

MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

*THE MENTOR PAUL, A MODEL FOR APOSTOLICITY*

A PAPER

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE

DR 37337 ECCLESIOLOGY

BY

MATTHEW C. WARREN

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

September 9, 2020

## THESIS

Apostolicity is a component of ecclesiology that is not to be ignored. The Catholic church emphasizes an episcopal form of government that insists on the “bishop standing in the apostolic succession,”<sup>1</sup> However, “with the Protestants and Anabaptists the emphasis of apostolicity is not upon the office itself.”<sup>2</sup> One reason the Protestant church maintains that the Roman Catholic position is in error is that “there is no indication that the apostles appointed successors.”<sup>3</sup> Consideration must be given as to how the apostolicity of the church is secured and maintained. Michael Horton takes a unique position on apostolicity when he writes:

Apostolic succession, like all other attributes of the church, is therefore determined by the *content* of the church’s ministry rather than by the historical succession of *persons* ordained to office. At the same time, those who minister in Christ’s name must be called to that office by Christ through the agency of the church: they cannot send themselves on the basis of an inward call alone, but must be sent . . .”<sup>4</sup>

In a similar fashion, Matt Jenson and David Wilhite insist that “what is certain about the church’s apostolicity is that it is a mark of the church’s connection to the original followers of Jesus.”<sup>5</sup> At first this might seem like a traditional view on apostolicity however, Jenson and Wilhite continue to describe the mark of apostolicity saying, “it is primarily a mark about the

---

<sup>1</sup> Volf, Miroslav. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Sacra Doctrina. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 133.

<sup>2</sup> Jenson, Matt, and David Wilhite. *The Church: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2010) Kindle Location 1051.

<sup>3</sup> Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 60.

<sup>4</sup> Horton, Michael Scott. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 891.

<sup>5</sup> Jenson, Matt, and David Wilhite. *The Church: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2010) Kindle Location 1064.

church itself, not a definite statement about the church's visible office.”<sup>6</sup> Here are two different modern sources acknowledging a different sense of apostolicity and apostolic succession. Therefore, the questions must be asked “What is apostolic succession?” And “How is it rightly maintained if not directly through an office itself?”

This paper will argue that the Apostle Paul established methods of mentoring that are to be employed by individuals and the church so that the church is apostolically authentic because the church is grounded in biblical truth. For the purpose of this work, the concept of apostolic succession is not being equated to traditional idea of the succession of the office of bishop through individuals. Instead, apostolic succession will be defined as the connection a church has to the truth given by Jesus and the Apostles as they originally taught the truths of the gospel.

In order to best account for the understanding of apostolicity, an examination of some of the earliest writings of the post-Apostolic Fathers and the Didache will be helpful. Then there will be an examination of the methods of Paul and his relationships by which he instructed the church. Lastly, there will be implications drawn for the modern church.

Unfortunately, throughout church history there has been division over the interpretation polity and authority in the church. The question has been, “To whom did Jesus give the “*keys of the kingdom?*”” The answer for the Protestant church is that the “*keys*” are given to the membership of the church. Thus, Leeman concludes:

---

<sup>6</sup> Jenson, Matt, and David Wilhite. *The Church: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2010) Kindle Location 1064.

Jesus gives all believers, when gathered as congregations, the authority to administer their priestly and kingly duties with the keys of the kingdom. The whole congregation employs these keys – through the ordinances – to make formal declarations concerning the *what* and *who* of the gospel. The elders, on the other hand, have a morally binding authority to lead or instruct a church in its use of the keys through their Spirit-given and congregationally affirmed authority to teach.<sup>7</sup>

For the Protestant church to correctly identify apostolicity, there must be a recognition that the members of the church have a responsibility to uphold sound doctrine. The doctrinal force of apostolicity often focuses on the ability of the church to exercise the “*keys of the kingdom*,” which are given by Jesus in Matthew 16 and 18.<sup>8</sup> The giving of the “*keys of the kingdom*” emphasizes the authority presented to the church to bind and loose. In Matthew 18, the authority is delegated by Jesus to the *ekklēsia*, those gathered in community. The “*keys*” are the means by which the church is to oversee and protect the purity and holiness of the church in doctrine and practice. In Matthew 18 Jesus employs the plural form of “you,” thus placing an emphasis on the responsibility of two or more, who are to witness and enact binding and loosing. By using the plural form, Jesus clarifies the importance of the authority of the community instead of giving authority to an individual or an office.

Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 5:4, when Paul addresses the sin of the immoral man, he identifies that “the power of our Lord Jesus” is present when the church is assembled. The word assembly necessitates that more than one member is responsible for handling the “*keys*.” The phrase, “the power of our Lord,” means the work of the Spirit, which happens in and through the assembled church and enables the members of the church to properly exercise discipline.

---

<sup>7</sup> Leeman, Jonathan. *Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 67.

<sup>8</sup> Dever, Mark, Jonathan Leeman, and James Leo Garrett. *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015), 335.

Another example is found in 1 Corinthians 6:1-6 as Paul corrects the church (*ekklēsia*) for taking its disputes into the public courts of law, rather than properly exercising the rule by the authority given by Jesus. The account demonstrates the importance of the church governing itself in the issues of binding sin as conflict arose between its members. The conflict was to be overseen by the church in its authority, rather than being dismissed to the secular authorities.

Accounting for the appropriate authority of the church aids in understanding apostolic succession. However, there must be clarity in how apostolic succession is transferred and applied across generations of the church. Apostolic succession is not a work of the Holy Spirit alone. Rather, apostolic succession must be an intentional part of the maturation process of and for the church. Maturation happens when individuals and the whole church grow together as the Holy Spirit guides them in the application of Scripture, biblical virtues, and practices. Emphasizing the connection of Scripture and maturation, Hammett concludes, “for a church to be apostolic it must seek above all to be governed by Scripture.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the church must uphold the Scripture through the witness and application made by the Holy Spirit for the church to be properly aligned in its authority.

The fact that the Apostles did not appoint successors during the time of the New Testament indicates that there must be another intended method of apostolic succession. The young church would require intentional methods and means to ensure the health and proper authority in her life as she grew numerically. Fortunately, Jesus established the pattern of apostolic succession when he gave the Great Commission and transferred his authority to his followers. Similarly, Jesus expressed his intentions on succession in John 17:18 as he prayed for

---

<sup>9</sup> Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 61.

his followers that he would send into the world. Jesus clearly gave authority to the *ekklēsia*. The authority was vested in the multitude of believers who comprise the church.

The Apostles of Jesus were intrinsic in planting churches and the maturation of the churches. There are examples of each of the Apostles, who wrote letters, giving instructions to individuals and the church community. For instance, Peter instructed the elders as a fellow elder (1 Peter 5:1). Peter also indicated that he was invested in the lives of Silvanus and Mark (1 Peter 5:12-13). This paper will focus on Paul because he wrote the majority of the letters of the New Testament and because he possessed the authority, as an Apostle, to instruct and delegate authority to others in the church. Though there have been questions about Paul and the type of apostle he represented, Bengt Holmberg aptly concludes:

According to Paul's own words they [the Apostles in Jerusalem] acknowledge him as an Apostle (of Christ) to the Gentiles, the equal of Peter, "the Rock"; and it is not possible to invalidate this statement as pure or partial imagination.<sup>10</sup>

It is appropriate to conclude that Paul is of the highest and proper position as an Apostle of Jesus Christ. In this position, Paul is given the unique status, authority, and influence to lead individuals and the church and so, Paul called his followers to imitate him as he imitated Christ. The teaching, behaviors, and methods of Paul indicate that he intentionally acted to secure the apostolic succession of the church based on the authority vested in him as an Apostle. Though the Apostles did not appoint successors of their kind, it will be the position in this paper that Paul was modeling and delegating apostolic authority to individuals and the church as a whole.

This paper will first present and examine the mentoring relationships and methodologies of Paul and argue that a Protestant interpretation of apostolic succession is modeled by Paul, the

---

<sup>10</sup> Holmberg, Bengt. *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*. (1st Fortress Press ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 53.

mentor. Secondarily this paper will insist that methods employed by Paul serve as an example for the church to continue in a manner appropriate for apostolic succession in the modern era. The examination of relationships will focus on Paul and key relationships with individuals and churches that address both doctrine and behavior.

### **IMITATION, MENTORING, AND APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION**

Hebrews 13:1 is an interesting focal point for the topic of apostolic succession because the writer refers to “Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.” In the verse there are two key terms that relate Jesus to the author and the audience. The first term applied to Jesus is “apostle,” meaning, “the one sent with a message.”<sup>11</sup> The second term that relates to the church is the word “confession,” which identifies a willingness to “express openly one’s allegiance to a proposition or person.”<sup>12</sup> The writer of Hebrews connects the two ideas, office and doctrine, in this single verse. In John 20:2, Jesus indicates his expectations of continuity: “As the Father has sent me; even so I am sending you.” By this statement Jesus establishes the importance of his authority in relationship to apostolic ministry. Jesus is sent by the authority of the Father and Jesus is sending out the disciples by his authority.

The Reformers began to insist that apostolicity was “oriented more towards an abstract norm than to the <sup>13</sup>authoritative office.” This paper will hold that office, doctrine, and confession, which is exercised through the ordinances, are the elements which account for apostolic

---

<sup>11</sup> Louw, J. P., and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 410.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>13</sup> Jenson, Matt, and David Wilhite. *The Church: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), Kindle Location 1034.

succession. Therefore, as a whole, apostolic succession is that by which the church connects to the original followers of Christ, their teachings, and to Christ himself.<sup>14</sup> The church, through its offices acting together by the Scripture’s guidance, is responsible to maintain its doctrine and practices, for the “church is truly the church only when governed by someone within this line of apostolic succession.”<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, the Apostle Paul connects the idea of apostolicity when in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 he describes the role of believers as “ambassadors for Christ” who are “entrust[ed] with the message of reconciliation.” Equally important is Paul’s statement, “All this is from God.” From a Pauline perspective, the concept of apostolicity is clear. By his use of the words “entrusted” and “ambassadors,” it is clear that Paul recognizes that believers are officially sent. Michael Horton notes, “Ambassadors are not just witnesses, but they are also restricted in their authority by the commission they have received.”<sup>16</sup> Horton’s use of the word restriction should not be taken in only a negative sense, for taken positively, restriction communicates the sense that authority is a bestowed trust by which clarity, direction, and purpose are underlying elements.

Leeman proposes three key ideas in reference to leadership and congregational rule which relate to mentorship and apostolic succession: (1) the congregation has final earthly rule over the church, (2) Christian discipleship works largely through imitation, and (3) the Bible’s general discipleship program operates on emulating one another’s sound doctrine, sound teaching, sound

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., Kindle Location 1057.

<sup>15</sup> Jenson, Matt, and David Wilhite. *The Church: A Guide for the Perplexed*. (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2010), Kindle Location 1023.

<sup>16</sup> Horton, Michael Scott. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 890.

living, and sound worship.<sup>17</sup> In order for a person to imitate another in the areas mentioned by Leeman, there must be relational proximity because proximity provides for intimate and comprehensive knowledge. The areas mentioned by Leeman are those that point to the “*keys of the kingdom*” and provide proof of apostolic succession for the church in leadership, doctrine, and practice.

The Apostle Paul gives instructions and exhortations on several accounts to promote the well-being of the church, which intimates apostolicity. One instance is found in Romans 10:14-15 where Paul describes the beauty of the feet of those who bring the good news. Horton concludes the following as he relates apostolicity to Romans 10:14-15:

Apostolic succession, like all other attributes of the church, is therefore determined by the *content* of the church’s ministry rather than by the historical succession of *persons* ordained to office. At the same time, those who minister in Christ’s name must be called to that office by Christ through the agency of the church: they cannot send themselves on the basis of an inward call alone, but must be sent, which again emphasizes the mission as concerned chiefly with heralding the good news.<sup>18</sup>

In other words, Horton recognizes that succession occurs under the purview of the local church and her ministry. He emphasizes that the individual holding office in the church must be identified and sent by the church as the local body recognizes the call of Christ on the individual. Therefore, Horton rightly concludes that apostolic succession is a responsibility of the church in cooperation with the individuals who hold an office.

Apostolic succession must include a focus on the office. Therefore, there is a demand to understand the overlap between Apostles, their delegates, and elders in the New Testament church. In 1 Peter 5:1, the Apostle Peter refers to himself as a “fellow elder.” John, the beloved

---

<sup>17</sup> Leeman, Jonathan. *Don’t Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 146.

<sup>18</sup> Horton, Michael Scott. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 891.

disciple, is attributed as writing three letters. In the second and third letters, John refers to himself as the elder. Therefore, “enough overlap in their roles exists” to give instruction and direction to the church.<sup>19</sup> The overlap identifies the importance of elders as guardians of the doctrine and practice of the church and indicates the delegation of apostolic authority at this early stage in New Testament life. Thus, the responsibility was not the Apostles’ only.

Neither Timothy or Titus were Apostles of Jesus in the official sense, nor was either a pastor/elder. Instead, Timothy and Titus were assigned the temporary task of communicating and applying Paul’s instructions to local churches.<sup>20</sup> In other words, as delegates sent by Paul, Timothy and Titus were instrumental in maintaining the apostolic succession among the churches by authoritatively teaching sound doctrine and proper practice.

Clearly, authority is a foundational topic regarding the church and apostolic succession. Clowney says, “The church is apostolic because it is founded on apostolic teaching.”<sup>21</sup> The teaching of the Apostles is built on their authority as witnesses of Jesus’ life and resurrection. For the church to be apostolic in its succession it must contain an observable orthodoxy in its teaching that displays consistency with the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. Holmberg writes:

---

<sup>19</sup> Leeman, Jonathan. *Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 142.

<sup>20</sup> Merkle, Benjamin L., and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds. *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2015), 90.

<sup>21</sup> Clowney, Edmund P., and Gerald Lewis Bray. *The Church. Contours of Christian Theology*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 75.

All authority is considered as ultimately flowing from the same source, viz. the Founder of the Church, and this is recognized as being the basis for the legitimacy of the exercise of authority in the Church.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, when the teaching (and practice) of the church is aligned with the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles, and those who were delegates of the Apostles, then that local church has proven its apostolic succession and is rightfully taking possession of the “*keys of the kingdom*.”

In the New Testament Paul displays an observable emphasis on apostolic succession. Apostolic succession is concerned with the succession of authority. That chain of succession can be traced from Jesus to Paul to his delegates and the church. As previously identified, Paul makes it clear that his authority is delegated from Jesus. Paul also describes himself as the “father” of the churches he planted and a “father” to individuals (1 Cor 4:15, 1 Thess. 2:11, 1 Tim. 1:2, Titus 1:4, Philemon 10). Paul authorizes men like Timothy and Titus as his delegates to lead, teach, and demonstrate his message to those churches. Likewise, the churches themselves have authority. Romans 12:2 indicates that the church is responsible to discern the will of God. Furthermore, in Philippians 1:9-11, Paul expects the church to discern and approve what is excellent.<sup>23</sup> The pattern of succession repeats in a variety of situations.

To this point, the conclusion of the matter of apostolic succession is this: apostolic succession is based on the authority of the one who is sending, while the messengers maintain and transfer the sound message and confession through instructions, which ultimately produce sound practice. Apostolic succession is vital if the local church is to mature properly in doctrine

---

<sup>22</sup> Holmberg, Bengt. *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*. (1st Fortress Press ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 193.

<sup>23</sup> Holmberg, Bengt. *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*. (1st Fortress Press ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 185-6.

and practice, for if apostolic succession were absent, error might easily overtake the church. Therefore, a proper method of apostolic succession must be maintained for the propagation of the church.

### **PAUL, A MENTOR**

In all but three of Paul's letters he refers to himself as an apostle in relationship to Jesus Christ. First, Paul employs this title to acknowledge the authority by which he accomplished his ministry, the authority of Jesus. Second, Paul uses the title to emphasize his authority, the authority that would be transferred to particular people under his influence. In short, Paul continues the pattern of succession and transmission of authority based upon Jesus the apostle sent by God (Hebrews 3:1. For Paul, the means by which this transmission and succession takes place is through imitation. This paper contends that imitation is conceptually identified with the modern concept of mentoring.

Mentoring, for the purpose of this paper, is defined as a relationship in which a more experienced person, the mentor, invests in a less experienced person, the protégé, to "teach, advise, model, guide, and even protect those they mentor."<sup>24</sup> In order to accomplish the goals and impart the skills and virtues to the protégé, the mentor will often provide "resources, opportunities, and motivation,"<sup>25</sup> by which maturation and competency occur for the protégé. To

---

<sup>24</sup> Wilson, Peter F., and W. Brad Johnson. "Core Virtues for the Practice of Mentoring." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 29, no. 2 (June 1, 2001): 122.

<sup>25</sup> Lloyd-Jones, Gareth. "An Evaluation of How Paul's Mentorship of Timothy Provides a Model for the Development of Church Leaders in the 21st Century." (MA Applied Theology, Regents Theological College, 2010), 7.

effectively accomplish the goals a good mentor is one who pays attention to and understands the developmental needs of a protégé.<sup>26</sup>

One must concede that maturation is not the work of the Holy Spirit alone. Alister McGrath writes, “Evangelicalism, whenever it has stressed merely the Godward side of the Christian faith, has been guilty of neglecting the human side of things.”<sup>27</sup> If McGrath is correct, then the relationships of people in community together form the human side, which must be a contributing factor by which apostolic succession is secured. Akira Shinohara responding to McGrath states, “One aspect of seriously considering the human side of the Christian faith may be described as spiritual mentoring.”<sup>28</sup> In sum, spiritual mentoring happens in relationships as the mentor is emulated or imitated by his protégé. Therefore, mentoring is a vital piece in the apostolic succession of the church.

In the following verses, Paul presents himself as a living example worth imitating: 1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1; Philippians 3:17; Galatians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; and 2 Thessalonians 3:7, 9. Paul uses the word “imitate” translated from the Greek word group μιμέομαι/μιμητής. Though Paul does not employ the μιμέομαι/μιμητής word group frequently, his use of the word group demonstrates “his consciousness of his own apostolic authority and ministry.”<sup>29</sup> First Corinthians 11:1 is a significant passage that connects mentoring and apostolic

---

<sup>26</sup> Cooper, Michael T. “The Transformational Leadership of the Apostle Paul: A Contextual and Biblical Leadership for Contemporary Ministry.” *Christian Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (2005): 53.

<sup>27</sup> McGrath, Alister. *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 130.

<sup>28</sup> Shinohara, Akira. “Spiritual Formation and Mentoring: An Approach from the Christian Tradition of Spiritual Direction.” *Christian Education Journal* 6, no. 2 (2002): 105–18.

<sup>29</sup> Hwang, Jin Ki. *Mimesis and Apostolic Parousia in 1 Corinthians 4 and 5: An Apologetic-Mimetic Interpretation*. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 1.

succession because Paul calls the church to, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Paul not only encourages the method of imitation, but he connects imitation to Christ, which demonstrates apostolic succession by virtue of the chain of authority and the delegation of authority.

Gordon Fee comments on the authority of Paul in relationship to the church at Corinth saying, “the inherent authority of the father/child relationship allows him alternately to “admonish” (4:14), to “urge” behavioral change (4:16–17).”<sup>30</sup> In verses 16 and 17 Paul specifies two ideas: 1) imitation of him and 2) his ways in Christ. Though Paul has addressed the principle idea of imitation, he is not going to be the only one to model it directly. Paul implements the chain of authority from mentor to protégé as he says, “That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (4:17). Paul had been investing in Timothy, his child in the faith, teaching him doctrine, exhibiting behavior, instructing Timothy in methods of leadership for the church, and transferring authority to Timothy to act on his behalf. In other words, he had mentored Timothy in the faith.

The New Testament church required leaders, other than the Apostles, who were qualified and authorized to teach, model, encourage, and train in sound doctrine and practice. Paul connects Christ to those he mentored, which means Christ is connected to the church through Paul’s protégés. Thus, the process of connection incorporates mentoring in apostolic succession. Frank Matera said:

The theme of imitation continues to have value because Paul viewed himself as the beginning of a chain of imitation rooted in Christ. Paul imitated Christ’s cruciform life and taught others to do the same. And ever since that has been a kind of apostolic succession of imitation from one generation to the next.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1987), 185.

<sup>31</sup> Matera, Frank J. “Imitating Paul in Order to Follow Christ.” *The Living Light* 38, no. 2 (2001), 43.

Paul does not compromise on the importance of transmitting the knowledge of the gospel to the church. Rightly, Paul emphasizes that a Christian “needs to be schooled in the mind and attitudes of Christ if he is to enact him faithfully.”<sup>32</sup> For example, in Ephesians 1:17-18 Paul prays for the church to be given “a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened.” In 2 Timothy 3:10ff. Paul writes, “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings.” Paul intended to be imitated by his followers/protégés, as he directed them to follow Christ.

### **THE MENTORING METHODS APPLIED BY PAUL**

There are specific methods for mentoring which were applied by Paul. Concerned with the key values of doctrine, behavior, attitude, practices, and authority, Paul engaged in a multitude of methods to communicate, encourage, correct, and instill those values. For example, Paul instructs Timothy: “set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim. 4:12-13).

One writer categorized the training of Paul into five areas: “Doctrine/confessional statements, polity, leadership, relationships, and general pastoral instructions.”<sup>33</sup> Each value is covered in the instructions and Paul’s methods are identified. The following thoughts will identify and explain the methodology of Paul in his mentoring of individuals. Most of the

---

<sup>32</sup> Jensen, Michael P. (Michael Peter). “Imitating Paul, Imitating Christ: How Does Imitation Work as a Moral Concept?” *Churchman* 124, no. 1 (2010): 3

<sup>33</sup> Newton, Phil A. *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017), 65.

methods involve teaching and instruction, though other methods are discovered in Paul's letters to his protégés and to the churches.

### **Teaching and Instructing in Doctrine**

Paul instructs Timothy to teach sound doctrine in 1 Timothy 1:3-4. In 2 Timothy Paul displays his mentoring approach to imparting doctrine when he says, "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me (1:14)." Paul further encourages Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:2-3 saying, "Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of the Lord . . ." Paul exhorts the Thessalonian church to "stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us" (2 Thess. 2:15). Paul also instructs Titus to "teach what accords with sound doctrine" (2:1).

### **Conduct or Behavior**

Paul was a citizen whose lifestyle was to be imitated. In 1 Corinthians 7:17 Paul writes that he taught the people of the church to "lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him." Paul makes one of his strongest defenses of his ministry in 1 Corinthians 9 insisting that he did not take advantage of the privileges afforded to him as an apostle. He says he worked with his hands (1 Cor. 4:12, Acts 18:3) as a tent maker beside Aquila and Priscilla. In 1 Thessalonians 2:9 Paul reminds the church of the "labor and toil" so his party would "not be a burden" to any in the church. In Ephesians 4 Paul instructs the church to put away falsehood and instead speak with truth. He gives instructions for the church to be imitators of God and to walk in love (Eph 5:1-2). In Galatians Paul includes himself in the statement, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit," (5:25) expressing this commitment to the importance of conduct. Paul instructed Timothy to be an example in conduct and love (1 Timothy 4:12). The previous examples illustrate Paul's focus on the behavior and practices of his life.

Furthermore, Paul frequently acknowledges his sufferings. In Ephesians 3:13 he says his suffering is for the glory of the church. In Colossians 1:24 he points out how he suffers for the sake of the church. In 2 Timothy 1:8 Paul instructs Timothy to share in the suffering that Paul endured for the sake of the gospel. Finally, in 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul exhorts Timothy to endure suffering to fulfill his ministry. Paul consistently suffered for the sake of the gospel. He also understood that godly conduct displayed in the midst of suffering would be a model for others to endure suffering.

### **Attitude**

Paul continually provided motivation by the example of his own attitude, for he recognized his eternal security, a position provided as a bondservant of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul conveys this attitude of hope and security despite his suffering. He says, “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” Paul regularly gives thanks for the churches acknowledging God’s work in them, their faith, and the increase in love. Paul’s own thankfulness is the example for his protégés and the church to imitate.

Paul also addresses the attitude of humility, modeling it by servant leadership. In 2 Corinthians 10 he identifies how he “entreathed” the church “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” In 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul opens the letter with “a call for the rectification of the Corinthians’ attitudes with the hortatory formula “but I admonish you.”<sup>34</sup> The admonition occurs because Paul recognizes that some claim to follow him while others insist on following Apollos. His humility insists that Christ is ultimately the one to be followed. In chapter 11 Paul gives

---

<sup>34</sup> Sanders, Boykin. “Imitating Paul: 1 Cor 4:16.” *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 4 (October 1981): 354.

further correction to the church because they had disregarded his humility, exemplified during his previous visit.

### **Practice**

Paul includes teaching about the ordinances of the church in his letters. In Romans 6, 1 Corinthians 12, Galatians 3, and Colossians 2 the ordinance of baptism is mentioned. The only instructions regarding the Lord’s Supper, outside of those given by Christ himself, are found in 1 Corinthians 11. Paul wrote a lengthy and detailed section in his letter to correct the Corinthian church in its practice of the ordinance.

Conflict resolution relates to the second area of practice is to be considered because of its relationship to church discipline. The primary example of conflict resolution is found in the relationship of Paul with Barnabas and John Mark. The scenario is described in Acts 15 in which the parties eventually divided because of an unnamed issue between Paul and John Mark. Most likely, the issue was not a matter of sin but about a task or process of ministry.<sup>35</sup> Reconciliation was eventually secured between the parties, for Paul positively mentions the value of Mark in Colossians, 2 Timothy, and Philemon. Furthermore, Paul’s focus on behavior is emphasized by the multiple instructions given on the “one-another’s” in his letters.

### **THE PROTÉGÉS OF PAUL**

The intentionality of Paul is manifested in the emphasis he places on relationships with individuals. F.F. Bruce devotes an entire work to the examination of Paul and his relationships, examining Ananias, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Luke, Priscilla and Aquilla, Apollos, Titus,

---

<sup>35</sup> Singfiel, Jeffrey J. “Paul the Team Leader: Strategic Planning, Intragroup Conflict, and Team Formation.” *Theology of Leadership Journal* 1, no. 1 (2018): 13.

Onesimus, Mark, and others. Bruce notes that “There are about seventy people mentioned by name . . . for their association with Paul.”<sup>36</sup>

Several of Paul’s relationships correlate to the topic of apostolic succession. Timothy and Titus are two at the forefront. Leeman acknowledges:

There is some discussion over whether Timothy and Titus should be viewed as elders or apostolic delegates. Yet, even if the latter, there is surely much overlap between their role and an elder’s role, particularly in the matter of teaching.<sup>37</sup>

Though Leeman does not address apostolic succession, he notes the overlap of roles that are filled by Timothy and Titus in an apostolic sense. Therefore, being sent by Paul, Timothy and Titus fulfill the role of apostolic delegates while providing apostolic succession among churches.

Timothy is sent by Paul as an authorized representative to several churches. In 1 Corinthians 4:16-17 Paul employs a mentoring method identified by his use of μημηταί.<sup>38</sup> Paul indicates that he wants the church to imitate him and explains his reason for sending Timothy is to remind them of Paul’s ways. Here is clear evidence of the mentoring/protégé relationship coupled with the authority of the apostolic delegate Timothy. Paul follows with instructions on how to handle the immoral man, lawsuits against believers, and the sexual immorality that was rampant in the church. The text indicates that Paul desires the church to be corrected on its misguided and failed efforts to behave. In Paul’s absence, Timothy is the delegate authorized to instruct the church.

---

<sup>36</sup> Bruce, F.F. *Pauline Circle Engaging Portraits of Paul’s Friends, Co-Workers, Hosts and Hostesses*. (Downwood, UK: F. F. Bruce Copyright International, Inc., 2017), 10.

<sup>37</sup> Leeman, Jonathan. *Don’t Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 135.

<sup>38</sup> Holmberg, Bengt. *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*. (1st Fortress Press ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 59.

Paul's two letters to Timothy further reveal the mentoring/protégé relationship. Bruce notes, "On one occasion Paul gave Timothy a responsible commission to be fulfilled in the Ephesian church."<sup>39</sup> The responsible commission focuses on a number of issues for the church: sound doctrine, faith, love, the gospel, prayer, behavior, leadership (elders and deacons), ministry to the widows, discipline of elders, suffering, the authority of Scripture, importance of preaching, etc.

Titus is the second key figure who was mentored by Paul. In 2 Corinthians 8:16-24 Paul writes a commendation of Titus and another unnamed appointed minister of the gospel. In verse 23, the word ἀπόστολοι is applied to describe them. Titus and the other are messengers sent to the church to prepare for Paul's third visit, in which Paul would strengthen his role as a spiritual father directing the church in the ways of the Lord (chapter 13). In the letter to Titus, Paul emphasizes the importance of teaching sound doctrine, "to which a leader must conform and seek to conform others."<sup>40</sup> It is also clear that Paul authorizes Titus to put churches in order and appoint elders to be responsible for the churches in Crete (1:5).

Holmberg draws the following conclusion about Timothy and Titus as the delegates of Paul and representatives of his apostolic authority:

As "media" for the apostolic presence the emissaries participate in the apostle's power, both as regards what they convey from him (teaching, instruction, leadership) and as regards what they are entitled to receive from the churches.

---

<sup>39</sup> Bruce, F.F. *Pauline Circle Engaging Portraits of Paul's Friends, Co-Workers, Hosts and Hostesses*. (Downwood, UK: F. F. Bruce Copyright International, Inc., 2017), 35.

<sup>40</sup> Leeman, Jonathan. *Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016) 136.

In other words, the apostolic authority possessed by Paul is delegated to Titus and Timothy.

They are expected to represent Paul in a number of ways, and the churches are to treat the protégés with the same respect they would treat Paul himself.

There are other examples of Paul's relationships that are illustrative of his intentional mentoring. Epaphras was a minister to the Colossian church. Tychicus, who was sent to Ephesus and Colossae, is described as a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant. Aristarchus, who is likely well known by the Colossians, is described as a fellow prisoner and fellow worker. Paul describes Onesimus as his child in the faith, a term that indicates investment and endearment. Paul acknowledges these relationships and others in his letters, making it clear that he intentionally mentored people to promote the gospel and invest in churches, creating an apostolic succession as a result.

## APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION CONNECTED

Apostolic succession is a matter of ecclesiology that needs to be handled correctly. Understanding the proper transmission of biblical authority and how that has impacted the church throughout history will impact the contemporary church in numerous ways. A proper understanding of apostolic succession considers "the tradition of authoritative teaching passed through a local church."<sup>41</sup> Schreiner explains that Paul communicates to Timothy "instructions about orthodoxy and orthopraxy [that] function as a paradigm for elders."<sup>42</sup> As Schreiner

---

<sup>41</sup> Emerson, Matthew Y, Christopher W Morgan, and R. Lucas Stamps. *Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Toward an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020), 115-16.

<sup>42</sup> Merkle, Benjamin L., and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds. *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2015), 92.

acknowledges, the paradigm is formed by Paul. Of significance is the fact that the paradigm is enacted by Timothy. This is an example of apostolic succession in the New Testament church. The example is vital for the contemporary church because Paul perpetuates a pattern for individual discipleship, church polity, and the maturation of the church, which is to be carried throughout all eras. Phil Newton says:

Jesus set the pattern: *Spiritual leaders working through community train leaders who shepherd, plant, and revitalize discipling communities, who replicate the same work.*<sup>43</sup>

Newton's emphasis on community, training, and replication which is a pattern he attributes to Jesus, is evidence for apostolic succession.

Consider the following comment made by Leeman and its relationship to apostolic succession and elders (while keeping in mind that he does mention Titus, the apostolic delegate, parenthetically):

The faithful re-revealing of the biblical Word bears authority both because authority inheres in the Word *and* because authority inheres in the office of elder (or, perhaps in Titus' case, apostolic delegate).<sup>44</sup>

It is necessary to weigh two primary thoughts in Leeman's statement. First, "re-revealing of the biblical Word," emphasizes the preaching/teaching of the Scriptures, which applies to new audiences in the future. Therefore, a proper biblical authority vested in those who preach/teach the Word is essential. The foundation of the congregation's trust in the preacher/teacher/elder is established in two ways: the investment made in the individual by other individuals (mentoring) and the acknowledgement of preparedness and calling that is affirmed by the local church. The

---

<sup>43</sup> Newton, Phil A. *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017), 73.

<sup>44</sup> Leeman, Jonathan. *Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism.* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 137.

correct understanding of apostolic succession affords the church this privilege and authority.

Therefore, “New Testament revelation . . . is the apostolic foundation on which Christ builds his church.”<sup>45</sup>

Second, Leeman accounts for the possibility of Titus being an apostolic delegate. The statement alludes to apostolic succession and mentoring, which correlates to the authority and practices of the church. Orthopraxy is a necessary part of apostolic succession. It was previously mentioned that Paul thought orthopraxy to be vital for individuals and the church. Thus, for Titus to follow Paul’s instructions indicates his awareness of the responsibility to help churches maintain the elements of apostolicity: orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In other words, being mentored by Paul, Titus was busy fostering proper apostolic succession within the churches.

Christ gave the Holy Spirit to seal believers individually and empower them with gifts to for the ministry of the church. The gifts, especially those described in Ephesians 4, have equipped the church for ministry throughout the centuries. The leadership gifts are a necessary part in the apostolic succession of the church and the management of the “*keys of the kingdom*.” Horton rightly concludes:

The ministry of binding and loosing, when placed in the context of gospel proclamation, is not ancillary to mission; it is the mission of the church in the world. It is the *authorization* to go, given by the one to whom all authority has been given . . . This ministry is now entrusted publicly to officers, but all believers share in the general office of prophets, priests, and kings under Christ.<sup>46</sup>

Though Horton holds a strict Presbyterian form of church polity, he is to be commended for emphasizing the general office of the believer. Horton also rightly acknowledges the importance

---

<sup>45</sup> Clowney, Edmund P., and Gerald Lewis Bray. *The Church*. Contours of Christian Theology. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 75.

<sup>46</sup> Horton, Michael Scott. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 897.

of the mission of the church as binding and loosing. As Horton suggests, when the church places binding and loosing in the context of the proclamation of the gospel, the mission is clear.

Horton's interpretation means that the whole church is authorized with the "*keys to the kingdom*" and by virtue, the church discovers its apostolic succession through the leadership, general office of membership, and practices of ministry together.

## CONCLUSION

The local church consists of individual believers who adhere to specific doctrines, with agreed upon polity, and recognized leaders. Apart from this paradigm the people are just a crowd of Christians. Leeman is correct when he says:

For them [the crowd of Christians] to become a church, someone needs to speak in a jurisdiction-defining and legally binding, heaven-revealing and Bible-interpreting sort of way. Someone needs to recognize someone else as believing in the same gospel, which presumes the ability to interpret and articulate the gospel.<sup>47</sup>

This paper set out to explain how Paul formed and implemented mentoring as a model to instill the abilities mentioned by Leeman. Never did the Apostles or their apostolic delegates assume that discipleship would occur happenstance. Nor did they leave the process to the work of the Holy Spirit alone. Instead, there is clear evidence of intentional methods and instructions so as to impact the whole believer for the benefit of the church. Paul established "*imitation*" as the essential method.

There are three keys regarding imitation. First, in 1 Thessalonians 2:13-17, Paul commends the church for imitating other churches. In other words, it is valid to imitate a healthy church. Second, "imitation involves a pattern of authority deriving from the model to the

---

<sup>47</sup> Leeman, Jonathan. *Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 83.

imitators.”<sup>48</sup> This means that there are patterns transmitted from leaders to followers and presented to others, and this pattern is to be replicated. Third, “identification precedes invitation.”<sup>49</sup> Paul appeals to the churches to recognize their identity in Christ, which is the basis for their collective identity, which in turn, enables them to engage with others.

Paul knows that the success of the church is found in the authority of Jesus as the source of its identity as a community. Paul provided a leadership model which “spanned several generations of leaders.”<sup>50</sup> The transmission of authority occurs through apostolic succession, which enables the church to guard and promote sound doctrine and orthopraxy. It has been said that the “mark of a church’s apostolicity is seen most clearly in the way it adheres to the New Testament as its supreme guide in matters of faith and practice.”<sup>51</sup>

The Apostle Paul offers one of the clearest examples of how apostolic succession occurred in the New Testament church. His connection to Christ and his mentoring of apostolic delegates like Timothy, Titus, Epaphras, Tychicus, etc, afforded the early church an effective means to properly implement the authority given by Christ. Paul used the method of imitation that pointed to the chain of authority. He also used the method to encourage individuals and the church community to imitate Christ. Thus, Paul employed a chain of succession to assist the church in its maturing orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Most importantly, Paul did this in connection

---

<sup>48</sup> Jensen, Michael P. (Michael Peter). “Imitating Paul, Imitating Christ: How Does Imitation Work as a Moral Concept?” *Churchman* 124, no. 1 (2010): 29.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 30

<sup>50</sup> Malphurs, Aubrey, and Will Mancini. *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), Kindle Location 1660.

<sup>51</sup> B Bray, Gerald Lewis. *The Church: A Theological and Historical Account*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 237.

with those individuals he mentored by authorizing them as apostles sent from him to the churches with his instructions.

Today the Protestant church acknowledges that Jesus gave it the authority to control the “keys of the kingdom.” However, if the church is to maintain sound doctrine and practice it must happen as its offices together correctly handle the “*keys of the kingdom*.” The offices of elders and members, which are responsible for guarding orthodoxy and orthopraxy, require maturation, that is best reproduced through mentoring. Paul demonstrated the transmission of authority well, securing a biblical conformity of individuals and the community. Therefore, he initiated a method of apostolic succession to be implemented for future generations of the church.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bray, Gerald Lewis B. *The Church: A Theological and Historical Account*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

Bruce, F.F. *Pauline Circle Engaging Portraits of Paul's Friends, Co-Workers, Hosts and Hostesses*. Downwood, UK: F. F. Bruce Copyright International, Inc., 2017.

Clowney, Edmund P., and Gerald Lewis Bray. *The Church. Contours of Christian Theology*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995.

Cooper, Michael T. "The Transformational Leadership of the Apostle Paul: A Contextual and Biblical Leadership for Contemporary Ministry." *Christian Education Journal* 2, no. 1 (2005): 48–61.

Emerson, Matthew Y, Christopher W Morgan, and R. Lucas Stamps. *Baptists and the Christian Tradition: Toward an Evangelical Baptist Catholicity*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2020.

Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1987.

Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005.

Holmberg, Bengt. *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles*. 1st Fortress Press ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

Horton, Michael Scott. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

Hwang, Jin Ki. *Mimesis and Apostolic Parousia in 1 Corinthians 4 and 5 : An Apologetic-Mimetic Interpretation*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010.

Jensen, Michael P. (Michael Peter). "Imitating Paul, Imitating Christ: How Does Imitation Work as a Moral Concept?" *Churchman* 124, no. 1 (2010): 17–36.

Jenson, Matt, and David Wilhite. *The Church: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2010.

Leeman, Jonathan. *Don 't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016.

Lloyd-Jones, Gareth. "An Evaluation of How Paul's Mentorship of Timothy Provides a Model for the Development of Church Leaders in the 21st Century." MA Applied Theology, Regents Theological College, 2010.

Louw, J. P., and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989.

Malphurs, Aubrey, and Will Mancini. *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004.

Matera, Frank J. “Imitating Paul in Order to Follow Christ.” *The Living Light* 38, no. 2 (2001): 35–43.

Merkle, Benjamin L., and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds. *Shepherding God’s Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2015.

Newton, Phil A. *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017.

Sanders, Boykin. “Imitating Paul: 1 Cor 4:16.” *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 4 (October 1981): 353–63.

Shinohara, Akira. “Spiritual Formation and Mentoring: An Approach from the Christian Tradition of Spiritual Direction.” *Christian Education Journal* 6, no. 2 (2002): 105–18.

Singfiel, Jeffrey J. “Paul the Team Leader: Strategic Planning, Intragroup Conflict, and Team Formation.” *Theology of Leadership Journal* 1, no. 1 (2018): 6–21.

Wilson, Peter F., and W. Brad Johnson. “Core Virtues for the Practice of Mentoring.” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 29, no. 2 (June 1, 2001): 121–30.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/009164710102900203>.

Volf, Miroslav. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Sacra Doctrina. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.