

Luke 2:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

Analysis

A widow of about fourscore and four years (χήρα ἕως ἐτῶν ὀγδοήκοντα τεσσάρων, *chēra heōs etōn ogdoēkonta tessarōn*)—Likely 84 years of widowhood (not total age), making Anna over 100. The Greek construction suggests prolonged state: 84 years of faithfulness despite loss.

Which departed not from the temple (οὐκ ἀφίστατο τοῦ ἱεροῦ, *ouk aphistato tou hierou*)—The imperfect tense indicates continuous, habitual action: she never left. **But served God with fastings and prayers night and day** (νηστείαις καὶ δεήσεσιν λατρεύουσα νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν, *nēsteiais kai deēsesin latreuoussa nykta kai hēmeran*)—The verb *latreuō* means 'worship' or 'serve,' particularly in religious ritual. Her life became perpetual liturgy, fasting and intercession without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), anticipating reward for those who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' (Matthew 5:6).

Historical Context

Temple worship included morning and evening sacrifices with accompanying prayers (Exodus 29:38-42). Devout worshippers often attended both, but Anna's presence extended beyond scheduled services to virtually continuous intercession. Her lifestyle paralleled later Christian monastic traditions of perpetual prayer.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Anna's 84 years of temple devotion challenge contemporary views of retirement or decreased spiritual service in old age?
2. What does her practice of 'fastings and prayers night and day' teach about prioritizing intimacy with God over physical comfort?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	αὕτη	χήρα	ὥς	ἐτῶν	ὀγδοήκοντα	τεσσάρων,	
And	G846	was a widow	of about	years	fourscore	and four	
G2532		G5503	G5613	G2094	G3589	G5064	
ἣ	οὐκ	ἀφίστατο	ἀπὸ	τοῦ	ἱεροῦ	νηστείαις	καὶ
which	not	departed	from	G3588	the temple	God with fastings	And
G3739	G3756	G868	G575		G2411	G3521	G2532
δεήσεσιν	λατρεύουσα	νύκτα	καὶ	ἡμέραν			
prayers	but served	night	And	day			
G1162	G3000	G3571	G2532	G2250			

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 5:5 (Prayer): Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

Acts 14:23 (Prayer): And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Psalms 23:6 (Parallel theme): Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Psalms 27:4 (Temple): One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Acts 13:3 (Prayer): And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 26:7 (References God): Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.