EXPOSITION OF I TIMOTHY  

Message #24  

I Timothy 3:14-16

Most serious-minded Bible students agree that in these verses is a purpose statement for the N.T. local church. William Barclay said, “Here in one phrase is the reason why the Pastoral Epistles were written” (p. 88). It is certainly why I Timothy was written.

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE TO COME TO CHURCH TO HEAR THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD TAUGHT SO THEY MAY LEARN WHAT TO BELIEVE AND HOW TO BEHAVE SO THAT THEIR LIVES AND GOD’S CHURCH WILL BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE LIVING GOD.

John Calvin said God does not appear Himself to this world today, nor does He send angels to appear to this world, but He uses His leaders, His people, and His church to make a statement for Him (p. 90).

We have the power as a local church to support, to strengthen and to stand for God’s truth. We have the power to be a fantastic testimony for the Living God. Our membership can make a powerful difference in the northwest. But in order to do this, we must take the Word of God seriously as a church and as individuals. The written Word of God must be esteemed and expounded. The written Word must be believed and obeyed.

Church is about belief and behavior. It is about education, edification and evangelism. Knowledge is to affect behavior. When we gather in church, it is serious business.

IDEA #1 – Paul’s personal statement to Timothy. 3:14

Point #1 - He is personally writing these things.

The verb “writing” is present tense, meaning he is referring to the things he is continually and presently writing. The “these things” in its immediate context refers to the selection of qualified leadership; but in the grammatical context it refers to everything he is continually writing in this letter.

It is imperative to see that God’s Word has been written. It is the job of the church to carefully study the written revelation and to instruct the church in view of what God has put in writing. God’s Word is in writing.

Point #2 - He is personally writing these things to Timothy.

Paul wanted Timothy to realize this letter was to him. The pronouns “you” emphasize this letter was to Timothy. Timothy was like the pastor and it was his responsibility to lead the church into becoming what God wanted it to become.

Paul was not minimizing Timothy’s responsibility, he was emphasizing it.
If the pastor and the leadership do not lead the church into obedience of God’s Word, it will never become a pillar and support of the truth.

Paul wanted Timothy to take this letter personally and seriously. It was aimed straight at him. If he didn’t select qualified leadership and lead the church into obedience, he was shirking his job.

**Point #3** - He is personally hoping to visit Timothy.

The fact that Paul is personally hoping to visit indicates Paul personally holds Timothy responsible for organizing the church in the way God wants. Timothy is responsible to conform the church to Paul’s teachings in view of Paul’s upcoming visit.

**IDEA #2 –** Paul’s purposeful statement for the church. 3:15

The words “in case I am delayed” are written in Greek in such a way that it was probable that Paul would be delayed (Dana & Mantey, p. 290). Even though Paul wanted to visit Timothy soon, there was a good chance he would be delayed from doing so. So Paul simply tells Timothy why he is writing—so that God’s people would know how to conduct themselves in God’s church. The words literally indicate Paul is writing so that people can turn around and behave the way God wants in His house.

**Fact #1** - The church is the household of God. 3:15a

The word “household” is used in Greek not only to refer to a house, but also a family. Paul was writing this so that the family of God would know how to conduct themselves, especially as it comes to corporate church life.

The Word of God is designed to change our conduct. We are God’s people, this is God’s church and God’s written Word is given to affect our behavior. The church is not mine, it is not yours; it is God’s. We are His household and we need to behave His way.

George Knight said, “The standards of conduct prescribed are not mere rules of etiquette, they are standards for the house/household that is none other than God’s” (p. 180).

**Fact #2** - The church is the church of the Living God. 3:15b

God is alive in His church. I want us all to remember God lives in His people and God lives in His church.

Here is the point: we are to reflect that God lives here and we do it by proper conduct. When we refuse to put into leadership any who are unqualified, we demonstrate God lives in this place. When we obey the Word of God and focus on teaching the Word of God, we demonstrate God lives in this place. The church is not about us; it is about the Living God.
Fact #3 - The church is the pillar and support of the truth. 3:15c

Ephesus featured the temple of Diana, which featured 127 pillars. The pillars of the temple stood out for all to see. In fact, this temple was one of the great wonders of the world. People could spot these pillars when they were miles away.

The church is to stand out and stand up for the truth of God. The church is to be the place where God’s truth is preached and practiced. When people look at us and when they look at this church, they should be able to see that we hold high the Word of God.

Dr. John MacArthur said is well when he said, “The supreme mission of the church is to uphold the precious legacy of God’s word” (p. 138).

How do we as individuals and as a church make the Word the pillar and support of the truth?

1) Esteem the Word; 2) believe the Word; 3) read the Word; 4) memorize the Word; 5) meditate on the Word; 6) communicate the Word; 7) obey the Word; 8) hear the Word.

IDEA #3 – Paul’s statement about Christ. 3:16

The pagans of Ephesus had a statement—“Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” (Acts 19:28). Paul’s point is what is really great is true godliness.

When Paul says, “by common confession great is the mystery of godliness,” what he means is the common testimony of all who are right with God is that the mystery of godliness, which reverences the true and living God and conducts itself accordingly, is great or at a mega-level and is centered on one person—Jesus Christ.

The great mystery of being godly is resolved in the person of Jesus Christ. In other words, our relationship with Jesus Christ is the key to being a people and a church that is a pillar and support of the truth of the Living God. Every true believer will give this common confession.

All verbs listed here are aorist passive, indicating these are things that have been accomplished and we had nothing to do with the action.

Truth #1 - Jesus Christ was God revealed in the flesh. 3:16a

This is a reference to Christ’s incarnation.

Truth #2 - Jesus Christ was vindicated in the Spirit. 3:16b

This is a reference to Christ’s resurrection.
Truth #3 - Jesus Christ was beheld by angels. 3:16c

This is a reference to Christ’s exaltation.

Truth #4 - Jesus Christ was/is proclaimed among the nations. 3:16d

This is a reference to Christ’s evangelism.

Truth #5 - Jesus Christ was/is believed on in the world. 3:16e

This is a reference to Christ’s salvation.

Truth #6 - Jesus Christ was taken up into glory. 3:16f

This is a reference to Christ’s ascension.

Why did Paul bring this important Christology up here?

1) To instruct the church concerning true Christology.
2) To motivate the church concerning true godliness.
3) To correct the church concerning false Christology.

Key questions worth asking:

1. Does this church take the Word of God seriously?
2. Do I, as an individual, take the Word of God seriously?
3. Does this church communicate the great truths of Jesus Christ?
4. Is my life, through obedience to God’s Word, a strong statement for the Living God?
5. What does my life stand for and what do people spot in me?