

Paul's Epistles to Individuals

Lesson 8 – 1 Timothy 3:14 – 16

I. Why Paul Writes (vs. 14-15)

Paul had instructed Timothy to remain in Ephesus as he departed to Macedonia (**1 Tim. 1:3, Acts 19, 20**) and here he describes his reason for writing to Timothy. As the work had pushed Paul on to other venues, Timothy was to remain and instruct the brethren how to conduct themselves in the household of God (**v. 14**), the specifics of this instruction centering around adherence to the Truth, teaching men not to teach “strange doctrines” (**1 Tim. 1:3**). Remember the earlier discussions about these doctrines in **1 Tim. 1** which included the perversion of the Gospel with Jewish traditions pulled from their corruptions of the Old Law (**1 Tim. 1:4**) and the worldly behaviors which threatened to encroach into the church (**1 Tim 1:9-10**).

At the time of this writing, Paul's schedule was uncertain. He hoped to return personally to Timothy to continue his inspired instructions to those there but when he wrote to Titus shortly thereafter, we see he did not succeed as hoped (**Titus 3:12-13** – “*When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there*”). Therefore he writes this letter to equip Timothy to teach the Christians there in case he was delayed (**v. 15**), which we know he was from the aforementioned reference in **Titus 3**.

II. The Household of God (v. 15)

The “household” here is of course not a reference to a physical structure but is specifically defined here as “*the church of the living God*”. The conduct to which referred therefore is the behavior of Christians as they work together in the cause of Christ. The idea of the church as a house or household is elsewhere found in the scriptures (**Gal. 6:10, Heb. 3:6, 10:21, 1 Pet. 2:5, 4:17** and **Isa. 2:3**) and indicates the closeness of a family (**Eph. 3:15**). The “*church of the living God*” (**v. 15**) reminds us that God and Christ is alive eternally. Jesus lives (**Rev 1:17-18** – “*Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades*”; **Rom 6:9** – “*knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him*”) and was “*exalted to the right hand of God*” (**Acts 2:33**).

III. The Church is the Pillar and Ground of the Truth (v. 15)

A pillar is a foundational support. The church is to steadfastly support the “truth” (**2 Thess 2:15** – “*So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us*”), which is God's Word, the gospel. (**John 17:17** – “*Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth*”; **Col 1:5** – “*because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel*”). Elders are to be “*apt to teach*” (**1 Tim. 3:2**), “*holding fast the faithful word*” (**Tit. 1:9**) for this purpose. (See also **Heb. 5:11 – 6:8**).

IV. The Mystery of Godliness (v. 16)

The New American Standard's translation here of “by common confession” is a bit unfortunate. The KJV says “without controversy” which is much closer to the original language. The Greek adverb here translates literally as “confessedly”, essentially meaning, “without a doubt”. The translators of the NASB may have used “by common confession” because they believed the quoted section here was Paul citing a first century Christian hymn but there is no evidence to support that position. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write as he did.

A. *Mystery*

This word does not indicate that the substance of Godliness is concealed or hidden but that it was once concealed. The Gospel was a mystery until it was revealed (**1 Cor. 7-16, Eph. 6:19, Col. 1:26-27, Col. 2:2, Col. 4:3, 1 Tim. 3:9**).

B. *Godliness*

Godliness is something to which one is disciplined (**1 Tim. 4:7**). It is to be pursued (**1 Tim. 6:11**) because it is profitable (**1 Tim. 4:8**). It is a means of great gain (**1 Tim. 6:6**). It is characterized by Holy conduct (**2 Pet. 3:11**) and is a result of a knowledge of the Truth (**Tit. 1:1**).

V. **The Greatness of Christ and His Gospel (v. 16)**

Paul enumerates the primary tenants of our Faith by describing the facts of Christ and His revelation as our sacrifice and savior.

A. *Revealed in the Flesh*

Jesus was God, Deity in the flesh. (**Col 2:9-11** – “*For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority*”). See also **John 1:1, 14; Phili. 2:5-11**.

B. *Vindicated (Justified) in the Spirit*

Jesus was shown to be Holy and righteous. At the transfiguration (**Matt. 17:5** – “*Behold my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, Hear ye him*”) and known as righteous (**1 John 2:29** – “*If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him*”) and sinless (**1 Pet. 2:22, 2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15, 1 John 3:5**).

C. *Beheld by Angels*

The Angels know of Him (**1 Peter 1:10-12** – “*As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, 11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look*”). For a time He was human and lower than the angels (**Heb. 2:9**).

D. *Proclaimed Among the Nations*

Jesus and His gospel were also made available to the Gentiles (**Eph. 3:4-7**) according to the promise made to Abraham stating that through Him all nations of the earth would be blessed (**Gen. 12:3; 22:18**).

E. *Believed on in the World*

Though He was born of lowly earthly status (**Matt. 8:20**) and rejected by religious leaders of the day, He still was believed in by Jew and Gentile alike.

F. *Taken Up in Glory*

And finally he ascended back to his place of origin, to Heaven with the Father (**Acts 1:1-11; 2:33**).