

Dead While Living

"Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Timothy 5:5-6). Dead and yet alive? How can this be? In a garden, squash plants may look lush. But in stealth, the squash borer enters the stem and eats the inside of the stalk. Abruptly, the squash wilts and dies. So is this woman. She is already dead from the inside. On the other hand, *"she who is really a widow"* is old and gets older. Yet she is alive both inside and out. She will still be vitally alive when she expels her last breath -- alive even when she is dead.

She is dead while she lives because she lives in pleasure. Enjoying life is not evil, pleasure is not the focal point of life; fun does not define life. For many, fun is more important than money -- they only work so they can afford to play. Contrast now the widow who trusts in God. God is her core of life; faith is her solid connection to Him.

Being *"dead while she liveth"* conjures up some applications to the church. Some churches are already dead and no one notices. Nothing seems amiss; everything proceeds as always. The church died, but no one grieves, laments, or cries. When is a church dead?

- A church is dead while alive when the ability to edify the members is lost. If no edification is done, a Christian will not grow better, but they will eventually weaken and dry up (Ephesians 4:12). By then, they will have been dead a long time -- just waiting to be buried.
- A church is dead while alive when its sense of worship has expired. Awe in God's presence is forgotten. Songs are dirges and prayers are by rote. Bread and grape juice are consumed without remembrance. The "acts of worship" are all in place, but "worship" is gone. The church is dead -- just waiting for the doors to close.
- A church is dead while alive when it loses its distinctiveness. Churches must always stand for the truth and never develop *"itching ears"* which cannot tolerate the exposing of error and false teaching. Within this church, sin and weakness will run rampant. The church is dead -- just waiting for the memorial service.

- A church is dead while alive when a zeal for souls is gone. When a church loses its zeal for souls, it is as good as dead. But surely no one will notice or accept this fact. Sooner or later, people will move, die, or desert the Lord until no one is left. The building is an empty monument. The church is dead -- just waiting for the trip to the cemetery.

The remedy? *"... Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ..."* (Ephesians 5:14-15).

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