

THE PILLAR
of the TRUTH

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(1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus)
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A COMMENTARY ON
THE PASTORAL EPISTLES
(1 TIMOTHY, 2 TIMOTHY, AND TITUS)



DOUGLAS WILSON

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INTRODUCTION



In the typological relationship of Old Testament to New Testament, we have to remember the importance of terrain. Mountain ranges answer to mountain ranges, great rivers to great rivers, canyons to canyons, and of course, ordinary meadows to ordinary meadows.

A great mountain would be something like the relationship of Adam to the second Adam (Rom. 5:14, 18; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45). The typology of the tabernacle answers to the heavenly antitype (Heb. 9:12), as well as to its future antitype in the Christian church (Heb. 9:10). The Holy of Holies in the old covenant is a perfect cube, the same shape as the New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven like a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:9).

When we are given space to breath, as we sometimes are, this is not because the typology switch has been turned

off. Rather it is because once issues of great moment have been settled, it becomes necessary to turn at some point to the day-to-day business of governance. We sometimes mistakenly put the sheen of antiquity on events from centuries ago, as though the apostle Paul somehow didn't have to put his sandals on in the morning. I recall how startled I was one time, reading a biography of John Chrysostom, and I came across a reference to the minutes of one of their church meetings. *Minutes?*

In the pastoral epistles, the apostle Paul has, near the end of his life, turned to the crucial business of institutionalization. He knows that the institution of the church is inevitable, and he, more than anyone, knows the temptations that will beset that institution. But the fact that temptations will necessarily come to the best-planned institution is no argument for planning the whole thing poorly. If the temptations finally overwhelm the poor little ecclesiastical functionaries, and they go the way of all flesh, a well-planned set of institutional blueprints (as we find in the pastorals) will provide the marching orders for the inevitable reformers. If the Temple falls into disrepair, we may still take heart—a copy of Deuteronomy remains in its shambles of a library, and Josiah will find it.

Nevertheless, despite this focus on the institution, we still see an awareness of typological transition. The Church was about to enter the period that answered to the books of Joshua and Judges. They had come to the end of their forty years in the wilderness—the time between the Ascension of Jesus and the destruction of the Temple. During those forty years a number of remarkable things had happened

to both Israel and the Church. Both had extraordinary government (Moses and the apostles), both had ordinary government taking shape (elders and elders), both had to withstand challenges to their extraordinary rulers (Korah and Paul's enemies), and so on. Given the circumstances, it is not surprising that what typology we do see has to do with government and rule.

We can see this awareness in how the Old Testament is quoted and applied in the pastorals. The first citation has to do with the payment of ministers. "For the Scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. 5:18; cf. 1 Cor. 9:9). This is a citation from Deut. 25:4. The second part of the verse is from Luke 10:7, cited alongside Deuteronomy as "Scripture." We can see how, within the space of the first generation of Christians, one of the apostles is talking to them about their future budgets. Not only so, but a passage from one of the gospels is cited authoritatively as Scripture, right alongside Deuteronomy.

The next quoted verse sets up the threshold for entertaining charges against elders (1 Tim. 5:19), and does so by quoting the requirement of Deuteronomy 19:15. Everything must be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. This is another procedural governmental requirement, one essential to a healthy institution.

It is not possible to have a biblical form of government without having that form of government challenged by somebody. A naive person might assume that the more biblical the form of government was, the less likely a challenge would be. This is not at all the case. Moses had

to fight off a challenge to his authority in the wilderness, and Paul, who knew exactly what that felt like, quoted Moses from the episode of Korah's rebellion. Moses said, as did Paul:

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure,
having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.
(2 Tim. 2:19a)

And this was the situation that Paul identified with.

And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord to morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the

Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him? (Num. 16:3–11)

The follow-up comment in that same verse—“And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Tim. 2:19b)—contains echoes of Proverbs 16:6.

A bit later in 2 Timothy, we find out the name of one of Paul’s adversaries. We are not told a great deal about him, only his name, the fact that he was a coppersmith and that he did Paul great damage. We do not know if he was within the Church or outside it, but given the nature of Paul’s concerns in this letter, I would be inclined to mark him down as a New Testament Korah.

Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works (2 Tim. 4:14)

When the judgment of the Lord falls, it will fall on those both within the covenant and outside it—“Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.” (Ps. 62:12).

At the same time, for all the work that Paul is doing in preparation for “the church as institution,” we can clearly see that he is not resigning himself to an inevitable downgrade when it comes to holiness. If institutionalization is inevitable, then holiness must be able to take an

institutional form. God is the one “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). This appears to be a collage of Ps. 130:8, Eze. 37:23, and Deut. 14:2.

One of the most important things we can learn from Scripture is how to see ourselves accurately in the story in which we find ourselves. What story is God telling, and how does it concern us? For busy pastors, whose lives are filled with counseling, committee meetings, small town politics, and more, the hard-headed typological lessons of the pastorals can be a great encouragement.

AUTHORSHIP



As we begin our study of what are called the pastoral epistles, it is important to contextualize them. Reconstructing the chronology of the New Testament, we may conclude that Paul was probably imprisoned in Rome twice. The first is found at the end of the book of Acts, after which he was released, and during which time he wrote 1 Timothy letter and Titus (c. A.D. 62–66). When he was imprisoned again (at the end of which time he was executed), he wrote 2 Timothy. It is fashionable for many modern scholars to dispute the Pauline authorship of the epistles, and, also sadly, it is common for more conservative scholars to argue for the Pauline authorship without reference to chapter one, verse one. “Paul, an apostle . . .” If we believe in the inspiration of Scripture, as we do, it