

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

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The Kingdom of Our Lord #10.

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Justice For The Widow

In Scripture, the orphan and the widow sometimes are referenced together as two special classes of people that are vulnerable to injustice. One lacks parents, especially a father, and the other lacks a husband, leaving no one to support, provide, protect, and defend them. Thus, the Lord declares that He executes justice on their behalf. The Lord's justice is based on impartiality and is undergirded by love. Now, the previous issue of this series was devoted to the orphan; in this one, let us consider the widow.

(17) "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. (18) He executes justice for the orphan and the widow..." (Deuteronomy 10:17-18 NASB)

A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy habitation. (Psalm 68:5 NASB)

The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, but He thwarts the way of the wicked. (Psalm 146:9 NASB)

In Hebrew, the word for *widow*, which is in the feminine gender, literally means "a desolate house." Thus, a widow represents a desolate house because no man, that is, a husband, resides there. A house requires a head for authority.

As with the orphan, the widow can also signify something spiritual and national in addition to the individual and practical meaning.

Let us begin with the individual and practical aspect of the widow as given by James, who defines pure religion in relation to orphans and widows. In the kingdom of our Lord, the less fortunate and the distressed are not to be left alone, for the heart of our Heavenly Father is to execute justice for them.

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress.... (James 1:27 NASB)

When most people hear the word *religion*, they think of faith in something, or a set of doctrines, or outward forms of worship and piety. However, James defines religion from God's view in very practical terms that are based on the royal law of love. Love demands that orphans and widows in distress be visited, that is, helped. One does not go to them and just ask them how they are doing. No; one goes to them to help them, for James asks: **(15) If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?** (James 2:15-16 NASB).

Undoubtedly, James, who was well-versed in Hebrew Scripture, considered the Lord's word in connection with Assyria being sent to chastise and judge Israel.

So as to deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of My people of their rights, so that widows may be their spoil and that they may plunder the orphans. (Isaiah 10:2 NASB)

In this case, widows and orphans are the product of war, for when wars are fought, men die and leave behind widows and orphans. In fact, women and children are often the tragedy of war. If they survive, they are often left destitute and become the spoil and plunder of war. Thank God, war will cease in the kingdom of our Lord.

Nevertheless, even in good times, the widow is not to be neglected. We see practical examples of the care for widows in the early Pentecostal ecclesia that knew God's heart. Take note that just because a woman is a widow does not automatically make her a welfare case. The family of the widow has responsibility for her care and well-being. However, if a widow is indeed a widow, that is, she has no source of help, then the church is to provide.

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. (Acts 6:1 NASB)

(3) Honor widows who are widows indeed; (4) but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. (1 Timothy 5:3-4 NASB)

If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed. (1 Timothy 5:16 NASB)

Now, let us consider the spiritual and national significance of the widow as seen in ancient Israel being called out of Egypt to enter into a covenant with the Lord, into a husband and wife covenant. However, they broke the covenant and became widows, divorced from the Lord due to their harlotry.

(31) "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. (33) "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jeremiah 31:31-33 NASB)

They were also the house of the Lord, but when Jesus came to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the Judahites in Jerusalem rejected Him. As He headed toward the cross, Jesus walked out of the house.

(37) "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. (38) Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" (Matthew 23:37-38 NASB)

It was no longer His house; it was their house, and He walked out of it and left it desolate. On the physical level, He literally walked out of Herod's temple that became desolate nearly 40 years later in 70 AD. On a spiritual level, He walked out of what was to be a spiritual house of people, the wife of the Lord. On that day, we could say that He turned His back on the old covenant and began to inaugurate a new covenant in which He will have a new wife, even a new creation.

Consequently, based purely on love, the widow is to be helped in practical and loving ways today. However, I believe that it is also a reminder to us that the Lord is after a wife, and in His kingdom, there will be no widows, for all who are of the new covenant will be wed to Him.