

# THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

## **TEXT: I TIMOTHY 3:14-16**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Since we are celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of our church, I thought I would speak tonight on "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:15).
2. The Lord Jesus Christ is the founder of the church. He said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
3. The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the founder of the church, He is the foundation of the church. Ephesians 2:20 says the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."
4. Romans 9:33 says, "Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."
5. That phrase, "whosoever believeth on him," is found repeatedly in the Bible. To belong to the church of the living God a person has to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
6. The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).
7. They answered him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

### **I. THIS IS GOD'S CHURCH**

1. It is "the church of the living God" (I Tim. 3:15).
2. Our Lord said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18).
3. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth..." (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1).
4. And Paul wrote in I Corinthians 10:32, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."
5. Paul was not referring to any particular denomination. There were no denominations back then. Denominationalism came much later, and denominationalism brought confusion.
6. People often ask me about all of the various denominations. I tell them the Bible is our only authority.
7. The local New Testament church is a divine institution -- it is "the church of God."
8. Paul said to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:28, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
9. Since this is God's church, things must be done God's way (cf. Matthew 28:18-20). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). This is God's way.
10. A young preacher told the Duke of Wellington that he considered it useless to attempt to evangelize India. The "Iron Duke" sternly replied, "Sir, what are your marching orders?"
11. The young minister asked the Duke what he meant by that question, and the Duke of Wellington said: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). **Sir, these are your marching orders!"**

12. And these are our marching orders as well.

13. I would like for us to consider the Great Commission this evening. Let us look at:

- Its **Purpose**: the evangelization of “the world.” “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15, 16).
- Its **Result**: establishing churches. Jesus said, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). This is God's program -- the local church.
- Its **Scope**: every Christian witnessing to “every creature.” The Great Commission is not just for missionaries or pastors or evangelists, etc. “He that winneth souls is wise” (Pro. 11:30).
- Its **Method**: house by house, street by street, town by town, country by country, etc. (Cf. Acts 2:46; 5:42; 20:20).
- Its **Power**: it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can win souls, and send out missionaries, and establish churches, and fulfill the Great Commission (cf. Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8).

14. Back on February 21, 1882, a Baptist missionary in India, named Rev. N.M. Waterbury, wrote an article and it was published in the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*.

15. I will not read the article in its entirety, for it is rather long, but I will read part of it.

16. "The Lord Jesus says, 'Behold, I come quickly.' If this be true, it were well that his servants do his work quickly. The powers of darkness and error work quickly. The Roman Catholics have bought many converts in India. The Mohammedans are laying hold of Africa. The time to do effective work is now. Much of the work of evangelizing the world has been committed to the Baptists. Our missionaries were pioneers in India and in Burma. The blessings bestowed upon their efforts has been beyond all precedent. At the same time, their growth at home has been wonderfully large. The Baptist principle requires that the Baptists in America push forward the work (in missions)...Large fields still wait to be opened up. The harvest is plenteous, but the labourers are few, and often the contributions are discouragingly small. The Lord of the vineyard calls for the fruits due to him. Now is the time for the Baptists to respond."

17. Back in the 18th century, after hearing an account of the spiritual needs of India, a pastor said, "There is a gold mine in India, but it seems almost as deep as the center of the earth. Who will venture to explore it?" William Carey said, "I will venture to go down, but remember that you must hold the ropes."

18. This is the Lord's church, and we must do things His way. First Corinthians 14:40 says, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

19. This is the Lord's church, and we must do things His way -- "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

20. The Lord has given His church two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper (cf. Matt. 26:26-30).

21. First Corinthians 11:26 says, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

22. This is God's church -- "the church of the living God" (I Tim. 3:15), so we must be careful to do things God's way.

## II. IT IS THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

1. The true church is "the house of God," and it is "the church of the living God" (I Tim. 3:15).
2. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal up on Mount Carmel, to prove that his God was the living God, and Baal was a false god.
3. All throughout the Bible, our God is referred to as the living God.
4. Moses said, "For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?" (Deuteronomy 5:26).
5. Joshua said, "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites" (Joshua 3:10).
6. Referring to Goliath, David said, "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (I Sam. 17:26; cf. 17:36).
7. King Hezekiah said, "It may be the LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God" (II Kings 19:4; cf. 19:16).
8. Psalm 42:2 says, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (cf. Ps. 84:2).
9. King Darius said to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" (Daniel 6:20; cf. 6:26).
10. Hosea 1:10 says, "Ye are the sons of the living God."
11. Simon Peter said to our Lord, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).
12. Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
13. Jeremiah 10:10 says, "But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God." Notice: "The LORD is the true God, he is the living God."
14. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (I Thessalonians 1:9).
15. There are many gods in this crazy, mixed-up world, but only one "living and true God" (cf. (I Cor. 8:4-6).
16. There are many gods (Baal, Allah, Buddha, etc.), but only one true God -- the God of the Bible!
17. First Timothy 3:15 says, "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."
18. There is only one true God, and one true church -- "the church of the living God."
19. If a church does not follow the Word of God, it is not "the church of the living God." For example, most of the mainline churches (Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal, Methodist, etc.) now support so called "same sex marriage," and homosexual ministers. Once a church endorses sin and promotes sin, it can no longer be considered a true New Testament church.

20. I don't care what the S(odomite) COTUSA says. God has already defined marriage as a union of a man and a woman. And God says homosexuality is an abomination.
21. When we purchased this building, a local businessman asked me why we wanted to establish the work here on Elmont Road because we were surrounded by all these different churches.
22. I told him that not one of these so-called churches was winning people to Christ.

### III. THE CHURCH IS THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH

1. Albert Barnes said,

The word "pillar" (I Tim. 3:15) means a column, such as that by which a building is supported, and then any firm prop or support (Galatians 2:9; Revelation 3:12). If it refers to the church here, it means that that is the support of the truth, as a pillar is of a building. It sustains it amidst the war of elements, the natural tendency to fall, and the assaults which may be made on it, and preserves it when it would otherwise tumble into ruin.

Thus it is with the church. It is entrusted with the business of maintaining the truth, of defending it from the assaults of error, and of transmitting it to future times. The truth is, in fact, upheld in the world by the church. The people of the world feel no interest in defending it, and it is to the church of Christ that it is owing that it is preserved and transmitted from age to age. The word rendered "ground" means, properly, a basis, or foundation. The figure here is evidently taken from architecture, as the use of the word pillar is. The proper meaning of the one expression would be, that truth is supported by the church, as an edifice is by a pillar; of the other, that the truth rests 'on' the church, as a house does on its foundation. It is that which makes it fixed, stable, permanent; that on which it securely stands amidst storms and tempests; that which renders it firm when systems of error are swept away as a house that is built on the sand (compare notes on Matthew 7:24-27).

The meaning then is, that the stability of the truth on earth is dependent on the church. It is owing to the fact that the church is itself founded on a rock, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, that no storms of persecution can overthrow it, that the truth is preserved from age to age. Other systems of religion are swept away; other opinions change; other forms of doctrine vanish; but the knowledge of the great system of redemption is preserved on earth unshaken, because the church is preserved, and because its foundations cannot be moved. This refers...to the living spirit of truth and piety "in" the church itself. As certainly as the church continues to live, so certain it will be that the truth of God will be perpetuated among people.

2. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is in conflict with error. This is inevitable. This is unavoidable.
3. That is why our Lord said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).
4. Satan and his demons are constantly fighting the church, hindering the church, vexing the church, infiltrating the church, influencing the church, etc.
5. Some so-called churches refuse to engage in battle with the forces of darkness. This proves that God is not with them.
6. Joel Osteen says Jesus Christ is not the only way to heaven (cf. John 14:6). He also says impenitent homosexuals go to heaven.

7. Men like Osteen want to be popular with the worldly crowd, but in doing this they are denying Christ. Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18, 19).
8. Most of our neighbors are friendly, and our church enjoys a good reputation in Elmont (and beyond Elmont), but we must never compromise to win favor with the enemies of the Gospel.
9. F.B. Meyer said, "The Church is the earthly dwelling-place of God. It lifts up and maintains the standard of truth in the midst of men; therefore it is hated. It is most necessary that Christians should bear witness to the truth, collectively as well as individually."
10. Back in April, Frank Bruni wrote an op-ed article in the *New York Times*, a very liberal, pro-homosexual newspaper. He said, homosexuality and devout Christianity are "forces in fierce collision."
11. He said churches must bow "to the enlightenments of modernity... Religion is going to be the final holdout and most stubborn refuge for homophobia. It will give license to discrimination. It will cause gay and lesbian teenagers in fundamentalist households to agonize needlessly: Am I broken? Am I damned? Conservative Christian religion is the last bulwark against full acceptance of L.G.B.T. people."
12. I am so glad our Lord has promised, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).
13. The gates of hell will attack, but they will not prevail.

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. Many years ago, a preacher named Banks grew up in a remote area on the western frontier. There was no electricity, and their little country church didn't even have oil-lamps.
2. For the evening service, members were required to bring at least one candle. As the congregation started growing, the light grew brighter.
3. But if the congregation was small, the light was dim.
4. Beloved, I do not want Bible Baptist Church to be a dim light here on Elmont Road. I want our light to shine brightly!
5. In Revelation 1:13, the apostle John was on the isle of Patmos, and he was given a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ standing in the midst of seven candlesticks.
6. Then in Revelation 1:20, we are told that the seven candlesticks which John saw are seven churches -- Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
7. The meaning is clear -- the churches represent God's light in a spiritually dark and dangerous world.