

1 Timothy 5:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man,

Analysis

Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old (Χήρα καταλεγέσθω μὴ ἑλαττον ἐτῶν ἑξήκοντα γεγονυῖα, Chēra katalegesthō mē elatton etōn hexēkonta gegonuia)—'let a widow be enrolled only if she is not less than sixty years old.' Katalegō means to enroll in a list, register officially. This refers to the official order of widows receiving regular church support.

Having been the wife of one man (ἐνὸς ἀνδρὸς γυνή, henos andros gynē)—literally 'a one-man woman,' emphasizing marital faithfulness paralleling elder/deacon requirements. This likely excludes women who divorced and remarried or lived promiscuously, but wouldn't necessarily exclude widows who remarried after being widowed (which Paul endorses for younger widows in 5:14).

The age minimum (60) and character requirement (faithful wife) limit the widow roll to older women with proven godly character. Younger widows should remarry (5:14); older faithful widows deserve sustained church support.

Historical Context

The early church maintained an official list of widows—like a welfare roll combined with a quasi-ministerial order. These women devoted themselves to prayer, good works, and serving the church (Acts 9:36-42). The 60-year age minimum ensured they were past childbearing and unlikely to remarry, making them suitable for full-time devotion to church service in exchange for support.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Why does Paul set age 60 as the minimum for the widow roll?
2. What does 'one-man woman' (marital faithfulness) reveal about qualifications for church support?
3. How might churches today appropriately support elderly believers who have no family?

Interlinear Text

Χήρα	καταλεγέσθω	μὴ	ἔλαττον	ἐτῶν	ἑξήκοντα
a widow	Let	not	under	years old	threescore
G5503	G2639	G3361	G1640	G2094	G1835

γεγονυῖα	ἐνὸς	ἀνδρὸς	γυνή
having been	of one	man	the wife
G1096	G1520	G435	G1135

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 3:2 (Parallel theme): A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

1 Timothy 5:11 (Parallel theme): But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

