

**Subject: *Back to the Basics***  
**Scripture: *1 Timothy 3:14-16***

Coach Vince Lombardi was a Hall of Fame coach of the Green Bay Packers. He was known for his emphasis on the fundamentals of football. He had championship teams because he focused on the basics of the game: blocking, tackling, and execution. On one occasion when he was frustrated with the team, he held up a football and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football."

Paul realized the need to focus on the fundamentals. These verses are a turning point in First Timothy. In chapters 1-3, Paul has given positive instruction and in chapters 4-6, he gives negative warnings. In the last verses of chapter 3, Paul gives the purpose of his letter. Paul hopes to see Timothy face and face, but if he doesn't come soon, he will know how to behave or conduct himself in church. This is practical knowledge ("know" *oida*), not just intellectual knowledge. He gets back to the basics of the church's master, mission, and message.

### **THE MASTER OF THE CHURCH**

The church is the house (household) of God and the church of the living God. The church belongs to God and is not a manmade organization. ***Ephesians 2:19*** *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* ***Acts 20:28*** *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

It is the church of "the living God." This name for God is often found in the Old Testament. ***Joshua 3:10*** *And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.* ***1 Samuel 17:26*** *And David spake to the men that stood by him...who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?* ***Psalms 42:2*** *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?"* ***Jeremiah 10:10*** *But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king.*

This was a powerful reminder to the church at Ephesus (where Timothy was pastor, 1:3) since they represented the true and living God in a world of idolatry. Ephesus was home to the temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This church served the one true living God. All other gods are false gods and dead gods.

### **THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

Paul uses an image that the people in Ephesus would be familiar with. I mentioned the temple of Diana. It had 127 pillars and these pillars held up the weight of the roof. Like any large building this temple also had a massive foundation. The church is both the pillar and ground (foundation) of the truth. The temple of Diana and other false gods were a testimony to their false religion, so the church is to be a testimony to God's truth. That is the church's mission.

The truth is God's Word and especially the truth of the Christian faith found in God's Word. The church is to uphold and support Biblical truth and stand upon it. Jesus said, ***Matthew 16:18*** *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The church has a responsibility to God's Word, but the church can only be faithful as each believer in the church is committed to it. In practical terms, that means that every believer must read and know the truth, believe it, obey it, study it, memorize it, meditate on it, live by it, teach it, and share it. Some people say they believe the Bible cover to cover who have never read it from cover to cover and studied very little of it.

### **THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH**

God's Word is a treasury of spiritual truth, but what is the main truth to uphold and proclaim? Paul gives the answer in verse 16. "Without controversy" means by common confession or to say the same thing. This is the truth to which every believer is committed. The mystery of godliness is the same as "the mystery of the faith" (vs. 9) that the church leaders must be committed to. It refers to the truth of salvation and righteousness through Christ that produces godliness in those who believe. Godliness is a word Paul used many times in this letter (2:2, 20; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11) It is a "mystery" in the sense that God revealed it to us. A mystery in the Bible is something we could never know apart from Him.

- God was manifest in the flesh (Christ became a man)  
John Walvoord said: "The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity." In other words, if God did not become a man, then Christianity falls like a house of cards.

- Justified in the Spirit (Christ lived a perfect life and died for our sins)

The Holy Spirit confirmed, validated that Jesus was who He claimed to be and did what the Father sent Him to do. The resurrection was the final proof. ***Romans 1:4***  
*And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*

- Seen of angels (at His birth, temptation, in Gethsemane, at His tomb)

Angels watched Jesus and ministered to Him. They were the first to see the risen Lord.

- Preached unto the Gentiles (the Gospel was preached everywhere, Acts 1:8)
- Believed on in the world (many people were saved by grace alone through faith alone)
- Received up into glory (Christ ascended to the Father in heaven)

These six statements we have a summary of Gospel truth. God became a man, died for our sins, rose from the dead, was honored by angels, and ascended to heaven in victory. This message was preached everywhere and many were saved.

There was an old church in England with a sign on the building that said: "We preach Christ crucified." After some time ivy grew over part of the sign and it read: "We preach Christ." The ivy kept growing and the sign said: "We preach." Finally the ivy covered up the sign and the church died. That's what always happens when a church gets away from the basics.