

How We Ought to Conduct Ourselves

Preacher: Joe R.

Date: June 28, 2026

Church: 16th Avenue Gospel Chapel

References: **1 Timothy 3**, 1 Timothy 3:15; Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18; Philippians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 11:17-20; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 1 Corinthians 12:25; 1 Corinthians 12:26-27; Matthew 28:20

Introduction

Carry on please. Thank you. Good morning to all you folks. Greetings from Golden Lake. It's my privilege to be with you again. So nice to see you. And I see it looks like there's 26 or 28 on Zoom as well. So there's a full house if we count everybody. Thank you for the privilege of being here. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them in the comments.

If you have a Bible, would you turn with me to 1 Timothy chapter 3 this morning? 1 Timothy chapter 3. I know that some of you, if not most of you, would recognize the name William MacDonald. And again, some of you would have his Bible, Terry. I'll just reach behind me here. This is what the new version looks like. Some of you know about this. And it has been my experience that this is such a wonderful resource to help us glean the truth of Scripture. I would highly recommend that commentary to any of you that don't have that.

Now, in 1 and 2 Timothy and in Titus, Mr. MacDonald, along with dozens of other commentators, suggest that these are what they call pastoral epistles—Timothy and Titus taking on the role of an elder or teaching elder, a pastor-teacher role in the New Testament. And I have certainly appreciated Mr. MacDonald's thoughts as you work your way through these.

I want to go to chapter 3 and verse 15 this morning for our thoughts at this particular service. Paul writing to Timothy—and many of you would know that the second letter that he wrote to Timothy would be the final letter that would be recorded in the New Testament from Paul, the pen, and the inspired pen, I might say, of the Apostle Paul. But I like this verse. It caught my attention. Several things have brought me to this, and I want to read the verse, and then we'll share some thoughts that we trust the Lord has given us this morning. So I'm in 1 Timothy 3, and in verse 15, Paul says:

[1 Timothy 3:15 NKJV] - but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

My wife and I were just talking this week how that in our generation—and we realize that our generation is passing on. It won't be much longer, our generation. It'll be the next generation's time to pass on. But even as a boy in Mississippi, grew up in a mainline denominational church, I think we went probably every Sunday. Most often we did, anyhow. And in a small town where—and I have to be careful here, because I know this is not inclusive—but where everybody believed in God. I mean, it would have been a shock if anybody in the town I grew up in said, "I don't believe in God." Everybody would have gone, "Wow, you don't believe in God. How dumb are you?"

Having said that, and realizing that that's a very broad statement, I'm not suggesting that everybody in this little town of 1,200 people were Christians. I don't believe they were. As a matter of fact, I would suggest, having later become a Christian myself, that probably most of them were not Christians. Some, of course, were, but society had a different attitude toward God. Could I put it this way? They were God-fearing people. Christian morals were expected, right?

And even though I came from an unsaved home—Mom and Dad not saved, my two sisters not saved—we were taught Christian morals. There was something inherently good and right, I think, about the attitude of that generation. To my disappointment and grief, I don't see that anymore. I don't think any of us reading our New Testament and observing the society around us would say that we live in a God-fearing society anymore. Now, I'm not suggesting that we are living in a God-hating society, but they just don't care. As it was in the days of Noah—oh, they just didn't care. They were just eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage till the day the flood came and took them all away. They just were indifferent. They were immoral. The imagination of man was only evil continually. And so there is a part, of course, that the believer plays, and a part that the—I'm going to use a broad term—the church plays in the society in which we live.

Three Pictures of the Church

So Paul's writing, if you know anything about this chapter or this context in particular, he's talking about elders in the church. He's also talking about deacons in the church. By the time we get to verse 10, he's writing precisely or directly to Timothy as a leader, as perhaps

a pastor-teacher, or maybe an elder. We're not sure exactly what role, but Timothy is in leadership or oversight of some kind. Let's just leave it at that for now. And he says, "Timothy, I need to tell you, if I don't get there, I got something you need to know, son." Something that you need to pass on, as Timothy, I believe, was probably in Ephesus at that time. And so he talks about the church.

Now, I know I'm preaching to the choir here this morning, but just bear with me. If you put the cookies on the bottom shelf, everybody can get one, right? So wherever you are in your spiritual maturity, I trust this won't be boring or so repetitive, but encouraging for you.

Let's look at this verse again: "If I'm delayed, I write so that you may know." There's something incredibly important that I need to make sure that you're aware of, that you have information. Now, if I said to one of my children, when we had the children, they were smaller at home, if I said to them, "Smart enough, don't you know how to behave?" No. But if I never instructed them as to what behavior would be acceptable, or if I never instructed them as to what they should do as opposed to what they shouldn't do—if I didn't lay down the law, if I didn't give the rules, if I didn't share some expectations and I only just corrected them, that wouldn't be fair. God's always fair. Paul knows that. He says to Timothy, "I want you to know this so you can pass this on, so that the people of God might know what to do, how to conduct themselves, how to behave themselves."

And so he gives three pictures of the church in that verse. He calls it **the house of God**. He calls it **the church of the living God**. And he calls it **the pillar and ground of the truth**. These are lovely declarations. These are lovely illustrations or names that the church of God is called. Let's briefly look at this. This is not really the bulk of my message, but let's briefly look at this.

The House of God

First of all, he said, "I want you to know how to conduct yourself, how to behave yourself in the house of God." Let me see if I can help you a little bit about this. Some of you may be thinking—and it's okay, it's quite common to think this way—you might be thinking, "Well, when I go to church, I know I got to behave." Well, what does that mean? "Oh, that means when I walk down the sidewalk in front of 16th Avenue Gospel Chapel, that's one thing. But when I go into the church, that's another thing, and I better be careful when I get in there, because there are certain standards and there are certain expectations."

And what we don't realize is, or what we don't maybe consider, is that there's nothing—excuse me now, please bear with me—there's nothing holy about this building except the people that are sitting in this building and conducting a God-fearing meeting with Christ as

the head. You know, who knows how long the whole thing will last. This building in the future could be sold. There could be a casino put in here. Same building. You know, you say, "Well, God forbid." I do, too. You would never want to see that. But the structure itself is not the church. You know that.

So let me read this and see if I can make it where I think you will get it. He says, "But if I am delayed, I write so that you might know how you ought to conduct yourself in Joe Reese's house." You say, "Well, that's not what it said." I'm giving you an illustration. In other words, I'm giving you some instructions here. When you go to Joe's house, there's some standards, there's some traditions, there's some biases, there's some whatever. When you get to that house, I tell you what they're going to be expecting there.

You see, the word here, "house of God," really could be translated like this: **the household of God**, God's family. Are you with me on this? Okay. We're not talking about walking into 2039 Traymore Road in Golden Lake into Joe's house, and we're not talking about whatever the address is of 16th Avenue Gospel Chapel, okay, on 16th Street. We're talking about the family of God, the household of God. And God has some standards. Believe me you, they are high. They are not low standards. And so Paul says to Timothy, "I'm writing to you so you know how you ought to act, how you ought to think, how you ought to talk, how you ought to behave, how you ought to conduct yourself in the family of God." That's not hard. That's not hard.

The Church of the Living God

And then he goes on to say, which is equals, same as, "which is the church of the living God." Okay, I got it. This is God's household. This is God's family. This is the assembly, the church, the gathering. Whenever Christians gather together, let's just remember something: the assembly of or belonging to God, or is God the living God's family or household?

If you're taking notes, just jot down Acts 20 and 28, okay? And there it talks about the assembly in Ephesus and those who are true believers being purchased by the blood of God.

[Acts 20:28 NKJV] - Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

You say, "Oh my goodness, what's this about? Jesus was on the cross." Yes, of course. In Matthew 16, I forget what verse it is, Jesus said, "I will build My church."

[Matthew 16:18 NKJV] - And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

So Jesus said, "No, it's My church." God said, "Well, it's purchased with My blood." What are we getting at? The triune God is involved in this. It is the living God. It is the Savior's church. It is the Holy Spirit who calls them out. It is the work of God that establishes this thing. And so, we got that you ought to know how to act in the house of God, the family of God, which is God's church, the living God—not the dead god, not a statue of somebody sitting in a corner over here somewhere or a monument to someone out front somewhere. No, the living, resurrected, "I AM" eternal Jehovah God.

The Pillar and Ground of the Truth

And then he says this third thing: **the pillar and the ground of the truth**. We usually call them beams today. You put up a beam. You can't call them a pillar. It's a structure that usually holds something. Thank you. And a pillar is no better than the foundation that it's placed on. If you take a wonderful pillar, a structure, to hold up something, and you put it on sand, the first time the floods come and the erosion takes over, the whole thing is going to come down.

So the pillar and ground of the truth are very needful. All three of these declarations—the household of God, the church that is purchased by the blood of the living God, and the pillar and the ground of the truth—are all designations of not a building. I know it seems—it seems like one, not a structure. We all know that if this building was undergoing renovation or, God forbid, the building would somehow be destroyed, guess what? Next week, guess what would happen? You'd meet. The church would meet. The household of God would meet. You might meet out in the park. You might meet in a barn. It is the people that we are talking about.

And the people like you that we are talking about, you are the very support and foundation of the truth. Granted, most unsaved people don't get this. But when they walk down that sidewalk in front of this place where it says, "Christians gather here and we honor the Lord, we believe the scriptures, we preach the gospel," there is something, there is a testimony there that you don't have three houses or two houses down the street. They don't have that. And so it is significant.

I don't know what part all of this plays in a society that's lost its fear for God, but it doesn't in any way suggest that we just quit doing what we're doing. So Paul says, "Timothy, you got to know something, son. This is the house of God, the Church of the Living God, the pillar

and the ground of the truth." Because in the last days—and you, I'll remind you, the last days started when Jesus went back to heaven, okay? So where, could I dare say, we're in the last days of the last days? I mean, we know the end is coming. We just don't know when. But what is necessary? You've got to know this, son. You've got to know these things.

So let's just rehearse here for a minute. So in the context, he's instructing elders. He's instructing deacons. And he's instructing Timothy that he might know. So that what? So that Timothy can pass this on. To who? To me and to you. And so let's ask ourselves this question: how am I to conduct myself? He doesn't really answer this question completely in that verse, of course. He just throws it out: "I've got to share something with you. You need to know this so that you can pass it on." All right, got it.

Conduct in the Assembly

So let's ask ourselves the question, what should you and I as Christians do? Now, remember, when Paul writes to the church in Philippi, he says to the bishops, to the deacons, and to the saints. Now, that's your three categories right there in the church. Philippians chapter one and verse one, if you want to mark it down.

[Philippians 1:1 NKJV] - Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

He writes to the bishops, that is the overseers, the elders. He writes to the deacons, and he writes to the saints. So you've got two in leadership capacity, the elders and the deacons, and then you've got the flock called the saints. Now, they're all saints, and out of that, there are some that God has chosen for overseers and deacons. Okay, so let's just ask ourselves the question, what's our responsibility in a general sense as believers, as saints—those that are set apart for God?

Let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, please. 1 Corinthians in chapter 12. So in my notes, I asked myself this question. I said, "How should believers conduct themselves in the church?" Now, if you're in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, let me just give you another designation. Go back to chapter 11 and look at verse 17. Verse 17. I'm just going to take everything out of context for a moment and just focus on a phrase. In verse 17:

[1 Corinthians 11:17 NKJV] - ¹⁷ Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.

Together. Just remember that. We're not going to get into current problems and what all they're doing. Just that phrase, come together. Look at verse 18:

[1 Corinthians 11:18 NKJV] - ¹⁸ For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.

Look at verse 19:

[1 Corinthians 11:19 NKJV] - ¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

And then look at verse 20:

[1 Corinthians 11:20 NKJV] - ²⁰ Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

Okay, that phrase is a reference to the meeting, to the various meetings of the assembly. That's what you're doing this morning—you're coming together. So whether it's in a building or in a field, it doesn't matter. The church is coming together.

Now in chapter 12, Paul gives some instructions about this group of people that come together. We don't have time to read it all, but let me skip down to verse 12. Verse 12, he talks about gifts and then he says:

[1 Corinthians 12:12-14 NKJV] - ¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.

I got hands and legs and all this stuff, but then he said, "Let me share something with you, the body of Christ is like that." So also is Christ. I don't know how many people are here—I think there's 26 online—and every one of you that know the Lord, according to this, you're a member of the body of Christ. Here's the way this is, I understand it unfolds: when you trusted Christ as your Savior, you've been taken out of your old position, which was in Adam, sinful and separated from God, and placed into your new position, the body of Christ. We're talking about position here. We don't feel that, we don't experience that necessarily, probably don't even know that till we study the scriptures. We just know we had a big hole in our heart and the Spirit of God convicted us, and by grace we're saved through faith. And the next thing you know, we're positionally moved from where we were separated from God now into Christ, called the body of Christ, called members in particular. You're there if you know the Lord. You're in the only church you want to make sure you're a member of, which is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, right? A member of the body of Christ.

And then he takes some time to say everybody's got different gifts. You got different parts of the body, we got different gifts. And I won't take time to read all this, but if you read verses 15 down through verse 25, it says we have a responsibility. In other words, this is how you ought to behave yourself. This is how you ought to act. God gives you a gift. Hey, not just preachers have gifts, folks. Come on. It's not just Sunday school teachers that have gifts. It's not just missionaries, excuse me, that have gifts. Every person in Christ has at least—are you with me?—at least one spiritual gift. Some of you have multiple gifts. Thank God for that. Okay. But those gifts are not for me. They are not for you. They are for the furtherance of the gospel, for the edifying of the body of Christ, for the glorifying of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we need to exercise. That's how you ought to behave yourself. "Neglect not the gift that is in you." Do you know your gift? Do you have a clue what it is? Are you trying to exercise it? Are you trying to develop it? This is how you ought to behave yourself in the gathering, the coming together, the body of Christ, the house of God.

Okay. Now look at verse 26. In this context, if one member—that'd be you, okay, or me—if one member suffers:

[1 Corinthians 12:26 NKJV] - ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Now don't make that hard. If you stomp your toe, are you with me? Your whole body hurts. You know that. Oh, man. We have a bed, and that bed doesn't have much of a frame, but it's got some kind of a thing underneath, and every once in a while, I stomp my toe, I bump into

that metal thing, and, oh, I hate it when I do that, you know. I don't just say, "Hey, toe, get over that, you know, suck it up. Everybody gets bumped into." No, my whole body hurts. So this is what it's talking about. If one member, that'd be you, all the members suffer with it, or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice in it. Look at verse 27:

[1 Corinthians 12:27 NKJV] - ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

One thing you must never forget: you are not alone, okay? You are not the only Christian. You are in a fellowship. You are in a group of believers. You have a gift. You have power from the Holy Spirit to use that gift. And that's so that the body won't be diverse or diversified or separated, or as it says in verse 25:

[1 Corinthians 12:25 NKJV] - that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

We're to have the same care, one for the other. So how should I act? Read the epistles. They're basically addressed to the church, and we have certain principles. We have certain patterns that are laid down, and we conduct ourselves in that way.

My encouragement and my advice to you today as a believer: please, please don't think—and listen, don't, don't, don't get mad at me now, okay, I'm not upset with anybody, I just want to tell you—don't think your gift is coming and sitting and listening to Joe Reese preach. That'd be a horrible thing to have to do all the time. But your gift is to support the church, encourage the believers, exercising your gift. Everybody's got a part. There are different gifts, different individuals. And how I should behave myself is certainly not criticize or condemn the other parts of my body. If I shut my left hand in the car door, my right hand doesn't say, "Cut that left hand off, he's no good to us anymore." You know, the right hand opens that door and says, "Oh, can I help you?" and that right hand takes that left hand and says, "Oh, let me help you, let me help you." See? So one member suffers, we all suffer. One member is honored, we're all honored. Working together is what we want to do.

I suspect that I'm going to try to give some more ministry on this next Sunday of how we ought to conduct ourselves in the—what? The house of God, which is not really a house of sticks and bricks; the church of the living God, purchased with His own blood, the pillar and ground of the truth. You folks are the only Bible some people are going to ever read. They're

not going to read their Bible. They're going to watch you. And if we can conduct ourselves, behave ourselves in a God-honoring, God-glorifying, God-fearing way, then we are going to pass on the truth to that next generation or to anyone who might be watching.

Closing Prayer

Father, it's a big job. We couldn't possibly do it without the guidance of Your Word and the help of Your Holy Spirit. It just would be impossible. But You didn't leave us alone. When the Lord Jesus gave the Great Commission, He didn't say, "Just go," Father. He said:

[Matthew 28:20 NKJV] - teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

So, Lord, bless all those who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus and help them to conduct themselves in a God-honoring way today. In Jesus' name, amen.