

A NATIONAL MINISTRY FOR MISSIONS

Directives Drawn From

I & II Timothy & Titus

A graduation ceremony held at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota early in the last decade probably provided the first impulse for this paper. Prof. E. E. Kowalke was the speaker. In looking back over his ministry he said that he would have liked to have given more attention to Scriptural examples and directives for methods in our work. This paper is an attempt to explore I and II Timothy and Titus for such directives and examples in regard to the establishment of a national ministry in mission fields.

The reason for choosing these books is quite obvious. The responsibility placed upon Timothy and Titus was very much the same as ours, namely the establishment of a national ministry in our respective mission fields. To Timothy Paul writes, "Now therefore, my son, take strength from the grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus. You heard my teaching in the presence of many witnesses; put that teaching into the charge of men you can trust, such men as will be competent to teach others," and to Titus, "My intention in leaving you behind in Crete was that you should set in order what was left over, and in particular should institute elders in each town." (II Tim. 2:1,2; Titus 1:5. All references in this paper are from the New English Bible.)

Certainly all of us have studied these books before, but I don't think that any of us has ever studied them in this kind of a situation, that is together with a group of men charged with this same responsibility, a group made up of men serving in several different countries at a great distance from each other and under an extreme variety of cultural, social, and economic conditions; but nevertheless all serving for the same purpose, the establishment and continuation of a national ministry. It is my hope that the pressure of responsibility placed upon us may cause us to search more deeply into these books for directives for our work.

Let us proceed somewhat like a person crossing a pool in a Japanese garden by means of steppingstones. The steppingstones are selected passages which I feel deal most directly with our work. We shall pause at each one in an attempt to appreciate the view from that particular point. At the end of the paper I intend to offer some general conclusions plus some suggestions for discussion. I suggest that you open your Bibles to I Timothy so you can follow the references.

I Timothy

1:1,2 Paul immediately emphasizes his call. Let's not lose sight of our call and commissioning. Isn't it true that each one of us can say, "God our Savior has commanded me to bring His Gospel to ... (Central Africa, or Latin America or whatever area it may be,)? Do we think, live, work, speak as men who are aware that the Lord has placed us where we are working now? By the way, Paul doesn't sound like a "Friendly Counselor."

"Son in the faith," spotlights a frequent advantage and joy in mission work, the joy of working with people whom the Lord has brought to faith through you.

The missionary pastor needs: "Grace," for his sin, "Mercy," in his tribulations, "Peace," in his troubles and doubts.

1:3,4 There were serious doctrinal troubles in these young churches. Some of these people were in teaching positions. No wonder that Paul urges such great care in the selection of men for a national ministry!

1:5-7 Paul contrasts his aim and object of love with the false teachers' "Wilderness of words," - an aid in the detection of false teaching.

1:8-11 Mission churches need to learn to use God's law for what it is - something that condemns, something directed at people who are guilty.

1:12-14 Do we stop to thank God for providing us with the qualifications for our work? We must set an example as Paul did and then encourage our seminary students and national pastors to thank God for choosing them to be bearers of the message. He has chosen them and us in spite of our sin and frequent lack of appreciation for the wonders of the Gospel ministry.

1:15-17 The core of the Gospel, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." We need to use such words as a touchstone for all things. Let us like Paul, before the eyes of our people and especially our students be obvious, living examples of the truth of these words. They need to know that we too are men, sinful men, who live, who can hope to live only by the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1:18-20 We dare not forget that we are in a spiritual battle. We must fight to hold to our commission and to fulfill it. The social, economic, and legal structures in which we must live and work are frequently corrupt, but that is no excuse. Timothy lived and worked in a corrupt world too. As foreigners we are exposed to temptations that seem new. Therefore we must be all the more alert as we do battle. We must remember to arm ourselves with faith and a good conscience. It is more than possible for a missionary to lose both. Don't let the State Slide "Heroes of the Faith," attitude toward missionaries fool you. The danger is real. The battle must be real if we are to survive in faith.

2:1-7 We are sharply limited in our work, but we are not limited in our prayers. We can pray for the millions whom we can never hope to reach with the Gospel message ourselves. We dare not forget to pray for the nation in which we live and work. Recently a Japanese man was quite surprised when I told him that we include the Japanese government in our prayers.

2:8-15 The living Church comprises men and women. There is a difference. Each sex has its own place in the life of the Church. Women are not to assume positions of authority over men. The cultural climate of the country will certainly have a strong effect upon woman's work in the church. Specific needs may also make a difference. Priscilla, no doubt, gave Apollos some of his seminary training. (Acts 18:24-28.)

3:1-7 At the head of Paul's list of qualifications for teachers in the church he places the expression "dei oun," which I believe should be taken to mean simple necessity. The urgent need for national pastors, our eagerness to fill this need, our joy over finding someone who wishes to be a pastor may tempt us to skip over some of these qualifications. Paul's "dei oun," tells us that we dare not do so.

The qualifications that Paul requires seem to fall into three groups. The moral qualifications are very high. They even include such things as an even temperament which allows for sound, well-balanced thinking. In addition to this a man must be apt to teach. In this area of intellectual gifts do we possibly tend to set higher standards than Paul? The third qualification is that a man shall not be a recent convert. Christian common sense will have to determine when a man is no longer a recent convert. I think that in our Japan mission most of us feel that he must have shared in the life of our church for at least one year after his baptism. There is another qualification which Paul seems to take for granted. The aspirant for such a teaching position in the church which includes leadership must be of the male sex. If you eliminate the chapter division here, you see that Paul isn't taking this for granted. He has already made it abundantly clear. In fact you might even say that Paul introduces the matter of the Christian ministry with a discussion of the proper place for men and women respectively in the life of the Church.

The fact that the aspirant must be above reproach precludes that he is well-known to the people of the congregation. He must also have a good reputation with the non-Christian public. Here I believe some careful distinctions must be made. The people Paul speaks of in I Corinthians 1:25-31 were possibly despised by the non-Christian public, but not for reasons of immorality. On the other hand, people who have a bad reputation because of their immorality certainly are most welcome in the church, but not as leaders, at least not until their new life as a child of God has erased the former evil reputation. Perhaps at this point it might be well to mention that people who are despised by their own community may gravitate to the relatively foreign community of the Christian Church. I believe this can be good, bad, or indifferent depending on the specific circumstances.

8-13 In our mission fields we seem to find it quite necessary and natural to have men fill teaching positions and serving positions of lesser responsibility before entering the full pastoral ministry. The qualifications are essentially the same as those for positions of higher responsibility. We seem to shy away from subjecting the wives

to the same scrutiny. The business world does. Paul advocates doing so. We certainly should do so. The last sentence in this paragraph regarding deacons seems to fit very naturally to the church workers in our mission fields. "For deacons with a good record of service may claim a high standing and the right to speak openly on matters of the Christian faith."

14,15 The Church is the household of the living God. She is the pillar and the foundation of the truth for all the world. We need to keep this in mind as we accept nationals for work in the Church. If you or I were working in the personal department of a federal mint and were charged with the responsibility of accepting applicants for jobs in the mint, I am sure that because of the nature of the work, we would feel conscience bound to be extremely careful as to whom we accept. How much more so when it is a matter of serving in the household of the living God!

It may seem that holding to these standards amounts to expecting the impossible. I do not believe that this is the case. Paul was not living in a dream world. He and Timothy accepted real men on the basis of these qualifications. I believe we are experiencing the same thing in our mission fields today. The Lord is providing His Church with men who meet these qualifications. I know He is doing so in Japan.

I would like to sum up this section by referring back to verse nine of chapter three. This seems to sum up the spiritual life we are to expect of the aspirant for the ministry. It eliminated academic orthodoxy as well as vague religious emotionalism. "They must be men who combine a clear conscience with a firm hold on the deep truths of our faith."

Paul immediately reminds us in verse 13 that these "Deep truths," are mysteries. The incarnation, the resurrection, the angels' interest in Jesus and in our salvation, all are mysteries. A man comes to Africa and emits certain vibrations into the air from his throat. Another man receives these vibrations through his ear. That's the bigger part of the technical process, but as a result the hearer is freed from the power of death and shall live eternally with his Creator in glory and splendor too wonderful for us to imagine. We need men in the ministry who accept and believe these mysteries as mysteries.

4:1-5 There are going to be head-on attacks on our faith and freedom in Christ. To withstand such attacks these young churches need men in the ministry who combine a clear conscience with a firm hold on the deep truths of our faith.

4:6-10 Here as in many other places Paul stresses intensive, vigorous personal spiritual life for Timothy. We need to give much time, thought, effort to personal study, meditation, and prayer.

4:11-14 Verse eleven gives us another facet of Timothy's call and commission. Paul's choice of verbs and use of two verbs gives it an intensive tone. Timothy was young. We too frequently have young men serving on mission fields. These men do not have

experience, but these men do have a call from the Lord of the Church. They also have God-given abilities. These men must not be slighted. These men themselves, their co-workers, the people of the church must be led to respect their call and appreciate and use their abilities. We must be careful that these young men do not fall into a frame of mind where they in deference to their elders hold back from carrying out their call or making full use of their God-given abilities.

4:15,16 One can't help but admire the realistic, factual way that Paul treats the matter of the youthful missionary. He does not tell Timothy to act like an experienced older man. This would be false. Rather Paul urges Timothy, through speech and behavior, by love, fidelity, and purity, to make personal spiritual progress. Such spiritual progress will be manifest to all and will give him the respect of his people and co-workers. Timothy is to keep watch on his own spiritual life however, not just for the purpose of winning the respect of others. Rather he is above all to be concerned about his own salvation. What sound advice for all of us of any age. Don't try to be something that you are not. Give attention to your own salvation, your own spiritual progress, and your call. Respect from your fellow Christians will follow quite naturally.

5:17,18 Paul speaks rather softly in regard to titles for men in the ministry but he speaks very strongly about genuine honor which I believe here includes giving them money or goods. We are not to let our young churches think that just giving a pastor an honorific title takes care of the matter. Those who labor in the word are to be honored not just with words and phrases but also by means of deeds.

5:19-22 National pastors are to be honored as servants of the Word. These pastors have been called as public teachers. Both of these considerations will serve to determine what you do when charges are brought against them. (Note again that Paul is not dreaming about some religious utopia. He is assuming that such charges will probably be brought and he is not ruling out the possibility that the person charged may be guilty. The question is, what do you do?) You never accept gossip. If the charge is substantiated, it must be dealt with publically. This will be a help to the people and to the other pastors in their own battle against temptation. This is an extremely grave matter. Paul uses an oath in charging Timothy to follow his directives. He ends with a preventive measure. The way to avoid defrocking proceedings is quite obvious. Don't be hasty about ordaining people. He gives this matter a final rather painful thrust when he says that if you have been hasty in accepting someone for the ministry, and then he is defrocked, you share the guilt.

5:23 This comes as an interjection. I think that the fact that it is an interjection is also significant. Paul is deeply, personally concerned about his friend Timothy's well-being. Paul just has to inject this item which might be of help to his friend.

Our relationship to our fellow-workers of any race or nation must be far richer, far deeper, far more personal than professional propriety! By the way, a possible logical reason for this item coming where it does, is the fact that there is nothing quite like the above-mentioned troubles in the church which will give the dedicated, peace-loving missionary neuro-physical health problems.

5:24,25 When people apply to be workers in the church, give the matter time to jail. Certainly Paul wanted this church to get on its feet, equipped with its own pastors as soon as possible. Strange that there is no feeling of hurry here - rather the opposite. Paul is saying that you can't go wrong by taking it slow in these matters.

6:11,12 We dare never forget that we are still in the race ourselves. We could defect. We dare never speak or act from the position that all foreign missionaries automatically receive eternal life. This awareness sets the tone for our relationship to our fellow national pastors and students. We are fellow-runners with them, as much in need of eternal life as they are.

II Timothy

1:12-14 If Paul is saying, "What He has put into my charge." then I think Paul is speaking of the Gospel and he is expressing his confidence that God shall continue to provide people to proclaim the Gospel until Christ returns. The ascended Lord had been doing that for the Christians at Ephesus. (Ephesians 4:11,12.) We are experiencing this on our mission fields. We must think of our seminary students as precious gifts of our Lord to His bride, the Church. This is what they are. We must treat them accordingly.

Note how Paul insists upon orthodoxy, but he leaves no room for abstract orthodoxy. Here it is coupled with faith and love, centered in Christ, all the work of the Holy Spirit. Our teaching and our life must be one.

2:1,2 This is our work in a nutshell
 "Take strength from the grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus." Paul begins with this. Don't take this for granted. We need to be practical about it. The grace of God in Christ Jesus comes to us through the means of grace. This means personally studying and hearing God's word as it is written in Scripture and preached by others. It means remembering our baptism. It means receiving the body and blood of the Savior frequently ourselves. This is the way, the only way, to take strength from the grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus. If we do, every facet of our work, our teaching, our life will radiate with the love of God in Christ.

You and I have a lot of thoughts and ideas as to what is good for the mission churches. Some are good. Some, no doubt, are bad. We must remember that the main thing, the first thing we are to transmit to our students is the Apostles' teaching.

We are to put this teaching into their hands. Don't think that only a Caucasian can preserve it - preserve it alive.

Put it into the charge of men you can trust. We are to be selective about these men as Paul had outlined in his first letter to Timothy.

These men must be competent to teach others. Our students are not only to receive the torch but they are to pass it on to the next generation. In each of our fields we are beginning a chain reaction teaching process which is to continue until Jesus returns. This is our hope. This must be our intention.

3:1-9 Even abusive, radical opposition to wholesome teaching can be expected.

4:1-5 Note how Paul stresses intensive teaching activity. This is when the real things are happening. This is when the Holy Spirit is working. This is when people are begin reborn and strengthened in their hold on eternal life. It is in the moment when the Word is being taught. We must keep teaching intensively. This is not to be a wildly enthusiastic erratic outpouring, but sane, calm, intensive teaching. (V.5)

4:9,10 Look at the importance that Paul places upon personal contact with these workers in the church. Think of how often his letters contain similar notes. Paul had much to give to the Church and to his fellow workers. Apparently he felt the best way to do so was through personal contact. When you think of the frequency of these personal consultations, the time, distance, effort, expense, and danger involved, you can't help but conclude that Paul gave personal consultations with fellow workers a very high priority. He apparently felt it was a necessity. Obviously no single one of us is a Paul, but the Lord has endowed each one of us with particular spiritual gifts. We need to share these gifts with one another in order to further this work to which He has called us. This conference itself indicates that we share Paul's opinion that the best way to share such blessings is through personal contact. If we wish to follow Paul's lead in this matter, I think that conferences of this will be held frequently in the future.

Titus

One can't help wondering how old these congregations on the island of Crete were. Apparently Paul wanted to begin the establishment of some sort of national ministry very shortly after mission work began.

1:5 Part of Titus' call and commission was essentially the same as ours, namely the establishment of a national ministry.

1:6 I believe the word Paul uses here for "Prescribed," is quite definite and strong. These tests simply should be observed. Paul requires moral standards of the same level as in Ephesus. This is not a regional matter.

1:9 The Church always has to battle her way in this world, no matter where she may be. These national pastors must be men who both proclaim wholesome teaching and also confute the objectors. These pastors dare not be one-sided coins. They must teach and refute.

2:15 Again Paul stresses intensive teaching activity coupled with respect for Titus' call to teach.

3:12 One gets the impression that there was a constant coming and going of men between Paul and the mission stations. Paul had so much to give to these men and these young churches. He wants to use the time the Lord grants him in this life to bestow these blessings as effectively as possible. Apparently he felt this called for personal consultation wherever possible. We don't have to be defensive about conferences of this nature. We are following a good precedent.

General Conclusions

1. Paul's directives for the acceptance or selection of national pastors apply at all times and everywhere. They are based not upon regional or passing circumstances, but upon the nature of the Church - The household of the living God - and upon the nature of the ministry - men called by the Lord to proclaim the grace of God in Christ Jesus.
2. The keynote of the missionary's activity is to be intensive teaching, intensive teaching, intensive teaching.
3. We missionaries dare never forget that we too are running the race for eternal life. Our personal spiritual life must be vigorous so that we do not lose the faith ourselves.
4. One of the apparent purposes of these letters was to give Timothy and Titus a type of backing or support in their work. From these letters the people of the congregation could see for themselves the directives that these men had received from Paul. I believe we should use these letters the same way. We should not only try to follow their directives. We should also strive to make our people familiar with and keep them familiar with the content of these letters. We should cite these letters as we with our people make decisions, determine policy, strive to solve problems in the church. Then our people will realize that these directives do not come from us but from Paul and the Lord. Thus we will also be leading them to consciously follow these same directives.

5. Paul apparently considered personal contact between mission workers from various fields to be very important. Such personal consultation was carried on quite frequently in spite of the cost in time and money. He gives such personal contact high priority. We would do well to follow his example.

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. What sort of responsibility and authority do our call and commission place upon us?
2. There are various levels of responsibility in the church: deacon, bishop, pastor, parish worker, Evangelist, interpreter, etc. Should there be any variation in the qualifications for these various positions?
3. Can you think of any exceptional situations in which the qualifications for the ministry prescribed by Paul need not be required?
4. It appears that Paul's mission congregations provided the financial support for their pastors. Was this the result of an "Indigenous Church" policy or was it merely a matter of circumstances. In Paul's day the financial situation was the reverse of ours. The "Mother Church" was poor and the "Daughter Churches" seem to have been more affluent.

Permit me to conclude with a sketchy comparison of Paul's time and ours. We speak of God preparing the world to receive the message of His Son. I feel that God has done far more in our time or rather for our time.

The far-reaching Roman government made travel from one country to another easy for Paul. I know that there are a number of exceptions, but isn't it true that we, especially as American citizens, are able to travel quite freely through many parts of the world? Transportation was good in Paul's day. It is true, but stop and compare the way Paul moved his men around the Mediterranean on foot and horseback along Roman roads and in sailing vessels, compare that with today's jet air travel and instantaneous telephone communication. There was relative safety in travel in Paul's day, but this doesn't begin to compare with the safety you and I enjoy. Paul had the advantage of the widely-spoken Greek language, but consider what God had done in our time. Take our two most distant mission fields, Zambia and Japan, for example. If a national in either one has a second language it will mostly likely be English, English which is your mother tongue and mine. In our day the Lord has through the spread of the English language reduced the curse of Babel for the benefit of His Gospel. We are in a sense experiencing a second Pentacost. Do we thank Him for it? In Paul's day the old heathen religions around the

Mediterranean were going bankrupt. In our day the native and national religions in many parts of the world are on the wane.

I think that you can take most any advantage that Paul enjoyed at his time in the Mediterranean Basin and you will find that the Lord has provided us with the same or a similar advantage only on a world-wide scale. In these letters we see Paul zealously and with determination exploiting these opportunities for Gospel preaching. The Lord has given us opportunities and advantages that go far beyond Paul's wildest dreams. Will we exploit them for Jesus and for His Gospel? I hope that our study of these letters may enable us to share in some greater measure Paul's zeal and determination to proclaim to men everywhere the wondrous mysteries of God's grace in Christ Jesus, Who came into this world to save sinners.

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