

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES: GOD'S DIRECTIVES FOR HIS UNDERSHEPHERDS

I. 1 Timothy: Basic Local Church Ministry

H. God's Foundational Ministry Of The Church (1 Timothy 3:14-16)

I. Introduction

- A. In view of reports of great needs and problems in various churches, much of which has been produced by Church leaders themselves, we view the Pastoral Epistles, handbooks on local pastoral ministry.
- B. 1 Timothy 3:14-16 provides God's foundational ministry of the Church, which ministry has often been lost throughout current evangelicalism due the compromise of evangelicals with the world itself.
- C. We thus view this passage for insight and application for local church ministries (as follows):

II. God's Foundational Ministry Of The Church, 1 Timothy 3:14-16.

- A. Having given Timothy instructions on worship in the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 2:1-15 with 1:3a) and the qualifications for elders and deacons in that church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 3:1-13 with 1:3a), Paul wrote that he had shared this information with Timothy that were he to be absent for an extended time period, Timothy would know how he should conduct himself in the "house of God, which is the church," 1 Timothy 3:14-15a.
- B. Since Timothy was pastoring the **local** church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), it is the **LOCAL** church that constitutes the "house of God" here. [Ephesians 1:22-23 refers to the Church universal. Here, it is local.]
- C. Paul added that the **local** church is also the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15b KJV). We explain:
 1. The word rendered "pillar" (KJV) is *stulos*, "column, pillar" (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 779), what extends up from the foundation of a building to support its roof. (Wm. Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of The Pastoral Epistles, 1974, p. 136)
 2. The word rendered "ground" (KJV) is *hedraïoma*, "foundation" (Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 217), that part of the building that lies horizontally on the ground and supports the entire building, Ibid., Hendriksen.
 3. Significantly, the article is omitted in the Greek text from both nouns *stulos* and *hedrioma*, making them **indefinite** nouns, stressing their **qualitative** force, that "the church is nothing less than the truth's *pillar*; better still, it is the truth's very *foundation*," Ibid., Hendriksen, fn. 70.
 4. Thus, the **LOCAL** church, constituting the truth's pillar, yes, even the truth's very foundation, means that **the local church is the vehicle through which God expresses His truth to the world.**
- D. Since the heart of that truth upheld before the world is the Head of the Church universal and local, Jesus Christ Himself (cf. Ephesians 1:22-23), Paul then wrote out what apparently constituted an excerpt from an early Church hymn that summarized the rich theology of the Person and work of Jesus Christ, 1 Timothy 3:16:
 1. Christ's appearing in a body refers to His Incarnation, 1 Timothy 3:16a; Bib. Know. Com., N. T., p. 739.
 2. Christ's being vindicated by the Spirit "refers to God's demonstration through the Resurrection (cf. Acts 2:24-36), by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:11), that the crucified Jesus is Lord and Messiah, Ibid.
 3. Christ's being seen by angels refers to His "exaltation before the heavenly realm (cf. Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 1:6)," Ibid.
 4. Christ's being "preached among the nations (cf. Col. 1:23)" refers to His Gospel in the Church era.
 5. Christ's being "believed on in the world" refers to the progressive fulfillment of God's redemptive plan through His preordained means (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25)," Ibid.
 6. Christ's being "taken up in glory refers to the Ascension (Eph. 4:10)," Ibid.

Lesson: *The LOCAL church is the practical vehicle through which God expresses His truth to the world, that truth predominantly being about the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, every believer's conduct in the local church, be he in leadership or otherwise, is highly significant in God's program and requires proper behavior and teaching that the truth of the Person and work of Jesus Christ might be upheld before the world.*

Application: *(1) May we realize that the local church is NOT a place for human showmanship, but a gathering of God's people whose ministry is to be a conservatory of the truth of God in the Person and work of Jesus Christ before a world in need of His salvation gospel. (2) The exposition of God's Word about Christ should be the heart of the local church's ministry, not a marginal function. (3) The local church must exalt Jesus Christ, not any mortal human personality or personalities in the local church. (4) Though there is nothing innately wrong with parachurch ministries like missions, Christian colleges and seminaries, God views the local church as His vehicle of spreading His truth, so He wills that parachurch ministries help and not hurt local churches.*