

April 14, 2024
Dr. Jay Robertson

Series: "Foundations of Christian Ministry"
Sermon: "The Church of the Living God"
Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:14–16
Memory Verse: John 13:35

Introduction

- A. Despite the importance of the church in the New Testament, this crucial doctrine is sadly neglected today.
- B. The church appears to be irrelevant or optional for many "professing" Christians today.
- C. Why bother with Sunday morning crowds? "I can have church in the comfort of my home and watch a sermon from my favorite pastor." Is this really what God intended?
- D. "I don't have to go to church to be a Christian." Why would any actual Christian not want to go to church? That dog won't hunt.
- E. Ekklesia literally means "called out ones." It refers to people called to assemble or gather together.
- F. Many professing Christians may be very surprised to hear that Scripture gives us a much higher view of the church.
- G. Big Idea: The church of the living God is God's household, and it is charged with living in accord with and upholding the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I. The Church Is Significant (3:14–15)

- A. In verses 14-15 Paul wrote the theme of 1 Timothy. He wrote to Timothy to make sure he knew what had to be done. Timothy had to know if he was to teach the church.
- B. "Know" is not just intellectual knowledge but the practical knowledge of "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God."
- C. Theological knowledge is never just theoretical or intellectual knowledge. Our knowledge of God will always transform us more and more into the image of Christ.
- D. "To conduct himself" speaks of a consistent pattern of life.
- E. "The household of God"—We are the expression of God's family. Just as a household has a certain order to it, with husbands leading and wives helping and children obeying, so also God's household has a certain order to it. There are pastors, there are deacons, and there are members. Christians, we have been adopted into God's family, and we are to obey Him and reflect His character.
- F. "Which is the church of the living God"—We are the dwelling place of God's presence. "In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). We are "a sanctuary of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16). By identifying God as "the living God" Paul contrasted the true God from dead idols. The church of Jesus Christ is the true temple. The living God does not dwell in temples built by human hands (Acts 17:24).
- G. "The pillar and support of the truth"—We are the guardians of God's Word. This imagery would not have been lost on the Ephesians. The impressive temple of the goddess Artemis (Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was located in Ephesus. It contained 127 pillars made of marble and studded with jewels and overlaid with gold.
- H. As "the pillar and support of the truth," the church is the guardian of God's Word. The truth is the divine revelation, the content of the Christian faith.
- I. It is the solemn responsibility of every church to uphold the truth of God's Word.
- J. "The church has the stewardship of Scripture, the duty to guard it as the most precious possession on earth. Churches that tamper with it, misrepresent, depreciate, relegate to secondary place, or abandon biblical truth destroy their only reason for existing and experience impotence and judgment" (John MacArthur).
- K. We must preserve God's Word and proclaim God's Word.

- L. How do believers uphold the truth? (1) Believe it. (2) Memorize it. (3) Meditate on it. (4) Study it. (5) Obey it. (6) Defend it. (7) Live it. (8) Proclaim it.
- M. The church is significant.

II. Christ Is Supreme (3:16)

- A. The Word of God is a vast, inexhaustible storehouse of spiritual truth. Out of all that truth, what is most essential for the church to uphold and proclaim?
- B. Paul gave the answer in verse 16: the message of Jesus Christ.
- C. "And by common confession"—A truth upon which everyone agrees. All Christians believe that "great is the mystery of godliness." This phrase may be parallel to the common confession of the pagan worshipers in Ephesus: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:28).
- D. A "mystery" was not something currently hidden but something formerly hidden but now revealed by Christ and His gospel.
- E. "Godliness" refers "to the duty man owes to God in terms of both believing and living rightly" (Denny Burk).
- F. How can we live a godly life before God? By believing in Jesus Christ.
- G. In six clauses Paul characterized Christ's supremacy:
 - 1. "He was manifested in the flesh"—Incarnation
 - 2. "Was vindicated in the Spirit"—Resurrection (Romans 1:4; 8:11)
 - 3. "Seen by angels"—Jesus' life and resurrection had heavenly witnesses.
 - 4. "Proclaimed among the nations"—The spread of the gospel in the world. (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:44-48)
 - 5. "Believed on in the world"—The response of the nations to the gospel.
 - 6. "Taken up in glory"—Jesus' ascent into heaven.
- H. We see three couplets in this verse: the revelation of Christ, the witnesses of Christ, and the reception of Christ.
- I. The person and work of Christ is the key to godly conduct.

Conclusion

- A. We are the church of the living God. We have a mission and a message.
- B. Big Idea: The church of the living God is God's household, and it is charged with living in accord with and upholding the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- C. Every church is to be a pillar and support of the truth.
- D. Indeed, we exist to glorify God by making disciples through the gospel, in community, on mission.
- E. The Gospel Definition