

# GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Our responsibility to widows

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**I**n ancient times the plight of the widow was foreboding. The Greek word, translated “widow” literally means “left empty” or “forsaken” due to losing a husband. She often desired to die when losing her husband because in staying with her deceased husband’s family she took on “an even more subordinate and often humiliating position.” Only if “the purchase price was paid back to the husband’s heirs or the dowry to the wife’s family” could she return to her own family. (Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament, Kittel, Vol. IX, pages 441-442).

The Bible reveals her needs in two distinct but related areas: legal justice and physical sustenance. Job and Isaiah comment on their times when an “widow’s ox is taken for a pledge” (Job 24:3) and “the cause of the widow” is not considered (Isa. 10:2). Jesus condemns certain leaders among the Jews who “devour widow’s houses” (Mk. 12:40), and apparently points to a common scene of a widow shamelessly persisting to receive justice at the hands of an unrighteous judge to illustrate the principle of continual beseeching in prayer

(Lk. 18: 1-8). The widow in ancient times had her borders taken away (Prov. 15:25), and found herself without help to take up her “cause” (Isa. 1:23).

The loss of a husband often led to the widow’s need of physical sustenance. Among Christians in Jerusalem the widows of the church were receiving physical sustenance through “daily ministrations” (Acts 6:1). When some Grecian widows in the church murmured about not receiving this service, the apostles met the need by having seven men selected among the brethren who would be over the business of “serving tables” on behalf of these neglected widows (Acts 6:2-3). Widows, at least 60 years of age, who were serving the Lord faithfully as Christians, and were totally desolate were sustained by the New Testament church (I Tim. 5:9-11).

Jehovah, “the judge of the widows” (Psm. 68:5), who “upholdeth the fatherless and the widow” (Psm. 146:9) instructs us as to how we as individuals should treat widows among us.

In our physical families, children and grandchildren are commanded to take care of the

needs of their widowed mother or grandmother. After all, did not your mother and father take care of you when you were helpless? Then, lovingly “requite” - pay them back with help in their time of need (I Tim. 5:4). Each of us must “relieve” the widows of our own family. The church must not be burdened with our responsibility (I Tim. 5:16).

We are to “visit the fatherless and widows” (James 1:27). The word “visit” involves “seeking out” one because we are concerned for the welfare (cf. Acts 15:36, 7:23). Tabitha practiced “pure religion” when she made garments the widows could use (Acts 9: 36,39).

Have any of the widows among you been deprived of justice in our courts, lacked daily food and sustenance, and in some need of help? Then, we must “visit” them. While widows among us live in a country of plenty and justice for all, and may not suffer the same plight as widows of ancient times, they still have been “left empty” by the death of a husband. Let us lift up their hearts by checking on them, and never allow them to be neglected.