

Bristol Conference 1975-06 1 Timothy - Chapter 5:

by Stan Ford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of real Christian fellowship, which is based on respect, regard, recognition, and reverence for all members, and involves the responsibility to care for those in need.

Duration: 36:20

Scripture: 1 Timothy 5:1

Topics: "Christian Fellowship", "Respect For Elders"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the third chapter of First Timothy and discusses the basis of real Christian fellowship. He emphasizes the importance of respect for both older and younger individuals within the church. The speaker also highlights the need for recognition and regard for older women. He shares a story about a man named Edwin Willey, who passed away while leading someone to Christ, and mentions a favorite chorus of his. The sermon concludes with a reminder to observe the teachings in this chapter and to keep oneself pure.

Transcript

The fifth chapter of 1 Timothy, please. 1 Timothy chapter 5, and for the sake of time, I'm not going to read the whole chapter, but with your permission I will read a verse or two here and there. Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and younger men as brethren, elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity.

Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow has children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents, for that is good and acceptable before God. We'll go down the chapter, if we may, for the sake of time, and I wonder if we could read together in verse 17.

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scriptures say of thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an acquisition, but before two or three witnesses.

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins, keep thyself

pure.

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities. Some men's sins are opened beforehand, going before to judgment. Such men they follow after.

Likewise, also, the good works of some men are kept beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be kept. Now, may the Lord just add his blessing to this very wonderful chapter of his own precious work. May I repeat, please, our theme text, our theme verse, from the third chapter of 1 Timothy? Oh, let us never forget, any one of us here this week, let none of us here forget, that these things write I unto you, says Paul, as he writes the young Timothy, that thou mightest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

I must suggest to you that this very wonderful chapter divides itself into four parts. It seems to me, I know not how it seems to you, but it seems to me, as I read this chapter, that, first of all, we have brought before us the basis of real Christian fellowship. May I repeat that? And I think that's most important, don't you? The basis of real Christian fellowship.

And, I'm going to suggest to you, we have brought before us the burden of real Christian fellowship. Not only the basis of it, but the burden of real Christian fellowship. And then I'm going to suggest that we have brought before us the benevolence of real Christian fellowship.

The benevolence of real Christian fellowship. And then I'm certain that all of us would agree that, last of all, we have brought before us the very bulwark of Christian fellowship, real Christian fellowship. But, first of all, and I'm going to try to get through as quickly as I can tonight, but, first of all, I wonder if we may consider those first two verses.

The two verses that I have suggested bring before us the basis of real Christian fellowship. Whatever we may say of the Church of God, whatever we may say of the House of God, each one of us will acknowledge that it is a place into which both young and older, both men and women, are brought. And it seems to me, right at the very beginning of my remarks this evening, I must remind every one of us in this place of what the Apostle exhorts a young man to pass on to others.

He first reminds him that whatever else he does, he must emphasize the need for respect for old men, those that he calls father. Then I'm going to suggest that he reminds them not only that there must be respect for old men, fathers, but there must be regard for young men. For he dares call them brothers.

And then it seems to me that he reminds us that there must also be recognition of older women, for he calls them mothers. And then he dares tell us that there must be reverence for younger women, for he calls them sisters. Is it grand that while the Church is called the House of God, the pillar and ground of the truth, when the Apostle writes to Timothy, he reminds us of the family attitude that we must ever have towards the Church of God, that our local assembly must be as a family.

Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters. He dares tell us that there must be respect, there must be regard, there must be recognition, and there must be reverence in the Church of God. And I have never seen a local assembly that is shining brightly for the Lord unless these things are evident in it.

This is the very basis of real Christian fellowship. First of all, then, respect for old men. And I believe that's important, don't you? I wonder why it appears that in our modern day, in my country, I can't speak for yours, but in our modern day, in our country, it seems that young folk have very little respect for those that

are older.

And yet, these things should not be so in the Church of God, should they? There should be a recognition of those that are aged amongst us, and we should respect them. Now, I know sometimes they don't talk the same language as young folk talk. Well, let me put it the other way.

Young folk don't talk the same way as the older talk. Now, please, I suppose I've reached the age when I don't like to be called old, and as I reminded you the other day, my son looked at me and said, Dad, I was thinking you've had it. Sure, well, there it is, I suppose I can't say that I'm young.

But I do know this, and I am assured of it, that when I look around and see grey hairs in an assembly of God's people, I want to lift my voice in praise of the Almighty, for a God who has proved Himself faithful over years. What was it David said? I was young, now I'm old, and yet I have not seen the righteous, the Satan, nor their seed-begging brag. There are some things that are not taught in scriptural or Bible theological seminaries.

They are taught in the schools of experience. And I want to lift my voice and say thank you to men who, in my early Christian experience, meant so much to me. They were aged men, and I learned to revere them, and revere them because respect them, because regard them, because they were men of God.

Then will you notice not only the old man whom he calls father, but now he speaks indeed of the young man whom he calls brother. And I wonder if I may say something to you young friends. Do you, you young brethren here today, do you regard the other young men in your meeting as your brother? No, I don't mean in just a theological sense, but in a real sense.

You see, I have a brother. I've only one brother in the flesh, but I have a brother. And that brother knows all the peculiar things about me.

And I know all the peculiar things about him. But I'll let you into a secret, I wouldn't let you tell me them. For as soon as you start, I put my hand on your shoulder and I say, hey, that's my brother.

And you know, in the church of God, you young men, do you count the other young men as your brother? And when someone dares to say things concerning them, when one dares to speak even ill of them, do you stand by their point as a brother? Oh, this is the basis of the real Christian church, that we are those who love one another. We love one another. And then would you notice he speaks indeed of those older women, and he calls them mothers.

And I love that. Oh, I know they're often referred to as mothers in Israel, but I've got a feeling that here's an even stronger word. A mother.

A mother. You know, my mother was only a wee little lady. She didn't stand any higher than this.

She was just a little dot of a lady. And I used to look at her and say, you know, Mom, you used to nurse me. She never offered to towards the end, you know.

Never offered to towards the end. But I learned so much from my mother. And I'm not just trying to be emotional.

I'm not just trying to stir up something that's unscriptural. I only know this, that the regard everyone should have for their mother is the regard we should have for elder sisters in the meeting. I wonder whether we

do.

If we don't, if we don't, then the church of God, the pillar and ground of the truth, is not the place where we're beholding ourselves and behaving ourselves as we should. But then he speaks of younger sisters. And he dares to speak of the younger women and call them sisters.

And I dare suggest that we are exhorted that we shall reverence them. What strong words to use. Elder women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.

With all purity. You know, I still think, I still think there's something to be said for those old-fashioned graces that used to mark a Christian. My wife brought over with her from England a few tapes of some of the older brethren who'd passed away.

Montague Goodman and some others. And amongst them is a message by a man who meant so much to Mary and myself in our early Christian experience. His name was Arthur Burr.

He was a bank manager, or something in a bank. He might not have been the manager. He might have been just a, well, I don't know what he was, but he was in the bank.

I only know this, that what a mighty man of God he was. And the first time I ever heard him speak, he gave an address on what is a Christian. And amongst the many things he said was this, that anyone who calls himself a Christian should walk with dignity.

Should walk with dignity. And I believe that's true. And I believe that young men and older men and older women and young women in the Church of God, we should learn to behave ourselves not only towards God, but towards one another.

May I ask, please? No, I'm not asking you to look at your assembly and answer this question. What is my assembly like? What I am asking you to do is this. What are you like in your assembly? I mean, that's the question, isn't it? What are you like in your assembly? Here is the basis of a real Christian church.

It is a church where love and respect is shown to all. To all. Then would you notice that this chapter tells us not only of the basis of real Christian fellowship, but it tells us of the burden of real Christian fellowship.

Now, let me say it again, not guilty. I didn't write Paul's letter to young Timothy. I am only here that I might explain something of it, that might remind you of its truth.

And as I read through from verses 3 to 16, I realize that here is a burden that rests upon a Christian church, and rests poor prayer upon the shoulders of that Christian church. May I, as we go through these verses, point out that Paul first speaks of responsibility to widows. Verse 3, Honor widows that are widows indeed.

You see, I don't believe that a local assembly is a place where we gather Lord's Day morning, we try and gather Lord's Day evening, and they meet one evening in the week, and our responsibilities are over. The Christian church enters every part of the life of a Christian, and upon the shoulders of a local church, there is a responsibility for widows. Why, he dares to say in these words that we have read, he dares to say, Honor widows that are widows indeed.

But having brought before us the responsibility for widows, he then reminds us of the responsibility of relatives. And I can't help but feel that the Christian church must open its voice in the day in which we live,

and say something about this. I don't know very much about your country, so please, I must go to my own country.

But in my country, where there is so much government provision for those that are sick, those that are in need, I have a strong feeling that one of the tragedies of our day in my land is that young people are growing up with this idea that, well, it's not really our responsibility to care for mum and dad when they get old. They've paid their national health insurance. Why, it's the responsibility of the state.

Look what they've done to help build up the state. I can think of nothing further from the truth of the Word of God. My Bible dares to tell me that if a widow has children or nephews, their responsibility is to care for that older person.

And my wife, after this service, is going to really tell me about this. But I don't mind that she does. But many of you noticed when she arrived yesterday that she arrived with her arm in the flesh.

And many of you thought that, you know, maybe I'd lift her too much, I'd hug her too much, and that, well, I wanted to do it, but I couldn't. She's just come out of hospital because the muscles have pulled away from whatever the muscles are attached to. And I know one of the reasons that she's had this problem.

She'll tell me off afterwards, but I'm going to tell you. For 20 years, her dad has lived with us. This is one of the reasons she's been unable to travel around with me.

But I couldn't talk as I'm talking tonight if we ourselves had not tried to do something in this matter. For 20 years, my wife cared for her father. Towards the end, it was a matter of having to lift him and help him and pull him.

That's one of the reasons that she is as she is. And she won't mind me saying that, for that reason, she's glad that she had the trouble. Listen, my brother, my sister, you young folks.

You remember this. When you were bathed in our arms, there was a mother who cared for you and loved you and pet you and clothed you. And if you love Jesus Christ, there'll come a day when you will have a responsibility for death, not the government or the old folks' home, but you.

I say, you didn't come to Bristol to hear that, did you? May I go further? May I remind you that first there's a responsibility for the widow, and then there is the reminder for the relatives. But now he goes on and he speaks of the reliance of those who are the real widows. You know, this is the amazing thing.

We're told the church has a responsibility for the widow. We're told that sons and nephews have a responsibility for the widow. But then we're told that the widow has a responsibility for herself.

For this is what the Word of God says of a widow that's a widow indeed, verse 5. But she that is a widow indeed and desolate, trusteth, not in her son, not in her nephew, not in the church, she trusteth in God. And this is what Paul dares to say of that dear, dear widow. He dares to say, and continues in supplication and prayers night and day.

Oh friends, my friends, can I say this? I look around God's folk all over the world, and I want to say thank you to the Lord Jesus Christ for the many dear sisters who, with all the problems that have gone on with God, and have left a responsibility on our shoulders to follow in their footsteps. And when difficulties come, supplications, prayers, trusting God, oh the wonder, the wonder of it all. And then he goes on.

He reminds us not only indeed of responsibility for widows. He reminds us not only, or reminds relatives of their responsibility. He speaks not only of the reliance of a real widow, but he speaks the word of reproach to some widows.

He dares say that there are some that liveth in sin, and they're dead while they live in sin. Oh please, please, what right have I to talk like this? I've no right to talk like this. I'm healthy and strong, I'm a man.

You see, we lost Dad, as I told you the other day, when I was but a boy. And I saw a little mother no bigger than this who struck her fingers bare to keep her family. And I know, I am sure, that there are many, many, many dear sisters.

And I would like to say one word of reproach. Remember this, whether you be young, whether you be older, whether you be man or woman, for I'll jump even further than widows. And I dare to say that if we as believers live in sin and we're dead while we live, we know nothing of the very thrill of a God who breathes through our very being.

Then he goes further, and he speaks of requirements of those who have no children or nephews, who have no one to care for them. He dares to say that we must take into the very care of the church those as to their age, three, four years old, the wife of one man. Those who have borne a good testimony, well-reported, well-reported for good work.

Those that have brought up children. Those that have been hospitable, they have lodged strangers. Those that have been sympathetic, they've washed the saints' feet.

And dare I say this to you, brethren and sisters, every one of us acknowledge that such women as that have a claim upon the church. They have a claim on the church. You know, I get a little tired sometimes at evangelical expression.

I get tired of the preacher who stands up and says something like this. And how often we hear words like this in the very assemblies with which you and I are connected. We hear brethren stand up and say, We don't preach religion! Do you know, I almost feel I could shout out, Father, sit down! Let me say this to you.

If we don't preach religion, it's about time we did. Do you know what the Bible says pure religion is? Of course you do. It's the visiting of the fatherless and the widow, and the keeping yourself unclotted from the world.

And if we don't preach that, God forgive us. But we not only ought to preach it, we ought to practice it. We ought to practice it.

The visiting of the fatherless and the widow, and the keeping ourselves unclotted from the world. Keeping ourselves unclotted from the world dares to tell us, as in the word found here, from verse eleven to thirteen, that there are some that we must even refuse to help. Those that are reckless and resentful and rebel.

Those that have given to revelry. There is a holy standard in the church of God. Holiness becometh the house of God.

We're not here to encourage that which is not holiness. Then he goes on and dares to speak of the relief of those that are widows. He dares to say this, and may I ask a question? What does he mean? Let the

church be charged.

Do you know what I think he means? Do you know what I think he means, brethren and sisters? I think he means, let the church be charged. That's what I think he means. I think he means that as an assembly of God's people, we have to bear the financial burden of caring for those in need.

I wonder whether we do. Do you know it's comparatively easy, isn't it, to write a cheque and send it to Muller's home? Comparatively easy. Comparatively easy! And somehow, when we do that, well, our responsibility is not on our shoulders any longer, is it? Now the responsibility, we send the cheque to Muller's home.

Our responsibility, well, it's gone. It's the responsibility of those who care at Muller's home. But there's something deeper than that.

When the church cares, its responsibility is continual. And hallelujah, its joy is continual as well. May I go a step further? How we may behave ourselves or should behave ourselves in the church of God? First of all, the basis of real fellowship in the church.

Love one to another as we respect and regard and recognize and revere those that are old men and young men and older women and younger women. Then, indeed, the burden of real Christian fellowship, that we're willing to carry the responsibility for those in need. And then the benevolence, and I've used this word perfectly, something more than just a responsibility, but the benevolence of real Christian fellowship.

You see, friends, when we've said all we've got to say, verses seventeen to twenty, speaks of those who are elder. We are told, first, that those who are ruler, we must recompense and reward that the elders that ruled well be counted worthy of double honor. Then we are told of those who are not ruler, but, dare I suggest, those who are renter.

And we are told not to recompense them, but repudiate them. For this is that which he says, against an elder received not an acquisition, but before two or three witnesses. When there comes amongst God's folk, as there always does, as there always does, those who are always pointing their finger at those that rule.

Now I say it again. You, most of you, heard him say it. But my great friend, Bill Patterson, whom the Lord called home, as you know.

But how many times, when preaching up and down the face of this world, all over the place, would dear Billy Patterson, did I hear Billy say, never you forget, every time you point your finger at anyone, you point three fingers at yourself. I say, whatever we do, don't let us listen to an acquisition against an elder, except in the mouth of two or three witnesses. Those folk who are renters, who are always fighting for, why, the best thing to do with them, is that which the Word of God tells us to do, to repudiate them.

Then, dare I go further? He dares to say those who are rulers must be recompensed. Those who are renters, they must be repudiated. And those that are rebels, they must be rebuked.

Then the same rebuke before all others, that others may fear. We don't often have that, do we? We don't often have that. Maybe our modern society, you know, if we rebuke someone while they say, I'm not going there anymore, I said something I don't like.

Let me tell you a story. We sang a little chorus just now, didn't we? You added two. Or put two choruses together.

There was a second chorus of Edwin Willie. Edwin Willie was the mighty man of Jamaica. Actually, Edwin Willie passed away leading a man to the Lord.

He was lying on his bed, knowing that he was drawing his last breath, and he went for the local road surveyor to whom he'd witnessed. And as Edwin Willie was lying on his bed, he turned to this man, and he said, You ought to trust Jesus Christ. Let me tell you how you can.

He actually passed into the presence of the Lord, pointing that man to Christ. But Edwin Willie was a mighty man, a businessman, a businessman who gave himself to God. But this was Edwin's favorite chorus.

And many a time, at four o'clock in the morning, I've been awakened out of a sleep by hearing that, that, well, you mustn't make an accusation against an elder, but lies bring up more witnesses. So there it is. But I used to hear him at four o'clock in the morning, singing at the top of his voice, Cheer up, ye saints of God, there's nothing to worry about.

And I used to turn and put my ears in the pillow, and say, Oh, be quiet. Oh, have a dearly. But he was a wonderful man.

I've taken too long speaking about him. But you know, there are so many great men that God has placed among us. But there was, in the fellowship at Napan, one of the problems of some of the meetings in Jamaica, is the problem of voice beating.

Now, it's a real problem. And there was, in the fellowship at Napan, an elder in the meeting, whose wife came to Edwin Willie, and complained that her husband had beat her. And I went with you, old Edwin Willie, to see the good fellow.

And Mr. Willie said, Brother, you be at the meeting Sunday morning. And he was there. And after the meeting, Mr. Willie rose, and in front of all the assembly, he rebuked this man for beating his wife.

And then he said this. He said, and I want you to understand, that henceforth, you will not be recognized as an elder in this fellowship. And what a commotion.

Whoa! At the back of the chapel, I heard a woman scream, No, no, Mr. Willie! I didn't want you to do that! It was his wife. She didn't mind him rebuked. But there was a bit of prestige, being the wife of an elder, you see, and it was being taken away from her.

Oh, you say, Mr. Ford, that wouldn't happen in our fellowship. I know it wouldn't. But what I'm getting home is this, that there are many reasons, many reasons, that we don't like being rebuked.

But when there's that which is wrong, the Bible tells us there does come a time when rebuking is necessary. Then he comes to the close of this chapter, and please, I didn't write it, but he speaks of the bulwark of a real Christian fellowship, the means of its defense and security, the bulwark. He dares to say that we must rule and rule impartially, without preference one for another.

We must resist things, the desire to lay hands suddenly on a man. We must be refined to keep ourselves pure. We must find that there is a remedy even for the bodily ailments.

And we must find this as well, that God has a revelation for us. And this is the revelation, that some men's sins are open, and some men's sins follow, that some men's good works are open, and some men's good works follow. Never forget, he says, whether what we do is known by others, whether what we say is known by others or not, one day God will reveal it.

And as I come to a close, I want to look around this audience. I want to go back to our first text. He says, I'm writing these things that thou mightest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.

And I have been speaking to those and reminding us of our responsibilities who are in the house of God, members of the church. But maybe tonight, I've been speaking to some of you young folk and you're not even in the church. You've never trusted Christ.

You've never faced life and its responsibilities. And may I say this to you, that tonight it's possible for you to come into that church. It's possible for you to trust Christ.

But I would be wrong, I would be wrong if I were to suggest to you that taking Christ as your Savior means that you just flip your hand up in a service and say, Christ for me! And then go and live as though Christ doesn't exist. If I've done nothing more tonight, I trust I've done this. I've reminded you that being a Christian isn't sitting with your feet on the mantel shelf singing Matthew the Perishing up the chimney-fang.

But trusting Jesus Christ and bearing the responsibility of Christian fellowship is something that's real and vital. I wonder if there are some young folk here tonight who are prepared to trust Christ and knowing what's expected of them, saying, henceforth, for me to live is Christ. Oh, please God, you will trust me.

You will let the Lord have His way in your life every day. And may it be so. O God and Father, what can we say to thee? We feel that the Spirit of God Himself has been rebuking even the sweeter disease.

We confess that sometimes we have not respected older men. We have not regarded younger men. We've not recognized older women.

We've not revered younger women. Sometimes we have not borne the responsibility of our fellowship for those in need. And we've never been as benevolent as we should be to care for those that have cared for us.

But, O God, we pray thee that we may this very evening so have dealings with the Head of the Church, our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord, that we'll go upon this place determined to make the assembly with which we are in fellowship a place that rightly can hold the title the Church of God, the House of God, the Pillar and Grand of the Church. Haunt us in our prayer and bless us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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