

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **“The Confession of Church Doctrine”**

#### **1 Timothy 3:14-16**

#### **Part 1**

Please turn to 1 Timothy 3:14-16 and we will read this together. I'll read it from the New American Standard. Paul writes to Timothy, 1 Timothy 3:14-16, “I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.”

In this passage we find a statement, a doctrinal statement if you will, a statement that has some rhythm to it, some sense of separation from his general writing, the creedal statement about who Christ is and what He has done. And it's a scriptural statement; other creedal statements have come through time down to us. Some churches really like creeds. Some like them so much they recite them on Sunday mornings when they gather.

The church I grew up in was the Catholic Church and every Sunday we recited the Nicene Creed, which may be familiar to some of you, maybe you did too. It resonates with me so much that I can remember phrases from it 25 years later very much from memory. They did those every Sunday, still do, planned so much you could set your clock by when this occurred, you became very familiar with the Nicene Creed. I will read it to you.

*“We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered death and was buried. On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”*

That may sound familiar to some of you, to others it may not, but it's said every Sunday. It unlike what we find here in 1 Timothy 3 was a creation of man to try to deal with a problem that was facing the church at the time. In 325 A.D. which was when the council of Nicea came together and formed this statement they were combating a heresy known as Arianism taught that Jesus was just a created being not the Son of God, divine, sent from God and God Himself. Jesus was only a created being, much like the Jehovah Witnesses teach today.

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Well, that was denounced in the council of Nicea in 325 A.D. and this statement was given to oppose that. As a creation of man it is interesting that we don't get in the statement recited by the people gathering at churches on Sundays we don't get the whole statement. Here is the rest of it that I will read to you that is not said, *“And those that say 'There was when he was not,' and, 'Before he was begotten He was not,' and that, 'He came into being from what-is-not,' or those that allege, that the son of God is 'Of another substance or essence' or 'created,' or 'changeable' or 'alterable,' these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.”* You can see this is even more targeted to this sense of Jesus being a created being.

As time went on (as creeds do) it became modified again. It was originally stated this way “proceeds from the Father and with the Father...” but phrase “proceeds from the Son,” the phrase “from the Son” was added later. Which became a source of controversy, which was the doctrinal issue that divided the church in 1054 A.D. The first time the church divided itself with the Eastern church, which is where you get the Greek Orthodox, the Russian Orthodox, the Eastern Orthodox churches. Believing that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father but not from the Son, the western church, the Roman Catholic Church and all the denominations that sprung from it, believing that the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son.

You may think boy, what a fine theological point that is, it's very minute what's the big deal there. Well, they thought it was a big enough deal to split over, although that was just theological doctrinal issues, there were other political issues that caused the division there. But the point being that even the Nicene creed, perhaps the most well recognized creed that we can all gather around and recite together, even that has caused division and changes and the reason is it's a creation of man and it is not a revelation of God. It's trying to reflect the revelation from God in the Scripture.

So when we look at 1 Timothy 3:14-16 we find a section that deals with doctrine that is not the creation of man, it is the revelation of God, about Jesus Christ and we should take heed, it is important. Should we read it every week, well I don't know about that because I will speak from personal testimony when you read something every week or you recite something every week you completely turn your mind off from what you just said, but never the less it is very meaningful and we will take a look at it. Before we get there we have to look at the verses preceding it, which deals with the design of God's Word.

The Design of God's Word, God had a plan for His writings and its revealed to us. On the occasion of the writing Paul writes 1 Timothy 3:14, “I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long;” so here we have how this writing came about. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus and had moved on to Macedonia but was still very concerned about the church in Ephesus that Timothy had been left behind to organize and could not get to him and sent this letter as his replacement. It has been now preserved for us as scripture, directing us on how we are to conduct ourselves. So that's the occasion.

A few years before his death, 3 or 4 years, or maybe as many as 5 depending on how you count things, Paul wrote this letter. He was in Macedonia; Macedonia is in the Northern part of Greece to Ephesus, which is on the coast of modern day Turkey. Its no small trip to get there, there's no post office no planes to cross the Aegean Sea with, it was an effort to get this letter to these people.

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In spite of the effort to get this letter to these people, what Paul had written was considered so important as worthy to make this trip to deliver it and worthy to be preserved for us today as scripture.

Now there's the objective of what Paul was trying to accomplish when he wrote and whenever a biblical author tells you why he's writing your ears should perk up because this is important, this is the motivation, he sort of colors all of that of what he writes because he is telling you why he wrote. And he says, 1 Timothy 3:15, "but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."

He didn't write this thinking that he may be delayed; the grammar should best be understood as, he is seeing the delay and therefore he is writing. He is writing to instruct Timothy on how to instruct the church on how to conduct itself and now on how we should conduct ourselves in the household of God. Now this presupposes something, doesn't it? It makes an assumption, that we are in the church and we cannot be conducting ourselves among the household of God if we are not participating with the household of God. It presupposes we are here. Here relationally, here involved.

There's some people that will read the Bible at home, they will pray at home, they will consider themselves doing well, but they cannot be applying what God directs them to because the very purpose of what He's giving the scripture for is to tell us how we are to conduct ourselves in the household of God, the church. The church is indispensable, it is absolutely necessary for us to live a godly life, it has to be done in the context with the church or we are not fulfilling the purpose of which Paul wrote for us to function. So that's why he is writing and so as we read this we keep that in mind. This doctrinal statement is given to us so that we will conduct ourselves properly in the church.

The church gets described for us here. There are words surrounding it. It's also instructive for us to know what the church is. It's described as the household of God. Household gets used a few verses earlier in qualification for elders, qualification for deacons.

1 Timothy 3:12, "Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households." The idea of a household is you have children and maybe extended family and maybe in some cases there's even servants involved, but the household had a connection to one another.

In your household you have a connection to one another and it requires a lot of very bad behavior before brothers and sisters stop communicating with each other, before mothers and fathers stop relating to their children. Even the ungodly will love their family and feel a connectedness with their family, that is hard to break. But in this day and age the family of God, the household of God, is more easily torn asunder where we can pass our relationships off as no big deal.

Well, the Scripture describes us more serious in our relationship because the church is not just a place, it's not just a house as some versions put it, it's a household, it's a family, that's why you see phrases about one another as brothers and sisters in Christ in the Scripture because we are related to

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one another. That doesn't mean everyone is conducting themselves appropriately, just like in a family not everyone conducts themselves appropriately, but there is a connection between us that's important, meaningful and we should be building that not taking it for granted or tossing it aside quickly.

The church is not a place, it's a family. It's described as the church of the living God. Who owns the church, God owns the church. It belongs to God, He is living, He is here, He's everywhere, He's omnipresent, but He has a specific interest in the church because it represents Him on earth. It is not a human institution, it's not something that we came up with because we thought it would work really good if we met once a week on Sunday morning and we did this every week, that wasn't it. God designed this, and because God designed it, it's good, it's right, it's the way it should be conducted, we should be meeting and involving ourselves together because it's God's plan and it's why He has given us the scripture, one reason to build the church.

Now this last phrase is interesting. The church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, or in my version the pillar and support of the truth. The church is supporting the truth. Now I shared with you that I grew up in the Catholic Church and I've had many friends that were Catholic. Most of them don't really know a whole lot about the beliefs of the Catholic Church and they are tied to it for different reasons, but there are some that take it very seriously.

I have friends that take it so seriously, they know that I've been catholic in my life and will seek to convert me back to Catholicism believing that, as they'll put it, the church, meaning the catholic church, is the pillar and support of the truth and they understand this phrase this way. That the Catholic Church is the means by which God's truth is communicated to man. It is the support and pillar of truth, therefore we can't just cast it aside. Are they right? Are we in the wrong place? They certainly have history on their side, don't they?

Valley Bible began in 1956 not as early than the roots of the Catholic Church that's for sure. But when we look at church, we are not just looking at one church, not just Valley Bible church, it's all comprehensive. So we can have very interesting discussions where we stayed up late at night talking about these things. I find it very interesting, are we in the wrong place or is the Catholic Church the church that is supporting the truth, the pillar of the church.

Well, here's where they are in error - the church does not determine the truth, it supports the truth. You look at the imagery here and you have the church as the instrumentality to deliver truth, but it does not get to determine what the truth is. Where truth is being determined is in what has been revealed to us by God in His Word, and the church is representing that truth. So if the church is representing that truth accurately then we can say the church is the pillar and support of the truth. But let's not beg the question of is the church representing and supporting the truth.

The Catholic Church didn't just come up with the Nicene Creed, this was actually before there was a split in the church. Before certain teachings that were unbiblical became involved to a greater and greater degree. But as time went on there became issues, which led to creeds. Well the biggest issue, which made the biggest division, was regarding the reformation.

In the 1500's Martin Luther and many others taught correctly about the gospel and about salvation coming by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and nothing else. The Catholic Church responded to that, they had to respond to that because the teaching of the reformers was creating

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such a movement among the people, by God to bring truth, that the church was being split apart. Now that wasn't the intention of Martin Luther, in fact, his intention was to bring doctrinal change to the church, to help them teach correctly. Unfortunately, they didn't like that and sought to kill him and others, they responded by drawing a line in the sand.

It started in 1546 where they called the Council of Trent, and it ended there, was a large meeting in 1546, lasted a long time, more than a year, then they met again, then they met again and that last meeting in 1564 produced a creed. This is their last creed, and it basically defined the doctrine of the Council of Trent in representing the Catholic Church, united about the doctrines of the reformation. And I'm going to read these to you because I think this is very relevant to what we should believe and you get crystallized in the truth by seeing it being opposed. So its very helpful, I'm going to read this to you. It kind of gives you a sense of what the teaching of the church is. This has not been removed or back away from in any sense and would be held by my friends who would be trying to convert me.

*I, [NAME], with firm faith believe and profess each and every article contained in the Symbol of faith which the holy Roman Church.*

*I resolutely accept and embrace the apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions and the other practices and regulations of that same Church. In like manner I accept Sacred Scripture according to the meaning which has been held by holy Mother Church and which she now holds. It is her prerogative to pass judgment on the true meaning and interpretation of Sacred Scripture. And I will never accept or interpret it in a manner different from the unanimous agreement of the Fathers.*

*I also acknowledge that there are truly and properly seven sacraments of the New Law, instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, and that they are necessary for the salvation of the human race, although it is not necessary for each individual to receive them all.*

*I acknowledge that the seven sacraments are: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, and matrimony; and that they confer grace; and that of the seven, baptism, confirmation, and holy orders cannot be repeated without committing a sacrilege. I also accept and acknowledge the customary and approve rites of the Catholic Church in the solemn administration of these sacraments. I embrace and accept each and every article on original sin and justification declared and defined in the most holy Council of Trent.*

I'm going to pause here and read for you a couple for the articles on justification to give you an idea of what they mean when they say this, Canon 9 on the doctrine of justification in the Council of Trent said this:

*Canon 9: "If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema."*

In other words if your will is not co-operating with God to bring about justification, you're considered anathema, that means damned, cursed.

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*Canon 30: "If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema."*

Cursed. Damned. That's what they mean. I'm going to continue with this creed:

*I likewise profess that in the Mass a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice is offered to God on behalf of the living and the dead, and that the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is truly, really, and substantially present in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, and that there is a change of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into blood; and this change the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation. I also profess that the whole and entire Christ and a true sacrament is received under each separate species.*

(In other words, it literally is the body and blood of Christ).

*I firmly hold that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful. I likewise hold that the saints reigning together with Christ should be honored and invoked, that they offer prayers to God on our behalf, and that their relics should be venerated. I firmly assert that images of Christ, of the Mother of God ever Virgin, and of the other saints should be owned and kept, and that due honor and veneration should be given to them. I affirm that the power of indulgences was left in the keeping of the Church by Christ, and that the use of indulgences is very beneficial to Christians.*

*I acknowledge the holy, Catholic, and apostolic Roman Church as the mother and teacher of all churches; and I promise and swear true obedience to the Roman Pontiff, vicar of Christ and successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles.*

(That's the Pope).

*I unhesitatingly accept and profess all the doctrines (especially those concerning the primacy of the Roman Pontiff and his infallible teaching authority) handed down, defined, and explained by the sacred canons and ecumenical councils and especially those of this most holy Council of Trent (and by the ecumenical Vatican Council). And at the same time I condemn, reject, and anathematize everything that is contrary to those propositions, and all heresies without exception that have been condemned, rejected, and anathematized by the Church. I, [NAME], promise, vow, and swear that, with God's help, I shall most constantly hold and profess this true Catholic faith, outside which no one can be saved and which I now freely profess and truly hold. With the help of God, I shall profess it whole and unblemished to my dying breath; and, to the best of my ability, I shall see to it that my subjects or those entrusted to me by virtue of my office hold it, teach it, and preach it. So help me God and his holy Gospel.*

Think they are serious? I think they are serious, they are not messing around, and they expect their people to follow this and to instruct others to follow this and in that sense I respect the friends of

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mine who attempt to follow this diligently and take this seriously, because at least they are being consistent and they don't say, oh well, it really doesn't matter. I respect that part.

I asked them "what would it take for you to leave the Catholic Church?" This gives you a mind set kind of where people are at who are serious about this (maybe 5% of Catholic's, maybe less than that). The lady said, "they would have to give up on the life issues like abortion or euthanasia." She thought that was so important that she couldn't follow a church that was giving up those teachings. The fellow was more thoughtful, to be honest. He said in essence they would basically have to tell me to go away. That he saw that the church was the pillar and support of the truth, that they could not cease to be the pillar and support of the truth until they said we are no longer the pillar and support of the truth. That's how seriously he took it, and I think he was consistent.

So keep in mind that the church does not determine the truth it only supports the truth, and we have to compare the teaching of churches, any church, our church with what the Scriptures teach. If we are teaching the truth, then we are the pillar and support of the truth. We are the means by which the truth is being represented to the world. But we don't get to determine the truth that has been determined for us. All we do is represent it.

Another point I wanted to make is that the church supports the truth, not a few church leaders support the truth. So it's not we get certain people together in some place and they all support the truth, and the rest of us sit around and cheer them on. We all have a role in this to support the truth, the church is the supporter of the truth.

Now let's get to this creedal statement that we have in 1 Timothy 3:16. There is a lot of truth in here that we are confessing together. First there is the consent of the confession. There is a common consent, its held in common. When Paul is writing to Timothy, he is writing something that is being well represented by many people, there is no controversy in the church about these things. They are fundamental to the church. They are not just fundamental to know truth, they are fundamental for godliness. Because it says, "by common confession, great is the mystery of godliness."

So knowing the truth is one thing, but we need to practice the truth that we know in order to become godly. Some people have a sense of theology that well, it's just for people that are kind of theologians, I do that and I just live for God and that sort of thing. Well you cannot divorce godliness from doctrine. I'll grant you that some people are just into doctrine and they are not practicing anything and that's corrupt.

But you cannot get to godliness except by involving yourself with some doctrine some beliefs because to really know God and to live for God includes beliefs and we have some for us and the better you know these things, what they mean, the better you will be able to live for godliness, the more you will become godly. Not only is this statement for godliness, but there are a lot of doctrines here and we are going to look at the content of this for a moment.

The revelation of Christ is the first statement. *He was revealed in the flesh.* When does that happen? It happened at the incarnation when he became born of the Virgin Mary. John 1:14, says, John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." He dwelt among us, apart from His revelation to

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us we are remaining in our sin. We are dependent upon Christ coming to earth and revealing God to us, the incarnation.

Secondly, is the righteousness of Christ, the perfection of Christ. This is this phrase “vindicated by the Spirit.” When did this vindication happen? This happened, remember the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit came upon Him as a dove and the voice of God said “this is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.” This is the statement of righteousness of Christ, the perfection of Christ which He then lived out. Christ was righteous. That was necessary for the forgiveness of sin because in God’s design a perfect Lamb of God must be sacrificed for the sins of the world, Jesus.

Because the sins of the world were against God, when you sin, when I sin, we sin against God and no one else can forgive sin but God alone. So as an illustration, if I break your lamp, the guy down the street says oh that’s no big deal I’ll forgive it, its your lamp and it is a big deal and you must decide if you choose to forgive me or I pay for the lamp. You can pay for your sins if you choose to which would be death or Christ could forgive you by receiving His sacrifice for your sins. But His sacrifice had to be a perfect sacrifice. He had to live a righteous life, be vindicated by the Spirit or that sacrifice would not be sufficient.

Then there is this witness to Christ, “beheld by the angels.” And you will notice that often times when there is revelation by God, and God is coming to man there are angels involved. Not just in the life of Christ but in other places. But certainly in the life of Christ the angels were there in the beginning, the middle, the end we see angels involved with Christ. He was beheld by angels, and they testified to who He is, the Son of God.

Then the next phrase, 1 Timothy 3:16, “And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, beheld by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.” This speaks to the body of Christ, the inclusiveness of the body of Christ. Some of your versions say it well, Gentiles. Nations is not a geopolitical thing, this country and that area, it is all the people outside of the Jews, all these people of the world. Christ’s message is being proclaimed of the salvation in hand to all the nations. Which does what, it brings them into the church, if they believe.

Which gives meaning to the phrase by common confession great is the mystery. Because what is the mystery of godliness? Well in Paul’s other writings in Ephesians chapter 2 and Colossians we find the mystery is God bringing together Jews and Gentiles into one body, the body of Christ, the church and so this proclamation to the nations is to bring Gentiles into knowing God and to be joined together with the Jews, proclaimed among the nations, the body of Christ. That was the mandate Christ gave in the end of his life. To go unto all the world and preach the gospel Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth. To include every tribe every time there will be representatives from every tribe every time in the kingdom.

The gospel of Christ is “believed on in the world.” This is the message of salvation and when we believe, we receive the resurrected Christ and we are taken up into glory as Christ, we are forgiven. He was glorified in the Ascension. That’s taken up in glory. He wasn’t just resurrected, as important as His resurrection is. He was ascending to heaven He was taken up and glorified reflecting who He really is.



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That's the content. This content is given to us in an order. It is constructed together for a purpose and I will try to give you the sense of this.

First is the phrase revealed in the flesh. That shows His incarnation, He arrives, He's revealed, the arrival of Christ to earth. Incidentally the revelation presupposes a preexisting. It doesn't say He began, He was revealed, He was hidden in His full knowledge and now He is revealed. So it eludes to the preexistence of Christ.

His arrival: the incarnation. The next layer under His arrival is His consideration. Deemed righteous by God. He was vindicated by God, considered to be righteous by God.

Then the most inward part of this parallelism is He was revealed and beheld by angels. This parallelism, and parallelisms are common in the scripture where you have things that are bouncing off each other or connected to one another. This is a particular type of parallelism. It's called a Chiasm. Here's the point. It's constructed for a purpose and it's moving from the outward outline to the inward outline and now back to the outward. So, corresponding to His revelations to the angels is His revelation to the Gentiles as He is proclaimed among the Gentiles His revelation is coming to the nations of the world, the peoples of the world.

Then corresponding to the middle layer, His consideration is deemed righteous by man. Believed on in the world. As we believe Him, we consider Him right, righteous, and we follow Him. He was deemed righteous by God. He was deemed righteous by men, and the outward part of this is His departure, the ascension. He comes, He leaves.

When you have this type of construction, it highlights the middle. A structure like this passage emphasizes the middle and the point is that Christ came to reveal God to the Gentiles. That's the mystery of godliness.

Christ came to communicate the message of God to the world so that the world would believe in Him. So as we see this doctrine as important, as each individual point is to know, we can't lose the message, given for a mission to proclaim this among the world. So if we are going to live for godliness, we are going to have to adopt the message and the mission of Christ to the Gentiles. The better we know that message and carry out that mission the more righteous we will be and we will reflect godliness. We will conduct ourselves properly in the church and by conducting ourselves properly in the church we will represent God well to the world around us. If we conduct ourselves poorly in the church and we don't understand how we are to function, we will not be a good vehicle for that message going to the world and they will not be interested in receiving it. So let's together serve to fulfill this mandate in the statements given to us.

Let's pray together shall we. Lord, we thank You for giving us Your Word. For giving us the knowledge of Your truth. Helping us to understand what it means and as we understand what it means we pray that we would be putting it into practice. That we would know it well and be able to communicate it well so that You would be honored among the peoples of the world as You have been honored among us, and we pray that we would be conducting ourselves together fruitfully, profitably so that we can be representing Your message in a godly manner and be received rather than rejected and we ask that in Jesus' name. Amen.