



# Truth

## On Tough Texts

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A MINISTRY OF GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

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### *Teaching Faithful Men*

#### 2 Timothy 2:2

**R**OMANS 8:29–30 HAS OFTEN BEEN CALLED God’s “Golden Chain of Salvation”: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified.” That title is fitting because we see here five links that are absolutely unbreakable, five acts God alone has done in the past (since all the verbs are in the past tense) to provide and secure our salvation.

Well, there is another “chain” in Scripture, one that we could dub God’s “Chain of Teaching.” It is found in 2 Timothy 2:2:

**And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.**

#### *Responsibilities of the Pastor-Teacher*

To introduce this key text concerning church ministry, let’s very briefly note Acts 20:28–35. In a hurry to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost, Paul sends for the elders (pastors) of the church at Ephesus. In one of the most touching scenes in Scripture, we read the counsel and parting challenges Paul gives these dear men of God. He here lists six basic responsibilities of the pastor-teacher.

*First*, a pastor must guard his own life and ministry (v. 28). “Take heed” is *prosechō*, a nautical term meaning to holding a ship in a certain direction, sailing towards something. A pastor, therefore, is to hold to his course, pay attention to the “compass” so he doesn’t drift from the right

heading. He must at all times make sure he is right with God, live what he preaches, keep his life pure, and be disciplined in every area of his existence.

*Second*, he must “feed the church of God” (v. 28). This is without argument his number one responsibility. This man must be “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2), that is, *skillful* in teaching and he must be committed to that single task. He is not an entertainer, psychologist, fund-raiser, or any other modern job description. His primary duty is to preach and teach the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:1–4).

*Third*, he is to “oversee,” that is, lead the sheep (v. 28). “Overseers” is *episkopos*, which is rooted in Greek culture and referred to a superintendent or magistrate who was sent to an outlying city to organize and govern it. As a building superintendent doesn’t own the building he manages, the pastor doesn’t own the Church; he manages it, leads it, and governs it according to God’s Word. Further, as a shepherd, he leads. He does not *drive* the sheep, as would a *dictator*, rather he *leads* the sheep as does a *shepherd*. As Peter declares, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof” (1 Pet. 5:2).

*Fourth*, he is to protect the sheep (vs. 29–31). The pastor first protects the sheep from *danger from without* (v. 29), as he guards them against “grievous wolves” of false teaching and other risks. He also protects them from *disease from within* (v. 30), from those who would arise even within their midst “to draw away disciples after them.”

*Fifth*, he is to study and pray (v. 32). “Commend” (*paratithēmi*) speaks of “a deposit, a trust.” Preachers have been *entrusted* with the Word of God, *put in charge* of its use. What a responsibility this is and one we had better not take lightly! Most preaching today shows the shallow (or

even non-existent) study of the preacher. So the number one *responsibility* of the pastor is to feed the sheep, but his number one *priority* must be his study time. A preacher who does not spend the majority of his “ministry time” in study will not be able to adequately feed his people. It gets harder every day to find men who are truly preaching the Word of God instead of philosophy, politics, and “warm-fuzzies.” Many Bible colleges, seminaries, and pastor’s conferences revolve around the latest marketing tools instead of the revealed Truth of God.

*Sixth*, he must be free of self-interest. Verses 33–35 end with a three-fold challenge: do not covet wealth, be satisfied with what God provides, and be generous in giving. A pastor must never be one who thinks of temporal gain and possessions. His motive and desire is to feed the sheep and see them grow and reproduce. There are, indeed, many false teachers today who instead of *feeding* the sheep are *fleeing* the sheep, who are “greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:3,8), guilty of taking all they can get, and thereby ruining not only God’s work but their own reputations.

### God’s “Chain of Teaching”

That brings us to our text, where Paul adds a seventh responsibility of the pastor-teacher, namely, *every pastor is to train other men of God*. Some commentators take this to refer simply to the pastor’s duty to teach *all* Christians in his role as a shepherd. While he is certainly required to do that, the fact that this is a Pastoral Epistle suggests something more specific. This seems clear when we consider five “links” in this chain of teaching

*First*, there is the Lord Jesus Himself. While He is not mentioned in our text, He must be noted, for He is the one who personally taught the Apostle Paul. Not only did He reveal Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–9), but Paul himself recounts something further in Galatians 1:16–19. Here he states that while in Nabataean Arabia—a region that stretched east from Damascus down to the Sinai peninsula—he “conferred not with flesh and blood,” that is, any person—although he did see Jesus’ brother James—nor did he go “up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before [him]” to be taught by them.

Now, while this passage does not specifically state what occurred in Arabia, there is little doubt that it was here that Paul was prepared for ministry. In fact, the number “three” seems to reoccur repeatedly when it comes to training men for ministry. The disciples spent three years with the Lord, and Timothy was with Paul for three years during his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36; 18:22). Since Paul, therefore, was not taught by any of the other Apostles, just as none of them were taught by other men, there seems no doubt that Paul was taught for three years by the Lord Jesus Himself in Nabataean Arabia.

*Second*, Paul is the next link in God’s chain of teaching. Having been taught by the Lord Jesus—again, just as

the other Apostles had been—Paul became a trainer of men for ministry. Since the Lord Jesus was no longer on earth to carry out this crucial need, he appointed men to do so. And that is exactly what Paul did. Throughout his ministry, men accompanied him, aiding him and learning from him. These included: Barnabas (Acts 11:25–26); John Mark (12:25; 13:5, 13; 15:37)<sup>1</sup>; Silas (15:36–41); and especially Timothy (16:1–3; etc.). Concerning Timothy, in fact, our text records that Paul specifically mentioned **the things that [Timothy had] heard** from him, that is, the things that Paul had taught him.

**Heard** is the Greek *akouō* and is the source of such English words as *acoustics* (the science of sound). It not only means to hear in general (e.g., Matt. 2:3), to hear with attention (e.g., Mark 4:3, “hearken”), and to understand (e.g., Mark 4:33), but also to *obey* (e.g. 1 Jn. 3:11). We can only imagine how many times Timothy heard Paul preach, how many times he heard Paul teach precept upon precept. We can only imagine the private times of teaching and counsel that these two men shared as they traveled hundreds of miles together. Paul taught, and Timothy listened and obeyed.

*Third*, Timothy is the next link in God’s chain of teaching and brings us to the core of our text. Having taught Timothy, Paul now challenges him to teach others. The word **commit** is *paratithēmi*, a compound comprised of *para* (near or along side) and *tithēmi* (to place or deposit). The idea in this word, then, is to place something with someone for one’s own sake, to commit it *to* them and entrust them *with* it. Such an act is a painstaking one. It requires diligent and disciplined teaching.

It’s noteworthy that Paul does not *suggest* that Timothy teach other men but *commands* him to do so. The verb *paratithēmi* (**commit**) is here in the imperative mood, indicating a command. Just as the Lord Jesus left this earth and would no longer personally train His men, Paul also was close to departing this life and commanded Timothy to do what God had commanded him to do. This is not teaching some supposed “apostolic succession,” as some foolishly teach, rather it demonstrates that each generation must teach the next.

*Fourth*, **faithful men** form the next link in God’s chain of teaching. **Faithful** is *pistos*, which here refers not to the *act* of believing but to the *state* of being *trustworthy*. Paul used this word in reference to himself in his first letter to Timothy, where he wrote that “Jesus our Lord . . . enabled me” and “counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12). He wrote of the same quality to the Corinthians: “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).

Proven faithfulness is, therefore, a crucial key in determining a man’s qualification for ministry. As mentioned in a previous TOTT (#44), this is why John Mark disqualified himself when he abandoned Paul’s team (Acts 15:36–41). This is also why the qualifications and re-

quirements for leadership in the Church are extremely high, according to 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. God could not be clearer on this issue of qualified leadership. In spite of that, however, we see more and more people today leading who frankly should not be doing so. The common attitude is that anyone can lead, but this is worse than dangerous. Men must be *proven* before they can be *appointed*.

*Fifth*, the word **others** forms the “final” link in God’s chain of teaching, although in reality there is no last link in this chain. It is designed to continue on—one link being added to the next and the next and the next—until our Lord returns. One more key word here, of course, is **teach**. This is the familiar New Testament word *didaskō*, which speaks of systematic teaching and appears (with other forms) no less than 26 times in the Pastoral Epistles.

Is there any doubt, then, what the preacher’s job is? This is precisely why Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 3:2 that one of the required qualifications for the ministry is that a man is “apt to teach,” as mentioned earlier. This is one word in the Greek (*didaktikos*) that means “*skilled in teaching*.” As one expositor puts it: “Not merely *given to teaching*, but able and skilled in it. All *might teach* to whom the Spirit imparted the gift: but *skill in teaching* was the especial office of the minister on whom would fall the ordinary duty of instruction of believers and refutation of gainsayers.”<sup>2</sup> Is it any wonder, then, that included in the pastor’s teaching responsibility is the duty to teach and train other men for this very same ministry? This is, indeed, God’s method of propagating the Church leadership offices. I appreciate one expositor’s comment here:

In our educational system, there are few greater sins than that of plagiarism. “Be innovative, creative, and original,” our teachers say—which is fine for schoolwork, but not for ministry. Because there is no such thing as plagiarism in ministry, Paul told Timothy to take the very things he had heard Paul teach and pass them on to others.<sup>3</sup>

In a day when innovation and creative thinking are the primary tools for church building, we need to be reminded of what Scripture says and proclaim that alone. I’m reminded often of what I heard Vance Havner say many years ago:

We don’t need to be in the novelty shop, as much as we need to be in the antique shop, where we find the old truths of God’s Word. We don’t need something new today half as much as we need something so old that it would be new if anybody tried it.”<sup>4</sup>

A mantra of our day is, “We need something new, something culturally relevant, something that appeals to people’s felt needs.” No, what we need are men who will teach other men the historical doctrines of the church and

biblical ministry. This leads us to further application of this principle.

### *Applying the Principle*

I have been fascinated by this principle for several years. As I have meditated upon it, it has occurred to me that the “three year” pattern works out quite well in practical application. In modern terms, this translates to thirty-six months, which in-turn roughly equals a four-year degree program (assuming only nine months per year). This would seem, then, to be the absolute bare minimum for a man’s training for ministry.

Sadly, this kind of thinking is becoming more “archaic” nowadays, as people of more modern thinking prevail. As mentioned earlier, more and more people (both men and women) are taking on leadership roles for themselves with no divine calling, training, or accountability to anyone.<sup>5</sup> Also quite common is the two or three year “Bible Institute” that claims to prepare men (and again women) for leadership. Does this not seem woefully inadequate when we weigh it against the biblical precedents of narrow qualifications and intense training? After all, the “three years” spoken of in Scripture did not have either Christmas break or Spring break, not to mention three months off in the summer. For all practical purposes, those years were around the clock the training, with the added daily pressures of persecution and threat of death.

If we might go one step further, while Bible colleges and seminaries certainly have their place, should they be the sole locations of such training? Let us remember, Paul was writing specifically to a *pastor*, not a seminary professor. He did, in fact, *command* that pastor to train men for ministry. What, then, are we doing in our churches today to train men? Are we training them in any way before we ship them off to “school”? Do we provide an internship for them after they graduate to give them more practical experience? Or to be real “novel,” how many churches could channel their resources into starting a Pastor’s College, as did Charles Spurgeon? That would, in fact, be the ideal and most biblical approach to training men. What better method could there be other than training men *in the church for the church*?

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See TOTT #44 for a study of “The Disagreement Between Paul and Barnabas” concerning John Mark (Acts 15:36–41).

<sup>2</sup> Dean Alford in *Wuest’s Word Studies* (Eerdmans), electronic edition, note on 1 Timothy 3:2.

<sup>3</sup> *Jon Courson’s Application Commentary*, New Testament (Thomas Nelson, 2003), electronic edition, note on 2 Timothy 2:2.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Vance Havner by Dennis Hester; October 1982.

<sup>5</sup> See TOTT #18 for a study of the “Call to Ministry” and related issues.

## Teaching Trip to Haiti

Back in September, I had the opportunity to see an example of the theme of our earlier article. I have had the blessing of preaching all over the country in my years of ministry but had never been off the continent. A friend of mine, who has been doing International Education for several years, called me with an emergency. Due to an illness, the professor who was supposed to accompany him to the Haiti Bible Institute had to cancel, and I was asked if I could go and to teach in his place.

It was a unique experience, to say the very least. Not only was it my first trip overseas, it was also my first time using an interpreter (French being the national language). It was one of the greatest joys I have ever experienced in preaching and teaching. I had the privilege to teach two courses to 18 men, who reminded me very much of dry sponges as a bucket of water was poured onto them. They couldn't get it all, but they soaked up every word they could possibly hold.

I relate this because it is an example of men training other men biblically. Most of the men I have heard of who are doing this kind of ministry are former (sometimes even current) pastors. The godly, committed, and carefully screened and selected students would probably never be able to receive adequate training if not for those who go and teach them. The ultimate goal is that these students themselves will one day be teaching others at the institute.

One such ministry, the one with which I traveled to Haiti, is *On Target Ministry* ([www.ontargetministry.org](http://www.ontargetministry.org)). Its personnel travel all over the world (Egypt, Jamaica, Jordan, Philippines, Romania, Ukraine, Uganda, and others) teaching and otherwise preparing men to be pastors.

Another such ministry is that of Dr. Ron and Nancy Minton ([www.ron.minton.name](http://www.ron.minton.name)), missionaries to the Ukraine who labor in church planting and teaching at International Baptist Bible College in Kharkiv and branch locations.

I have been graciously blessed to be invited to return to Haiti next September. If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to that trip (a \$1,200 need)—and only if you are able—it will be used for God's *glory* and our students' *good*. (Make your check payable to "Faith Community Foundation," designate it to "On Target Ministry – Haiti – Watson," and mail it to: On Target Ministry, 2130 Grand Avenue #3, Des Moines, IA 50312.)

In any event, I would like to encourage you to examine the ministries noted above and support them in whatever way God would impress upon you. Let us all, at the very least, pray for those men who continue to add links to God's Chain of Teaching by taking "the things that [they have] heard of [Paul] among many witnesses" and "[committing them] to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

*Pastor Watson*



*The students of Haiti Bible Institute ☞ Sunday morning, 9–6–2009 ☞ Pastor Watson's sweet and patient translator (Wallenson Norbert) is in the exact center of the front row.*