

# Investigating the Pauline Model for Pastoral Ministry<sup>1</sup>

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By David Roseland

Pastor of Preston City Bible Church, Preston, CT

## Introduction

A philosophy of pastoral ministry is indispensable to the task of shepherding God's flock. A pastor's approach to his sacred task may arise from his own experience, the examples that have preceded him in his theological or ecclesiastical tradition, pressure from the congregation, or any number of perspectives which purport to have the most expedient answers to challenging questions of our time. Today it is not uncommon to hear from the world of commercial trade about how to succeed in leadership for the church.<sup>2</sup> As many different instances of ministry philosophy exist as pastors and leaders in the various local churches that comprise the Body of Christ. In the larger category of ecclesiology, this topic is one of the most varied regarding opinions and perspectives. This paper will argue that the biblical philosophy of pastoral ministry begins with the imitation of Jesus and His apostles. It will be shown that this concept of leadership imitation extends from the general features common to all believers in the growth process of experiential sanctification to the specific tasks that belong to pastors and teachers in the local church.

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<sup>1</sup> This work is under revision. Please look for updated versions on the Chafer.edu website and at Deanbible.org.

<sup>2</sup> A recent and generally well-received example of such an approach is *In Pursuit of Great and Godly Leadership: Tapping the Wisdom of the World for the Kingdom of God* by author Mike Bonem. This book is an attempt to compare the successful practices of secular business with the Scriptural testimony so that pastors may learn from former without sacrificing their commitment to the latter. While this approach will certainly assist a pastor's perspective by lending him the wisdom of those with great business experience, it is not the proper starting point for developing a philosophy of ministry.

## **Scholars vs. Pastors?**

Of necessity, pastoral ministry is an area of interest and study so broad in the evangelical world that entire seminary masters and doctoral degrees are conferred pursuant to its study. Most theological training institutions make a distinction today between pastoral ministry and academic ministry, proposing that the equipping of specialists in academic pursuits should somehow be separated from the development of specialists in the pursuit of leadership in the local church. Specialization allows for the use of our resources of time and effort, but we should be cautious about creating too much of a distinction between the “academic” and the “pastoral.” The ancient proverb popularly attributed to Thucydides applies analogously: “A nation that draws too broad a difference between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.” To bring this idea from the martial to the ministerial we might paraphrase thus, “A church that draws too broad a difference between its scholars and its pastors will have its thinking done by those disconnected from actual Christian disciple-making practice and its disciple-making done by those who have no idea of the Biblical basis for that practice.”

## **A Pastoral Philosophy of Imitation—of Jesus and Paul**

This article proposes that before we assume any prescriptive validity from our experience, ecclesiastical traditions, the business world, the philosophies of secular education, or the theorizers who make the secularist distinction between “theory” and “practice” in the endeavors of theology and pastoral ministry, we should search the Scriptures to ascertain the philosophy of ministry we may find there. By examining the writings of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, I propose we may detect a very clear *biblical* philosophy of pastoral ministry for the entire endeavor of disciple-making in the local church, including the development of the next generation of leadership. By examining the message and methods of the Apostle Paul in his

conduct of pastoral ministry, one finds a fully-developed perspective on leadership in the local church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This argument moves in all cases from the general to the specific. Generally, one must establish the case for imitation of Paul before applying that general edict to those in pastoral ministry. In other words, we should determine the general concept that Christians should conduct themselves like Paul in his Christian walk. Then we will show that Christian pastors should conduct themselves in pastoral ministry like Paul did in his pastoral ministry. After validating that general assertion about pastoral imitation of Paul, we will look at specific ways Paul gives us an example.

### **Part I: Why We Must Look to Paul's Example**

Certainly the common idea of imitation in the writings of Paul occupies the consciousness of many Christians of various levels of biblical understanding. Nevertheless it behooves us to make the general case for imitation of the apostles as the primary leadership emphasis of disciple-making in the New Testament. We understand this principle from the blatant commands of Paul and their antecedents in Jesus' instructions to His disciples. From Jesus' instructions it will be clear that those in leadership must adopt His attitudes, motivations, and even practices in the endeavor of shepherding His flock.

### **The command to Imitate Paul**

Thematically we find Paul's instructions to imitate him in several key points of argument in his epistles. The "list" of these injunctions includes 1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1; Philippians 3:17, 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; and 2 Thessalonians 3:9. To these straightforward commands Paul adds the suggestion of himself as exemplar for his disciples in 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:8, 13, 2:2, and 3. The leadership cycle of imitation perpetuates to the next generation in 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 2:2, and Titus 2:7-8, so that the copying idea progresses from Paul to those following Paul's subordinates in 1 Tim 4:12 and Titus 2:7-8.

### Philippians 4:9

Probably the most explicit statement of Paul's letters which requires all believers everywhere to imitate him is Philippians 4:9: "*The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*"<sup>3</sup> In this terse summary statement, Paul issues one simple verbal injunction: "Practice," which is the present imperative of *πρασσω* (*prasso*). Paul often uses this verb to carry the connotation of performance in outer conduct what begins in inner principle.<sup>4</sup> The command "to practice" has one generic direct object: "the things," the best English rendering of the neuter plural relative pronoun in the accusative. The meat of the verse, however, is in the specific content that Paul attributes to *the things*: what "you have learned and received and heard and seen in me." These four aorist active indicative verbs uniquely describe "what" Paul gave them by describing *how they received them*. The uniform use of the aorist indicative specifies that the transmission of Pauline content actually took place in the past. Therefore as we launch into the examination of

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<sup>3</sup> All Scripture quotations are taken directly from the NASB95.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. especially Rom 1:32, 2:1-3, a discussion of "practice" in light of the Law. Also in 7:15, 19 Paul uses *πρασσω* with the synonym *ποιεω* (*POIEW*), a more generic term for action or doing. See also Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933, s.v. Phil 4:9. Robertson suggests the difference between the two words is that *πρασσω* is habitual. Also see O'Brien, Peter Thomas. *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991, 507.

these four verbs in their lexical nuance, we can say that they form a unit of instruction by which Paul holds the hearers responsible for applying in their present experience the Pauline content which they have received in the past experience of Paul's ministry.

**The things you have learned:** ἐμάθετε (μανθανω, *manthano*). This verb generally means to learn something, as in the case of a student. A disciple or student is a μαθητες (mathetes) and his vocational responsibility is to learn, manthano. This description of Pauline content is probably a summary for all that Paul delivered to the Philippian believers. Paul uses this uncommon Greek word far more than any other writer in the NT, often summarizing the disciple-making ministry of the Church age. These instances present a strong correlation with the disciple-making ministry established by the Lord Jesus Christ (μαθητευω, matheteuo).<sup>5</sup>

**The things you have received:** παρελάβετε (παραλαμβάνω, paralambano). This word is a compound, composed of the preposition παρα and the common verb λαμβανω. When this word is compounded with the preposition παρα, it is considered to be an emphasis on the source of reception.<sup>6</sup> The Pauline teaching the various churches *received* from him is actually the teaching which he *received* from Christ. In all but three instances we see this consistent connotation of transmission of revelatory content. When it comes to special revelation, Paul's constant validating appeal is to its source, and he often must vindicate his message of special revelation against the contrary claims of false teachers.

**The things you have heard:** ἠκούσατε (ακουω, akouo). This verb is the common expression for hearing. The description of Pauline content now moves from emphasis on the personal source and transmission of the content to personal reception of *verbal* content. I take it

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<sup>5</sup> Jesus' summary command for His disciples at the close of *Matthew* is to make disciples, MATHETEUV (Mt 28:19-20). Cf. Rom 16:17, Eph 4:20, Col 1:7, 2 Tim 3:14.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce M. Metzger. Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997, .

that this constituent element in Paul's list is used to emphasize the verbal nature of his revelatory content. Paul is the one who in Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing (akoe, related noun) and hearing by the Word of God." Those who would say that we learn by imitation of only behavior must deal with Paul's emphasis here on that which is heard.

**The things you have seen:** εἶδετε (ὄραω, horao). Just as akouo focused on the delivery of verbal content, so horao focuses the recipients of these instructions on the entirety of the ministry example set by Paul as "what they saw." The entirety of Paul's work among the Philippians is encompassed by this word, not just the verbal content.

Perhaps in this list of four verbal descriptions of Paul's content we can understand his structure by observing each one in terms of the movement from the general to the specific. This structure, if valid, is one of several chiasmic structures in Pauline lists.<sup>7</sup> Such a structure would be ABB'A':

**A: GENERAL DESCRIPTION,** that which they **learned:** A general description of the whole Pauline ministry, for to learn includes not just verbal content but the know-how of putting the propositional content into action in life.

**B: SPECIFIC PROPOSITIONAL CONTENT:** That which they **received (by transmission from Paul):** Specific reference to Pauline doctrine or "tradition."

This word, again, is usually a reference to Paul's commission of verbal revelation he received from the Lord to his hearers.

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<sup>7</sup> On chiasmic structures in the NT, see Man, Ronald E., "The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 141*. Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984. Several views of the structure of these four verbs have been advanced in the history of interpretation of Philippians. For a helpful catalog of other options, see Peter T. O'Brien, NIGTC Philippians, 508.

**B': SPECIFIC VERBAL CONTENT:** That which they **heard**: This word stipulates **verbal revelation** by its very nature and by God's creative order.

**A': GENERAL PRACTICE:** That which they **saw**: In the same way that hearing refers to the verbal, seeing involves the general practice or "doing" of the verbal content.

In keeping with the Hebraic origin of the chiasmic style of Paul, we would conclude that the center elements are his focus in making this list. Thus, while the entirety of his ministry provides the Philippians with an example from Paul, the specific verbal revelation of doctrinal content must be focal.

At the end of Paul's list he further specifies that the four verbal descriptions above, these things they have learned, received, heard, and seen were *in him*. Certainly there is no meaning to the content if it is not so specified. He is clearly setting himself up as a ministry example for every believer in the Philippian churches. In effect, Paul is certifying his past performance and making it normative for every Christian—by extension—of the Church Age. Regardless of one's understanding of the structure Paul intended in his list of content-describing verbs, we have a universally-affirmed declaration that all believers, like the Philippians, are responsible to follow Paul's example which he set in precept and practice.

### **1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1**

If Philippians 4:9 was helpful by giving plenary content to the sense in which believers are to imitate Paul, then he gives us the summary command to do so in First Corinthians at two salient points in his argumentation. In 1 Corinthians 4:16 Paul concludes, "*Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.*" In this context Paul is drawing the inference that they should imitate him from the preceding discussion that he is their "spiritual father" in vv14-15. Children should

imitate their parents. This is the biblical view of child-rearing, and it explains the conventional wisdom that “world view is more caught than taught.”<sup>8</sup> The broader context of Paul’s command here is his self-commendation to the Corinthians to receive his teaching and regard him and his associates as servants of Christ. The lesson here is that of a loving “father” seeking the audience of his unruly and arrogant children (cf vv3, 6-8) who have rejected both him and his wisdom.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul again summarizes the relationship of the Corinthian church (and by extension all churches) to Paul and the apostles: “*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*” This command is a helpful introduction to the greater theological realities of imitation in Paul’s teaching. Here, in closing the topic of the dietary accommodation of weaker believers’ conscience, he presents himself as merely a middle-man, a copy of the Original. In 10:23-33 Paul teaches self-sacrificial love as the necessary restraint on the believer’s liberty, concluding that he is himself an example of this love in v 33. So in the next verse, Paul indicates that to the extent that the Corinthians have in Paul an accurate representation of Christ, they are to copy Paul. Therefore we see the NT progression of disciple-making: to copy Paul, the “disciple” of Christ is to copy Christ.

The instruction in 1 Corinthians 4:16 is general in its scope, cf., Philippians 4:9. In contrast, in 1 Corinthians 11:1 the command to imitate is rather more limited to the specific concept of Christ-like self-sacrifice for the edification, conscience, and general benefit of fellow believers. While this latter command certainly has a narrow focus as compared to the former two, this concept of self-sacrifice in the pattern of Christ is no doubt the major emphasis of our Lord’s instructions to His disciples as the “new commandment” in John 13:34-35.

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<sup>8</sup> This phrase is difficult to trace as to its origin, but one helpful example of its use for this discussion can be found in the research of George Barna at <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/133-only-half-of-protestant-pastors-have-a-biblical-worldview>



In the preceding three biblical examples of Paul's commands to imitate him, we have a representative sample of Paul's teaching on this topic. One cannot deny that the general relationship between Paul and the rank-and-file Christian is that of example and follower of the example. Also, we have seen the general concept of imitation as well as a specific instance of how we are to imitate Paul. Now we must pursue the doctrine of imitation in Paul's literature to passages dealing with theology proper.

## **Paul's Commands to Imitate Christ and God**

Launching from 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Paul's connection of his example to that of the Lord Jesus Christ in self-sacrifice and his father-children image in 1 Corinthians 4:16, Ephesians 5:1 is strikingly familiar in tone and content.

### **Ephesians 5:1-2**

*"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."*

In comparison with the previous examples one notices very quickly that imitation of God derives from the parent-child relationship that now obtains between a believer in Christ and God the Father. Just as in 1 Cor 4:16, Paul again teaches that children are to imitate their parents. The emphasis on love is also very obvious on a cursory examination of 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Ephesians 5:2. Finally we see the connection to Christ as exemplar in both 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Ephesians 5:2.

Upon examination of the Greek constructions in the three passages, we find more common ground between them. In 1 Corinthians 4:16 and 11:1 Paul uses the same specific language we find in Ephesians 5:1 to command imitation. Each of these three verses combines

the present active imperative of γίνομαι (GINOMAI, usually “to become”) with the noun μιμητης (MIMETES, “imitator”).<sup>9</sup> The present tense of GINOMAI is used in all three instances to present a general edict which is always incumbent on the recipients.<sup>10</sup> As with 1 Corinthians 11:1, there is a specific sense in which Paul commands imitation of God as Father, indicated in part by the inferential conjunction οὖν (OUN, usually “therefore”). In the preceding verse, Ephesians 4:32, Paul commands the Ephesians to be forgiving of others like God has been forgiving of us. We see a move from the command of 4:32 in the specific to the general instruction of 5:1.

### **Matthew 5:48, Luke 6:36, and 1 Peter 1:15-16**

Matthew 5:48 *“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Luke 6:36 *“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*

1 Peter 1:15-16 *“but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”* With the concept of the imitation of God as our Father in Ephesians 5:1, we must correlate the teaching of Jesus in Matt 5:48 and Luke 6:36, as well as Peter’s quotation of Leviticus 19:2 in 1 Peter 1:15-16. In Matthew 5:48, the adjectival comparison of Jesus’ auditors with the Father is that He is “perfect” or τελειος (TELEIOS), while in Luke 6:36 the comparison is that God’s is merciful, (οἰκτίρων, OIKTIRMWN). Peter’s command in 1 Peter 1:15-16 is that we be “holy” as God is Holy (ἅγιος, HAGIOS). One may summarize from these instructions that God’s outstanding

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<sup>9</sup> Actually the concept of being an imitator occurs with these two words in combination in seven verses in the Majority Text: 1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1, Eph 5:1, 1 Thes 1:6, 2:14, Heb 6:12, 1 Pet 3:13.

<sup>10</sup> Fanning on Present Imperatives, cf. Wallace. The relationship of the present tense’s internal aspect to the imperative mood is an important discussion for commands like this in Ephesians 5:1, which summarize the entirety of the Christian life.

character qualities are to be our character qualities since we are His children. In receiving the privilege of family relationship, we have clearly defined responsibilities for development in interpersonal fellowship with God. Furthermore this transformative relationship with God is to have concrete impact on our interactions with others, including our enemies and fellow believers.

Having thus traced the concept of imitation in Paul's writing from the imitation of Paul, a man in a fatherly role, to the imitation of God the Father Himself, the doctrine of imitation-as-discipleship must now focus on its central emphasis in the New Testament: Imitation of the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

## **Jesus Commands Imitation of Himself**

A brief sampling of Jesus' instructions to His disciples regarding their walking in His pattern will showcase the origin of Paul's doctrine of imitation. Indeed Paul is "an Apostle of the Jesus Christ."<sup>11</sup> In comparing the training ministry of Jesus and Paul we see both continuities and discontinuities. This argument focuses on what is common to both ministries—imitation. However, a brief comparison of both ministries is in order.

### **Continuity and Discontinuity between Jesus' Training and Paul's**

Sometimes so much is made of the actual discontinuities between the message of our Lord in the Gospels and the apostles in their Epistles, especially from Paul, that we fail to recognize the great continuities. This writer contends that a correct understanding of Jesus' training on discipleship in the Gospels presents much greater continuities with Paul's writing than the legitimate dispensational distinctions that obtain between the two phases of training. That is, in terms of discontinuity Jesus and Paul had different emphases in their proclamation of

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<sup>11</sup> Rom 1:1, 1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:1, Col 1:1, 1 Tim 1:1, 2 Tim 1:1, Titus 1:1

the “good news.” Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom to Israel prior to the Cross, “Repent, for the Kingdom is at hand.”<sup>12</sup> Paul preached the Gospel of the Cross—“Christ and Him crucified.”<sup>13</sup> One must emphasize that the discontinuity is not in the salvific requirements for justification but in emphasis based on the time of presentation with respect the Cross and the community to which the message was sent.

In terms of continuity, though, Jesus’ training of the Twelve was designed to prepare them for rulership in His Kingdom subordinate to His kingly rule.<sup>14</sup> Paul and the other apostles continued that ministry of preparation for believers in Christ, training them for rulership in the coming Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> This theme of preparation explains the bulk of the instructions in the NT Epistles which are written to justified believers, even those sinful saints of Corinth. This continuity is also the only possible answer to the question of Peter and the other apostles’ rulership over the Twelve Tribes of Israel in Mt 19:28 and over the Church in Mt 16:19 and 18:18. The Church, which is not Israel, will rule in subordination to Christ in His Jewish Kingdom wherein the Twelve Tribes of Israel will rule over all the nations.

An examination of the disciple-making ministry of the Lord Jesus is now in order to demonstrate the essential command in our Lord’s ministry that His disciples imitate Him. Two motifs in the Gospels will serve to demonstrate this theme: the many consistent challenges to

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<sup>12</sup> Mt 4:17, Mk 1:15

<sup>13</sup> 1 Cor 2:2. There is no problem introduced by two different emphases in the proclamation of Good News in the two different dispensations. Jesus’ message to Israel about the promised Kingdom certainly required the cross (cf. Mt 16), since the divine righteousness to which He called them could only be given from God on the basis of grace (Mt 5-7). This was what John 3 is about: Nicodemus, a ruler and teacher of the Jews should have known that new birth from above through faith, like in the case of the bronze serpent was necessary to enter the Kingdom. He should have known that the sacrifices were types of the real once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of Israel. It is no accident that we preach the Gospel of grace through faith in Christ from this context when we use John 3:16-17. Also, a summary examination of Paul’s message in Acts is about the Kingdom which is not present now. His ministry is the preparation of those who will rule when the Kingdom comes. Cf. Acts 8:12 (Stephen), 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Dan 7:22, Mt 19:28, Lk 22:30

<sup>15</sup> Mt 19:28, Lk 22:30, Rev 3:21; 4:4; 11:16; 20:4, cf. 1 Cor 6:2-3, Rom 8:16-17, 21

discipleship and its high cost in the Synoptics and the command to imitate Jesus' service in the "Upper Room Discourse" of John's Gospel.

### **The Specific Commands to Adopt Jesus' Pattern: Matthew 16:24 et al**

*"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'"* This statement in Matthew 16:24 of the requirement for "coming after Christ" follows immediately after Peter's error of rejecting Jesus' teaching about the Cross and resurrection (vv21-23), which in turn followed from Jesus' statement that Peter would rule under Him in the Kingdom (v19). Verse 24 launches a four-verse discussion about the Kingdom and the rationale for living in light of what is coming, including judgment and rewards (v27). Nothing less than our entire ψυχή (PSUCHE), usually rendered "soul," is at stake, and nothing less than our "soul" will satisfy the Lord if we are to be His disciples.

This message about the cost of discipleship is a common feature of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels. We find it also in the parallel accounts of the Synoptics about this event in Mark 8:31-37 and Luke 9:22-25. A second block of His teaching on this principle of entire self-commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ is found in Jesus' Third Tour of Galilee in Matthew 9:35-11:1 (especially 10:38), Mark 6:6-13, and Luke 9:1-6.<sup>16</sup> The third event which recollects Jesus' teaching about the high cost of discipleship is found only in Luke 14:25-35, during Jesus' ministry in Perea.<sup>17</sup> This theme was no doubt a key aspect of Jesus' teaching throughout His three-year ministry. This brief catalog of these statements in the Gospels which place a whole-life responsibility on those who would "come after" Jesus showcases the focal aspect of imitation which Christ incorporated in His training of His disciples. Jesus denied Himself by submitting to

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<sup>16</sup> Harmony of the Gospels by Robertson

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

the humiliation of the Incarnation, all the way to the death of the Cross. This is the disciples' pattern, according to these passages: "deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me." To obey Jesus instruction is to imitate Him. Specifically, as "sons of God" per Romans 8:16-17 and Galatians 3:26, we will submit our entire lives to the dictates and purposes of God the Father, and in this life-long denial of "self" we will suffer with the ultimate result that we will be glorified with Christ.

### **The Specific Command to Imitate Jesus' Ministry of Selfless Service: John 13:13-17**

**John 13:13-17** *"You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.* John's unique rehearsal of the details of the Last Supper in the Upper Room shows us that the disciples had many lessons on that last evening with our Savior. Perhaps there was no more content-rich single evening in their entire course of instruction with the Great Shepherd, including the long day and night of feeding the five thousand and then rowing across the Sea of Galilee of Matthew 14. At dinner Jesus instituted the Communion ritual from the Passover meal, thus providing a very concrete way to commemorate Jesus' person and Work on our behalf. He also taught them discipline in prayer in the Garden of Gethesmane. He had often taught this, but the last night included another lesson especially for Peter, James, and John. Jesus connected OT prophecy to His betrayal. He taught Peter to respect civil authorities, the rule of Law, and God's supreme court of justice and vengeance as He reattached Malchus' ear.

In John's Gospel, though, we have the most significant block of didactic instruction from the Lord Jesus for the Church Age in Chapters 13-17, the "Upper Room Discourse" and "High Priestly Prayer." The many topics that Jesus covered in this teaching event developed the same recurring theme of imitation. The disciples would serve the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit—the "Spirit of Christ"<sup>18</sup> by teaching others to obey Him. Jesus thereby committed to them the ministry for others that He had performed for them. The Spirit of God would superintend their message, empowering them as He had Christ. They would love one another with the same love with which He had loved them—the Law of Christ in John 13:34-35. They would abide in Him by obeying His commandments, relying on His power and provision. They would continue Jesus' ministry of revelation of the Father by their unity, according to John 17:4, 20-21. They were to be vigilant against the coming attack of wolves, they were to be bold in the power He would send them, they were to rejoice that He would send the Holy Spirit after His departure, they were to have great hope and joy that He would prepare a place for them so that they could once again co-locate with Him—forever. All that Jesus taught them, which cannot be adequately addressed in a thousand pages of expository work, began with Jesus' concrete object lesson providing them an example in the garb of the lowliest slave.

The message of the object lesson wherein Jesus washed His disciples' feet is twofold. First, in vv7-11, Jesus' dialog with Peter shows us that the cleansing He offers can only come from Him and is a ministry that the disciples must receive, if they are to have any "part" with Jesus. However, like the washing of a person's feet, this is only a partial cleansing, effective only for those who are "already clean" through believing His word, unlike unbelieving Judas.

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<sup>18</sup> Rom 8:9. The Holy Spirit as a separate and distinct Person of the Godhead from the Second Person of the Trinity is nevertheless the "Spirit of Christ" because He empowered God the Son in His humanity during His earthly sojourn.

Obviously this is the cleansing of a believer from the dirt of sin along the life path of post-justification experience. The second aspect of the message of Jesus' object lesson is more general, namely they were to serve one another in the same pattern they had in Him. This is the very essence of a disciple's imitation of Christ: selfless service of God the Father for the benefit of those who belong to Him.

### **The Apostle of Jesus Christ**

As an Apostle of our Lord, Paul's core message was not merely non-contradictory to the message of Jesus Christ but *directly derivative* from it. In carrying forth God's manifest technique of the progress of revelation, we see Paul delivering mysteries and informational content that prior to his teaching and writing were not known to the community of faith in God and His promises. They are the mysteries of the Church. This concept of the progress of revelation is a key observation that has given rise to dispensational theology. While Paul indeed delivered revelations that were not given prior to his communiques to the various churches under his supervision, they were always from "the Lord." Therefore, contrary to the Marcionite and some hyper-dispensational perspectives, we expect Paul's message to arise out of and advance upon the teaching of Christ we find in the Gospels.

Having demonstrated above that Paul leads by example and commands that his "flock" follow his example, we see a great continuity in the Scriptures to note that Jesus commanded the same practice of imitation. If Paul was following the example of Christ, and we are following the example of Paul, then we are ultimately following the example of Christ. This is our Lord's ingenious system for disciple-making, whose goal is conformation of the inner man to the character of Christ and the resultant practice of godliness that befits one called a "Christian." Thus the general case for imitation of Christ and His apostles has been made as a major emphasis



in the making and training of disciples. The question remains of the specific application of this universal responsibility for believers into the practices of Christian pastors for their philosophy of ministry and their task of supervision of our Lord's Flock.

## **Part II: From General Responsibility to Imitate Paul to the Specific Tasks of the Pauline Pastor**

Having demonstrated the biblical mandate that we as believers should follow Paul's example as He followed Christ's example, we move to the question for pastors: What was Paul's pastoral example? Doing so will require at least three propositions: First, we must explain the implications of the discontinuity between ourselves, on the one hand, and Christ and His apostles on the other. We will show that a biblical rubric exists which helps us think categorically about how we obey Paul's and the Lord's commands to imitate. This rubric is based on two self-evident axioms in the Text: the doctrine of the cessation of revelation with the close of the Canon and the manifest differences of roles between those who lead and those who are led in local churches. The second proposition flows from this rubric and deals with the legitimacy of moving from the general concept of imitation of Paul in sanctification to the specific features of pastoral ministry in Paul's example. Once this concept is demonstrated sufficiently we will examine the particular behaviors that define Paul's pastoral approach.

### **The Rubric: Cessation of Revelation and Distinction of Roles in the Local Church**

Certain hesitations arise for various reasons when we observe the very clear message that believers should act like Christ and His apostles. One, which has been discussed, is the discontinuity between Jesus' pre-crucifixion and resurrection teaching and that of the apostles

after the Work of Christ was completed. We have seen their teaching regarding disciple-making to be a matter of great continuity. Another hesitation regards the vast discontinuity between Jesus Himself and His believing fellow-heirs and to a much lesser degree between the apostles and their believing disciples. The same issue exists, at least by analogy, in the local church between those who “stand in front”<sup>19</sup> and those who are led by them. This discontinuity immediately suggests the rubric for application proposed here. We can observe at least four levels or “tiers” of delegated authority in our Lord’s universal Church.<sup>20</sup>

No one but Jesus is the Savior. No believer can claim sinlessly perfect humanity, deity, or the task of Redemption. We see anti-Christian dogma when these prerogatives or characteristics are claimed by humans. The sanctification process of the NT is undermined by the teaching of sinless perfection by some Arminian theologians and preachers. Christian Science posits a sinless perfection of the human body, which turned out to be a hopeless dream for the now deceased Mary Baker Eddy. Indeed the doctrine of perfectionism in that movement alone qualifies it in most evangelicals’ understanding as a cult. The claim to deification, the eschatological hope of Mormonism, is one of the more pernicious false doctrines of that sect. Christian thinkers who observe American culture see today’s progressive liberalism and their leaders as replacement saviors for the redemption which can only be found in Christ. The godless must worship something, and they hope for salvation in human central government instead of the King of Kings.

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<sup>19</sup> 1 Thes 5:12 in the NASB95 renders the substantival participle προΐστημι (PROISTEMI), etymologically meaning “to stand in front” of someone as “those who have charge over.”

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 1: Diagram of the Four-Tier Supervisory Structure of the Local Church

By the same token no one today can claim the prerogatives of apostleship. No living person has seen Christ in His resurrection glory.<sup>21</sup> Those today who claim to heal with apostolic power have yet to demonstrate the power of Peter or Paul in healing the lame or raising the dead. No one carries handkerchiefs from any faith-healer's body to the sick with the result that they are healed by contact with the fabric. These biblical events were verifiable and visible for the community to examine. Snake handling preachers die from rattlesnake bites from generation to generation.<sup>22</sup> No matter how compelling the preaching or teaching of those claiming special-revelatory insight today, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not adding any human's writings to the corpus of twenty-seven books which comprise the completed canon of NT Scripture. Most evangelicals, even in the charismatic movement refuse to equate what they consider today's prophecy with the writings of apostles. In a way, the doctrine of apostolic authority was and remains a central point of fracture between the Roman Catholic Church and the various protestant denominations and all in evangelicalism. Luther's *sola scriptura* only makes sense if there is a difference in authority between Paul's writings and the Pope's *dicta ex cathedra*.

No doubt conservative evangelicals see those areas where the imitation of Christ and Paul are impossible. The concept of authority explains what we all conclude instinctively. No one carries the authority of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords now, and no one ever will. Delegated authority from Him, which is the destiny of the Church in His Kingdom is never to be *parity* with Him. In the same way, no one today has received delegated authority from Christ over multiple local churches like the apostles and their emissaries had. The independent church movement within the fundamental portion of conservative evangelicalism assumes this as axiomatic. Though radically different from the notion of succession within the episcopal church

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<sup>21</sup> John 1:14, 2 Peter 1:16, 1 John 1:1-3, Acts 9:27, esp. **1 Cor 9:1**

<sup>22</sup> Rattlesnake preacher article of son who died like his father

denominations, this axiom is the only consistent conclusion to which one can arrive if he follows the biblical basis for Luther's break from the Church of Rome. In today's church, this side of John's completion of Revelation 21, our words do not carry the same authority of special revelation, and our role in supervision over God's flock does not rise above the individual local church.

Therefore, in matters of authority, like Jesus' example of the prophetic delivery of special revelation we are incapable of imitating Him. It is a great absurdity to try. No one today speaks with the authority of Jesus or Paul. We speak their words, which carry their authority, but our words about them do not. This obvious fact demonstrates the existence of the proposed rubric in the necessary implications of the Bible. The reason for stating the rubric explicitly is our need to apply the commands of Scripture to imitate Paul and Jesus. Accordingly a brief summary and defense of each tier is in order.

**Tier 1** in this structure is occupied only by Jesus Christ. As Messiah, our Prophet, Priest and King, Jesus has prerogatives that His apostles did not have. Those things which belong uniquely to Him, like the responsibility and glory of being our Redeemer, are for Tier 1. We do not like "Tier 1" violations, like the claim that Mary is a co-mediatrix with Christ. Satan's fall came from the rejection of God's authority and the desire for independence and supersession of Divine prerogatives. This rubric is not just a superficial construct foisted on the Text but an necessary corollary to the uniqueness of the prerogatives of God in delegating responsibilities as He sees fit. In Tier 1 functions we see Jesus as our example in motivation, attitude, and application, but we cannot do many of the key specific things He did. In this structure our adoption of our Lord's attitude in His suffering is a Tier 4 responsibility of all believers.

**Tier 2** is reserved for the unique prerogatives and responsibilities of apostles.<sup>23</sup> The ministry of our Lord's apostles was apparently a combination of the special-revelatory gift of prophecy combined with the commission of supervisory authority for the establishment and shepherding of all the local churches which comprise the body of Christ. Today we are still under this administrative supervisory authority of these long-dead men because we have their authoritative writings. Much like the US Constitution over this nation or the Mosaic Law which was often referred to simply as "Moses," the authority reposed by God in the apostles still bears on the Church through their documents.<sup>24</sup> I propose that in Tier 2 we have the two-fold issue of the propagation of Holy Writ and authoritative supervision over independent local churches. Regarding the Scriptures, every book of the NT is either the direct product of an apostle or associated with one. It would be an error to attempt to imitate Paul in his Tier 2 Apostolic practices by writing an inspired Epistle or speaking direct revelation to the churches or exercising inspired supervisory authority over multiple churches in accordance with that special revelation. Again, either we hold to the Reformation's break with the Roman Church view of apostolic succession or we do not. This argument assumes the persistence of apostolic authority in the Scriptures but not the succession of apostolic prerogatives in living persons designated by God or other humans.

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<sup>23</sup> Incidentally, we can very clearly identify the distinction between Tier 1 and Tier 2 when Paul says, "Not the Lord but I" or "Not I but the Lord," cf. 1 Cor 4:4, 19, esp. **7:10, 12**. His words have apostolic authority, and they are inspired, but he is not quoting the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to him.

<sup>24</sup> The manifest difference between the US Constitution and the Mosaic Law is that the latter is inspired. However, the commonality between the two as the founding legal documents of their respective national entities serves to demonstrate the point that just as the kings and citizens of Israel always had to submit to Moses as God's chosen human instrument for their governance, so the United States citizenry must submit to the Framers of the Constitution—through their documents. Romans 13:1ff must be applied through this thought process for those whose governments are constitutionally-based and representative in nature.

**Tier 3** in this rubric is largely the subject of this discussion—developing a Pauline philosophy of *pastoral* ministry by imitating Paul. In Tier 3 we recognize the responsibility for oversight of the “flock” in a local church by pastors or elders. This Tier is a field of controversy, but its existence should not be. Before delving into the controversial content of Tier 3, we should find common ground by agreeing that it exists. There is a difference between shepherds and their flocks. Elders are distinguished from the “youngers” by very definition. Overseers must be overseeing something—or someone—or there is no oversight. Anyone who reads 1 Timothy 1, Titus 3, 1 Peter 5:1-4, and Acts 20:28 must agree that there *is* such a class of persons set aside for rulership in our Lord’s flock. If this rubric is based on the differential of authority between the various persons who uniquely occupy their respective tiers, then leadership in the local church must be included in this biblical hierarchical structure.

Egalitarian impulses from the secularist worldview that dominates academic pursuits even in once conservative theological seminaries may prompt the casual consumer of popular culture to take issue with the concept of hierarchy in the local church. Even the very word “hierarchy” elicits an ad-hominem rejection in this civilization. The problem is not the word but the concept of authority which runs contrary to man’s fleshly nature. Egalitarianism, the original Satanic attack on mankind in Genesis 3, pervades Western culture today and brings about this emotional reaction to the “arch” in “hierarchy.” No one wants to be ruled.

Frankly the Scriptures are very clear on hierarchical roles based on differentials in divinely-delegated authority. One passage will suffice to bracket this discussion as thoroughly evangelical and textually-based: First Corinthians 11:3 demonstrates God’s design of equal value belonging to constituent members of an organic entity who have different levels of authority. Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead is “Co-equal” with God the Father and yet

subordinate to Him in authority. This submission of One with equal essence to the higher authority of the Other is the message and example of Philippians 2:5-8. So this pattern obtains in marriage and any other authority structure composed of human beings. The constituent members are of equal value, being the image of God, yet in their function and authority they differ. Those who reject hierarchical authority in the local church are at odds with the Text, the source of this rubric, which is merely a collection of easily-induced and handily-demonstrated conclusions so assembled to facilitate their application in ministry. Tier 3 is nothing more or less than an acknowledgment that while our church leaders are not Jesus or apostles, they are in charge in a way that the others in the congregation are not.

Having thus defended at least the existence of Tier 3 as a separate category of supervisory authority in the local church from Tier 4, the congregation at large, an acknowledgement of the controversial features within Tier 3 is necessary. At least four major views exist within “evangelical” scholarship regarding “who is in charge” in a local church.<sup>25</sup> Within the independent church movement generally considered to be “congregational” in government, the church is either led by an individual elder-overseer-pastor or by a plurality of elder-overseers who may or may not be called pastors. In many cases, at least in this writer’s observation, churches that have a board of multiple elders still recognize the pastoral role of one in their number. Without wading into the merits and deficiencies of the differing views, it is sufficient for this discussion to say that almost all within the independent movement submit to the authority of a separate class of persons (or person) who *pastor* them. It will be shown that those in this category in a local church can and must imitate Paul and our Lord in certain specifics of conduct and practice as shepherds. The adage, “When in charge, take charge” is

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<sup>25</sup> *Who Runs the Church?*. Edited by Engle, Paul E. and Steven B. Cowan. Zondervan Counterpoints Collection. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

very apt for the leadership endeavor in the local church, and the Scriptures speak with great clarity about “who is in charge.” Those in charge in a local church are identified with three different descriptive words. They are ἐπισκοποι (episkopoi, “overseers”), πρεσβυτεροι (presbuteroi, “elders”), and ποιμηνες (poimenes, “pastors”).

**Tier 4**, obviously, is what remains of the local church, the majority of believers throughout the Church Age. Everyone in the Body of Christ is in Tier 4, by design, for God’s establishment of local churches in the NT record is no doubt prescriptive for all believers. In other words, every believer is not in the same local church but everyone should be in a local church. The Lord knocks on the door of the local church of Laodicea in Rev 3:20, asking to come in and have fellowship. Paul wants to give himself to the Thessalonians in 1 Thes 2:8, he was sent out by the church of Antioch in his missionary endeavors, and he judges the sinful man in 1 Corinthians 5 as though he were among them. Every local church is under the Lord and His apostles, and they, in some way, are constituents of each church. This fact may provide help for the young pastor, who like Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, needed the encouragement of a senior man both in experience and authority. Incidentally there can be no argument, because of 1 Timothy 4:12, that young men cannot be elders, since Timothy’s job as an apostolic emissary was to *designate* elders and instruct them.

As the diagram in “Appendix: Authority Structures in the Local Church” demonstrates by its concentric circles, everyone is in Tier 4. The leadership in the local church are not apostles, but the apostles shepherd and lead in the local churches by their writing. The Son of God is the very source of the apostles’ authority, and He is the Great Shepherd, according to Hebrews 13:20 and 1 Peter 2:25. The illustration is not a perfect description because inclusion, indicated by nested circles, is not the same as rulership or authority. So a modification might be a three-



dimensional model like a multiple-stacked wedding cake, with the base being Tier 4, and the topmost piece being Christ. This model falls short, as well, in two aspects. First, three-dimensionally speaking, each level of the cake needs to run all the way to the bottom, so that after the cylindrical Jesus portion each level has a hole in its center occupied by the other layers, making concentric cylinders. The other problem is that Jesus and the apostles are identified in the Bible as the foundation of the edifice. Hierarchy by foundation as well as supervision is God's way in His institution of local church. Finally, this is a model of local church, but it obviously overlaps with the picture of the Universal Church, in that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd and the apostles are over the whole entity under Christ. The problem with using this for Universal Church comes in with Tier 3. Historically this has been a problematic issue, and nothing in the Scriptures indicates administrative oversight of Tier 3 persons, like the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, over multiple local churches.

The rubric of hierarchical authority roles in the local church thus established, if only in a rough and cursory fashion, the discussion must advance to its use in applying the commands of our Lord and Paul to imitate them.

### **From the General Notion of Imitation to the Specifics of Roles in Life**

Certainly the general need for all believers everywhere to imitate Christ by imitating the apostles is axiomatic. If the principle of imitation applies in general, is it not safe to assume the principle applies to all specific instances? Does the general "blanket" command not cover all the possible particulars of the various roles to which we are called in life? For an example of how this discipline of imitation may extend from the general axiom to the specific features of life, we may examine the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus in His various roles. In His words and works

we may learn to fulfill two opposite roles at the same time with the same motivation and attitude. At once in His example we learn how to follow and how to lead.

As a follower, our Lord did not follow His subordinates but rather His Father in Heaven. Philippians 2:5-11 teaches very clearly that the Second Person of the Trinity submitted Himself to be humbled—even humiliated—all the way to the point of death on the Cross. This “kenosis” passage, which gives us our greatest insight into the mystery of the Lord’s incarnation, begins with the command to adopt our Lord’s attitude of submission and humility (Phil 2:5). To follow our Lord’s example is ultimately to follow or submit to His Father in the same pattern of humiliation and glory.

On the other hand Jesus also showed us the paradigm for leadership as He led His disciples with great decisiveness, teaching them, correcting them, and encouraging them. As already demonstrated, Jesus taught by example, explicitly stating that His leadership example was for them to follow in John 13:13-17. The tight connection between leader and follower in this example showcases the Christian leadership ethic. We are to place our interests below those of our flock, but we do so in subordination to God’s authority. As servants of the Lord, we selflessly shepherd His flock.

In these two opposite examples the Scriptures specifically prescribe imitation of both roles for our Lord’s disciples. The Spirit certainly commands general imitation of Christ (1 Cor 11:1, Eph 5:1), and by extension His apostles (1 Cor 4:16, 11:1, Phil 3:7, etc), but He also pushes this general prescription into our specific actions and attitudes regarding our various relationships in life. In other words, the general notion of imitation has specific content in whatever roles we find ourselves. In general terms, all believers should relate to God as

servants, and we serve Him by ministering to His flock. In specific terms, some believers are Tier 3, and we may find further specific features to imitate in Christ's example as a *shepherd*.

### **The Lord is My Pastor**

In the Scriptures, when Jesus summarizes His work as a leader He often invokes the imagery of a shepherd with his sheep. Perhaps the most salient example of this teaching is the famous "I am" of John 10:11-18, where Jesus tells His disciples that He is the "Good Shepherd" and describes His shepherd-like ministry. In Matthew 9:36 and Mark 6:34, Jesus has compassion on the crowds and *teaches* them because they are "like sheep without a shepherd." Throughout the Scriptures God depicts Himself as a shepherd of the flock of His people (Ps 23, 80, Is 40:11, etc), and when God Incarnate describes His care for His disciples, He says it is the work of a shepherd. Both Hebrews 13:30 and First Peter 2:25 refer to Jesus in summary fashion as our Shepherd.

We may justly conclude that Jesus' self-description of His leadership duties and performance is intensely *pastoral*. One cannot avoid the linguistic significance of our most commonly-used term for leadership in the local church today. We say "pastor," but this term is a Latin transliteration, not a translation.<sup>26</sup> To *translate* "pastor" into English we should use an English word, not a Latin word. The English word is *shepherd*, a translation of either the Greek ποιμην (POIMEN) or the Latin *pastor*. When we say "pastoral ministry" we are actually speaking Latin and should probably be thinking of the tasks involved with tending sheep. The metaphor is important only inasmuch as the Word of God uses this language to describe the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ for His disciples.

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<sup>26</sup> The Vulgate translation of John 10:11 reads thus, "ego sum **pastor** bonus bonus **pastor** animam suam dat pro ovibus"

In fact, a quick examination of the New Testament uses of the word translated “pastor” (ποιμην, POIMEN) reveals an interesting emphasis when compared with modern evangelical ecclesiology. While a great deal of thought about the “pastor” focuses on the leadership of the local church, the New Testament emphasis of “pastor” is really on Christ. In a search that combines both the noun ποιμην and the verb ποιμαινω, the concept is only mentioned by name 29 times. Of those only four are speaking of our delegated “pastoral ministry,” while the vast majority are references to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup>

A close investigation of the texts which refer to leadership in the local church or the Body of Christ at large with “pastoring” or “shepherding” language will demonstrate the tight connection to Christ as the Great Shepherd and exemplar for this ministry. John 21:16 and 1 Peter 5:2 are closely related. In the former, Jesus is commissioning Peter to “shepherd,” (ποιμαινω, poimaino) His flock. In the latter, Peter is commissioning elders to perform this same ministry. Here we see a lock-step progression from Christ as exemplar to His disciple Peter to Peter’s disciples the “fellow elders” of the Christian diaspora. This is the move from Tier 1 to Tier 2 to Tier 3.

Paul has the other two references in Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 4:11. In the Acts reference, he is charging the Ephesian elders (appointed by the Holy Spirit) to “shepherd church of God,” just as Peter does in 1 Peter 5:2. In Ephesians 4:11, the persons mentioned in the list of “gifts” are actually the gifts *themselves* from our Lord Jesus to His church. By comparing the *outcome* of this gifting in Ephesians 4:12-13 with the *intention* of Peter and Paul in the respective passages above, we may conclude that they are speaking about the same ministry. Certainly this correlation requires a detailed analysis, for there are differences in emphasis between Ephesians

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix Chart, “Shepherd Language in the NT” Sixteen uses of the word group ποιμην refer to Christ, while the remainder are speaking about actual shepherds, examples of labor, or in one instance, ruling with Christ in the eschaton.

4 and the other three contexts. These passages differ in the details of their source (the Holy Spirit in Acts, Jesus triumphant in Ephesians), and indeed with different senses of what is given (“some” in Ephesians 4, the “flock” in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:3). Nevertheless, these differences in emphasis serve to present more information on the topic, not contradictory or differing ministries or gifts.

The problem of misplaced emphasis regarding the concept of the *pastor* has resulted in confusion at best about the topic of pastoral ministry in the local church. As one might expect, many difficulties dissolve like so much fog in the sunlight of the biblical emphasis, which is our Lord Jesus Christ. In summary, Jesus is the ultimate exemplar for the specific task of shepherding because He is the Good Shepherd in John 10 and the Great Shepherd in Hebrews 13. Again, we cannot deny the development from a general edict of imitation (1 Corinthians 11:1) to the specific instance of imitation in the role of under-shepherd for the flock of God in His Church. In other words, all Christians should count the cost and be disciples of Christ, which makes them imitators of Him and therefore participants in His disciple-making mission. They should all “come after” Him as in Matthew 16:24. However, not all will function in this overall mission with the same responsibilities or *modus operandi*.

## **The Pastor’s Imitation of Paul in His Pastoral Practices**

Assuming validity of the 4-Tiered rubric for supervisory authority in the local church, as well as the move demonstrated above from general imitation of Jesus and His apostles for all believers (Tier 4) to the imitation of them in their shepherding roles (Tier 3), we move to the specific examination of Paul in his practice as shepherd. For the purposes of this discussion, I will assume that Paul’s and Peter’s summary of “pastoral ministry” relates to one summary

concept: exercising oversight, (ἐπισκοπεω, EPISKOPEW). In all of Paul's writing, as well as Luke's writing about Paul we have what amounts to Pauline oversight over the churches, that portion of God's flock "allotted to his charge." First Peter 5:2 makes this determination necessary because he says that the elders are to shepherd (ποιμαινω, POIMAINW) by *exercising oversight*.<sup>28</sup> What does it mean to exercise oversight? The Biblical answer to the question is given in the manifest works of Paul on behalf of the churches. Where Tier 3 personnel may copy Paul, they should.

### Supervision Through Content Delivery

The most ubiquitous and obvious feature of Paul's ministry is *content delivery*. As a very prolific writer of letters to churches and individuals we have more insight from Paul's writing ministry about the practices of the apostles in training the infant church than any other source, as much in the range of topics he wrote about as the situations that prompted his writing. This analysis of Paul's epistolary corpus is not the normal approach to Paul because of our obvious theological interests in his perfectly non-contradictory content. Nevertheless, the doctrine of inspiration drives us to examine not just Paul's argumentative or "doctrinal" discussions but also the *sitz-im-leben* that gave us that content.

We must also mention Luke's corpus because of Paul's apostolic ministry of oversight on the work of the beloved physician-historian. In Acts we see Paul in action shepherding the nascent church, and we again must acknowledge that Paul's *raison d'etre* is content delivery. Whether teaching a group of believers (e.g. most of the Epistles), a group of elders in a last

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<sup>28</sup> We are taking the adverbial participle from ἐπισκοπεω in 1 Peter 5:2 to be a participle of means, describing how or by what means the main verb ποιμαινω is to be accomplished. "Shepherd the flock...by means of exercising oversight...."

address (Acts 20), or individuals (Timothy, Titus, Philemon), Paul is making his case in any way he can to everyone within his ministry. While Paul's primary focus is the delivery of his propositional content, the very revelation of God the Son, he adopts many different approaches and devices in his argumentative epistles.

Paul makes his case using personal examples, shared history, fatherly appeal, and authoritative commands. He has a fairly well-developed practice of disciplinary correction of errant churches, both for bad theology which rejects his message of grace in the case of *Galatians*, and for gross misapplication of grace in First Corinthians. He is concerned for both doctrinal error and applicational failure. One cannot divide Paul into academic and pastoral ministry, in other words. Paul encourages the baby church of Thessalonica in First Thessalonians with a winsome epistle to keep advancing in the same direction they are going. The same tone is evident in the more mature Macedonian church of Philippi, where he expresses an almost overwhelming sense of joy directly derivative of their fellowship in his ministry of the gospel.

We apply this example to our ministry as pastors by adopting a priority for content delivery, just like Paul. He spoke and wrote direct revelation from Christ. We read and then expound upon his meaning of what he wrote. Tier 2 prerogatives are not to be assumed (revelation), but Tier 3 performance (content delivery) must be. Moreover we apply Paul's example of content delivery by following his practice and precept in selection of content. We keep our finger in the Text of Scripture because that is what Paul gave us in the Epistles and commanded regarding the OT Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16). The first and foremost way we will oversee God's flock in the pattern of Paul—and Jesus—is delivering the contents of God's Word.

## **Supervision Through The Personal Address to the Mass Audience**

Another key feature of Paul's writing pervades all his various tones, devices, and approaches. With the exception of the personal epistles, which themselves include the named recipients and their households who are known to Paul, he writes personally to many believers of whom he has no personal or relational knowledge. Thus Paul demonstrates the skill of cultivating the example of personal concern in word and deed for people he has never met. Also Paul can write to the Laodiceans and tell the Corinthians to read the letter for their own edification, and his letter to Ephesus is really a circular message for all believers of the Roman Province of Asia. This feature of Paul's approach to ministry in his Tier 2 function of content delivery requires that all believers of the Church Age adopt his instructions as binding upon their lives. But at the same time, Tier 3 shepherds can see something of Paul's example in exercising oversight for those he does not personally know.

## **Supervision of Doctrinal Soundness and Application**

Paul wrote several of his epistles for the purpose of verifying the doctrinal soundness of his audience, as well as their application of that teaching to their experience. Here is a difficult area for pastors to imitate because it often involves uncomfortable conversations and the possible claim of self-righteousness or other arrogant motivation by those under the pastor's supervision. Paul wrote Galatians both because they had rejected his teaching on grace and because they were applying that rejection in the practice of ritual circumcision of adult Christian men. A close examination of most of Paul's epistles reveals both a developed argument of "theory" or theological reasoning and a section which applies that reasoning to the experience of the audience. Romans 12 is the point in that epistle where Paul makes the move to application.



Ephesians 5 and Galatians 5 seem to be similar points where Paul moves from the argument to the application of the principles he has developed.

Paul tells us that Galatians, his first epistle, was specifically to combat the error of the rejection of grace. He is amazed in verse 6 of chapter 1 that they have abandoned the Gospel. Paul's pastoral moves in his second epistle, First Thessalonians, are helpful for us to observe because he shows that no obstacle would stop him from supervising the new believers in both doctrinal soundness and the application of that content in their lives. First Thessalonians 2:17-3:10 is an autobiographical presentation of Paul's supervisory intentions, decisions, and successes.

The obvious challenges that present themselves to us in supervising the flock of the Lord Jesus in our local churches, including the fleshly tendency to reject duly constituted authority must not sway us from adopting Paul's example. By the same token, we must wisely consider where Paul functioned in Tier 2 prerogatives and not assume them to ourselves.

### **A Priority for Personal Presence and Interpersonal Communication**

A final insight that Paul demonstrates in his shepherding practices with the early church is that he wanted to be present with the believers to whom he wrote. He constantly reminds those he cannot visit that he wants to. Again in First Thessalonians 2-3 Paul informs them that Satan prevented him from coming—so he sent Timothy. Personal presence is a feature of Paul's writings in First and Second Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, First Thessalonians, and Philemon (and probably others—more soon.). Since Paul could not be with them to teach them in person and pray with them, he also tells them the contents of his prayers for them. This transparent look into Paul's personal concern on behalf of those over whom he exercised oversight begins almost every epistle. Why did he include the “prayer section” in the first

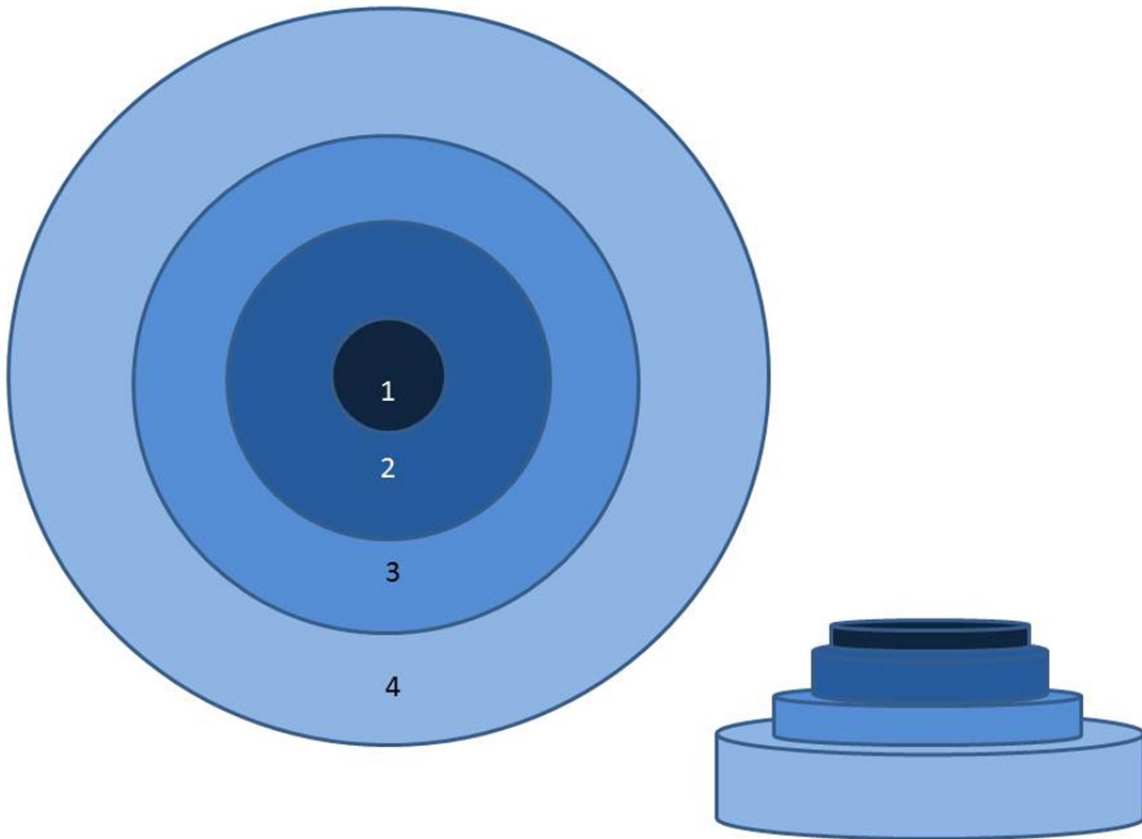
portion of most of his epistles? Because he wanted them to know what he prayed for them. In turn this would show them what he wanted for them while providing an example of how to intercede for one another.

## **Conclusion**

All believers should imitate Paul in our spiritual growth as he imitated Christ. As pastors we should imitate Paul in his conduct of pastoral ministry just as he imitated Christ in this specific role of supervisory ministry. Our motivation, attitudes, principles, and specific behaviors should reflect those of our Lord, the Great Shepherd, and Paul, His under-shepherd, taking care to recognize that we are not apostles but shepherd-elder-overseers in the local church.

# Appendix: Diagram of Authority Structures in the Local Church

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## Appendix Chart: SHEPHERD LANGUAGE in the NT

πομην	ποιμαινω	Referent
	Mt 2:6	Jesus
Mt 9:36		Jesus or a teacher
Mt 25:32		Jesus in extended metaphor, different topic
Mt 26:31		Jesus in OT Prophecy
Mk 6:34		Jesus or a teacher
Mk 14:27		Jesus in OT Prophecy
Luke 2:8		Actual men who are shepherds
Luke 2:15		Actual men who are shepherds
Luke 2:18		Actual men who are shepherds
Luke 2:20		Actual men who are shepherds
	Lk 17:17	An example of labor
Jn 10:2		Jesus in extended metaphor
Jn 10:11		Jesus
Jn 10:12		Jesus
Jn 10:14		Jesus
Jn 10:16		Jesus
	Jn 21:16	<b>Peter!!</b>
	Acts 20:28	<b>The Ephesian Overseers</b>
	1 Cor 9:7	An example of labor
Eph 4:11		<b>"pastors and teachers"</b>
Heb 13:20		Jesus
1 Pet 2:25		Jesus
	1 Pet 5:2	<b>Elders</b>
	Jude 12	False teachers
	Rev 2:27	The Overcomer of Thyatira, with a rod of iron
	Rev 7:17	Jesus
	Rev 12:5	Jesus, with a Rod of Iron
	Rev 19:15	Jesus, with a Rod of Iron

# Appendix: Key passages for elders to adopt Tier 3 practices of the Apostles

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## Acts 20:28 (Majority Text (Hodges/Farstad))

<sup>28</sup>Προσέχετε οὖν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ ὑμᾶς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους, ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος.

Therefore take care/beware to yourselves and to the whole flock **in which** God the Holy Spirit appointed you overseers, to shepherd the church of the Lord and God, which He acquired through His own blood.

Three main ideas:

- 1) Care—conservative and protective; context (v29-30) means we have to be proactively protective
- 2) Oversight—The Spirit makes the appointment of this task
- 3) Shepherding—The purpose for which the Spirit appointed overseers.

## 1 Peter 5:2–3 (Majority Text (Hodges/Farstad))

<sup>2</sup>ποιμάατε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ ἀναγκαστῶς, ἀλλ' ἐκουσίως, μὴδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς, ἀλλὰ προθύμως, <sup>3</sup>μηδὲ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων, ἀλλὰ τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου.

Shepherd the flock of God **among you,**

*by means of* exercising **oversight**,

not by compulsion, but willingly,

neither for sordid gain, but freely,

nor as one who lords it over those allotted, but being a type for the flock