

The Glory of a Gospel-Centered Church (3:14–16)

SUPPORTING IDEA:

FCF: **We each tend to think that the world revolves around me.** (Illustration of Silas wanting food, comfort, or attention according to his schedule. Kind of cute for a 6-year-old [soon to be 7-year-old kid]... not so much for elementary children, teens, young adults, or the rest of us!) We have embraced the lie that it is all about my preferences. When it comes to the church, those preferences include worship style, outreach, leadership, and fellowship. **The goal quickly becomes personal comfort instead of daily conformity to the image of Christ.**

Transition: Part of conformity to Christ includes a proper understanding of God’s plan for you personally and His plan for your participation in the church corporately. This morning, I want you to see that God has a plan to accomplish with your life. His plan involves your connection to a local assembly. The strength of your resolve to this connection is based on your view of the Gospel.

Proposition: Without Christ, the church would not exist. We must know who we belong to and what he expects of us and then align ourselves accordingly.

- **Healthy members pursue their calling. (14-15a)**
- **Healthy members embrace their identity. (15)**
- **Healthy members confess their loyalty to the gospel. (16)**

I. **Healthy members pursue their calling. (14-15a)**

- A. SET GOALS. (I hope [ANTICIPATE; EXPECT] to come to you soon (after a short period of time) --
- B. REMAIN FLEXIBLE. (but – indicating a change in plans...if I delay [held back or hesitated])
- C. DO WHAT YOU CAN WITH WHAT YOU HAVE. (I am writing [grape] these [content of chapters 1-3] things to you)

THE APOSTLE PAUL IS WELL KNOWN FOR HAVING AN IDEA OF WHAT HE WANTED TO DO AND WHERE HE WANTED TO GO, ONLY TO BE HINDERED FROM ACCOMPLISHING HIS PLAN THE WAY HE ENVISIONED IT. [DESIRE TO GO TO SPAIN. DESIRE TO RETURN TO CORINTH.]

(Paul demonstrated the skill of setting goals, remaining flexible to God’s leading, and doing what he could within the context he found himself.) “I hope to come to you sooner, but I am writing these things...” Paul didn’t give up, he readjusted his approach. (Either flexible or you are frustrated.) Many times our disappointments are God’s appointments.

- **WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT:** Think about it. If Paul was able to visit Timothy and the church in Ephesus, he would have never written the letter that we benefit from today. **GOD IS ALWAYS UP TO SOMETHING BIGGER THAN YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE. YEILD YOURSELF TO HIS LEADING IN YOUR LIFE!**

Illustration: Moving to Mpls after getting established in the school and community in MD. Only to work in the Bus Ministry as a junior in high school... (If we would not have moved, I would not have received the responsibility of oversight which led to my clear calling into Gospel ministry.) (2) Trying to sell our house in Mpls so we could move to VA. (God wanted us to stay and plant a church in Mpls.)

Paul didn’t give up. He remained faithful by doing what he could to fulfill the burden God placed on his heart. In this case, it included writing the Pastoral Epistles.

I. Healthy members pursue their calling. (14-15a)

II. Healthy members embrace their identity. (15b)

[15] 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.

- A. **God calls His people to a higher standard of conduct** [a specified standard for evangelism (chp 1), worship (chp 2), leadership (chp 3), fellowship and service (pictures of the church in verse 15)].

2. How we live as the church (3:14–15)

3:14–15. After describing how we are part of God’s household, Paul interwove through these verses guidelines for **how people ought to behave or conduct themselves** as God’s people and gathered assembly. The purpose of Paul’s instructions on order, worship, and leadership was to make vivid the high calling of the Christian and the church—their remarkable way of living as individuals and as a group—to the glory of God.

Leaders of some nations have on staff a person known as the chief of protocol. His or her job is to tell people how to act when dignitaries arrive—when to stand, manners of greeting, and other etiquette.

The Bible is the protocol book for life—for all we do. As followers of Christ we are responsible to live lives that are deserving of his gift of grace. We are to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15); we are to conduct ourselves “in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27).

B. God calls His people to a higher standard of commitment.

- **AS A FAMILY**
- **AS A COLLECTION OF GENUINE WORSHIPERS**
- **AS A BEACON FOR THE TRUTH**

1. How God sees the church (3:14–15)

God has established only three institutions—government, marriage and family and the church. In post-Christian America all three of these are being either discarded or treated with suspicion. In modern America, church has become peripheral.

Yet God firmly established the church, bestowing it with honor and declaring that even hell itself could not overwhelm it. Despite society’s no-confidence vote, it is paramount that we learn how God views the church and what he expects from it.

3:14–15. Paul first described the church as **God’s household**. The household of the first century was a bit different from what we have in modern times. Not only did the ancient home consist of parents and children; it also encompassed extended family, workers, and stewards. It was the framework and microcosm of society at large. Within the household were various age groups, genders, duties, responsibilities. Over this diversity was the master, who kept the house in order, and stewards, who bore responsibility to the master for those in his charge. The household is a picture of the church in variety and structure, bringing together a mix of talents and gifts, men and women, adults and children, professionals and laborers, all of them are cared for and guided by stewards—pastors and deacons responsible to the Master.

The household is also a picture of the warmth and refuge which family provides. We are to treat one another with the love and respect of brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. The church is to exemplify to the world a place of acceptance, love, and protection as offered by the other members and by God himself. We are members of God’s household (Eph. 2:19).

As Christians we are also members **of the church of the living God**. We are his assembly, his gathering. The emphasis is on God, who is alive. This group, known as the church, is distinctive from all other groups, because the one who has called us is an ever-living, ever-present God. This is no club meeting based on ideology, the religion of ritual, or idols. The church meets to worship the living God, even as its members have the Spirit of God within them.

The church is a gathering of new relationships, a place of protection and refuge. Paul characterized the church as **the pillar and foundation of the truth**.

All that is true comes from God, and he has designated the church as guardian and proclaimer of the truth. The church provides the framework for safeguarding orthodoxy and living its claims.

FOUNDATION OR BUTTRESS: *This does not mean that the church is the SOURCE of all truth (Catholic Teaching) but that the church must be a place that SUPPORTS and upholds truth.* The church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). **The combination of “pillar and buttress” relate to the picture of the church as a building.** The idea of the church as a “building” dedicated to **the living God** is a common one for Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20-22).

The Word of God must be taught in all churches. This imagery of the church as the supporting structure of essential truth is a reminder that we must base the central issues of belief and practice upon the authoritative Word of God.

The church protects the truth from the attacks of falsehood. Paul’s call for pure doctrine is also a call for pure people. Central to the truth of the gospel is the transformed life of the Christian.

THE FAMILY OF GOD:

- **Like a healthy 1st Century family, a 21st Century church should include various age groups, genders, duties, and responsibilities all uniting together to fulfill the Great Commandment (love/worship God and love your neighbor) and the Great Commission (make disciples of all nations).**
- **Godly leadership in our church is vital to a healthy family! (beginning with God Himself “God’s Household” mediated through godly leadership -- context of chapter 3)**
- **As God’s household, we must provide an atmosphere of acceptance, love, and protection. We must treat each other as family members. (I Timothy 5:1-2)**
- **Like a family, a church needs discipline in love.** Children who are not disciplined become rebels and tyrants. The spiritual leaders of the assembly should exercise discipline (1 Cor. 4:18–5:13; 2 Cor. 2:6–11). Sometimes the children need rebuke; other times the discipline must be more severe.
- **Children also need encouragement and example (1 Thes. 2:7–12). Spiritual leaders must have the gentleness of a nursing mother and the strength of a loving father.¹**
- **Because the local church is a family, it must be fed; and the only diet that will nourish the people is the Word of God.** It is our bread (Matt. 4:4), milk and meat (1 Cor. 3:1–2; Heb. 5:12–14), and honey (Ps. 119:103). A pastor must take time to nourish himself so that he might nourish others (1 Tim. 4:6). A church does not grow by addition, but by nutrition (Eph. 4:11–16). It is tragic to see the way some pastors waste their time (and their church’s time) all week long and then have nothing nourishing to give the people on the Lord’s Day.

A LIVING ASSEMBLY:

- We must acknowledge God’s presence each time we worship. He is not an idea, the subject of a ritual, or a dead idol...HE IS ALIVE!!! (“We serve a risen Savior who is in the world today...”)
- We must not worship out of duty or dead orthodoxy. (HE SEES. HE KNOWS. HE CARES.)

A SUPPORT FOR TRUTH:

- We must be willing to stand for absolute truth of God’s Word...*not the pillars of post-modernism: adherence to relativism and narcissism.*

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (1 Ti 3:14). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

- Eph 2:20 – “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone.”
- We must stand against the cultural shift to embrace sensuality (immorality, homosexuality, adultery, or addiction to pornography), materialism (pursuit of the American dream at any cost), murder (euthanasia or abortion) addictive substances (whether acquired over the counter or on the street corner) or immaturity (not taking responsibility for anything).

Illustration:

- **Membership of PBC**
 - 320 full members
 - 86 watchcare (associate) members
 - We need 128 to form a quorum for church business meetings.
 - Quorum is based on no less than 40% of active full members.
- **Pre-Covid Average Attendance**
 - Sunday morning worship service – 513 average
 - Wednesday night community groups – 223 average
- **Post-Covid Average Attendance**
 - Sunday morning worship service – 415 average
 - *A difference of 98 people from pre-covid attendance*
 - Wednesday night community groups – 200 average
- **Current Budget as of 4/25/2021**
 - \$446,538
- **Current Giving as of 4/25/2021**
 - \$419,538
 - (\$27,000)
- **Financially support the ministry (320 members)**
 - 159 giving units
 - 42 giving units have not given in 2021
- **Solution**
 - Remain faithful in your giving.
 - Return to faithfulness in giving.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The top 28 giving units provide 50% (387k) of the church budget (774k)</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$266 per week • \$1,152 per month • \$13,821 per year |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The remaining 131 giving units provide the other 50% (387k) of the church budget.</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$57 per week • \$246 per month • \$2,954 per year |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If 21 (50%) of the 42 giving units who have not started giving in 2021 started giving at the rate of the remaining 131 giving units, our deficit would erase!</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$57 per week • \$246 per month • \$2,954 per year |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Church wide increase of \$62,034 in giving.</i> • <i>Current deficit of PBC giving when compared to our budget is \$27,000.</i> |

I. **Healthy members pursue their calling. (14-15a)**

II. **Healthy members embrace their identity. (15b)**

III. **Healthy members confess their loyalty. (16)**

A. **Relish in the greatness of His promise.** – *God’s promise is greater than you can imagine.*

1. It is broad. (great - mega)
2. It demands humility (we confess – undeniably admit)
3. It involves GOOD NEWS that was previously concealed but is now presently revealed (the mystery [secret] of godliness)

B. **Reflect on the glory of His promise.** – *God’s promise is centered in the glory of Christ as seen in the Gospel. (The goal of every church must be the exaltation of Christ.)*

This was probably a hymn well-known in first-century Christendom and often used in public worship services. Paul may have included these familiar words to provoke the listeners to evaluate their conduct and life in view of this confession.

Whether the fragment should be divided into two or three parts is disputed. Whichever one chooses, the six elements of the excerpt are as follows: (1) **Appeared in a body** refers to the Incarnation of Christ. (2) **Was 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. (3) **Was seen by angels** refers to His exaltation before the heavenly realm (cf. Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 1:6). (4) **Was preached among the nations** (cf. Col. 1:23) and (5) **was believed on in the world** refer to the progressive fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan through His preordained means (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5). (6) **Was taken up in glory** refers to the Ascension (Eph. 4:10).²

[3:16. *Here Paul gives the standard of faith his readers were to uphold in the form of a creed or hymn (which Timothy probably already knows). If “taken up in glory” refers to Jesus’ return (cf. Dan 7:13–14) rather than to his ascension, then the lines are in chronological order; but not all scholars think this proposal likely. “Justified” or “vindicated” in the Spirit refers to the resurrection, God’s acquittal after the human judicial condemnation of the cross.*³]

In this confession of the mystery of godliness, Paul called us to pay attention to the importance and calling of the church. Founded by Christ, built on him and by him, the church is called to be a preview of his kingdom. This occurs as his people serve and love in obedience to their living Lord. Let us live worthy of the call of God, serving his church.

A relook at this wonderful hymn through the pages of Matthew:

- **He was manifested in the flesh,**
 - **The Birth of Christ** (Matthew 1-2)
- **He was vindicated by the Spirit,**
 - **His Baptism.** (Matthew 3)
- **He was seen by angels,**
 - **His Temptation.** (Matthew 4)
- **He was proclaimed among the nations,**
 - **His Public Ministry.** (Matthew 5-23)

² Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1 Ti 3:16). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (1 Ti 3:16). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

- **He was believed on in the world,**
 - **His Triumphal Entry, Crucifixion and Resurrection.** (Matthew 24-28)
- **He was taken up into glory.**
 - **His Ascension.** (Acts 1)
- **The Gospel of Jesus Christ must be at the center of everything we do at PBC.**
 - **Manifested in the flesh** – the incarnation of Jesus Christ is essential for our redemption... Christ alone can relate with us in all points... the gift of Christ demonstrates God’s amazing love for us
 - **Vindicated by the Spirit** – reflect on the recognition of Christ by the Father and the glory of His resurrection... Christ alone satisfied God’s righteous wrath upon your sinfulness
 - **Seen by Angels** – the witness within the spiritual realm of Christ’s presence and power... we can trust Christ to provide us the victory we need over life-dominating sin
 - **Believed on in the world** – people from every tribe, tongue, kindred, and nation have responded to the Gospel with repentant faith... the Gospel was entrusted to you so you can share it with others
 - **Taken up in glory** – Jesus ascended to the right hand of the father... because of the Gospel, Jesus Christ has all authority to set us free from sin, advocate for us, and one day receive us to Himself.

Gospel Motivation

- Church planting
- Church revitalization
- Camp Ministry
- Missions Support
- Pastoral Training
- Business as Missions

Gospel Motivation

- Chair Set Up and Tear Down
- Serving in the Nursery
- Teaching Junior Church
- Ushers and Greeters
- AV Set up and Tear Down
- Transportation
- Special Projects

Gospel Motivation

- Go Wednesday
- Juvenile Detention Center
- Bethel Bible Missionary Church
- Deaf Ministry
- Habitat for Humanity
- Piedmont Women’s Center
- Y Mentorship
- Dream Center in Easley
- **OPEN A COUNSELING CENTER THROUGH PBC**

APPLICATION:

- **Identify at least one way you can increase your commitment and live out your calling at PBC.**
 - Ask God for help.
 - Ask another member for accountability.
- **Study the different descriptions Paul uses for the church.**
 - The family of God⁴
 - A living assembly⁵
 - The support for the truth⁶

⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/family-of-God.html>

⁵ https://www.openbible.info/topics/living_church

⁶ https://www.openbible.info/topics/church_as_the_support_of_the_truth

- **Praise God for the Gospel by using I Timothy 3:16 as a prayer guide!**
 - **Manifested in the flesh** – the incarnation of Jesus Christ is essential for our redemption... Christ alone can relate with us in all points... the gift of Christ demonstrates God's amazing love for us
 - **Vindicated by the Spirit** – reflect on the recognition of Christ by the Father and the glory of His resurrection... Christ alone satisfied God's righteous wrath upon your sinfulness
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