



1 TIMOTHY 3:16 & 2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13

Reflection on the Songs

1ST SUNDAY AFTER LENT – MARCH 5, 2017 (PM)

1. There is a song that stands at the center of both 1Ti. and 2Ti. These songs mark the high points in both letters. They are key to hearing and grasping Paul's purpose in writing both letters. I believe we should review their meaning this evening, just summarizing what was preached about them, and see what we gain more from the cumulative contribution of both.

2. 1Ti.3¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

- In response to Paul statement saying ¹⁴... I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God..., the first thing we hear does not sound like instruction on how (we) ought to behave. Rather, we hear an introductory statement suggesting that the nature of our (behavior) as the church is quite different than we'd expect. Paul writes: ¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness. Great... is the mystery of how we are to behave... as the church of the living God. So, right (behavior) as the church is called godliness here, and how we enter into godliness he says is a mystery.
 - We just need to remember that the NT word mystery means something previously hidden has now been revealed because of Christ. So, what Paul seems to be saying is: by common confession ^(NASV), or beyond all question ^(Kostenberger 531), the (greatness) of the revelation of Jesus Christ is displayed in His enabling godliness in the church.
 - In Him we're actually enabled to behave (as) the household of God, (as) the church of the living God, (as) a pillar and buttress ^(holding forth) of the truth. In Christ we're equipped to grow in godliness.

- The call to live in this godliness is a high priority in this letter, appearing ten times. And how it happens spelled out most clearly here in 1Ti.3¹⁶.
 - The great mystery which produces godliness in the church is nothing other than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, come in the flesh. Following His death and burial, His victory over sin and death is proven, He was vindicated by the Spirit in His resurrection, His coronation as King, which was witnessed by angels. He was then proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, and finally, in ultimate victory, taken up in glory, returned to the Father, where His church will one day be.
 - ¹⁶ Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.... But as Paul wrote to the Colossians: ¹²⁷ ... God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. That summarizes it well. And in John's words: ¹Jo.³² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Christ in (us) produces purity, and sanctifying hope. It produces the godliness that Paul is describing here in 1Ti.3¹⁶.
 - Godliness is (behavior) that flows from the inside out. It is generated as we receive the saving, sanctifying Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts and minds and lives by faith.
 - This is not the sort of change that can happen by the force of our human will. This is the change that results from being ¹Pe.¹³... born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

3. 2Ti.2¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for"

if we have died with him, we will also live with him;

¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny him, he also will deny us;

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—

for he cannot deny himself.

(adapted from Nick Conner's sermon notes, 26 February 2017)

- There are two groups in view here. First, there are those who are loyal to Christ (11-12a)—those who, when faced with suffering for the gospel, choose death to self and endurance for Christ. And second, there are those who are disloyal to Christ (12b-13)—those who, when faced with suffering for the gospel choose safety and comfort for themselves, and deny Christ.
 - To the first group is promised life, resurrection, and reign with Christ. This draws our attention back to ⁸ remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead... and ties this whole paragraph (8-13) together. Those who endure suffering will rise, live, and reign with Christ.
 - To the second group is promised separation from God. The last stanza is not saying that, when we struggle with unbelief, God remains faithful to us, though that is surely true (see the Psalms!). And it is surely not saying that, though we deny (Jesus), he will (remain) faithful to us. Rather, it is saying that, (should) we deny him in the face of suffering for the gospel, he (will remain) faithful to Himself, to the exclusion of us—he will deny us, for he cannot deny himself. He'll do just as He said in Mat.10³³ ... whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.
 - Remember, though, this is a trustworthy saying (11). It's intended to bring us good and necessary news. And as Nick reported from our Preaching Team discussion: All of the harshest warnings in Scripture are indications of God's goodness. This saying is for Timothy's good, and for ours, so that we might hear this warning, and be challenged to endure.
4. Taken together, what common and complementary themes do we hear between these two songs that can help us in our walk this evening, and this coming week?
- The work of Christ is central in both—His death, resurrection, and eternal reign.
 - Receiving Him is central in both—the mystery of godliness, that central calling in 1Ti., is Christ in (us) (Col.1:27) producing godliness. And (dying), (living), and (enduring) with him assumes we are already found to be in Him by faith.
 - There is an eschatological (end-times) focus in both, looking forward to the eternal reign of Christ as comfort, encouragement, and motivation for Timothy in his day, and for us in our days of suffering here.

- There is an element of mystery in both. It is explicit in 1Ti. with the mystery of godliness previously hidden but now revealed in Christ. But it is present also in 2Ti., implicit in the inner-Trinitarian (faithfulness) of God to himself. We get that somewhat, but not fully.
- Both just sharpen our appetite for Christ and His Kingdom, just as they should.