THE LOCAL CHURCH, THE PILLAR AND FOUNDATION OF THE TRUTH

I Timothy 3:14&15 Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Background

I Timothy 1:3&4a As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.

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The Overall Theme of First Timothy

I Timothy 3:14&15 …I am writing you these instructions so that…you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God,

At least 85% of the references to “the church” in the New Testament refer to a local church. Once “the church” seems to refer to all the churches in a given area (Acts 9:31) and the rest of the time it refers to all true believers in Jesus (Ephesians 2:19-22). The word “church” never refers to a building in the New Testament.

That the word “church” refers to a local church in this passage is pretty obvious because the entire first part of the chapter is a list of qualifications for elders and deacons (both men and women).

The Local Church Is God’s Family

The Greek word translated “household” in I Timothy 3:15 is translated “family” in the NIV in I Timothy 3:4&5 and “household” in I Timothy 3:12, where it obviously refers to a deacon’s family. We are family, because we all have the same Father, who is the Ultimate Authority in our family. This is, of course, also true of all believers.

The local church is also described as God’s Temple: I Corinthians 3:16&17 Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

I Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

And the local church is also called the body of Christ: I Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

I Corinthians 12:12&13(NASV) For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

And although a local church is also an organization with officers, Elders and Deacons, it is never called an organization.

The Local Church is the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth

Galatians 2:9a James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me.

A pillar is a visible support of a building. James, Cephas and John were seen as pillars upon whom the church rested to a significant degree. Since Paul said in Ephesians 2:20 that the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” that perception would seem to be correct.

The local church is the pillar of the truth. The truth is the “faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people” (Jude 3b). The local church is visible, the world sees it, for the most part it does not see the Church, all believers in Jesus. Most people’s perception of Christianity will be formed by their interaction with people in a local church.

According to Outreach, the best way to see significant numbers of people saved is to start a local church.

A pillar is also a support upon which part of a building rests. I Timothy 3:15 calls the church, “the pillar and foundation of the truth.” The word translated “foundation” means something solid on which something sits. Taken together, “pillar and foundation” mean the truth rests upon the local church. In what sense is that true?

“The faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people” has not primarily been maintained in Seminaries and Bible Colleges. Harvard, Princeton and Yale were established by Christians to prepare people to be pastors.

Harvard’s original motto (in Latin) was “Veritas Christo et Ecclesiae,” which means “Truth for Christ and the Church.” Princeton’s original motto was (in Latin) “Dei Sub Numine Viget” meaning “Under God’s Power She Flourishes.” Alfred University, which was founded as a Seventh Day Baptist Seminary, still has as its motto “Fiat Lux,” meaning “Let There Be Light.”

“The faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people” has not primarily been maintained in denominations and church hierarchies. The past 50 years has seen one denomination after another split as the hierarchy became too liberal for many of the local church congregants.

Some Things to Think About

The New Testament has very detailed instructions about how those who follow Jesus are to “do church.”

The local church is the primary visible witness to the world of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I Timothy 3:15 says, and history proves, that individual local churches are where the truth of the Word of God has been maintained.

Active participation in a local church is for most people the best way to help people come to Christ and grow in their faith.