

## 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

False teaching had distracted the local church in Ephesus from its mission of preaching the gospel and making disciples.

So Paul writes to Timothy and the big message of his letter is: "Sort out the church for the sake of the gospel!"

Timothy is told to fight for the gospel by silencing false teachers, leading the church in praying for all people, by teaching the church how to display the gospel, and by appointing appropriate leaders (elders who are supported by deacons).

Why is it so important that Timothy and the church in Ephesus follow Paul's instructions?

"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory." (v14-16)

[Note the urgency in what Paul is saying]

Two reasons:

### A. Our Identity

"I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God."

#### 1. The household of God

A family metaphor – we are God's children.

A household is regulated by certain behaviour – certain expectations on those who are part of it.

As it is God's household, He decides how the members should behave.

Because of the false teaching, the local church in Ephesus was not behaving, as it should have been.

#### 2. The church of the living God

The church is the place where God dwells by His Spirit.

We are representatives of the living God.

As the world looks at local churches they should see God on display.

#### 3. Urgent message because of our identity.

### B. Our Mission

"a pillar and buttress of the truth."

#### 1. A pillar and buttress of the truth

We are saved by the truth – if we move away from the truth, we move away from the only person who can save us.

We are to protect the truth – it has been entrusted to us; if we don't no-one else will, and this saving message will be lost.

“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”

2. This truth that is made known in Jesus...

He was manifested in the flesh – incarnation.

He was vindicated by the Spirit – life and death (righteous).

He was seen by angels – resurrection.

He is proclaimed among the nations – mission of the church.

He is believed on in the world – as people respond to the preaching of the gospel.

He was taken up in glory – out of order; but is final evidence of the truth that Christ is the Saviour.

3. ...is put on display by the church.

We are to display the truth – if we don’t know-one else will and people will be lost forever.

In Ephesus the cry of the pagans was “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” but the cry of this local church was to be “Great is the mystery of godliness.”

Our mission is to proclaim the truth about Jesus – it’s vital nothing gets in the way of us doing this – which is why Paul wrote to Timothy and to us this letter.

### **C. Applications**

1. Repent!

Of the times when we have failed to be who we are.

Of the times when we have been distracted from our mission.

Of the part we have played as elders in this.

2. Pray!

That we would be the household of God.

That we would proclaim the truth of the gospel.

That God would give us the wisdom we need as elders to lead the church in these areas.

3. Stick closely to the Word of God!

We need to hear from God about how He wants us to behave as a local church.

We need to make sure we don’t move away from the truth – to do that we need to regularly remind ourselves what the truth is.

Especially true for us as elders.