



Encounters with God – Through the Church

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.** [1]

Introduction: The church as the pillar and ground of the truth provides the venue which God has chosen as the earthly witness of the gospel and its power of the resurrected Christ. As the venue for witness, there is an understood structure that presents itself through necessity. [2]

This structure reveals two offices of leadership: [**Philippians 1:1**] [Elder (Bishop) and Deacon]

NOTE: The Elder and Deacon offices in the church is not to be understood as a hierarchy of leaders i.e., one over another, but a revealed pattern by which the Lord cares for and keeps His church through the ministry of the gospel of Christ [**Acts 6:2-4; 20:28-30**] which is the very present and continuing power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes [**Romans 1:16**].

REVIEW: In the Scriptures there are various titles used for the Elders of a church, each reflecting a different perspective of their responsibilities. They may be called elders [**Acts 14:23**] or bishops [**1 Timothy 3:1**] indicating the work of an overseer [**Acts 20:28**] as those who look after the flock of God. [**1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:17-18**] These titles are used interchangeably and refer to the same person. They may be called pastors. [Compare **Matthew 9:36** and **Ephesians 4:11**] This is the least used title in the Scriptures, but is another way of describing the shepherding work of those who oversee the church of God. [3] The office of Deacon [**1 Timothy 3:13**] is a transliteration of the word for minister or servant.

NOTE: The office of deacon is to be interpreted differently than his service. This interpretation is to be **according to its context** revealed in the word of God. There are some that believe that a woman can hold the office. The Scriptures are clear concerning gender leadership in the church. [**1 Timothy 2:12-13; 3:12; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35**]

[4]

We find the qualification for these offices: [**1 Timothy 3:1-13**]

Conclusion: There is an understood structure as to the practical demonstration of the assembled body of Christ. This structure is revealed

out of necessity as the assembly grows in its influence in the life of people awakened to the truth of the gospel. As it grows it is to remain faithful to both the message and ministry of the gospel in the context of personal relationship as the body of Christ. God Himself has provided for this faithfulness to continue. [**1 Corinthians 12:18**]

[1] God has chosen to reveal the truth concerning Himself through His word. [**Genesis 1:1-3; 2:16-17; Psalm 119; Proverbs 2:1-7; John 1:1-14; 17:17**] The full revelation of God Himself is declared through gospel [good news] of Jesus Christ as the grace and truth of God. [**John 1:1-18; Colossians 2:9**] This gospel proclaimed and heard awakens those to faith who will believe, perpetuating the purposes of God. [**Romans 10:13-17**] This awakened faith is pleasing to God. [**Hebrews 11:6**] God seals the believing soul to Himself through the gift of His indwelling Spirit. [**Ephesians 1:12-14**] The sealed believer is now born of the Spirit [**John 1:12-13; 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:23**] and no longer in the flesh and at liberty to live by the principle or law of faith. [**Romans 3:23-31; 8:8-16; Galatians 5:13-17; 1 Peter 2:15-16**] The word of God is the standard by which faith's opportunity is both revealed and released through the ministry of the indwelling Spirit. [**John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; 6:19-20; Hebrews 4:12**] The word of God is the authority and power that can transform the believer through the renewing of the mind. [**Romans 7:22-25; 8:1-6; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Philippians 4:6-8**] This transformation is the grace of God at work in the believing soul [**1 Corinthians 15:10; Ephesians 2:8-10; 3:14-20**] as they recognize the difference between the manifestation of the flesh and the Spirit. [**Romans 13:14; Galatians 5**] The church is the venue by which God has chosen to reveal this manifestation in the context of personal relationship. [**Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:20-21**]

[2] **Review:** This need for structure in the church is first revealed in [**Acts 2:41-47; 6:1-7**] as God was adding to the Church and the number of disciples was multiplied. This structure for leadership is important to the purposes of God and His desire for the

church as the pillar and ground of the truth. [Ephesians 4:11-16]

[3] Consider these exhortations concerning the office of elder: [James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17]

[4] The use of deacon [Romans 16:1] concerning Phebe in some translations rather than servant [KJV] can cause some confusion when not compared and cross referenced with other Scriptures. Phoebe was a servant of the church at Cenchreae but did not hold the office of deacon in that church.