

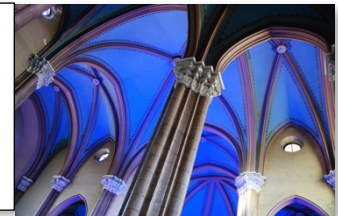
## “THE PILLAR OF TRUTH”

### 1 Timothy 3:14-16

**Theme:** *The Church's prime objective is to faithfully lift up Christ to those around us as the only solution to our alienation from God.*

**Introduction:** There are times when God's Spirit desires to be crystal clear, so He leads an author of Scripture to clearly declare: “This is why I am writing to you ...” or “This is what I am trying to say.” In our text today, the heart of the book of 1 Timothy is provided to us – the reason Paul is writing. Everything that has preceded these verses were designed to provide the fulfillment of these verses and everything that follows the same. Paul declares what the church's purpose is – and how believers ought to conduct themselves in the church to fulfill that purpose. Ultimately, ***“The Church's prime objective is to faithfully lift up Christ to those around us as the only solution to our alienation from God.”***

- I. Our Conduct as the Church – 3:14-15b
- II. Our Commitment as the Church – 3:15c
- III. Our Confession as the Church – 3:16



### I. OUR CONDUCT AS THE CHURCH – 3:14-15b

#### A. The Priority for Our Conduct – vv. 14-15a

1. Paul clearly provides the explanation as to why he has been writing about various corrections that were necessary in the church:
  - a) *False teachers were misleading the saints with reference to the purpose of the Law - chapter 1*
  - b) *The core value of prayer being offered by biblically qualified men.*
  - c) *The priority of the influences of a godly woman when she remains faithful to the role God has intended - as an example of the believer, modest in her presentation, an enabler of biblical teaching, and discipler of children within her home.*
  - d) *Biblically qualifications of spiritual leadership - elders and deacons who partner in shepherding the church, supported by godly women.*
2. Paul now explains: *“I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long ...”*
3. His point is that the aberrant conduct within the church needed to be

addressed and corrected by Apostolic authority.

4. His preference was to come in person – it warranted such a level of commitment by him – but Paul states that he might have to settle by *“writing these things to you”* because he may not be able to come, at least in a timely fashion – *“... but in case I am delayed”* their misconduct would not continue.
5. We don’t know whether Paul ever did make it back to Ephesus, nevertheless, the authoritative, inspired Word of God was provided through the power of the Holy Spirit correctively addressing these matters of doctrine, practice, and qualifications.
6. He will continue to address issues of apostasy, self-discipline, ministry to widows, discipline of elders, dangers of corruption through money, and the need to be faithfully contending for the faith in the remainder of the letter.
7. His priority in writing these things is *“so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God ...”*
  - a) *“conduct” [ἀναστρέφω] – to conduct oneself in terms of certain principles, act, behave, conduct oneself, live”<sup>1</sup> – it describes the consistent pattern of living expected by God among all who are part of the church.*
  - b) *This must not be viewed as something applying to pastors or elders but is the common “conduct” expected by anyone who knows Jesus Christ and is therefore part of the Body of Christ.*

## **B. The Propriety of Our Conduct – v. 15b**

1. The reason this is so important is that appropriate behavior must be sought because of the location of the behavior – *“in the household of God.”*
2. The Church belongs to God – it is His family – cp. *Ephesians 2:19*.
3. The decorum expected within the family of God, the Church is here identified and clarified.
4. People are not free to conduct themselves within the church in any freelance fashion – we are expected to comply with God’s expectations, regulations, and standards – it is God’s and to be in it is to recognize His authority and command – cp. *1 Peter 1:17*.

## **II. OUR COMMITMENT AS THE CHURCH – 3:15c**

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 72.

**A. The Ownership – “*which is the church of the living God*”**

1. Our commitment to the propriety of our conduct is reinforced by Paul’s description “... *which is the church of the living God* ...”
2. The phrase “*living God*” is rich in biblical citation to contrast the true God with the plethora of false deities of idolatry – cp. *Jeremiah 10:10*.
3. Our church is not a club democratically directed – but an assembly of people called out from sin and regenerated through the work of Christ Jesus and redeemed by His blood – we belong to Him! – cp. *Acts 20:28; Titus 2:14*.
4. Our commitment as a church must be to faithful allegiance to the true God – rejecting all attempts to lure us away from our God.
5. Instead, our task is to humble ourselves and to constantly be drawing near to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ – cp. *James 4:7-8, 10*.

**B. The Obligation – “*pillar and support of the truth*”**

1. This is essential since God’s intention for the Church is to serve Him by lifting up Jesus Christ – the One who is the Truth – cp. *John 14:6*.
2. This is the commitment of the church – to serve as the means by which the Lord Jesus is exalted – as a “*pillar and support of the truth*.”
  - a) “*pillar*” [στῦλος] – a cylindrical column designed to support the load of a header – cp. *Revelation 3:12*.
  - b) “*support*” [ἐδραίωμα] – that which provides a firm base for something; a foundation – only used here in the NT.
3. The analogy Paul uses to describe the church as the foundation and pillar on which the truth rests describes the stewardship given to the church to provide the truth was such a firm, immovable, unshakable, foundation that we can lift up and support the truth about Jesus Christ as pillars.
  - a) *If an earthquake of human rebellion were to assail the church – we should be so committed to our stewardship that the Gospel of Christ would not falter.*
  - b) *If a tsunami of opposition were to overwhelm the church, our obligation is to continue lifting up Christ Jesus to that world as the truth despite hostility, rejection, rebellion, antagonism, or vitriol.*
4. How shall we do this – execute our obligation as a “*pillar and support of the truth*?”

- a) Study the Word for conformity to Christ - [John 17:17](#).
- b) Submit to the Word with the mind of Christ - [Romans 12:2](#).
- c) Spread the Word to the glory of Christ - [2 Timothy 4:2](#).
- d) Stand on the Word with the Spirit of Christ - [Jude 3](#).

### III. OUR CONFESSION AS THE CHURCH – **3:16**

#### A. The Disclosure of Godliness - *“He who was revealed in the flesh”*

1. This is the basis for the work of redemption - that Jesus Christ “was *revealed in the flesh ...*”
2. The fact that He “*was revealed*” affirms the fact of His preexistence - that He was not created, but was “made visible” - He existed prior to His birth - cp. [John 1:14](#); [1 John 3:5, 8](#).
3. The fact that this disclosure of God was “in the flesh” affirms that Jesus Christ was truly a man of flesh and blood; thus, He was qualified to serve as a substitute for all other men because of His sinlessness.
4. It was this very godliness that qualified Him to take our place under the hand of God’s wrath - cp. [Hebrews 2:14-17](#); (cp. [2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

#### B. The Delineation of Godliness - *“... was vindicated in the Spirit ...”*

1. However, having been made sin and receiving the fullness of the wrath of God against sin in Himself, did He remain accursed?
2. Here we are told that He “*was vindicated in the Spirit*” - that is, the godliness of the Son of God was exonerated by means of God’s Holy Spirit.
3. How was this exoneration or vindication certifiable? - through the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead - cp. [Romans 1:4](#).
4. Had Jesus any sin of His own, he would not have qualified for resurrection - He’d have stayed dead as penalty for that sin.
5. However, since Jesus died for our sins only, the Father would not permit “*His Holy One to see corruption*” - and declared His innocence by raising Him from the dead - cp. [Acts 2:24-28](#).

#### C. The Delight in Godliness – *“... seen by angels ...”*

1. We are told here that the first ones to behold the resurrected Christ were the angels - *“... seen by angels ...”*
2. These are the ones who had been so attentive to the redemptive work of Christ from the very beginning:
  - a) *They had been there at His birth showing tremendous interest.*
  - b) *They had shown compassion for Him after His temptation.*

- c) *They had strengthened Him at Gethsemane.*
- d) *They were also the first to see the successful, victorious conqueror upon the event of His victory, the resurrection - [Matthew 28:2-7](#).*

3. In addition, they addressed the disciples upon His ascension and welcomed Christ Jesus back into glory.

#### D. The Declaration of Godliness – “... *proclaimed among the nations* ...”

1. Once the good news of the Gospel seen by the angels, then Jesus was “*proclaimed among the nations*” - a reference to the clear commission given to believers by the Lord Jesus Himself - cp. [Matthew 28:19-20](#).
2. This was dependent upon the reception of the Holy Spirit for its accomplishment - cp. [Acts 1:8](#).
3. This declaration of the Gospel message throughout the world presupposes the prevailing characteristic of Godliness, whereby men are conformed to the image of Christ Jesus - the godly One.

#### E. The Dynamic of Godliness - “... *believed on in the world* ...”

1. The final area in the establishment of godliness is the work of redemption in providing saving faith.
2. Having come, died, resurrected, proclaimed victory, and declared the Gospel, there is the work that only God can do of bringing a person to faith in Christ.
3. Notice that a person does not become godly, then receive the grace of God; rather, a person who is godless, is brought near through the blood of Christ Jesus and given as a gift - saving grace through faith.
4. This was immediately accomplished the very first time the Gospel message was proclaimed - at Pentecost - cp. [Acts 2:41](#).

#### F. The Denouement of Godliness - “... *taken up into glory*.”

1. This is the final element in the “*mystery of godliness*” - the entrance of Christ Jesus into the glory of Heaven.
2. This was what Jesus had prayed for prior to the crucifixion - that he would be restored to the glory He had before the incarnation - *John 17:5*; to receive it would certify full success in the redemptive mission.
3. This was exactly what happened - God fully restored the Son to His pre-incarnate glory - cp. [Philippians 2:8-11](#).
4. Not only was He granted immeasurable pre-eminent glory, but He was also able to “sit at the right hand of the Father” - indicating the complete fulfillment of all necessary redemptive work, and that all that was left to occur is the timely salvation of individual sinners who would turn to Christ

- *Acts 2:32-37.*

### **So What?**

1. Are there any ways that I resist the authority of God's Word in its instructions concerning how I should be involved in the Church?
2. If I were to embrace the truth that the church belongs to God, how would I respond differently?
3. In what ways do I need to change in order to fulfill my obligation as the pillar & support of the truth?
4. Am I weak in any of my confessions as part of the church – how should I strengthen my convictions?

**The Church's prime objective is to faithfully lift up Christ to those around us as the only solution to our alienation from God.**