

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/25/94 PM

1 Timothy 3:14-15 "What God Thinks of Church Business Meetings"

Intro: I couldn't believe what my eyes were seeing and my ears were hearing. I had seen these people before, but I had never seen them act like this. True, I was only a child, but it just didn't seem right. One man talked loudly, waved his arms, and sat down. Another objected, jumped up, and made his point. A lady across the room blurted out her opinion. Someone else asked a question which the second guy had already asked, but I guess he just wanted everybody to know he was there. I looked around and saw a few looking at the floor, apparently a little embarrassed by the whole thing.

Where was I? At a political debate? No. At a parent/teacher meeting at school? No. I was at church, at a church business meeting (meetings in fact, plural). To be honest, I don't remember the exact details. Maybe it didn't happen quite like I just represented it. Maybe it was worse. All I know is that at an early age, as a new Christian I saw people act like I'd never seen them act before.

Let me set the record straight. One of the first things that impressed me seven years ago when I became your pastor was the gracious spirit I saw evidenced in our business meetings. What I have just described I have never seen here. To God be the glory. Yet as we prepare for our annual business meeting tonight, I'd like to pose a question.

What does God think of church business meetings? That's a good question to ask BEFORE we have ours. That's why the sermon is first in the order of service tonight. Know this. Church business meetings matter to God. We find out what God thinks about church business meetings in I Timothy 3:14-15.

Proposition: I Timothy 3:14-15 answers this question for us by addressing two related questions.

- I. What does God think of the Church?
 - A. The Church is the Household of God.
 - B. The Church is an Assembly.
 - C. The Church is the Pillar of the Truth.
- II. What does God expect of the Church?
 - A. We must have the right conduct.
 - B. We must have the right commitment.

Before we can answer the question, "What does God think of church business meetings?" we need to ask a more fundamental question, "What does God think of the Church?"

I. What does God think of the Church?

We find out in vv 14-15, "These things..."

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, one of his most trusted associates in ministry. I Timothy is called a pastoral epistle. Timothy was in Ephesus. Though he'd started the church, Paul wasn't there at the time. Apparently the church was struggling with

some issues. Paul hoped to come to Ephesus soon to help. But until God allowed that trip, this letter would give the needed direction.

V 14 "These things write I unto thee (Timothy), hoping to come shortly. BUT if I tarry long (lit. "to be slow")." In other words, "Timothy, I've written this letter so the church will know how to conduct itself."

I Timothy is like a manual for church life. We learn how to deal with doctrinal error in ch 1, what should happen in worship services (even the role of women) in ch 2, qualifications for church leaders in ch 3, how to establish a caring ministry for widows in ch 5, how to handle church discipline cases in ch 5, and much more.

Why do these "issues" matter to God? It goes back to what God thinks of the Church. We find three perspectives of the Church in 3:15.

A. The Church is the Household of God.

V 15 says that the church is the "house" of God. The Greek word "oikos" can refer to a building. Certainly Paul is using an architectural image here. But a more accurate word than "house" would be "household." The church is a household. Household refers to a place, but more specifically, to the people who live in that place (eg--2 Tim 1:16).

The church is not a building. It's people. It's a family. It's a household. But not just any household. We are the household of God. We are a people who belong to God. This church is His, not any person's.

1 Cor 3:16-17 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 2 Cor 6:16 "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

What is the foundation for this building? Eph 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

We are God's household. God is with us as we conduct our meeting tonight.

B. The Church is an Assembly.

The word "church" in v 15 is the Greek word "ekklasia." The word itself is a rather common word that means "congregation, assembly." That is what we are.

There's something interesting and informative about the makeup of this word. It's a compound word, comprised of two smaller words: "ek" (out) + "kaleo" (to call). The church is an assembly of "called out ones." God has called us out. He has chosen us, and set us apart from this world. We are an assembly of people that don't belong to ourselves. We belong to God.

In fact, we belong to the "Living God." He is alive. He is active. He has a purpose for this church. We must remember that.

C. The Church is a Pillar of the Truth.

V 15 says that the church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." This architectural image would have meant much to Timothy in Ephesus, for it was there

that the great temple of Diana was located. That temple had 127 pillars (Wiersbe, 223).

The church is a pillar. We can visualize that. But it's also a "ground." What is that? The NASB uses the word "support." The idea is a buttress, a bulwark. The church holds up something. What? The truth. What truth? THE truth. The phrase refers to the revelation of God in the Person and work of Jesus Christ (see v 16).

God has given us a beautiful facility. If we came into this facility, and noticed a crack in one of the pillars and supports out front, what would we do? We would make sure it got fixed! Those pillars hold up the edifice.

Listen. This local church is a pillar of God's truth. God has given us a message of truth. It's a message about His Son. We have a responsibility to that Truth, as we'll see in a moment.

You say, "What does this have to do with church business meetings?" We need to look at church business meetings through this grid, from God's perspective. Church business meetings are an opportunity for His household to meet, for His assembly to gather, for the Pillar to check its mortar. The local church is significant to God. Far be it from us to trivialize, to abuse what is important to God.

Church leaders are not perfect. A person might think, "Well, I don't like a particular Board member, so I'll show them. I'll make a statement. I won't give my tithes." Wait a minute. Whose church is this? A Board member's? No. The Church is God's household, the assembly of the Living God, and the Pillar of God's truth.

II. What does God expect of the Church?

Now the rubber meets the road. Paul highlights two expectations.

A. We must have the right conduct.

In v 15, Paul says he wrote this letter with what aim in mind? "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in...the church."

What strikes me is that the pronoun is singular. "Timothy, I want YOU to know how the church is to conduct itself." Why? Because YOU are a leader Timothy. YOU are responsible to teach the church membership how to conduct itself. The NIV catches the sense, "I am writing you these instructions so that...you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household."

Let's be practical. Who or what determines what kind of conduct is appropriate in the church (and in church business meetings)? Public opinion? No. God does. Conduct in the church is determined by God, not public opinion. How should we determine what we should do in a church business decision? Do we get things done by politicking for a majority vote? No, we seek and then yield to God's will as revealed in His Word.

Let me be specific. God doesn't intend His Church to operate like a school board meeting. For years, my father was a high school administrator. Frankly, I watched him come home from work many evenings, and go for a long walk to unwind from the tension of decision-making in a dog-eat-dog workplace. In a school board business session, the horn that makes the most noise gets the ear. So teachers make noise.

Students make noise. Parents make noise. Administrators make noise. And we may think, "That's the way it is. That's the way you get things done."

Don't miss this. God has a higher standard for His Church. He doesn't intend for His Church to operate like a school board meeting.

It's hard, but we need to rethink the way we "do business" in the church. We have missed the mark if we come to a business meeting and think, "Well, I've got my right to express my opinion! I've got a right to be heard!"

Says who? That may go at the Elks Club meeting, but not the Church. Why not? Which of us has any rights? Didn't we relinquish our "rights" to Jesus Christ when we accepted Him as our Lord and Master? If we have any "right," it's this. We have a right to search the Scriptures, to find out from God's Word what God's will is, and to make sure the church does that.

God expects us to have the right conduct. We are to behave ourselves in a way which pleases Him. We have a second responsibility.

B. We must have the right commitment.

What commitment? Notice the final phrase of v 15 again. The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." God has given us the truth, the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ. We are privileged to be part of something that will last forever!

A few years ago, Tony Compallo shared the results of a survey of 100 people 95 years and older (I think!). They were asked, "If you could live your lives all over, what would you do differently?" Three answers surfaced. One, reflect more. Two, risk more. And three, do more things that would live on after I was gone.

Beloved, God has given to us something that will live on after we are gone. We have the truth that changes lives. God calls us to invest our lives, our money, our time, our energy into that which will live on after we are gone.

100 years from now, Cleveland Browns games won't matter. Man's applause won't matter. The color of the carpet in the church nursery won't matter. The truth will matter.

The issue now, then, is this. What are we doing with the truth of Jesus Christ? Here's why business meetings are vital. They are opportunities for us to make decisions as a church which will make an impact years after we're gone. When we vote for church leaders, we must vote for people who have the right commitment--to accomplish God's agenda. When we vote on financial issues, what matters is not our personal interests, but God's.

When it comes to church business meetings, we must exhibit the right conduct and the right commitment. May God help it to be so tonight. May His Spirit guide us to make decisions that will please Him, that will make an impact even after we're gone.

Prayer Time: Ask God to direct in our Business meeting.