

1 Timothy 3:14-16

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[0:00] 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 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Amen.

of idolatry, which we are told is anything in which we find our ultimate satisfaction other than God himself. Last week, Pastor Jackson moved us into the second part of our series for the summer. Having defined the gospel, we now find ourselves considering what is the nature of gospel life. Our reflection on the nature of gospel life continues today as we turn our attention to 1 Timothy 3, verses 14-16.

[1:24] Hopefully, by the end of our time together in 1 Timothy, we will see that gospel living is godly living. Gospel living is godly living. Please pray with me.

Our Father, we thank you for this afternoon. We thank you for our ability and the privilege we have to meet together, to come before you in song, to examine your word, and to be taught by your Spirit. I pray that now you would reveal to us the nature of gospel living, that you would teach us how it is we are to live our lives out for the sake of your gospel.

In Jesus' name, amen. Growing up, we had a spot in our kitchen, not officially recognized or sanctified, but it was on the kitchen counter.

Usually, it was covered by a small piece of scrap paper. I remember it well, on the right side, as I would walk in. Every now and then, I would come home from school.

[2:27] Parents would be working late, running errands. We would come into the kitchen, grab a snack, and there would be a piece of paper sitting there, scribbled with some notes. It would say hello.

It would tell us there was a lasagna in the refrigerator, maybe. Turn the oven up to 350, throw it in there for a little while, and then dinner would be ready. But it was there just in case our parents were not home on time to do dinner themselves.

Though it's much longer than a short note of baking instructions, we find a very similar idea as we turn our attention to 1 Timothy today. In 1 Timothy 3, 14-16, we see some of Paul's instructions that he's writing and sending to Timothy in case he is delayed as he hopes to visit Timothy.

In verse 14, he writes, I hope to come to you soon, but I'm writing these things to you so that if I do delay, you may know how to act in the household of God. Paul hopes to come to Timothy, but he doesn't know when he is going to make it.

It seems there are some other obligations or perhaps unknown circumstances that may delay his arrival. In addition, we have come to a passage that serves as the purpose statement for Paul's letter.

[3:42] It is in these verses that he explains to Timothy his reason for writing. The rest of 1 Timothy can and ought to be seen in light of these verses before us today. These verses have great implication for the question we're asking, what is the nature of gospel living?

And it is the gospel that is behind Paul's instructions to Timothy. If you look back to chapter 1 in verse 15, you would read this from Paul. Then after a verse of doxology, he directs his attention to Timothy again in 18 and says, Timothy, this charge I entrust, to you.

The charge that Paul is passing is nothing other than the message of the gospel. Because all of what Paul is writing is based on the gospel and is focused on instruction to Timothy and his church, the passage before us is an ideal one for considering what composes the nature of gospel living. And as stated previously, we will find that gospel living is godly living. Our text will explain three aspects of gospel living. Gospel living with one another. Gospel living in the world. And lastly, gospel living embodied. The first aspect of gospel living that surfaces in 1 Timothy 3, 14 to 16, is found at the beginning of verse 15 and speaks to our gospel life together.

[5:25] That is what ought to be the nature of gospel living among the church. How ought we to conduct ourselves when we are together? This is what Paul speaks of when he writes his desire that you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God.

Implicit in this statement is the fact that if one has been changed and taken to heart the gospel of Jesus Christ, that his or her behavior must follow suit in accordance with that choice.

Paul's letter to Timothy has much to say concerning the life of the local church. It is full of instruction for her behavior. Even a quick glance across its six chapters demonstrates Paul's instruction to the church in that it includes how to stand against false teaching, to pray for all people, what government and the local church ought to look like, how to care for widows, and many other topics as well.

Alongside these specific instructions for gospel living, another recurring theme that runs through 1 Timothy is godliness. The form of godliness that we see in verse 16 in our passage occurs only ten times in the writings of Paul, and eight of them are found in 1 Timothy.

We'll turn our attention to those in a little bit. We see godliness in connection with every major idea in 1 Timothy. Paul mentions godliness in connection with the false teachers, with the care of widows, with specific instructions to Timothy, and the command to pray for all people.

[6:49] The only big theme in which the word godliness does not show up specifically is the list of qualifications for deacons and elders. But the qualifications listed in chapter 3 for elders and deacons are probably, in fact, one of the most grand descriptions of godliness we have in the book.

One commentator, I. Howard Marshall, sees a strong connection between faith or the growth of the gospel life and the behavior throughout the use of godliness in 1 Timothy.

He says this, he says that it, quote, expresses a strongly Christian concept of the new existence in Christ that combines belief in God and a consequent manner of life.

According to 1 Timothy, gospel living is godly living, and our gospel living with one another is based on our pursuit of a godly life. Paul's purpose statement in 14 through 16 then goes on to speak of our godly living in the world.

Verse 15 concludes with a description of the church, which is said to be the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. As we seek to understand the nature of gospel living, the second half of this phrase is of much benefit.

[7:59] We have already seen that godliness must be the goal of our gospel life together. Now we need to take a moment and lift our gaze off of ourselves and turn it to the world that has no reason or desire to seek after a godly life.

The church universal has been charged with guardianship of the gospel truth. This has incredible implications for the nature of gospel living. The church, as a collective of those who embrace the gospel, have been given sole responsibility for upholding and guarding the truth.

This is the idea behind the dual metaphors of calling the church a pillar and a buttress. The word buttress could just as well be translated foundation, and I think the meaning comes out the same. Pillars and foundations share a common purpose in that they uphold, support, and provide base for something else. And that is our charge as it concerns our gospel living in the world, to uphold, support, and to display the truth.

In an unbelieving world. The church has been entrusted with a precious gift that is not meant to be kept to ourselves, but it is to be put on display for everyone in hope that they too will be transformed by the same gospel truth.

[9:14] Today we are seeing that gospel living is godly living. And as it concerns our gospel life together, the pursuit of godliness must concern

our gospel life in the world. The gospel life of the church takes on a dual purpose as it seeks to uphold the truth in an unbelieving world.

As a beacon of truth, the church must guard and defend against that which is contrary to the truth of the gospel. However, the church must also take an active role in its keeping of the truth.

The church must not merely seek to defend against error, but it must also be a loud and a resonant voice in proclaiming the truth on its own merit. We have so far seen what gospel living means in the community of believers and what gospel living means for a life lived in the world.

And in both aspects, it is centered on godly living. Paul closes the heart of his letter to Timothy with a word concerning the gospel living embodied. As we move into verse 16, we find the key that unlocks the mystery of the truth which is revealed in the mystery of godliness.

He defines what that truth is that he mentions in verse 15 that the church is called to uphold. If we read in verse 16, Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.

[10:27] 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.

If we're surprised at this mystery, perhaps we shouldn't be. But in verse 16, Paul reveals the answer behind his references to truth and godliness. It's the person of Jesus Christ.

More precisely, the incarnation, resurrection, glorification, and proclamation of Jesus. Paul finally lets Timothy and everyone else in on this great and unbelievable mystery.

The answer to godliness, to upholding the truth, is not simply an exercise of fashioned command and response. It's not merely doing the right thing. It's seeking to be more like Christ.

The six-line poem we find in verse 16 at its core talks about two things, the person of Jesus and the proclamation of Jesus after his life on earth. We've been focusing on the gospel and gospel living this summer.

[11:26] Here, the gospel message is beautifully given for us in six lines. It begins with Jesus' life while on earth. The poem is introduced with a line concerning the incarnation of Jesus. If godliness wasn't a big enough mystery for us to wrap our heads around, we now must consider the incarnation.

But the beginning of the truth of the gospel comes when God humbled himself, took on bodily form, dwelt among us in the person of his Son. God in human flesh. God walking among us.

The second line, though a little more cryptic, seems to be alluding to the resurrection of Jesus after his death. Though the line is somewhat ambiguous, we do get some help from Romans 1.4, which tells us that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.

Bringing these first two lines together, we arrive at the core message of the truth of the gospel. Jesus came to earth, was crucified on the cross, but did not remain dead. Rather, as the second line reminds us, he rose again.

He conquered the grave. Death was not an enemy strong enough to hold him. Three days after his death, the tomb was empty and Jesus had overcome its curse. And this is the core of what the gospel offers.

[12:40] Life. We then see in the next line that Jesus was seen by the angels. This seems to be referring to Jesus' manifestation to the heavenly beings after the resurrection. He was then shown as the one who conquered the grave and all the angel hosts were now aware.

After speaking of Jesus' earthly ministry, our poem talks about what happened after he ascended into heaven. The gospel, this mysterious truth that was God embodied in human flesh, did not cease after Jesus returned to heaven.

Rather, it continued on. The fourth line refers to the proclamation about Jesus after his earthly ministry. The most cursory glance across the book of Acts were you to flip back would show us that after his ascension, there were many people who proclaimed the message of Jesus to the peoples and nations both near and far.

Not only was his message proclaimed, but the next line tells us that his message was believed on in the world. Now we begin to see the power behind the gospel. The mystery and truth of the gospel did not begin and end with Jesus and his disciples.

It was proclaimed by them and then believed on by others. We should note that it was the proclamation, not merely the living out of the gospel that led to its belief in the world.

[13:54] The poem closes with one more line, like the third, alluding to Christ being brought into glory. I've been saying from the beginning of our time in this passage that as it concerns our series on the nature of gospel living, that this passage points us towards the idea that gospel living is godly living.

Paul has stated his reason for writing to Timothy that we should know how gospel living is made manifest in the community of believers, their relationship to the world, and the embodiment of the gospel in the person and proclamation of Jesus.

We mentioned earlier that the same root of the word godliness that we have in verse 16 occurs all over Paul's letter to Timothy. As Paul is writing to instruct believers how they are to behave among themselves and towards an unbelieving world, the times he mentions godliness point us toward the proper conduct that should be born from gospel living.

As we have also seen, the embodiment of gospel living is the person of Jesus and the proclamation of him. These occurrences of godliness throughout 1 Timothy, all of which we will see were embodied in the person of Jesus, teach us what is proper conduct for a life centered on the gospel. And is that not the true essence of godliness, that we seek to live like Jesus and follow the example that he set before us? So what is this godliness? If gospel living is godly living, how are we to live?

[15:17] To answer these questions, let's turn to a quick survey of the use of godliness in 1 Timothy. Begins in chapter 2, verse 1. Paul writes, first of all then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people.

For kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. The first practical manifestation of godliness in 1 Timothy is prayer.

A godly life is a life committed to prayer, to communication with God. In Jesus, we have an incredible life of prayer as our example. Prayer was Jesus' means of communication with his Father, as it is ours.

He was in such agony before his crucifixion that while he prayed and prayed with such fervor, his sweat actually became blood. In his high priestly prayer in John 17, we see Christ lifting up everyone whom the Father had given into his hands and also those who would consequently hear their gospel in the future.

If we want to make our lives into lives of godliness, we must begin on our knees, humbly before God's throne in prayer. Paul calls for intercession and thanksgiving in our prayers.

[16:28] He calls for us to pray for all people that we may lead godly and dignified lives in the world. A life of prayer becomes an essential tool for gospel living with one another, but also for gospel living in the world.

We are told to pray for all people, not just our friends, not just fellow Christians, but rich and poor, young and old, leaders and lay people, Christians and non-Christians, but the beginning of a godly life, the beginning of a godly life is in solitude, away from people and in prayer for them.

In prayer that we would live a godly life and therefore have the Spirit of God enabling us to go forth from our time of prayer to proclaim the gospel to those who are being showered in prayer and to reflect, confess, and change our own lives so they are always becoming gospel lives that look more and more like our Savior, Jesus.

Moving on in 1 Timothy, we run into the term again in chapter 4, starting in verse 7. Here Paul is giving Timothy instruction to stand firm in his teaching of the gospel and to always be growing in the gifts he has been given.

But his words on godly living extend to all believers. He writes, Godliness is not confined to our present life. For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

[17:50] Godliness is not confined to our present life. Rather, it will be of benefit for us for all of eternity. And who would have known this better than our Savior? His life of godliness, perfect and unblemished, is what allowed him to accomplish his purpose and mission as given by God.

If Jesus had not lived a perfectly godly life, he would not have been an appropriate sacrifice for the sins of the world. His godliness grants opportunity for all to strive for godliness because it is his godliness that is placed upon those who believe the gospel, can be declared righteous by God, and therefore godliness truly is of value for this life and the life to come.

Our seeking after godliness does not end with our own lives. In verse 416, we see that Timothy's pursuit of godliness and his teaching of the gospel lead to the salvation of himself and also those who hear him.

As people in God's living church, we have been entrusted with the truth of the gospel, and it is that truth that needs to be brought to a world so desperately in need of the gospel and godly living. But the responsibility lies with those who have the truth. For how can those who do not have the truth come to a knowledge of the truth unless someone proclaims it to them? Paul's next use of godliness appears in chapter 5.

[19:08] Let's begin in verse 3. He begins, Honor widows who are truly widows, but if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.

Paul is now giving a few words on how to care for widows who are often in a position of complete dependence on those who are around them. A godly life also includes making sure that those who cannot help themselves, who are down on their luck, within the household of God are receiving the care that they need.

Jesus' ministry embodied this idea of care for the poor, the widow, the outcast. We often see him eating at the table of those others considered sinners, but his mission, he said, was to the sick, to those who not only needed their physical needs met, but also their spiritual needs and the needs of the gospel.

A godly life cares for those who are without the physical necessities of this world. A godly life makes sure that all in their community of believers are looked after and have the essentials that they need to live.

Paul's next use of the term godliness comes in chapter 6 as he talks about distinguishing between true and false teachers of the gospel. The way in which a teacher approaches the topic of godliness is given as a litmus test to discern whether or not their teaching is of sound doctrine and aligned with the teaching of Christ.

[20:31] Verse 3 tells us that the false teacher will disagree with Paul's teaching on godliness and that according to verse 5 they will see godliness as a means of personal gain. Not only is godliness not a means of personal gain, one's godliness actually is shown to grow more if they are content with having only the necessities of this life.

Verse 6 says, Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world but if we have food and clothing with these we will be content.

Jesus was content and he didn't even have a place for his head to lay. Individually we will grow in godliness as we learn to be content with what we have because we have seen that godliness is a benefit for our eternal lives and what we accumulate here is not going with us.

This passage also speaks of the church's responsibility to uphold the truth. We've talked about upholding the truth by proclaiming it aloud but we also must guard the truth against error as was happening around Timothy.

Lastly, godliness is one of the weapons that the Christian has given to assist in our fight of the faith. Look down to verse 11 in chapter 6. Paul commands Timothy to among other things pursue godliness.

[21:44] Godliness will not come to the one who does not seek it. It is essential for gospel living as are the righteousness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness that are also mentioned in 6.11.

Paul commands Timothy to among other things pursue godliness. It is essential for where is there a better example of a life lived entirely towards godliness.

It's in the person of Christ. Godliness requires a life of striving to ever be more like him. And in him we see this embodiment of the pursuing of godliness.

Everything we know of Jesus' ministry points towards its end in Jerusalem. He was baptized and acknowledged from heaven by his father, went into the wilderness and overcame sin, thus remaining completely righteous and godly.

He preached a message of repentance from sin and the coming of the kingdom of God. He knew that he must die, yet he forged ahead accepting his death, three days later conquering that death. [22:45] Jesus' pursuit of godliness, doing what his father had asked and planned, was the singular goal of his ministry and nothing deterred him from the fulfilling of his purpose.

So we've seen that gospel living is godly living. Gospel living must have an effect on the way that we live among one another. A life of godliness among one another will make sure the needs of everyone among us are met.

It will find us in prayer, examining our own lives, as well as lifting others up before God that they too might grow in godliness. Gospel living must also affect the way in which we live in the world.

We are guardians of the truth of the marvelous mystery of the gospel, and as such we must guard against any error that may seek to undermine the gospel of Jesus. But we must also uphold the gospel in truth for the world to see.

We must be in prayer for those who have yet to accept the truth of the gospel and share the gospel with them so they may also have the joy of the gospel in their lives. Finally, we see the gospel living embodied in the person of Jesus.

[23:50] Not only is he the perfect example of godliness, he is also the message of godliness that we have been given to proclaim. Gospel living is godly living, and godly living is our seeking to be more like Jesus every single day.

Let's pray. our father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the instruction of when the gospel takes root in our heart that it is to be proclaimed, but that it is also to be manifested in godliness in the way that we conduct our behavior among one another and among the world. and we thank you for the perfect example we have of that godliness embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. May you give us the strength to always be seeking to conform ourselves more to him. In Jesus' name, Amen.