethnēken is perfect tense—'has died' with ongoing state.

This contrasts with the godly widow (5:5) who 'trusts in God and continues in prayers.' A widow who lives for self-indulgent pleasure, pursuing comfort and entertainment rather than godliness, is spiritually dead despite physical life. She has no vital relationship with God, no hope, no spiritual fruit.

This isn't condemning normal joy or appropriate enjoyment, but selfish hedonism—living for pleasure rather than God. Such a widow doesn't qualify for church support because she's not living as a faithful believer. Paul's concern is spiritual, not merely financial—what kind of life honors God in widowhood?

Historical Context

Wealthy widows in Roman society sometimes lived notorious lives of luxury and licentiousness, freed from patriarchal control. Some joined the church but continued self-indulgent lifestyles. Paul insists authentic widows needing church support must demonstrate godly character—not merely financial need, but spiritual vitality and devotion to Christ.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to be 'dead while living'—how is spiritual death different from physical death?
2. How can Christians distinguish between legitimate enjoyment and self-indulgent pleasure-seeking?
3. Why does Paul make godly character a criterion for receiving church benevolence?

Interlinear Text

ἢ	δὲ	σπαταλῶσα	ζῶσα	τέθνηκεν
G3588	But	she that liveth in pleasure	while she liveth	is dead
G1161		G4684	G2198	G2348

Additional Cross-References

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.

Revelation 3:1 (Parallel theme): And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Revelation 18:7 (Parallel theme): How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

Luke 15:24 (Parallel theme): For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Luke 15:32 (Parallel theme): It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Ephesians 2:1 (Parallel theme): And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Ephesians 5:14 (Parallel theme): Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Matthew 8:22 (Parallel theme): But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Luke 15:13 (Parallel theme): And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.