

The Household of God

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[0 : 0 0] 1 Timothy chapter 3 verses 14 through 16.

! If you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together. I'm writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his Word. Would you please be seated? In the church, when we talk about the gospel, we're talking about the good news that Jesus lived the sinless life that we could not live, that he died the death on the cross we all deserved, and that he rose again from death to life to conquer the enemies that we could never defeat.

Sin, Satan, and death. The gospel is the good news of God's grace to save undeserving sinners. God the Father, through the perfect life, the atoning death, and the bodily resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, rescues his people from his wrath, giving us peace with him and the promise of the full restoration of his creation with him in glorious, eternal, everlasting life, all to the praise of his glorious grace.

[2 : 1 3] In the church, when we think about the gospel, we sometimes think about it as something that's primarily for unbelievers. It's the message that Jesus commands us to share as we go and as we make disciples.

This is true. But the gospel is also for believers. The message of the gospel is a truth that both saved us and sanctifies us.

It is a truth that God uses both to save us, declaring us righteous, and it is a truth that God continually uses to make us more righteous, more like Jesus.

Jesus said that in Matthew 28. In this teaching, this disciple training takes place in the church. The gospel isn't just a message we proclaim to unbelievers. It's a message that the church embodies. We are who we are. We are who we are.

[3 : 2 7] And we do what we do because of the saving truth of Jesus Christ, encapsulated in the message of the gospel and incorporated into all areas of the church.

The gospel communicates God's love to save sinners and sinners who have been graciously saved by God should manifest that love, that same love in the church by demonstrating our love for the Lord, our love for the truth, and our love for one another, and our love for lost people.

The gospel is the message that saves, sanctifies, and shapes the church's culture. And by that I mean it influences not just what we believe, but what we do and how we do what we do, which communicates what we value and determines how we choose to conduct ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ in the church.

In Galatians chapter 2 verses 11 through 14, Paul speaks about a confrontation that he had with Peter while they were at the church in Antioch.

In verse 9, Paul shares how Peter, along with James and John, extended fellowship to him, having recognized the grace of God at work in his life to save him and transform him.

[5 : 0 8] In that verse, Paul recognizes Peter as someone whom the church perceived as a pillar. And I'll talk more about pillars later, but pillars support the roof of a structure.

Peter was an important person in the early church. He was one of Jesus' 12 disciples. He was part of Jesus' inner circle. He was the one who preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost and whose sermon the Holy Spirit used to create the church.

Peter was a big deal in the church. However, Paul noticed that while Peter was not preaching a false gospel in Antioch, he was subverting the truth of the gospel by his conduct and he confronted him about it.

And we read about that in Galatians chapter 2 verses 11 through 14. But when Cephas, and that's Peter's name, came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

[6 : 31] But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, if you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

Peter, Barnabas, and other Christians with Jewish heritage weren't subverting the gospel with their teaching or their doctrine, but by their conduct.

And this threatened to create a culture that didn't reflect the transformational power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's transformational power to both make us new creations in Christ, transforming our relationships with him, with God, and our relationships with other people in the church.

And while they were upholding the truth of the gospel with their teaching, they weren't upholding the truth of the gospel in their conduct, and that negatively affected the church's culture.

The church in Ephesus, which Timothy pastored, and whom Paul is writing to, was dealing with a similar problem.

[7 : 46] These verses, chapter 3, verses 14 through 16, are Paul's purpose for writing. They include Paul's purpose statement for writing to Timothy.

The church in Ephesus had problems. We've read about some of them. They had false teachers serving as elders who were leading some of its members astray. Paul had already dealt with some of them, and he talks about that in chapter 1, verse 20, and he left Timothy in Ephesus to deal with the rest.

Timothy's task was to confront the false teachers and undo a lot of the damage that they had caused in the church by putting the church back into order. A church whose doctrine is reflected in its members' behavior.

A church that obeys God's commands and upholds the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, both in what it says and in what it does.

And so that's the main idea for this morning's message. God commands his church to uphold the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God commands his church to uphold the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[9 : 01] Now, the last recorded message in the Bible to the church in Ephesus wasn't the book called Ephesians or this letter or the next one that Paul wrote to Timothy.

It's found in Revelation chapter 2. In this letter, Jesus commends the church for their work to uphold the truth.

In Revelations 2, 2 through 3, he says, I know your works, your toil, and your patience, endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. So far, so good. Jesus praises the church for their hard work to uphold and guard the truth of the gospel.

They refused to compromise their beliefs, even though doing so meant hardships for them. They are obeying God's command to uphold the truth of the gospel.

[10 : 08] What more could Jesus want? Well, he wants more. In verses 4 and 5, he tells them, I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.

Like the Ephesian church, we can easily fall into a sort of cold, mechanical obedience to the Lord and to upholding the truth.

So we must examine our motivations for what we do in the church and for what we believe in the church. We need to love Jesus, who is the source of truth and the truth we uphold to have the kind of culture that demonstrates the transformative power of the gospel.

And so I want you to consider, just for yourself or for our church, is our church and our worship cold and mechanical?

[11 : 35] Or do our hearts burn within us as we worship the Lord of truth, Jesus Christ, who has been gracious to save us, faithful to sanctify us, and will complete his work in us, bringing us to glory.

If you're here this morning and maybe you've never heard the gospel, or maybe you've heard it and you don't believe, friend, we are glad that you are here.

God has ordained this day for you to be in this place and there's no greater place for you to be right now than here to hear the gospel.

And I hope that today is the day of your salvation. We've prayed for you. Again, we're glad that the Lord has brought you here and we hope and we've prayed that you will come to know the truth and that you will be set free by the good news of Jesus Christ, knowing who he is and understanding what he's done.

God commands his church to uphold the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And there's three commands in our text this morning, three ways that we as a church do that, uphold the truth of the gospel.

[13 : 04] The first command is that the church must uphold the truth of the gospel in its conduct. Church must uphold the truth of the gospel in its conduct.

Again, verses 14 through the beginning of verse 15. Paul says, I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God.

And so here, Paul introduces the purpose of his letter. Now, to us, this might seem like a strange place to put your purpose statement.

If you've ever written a paper for school, you've probably been told to state your purpose somewhere at the very front in the first paragraph, or at least on the first page, where you're telling your reader what you're writing about, why you're writing about it, and why what you're writing about matters.

But Paul locates his purpose statement about halfway in the letter, and he does so, I think, intentionally. This statement serves as like a hinge on a door or the spine of a book.

[14 : 12] It's holding all that he has said and all that he will say together. This is a turning point. The first three chapters contain positive instructions.

Confront false teachers, pray for all people, appoint qualified men to serve as elders and deacon. And in the last three chapters contain negative warnings. But everything Paul has written, everything that he will write in this letter, everything points back to these verses, chapter 3, verses 14 through 16, and the importance of guarding the truth of the gospel and conducting ourselves in ways that display the gospel in the household of God.

The church is God's household. And how we behave in his house matters a lot to him. And it should matter a lot to us.

Because Jesus founded the church. He talks about that in Matthew 16, 18 through 19. He died for the church. Ephesians 5, 25. He identifies intimately with the church.

Acts 9, 4 through 5. He called the church his bride. John 3, 29. And referred to it as his own body. Ephesians 5, 25. And here, the church is referred to as his family.

[15 : 37] Most families operate under a set of rules which, if obeyed, create order and harmony amongst the people living under the same roof.

Now, I remember growing up thinking that my parents' rules were sometimes unfair. And if you're a young person here this morning, I'm sure that you have often felt or expressed the same thing.

These rules are unfair. And you probably are thinking like I did back when I was a kid. Well, when I grow up and when I'm a parent, I'm going to let my kids do whatever they want.

Then you grow up. And you have kids. And you're not going to let them do whatever they want, are you? Because you love them.

And without rules, there is no order. And without order, there is chaos. God has given us rules not because he loves rules but because he loves us.

[16 : 47] His commands protect us from sin and the chaos that sin brings into our lives and into our relationships.

When I was in middle school, my parents opened our home to a seminary student. And he shared my bedroom. And he became sort of like a big brother to me.

And he came from a broken family. And he hadn't experienced a loving family environment with both a mother and a father and siblings like I had.

And whatever I would complain to him about the rules, rules that he didn't have growing up, he would say to me, you don't know how blessed you are to have the family that you have.

Sometimes we can take for granted the privileges of being a part of God's household, being a part of his church. When unbelievers come into our fellowship, they should see something here that they don't have.

[18:00] Something they see in our conduct that testifies to a greater truth that maybe they've denied. That there is a living God. And that he does live inside his people, his church, his household, his dwelling.

I can tell by the way these people conduct themselves. The Bible begins with God dwelling in the physical presence of Adam and Eve, the first human beings.

That changed after they sinned. Sin created a separation between God who is holy and man who is now sinful. But God promised to them, in his word, he promised that he will one day send an offspring of the woman who would crush the deceiver, the serpent's head.

And from that point on in the Old Testament, God progressively reveals the identity of that person as his presence moves closer and closer to his people.

In Genesis 28, verses 16 through 17, Jacob encounters God in a dream. And God reaffirms to Jacob in that dream his promise to send this offspring.

[19:17] And when Jacob wakes up, he says, in Genesis 28, 16 through 17, surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it. And he was afraid.

And he said, how awesome is this place? This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven. We hear Moses, or we hear something similar, I should say, in God's instructions to Moses concerning the construction of the tabernacle after he delivered his people from slavery in Egypt.

In Exodus 25, 8, God says to him, and let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst. After God's people conquered the promised land, God says to King Solomon in 1 Kings 6, 12 through 13, concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you which I spoke to David, your father, and I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people, Israel.

In the New Testament, the promised offspring, the serpent crusher, arrives. And look at how John describes him in chapter 1, verse 14, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen him, his glory, the glory as the only son from the father full of grace and truth. In the days leading up to his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples in John 14, 15 through 17, if you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will ask the father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever.

[21:05] Even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him for he dwells with you and he will be in you.

He will dwell in you. When the disciples were marveling over the temple's architecture, remember, Jesus prophesied that it would be destroyed, which happened in AD 70.

the place where God now dwells on the earth is not a city, it's not a building, it's in his people who constitute his church. Ephesians 2, 19 through 22.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. The church, the corporate body of Jesus' followers is the place on earth where God lives, dwells, and manifests his presence.

[22:23] Is that awesome? And so how we conduct ourselves here testifies to the world that something supernatural is going on.

We love each other. We treat each other as family. Even though we're not related by blood, we have been cleansed by the blood of Christ.

We've been adopted as his children into his family. And so it's important that we go to church. It's important that we gather.

We are the Lord's house. Worshiping in his presence, listening to his word, and partaking of the elements which symbolize his sacrifice to save us.

It is an awesome thing to be a part of God's household. And it's our sacred duty to conduct ourselves in ways that testify to the reality of what he has done to save us.

[23 : 29] And as Jesus has said, if you love him, you'll obey his commandments and you'll worship him in spirit and in truth. And as a result of that, the world will take notice.

John 13, 34 through 35. 35, Jesus said to his disciples, a new commandment I give to you that you love one another just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another.

By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. To love Jesus is to obey Jesus.

To love Jesus means loving one another. When we conduct ourselves in ways we should, we testify to the reality of the truth of the gospel and God's power to save sinners and give them new life and change them in ways that cannot be explained.

So how we conduct ourselves in God's house matters. Now the second command, the church must uphold the truth of the gospel in its convictions. The church must uphold the truth of the gospel in its convictions.

[24 : 41] The rest of verse 15, it says, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and a buttress of the truth.

Ephesus was home to one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Artemis.

William Barclay said that one of its features was pillars.

It contained 127 pillars. every one of them the gift of a king. All were made of marble, some were studded with jewels and overlaid with gold.

Worship of Artemis was a huge deal in Ephesus. The temple was a major moneymaker for many people in the city.

Acts 19 records Paul's ministry in Ephesus. His preaching, the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, resulted in many coming to faith in the living God. This drew the ire of Demetrius, a silversmith who made idols, small statues of Artemis to sell to tourists.

[25 : 49] The truth of the gospel was leading people away from the lie that he was using to make money. I think we're seeing something similar in our culture, aren't we?

there's a lot of lies disguised as the truth and there are a lot of people who make money promoting these lies as if they are the truth and a lot of people are buying these lies as if they are the truth because they are eager to exchange the truth of God for a lie.

And it all goes back to the first lie disguised as the truth in the Garden of Eden when Satan told Eve, you will be like God.

You can do what you want without consequence. And we've seen how that has gone. But Jesus said that he came to testify to the truth.

John 18, 37-38. Jesus said that he is the embodiment of truth. In John 14, 6. Jesus said that those who follow him will be set free by the truth.

[27 : 11] In John 8, 32. Jesus said that the Father seeks those who worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4, 23-24. And Jesus prayed that those who follow him would be sanctified in the truth.

John 17, 17-19. So friend, to know Jesus is to know the truth. And his commands that he gives to the church are truths that we must uphold.

As pillars, uphold the roof, so the church upholds the gospel, lifts up the word of God, the truth of the gospel that it likewise stands on.

The Greek word for buttress refers to a foundation. So not only do we uphold the gospel, but the gospel is also our foundation. Without it, the church is no longer a church.

And it will crumble. It's like we're the meat in this gospel sandwich. We stand on it and we uphold it. We speak the truth.

[28 : 24] We live the truth. We don't hide the truth. We magnify the truth. We amplify the truth. We shine a spotlight on it and we spread it.

We are God's family, the dwelling place of his presence and the guardians of his word. This is an awesome thing that should cause us all to be in awe of our awesome God who spoke the world into being, who rules supremely and sovereignly over all things, the one who has absolute authority, who knows all things, who holds all things together, who is infinite and infinitely holy.

He has chosen to save us. He has chosen to make us his family and he has given us his sacred truth to uphold it, to guard it, and to testify to it in the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

The church is not a club. We're not a business. We are a beacon of truth. We are a light that should dispel darkness.

We are a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. It is a place where the people are convinced of the truth of Jesus Christ and are convicted by that truth to conduct themselves in ways that promote the reality of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

[29 : 53] Who is Jesus and what has Jesus done? Verse 16, in the third commandment, the church must uphold the truth of the gospel in its confession, in our conduct, in our convictions, in our confession.

Paul says, in the beginning of verse 16, great indeed, we confess is the mystery of godliness. The mystery of godliness is the reality of the truths hidden in the Old Testament which are fully revealed in Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

The seed of the woman who crushed the serpent's head. The Messiah who would conquer by dying and rising again. Who would save his people from their sins. Cause his presence to dwell within them and bring them into his everlasting kingdom.

of the truths that the church has been given to uphold. The greatest one is the one that concerns the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

What follows in verse 16 is a hymn that was probably sung by the early church and it communicates the truths they confessed and the supreme truth they confessed about the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 18] Paul says he was manifested in the flesh. This refers to the truth of Jesus' incarnation. incarnation. God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ that the incarnation the eternal word of God added a human nature to his divine nature being truly God and being truly human.

1 John 1 1-3 the disciple of Jesus is testifying this confession that he has to the churches. That which was from the beginning which we have heard which we have seen with our eyes which we looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life the life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you so that you may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

this is an essential truth of the Christian faith and no wonder it's a truth that Satan so frequently and oftenly assaults the person of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan remember Satan challenged him and he challenged his true identity by saying if you are the Son of God if you are the Son of God it's a tactic he continues to employ to deny the reality that Jesus is God in the flesh truly man truly God he was God incarnate and then Paul continues saying he was vindicated by the Spirit the Greek word means to declare someone righteous in a legal sense throughout his ministry the Holy Spirit verified that Jesus was who he claimed to be the Son of God the Holy Spirit descended on him at his baptism Jesus' miraculous works giving sight to the blind hearing to the deaf healing people of all kinds of diseases and infirmities casting out demons walking on water bringing dead people back to life all of these things

Jesus bore witness to the Spirit's presence in his ministry and ultimately the greatest vindicating work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus Christ was seen in his resurrection on the third day after he had died on the cross Romans 1 4 and he was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ our Lord Romans 8 11 confirms the Spirit's role in the resurrection and the good news of what that means for those who are in Christ if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you Paul continues with this confession of who Jesus truly is that he was seen by angels throughout Jesus' ministry angels observed him and they served him

[34 : 49] Mary and Joseph are told by angels that she would give birth to God's Son angels announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds they ministered to Jesus after his temptation they strengthened him in the garden of Gethsemane as the cross loomed at his death and resurrection angels were present and informed Jesus' disciples that they should not seek the living amongst the dead that Jesus had risen just as he said because he's the Son of God Paul continues proclaimed among the nations before Jesus ascended back to heaven he commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations and as a result of that Paul says that he has been believed on in the world from Jerusalem to Bartlesville and beyond the gospel has advanced how awesome is that the church of Jesus includes people from many different nations who speak many different languages and who look very different from one another but we are all one eternally united in Jesus Christ and Paul goes on he was taken up in glory

Acts chapter 1 verses 9 through 10 records Jesus' ascension back to heaven proving that he is who he said that he was the Son of God proving that the work that he came to the earth to do was accomplished and it was accepted by God the Father atoning for sinners dying on the cross as the Lamb of God God's perfect sacrifice rising again crushing the serpent's head delivering us from sin Satan and death these six stanzas summarize the truths contained in the gospel these are the truths that the church the true church of Jesus Christ confesses this is the message that must shape the church's culture as the household of God this is the message that we must proclaim and so how should we adjust our lives according to what we've heard in God's word this morning be committed to uphold the truth of the gospel in all of these ways be committed to uphold the truth of the gospel in your conduct

I think a good thing for all of us to do when we're in this place to think before we speak or before we do something is what I'm about to say and is what I'm about to do upholding the gospel is it magnifying the name of Jesus Christ be committed to uphold the truth of the gospel in your convictions if you say that Jesus has saved you then there should be a transformation that has taken place in your life because the Holy Spirit dwells within you and so when it comes to your life when it comes to what you will do and what you won't do your convictions based upon your your confession that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior that should be seen what you say and what you do and then in your confession we have been chosen by God to be the guardians of his word and of his truth and there is nothing that Satan would want more than for those to have the truth to not talk about the truth or to doubt the truth this world needs

Christians who are bold who are unashamed and who are unafraid we share the gospel we confess who Jesus is we speak the truth in love and as a result of that God will do the rest and he'll be glorified in our sharing and our confessing and our conducting ourselves in ways here that reflect the truth of who Jesus is and what he has done you know I'm thankful many times when visitors come into our congregation I often hear them say about how much they felt welcomed and how much they felt loved and that's a great thing but we can excel still more can't we more and more until the day comes and it will all have been worth it because Christ is worthy and if you haven't thought that or believe that before and you've heard the gospel that I've confessed to you this morning and you have questions please come and find me because there's nothing more than we want than for you to be saved for God to be glorified and so I pray that today is the day of salvation for you again I'll be down here I'd love to talk to you and if you have been convinced you think what do I do next what's still like to talk with you but you go somewhere you get by yourself you get with God you repent of your sins you turn to faith in

Jesus Christ and you'll be saved that's it no works to be done no journey to take Jesus has taken the journey and done the work for you let's pray Lord what a awesome privilege you've given us to be saved of our sins to be clothed in your righteousness to receive your spirit indwelling us keeping us sanctifying us making us more like Jesus Christ our savior what a wonderful thing it is to be a part of your church in a world that is full of lies and deceptions Lord you've given us your church you've given us your word you've given us the truth to stand on Lord as you've said though the winds and the waves and the storms beat on the structure the house that is on the word of

[41 : 52] God will not fall and Lord we've seen that reality throughout the centuries Lord I pray that as it concerns our congregation Lord that we would continue to have our feet rooted on your word on the truth and that we would continue to uphold the gospel with even greater strength and vigor and desire God that this would be a place where we conduct ourselves in ways that match our convictions and our confessions that Lord we would be a church that pleases you that God we

would not just love the truth but we would love the Lord of the truth that our worship wouldn't be cold and mechanical that it wouldn't be just about winning arguments but being used by you in the hopes to win souls the saving faith in Jesus Christ

God we need your help for this and we trust that you provide it and we pray that the results will glorify you for only you are worthy we ask these things in Jesus name amen you