

HWMR: LIVING AND SERVING ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY CONCERNING THE CHURCH, (Week 8)

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 1:2; 3:16-17; 10:32; 11:16; Eph. 2:19, 21-22

**The Function of the Church(1) The House of the Living God
And the Pillar and Base of the Truth**

1 Timothy 3:15	But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
1 Corinthians 1:2	To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:
1 Corinthians 3:16	Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
1 Corinthians 3:17	If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.
1 Corinthians 10:32	Do not become a stumbling block, both to Jews and to Greeks and to the church of God;
1 Corinthians 11:16	But if anyone seems to be contentious, we do not have such a custom of being so, neither the churches of God.
Ephesians 2:19	So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
Ephesians 2:21	In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;
Ephesians 2:22	In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

Day 1

<i>Acts 20:28</i>	- Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
<i>Ephesians 2:21</i>	- In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

I. The house of God modifies the church, and the pillar and base of the truth also modifies the church; the house of God and the pillar and base of the truth **describe what the church is—1 Tim. 3:15.**

II. The **church is the house of God—1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:16:**

- The expression *the church of God* indicates that the church is **possessed by God** and that the church **has the nature of God** and is **constituted** with the element of God—Acts 20:28; Gal. 1:13.
- The church is *of God* because it is **produced of God** as the source and has God as its nature and essence, which are divine, universal, and eternal—1 Cor. 3:16-17.
- The content of the church **essentially is God Himself**—10:32.

III. The church of God is the **house of the living God**—1 Tim. 3:15:

A. The house of God is the **household** of God—Eph. 2:19:

1. The dwelling place—the house—and the family—the household—are **one entity**—a group of called, **regenerated ones** indwelt by God Himself—1 Pet. 1:3; 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:16.
2. Just as Christ is not separate from the members of His Body but dwells in them, the Father is not a separate member of His household but **is in all the children**—Rom. 8:16; 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 3:16.
3. The house of God is **organic** in the divine life, **organic** in the divine nature, and **organic** in the Triune God—Eph. 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:4; Matt. 28:19.
4. Because the church is organic, the church **grows**—Eph. 2:21.

First Timothy 3:15 says, “*If I delay, that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.*” As God’s dwelling place, the church is both God’s house and His household, His family. In the Old Testament the temple and God’s people were two separate things, but in the fulfillment in the New Testament the **dwelling place and the family are one**. According to God’s New Testament economy, God’s family is His house.

In speaking of the church as the house of God, Paul specifically refers to God as the **living God**. The living God who lives in the church must be **subjective** to the church rather than merely objective. An idol in a heathen temple is lifeless. The God who not only lives but also acts, moves, and works in His living temple, the church, is living. Because He is living, the church is also living in Him, by Him, and with Him. **A living God and a living church live, move, and work together**. The living church is the house and the household of the living God. Therefore, in our meetings, service, and ministry we must give people the impression that the living God is **living, moving, speaking, and acting among us**.

The church, the house of the living God, is living in the Father’s name and in the Father’s life. This means that the **church is living in the Father’s reality**. God’s house is a **living composition** of His many children in the Father’s life and reality. Where the house of God is, there is the family of God, and where the family of God is, there is God the Father with His life and reality. This is similar to the church being the body of Christ. Christ is not separate from the members of the Body, for, as the Head of the Body, **Christ indwells all the members**. Christ should not be counted as a separate member of the Body, because He is in all the members of the Body. The principle is the same with the church as God’s house and family. The Father is not a separate member of the household but is in all the children. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament: The Believers, Volume 2, chapter 161*)

Day 2

- 1 Timothy 3:15** - *But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.*
- 1 Corinthians 3:16** - *Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

Day 3

- 1 Peter 2:5* - You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- Ephesians 2:21* - In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

- B. In speaking of the church as the house of God, Paul refers to God as the **living God**—1 Tim. 3:15:
1. The living God, who lives in the church, must be **subjective** to the church and not merely objective—1 Cor. 3:16.
 2. Because God is living, the church as the house of God is also living **in** Him, **by** Him, and **with** Him.
 3. A living God and a living church **live, move, and work together**.
- C. As the house of God, the church is the dwelling place of God—the place where God can have His **rest and put His trust**—Eph. 2:22.
- D. The church as the house of God—the Father’s house—is the **enlarged, universal, divine-human incorporation** as the issue of Christ’s being glorified by the Father with the divine glory—John 12:23; 13:31-32; 14:20.

Day 4

- John 14:6* - Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me..
- John 17:17* - Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

IV. The Lord wants His church to **know Him as the truth** and to **receive and enjoy Him as life**—1 John 1:1-2, 5-6; John 11:25; 14:6; 18:37b:

- A. *Truth* means “reality,” denoting **all the real things revealed in God’s Word**, which are mainly Christ as the embodiment of God and the church as the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 2:4; Col. 2:9, 19.
- B. The church is built with the **divine life in Christ**, a life that is **indestructible, unconquerable**, and **able to withstand** decline into death from any source—1 Tim. 1:16; 6:12, 19; 2 Tim. 1:1, 10; Titus 1:2; 3:7.
- C. Both the truth and the life are **Christ Himself**—John 14:6:
1. Life is the **inward and intrinsic element**, and truth is the **outward definition** and explanation—1:4; 18:37b; 8:12, 32, 36; 17:17.
 2. The experience of the Lord as life is contained in the Lord as the truth; in order to experience the Lord as life, we must **know the truth**—14:6; 11:25; 8:32, 36.
- D. The content of the church should be the **growth of Christ in us** as truth and life—Col. 2:19; 3:4:

The way that we read the Bible is based on our purpose in reading it. Thus, we need to ask ourselves why we are reading the Bible. Are we reading in order to understand the Bible or in order to eat, drink, and enjoy the Lord through His Word? Once we answer this question, it will be easy to determine how we should read the Bible. If our purpose in reading the Bible is to **understand** it, we will spontaneously read it by **studying** it. However, if our purpose in reading the Bible is to **enjoy and absorb God**, we will automatically take the way of **absorbing God's fatness** from what we comprehend of the Word as we read it.

The difference between these two ways of reading is exceedingly great. Throughout the ages many people, both Catholics and Protestants, have spent much time reading the Bible. However, few gained genuine spiritual help through their reading, because they had no concept of enjoying God through the Bible. They desired only to know and understand the Bible; they had **no desire to enjoy God Himself through their reading**. If we wish to learn how to read the Bible, we must have a strong seeing of the basic principle of enjoying God.

We should not consider that reading the Bible is always beneficial. We must ask ourselves what kind of persons we want to become by our reading. Of course, the best answer to that question is that we want to become **those who enjoy and absorb God**, those who genuinely gain God by eating Him so that He enters into us as life. The Bible is a revelation of God coming to be man's food and man's life. In other words, God desires to be man's food and man's life, and the revelation, the explanation, of this reality is the Bible. Thus, reading the Scriptures is not for seeking knowledge, nor is it merely to gain teachings or spiritual guidance; the **real benefit of reading the Bible is to gain the supply of life**.

In John 5:39 and 40 the Lord Jesus said, "*You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me. Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*" This word indicates that in the Lord's eyes, everyone who reads the Scriptures should do so in order to gain eternal life. Moreover, merely reading the Bible is not sufficient for us to gain eternal life; we must also **come to the Lord**. (*Reading the Bible to See Its True Meaning and Central Thought, chapter 3*)

Day 5

John 18:37 - Pilate said therefore to Him, So then You are a king? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I would testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

1 Timothy 3:15 - But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.

1. Truth is the **shining**, the **expression**, of the **divine** light—John 8:12, 32, 36; 1 John 1:5-6.
2. The standard of the truth should **constantly be raised higher** among all the churches in the Lord's recovery—1 Tim. 2:4; 3:15.
3. We need to **grow** in life, be **saved** in life, be **filled** with life, and **reign** in life—Eph. 4:13-16; Rom. 5:10, 17.

V. The church is the **supporting pillar and the **holding base of the truth**—1 Tim. 3:15:**

- A. The **truth is the Triune God**, having Christ as the embodiment, center, and expression, to produce the church as the Body of Christ, the house of God, and the kingdom of God—Col. 2:9; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; 1 Tim. 3:15; John 3:3, 5.

- B. *Truth* in 1 Timothy 3:15 refers to the real things revealed in the New Testament **concerning Christ and the church** according to God's New Testament economy— Matt. 16:16, 18; Eph. 5:32:
1. The church is the **supporting pillar** and **holding base** of all these realities.
 2. A **local church** should be such a building that holds, bears, and testifies the truth, the reality, of Christ and the church—2:22.
- C. The **church bears Christ as the reality**; the church testifies to the whole universe that Christ, and Christ alone, is the reality—John 1:14, 17; 14:6.
- D. As the pillar that bears the truth and the base that upholds the pillar, the **church testifies the reality**, the **truth**, of Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4.

Day 6

Titus 1:1 - Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's chosen ones and the full knowledge of the truth, which is according to godliness,.

1 Timothy 2:4 - Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth.

- E. In order for the church to function as the pillar and base of the truth, **we all need to arrive at the full knowledge of the truth**—1 Tim. 2:4; 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1.

VI. When every brother and sister is full of life and truth, the church will be strong as the house of the living God and the pillar and base of the truth; this is what is needed in the Lord's recovery today—1 Tim. 3:15.

First Timothy 3:15 says that the church is the pillar and base of the truth. The pillar and the base of the truth is the **entire church, including all the saints**, not only the elders and leading ones. In ancient times buildings were supported by pillars or columns, each of which rested on a base. Paul referred to this architectural feature to illustrate that the church is the pillar and base to bear the truth. Most of the saints probably do not have a deep sensation that they are responsible to bear the truth. I hope that the Lord's speaking in this chapter will impress us that all the believers together are the pillar and base to bear the truth.

The church, which is the pillar and base of the truth, includes all the brothers and sisters. The sisters should not excuse themselves from knowing the truth simply because they are sisters. We should not come to the meetings only to shout and sing to have a good time. Merely to have a good time is not profitable. **We need to practice to know the truth**. If a student attends a university only to have a good time, after four years the student will go home with nothing. The best universities give the students a difficult time, not a good time. The church life is not for us to have a good time. The church is not a nightclub; it is the kingdom of God and the house of God. **There is the need of some discipline**. To be a citizen of a country or even a member of a family, one must learn and be disciplined. We need to **practice to know the truth**. When we come to the meetings, it is wonderful to have some pleasant singing and praising if the Lord leads. However, we should not go to the meetings mainly to have a good time but to receive some discipline and be instructed and edified.

In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul refers to "*the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.*" We are each a living member of the church with the living God in us. The church being the pillar and base of the truth implies that **every member of the church should know the truth**. We need to make a decision to learn the truth. If the young saints do not make such a decision, the church has no future. For the sake of the spreading of the church to new localities, there is a need of leading ones, some who can bear responsibility. We are short of such ones because in the daily church life we do not learn or practice the truth. If we learn the truth and practice the truth in the daily church life, **every member will be able to bear some responsibility**. Then wherever we spread, there will be no problems; every local church will be strong. (*Crucial Principles for the Christian Life and the church life, chapter 7*)