

Part of the Family

Family of Faith, 1 Timothy 3:14-16

Introduction

- Here's a familiar but fitting story: A pastor finds a young boy staring intently at a plaque in the church lobby. It was covered in names & an American flag.
 - The boy asks the pastor about the plaque, and the pastor explains that it's a memorial for the men & women who have "died in the service."
 - The boy's eyes grow wide & he asks, "Which service - the 8:30 or the 11:00?"
 - We appreciate our servicemen & women, but we can also appreciate the child's confusion.
- Is church meant to be a torture chamber? A spiritual super store? A social club?
 - The NT contains several metaphors for the church like the people of God, the body of Jesus Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.
 - But the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) add another vivid metaphor to the list – a family of faith.
 - Paul uses household language in all 3 of his inspired letters.
 - He describes elders as God's stewards or house managers" (Tit. 1:7)
 - He pauses in 1 Timothy 3:14-16 to organize his whole letter around the idea of the church as the family of God. (Read passage)
- I believe these 3 verses are the key to the whole book of 1 Timothy.
 - Tucked in behind the qualifications for elders & deacons, this passage is clearly an aside from Paul's main argument.
 - Paul addresses his circumstances & aims in the 1st person to add emphasis.
- We are starting a new sermon series in the book of 1 Timothy today, and before we go further, I want to take note of the circumstances surrounding it.
 - Paul planted the church in Ephesus before he was arrested & sent to jail.
 - Paul maintained his connection while in jail through the letter to the Ephesians.
 - When released, Paul continued his missionary activities while sending 2 trusted associates, Timothy & Titus, to the churches in Ephesus & Crete.
 - While separated, Paul sent this letter to encourage & empower his "true child in the faith." (1:2).
- As far as the reasons for his letter, Paul mentions 2: to fight false teaching & to establish the connection between beliefs and behavior.
 - It's this second reason that's in view in 1 Tim. 3:14-16.
 - Paul is concerned by false teaching that's infiltrated the church, but he doesn't address it head-on; he addresses the behavior connected to it.
 - You see, **Behavior is just as important as beliefs in the family of God.**
 - We have a tendency to separate them and to fixate on beliefs.
 - But behavior has a way of revealing what we really believe.
 - Jesus himself said, "Each tree is known by its fruit." (Luke 6:44)
- *In this key passage, we'll discover 3 reasons why behavior is just as important as beliefs and why it matters in the family of God.*

Body

I. The family of God belongs to God (v. 15a)

- A. The "household of God" (the people, not the building) is the church, and they both are under His ownership.
- B. This means:
 - 1. Direction: The church is to follow God's guidance in His Word.
 - 2. Identification: The church is identified by its relationship with God.
 - 3. Accountability: The church answers to God for its actions.
- C. Several years ago, I was working at Pedal Power Bike Shop right next to the University of Kentucky's campus. I was eager to move from sales to service, so I did everything I could to impress. In time, I learned about Billy, the college kid who worked his way up to buy the company. Billy didn't work many hours outside of the office; when he did, he had every right to tell us what to do because he was the owner – the company belonged to him.

II. The family of God demonstrates the gospel. (v. 15b)

- A. The Pastoral Epistles contain several phrases that refer to the gospel: sound teaching, the deposit, the Word, and the truth.
- B. Moving from the household to the house metaphor, the church is described here as the pillar or the supporting beam of the truth.
- C. Sometimes people need to see and hear the gospel for it to soften their hearts. They need to hear it explained objectively as they also see it lived out subjectively by real people.
- D. Your testimony will make or break your gospel witness!

III. The family of God participates in the Great Commission (v. 16)

- A. The "common confession" is an early hymn with 6 statements about Christ.
 - 1. The 1st 2 are His accomplishment: revealed & vindicated.
 - 2. The 2nd 2 are His accomplishments made known: seen & proclaimed.
 - 3. The 3rd 2 are the response to His accomplishments: believed & taken up.
- B. The hymn revolves around the church's part in making Christ known through the Great Commission to go and make disciples.
- C. There's a parable floating around the "fishless fishermen." Month after month, those who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish, and how they might go about fishing. Year after year, they carefully defined what fishing means, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing is always to be a primary task of fishermen – but they never went fishing.

Conclusion

- The letter of 1 Timothy rests on the assumption that **behavior is just as important as beliefs in the family of God.**
 - We cannot say that our deeds don't matter because we are saved by faith.
 - We cannot say that doctrine doesn't matter because we are doing good things.
- They're both important & w/ His help we must bring them in line with the gospel!