

1 Timothy 3:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Analysis

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God (ἐὰν δὲ βραδύνω, ἵνα εἰδῆς πῶς δεῖ ἐν οἴκῳ θεοῦ ἀναστρέφεσθαι, ean de bradynō, hina eidēs pōs dei en oikō theou anastrophesthai) —'if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God.' Bradynō means to delay, be slow. Anastrophē means to conduct oneself, behave. Oikos theou is 'God's household.'

Which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (ἥτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος, στῦλος καὶ ἐδραῖωμα τῆς ἀληθείας, hētis estin ekklēsia theou zōntos, stylos kai hedraiōma tēs alētheias)—'which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.' Stylos means pillar, column. Hedraiōma means foundation, support, bulwark.

Paul explains why proper church conduct matters: the church is God's household, and more—it's the pillar and foundation supporting truth in the world. Not that the church creates truth (God's Word is truth), but the church upholds, proclaims, and preserves it. How we conduct ourselves in God's house matters because the watching world sees our lives and either believes or dismisses the truth we proclaim.

Historical Context

Ancient cities featured prominent pillars supporting temples and public buildings—visible, structural, essential. Paul uses this architectural image: the church is truth's supporting structure in the world. When the church lives faithfully, truth stands firm. When the church fails morally, truth is undermined in public perception. The Ephesian church's conduct affected Christianity's credibility throughout Asia Minor.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How is the church 'the pillar and ground of truth'—what does this metaphor mean?
2. Why does proper conduct in God's household matter so much for preserving truth?
3. What happens when the church fails to uphold truth through godly living?

Interlinear Text

ἐὰν δὲ βραδύνω ἵνα εἰδῆς πῶς δεῖ ἐν
if But I tarry long that thou mayest know how thou oughtest in
G1437 G1161 G1019 G2443 G1492 G4459 G1163 G1722

οἶκῳ θεοῦ ἀναστρέφεισθαι ἣτις ἐστὶν ἐκκλησία θεοῦ
the house God to behave thyself which is the church God
G3624 G2316 G390 G3748 G2076 G1577 G2316

ζῶντος στῦλος καὶ ἐδραίωμα τῆς ἀληθείας
of the living the pillar and ground of the truth
G2198 G4769 G2532 G1477 G3588 G225

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 2:5 (References God): Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Chronicles 22:13 (Parallel theme): Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 (Truth): For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

1 Kings 2:4 (Truth): That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

Romans 3:2 (References God): Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Matthew 16:16 (References God): And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Galatians 2:9 (Parallel theme): And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

1 Samuel 17:26 (References God): And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

Acts 1:2 (Parallel theme): Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

Romans 9:26 (References God): And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

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