

## 2 Timothy, week 3

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Based on pp. 37-46 of Raymond Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (Paulist Press, 1984).

When my ashes scatter, says John, "there is left on earth  
No one alive who knew (consider this!)  
—Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands  
That which was from the first, the Word of Life.  
How will it be when none more saith, 'I saw'?"

—Robert Browning,  
from *A Death in the Desert*,  
about the death of John,  
traditionally the youngest apostle

*Central to Brown's argument is the idea that the Pastorals represent a tightening of the reigns—that beyond just calling for orthodoxy, they are calling for teachers to fall into line not attempt to add anything new to doctrine. To see whether this is really supportable I made a list of issues addressed in the Pastorals, especially 1 Timothy.*

*Included are fundamental issues, like legalism and circumcision, and proto-gnosticism. Also dealt with are less central doctrines, such as focus on genealogies, women's dress, propriety in worship, public relations (Paul's urges to lead quiet lives and pray for civil leaders), impositions of celibacy, abstinence and dietary rules, payment of teachers and elders, which widows deserved charity, and requirements for bringing accusations against elders.*

*Paul's directives cover both central and less important doctrines. Paul censures all who teach anything outside what he does. He also makes no provision for discrimination between primary and secondary doctrines. For this reason I think Brown is probably right—Paul's plan was to preserve good doctrine by preventing deviation from his teachings in any way.*

1. At the last meeting we discussed what might be called the "chain of belief". In 2 Timothy, this is the sequence of people through whom the Gospel passed to get to Timothy: Paul to Lois to Eunice to Timothy. (In other cases "tree of belief" might be more appropriate.) Paul uses this chain as a way to motivate Timothy, as he also used it to motivate the Thessalonians.

Who is in your chain of belief?

*My parents—but really Stu, and before him...I wonder? Who got him into Xenos?*

2. Brown says "The Pastoral Epistles, shaped by doctrinal crisis, are often read without context as offering a universal and unconditioned policy. Truly pastoral policy, rather, requires a *relaxation* of such stringent controls when the crisis has passed" (39).
  - a. Is the North American evangelical church in a time of crisis such as would make tight control (à la the Pastorals) necessary? How about the CRC?

*The mainline denominations are certainly in that sort of crisis. The evangelical church, not so much, because one isn't an evangelical without having orthodox beliefs.*

b. How much flexibility does our church allow in entertaining new teaching?

*That's hard to say—I don't know of any examples of people trying to bring new teaching into the church. Well, I know the CRC has steadfastly resisted making homosexuality okay, and is still resisting women in leadership, so I pretty resistant.*

3. Brown says “At certain times the greatest peril facing a well-ordered institutional church is not the peril of new ideas but the peril of no ideas” (40).
  - a. Do you agree? Can you think of such a time?  
*Perhaps worship styles are the best example of this. Well, except worship isn't doctrinal. Hmm.*
  - b. What issues facing the Church today call for flexibility beyond what the Pastorals would allow? Are there areas in the modern church where new ideas are lacking?
4. Based on the article discussed last time, *What American Teenagers Believe*, is the Pastoral template a good one for raising children in the faith?
5. In the modern church the gap between the clergy (the teaching class) and the laity is much wider than in Paul's time, because of the much larger Church history and tradition. The transition from laity to clergy requires about three years of full-time seminary training as a result.
  - a. Is this why our denomination goes beyond even the restrictions of the Pastorals by forbidding all but the minister of the Word, and those specially licensed, from preaching?
  - b. Given our modern context, would you change the teaching/eldership requirements of the Pastorals?
  - c. Would Paul have made a good elder in 67 A.D.? How about now? Why did he, as Brown points out, make a job description for elder which would have excluded himself?
6. “In fact they make no structural provision for ongoing mission activity; and the thrust toward such highly prudential leaders, holding on to the past, creates an orientation that is not going to favor the innovations necessary for dynamic mission” (42). Do you agree? Why do you suppose, in the Anglican church, the mission field (especially Nigeria) is producing orthodox believers, while the “mother” church is failing to reject heresy?