

# The Anatomy of a Church (8)

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[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 01/26/14)

## SOUND DOCTRINE

**The third** thing that a church must have as a part of its skeleton is sound doctrine. If you have a high view of God and are committed to Him, you must adhere to what His Word teaches. The teachings of God’s Word make up sound doctrine.

Many Christians today are vague about doctrine. Many pastors offer “**sermonettes for Christianettes**”—little sermons that are nice and interesting. Sometimes they make you feel warm, fuzzy, sad, or excited. But seldom do we hear doctrine taught or discussed.

Very few preachers explain the truths about **God, life, death, heaven, hell, man, sin, Christ, angels, the Holy Spirit, the position of the believer, the flesh, or the world**. We need truths that we can hold onto. You need to read a text, find out what it says and means, draw out a divine truth, and plant that truth in the minds of people by repeating it. I picked up that style of preaching when I graduated from high school.

My pastor gave me a Bible and wrote a note in it encouraging me to read [1](#) and [2 Timothy](#). I did that, and Paul’s message to Timothy kept running through my mind: “**In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following**” ([1 Timothy 4:6](#) (NASB); cf. [1 Timothy 1:3, 10](#); [1 Timothy 4:13, 16](#)).

[1 Timothy 1:3](#) (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

[1 Timothy 1:10](#) (NASB)

<sup>10</sup> and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

[1 Timothy 4:13](#) (NASB)

<sup>13</sup> Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

[1 Timothy 4:16](#) (NASB)

<sup>16</sup> Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

## An Excellent Minister Has a Thoroughly Biblical Ministry

### [1 Timothy 4:13 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>13</sup>**Until I come**, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.

Scripture is the material with which an excellent minister builds his ministry. The phrase **until I come** shows Paul intended to return to Ephesus (cf. [1 Timothy 3:14](#)).

### [1 Timothy 3:14 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>14</sup>**I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long.**

Until Paul arrived, **Timothy** was to continue to build with the revelation of God. His task was to **give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching**. **Give attention** to is the present active indicative form of (attention) *prosechō*. **Timothy** was to continually give his attention to those things; it was to be his way of life.

### [1 Timothy 4:13 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>13</sup>**Until I come, give attention** to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.

**Donald Guthrie** writes that the verb “implies previous preparation in private” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 109). It encompasses not just the act of teaching, but all the commitment, study, and preparation associated with it.

An excellent minister is to focus on the **public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching**. Although the word **public** does not appear in the Greek text, it is implied by the use of the definite article. The **reading** was done in the public worship service of the church. Due in part to a lack of manuscripts, the practice of the synagogue had carried over into the early church. Part of every worship service in a synagogue was the reading and explanation of the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. [Luke 4:16](#); [Acts 15:21](#)).

### [Luke 4:16 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>16</sup>**And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.**

### [Acts 15:21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>21</sup>**For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.**

That custom dates back to the practice of the exiles who returned from the Babylonian captivity (cf. [Nehemiah 8:1-8](#)). To the reading of the Old Testament, the early church added the reading and explanation of the apostles' doctrine (cf. [Acts 2:42](#); [Colossians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:27](#)).

**Acts 2:42 (NASB)**

<sup>42</sup>“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

**Colossians 4:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup>“When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup>“I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.”

As New Testament letters were written and circulated during the early years, they took their place in the public reading.

The reading of the Scriptures was accompanied by an exposition of the passage read so that the hearers could understand it (cf. [Nehemiah 8:1-8](#); [Luke 4:16](#)). Anything that needed to be clarified would be explained. In our day, when we are culturally, geographically, linguistically, philosophically, and historically far removed from biblical times, exposition is essential.

**Exhortation** challenges people to apply the truths they have been taught. It warns people to obey, in light of the blessing to come on them if they do, and the judgment if they do not. **Exhortation** may take the form of rebuke, warning, counsel, or comfort, but always involves a binding of the conscience.

**Didaskalia** (teaching) appears fifteen times in the Pastoral Epistles. It involves the systematic explanation of the Word of God. It could embody developing a means of teaching people individually, or in small groups meeting in homes. The point is that an excellent minister is to disseminate sound teaching to all people at all times through all means. That is the heart and soul of the ministry, since the Word is the only source of life and truth. It is no surprise, then, that an elder was required to be able to teach ([1 Timothy 3:2](#); cf. [Titus 1:9](#)).

**1 Timothy 3:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup>“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.”

**Titus 1:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup>“Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”