

GOD AND UNDERDOGS

“The fatherless and widows” – James 1:27

IN OLD TESTAMENT DAYS

Being fatherless or widowed were two of the most difficult life circumstances one could face in Old Testament days. Both usually meant poverty and sometimes severe hardship in those agrarian societies. There were no social security payments from the government or agencies to assist orphans in getting their basic needs met. God, of course, saw the plight of those societal underdogs. In the book of Deuteronomy alone, they are mentioned in tandem ten times. Of them, God said He would:

- Execute judgment on their behalf – Deuteronomy 10:18
- Order provision granted through their part in the offering – Deuteronomy 14:22-29, 26:12-13
- Insist on their joyful presence during His feast times – Deuteronomy 16:10-14
- Require crops be left in the field, on trees, and the vine for their sustenance – Deuteronomy 24:19-21
- Curse those that perverted the judgment of these underdogs – Deuteronomy 27:19

He loved them and he took their care to heart.

IN NEW TESTAMENT DAYS

Widows are mentioned more often in Luke's Gospel than in the other Gospels combined. Luke's mentions of widows include:

- Anna, the prophetess – married only seven years and was a widow of eighty-four, who served God in the temple night and day with fasting and prayers. She saw the baby Jesus in the temple, gave thanks to God, and talked about Him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem – Luke 2:36-38.
- The widow in the parable who troubled a judge until he agreed to avenge her – Luke 18:1-5. Jesus cautioned all to hear the lesson this widow taught. – Luke 18:6.
- The widow who cast in her two mites in the offering which Jesus said gave more than all the rest because while many gave of their abundance, she gave out of her poverty – Luke 21:2-3.

Nowhere in the New Testament are widows presented in a negative light. In fact, one of the most chilling warnings Jesus gave to any group concerned them when He pronounced, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation”* (Matthew 23:14).

PURE RELIGION

It was these two groups of underdogs that James used to express God's Will to believers. *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27). Maybe God has an underdog you could help.