

The Church of the Living God

The Church 2020

1 Timothy 3:14-16

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I. Introduction

¹⁴These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; ¹⁵but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶[By common confession] great is the mystery of godliness:

God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

II. Timothy's Ministerial Calling

Timothy was a minister of the Gospel in the city of Ephesus. Paul wants to equip him to shepherd the Church well and in the fear of God because the Church belongs to _____.

III. God's House and Church

A. The House of God

First, the place where Timothy labors is the *house of God*. Timothy is a servant in God's *dwelling place*, the place where God lives and makes Himself known. The term "*house of God*" is used in the OT to refer to the _____ of God (cf. Mk 11:17).

In the new covenant, all those whom God has called out of the world and united to Christ in faith are God's *house*. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:19-22:

¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Hence, there is a fitting way for Timothy to behave. Whenever you go over to someone else's house, you follow their house rules. So too with the *house of God*. Paul reminds the Corinthians: "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are*" (1 Cor 3:16-17). Why do you think that God has often handed His churches over to destruction? Because God is not mocked. Not infrequently, He destroys His houses to uphold His honor (cf. Jer 7:9-14; Rev 2:5).

B. The Church of the Living God

Second, the place where Timothy labors is the *church of the living God*. The word *church* comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means the "*called out ones*" or "*assembly*." Like "*house*", this title has an OT background; Israel gathered together (especially for worship) was the "*_____*" of God.

- Psalm 22:22, 25 - ²² I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You... ²⁵ My praise shall be of You in the great assembly; I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
- Psalm 35:18 - ¹⁸ I will give You thanks in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people.
- Psalm 40:9-10 - ⁹ I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness In the great assembly; Indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself know. ¹⁰ I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth From the great assembly. (cf. Ps 89:5,7; 107:32; 149:1)

The title “*church*” is inherently corporate. While “*house of God*” is sometimes applied to us individually (cf. 1 Cor 6:19), the title “*Church*” is not. *We cannot be the church _____; we are the church _____.*

And this helps explain my personal relationship to the feminine imagery associated with the Church – whether “*bride*” (cf. Eph 5:25ff; Rev 21:9ff) or “*mother*” (cf. Gal 4:26). We are to be jealous for the reputation of the Church. “*For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*” (2 Cor 11:2).

When we assemble, we must assemble *for the better and not for the worse* (1 Cor 11):

¹⁷Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it... ²⁰Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. ²¹For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

C. The Pillar and Support of the Truth

Finally, the place where Timothy labors is the *pillar and support of the _____*. The Church *holds up and exalts the truth* – it displays the truth in all its glory and grandeur.

So what is the truth? Jesus prays, “*Sanctify them by Your truth; Your _____ is truth*” (Jn 17:17 cf. Ps 119:142). The Church exists to bear witness to *the truth of God* – to proclaim that the Triune God created the world in the beginning, has revealed Himself throughout human history, and has finally intruded into history itself in the Person of His Son. We make *common confession* (16) of this reality.

- *God was manifested in the flesh* –
- *Justified in the Spirit* –
- *Seen by angels* –
- *Preached among the Gentiles* –
- *Believed on in the world* –
- *Received up in glory* –

Because the church is the pillar and support of *the truth*, it is not the pillar and support of our opinions. Jesus is Lord; we are not.

IV. Conclusion