

The Nature of the Local Church

Text: 1 Timothy 3:14-4:2 “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 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. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...”

Purpose: The purpose of this section is to emphasize why caution is so important when appointing church leadership.

Proposition: God wants us to understand the importance of the local church.

Interrogative: How can we understand the importance of the local church?

Truth 1: The church is a household: 3:14 “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God...”

- **“House of God:”** This is not referring to a physical building, like the building we are currently meeting in.
 - “Think family:”
 - “Intimate, interpersonal, interaction:”
 - Each member has an important function to play in the success of the church, and we must live and work in close proximity to one another.
 - Illustration of living in Ghana in a compound house

Truth 2: The church is a separated group: 3:15 “Which is the church...”

- **“The church:”** The word church means a separated group/called out
 - Separated from the world
 - Separated unto God.
 - Our thinking
 - Our relationships
 - Our ethics
 - Our values
 - Our time commitments

Truth 3: The church has mystical union with Christ: “of the living God...”

- **“Of:”** We belong to God.
- **“Living God:”** There is a mystical living union between God and His people

Revelation 1:13 “In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man...”

Ephesians 5:23-32 “The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not

having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. **For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:** For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. **This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church...**

Truth 4: The church is appointed to uphold the truth: “the pillar and ground of the truth...”

- **“Pillar:”** Think a portion of the framework/structure of a building
- **“Ground:”** Think foundation
 - **Truth is taught in the church**
 - **Truth is defended in the church**
 - **Truth is demonstrated in the church**
 - **Truth is commended in the church**

Truth 5: The church is entrusted with the only message that brings true godliness: 3:16

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory...”

- **“Without controversy:”** This is indisputable (Think apologetics/think eye witnesses)
- **“Great:”** Splendid/magnificent to behold
- **“Mystery of godliness...”** This is something that has been progressively revealed and until its fulfillment was not fully known
- **“God was:”**
 - **“Manifested in the flesh:” Incarnation: John 1:14** “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth...”
 - **“Justified in the Spirit:” Resurrection: Acts 13:27-33** “For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee...”
 - **“Seen of angels:” Glorification: Hebrews 1:3-8** “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again,

when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom...”

- **“Preached unto the Gentiles:” Validated** (The book of Acts)
- **“Believed on in the world:” Compelling** (The book of Acts)
- **“Received up into glory:” Ascension**

Truth 6: The church is constantly under doctrinal assault: 4:1-2 “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...”

- **“In the latter times:”** The period from the ascension to the second coming
- **“Some shall depart from the faith:”** Removing themselves from the body over time
- **“Giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils:”**
- **“Speaking lies in hypocrisy:”** They are speaking falsely and are not living consistently with what they are teaching.
- **“Having a conscience seared with a hot iron:”** They have become desensitized

Conclusion: This church is a precious body separated unto God and wonderfully related to Him. Let’s treasure God’s house in a way that is consistent with its value to God!