



"The media look to government as society's primary problem-solvers. This is simply because the more God diminishes in our lives, the more government has to rise to take His place."
—David Kupelian

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The Widow and the Fatherless (Part Two)

In Part One, we considered the apostle James' definition of "pure religion" as "to [visit orphans and widows in their trouble](#), and to keep oneself unspotted from [the world](#)" ([James 1:27](#)). Our [God](#) has called and chosen us, not to become puffed up with pride that He chose us out of all the people of the world, but to serve Him and others with humility. We are to be especially sensitive to the needs of those who are socially and economically limited: the widow, the orphan, and the stranger ([Deuteronomy 10:18](#)).

To such people, we need to provide help when we see a genuine need. This brings to mind God's command regarding third tithe, a program He put into effect to care for those in need. Today, people consider the government to have replaced God in this spiritual duty. Many ask, "What can we get from our government?" and the government obliges by providing food, housing, medical care, phones, and now, in some places, guaranteed income!

Yet, the apostle Paul writes in [II Thessalonians 3:10](#) that "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." Socialism of the sort we see in America is rising in popularity because it promises something for nothing, which is the

opposite of what God says. He stresses helping the widows, the fatherless, and the stranger because they are the weakest among us, and in most cases, they are unable to work. Those who can work should do so. But if illness, infirmities, death of a loved one, or some other debilitating circumstance puts a normally able-bodied person in a bind, then God expects the Christian to help.

He sets the example. David writes in [Psalm 68:5](#), "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation." God says in [Jeremiah 49:11](#), "Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me." God Himself looks out for the rights and welfare of widows and orphans. For those who think this is sexist, His care does not diminish the role of women and mothers at all! God is letting us know that both sexes have roles to play, positions to fill, and God-given responsibilities, a consistent teaching in Scripture. [Satan](#) has successfully removed men from many families, and we see the result all around us. God says He will fill the empty place of the husband and father Himself.

In a situation corresponding to ours, [Jeremiah 7:1-11](#) provides a powerful criticism of the people of Judah. Jeremiah addresses them as they come up to Jerusalem to worship. Jehoiakim had recently become king, and the prophet's words against his leadership nearly cost him his life! The king, a politician and not religious, had overturned Josiah's righteous policies, and worship of the true God was no longer a priority.

Jeremiah's sermon, which extends to the end of Jeremiah 10, falls into three sections:

1. He draws attention to the people's superstition that Jerusalem would never fall because God resided in the Temple. Jeremiah declares that their immorality would ensure its destruction.
2. He points out the growing wickedness of the nation, especially of its leaders.
3. He explains how they could avert the prophesied evils looming over them.

Here in [Jeremiah 7:1-11](#) from the *Contemporary English Version* of the Bible, God speaks through His prophet to His people:

The LORD told me to stand by the gate of the temple and to tell the people who were going in that the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, had said:

Pay attention, people of Judah! Change your ways and start living right, then I will let you keep on living in your own country. Don't fool yourselves! My temple is here in Jerusalem, but that doesn't mean I will protect you. I will keep you safe only if you change your ways. Be fair and honest with each other. Stop taking advantage of foreigners, orphans, and widows. Don't kill innocent people. And stop worshiping other gods. Then I will let you enjoy a long life in this land I gave your ancestors.

But just look at what is happening! You put your trust in worthless lies. You steal and murder; you lie in court and are unfaithful in marriage. You worship idols and offer incense to Baal, when these gods have never done anything for you. And then you come into my temple and worship me! Do you think I will protect you so that you can go on sinning? You are thieves, and you have made my temple your hideout. But I've seen everything you have done.

How powerful! Jeremiah continues in this vein, listing the sins of the nation, and then, in the latter part of chapter 10, he condemns the leadership. No wonder Jehoiakim was so upset with him!

In verse 5, God promises to keep them safe *if* they change their ways, specifically, if they stop taking advantage of foreigners, orphans, and widows (verse 6). He then admonishes them not to murder or to worship other gods, and if they do these things, they will live and enjoy long lives in their land. God seems to be partial toward the weak, protecting and looking out for them.

This is not much different from what James tells us in [James 1:27](#). He does not explicitly mention the "stranger" or "foreigner," but as we have seen, [Moses](#) and Jeremiah do. We are to be hospitable to those we do not know

because, as Moses puts it, we were once "strangers" in a foreign land ([Exodus 23:9](#)). Note, though, that looking out for the widows, fatherless, and strangers in the land precedes warnings against such sins as murder and idolatry. God through Jeremiah puts their care near the top of the list of things people need to do to reform their ways and return to a proper relationship with Him. God's ordering of this list should make us sit up and consider the importance of taking care of the weak among us.

In the next essay, we will see Jeremiah's warnings and instructions echoed by another of God's prophets, Isaiah.

- Mike Ford

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Life Is Service \(Part Two\)](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

While America's relationship with slavery has indeed been checkered, with chattel slaves and indentured servants contributing to the prosperity of earlier times, the 'Progressivist' claim that America invented slavery and historically practiced the most tyrannical abuses in the world is patently false. In point of fact, every ethnic group has both practiced slavery and has been victims of slavery. Israelites have been slaves multiple times, to the Egyptians, Canaanites, Babylonians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Romans. A culture of slavery pervaded life in the early Christian church, forcing Paul to pen instructions accommodating this practice in the context of love. As well, slavery was a part of the culture of ancient Israel, where God codified as part of His Law humane regulations, guaranteeing liberation of Israelite slaves after six years of service and the Jubilee. These regulations obligated masters to make provisions ensuring their slaves' successful transition to freedom. Contrasting the harsh treatment of slaves by some American slave owners, God's treatment of us as slaves of righteousness is mild, with Christ's promise that His yoke is easy. Christ, having purchased us from a prior slave owner who was cruel, demands only a lifetime of reasonable service to our brethren with the same rigor as Christ has served us. God has given us a

variety of talents and responsibilities to facilitate our serving one another in a spirit of humility, with none exalting himself above another. When we fulfill all the conditions for Christian behavior outlined in I Corinthians 12 and 13, we are still unprofitable servants unless we learn to forgive and meld in love (that is, in sincerity), compassion, and humility with our siblings in the God family.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Service: A Key to Spiritual Success](#)

by William R. Gray

Have we lost the fire for God and His way that we we once had? If we have, we need to reconsider our basic commitments, and one of those is service. William Gray shows just how vital a key to success service is in all aspects of our lives.

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