

Forethought For the Family

1 Timothy 5:7-8

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⁷ Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. ⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Would it surprise you if I said you used to be an unbeliever at one time?

Now, if you are a believer who did not grow up or were not raised in a home or family that professed faith in Jesus Christ, your journey to faith very likely had a clear before and after story.

If you are someone who was born into a family of the Christian faith, you probably were like me. You had knowledge about God and the Bible and so on. However, that didn't make you a believer.

I have had people who listened to sermons and went to church all their life and yet say, 'I don't know what true saving faith is'. And yet there are others who say, "Yes, I remember the day, I know the time when Jesus touched my life and everything changed".

Even the great apostle Paul tells Timothy in this letter, that, in spite of his knowledge and pedigree in learning he was still an unbeliever until he met Jesus Christ.

"..I had acted ignorantly in unbelief" 1 Timothy 1:12

So the groundbreaking reality of Paul's conversion was that his life was radically changed the day he found Jesus. And this was not just an intellectual or an emotional experience. It was a supernatural intervention from God. Listen to what Paul says in this letter to the Galatians.

¹³ For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to me" Galatians 1:13-16

So, if there is anyone who has one of the most clear and compelling conversion stories from unbelief to belief, that would be the Apostle Paul. Paul thought he had all the credentials to be in the household of God but he was really an outsider until he knew Jesus Christ. Once he knew what true adoption meant, his worldview changed.

Last week, we shared what brought you into the household of God. It was adoption.

We also saw that Paul was specifically addressing Timothy about how believers are to treat each other, how to relate to each other in the household of God, in the family of God.

Now, what constitutes a family? You know this but here is a basic definition of a family.

“A family is a group of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage, adoption, or a mutual commitment and who care for one another. Defined in this way, the family is universal or nearly universal: some form of the family has existed in every society, or nearly every society, that we know about”.

John MacArthur writing about the family says, *“The family is the basic building block of society. When it goes, everything goes. The family was God's first earthly institution. Before there was a government, and long before God instituted the church, He ordained marriage and the family as the basic building block of society”.*

The household of God is like a family but much more. It is a covenant community, a community where Christ himself purchased your ransom by his precious blood.

So last week, we saw that the household consists of the *adopted* children of God. And Paul uses very familial terms to describe who is in this family. Mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and children. Paul himself uses a very fatherly language in his opening address to Timothy by saying, “my true child in the faith”. And verses seven and eight are sort of summary of what he had said before. In verse seven is Paul instructing Timothy to continue to teach sound doctrine, promote godliness and whatever accords with godliness. Let's look at verse seven.

⁷ *Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach.*

Notice Paul tells Timothy to command “*these things*”. What are those?

In previous 6 verses, Paul instructs the church that older men must be treated with respect as fathers. Older women as mothers. Younger men as brothers and younger women as sisters in all purity. And the second instruction is to honor widows who have no other source of support or income or anyone to depend on.

These things, Paul tells Timothy to command. This is the word that is used as a general in army would command the troops. Why does Paul put such a high emphasis on how we ought to treat each other that he tells Timothy to command these things?

Two reasons:

1. First of all, this is not a new command Paul just makes up. This is an old command.

John 15:12 *“This is my commandment, that you love one another just I have loved you”.*

John 15:17 *“This is my command to you, Love one another”.*

1 John 2:7, 9-10 *“Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. ⁹ Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.”*

1 John 3:11 *“For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another”.*

1 John 3:11 *“And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us”.*

1 John 4:7 *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God”.*

2. Second reason – Paul is simply describing how the love for one another needs to take place in the church. Respect for older men and women. Brotherly or sisterly love for younger men and women. Caring and supporting widows who are truly in need. So, if the household of God is cherished bride of Christ that is loved by God **which it is**. And if you claim God has loved you Where would you expect to experience that kind of love, care and honor? Within the people of God. In the household of God. The world outside does not know this kind of love. This is agape love. Sacrificial love. And the world is craving for such kind of love but cannot find such love. So the family of God becomes the place where that particular love for each becomes tangible and real. This love is also a sanctifying love – a love that is kind, patient, a love that does not envy or boast, a love that is not arrogant or rude, a love that is selfless, a love that is not irritable or resentful, a love that does rejoice at wrongdoing or sin, a love that rejoices at the truth. A love that bears, endures and is full of hope. And what is the goal of such respect and honor for each other and for widows? Paul says in verse seven, “in order that they may be without reproach”. The goal is blamelessness. *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation”* Philippians 2:14-15. A good reputation. We are called to good works not to earn salvation but because we have been adopted as God’s children, because we are in the family of God, we are now the hands and feet of God.

So Paul says command these things so the church has a good reputation.

To contrast with this positive command, Paul says that those who don’t follow such things are worse than unbelievers. What does he mean? Look at verse eight.

⁸ *But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

Paul sets the bar very high for believers. If a believer does not care for his own household, for the people in his or her own family, this is a serious thing. Why? Because even non-Christians know how to care for their own. Societies consisting of families have lived for a long time. They don't have to be particularly of the Christian faith to know how to care for their own. People in the secular world know how to take care of their families. So, as a general principle, this is not new to the Christian faith.

Paul does not say this is a damnable or an unforgivable sin. Paul uses hyperbole to make his point. This is a principle of Christian living.

When Paul says provide for the family, the word literally means *forethought*. It means children or grandchildren are to provide for their parents or relatives or widows. Believers need to give *consideration, exercise foresight* for their own. They ought to show prudence and plan for the welfare of the family.

This is God's plan for his household of God – Love each other, respect each other, honor widows so that you may be blameless. The Bible tells us our Lord Jesus is blameless in God's house as a Faithful Son. Listen to Hebrews chapter 3.

"Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶ but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope." Hebrews 3:5-6

Do you know how much forethought Jesus gave for his own mother?

Even on the Cross, Jesus cared for his mother even when he hung on the cross. This is from John 19. Jesus in hanging on the Cross all bruised, battered with nails in his hands and feet. Blood streaming down his forehead and all over his body.

"So the soldiers did these things, ²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home." John 19:24-27

You see Jesus did not abandon his own mother at the most painful point in his life. He is the Faithful Son of God. He will not abandon you either. Jesus is that Faithful.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Forethought For the Family.** 1 Timothy 5:7-8

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What "things" does Paul instruct Timothy to teach in the church? What purpose does Paul have in mind? Verses 1-7.

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. In what ways do you see the church (God's household) as the place where his love is demonstrated for each other and others? Colossians 3:12-15, 1 Corinthians 12:24-26
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: Are there things that come in your way of showing love and care for one another? What will you do about it? Philippians 1: 9-11, 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13