



Old Testament Reading: Joshua 1:1-9
New Testament Reading: 1 Peter 1:1-25

The Pillar and Ground of Truth “The Recovery of Truth” 1 Timothy 3:14-16

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The church at Ephesus was started by Apollos, an evangelist, an apologist, a church leader, and friend of the Apostle Paul.

- However, when Paul visited the church on his third missionary journey, he discovered the church had dwindled down to only 12 members.
- Paul spent the next three years in Ephesus, teaching the few about the Kingdom of God and how to receive the Holy Spirit.
- After three years of Paul’s preaching and teaching the gospel, the church at Ephesus became the model church of the New Testament, and out of that experience came the Apostle Paul’s masterful doctrinal thesis on God’s plan of redemption, which we know as his letter to the Ephesians.
- However, when the Apostle Paul left to go to Jerusalem, the new leaders of the church allowed the religion of the culture to replace the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- In his first letter to Timothy, Paul asked his son in the faith to restore biblical integrity to the church at Ephesus, **for God had established His Church as the Pillar and Ground of Truth.**

A little “c” refers to a local assembly of believers

A big “C” refers to the universal Church: the worldwide body of believers in Christ.

In his letters to Timothy, Paul said some members of the church at Ephesus had become:

- **Obsessed with religion**, *but they wanted nothing to do with God.*
- **Obsessed with myths and the study of genealogies**, *but they had abandoned the study of the Word of God.*
- **Possessed with deceitful spirits**, *yet they thought they were so spiritual they did not need God.*

But the main issue was the rising influence of Artemis, or Diana, the sex goddess of the ancient world.

- Diana offered people the “good life” without guilt and the “fullness of life,” without the acknowledgment of God.
- Diana evoked the best in what the people wanted for themselves, but certainly, not what God wanted for those He sent His Son to save.



The worship of the goddess of Diana is a perfect description of:

- **The world** – while there is a longing for the true meaning and purpose to life, there is a reluctance to look to God to provide those answers.
- **The culture** – the entertainment media, recreational venues, political arena, and most commercial businesses offer their version of the full and meaningful life to those who will bow down to their goddess.
- **The church** – multiple thousands gather in their houses of worship each Sunday to worship a god after their making, in ways of their own liking, rather than the God of the Bible, and in the ways He has ordained.

When we presume to know what pleases God, without first listening to what God has said in His word, the god we are worshipping is not the God of the Scriptures. Therefore, there is no difference between the true worship of false gods, and the false worship of the true God.

What did the Apostle Paul tell Timothy to do to restore biblical integrity to the church at Ephesus?

- Paul did **NOT** tell Timothy to relax the standard of righteousness and to blend with the culture.
- Paul did **NOT** tell Timothy to lead the church members to attack the temple of Diana. In fact, Timothy was to avoid it because he had a much higher calling.
- Paul’s main concern for the church at Ephesus was not for their emotional well-being, but their spiritual health.
- Therefore, the only way Timothy could accomplish his mission was to replace the godless chatter and vain speculations with the absolute truth of God’s Word. 1 Timothy 1:3

- To restore the spiritual health of the church at Ephesus, Timothy was told to use the same things Paul used to build the church: **the preaching and teaching of sound doctrine.**

1. The Master of the Church is the Living God – Vs. 15 – “*the household of God, which is the Church of the living God.*”

The Greek word translated in our English Bibles as “*church*” is “*Ecclesia*,” which means “*the called out and assembled.*”

- **The Church of God is the assembly of those who have been called out from the world by the Holy Spirit and united together for the defense and propagation of the truth.**
- Paul called it the “**Church of God,**” for He is the Architect and the Builder. God lives in His house, God provides for His house, and God is to be honored in His house.
- In the original Greek manuscripts, verse 15 reads: “***The Living God’s Church.***”

2. The Mission of the Church is to proclaim God’s Holy Word – Vs. 15 – “*the Pillar and ground of the truth.*”



The temple of Artemis was the third of the seven wonders of the world. 127 marble pillars, 60-feet tall, 4-feet in diameter, studded with Jewels and overlaid with gold.

- Each pillar was decorated with a scene from Greek Mythology, and often with a figure of man at the top as if he was holding up the weight of the main beam of the portico.
- The pillars were set deep in the ground and on alternate layers of sheepskin and charcoal to mitigate the effects of earthquakes.

While the Church is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, with Him being the very Cornerstone, its purpose is to hold up the truth of the Word of God in such a way that all men can see it.

- While the giant pillars of the temple of Artemis were given to the goddess of Diana by earthly kings to honor themselves, the Church is the Pillar to honor Jesus Christ as the King of all Kings.
- Contrary to the Roman Catholic interpretation of this verse, in no way did Paul consider the Church as the source of truth or the creator of truth, but rather the Church is to hold firm to the truth and then hold up the truth to a world inundated with lies.
- As the foundation and pillars of the temple of Artemis were a testimony to the error of a false religion, the Church is to be a testimony of God’s truth.
- **Therefore, the only reason for the existence of the Church and the only mission of the Church, is to serve as the pillar**

and the ground of truth.

- **The Pastor** must be about the truth – a servant who is not hesitant to say, *“thus saith the Lord.”*
- **Every ministry** of the Church should be built around the centrality of the knowledge of God.
- **The worship services** should be built around the centrality of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit and derived only from the Word of God.

3. The Message of the Church is Jesus Christ – Vs. 16 – *“Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received in glory.”*

This was one of the first Church hymns, a poem to be sung; deep theology put to music, and it is all about Jesus Christ.

- The focus of the Church is upon Christ and Christ alone.
- The Church exists to hold up the truth about Jesus, to exalt Him, to proclaim Him, to worship Him, to live like Him, and for Him.
- Just as the Church depends upon the truth for its existence, the truth depends upon the Church for its defense and proclamation.
- Therefore, the gospel must be at the heart of every local church, and the Church of God must be at the heart of the gospel, **for the Church is the primary channel through which God’s plan of redemption is being accomplished.**
- Jesus said He would build HIS CHURCH, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.