

Letters From My Father
Week 9
1 Timothy 3:14-16
“Why It Matters”

Introduction

This grace was given to me — the least of all the saints — to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ, and to shed light for all about the administration of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things. This is so that God’s multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the Church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens. This is according to his eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Ephesians 3:8-11**

The end of the **Third Chapter of 1 Timothy** marks a noticeable breaking point in the letter. Up to this point, Paul has spoken of false teachers, God’s amazing grace and patience, as well as, the way Believers; men, women, pastors, and deacons are to conduct themselves within the body. But after this he explains why these things matter. They matter because we are in a spiritual conflict with the forces of darkness. And therefore, every Christian soldier ought to be sober-minded in order to be effective upon the field of battle. After all, if we do not faithfully live out what we claim to believe, then how will anyone ever recognize the goodness of the salvation that is found in Christ? For no credibility can be given to a false witness.

You can almost feel the concern in Paul’s words as he writes of his desire to come to Ephesus (**vs. 14-15**). For he had not only founded this congregation of Believers personally, but he loved them as well. What was happening there was undoubtedly breaking his heart. And he longed to be there to repair the damages himself, but for what ever reason, he was unable to do so at the time of this writing.

We do not know if Paul ever made it to Ephesus. We do know that he wrote his letter to Titus roughly within the same time frame, and he stated there that he intended to spend the winter in Nicopolis which was west of Macedonia, with Ephesus to the east (**Titus 3:12**). There were so many responsibilities that were pulling the apostle in different directions, and it was impossible for him to be able to be everywhere at the same time. So The Spirit, as well as circumstances, dictated the course of his actions. But nonetheless, he was concerned enough about the church in Ephesus that he sent his most qualified associate to handle the situation with all due diligence and speed.

I, for one, am grateful that Paul was not able to go to Ephesus; for if he had, then we the church of today, would not have these wonderful epistles from which to grow in our knowledge of The LORD and His desire for the organization of His Church! So you see, although Paul was undoubtedly disappointed at his inability to return to the church that he loved, God had a bigger purpose in mind. Ephesus received Timothy, while we received the letters of **1 & 2 Timothy**. Everyone involved was given exactly what they needed, even though Paul did not get what he wanted! This is a very important truth to remember, when we, as Believers, do not get our way. Perhaps God has something different in mind.

Often times, when we pray and ask God for the things that we earnestly desire, and we do not receive them, we are tempted to believe that God has not answered our prayers. But there is more than one answer to a prayer, my friends. There’s “yes”, and sometimes there’s “wait”, and yet other times, the answer is simply “no”. But make no mistake. Our Heavenly Father knows what is best for us far more than we ever could. And when the answer to our prayers is a firm “no”, then rest assured, it is not only an answer, but the correct answer!

In this last portion of **Timothy Chapter Three**, we see a beautiful explanation for why it is necessary that The Church be both orderly and holy. It is imperative for our men and women to live in purity, and that those who lead possess a genuine faith. And it is also of the utmost importance that those who serve within the body live according to the Spirit. The reason being, The Church is meant to be the representative of Christ in this world! So, in this passage, we see **The Church, The Christ, and The Charge**, so that we will be sober-minded in our efforts to honor God and to rescue men from darkness.

The Church (vs. 14-15)

I write these things to you, hoping to come to you soon. But if I should be delayed, I have written so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. **1 Timothy 3:14-15**

As stated above, Paul's desire was to go to the church at Ephesus himself, but circumstances did not allow him to do so at the time. So, he instead wrote a letter (two actually) to his young protege Timothy, in order to insure that the church would have the proper guidelines from which to conduct itself. Paul spoke about the roles of men and women, leaders and servants; with each of these groups receiving instructions as to how they should conduct themselves within the body. He then gives them the reason for these instructions; **"so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household."**

Therefore, every Believer must be fully cognizant of the reality that as Christians we have been adopted into the family of God.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by Whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" **Romans 8:15**

So you see, we are God's own adopted children. And as such, we are to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our standing. When I was a kid, my father made it abundantly clear that we, as his children, were required to conduct ourselves in accordance with the respectable reputation of our family. In short, if we boys acted like hooligans, there would be a price to pay! My father would not tolerate any of his family bringing dishonor to the family name. It was a rule that was strictly enforced, to say the very least.

God also has high standards, and He expects His children to live according to them. We have been given the Holy Spirit and The Word to enable us to conduct ourselves in a manner fitting to our family name. And it is a requirement that we obey the commands of Christ, if we have truly been regenerated (born again) from above. In short, Christians ought to act like Christians. I am reminded here of the words of Jesus:

"Why do you call Me 'LORD, LORD,' and don't do the things that I say?" **Luke 6:46**

So obviously, it is important to remember how to act, because of *Who* we belong to. We have been bought with a price. The Church is The LORD'S, and He purchased it for adoption with His blood.

In addition to this high and noble calling, we are also given the responsibility to uphold God's truth (**vs 15b**). Paul described the Church as **"the pillar and foundation of the truth,"** meaning that we have been left here upon the earth not only as Believers of God's Word, but also as teachers and defenders of it as well. And how will anyone believe our message, if we do not live by it in our every day lives. No one respects a hypocrite. It is no small thing to expect a person to practice what they preach.

In Paul's day, one of the seven wonders of the world was the temple of the goddess Diana located in Ephesus. The structure to the pagan goddess was massive, and it is said to have contained one hundred and twenty seven pillars, each one of them dedicated as gift from a king. These massive columns were there to support the roof of the gargantuan temple to prevent its collapse.

Everyone who lived in Ephesus would have been able to understand Paul's metaphor used here to describe how God intended for His Church to support the truth of His Word. This is why I firmly believe that The Word of God, and only The Word of God, should be preached from our pulpits. And it should also be lived out in our lives. The job of the pastor/elder is to teach God's Word so that the people not only understand it, but can also go out and be a living example of its effect upon them!

Today, sadly, many so called *Bible* Teachers have watered down the truths of The Word to make it more palatable to the masses. But watered down truth does not convict anyone of sin. And without the conviction of The Spirit through the preaching and teaching of The Word, no one will ever repent and

come to Christ. Oh they may feel better about themselves in the short run, but this will not save them from the wrath that is to come. This is why the Church MUST teach the whole truth of God's Word. We are trying to rescue dying men, not just wrap them up in a warm blanket as they perish! This is why there is such an urgency for the body of Christ to believe the truth, LIVE the truth, proclaim the truth, and defend the truth. For we are *The Church of The Living God!*

The Christ (vs. 16a)

And most certainly, the mystery of godliness is great: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels.... **1 Timothy 3:16a**

And while we must be ever mindful that we belong to God and have the responsibility for holding up His truth, we must also never forget that it is Christ Who is our firm foundation. The Church is built upon Him and His gospel.

As you come to Him, a living stone — rejected by people but chosen and honored by God — you yourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
1 Peter 2:4-5

So, as we proclaim God's truth to this lost and dying world, we must never forget that it is Christ Who is the source of all truth. *The Bible* is all about Him, it tells of His gospel, character, purposes, and His love for us. Every word of Scriptures points us to Christ the foundation of all truth! He is the Chief Cornerstone of our faith.

In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and The Word was God. **John 1:1**

To hold to the truth of God's Word is to hold fast to The Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith (**Hebrews 12:1-3**), The LORD Jesus Christ. Paul liked to refer to The LORD'S mission on earth as "the mystery of godliness".

The word for mystery in the Greek (*mysterion* pronounced moos-tay'-ree-on) carries with it the idea of something once hidden, now revealed. Jesus came to earth in the flesh to reveal (manifest) personally to us the very essence of God. He came as a man (in flesh) to live a sinless life according to The Law, and then He died on the cross to pay for our sin. The best I have heard it described is by a pastor named Major Ian Thomas, who lived from 1914-2007. He said, and I quote:

*"Jesus had to come as He came (born of a virgin) to be what He was (both God and man).
He had to be what He was to live as He lived (wholly dependent as man on His Father as God).
He had to live as He lived (an absolutely holy and perfect life) to do what He did (give His life first in service and then in sacrifice)."*

This is exactly what Paul is referring to when he speaks of the "mystery of God being manifested in the flesh." No one would have ever thought of this means for the redemption of mankind, save God Himself. It always was, and shall always be, the Father's perfect plan to save the lost and dying sinner from the wrath of God.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.
Romans 6:23

Paul then goes on to say that this same Jesus, who was manifested in the flesh, was also vindicated by The Spirit. This simply means that although the people of His own nation rejected His messages and put Him to death as a blasphemer, He was vindicated by The Spirit by rising from the dead! It is certainly hard to keep a good man down, now isn't it? Jesus' life and message was proven to be genuine at the resurrection. He claimed to be God in the flesh, and He was proven right, when He rose from the dead. He was, as such, "vindicated by The Spirit".

Not only was Jesus the manifestation of God in the flesh and vindicated by The Spirit, but His life, atoning death and resurrection were also witnessed by the angelic host. There were angels who were present at His birth. They ministered to Him both in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane, and they were there at the tomb for His resurrection. I can only imagine the celebration by the angelic hosts of heaven when He returned there victorious over death to sit down at the right hand of The Father. Yes, The Son of God has the full endorsement of the angelic hosts. Even the demons acknowledge that He is Who He claims to be (**Luke 8:28**). He is the Christ, the Son of The Living God. And He is the foundation upon which The Church is built. Therefore, we must live in a way that honors Him, in both word and deed, or no one will believe this truth which we claim to uphold.

The Charge (vs. 16b)

...preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Timothy 3:16a

Now, on to the mission or "charge", if you will, of the Church... We are to take the message of the gospel, God's truth that we uphold, to a lost and dying world. And the only way to be successful in this charge that we have been given is to live by it ourselves. I firmly believe in "Lordship Salvation". Meaning that if a person has truly been born again of The Spirit (**John 3:3-8**), he will obey the commands of Christ in his daily life. I fear there are many who have been deceived by repeating a prayer and being baptized, when in fact there is no *change* within them. To know Christ is to be *changed*. And to be *changed* is to obey His commands.

It takes just such people to "*preach Jesus among the nations*". The apostles themselves began the work of the Great Commission, and we, The Church, are called to take up where they left off. Is it any wonder that when the New Jerusalem descends from heaven, it has the names of the apostles written upon its foundations (**Revelation 21:14**)? These faithful ambassadors of Christ have set the example for us to follow. We, as they did before us, must preach Jesus to the nations. And the nations will only believe our message if we live in such a manner that all can see the *change* in us! And this is why our conduct matters. So that the message of grace will be as Paul says "*believed on in the world*".

And finally, Paul speaks of Christ being taken up in glory. How fortunate for us that God became a man, so that it is the man Christ Jesus Who represents us before the throne of God. He knows first hand what it is to live in this fallen world.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.
Hebrews 4:15-16

Honor and glory be to Jesus Christ our LORD, who came in the flesh to reveal God to us; was vindicated by The Spirit by the resurrection; seen and endorsed by the angelic host; was preached to the nations; and believed on in the world; and is now in glory to intercede for those who love Him. This is *Who* we represent, this is *Who* we follow, and this is The One *Whose* glory must shine through us. For we are His Church, commissioned to be the pillars of His truth!! May we do so in honor and holiness.

And may we, His Church, forever stand and proclaim His... TRUTH!!!