

STAND UP FOR JESUS

Roger Shouse

1 Timothy 5:13

“And at the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.”

In this section of the letter to Timothy, Paul gives instructions about which widows the church can help financially. Not anyone and everyone will be helped. Some have family and that's where help needs to start. Some are young and need to marry. Some are not making wise choices. This is where our verse is found.

There are layers of lessons here. Do you see them?

First, they learned to be idle. That's not a good thing to put on your resume. Moses tells us to learn to number our days. Paul said he learned the secret of being filled and going hungry. Jesus invites us to learn from Him. But here, it's idleness. Notice the flow of words. They were idle, yet they were going from house to house. They were idle yet they were busybodies. Idle is not staying in bed all day. It's a lack of spiritual activity. Going from house to house is not a bad thing if one is taking food, encouraging, or teaching. Here, they were spreading gossip. They were pulling brethren down and not building up. And, of all things, they learned this. One wonders if they saw this being done by others. If others did it, why couldn't they? Some help the church in the worst way. Some are never happy unless they are miserable.

Second, a person will learn what they want to learn. I have a friend who listens to podcasts about ancient Rome. He knows the Caesars and that history. He wants to learn that. Someone that wants to learn to fly a plane, will do just that. Someone that wants to learn the will of God, can. Why did they learn to be idle? Was that a required class in school? No. They were not strong spiritually. Weak tends to attract weak. Rather than learning how to be productive and useful to the Lord, they learned how to do wrong. Gossip is one of the things that God hates.

You want to learn the Bible? You can. You want to learn to lead singing? You can. You want to learn how to better yourself? You can. But, if you want to learn to be a bump on a log, you can. If you want to learn how to be hurtful and mean, you can.

The Ephesians were told to “Learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Third, they were talking about things that it's not proper to mention. In our culture, there would be a TV show focused upon the unmentionables. Some people are just not decent. Some people don't know when to close their mouths. Some get into all kinds of trouble because they are out of bounds with God and His people. The unfruitful deeds of darkness are disgraceful even to mention. That's what the apostle wrote to the Ephesians. Don't dwell upon the wrong. Don't focus upon the wrong. Don't major in the things that are wrong. There are times we need to be innocent as doves, as the Lord says.

Fourth, our verse, these words, were not describing those of the world, but those who were supposed to belong to Christ. When Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy, he warned that a time would come when itching ears would have no patience or tolerance for the truth. They would rather spend their time chasing myths and error. Is there a link between gossipy busybodies and itching ears? Could it be that some never were converted in their hearts? Some like the idea of Jesus. Some definitely want the hope of Heaven. But, day to day, they do not live for Jesus. Day to day, they are doing what the world is doing. Day to day, they are helping the devil.

It's easy to allow those who do not get it to discourage us. It is easy to focus upon the problems. It is easy only to see what is wrong and fail to see all the hearts that love the Lord. Remember, some walked away from the Lord. He didn't give up. Nor, can we.

We can try to encourage others to do what is right. We can invite others to come along with us and help others. We can stop gossip by not having anything to do with it. We can remind ourselves that we are disciples of Jesus.

STAND UP, STAND UP FOR JESUS. THAT'S WHAT WE MUST DO!
