

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, who was the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians, instructions on how to lead his church. In the first epistle, we find three things that are commandments for what a bishop is to do: give attendance to reading, exhortation, and doctrine.¹ The bishop is to read the Scriptures. For the Lord himself said, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.² The scriptures are the sure foundation of our faith: even surer than seeing the glory and majesty of Jesus Christ and hearing the audible voice of God Almighty.³ Everything we as Christians should believe is that which is written and according to the Scriptures. As Paul said, “What saith the Scriptures?”⁴ We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (the written word of God), Jesus Christ himself (not Peter) being the chief corner stone.⁵ The written word of God is the final authority for the saint. The Scriptures say that God has magnified his word above all his name.⁶ God will judge the world according to the word of God.⁷ We are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby.⁸ And the list goes on and on about the many glorious things he has said of his word.

Through the Scriptures we have a *correct* understanding of the LORD God. Many people, many religions, yea even many Christians claim things about God: yet if it is not found in this book, it is simply not true. If tradition contradicts the Holy Scriptures then the tradition is in error. If what any man says contradicts that Bible, then that man is wrong. The Scriptures are the truth according to the man in Daniel 10:21 and Jesus Christ in John 17:17. He said “thy word is truth.” That ends all arguments right there. “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”⁹ Again the Scripture says, “let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”¹⁰ God says his book is true and so it is. I believe God knows more than I do and if he says his word is truth then it is. Amen.

Through the Scriptures we come to *correct* conclusions concerning matters of faith, practice, and conduct. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”¹¹ That is the purpose of this book. It primarily testifies of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and tells us what the LORD our God requires of us. Jesus said unto the Jews, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not

¹ 1 Timothy 4:13.

² Matthew 4:4.

³ See 2 Peter 2:13-21. Peter writes about how the word of God supersedes any personal experience, even if it was genuine and of the Lord. Even though he saw Jesus Christ transfigured, shining in glory and honor, and heard the voice of God, he still said, “we have a more sure word of prophecy...”

⁴ Romans 4:3.

⁵ Ephesians 2:20.

⁶ Psalm 138:2.

⁷ John 12:48.

⁸ 1 Peter 2:2.

⁹ John 3:33.

¹⁰ Romans 3:4.

¹¹ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

come to me, that ye might have life.”¹² This whole book testifies of Jesus Christ. He is found throughout all of its pages. He is the great Redeemer, the great Saviour God that has reconciled us by his blood! That book tells you about the Creator: it also tells you about what God requires of you.

The bishop is not only to read the Scriptures but also to exhort his flock. He is to encourage the flock of God which he has made him an overseer of. He is to provoke them to good works.¹³ He is to not only preach the truth but also live it. He must practice what he preaches. As Paul wrote in Romans 2:21-23, do you preach one thing and live another? The pastor must set forth the example of the believers in conversation, charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.¹⁴ It is of the utmost importance that he lives what he preaches and that he preaches the word of God. The bishop must be a man that meets the requirements found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. He must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous, one that ruleth his own house well, having his children in subjection with gravity, not a novice, and of good report of them which are without. The bishop must exhort the Christians to live for him that died for all. A good bishop puts the brethren in remembrance of the word of God.¹⁵

The bishop is not only to give attendance unto reading the word of the LORD, and exhorting the church, but also unto doctrine. What is doctrine anyway? Doctrine is simply teaching; what is being taught. Biblically it is principles and truths taught by the prophets, apostles, and the LORD himself. The LORD says in Proverbs 4:2, “For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.” The gospels declare that the people were astonished at Jesus’ doctrine: for it was with great power and authority.¹⁶

In Acts 2, Peter preaches a great sermon on the day of Pentecost and over three thousand souls were saved that day and added to the church.¹⁷ The Bible tells us that those people that were saved continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.¹⁸ They humbled themselves and followed the apostles’ teachings and instructions. The churches of Macedonia were praised for giving their own selves unto the Lord, and unto us [Paul and likely the rest of the apostles] by the will of God.¹⁹ For the Lord himself sent them out into the world to teach the nations and teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.²⁰ The apostles were commanded of the Lord Jesus Christ to go and teach the nations to observe what Christ had commanded them. So how do we know what Christ commanded the apostles? How do we know what the apostles’ doctrine was? We have all of those things contained in the word of God. The

¹² John 5:39-40.

¹³ Hebrews 10:24.

¹⁴ 1 Timothy 4:12.

¹⁵ 1 Timothy 4:6.

¹⁶ See Matthew 7:28-29, Mark 1:22, Luke 4:32.

¹⁷ Acts 2:41.

¹⁸ Acts 2:42.

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 8:5.

²⁰ Matthew 28:19-20.

Scripture is the only reliable and truthful source about what the Lord Jesus Christ commanded the apostles to do and what the apostles taught and believed. You do not need to read the church fathers to learn about what the apostles believed. All you need is a King James Bible and you can know for sure what they believed and how they lived. There is no such thing as apostolic succession found anywhere in the Scriptures and you won't find popes, Mariolatry, or masses, and infant baptism in the New Testament. What you do find in the New Testament are eyewitness accounts of the earthly ministry of our Lord, a history of the Acts of the Apostles, epistles sent from the apostles to churches and individual Christians, and a book concerning the revelation of Jesus Christ. In those twenty-seven books of the New Testament we find the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and the inspired words and teachings and doctrines of the apostles. Even Peter acknowledged that what Paul was writing was Holy Scripture.²¹

Paul said unto Timothy, "...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."²² The bishop must teach the word of God. Paul told Timothy to teach others what he knew of Paul, and Timothy knew of his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, and patience.²³ He was to teach those things unto faithful men who would be able to pass that same sound teaching along to others. Anyone that is honest and reads the Pauline Epistles can discern precisely what Paul believed and taught. I have heard many "Professors" (boy do they profess) say that Paul contradicts himself and that we do not know what Paul believed and taught: how can you know what Paul believed based upon a small amount of epistles "supposedly" written by Paul? This is the argument from men that waste their time arguing about things that don't matter which do not believe the word of God, reject its authority, and exalt themselves above the Bible and declare what the Bible "really" means for us uneducated and ignorant folk: for we know not the Greek and the Hebrew. The fact is Paul clearly taught salvation was a free gift from God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Those that believe on him are justified from all things and have no fear of condemnation. Paul boldly declared that Jesus Christ is God and the Creator and Judge of all. The New Testament is crystal clear about what the apostles believed and taught.

In Acts 15, men came down from Judea and taught the brethren that unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. This issue was brought up before the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. This became known as the great synod of Jerusalem. In Acts 15:5 certain Pharisees which believed said that it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles and command them to keep the law of Moses. They discussed the matter amongst themselves. Peter first said that he was chosen of God that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. He goes on to say that God made no difference between the Jew and Gentile, purifying both of their hearts by faith. He then says this great verse, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."²⁴ It is crystal clear

²¹ 2 Peter 3:15-16.

²² 2 Timothy 2:2.

²³ 2 Timothy 3:10.

²⁴ Acts 15:11.

what they believed. Salvation was by the grace of Jesus Christ. This is exactly what Paul taught: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”²⁵ The argument that we cannot know for sure what the apostles believed from Scripture alone is futile.

If one takes the Scriptures *literally*, one will have no problem discerning the doctrine of Christ and that of the apostles. The literal approach to the Scriptures is the biblical one used by the prophets, apostles, and even Jesus Christ himself. The idea of an allegorical or spiritual approach to the Scriptures is not biblical. Granted there is allegory and metaphors in the Scriptures, nevertheless, ninety nine percent of the time it is to be taken “as it is written.” There is a reason why this phrase appears forty five times in the whole Bible. As it is written is what it actually means (that is profound). We will deal with this subject in more detail in a later chapter. After examining this issue it is so obvious we are to take the Scriptures literally. At the end of the book you will find an appendix with all of the Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament. Every time, that portion of Scripture is taken literally “as it is written.” People that deny the literal meaning of the text can imagine and create any doctrine they want from this book. That is why the allegorical approach is popular today because they can create what God says and doesn’t say.

Anyway, the bishop is to read the Scriptures, he is to exhort his church and provoke them unto good works, and to teach doctrine unto his flock. He is to “preach the word” and preach the gospel.²⁶ These three things the bishop is to give attendance to. The question I want to answer right away is why is doctrine so important? Many, many Christians have thrown away doctrine in these last days and have opted for fables and tales and that which satisfies their lusts. As afore mentioned, biblically, doctrine is truth and principles taught by the word of God. We know that the Scripture gives us sound doctrine and we can use the Scripture to correct our doctrine and conduct if necessary. But why is doctrine so important?

The Scripture says in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” Now Timothy was told to listen to and observe the doctrine taught to him and then to continue in them. That is what the Christian life is all about. After we have been born again, we are to grown in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and keep his commandments. Just continue in those things and you can never go wrong. The Christian life is really simple when you think about it: yet the problem is our flesh and old man. But praise God the Lord said “sin shall not have dominion over you.”²⁷ If sin has dominion over you after salvation it is because *you* let it! We have been made free from the law of sin and death and Christ said, if the Son shall make you free (from sin) then ye shall be free indeed.²⁸ We honestly need to stop presumptuous sins. There is absolutely no excuse for those. But praise God for his mercy the blood of

²⁵ Ephesians 2:8-9.

²⁶ 2 Timothy 4:2.

²⁷ Romans 6:14.

²⁸ John 8:34-36.

Jesus Christ has taken away the sin of the world. Oh I can't wait to get my new body, never more to sin again!

So Timothy was to pay close attention to the doctrine and to continue in them: and by doing that he would save himself and those that heard him. Again, the minister of the Lord must preach his word. If you preach that which is written in that book, God will not condemn you. The doctrine that Timothy was taught was according to the Scriptures. If he continued in them and taught that which he was taught he would have nothing to worry about. And those that heard him would have heard the word of God in truth. God does not take it lightly when a man speaks in the stead of God and speaks wrongly of him. Consider Job's friends. The Lord said unto them that his wrath was kindled against them because they did not speak that which was right.²⁹ We must always speak according to the written word. Any departure from this will get you in trouble with God.

Sound doctrine is extremely important. For what you believe affects how you live. This is why it is vital that we have sound doctrine according to the word of God. If you believe that all people will be saved in the end, you are most likely not going to go and preach the gospel or evangelize. What's the point? If you don't believe there is a hell with literal fire, or eternal condemnation and punishment for sin, what are you going to do? If you don't believe that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour and that all most come through him to be saved, you are likely going to tolerate and embrace other religions, maybe even other gods. If you don't believe the Bible than surely you are not going to live by it. If you are not taught that Bible is the foundation of our faith and final authority for the believer (which is taught in the Scriptures), then what does it matter what the Bible says? What you believe affects how you live. The type of doctrine you hold to will affect how you live. Therefore it is necessary to have sound doctrine and to know doctrine.

Also, God wants you to have sound doctrine and know doctrine because it teaches you about him! What is the will of God? It's in the Bible. What is God like? What will eternal life be like? What will happen to those that reject Jesus Christ? What happens after death? Why does God allow evil? Why am I here? What is the purpose of life? What is the purpose of creation? All of the answers to these questions can be found in the Bible. That is why it is important to study the Scriptures and know them because it teaches you about God and his will. Don't you want to know that? Don't you think that's important? That is the most important thing on this earth. God's word is the truth.

Doctrine is extremely important. It is so important that the Scriptures speak of it quite frequently. I did a study several years ago on Paul's warnings to the church concerning the end times and the future of the church. I read all of the Pauline epistles and made note of every single time Paul warned the church about something. What I found was startling. Out of the thirty warnings that I counted from Romans to Philemon, eighteen of those warnings concerned doctrine.

²⁹ Job 42:7.

The first warning I found was in 1 Corinthians 11:19 which states that there must be heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest. The second warning was in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, warning the church about someone coming and preaching another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit that they did not receive. The third warning was in Galatians 1:6-9 how they were soon removed from God unto another gospel. The fourth warning was in Galatians 2:4 about false brethren that crept into the church unawares that they might bring us again unto bondage. The fifth warning was in Galatians 5:7-9 which states how a little leaven leavens the whole lump (referring to a little false doctrine affects the whole). The sixth warning was in Ephesians 4:14 where we are warned of false doctrine by the slight of men. The seventh warning in Colossians 2:8 told us to beware of philosophy and vain deceit. The eighth warning in Colossians 2:18-19 dealt with the worshipping of angels. The ninth warning in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 described the falling away and the great apostasy that the church age ends in. The tenth warning in 1 Timothy 1:4-7 warns us not to give heed to fables and people would desire to be teachers of the law. The eleventh warning is in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 which sates that men shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having no conscience, forbidding to marry and to abstain from meats, and to refuse old wives tales. The twelfth warning is in 1 Timothy 4:16 which says to continue in the doctrine taught you. The thirteenth warning in 1 Timothy 6:3-6 warns us about people not teaching and consenting to the words of the Scriptures, and to the words of Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. The fourteenth warning is at the end of 1 Timothy 6:20-21, which tells us to avoid profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called. Would to God that every Christian would do that! The fifteenth warning in 2 Timothy 1:13 we are told to hold fast the sound words which we have heard from Paul. And the last warnings in the Pauline epistles having to deal with doctrine are found in 2 Timothy 3:13 and 4:3-4. Evil man and seducers will wax worse, deceiving and being deceived and the time would come that people would not hold sound doctrine and after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers having itching ears and turning the ears away from the truth unto fables. What a last warning to the church! If this is not true of the church today, I don't want to know how bad it's going to get!

The point is that sound doctrine was a major concern for the apostles. They foresaw through the Spirit that people would turn away from the doctrine delivered unto them and turn to fables. Sadly this all too well categorizes our day and age, especially in America. You have soothsayers on TV asking you for all this money promising you financial prosperity. They use the promises given by God in the Old Testament to the nation of Israel and apply those promises to the church. They don't preach on sin or judgment, neither hell, but preach smooth things as those false prophets in the days of Jeremiah. It's all about man and what God can do for you instead of biblical Christianity in which it's all about the glory of God and the believer is to the praise of his glory. It is not about God serving you it's about you serving God. That is biblical Christianity. In our day Christians have forsaken the creation account in the Scriptures and replaced it with evolution, they have made Jesus one of the many ways to obtain salvation, they have

denied the virgin birth, denied the miracles, and even denied the bodily resurrection. They don't believe the Bible and pick and choose from it like it's a buffet line. As the Scriptures says, "having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."³⁰ It will get to the point that they will actually deny the Lord that bought them!³¹ What a horrible end that awaits the church! But praise the LORD not all Christians have to end that way. It is very hard today to be a Bible believing Christian: you will be persecuted, even from professing Christianity. But it's worth it. Why? Because we know we are pleasing God.

So we see from the Scriptures that the bishop is to give attendance to reading, exhortation, and doctrine. All three of these things are vital for the bishop of the church to continue in. Doctrine is the truths and principles taught from the word of God. We are to learn these doctrines, and continue in them and not depart from the faith. If we depart from these truths, we are speaking lies and not the truth. And we have seen from the book of Job that God's wrath is kindled against such. We have seen how doctrine affects how you live and what you believe affects how you live. We have looked at many of the warnings given by the apostle Paul to the church and how many of them deal with doctrinal issues. We know how the church age will end: in apostasy. But it does not have to be that way for you. You have the choice to stand firm on the word of God and keep those things which are written therein. My prayer is that you would do just that. Just read, hear, and keep his word and then you your God will serve: for he is worthy.

³⁰ 2 Timothy 3:5.

³¹ 2 Peter 2:1.