

S O U T H E A S T E R N

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**Introduction to the Volume**

*STR Editor*

1

**Πιστός ὁ λόγος: An Alternative Analysis**

*L. Timothy Swinson*

57

**Kinship, Christian Kinship, and the Letters to Timothy and Titus**

*Charles J. Bumgardner*

3

**Paul's Letters to Timothy and Titus: A Literature Review (2009–2015)**

*Charles J. Bumgardner*

77

**Divergent, Insurgent or Allegiant? 1 Timothy 5:1–2 and the Nature of God's Household**

*Gregory A. Couser*

19

**Interview with Ray Van Neste of Union University**

117

**Paul's Family of God: What Familial Language in the Pastorals Can and Cannot Tell Us about the Church**

*Gregory J. Stiekes*

35

**Book Reviews**

125

## **Southeastern Theological Review**

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## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction to the Volume.....   | 1   |
| <i>Benjamin L. Merkle</i>   |     |
| Kinship, Christian Kinship, and the Letters to Timothy and Titus.....                                       | 3   |
| <i>Charles J. Bumgardner</i>  |     |
| Divergent, Insurgent or Allegiant? 1 Timothy 5:1–2 and the Nature of God’s Household.....                   | 19  |
| <i>Gregory A. Couser</i>  |     |
| Paul’s Family of God: What Familial Language in the Pastorals Can and Cannot Tell Us about the Church ..... | 35  |
| <i>Gregory J. Stiekes</i>   |     |
| Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος: An Alternative Analysis.....  | 57  |
| <i>L. Timothy Swinson</i>   |     |
| Paul’s Letters to Timothy and Titus: A Literature Review (2009–2015) .....                                  | 77  |
| <i>Charles J. Bumgardner</i>  |     |
| Interview with Ray Van Neste of Union University .....  | 117 |
| Book Reviews .....  | 125 |

### BOOK REVIEWS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Craig G. Bartholomew. <i>Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture</i> .....                 | 125 |
| <i>Grant D. Taylor</i>   |     |
| Christopher J. H. Wright. <i>How to Preach and Teach the Old Testament for All Its Worth</i> .....   | 126 |
| <i>Allan Moseley</i>   |     |
| Rodney A. Whitacre. <i>Using and Enjoying Biblical Greek: Reading the New Testament with Fluency and Devotion</i> .....                      | 128 |
| <i>Thomas W. Hudgins</i>   |     |
| Helen K. Bond and Larry W. Hurtado, eds. <i>Peter in Early Christianity</i> .....  | 130 |
| <i>David R. Beck</i>   |     |
| Gary G. Hoag. <i>Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy: Fresh Insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus</i> . ..... | 132 |
| <i>Benjamin L. Merkle</i>  |     |
| L. Timothy Swinson <i>What Is Scripture? Paul’s Use of Graphe in the Letters to Timothy</i> .....  | 134 |
| <i>Peter Link, Jr.</i>   |     |

Rodrick K. Durst. *Reordering the Trinity: Six Movements of God in the New Testament* ..... 136  
*Matthew Y. Emerson*

Jerry L. Walls. *Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory: Rethinking the Things that Matter Most*..... 137  
*Alan S. Bandy*

S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams. *Unchanging Witness: The Consistent Teaching on Homosexuality in Scripture and Tradition* ..... 140  
*Alan Branch*

Kirk R. MacGregor. *Luis de Molina: His Life and Theology*..... 142  
*Kenneth Keathley*

Kyle C. Strobel, ed. *The Ecumenical Edwards: Jonathan Edwards and the Theologians* and Oliver D. Crisp. *Jonathan Edwards among the Theologians*..... 144  
*Nathan A. Finn*

Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key, eds. *Women and C. S. Lewis: What His Life and Literature Reveal for Today's Culture* ..... 147  
*Adrianne Miles*

Philip Turner. *Christian Ethics and the Church: Ecclesial Foundations for Moral Thought and Practice* ..... 149  
*Erik Clary*

Stephen Finlan. *Bullying in the Churches* ..... 151  
*James P. Porowski*

## Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος: An Alternative Analysis

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*This article offers a literary analysis of the elliptical clause πιστὸς ὁ λόγος (“the word is faithful”) that appears five times in the Pastoral Epistles. Nearly every modern study of this clause operates from the premise that each instance of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος must refer to a distinct “saying” that occurs in the immediate context, either preceding or following the clause in question. Consequently, the referent of ὁ λόγος changes with each occurrence, and interpreters often must disregard the syntax of the immediate literary context so as to accommodate their construals, while the clause itself conveys no consistent message. As an alternative to the majority opinion in its various presentations, it will be argued that, in 1 Tim 1:15, 3:1, 4:9, 2 Tim 2:11, and Titus 3:8, the reader is expected to understand πιστὸς ὁ λόγος as a recollection and reminder of the fundamental, apostolic gospel.*

### Introduction: Contentions and Thesis

As even a cursory survey of the literature on the subject will indicate, while New Testament scholars and exegetes exhibit virtually universal agreement in their analyses of the occurrence of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος in 1 Tim 1:15a, no such consensus exists with respect to the referent of the clause in its remaining occurrences. R. Alistair Campbell summarizes the current situation in the following manner:

Five times in the PE the phrase πιστὸς ὁ λόγος rings out like a fanfare of trumpets, as if to direct the attention of the reader to some significant truth, and yet, despite this evident intention on the part of the author, scholars ancient and modern have been uncertain where they are supposed to be looking. Thus, although it is a natural assumption that the fanfare will precede the appearance of the important saying, in two cases at least the words that follow present such an anticlimax that most scholars have felt obliged to look for the referent of the phrase in something that has just been said and to understand πιστὸς ὁ λόγος as a sort of belated tribute to it, while a few have counselled [*sic*] abandoning the search for sayings altogether.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the uncertainty that attends conventional construals of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, most of the sources consulted in this study share at least three premises, upon the basis of which they propose their solutions to the riddle of

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<sup>1</sup> R. Alistair Campbell, “Identifying the Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” *JNTS* 54 (1994): 73.

πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. First, nearly all of them seem to assume that the referent of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος must either precede or follow the formula in the immediate literary context.<sup>2</sup> Two complications arise as a result of this starting point. One of these entails determining how to treat the conjunctions that occasionally follow instances of the formula, the opinions regarding which vary significantly and often seem arbitrary.<sup>3</sup> The other and more obvious difficulty concerns the previously noted and conspicuous divergence of the solutions that stem from this initial premise. Second, most interpreters appear to operate according to the implicit assumption that all five occurrences of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, and thus all three epistles, may be treated collectively, as if they were

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Bover, who asks, “¿Se refiere a lo que antecede, o bien a lo que sigue?” (José M. Bover, “Fidelis Sermo,” *Bib* 19 [1938]: 74). See also Norbert Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag G. M. B. H., 1975), 112; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ed. by Helmut Koester; trans. by Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 28; George W. Knight, III, *The Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1968; repr., Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1979), 50, 62, 112; Lorenz Oberlinner, *Die Pastoralbriefe: Zweiter Timotheusbrief* (HTKNT XI/2 Zweiter Folge; Freiburg im Briesgau: Verlag Herder, 1995), 83; Louis Pirot and Albert Clamer, *La Sainte Bible: Texte Latin et Traduction Française d'Après Les Textes Originiaux avec Commentaire Exégétique et Théologique* (vol. 12; Paris: Letouzy et Ané, 1946), 216; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (ed. by David Noel Freedman; ECC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 234; E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936; repr., 1957), 14; Ceslas Spicq, *Saint Paul: Les Épîtres Pastorales* (Paris: Librairie LeCoffre, 1947), 76; H. B. Swete, “The Faithful Sayings,” *JTS* 18 (1916): 1.

<sup>3</sup> For example, with regard to 1 Tim 4:9, C. K. Barrett views the γάρ of 4:10 as an introductory particle that best remains untranslated in his English version, while Donald Guthrie hypothesizes that the saying comes from a prior source. As a result, he suggests, “The conjunction forms part of the saying,” with γάρ standing as a remnant from the original citation. However, neither Barrett nor Guthrie provides data or arguments that justify these treatments (C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles in the New English Bible* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963], 70; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* [NIBC 14; 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 107). See also Knight, *Faithful Sayings*, 63, 113; I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1999; repr., 2004), 555; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy to Titus and to Philemon* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1946), 637. On the other hand, see Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 84. See also, Patrick Fairbairn, *A Commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 183; Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984; repr., 1988), 105; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 107; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 35a; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 250; Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 648–49; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 309, especially n. 28, 31.

composed together and with reference to one another. This assumption significantly circumscribes the evaluation of individual occurrences of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος.<sup>4</sup> Third, in the process of formulating their solutions, most interpreters seem to be guided by prior and subjective notions of what kind of saying or theological or ethical concern best qualifies as a “faithful saying,” a quality that proves difficult to define, and once again, opinions vary significantly.<sup>5</sup> These prevailing assumptions and approaches result in a lack of consensus and a multitude of treatments of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος that often come across as arbitrary, that leave more questions than answers, and that lead to the occasional counsel of despair to which Campbell refers.

As an alternative to the conventional approach with its various solutions and attending uncertainties, it will be demonstrated through this study that

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<sup>4</sup> While this is implicit in Bassler (*1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 61), Hanson (Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters: Commentary on the First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus* [CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966], 77–78), and Quinn and Wacker (*Letters to Timothy*, 629), Marshall explicitly makes this a key point in his discussion of authorship. Indeed, he writes, “Despite some dissent, the three letters are by one author. Any differences in character between them are due to the different situations addressed rather than to differences in authorship or thinking. This means that the letters can be considered together as a group of writings” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 1). See also Campbell, “Identifying the Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Epistles,” 77–78. On the other hand, Johnson opposes such a premise (referring to it as, “grouping”) explaining, “The consequences of this grouping have too seldom been noted. The first consequence is that characterizations are drawn from the evidence provided by all three letters as a whole and then (inappropriately) applied to each of them individually, even though a particular letter may lack a trait entirely . . . . These composite characterizations are then compared and contrasted with an equally abstract characterization of the ‘authentic Paul.’ Once more, the failure is to recognize the intractable diversity of even the undisputed letters” (*The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 63).

<sup>5</sup> Bover comments regarding 3:1, “No se ve razón por qué haya de aseverar San Pablo tan enfáticamente que las función episcopal sea excelente. Es una verdad de sentido común, que no merece una fórmula tan solemne de aseveración” (“Fidelis Sermo,” 77). On the other hand, Fee defends his preference for 3:1 as the referent, arguing, “2:15 does not have the characteristics of a ‘saying,’ and 3:1 does—despite its noncreedal content” (*1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 79). See also, Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 61; J. Garrow Duncan, “ΠΙΣΤΟΣ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ,” *ExpTim* 35 (1923): 141b; Ernest Evill, “The Faithful Sayings,” *ExpTim* 29 (1918): 443; Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 90; Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters*, 40; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* (2nd ed.; BNTC 14; Nashville: Hendrickson, 1998), 73; George Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992; repr., 1999), 401–2; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 475; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 48, 247; Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 29; Swete, “The Faithful Sayings,” 2; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 248.

πιστὸς ὁ λόγος plausibly may serve as a concise summation and commendation of the apostolic proclamation of the gospel<sup>6</sup> and that it relates to the basic content of that proclamation while permitting the content to assume various forms. The interpretation proposed here honors both the arrangement of the texts as they stand and the grammatical cues given by Paul, the author of record for each letter.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it satisfies the need for coherency within the context of each instance of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. Finally, while it presents a consistent treatment of the formula throughout the PE, it does not present a forced reading in any instance. In addition, the solution for

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<sup>6</sup> Largely ignored in modern PE scholarship, this basic idea was proposed and defended formally by both Frederic Rendall in 1887 and Jakob van Bruggen in 1984 (Frederic Rendall, “Faithful is the Word,” *Exp* 3/5 [1887]: 314–20; Jakob Van Bruggen, “Vaste grond onder de voeten. De formule pistos ho logos in de Pastorale Brieven,” in *Beziëld verband: opstellen aangeboden aan prof. J. Kampuis bij gelegenheid van zijn vijftiëntig-jarig ambtsjubileum als hoogleraar aan de Theologische Hogeschool van De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland te Kampen op 9 april 1984* [Kampen: Uitgeverij Van den Berg, 1984], 43–44; cf., Jakob Van Bruggen, *Paul: Pioneer for Israel’s Messiah* [trans. by Ed M. Van Der Maas; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005], 177). See also, W. Ernest Evill, “The Faithful Sayings,” *ExpTim* 29 (1918): 442–46. Without targeting any particular advocate, Jürgen Roloff objects to the hypothesis generally (*Der Erste Brief an Timotheus* [EKKNT 15; Zürich: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988], 88). On the other hand, Towner writes, “The ‘trustworthy saying’ formula is a technique by which Paul, in one motion, rearticulates his gospel (and corresponding aspects of his teaching), asserts its authenticity and apostolic authority, and alienates the opposing teaching that, by implication (and this is the polemical significance of the πιστις word group), does not belong to the category denoted by the term πιστός (‘trustworthy’)” (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 143–44). Elsewhere, he also suggests that the concern at this point in the history of the church lay in “the careful preserving and transmitting of the apostolic tradition (2 Tim 2.2; 1.13–14; 1 Tim 6.20)” [Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSup 34; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 13].

<sup>7</sup> For instance, by the author’s own reckoning the conjunction γάρ occurs thirty-three times in the three letters. All of the sources consulted construe every occurrence as causal, apart from those instances associated with attempts to make the material following the formula in 1 Tim 4:10 and 2 Tim 2:11 fit the requirements of a “faithful saying.” Furthermore, in the one instance in which Paul may have cited a pre-existing source that contains γάρ (1 Tim 5:18, which reflects the axiom found in Luke 10:7 exactly), the original γάρ is *not* carried over into the citation in 1 Timothy. Thus, the evidence would seem to tell against a “remnant” theory, such that the writer fails to discriminate between traditional material and the conjunctions that connect it to the original text. In view of these considerations, attempts to account for γάρ by appealing to unconventional functions appear to be instances in which grammar is subordinated to a prior determination of what constitutes the most suitable or plausible interpretive option. However, it is one of the contentions of this study that this process itself is based upon an unnecessary limitation of interpretive options.



which this paper argues does not rely upon hypotheses regarding pre-existing traditions or literary dependence between the three epistles, nor does it limit the interpreter to an artificial choice between the material that immediately precedes the formula or that which follows it.

### The Apostolic Gospel Proclamation: Instances Surveyed

In the following investigation of the occurrences of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, each letter will be treated as a stand-alone document. A key element in this approach entails tracing occurrences of λόγος, a term that anchors the most significant semantic thread running through all three letters. Furthermore, in order to demonstrate that the analysis of each instance of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος rests firmly upon its exegesis within each document and the context in which it occurs, as opposed to having been derived from a projection of readings borrowed from other instances in the PE, the survey will begin with Titus, it will proceed to 2 Timothy, and then it will conclude with an analysis of the occurrences in 1 Timothy.

#### Titus 3:8

Λόγος appears five times in Paul's epistle to Titus; in four of these occurrences it is accompanied by the definite article. Since the context of the letter indicates that the one anarthrous example of λόγος in 2:8 probably refers to Titus' own speech and instruction,<sup>8</sup> the analysis of Titus will concentrate upon the four literary units that contain λόγος with the article. The first instance occurs in 1:3, in the midst of the introduction to the letter that occupies 1:1–4. Tracing the syntax of this first literary unit, one may observe that Paul's apostleship is described by means of the preposition κατά, which is governed by two different objects, πίστιν ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ and ἐπιγνῶσιν ἀληθείας τῆς κατ'εὐσέβειαν. Thus, Paul's apostleship exists for the sake of the "faith of the elect of God" and for the sake of their "knowledge of the truth." The feminine singular genitive article that follows ἀληθείας introduces an appositional phrase, probably best translated, "that is in accordance with godliness."

With respect to the complex prepositional phrase that effectively covers the remainder of the first three verses, what does ἐπ'ἐλπίδι ζωῆς αἰωνίου modify? The nearest preceding idea that the prepositional phrase might modify coherently is the substantive, ἀληθείας in verse 1.<sup>9</sup> This would mean that

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<sup>8</sup> Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 135; J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 169. Collins goes a bit further, writing, "A third quality of Titus's teaching is that it should present a sound and irreproachable message (*logon hygie akatagnoston*)" (Raymond F. Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* [NLT; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002], 344).

<sup>9</sup> Towner writes, "The phrase used to describe the salvation process at the close of v. 4 (*eis epignosis aletheias elthein*; cf. 2 Tim 2.25; 3.7; Titus 1.1) also corresponds to

it describes “the truth” as something that “concerns the hope of eternal life.” In other words, the knowledge of the truth among God’s elect, which Paul’s apostleship serves, entails the knowledge of the hope of eternal life. In the subsequent relative clause (1:2), ζῶης is represented by ἦν, which serves as the explicit direct object of ἐπηγγείλατο and the implied object of ἐφανέρωσεν.<sup>10</sup> Αὐτοῦ in the next phrase (τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ) refers back to “the unlying God,” the subject of both ἐπηγγείλατο and ἐφανέρωσεν. It is proposed here that τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ stands in apposition to the whole of the idea expressed in [ἦν] ἐφανέρωσεν, while the antecedent for [ἦν] remains ζῶης. Thus, τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ refers to the manifestation of ἐλπίδι ζῶης αἰωνίου.<sup>11</sup> Τὸν λόγον is expressed, Paul says, ἐν κηρύγματι, ὃ ἐπιστεύθη ἐγὼ κατ’ ἐπιταγὴν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ. This would mean that, in this letter, when Paul first mentions “his word” (as in “God’s word”) he refers to the manifestation or revelation of “the hope of eternal life,” realized in the preaching entrusted to him by God, which entrusting and commissioning serve as a vital element of his apostleship.<sup>12</sup> In other words, according to the first literary unit containing an occurrence of λόγος, Paul’s apostleship exists for the

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the polemical thrust of the passage. It emphasizes the rational aspect of belief, in keeping with the close connection drawn in the Pastorals between ‘belief’ and apostolic doctrine” (*The Goal of Our Instruction*, 84); cf. *ibid.*, 122. See also, Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 182; Dibelius and Conzelmann, *Pastoral Epistles*, 131; Ben Witherington, III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy and 1–3 John* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 96, 102–3.

<sup>10</sup> While concurring with the association of ἦν with ἐπηγγείλατο, most sources find the direct object of ἐφανέρωσεν in τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ, attributing the shift in subject matter to anacoluthon. Marshall reflects the opinion of the majority. However, he also states, “The construction of the sentence encourages the reader to think that the object is still ἦν (sc. eternal life), but there is anacoluthon, and a fresh object, τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ, is added after the verb. It is possible that the fresh object is added loosely in apposition to the clause. But it is better to assume that the relative clause has been unconsciously replaced by a main clause at this point” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 127). See also, Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 182; Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 156; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 169; Cesare Marcheselli-Casale, *Le Lettere pastorali. Le due lettere a Timoteo e la lettera a Tito: Introduzione, versione comment* (Scritti delle origini cristiane 15; Bologna: Dehoniane, 1995), 461; Spicq, *Les Épitres Pastorales*, 222.

<sup>11</sup> Bassler writes, “The ‘word’ is thus the gospel message (see 2 Tim 2:9), which reveals and actualizes the eternal promise when it is proclaimed by Paul, by Titus (3:8), or by appointed church leaders (1:9)” (*1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 183). Knight also writes, “God makes known the truth about eternal life in what is called here τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 285).

<sup>12</sup> Fee writes, “Paul simply brings his sentence back to its point of origin, his apostleship. The revelation of the promised life has actually taken place in Paul’s proclamation of God’s word, as attested by the Cretans’ faith (v. 1). As always for Paul, such preaching, hence his apostleship itself, is not of his own choosing but is a sacred trust” (*1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 169). Spicq states simply, “Telle est la fonction

sake of “the knowledge of the truth,” as apprehended by God’s elect, which truth itself concerns “the hope of eternal life,” the very content of God’s word.<sup>13</sup>

The second occurrence of λόγος lies in the latter portion of the very next literary segment of the epistle (1:5–9) in which Paul justifies his stipulations regarding those whom Titus is to appoint as elders, or overseers. In 1:9, λόγος occurs in the wider construction τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου. This construction is an intrinsically suggestive expression, with πιστοῦ modifying λόγου in a first attributive construction, and the prepositional phrase κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν functioning adjectivally, also modifying λόγου. It may be cast quite literally as, “the according-to-the-teaching faithful word,” which runs more smoothly, “the faithful word that is in accordance with the teaching.” While Paul supplies the adjectival expressions πιστοῦ and κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν to describe λόγου, he provides no other material that would specify the substance or origin of that “faithful word.” Because of this, along with the relatively close proximity of this occurrence to the first instance of λόγος, the most coherent understanding entails reading this as the very same “word of God” mentioned in 1:3, the word that concerned the hope of eternal life and that found expression in Paul’s apostolic proclamation.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, based upon the data given up to this point in the epistle, to describe the “faithful word” as something that stands “in accordance with the teaching” would suggest that “the teaching” consists in God’s revelation of the hope of eternal life. The “faithful word” then comprises the word or message that bears witness to this hope, the apprehension of which message on the part of God’s elect people stands as a key objective behind Paul’s appointment as an apostle.

The expression, τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου, lies in the midst of a clause specifying the criteria by which men are to be appointed to eldership or oversight. They are to be men who exhibit all of the character traits and behaviors listed in 1:7–8, while, at the same time, they hold firmly to “the

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des Apôtres” (*Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 222). Van Neste likewise, while offering a different analysis of the prepositional phrases in 1:1–4, nevertheless states, “Paul has a divinely authorized position, for the cause of salvation, which has been promised in the past and is now revealed in a message which has been entrusted to Paul . . . . It was just mentioned that the three prepositional phrases in 1.1 are concerned with salvation and that 1.2–3 are concerned with the revelation of salvation” (Ray Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure in the Pastoral Epistles* [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 235).

<sup>13</sup> Kelly presents his analysis differently but arrives at the same conclusion, stating, “[Paul] is suggesting that it is his function to promote that hope” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 227).

<sup>14</sup> Bernard writes, “The phrase πιστοῦ λόγου suggests the ‘Faithful Sayings’ of the Pastoral Epistles (see on 1 Tim 1:15). Κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν must mean ‘in accordance with the [Apostolic] doctrine,’ διδαχὴ being taken objectively, and not in the active sense of ‘teaching.’ Hence the whole clause indicates the function of the ἐπίσκοπος as the guardian of the ‘deposit of faith’” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 159).

faithful word that is in accordance with the teaching.” The point behind this latter criterion would appear to consist in qualifying the would-be elder or overseer so that he *δυνατὸς ἢ καὶ παρακαλεῖν ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ καὶ τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν*.<sup>15</sup> Thus, one is qualified to “exhort in the sound teaching and reprove those who oppose” by “holding fast to the faithful word that is in accordance with the teaching.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the most natural reading of *τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ* in 1:9 would entail understanding this as another description of *τὴν διδαχὴν*, which appears previously in the same verse.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, Paul not only has given his readers two references to a specific body of teaching, also designated “sound,” he also has strung these ideas together such that “the teaching,” or “sound teaching,” also corresponds to “God’s word,” or “the faithful word.”<sup>18</sup>

In the longest literary unit containing an occurrence of *λόγος*, 2:1–10, Paul instructs Titus with respect to the kind of directives that he is to administer to the believing body on Crete. These directives concern the character and conduct of the community at-large and are presented in an array that reflects the various segments of that community: older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and slaves. Upon close examination, one first may observe the conspicuous occurrence of *τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ* at the beginning of the passage, a virtual replication of the expression found in 1:9. Because of the inherently exclusionary function of the adjectival participle (*ὑγιαίνουσῃ*), *τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ* in this passage most probably corresponds to the very same referent as that expressed in 1:9, in *τὴν διδαχὴν* and *τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ*. Furthermore, this entire literary unit is framed by references to “the teaching,” for we see *τὴν διδασκαλίαν* also at its conclusion. Thus, not only does this unit reflect an abiding concern to ensure that the teaching is commended by means of conduct and character that will

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<sup>15</sup> Collins writes, “In addition to using the trustworthy word for the salutary purpose of encouraging believers, the overseer is also expected to use it to confront the naysayers. He must disprove and correct those who oppose the sound teaching of the Pauline gospel” (*1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 326).

<sup>16</sup> Such qualification may rest upon meeting all of the required traits of 1:7–8. However, at the very least, the trait specified in the temporal participial clause, *ἀντεχόμενον τοῦ κατὰ τὴν διδαχὴν πιστοῦ λόγου*, would seem to be essential for the distinct tasks of the elder-overseer. See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 294.

<sup>17</sup> Lock writes of this as “the body of doctrine,” but thought of as embodied by the *ἐπίσκοπος* in his own ‘teaching’ (*Pastoral Epistles*, 132).

<sup>18</sup> Regarding this point, Collins writes, “For the Christian message [the pastor] uses the language of ‘teaching’ [*te didaskalia*] and the metaphor that his circles have borrowed from the domain of health care, that which is ‘sound’ [*hygie*]” (*1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 344). Dibelius and Conzelmann propose, “The Pastorals designate with ‘sound teaching’ [*ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία*] or ‘sound words’ [*ὑγιαίνοντες λόγοι*] the loftiest and holiest things they know: the true faith, the true message about faith. According to the Pauline use of language one could [e.g. in 1 Tim 6:3] substitute a phrase containing the term ‘gospel’ [*εὐαγγέλιον*]” (*Pastoral Epistles*, 24).

not dishonor it, it also sustains a tight connection to the specific teaching of which Paul has been writing from the earliest portions of the epistle—the teaching expressed in God’s word by means of the apostolic proclamation, the teaching concerned with “the hope of eternal life.”

In addition, 2:5 features an explicit reference to ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, which occurs as part of an expressed concern that no dishonor be brought to “the word of God.” This comment is similar those expressing concern for the correspondence between character and conduct issues and “the teaching” (2:10), or “sound teaching” (2:1). The similar formation of these three expressions and the parallel ideas expressed in them suggest that they may function interchangeably. Thus, as in previous sections of Titus, to speak of “the sound teaching” is to speak of “the word of God,” which also is to speak of “the teaching.”<sup>19</sup> Further, this “teaching” is comprised of the same body of instruction also designated as “the faithful word” in 1:9.<sup>20</sup>

Τὴν διδασκαλίαν in 2:10 is modified by the appositional phrase τὴν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ. Here, the link between “God’s word” and the “sound teaching” is made explicit, for just as the first occurrence of λόγος was designated “his [God’s] word,” so now “the teaching” is designated as “the teaching of God, our Savior,” or “God’s teaching,” most likely indicating that it originates with God and is authorized by him.<sup>21</sup> This is where the text has led from the beginning of the epistle, and these connections would seem to be the ones most natural for the original reader or readers to make, as the study now turns to the final occurrence of ὁ λόγος.

In Titus 3:4–7, Paul rehearses for Titus an account of God’s mercies and work in saving those who would come to believe. Whereas, in 1:9 Paul used the first attributive construction, τοῦ . . . πιστοῦ λόγου, to denote that to which a prospective elder or overseer must adhere firmly, here in the very first clause of 3:8 he casts the same words in a second predicative construction, so as to make the assertion πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, “the word is faithful.”<sup>22</sup> Since

<sup>19</sup> Spicq writes, “Ils ont à représenter par toute leur conduite sous sa forme authentique et le «nom» de Dieu, sa personne, et son message (ὁ λόγος, cf. I, 3, 9; τὴν διδασκαλίαν, II, 10) de salut universel” (*Les Épîtres Pastorales*, 253).

<sup>20</sup> Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 134; Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 28, 165; Lenski, *St. Paul’s Epistles*, 913; Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 141; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 728–29.

<sup>21</sup> Holtz refers to this as, “Genitivus auctoris” (Gottfried Holtz, *Die Pastoralbriefe* [THNT 13; rev.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1986], 225). See also, Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 141; Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, 56. As witnesses for an objective reading, see, Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 346–47; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 191; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 250.

<sup>22</sup> While Lock views this as a reference to a cited saying, in company with the majority, his opening remark is telling, for he writes, “If this phrase stood here alone it might well be ‘faithful is the whole gospel message entrusted to me’” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 155). Not only is his impulse in keeping with the reading advocated here, his reasons for deciding differently also confirm the tendency to treat all occurrences of

in 1:9 the “faithful word” serves to bear witness to God’s revelation of “the hope of eternal life,” it would be natural to suppose that such remains the case in 3:8a. However, one might justly inquire into the point of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος here.

In the material leading into the assertion of 3:8a, Paul has constructed one long sentence bursting with information pertaining to the “faithful word.” The main clause of 3:4–7 is found in the statement [θεός] ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς occurring in the middle of 3:5. This affirmation is modified by preceding material, found in the temporal clause of 3:4, ὅτε δὲ ἡ χρηστότης καὶ ἡ φιλανθρωπία ἐπεφάνη τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ, and in the two prepositional phrases set over against one another in the first part of 3:5, οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων τῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἀ ἐποιήσαμεν ἡμεῖς ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος. It also is modified by a lengthy and complex prepositional phrase that extends from the last half of 3:5 to the end of 3:7.<sup>23</sup> Because of the grammatical dependence of 3:4–5a and 3:5c–7 upon the main clause of 3:5b, one may suppose that all of 3:4–7 constitutes a unified complex of information.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the corresponding instances of τοῦ . . . πιστοῦ λόγου and πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, two other features strengthen the link between 3:4–7 and 1:1–4. The first is found in the final prepositional phrase of 3:7, κατ’ ἐλπίδα ζωῆς αἰωνίου. Here, in a comment that speaks to the nature of the inheritance awaiting those who stand justified, Paul reprises the expression that he used in 1:2 to denote the content of what God has revealed in his word: namely, the hope of eternal life.<sup>25</sup> Second, one may note the use of the phrases τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ (3:4) and Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν (3:6) to speak of God and Christ Jesus, again expressions used together in the same sentence only here and in 1:3–4. Together, these three elements, the designations of God and Christ Jesus as “Savior,” the double occurrence of “the hope of eternal life,” and the corresponding instances of τοῦ . . . πιστοῦ λόγου and πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, may indicate an *inclusio*. The *inclusio* would be formed by these two clusters of shared expressions that bracket the document, from the opening salutation through the main body of the letter, and suggests that the prevailing concern of this letter consists in preserving the message of “the hope

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the formula collectively. See also, Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 328.

<sup>23</sup> Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 178.

<sup>24</sup> Knight, after offering an extensive discussion upon the various proposals regarding the range of the material comprising an intact unit, concludes, “It must be further emphasized that verses 4–7 do constitute a unit both in form and in content, and may aptly be designated a saying” (*Faithful Sayings*, 85). See also, Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 144; Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 179; Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 360–61; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 202; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 161–62.

<sup>25</sup> While Paul refers to the believers’ anticipation of the “hope” also in 2:13, only in 1:1–4 and 3:4–7 does the exact phrase, ἐλπίς ζωῆς αἰωνίου, occur. See, Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 325; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 788.

of eternal life.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, just as Paul refers to the word of God that speaks of the hope of eternal life as “the faithful word,” so here in 3:8a, he concludes the main part of his epistles with an affirmation of the faithfulness and trustworthiness of that very same word. In doing so, Paul most probably refers to the gospel generally, not a literal “saying” or specific formulation. At the same time, while this instance of *πιστὸς ὁ λόγος* could pertain to the immediately preceding material, this follows, not from the placement of the material (before or after the formula) but from the textual details traced through Titus: on the one hand, the consistency with which *λόγος* forms a clear reference to the gospel message and, on the other hand, the absence of any unambiguously designated “saying” or citation formula. Faithful is the apostolic proclamation of the hope of eternal life, “the teaching of God our Savior.”<sup>27</sup>

## 2 Timothy 2:11

There are seven occurrences of *λόγος* in 2 Timothy. In this analysis, only five of these will be addressed, four of them in some detail.<sup>28</sup> The first appearance of *λόγος* in 2 Timothy occurs in 1:13. The literary unit of which it is a part lies in 1:8–14 and reduces to three major propositions, the longest of which occupies 1:8–12. The remaining two propositions are found in 1:13 and 1:14. The main idea in each of these propositions is expressed by a second person active imperative, though in the first instance the reader is prepared for the positive command by the preceding and corresponding prohibition *μὴ . . . ἐπαισχυθῆς*.

The first of the positive imperatival expressions, *συγκακοπάθησον τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ*, is modified by the prepositional phrase *κατὰ δύναμιν θεοῦ*, which itself is modified by a complex relative clause that runs from 1:9 to the end of 1:12. The subject matter of the clause concerns God, *τοῦ σώσαντος ἡμᾶς καὶ καλέσαντος κλήσει ἁγία*. As this relative clause progresses, the description of God develops into a rich exposition of what he has done to and for believers by means of *τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ*. At the end of 1:10, the relative clause finds its resolution in the designation of the means by which this work has been brought to light by Jesus (*φωτίσαντος*), namely, *διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου*. This entire proposition up to 1:10 virtually opens and closes with a form of *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*. Between these two occurrences in 1:8 and 1:10, Paul has crafted one expression of the teaching that comprises *τὸ*

<sup>26</sup> As observed also by Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 269.

<sup>27</sup> See Rendall, “Faithful is the Word,” 319; Van Bruggen, “Vaste grond onder de voeten,” 43.

<sup>28</sup> The remaining two instances occur in 2:17 (referring to the teachings of the opposition) and 4:14, in which Paul admonishes Timothy to be on guard against Alexander, *λίαν γὰρ ἀντέστη τοῖς ἡμετέροις λόγοις*. This latter instance may reflect a function similar to those treated more fully above.

εὐαγγέλιον.<sup>29</sup>

Within the proposition containing the second imperative, *υποτύπωσιν ἔχε υγιαινόντων λόγων*, lies the first occurrence of *λόγος* in 2 Timothy. The logical connection between this proposition and the preceding one may be found in 1:11. In the prepositional phrase lying there, *εἰς ὃ ἐτέθη ἐγὼ κήρυξ καὶ ἀπόστολος καὶ διδάσκαλος*, the relative pronoun *ὃ* corresponds to *τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* in 1:10. Here, Paul indicates his own apostolic appointment in the ministry of, and responsibility for, the proclamation of the gospel. In the process, 1:11 also anticipates his reference in 1:13 to *λόγων ὧν παρ' ἐμοῦ ἤκουσας*, for he states plainly that his apostolic task lay in preaching and teaching "the gospel."

Consequently, with respect to the proposition of 1:13, it is the position of this study that *υποτύπωσιν . . . υγιαινόντων λόγων ὧν παρ' ἐμοῦ ἤκουσας* corresponds to the teachings associated with *τοῦ εὐαγγελίου*. The prepositional phrase *εἰς ὃ ἐτέθη ἐγὼ κήρυξ καὶ ἀπόστολος καὶ διδάσκαλος* indicates that *τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* represents a particular set of ideas or teachings that Timothy received and learned from Paul directly, and which are authorized or authenticated by him.<sup>30</sup> So far, then, Paul has written two imperatives to Timothy: "Suffer with [me] for the gospel . . . for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher," and "hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me" (author's translation throughout).

Concluding the literary unit of 1:8–14, the third imperative reads, *τὴν καλὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον*. Since this clause follows hard upon the previous two imperatives, and in the absence of data pointing in any other direction, the most obvious referent of *τὴν καλὴν παραθήκην* would seem to be the previously mentioned *υποτύπωσιν . . . υγιαινόντων λόγων*. In other words, rather than being ashamed of Paul and Christ Jesus, Timothy must stand prepared to suffer for the gospel, which is expressed in the pattern of sound words that he learned from Paul and to which he is to adhere. Now Paul urges him to guard this pattern of sound words, also called, "the good trust."<sup>31</sup> In view of the data surveyed through 1:8–14, it seems most probable

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<sup>29</sup> Towner infers from the final reference to *διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον*, "This activity is clearly perceived as the normative way of mediating salvation" (*The Goal of Our Instruction*, 95; cf. idem, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 466–67).

<sup>30</sup> Oberlinner, while maintaining that the situation and authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is fictive, nevertheless recognizes the tradition as apostolic and Pauline (*Zweiter Timotheusbrief*, 51).

<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Mounce states, "The *παραθήκην*, 'deposit,' is the gospel . . . Its emphatic position before the verb *φύλαξον*, 'guard' (on which see v 12) and its description as *καλὴν*, 'good' (see 1 Tim 1:8), roughly paralleling *υγιαινόντων λόγων*, 'healthy words,' firmly separate it from the opponents' teachings" (*Pastoral Epistles*, 494). Similarly, Towner maintains, "*Paratheke* is closely associated with *euangelion* in 2 Tim 1.6–14. The emphasis in this term is more on the preservation and accurate transmission to succeeding generations of 'the gospel' that was entrusted to Paul. In



that the plural form of λόγος used in this passage denotes the teachings or words that comprise the message, or gospel, entrusted to Paul, who was appointed to proclaim it and teach it to others. As a final note regarding this section and its terms, it would appear that Timothy was intended to pass on to others the “sound words,” or the gospel that he learned from Paul, for Paul writes in 2:2, ἃ ἤκουσας παρ’ ἐμοῦ . . . ταῦτα παράθου πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οἵτινες ἱκανοὶ ἔσονται καὶ ἐτέρους διδάξαι. Therefore, it is understood that the “sound words” of the gospel proclamation comprise a body of teaching to be embraced, protected, and passed on or entrusted to others.<sup>32</sup>

The main ideas of 2 Tim 2:8–15, the next literary unit containing some form of λόγος, once again are carried by three imperatives: μνημόνευε Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, ταῦτα ὑπομίμησθε, and σπουδάσον σεαυτὸν δόκιμον παραστήσαι τῷ θεῷ. This section features three instances of λόγος, including one that forms a part of the single occurrence of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος in 2 Timothy. The imperative that opens this unit admonishes Timothy, μνημόνευε Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐγγεγερμένον ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ, κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου. While Paul previously has referred to the gospel entrusted to him as “the sound words, which you heard from me,” and as “the good trust,” he now writes of it as “my gospel.” In the process, he also discloses additional details regarding the material that contributes to the make-up of “his gospel,” or the “sound words,” namely, μνημόνευε Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐγγεγερμένον ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ.

Paul has indicated in earlier remarks, such as ἐμὲ τὸν δέσμον αὐτοῦ (1:8), and δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν καὶ ταῦτα πάσχω (1:12), that he suffers on account of the gospel. Also, he twice has urged Timothy to suffer for the sake of the same gospel, writing, συγκακοπάθησον τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ (1:8), and συγκακοπάθησον ὡς καλὸς στρατιώτης Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (2:3). Now he explicitly states again in 2:9 that he suffers for that gospel, writing of τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου, ἐν ᾧ κακοπαθῶ μέχρι δεσμῶν ὡς κακοῦργος. However, at this point (2:9), he also

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terms of content, *paratheke* may be generally described as *euangelion*, but greater precision is probably implied” (*The Goal of Our Instruction*, 123). See also, Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 381; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 714; Marcheselli-Casale, *Le Lettere pastorali*, 679; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 478–79; Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 156; Alfons Weiser, *Der Zweite Brief an Timotheus* (EKKNT 16; Düsseldorf un Zürich: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 135.

<sup>32</sup> Collins writes, “The ‘model of sound words’ is the precious treasure that had been entrusted to Timothy. That treasure, whose import is emphasized by the adjective ‘precious’ appropriate to the metaphor ‘treasure,’ is the treasure that had been entrusted to Paul (v. 12). Acting to ensure the proper transmission of the treasure for safekeeping from one generation to the next is the Holy Spirit” (*1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 213). Johnson also points out “This phrase echoes 1:13, where Paul speaks of the healthy words ‘which you heard from me’ . . . . The real key to the passage is 2:1–2. Indeed, it is the key to the function of the Pastorals as a whole: Timothy is instructed to ‘entrust’ the things he heard from Paul to other faithful men, who, in turn, can teach them to others” (*The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 364, 369).

takes the unprecedented step in 2 Timothy of referring to the gospel entrusted to him as the “word of God,” writing *ἀλλὰ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ οὐ δέδεται*. In other words, Paul points out that, while he suffers imprisonment for the gospel, the gospel itself (“the word of God”), unlike Paul, is neither imprisoned, bound, nor constrained in any way.<sup>33</sup>

The correspondence between Paul’s remarks concerning ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ in 2:9 and τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου in 2:8 is ratified in his comments in 2:10, διὰ τοῦτο πάντα ὑπομένω διὰ τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ σωτηρίας τύχωσιν τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. While in 1:8–10 one reads of τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν that is associated with θεοῦ, τοῦ σώσαντος ἡμᾶς and with τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, now in 2:9–10 it is ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ that stands in conjunction with σωτηρίας . . . τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. After declaring that he stands ready to endure any difficulty for the sake of God’s elect and their attainment of salvation, Paul delivers the affirmation, πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. By virtue of the semantic thread just traced, there can be little doubt that this λόγος is precisely ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ of which Paul has just written, which in turn represents τὸ εὐαγγέλιον with which he has been entrusted. The affirmation of the trustworthiness of the apostolic word of God is then justified (γάρ) by a series of conditional expressions that serve as truths deriving from the implications of that “faithful word,” for indeed, “if . . . we die with him, we also shall live with him; if we endure, we also shall reign with him; if we deny him, he shall deny us; if we prove faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot deny himself” (2:11–13)<sup>34</sup>

As if to confirm the determination that the referent of the predication, πιστὸς ὁ λόγος, truly consists in the apostolic proclamation of the gospel, the word of God, Paul urges Timothy in 2:15, σπούδασον σεαυτὸν δόκιμον παραστήσαι τῷ θεῷ, ἐργάτην ανεπαίσχυντον, ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας. The “word of God” and “faithful word” now is designated “the word of truth”; it testifies to the activity of “God who saves us,” and it is comprised of “the sound words.”<sup>35</sup> Naturally then, it would be a matter of great importance that one who would be a “worker unashamed” also would prove anxious to handle correctly this precious “word of truth.” Finally, one also should note the exhortation in 4:2 (κῆρυξον τὸν λόγον). What else would Timothy be instructed to proclaim if not “the word of truth” he learned from Paul, that is, “the good trust,” “the word of God,” indeed, the faithful

<sup>33</sup> Oberlinner is unequivocal in equating τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν with ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ (*Zweiter Timotheusbrief*, 80).

<sup>34</sup> See Rendall, “Faithful is the Word,” 319. Once again, honoring the typical causal force of γάρ not only permits the text as it stands to read coherently, it also tells in favor of the construal of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος proposed here.

<sup>35</sup> While he does not make these connections explicitly, Marshall nevertheless arrives at the same conclusion here, writing, “The object is ὁ λόγος, i.e. the orthodox Christian message” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 749). Mounce also writes, “The λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, ‘word of truth,’ is the gospel” (*Pastoral Epistles*, 526).

word?<sup>36</sup> As in the case of Titus, a careful tracing of the ideas as Paul has strung them together in 2 Timothy leads naturally to the conclusion that “the word” by which he is so captivated consists precisely in the apostolic trust given to him: again, referring most probably not to a specific “saying” or formulation, but to an essential proclamation that may assume various forms or expressions. Truly, faithful is the word.

### 1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9

One first may gain a reasonable feel for the likely agenda of 1 Timothy by noting the *inclusio* framing the body of the document, formed by two instances of *ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω*, as found in 1:3 and 6:3.<sup>37</sup> Second, after the introduction of 1:1–2, a directive given to Timothy dominates the remainder of the first chapter: namely, that he remain in Ephesus, *ἵνα παραγγείλης τισὶν μὴ ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν μηδὲ προσέχειν μύθοις καὶ γενεαλογίαις ἀπεράντοις*.<sup>38</sup> The command that Timothy is to deliver emerges again as the primary point of reference in 1:5 and 1:18. In 1:5, Paul discloses the goal or purpose of the command not to teach other teachings. In 1:18, he indicates that entrusting this command to Timothy effectively enlists him so that he might fight *τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν*, or, as he writes later in 6:12, *τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως*. Additionally, judging from Paul’s reference in 1:10 to *τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ*, which “lawless and rebellious men” oppose, the “sound teaching” would seem to authorize one specific teaching that is set over against any “other teaching.” Furthermore, this teaching stands *κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ*, which corresponds to the gospel message to

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<sup>36</sup> Marshall indicates a similar conclusion: “ὁ λόγος by itself is ‘the Christian message’; it is usually qualified in some way as ‘the word of God’, ‘the word of truth’, etc. [2.9, 15; 1 Th 1.6; Gal 6.6; Acts 8.4; 10.36–44; 14.25; 16.6, *et al.*], but by this point in the letter no fuller description is needed” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 800). See also, Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 453; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 572–73; Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 600; Van Neste, *Cohesion and Structure*, 184–85. Furthermore, it is significant that Van Neste identifies *ἡ γραφή* and *τὸ γράμμα* as two other elements in the “semantic chain” of terms running through 2 Timothy that pertain to or designate the apostolic proclamation. He writes, “Related to the chain concerning salvation is the recurrence of terms related to the basic message which Timothy is to preserve and proclaim. Already in the prescript there is reference to ‘the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,’ concerning which Marshall writes, ‘the phrase sums up the content of Paul’s gospel.’ There follows then throughout the letter a stream of words such as gospel, word, teaching, etc., that refer to the Pauline message” (*Cohesion and Structure*, 216).

<sup>37</sup> Regarding this, Van Neste writes, “This abandonment of the faith is perceived as primarily a doctrinal problem. In 1.3 and 6.3 the opponents are introduced as ‘certain ones’ who ‘teach wrongly’ [*τις ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖ*]. This doctrinal problem is seen as well in the basis of the opponents’ teaching” (*Cohesion and Structure*, 117).

<sup>38</sup> Bernard writes, “The purpose of Timothy’s continued residence in Ephesus was that he might check the progress of heretical doctrine” (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 23).

which Paul refers as that  $\delta \epsilon \pi \iota \sigma \tau \epsilon \upsilon \theta \eta \nu \epsilon \gamma \omega$ .<sup>39</sup> Thus, through the first chapter, the reader may observe that the prevailing concern of this letter consists in retrieving and reinforcing in Ephesus the “sound teaching” of the gospel and correcting those who teach falsely, which corrective labor constitutes one significant aspect of “the good fight” to which Timothy is summoned.<sup>40</sup>

In view of the preceding general observations, the “faithful word” in 1:15, which testifies  $\chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \acute{o} \varsigma \text{ } \acute{\iota} \eta \sigma \upsilon \acute{\iota} \varsigma \text{ } \eta \lambda \theta \epsilon \nu \text{ } \epsilon \iota \varsigma \text{ } \tau \acute{o} \nu \text{ } \kappa \acute{o} \sigma \mu \omicron \nu \text{ } \acute{\alpha} \mu \alpha \rho \tau \omega \lambda \omicron \upsilon \varsigma \text{ } \sigma \acute{\omega} \sigma \alpha \iota$ , provides the first explicit indication of the content of the “sound teaching” and “the gospel” of which Paul speaks in 1:10–11.<sup>41</sup> However, by reflecting as well upon the personal remarks that lead into and derive from the affirmation  $\pi \iota \sigma \tau \acute{o} \varsigma \text{ } \acute{o} \text{ } \lambda \acute{o} \gamma \omicron \varsigma$ , one may surmise that this “faithful word” also bears witness to  $\eta \text{ } \chi \acute{\alpha} \rho \iota \varsigma \text{ } \tau \omicron \upsilon \text{ } \kappa \upsilon \rho \iota \omicron \upsilon \text{ } \eta \mu \acute{\omega} \nu$  (1:14) and to the fact that the sinners whom Christ Jesus came to save include  $\tau \acute{\omega} \nu \text{ } \mu \epsilon \lambda \lambda \acute{o} \nu \tau \omega \nu \text{ } \pi \iota \sigma \tau \epsilon \upsilon \epsilon \iota \nu \text{ } \epsilon \pi \text{ } \acute{\alpha} \upsilon \tau \acute{\omega} \text{ } \epsilon \iota \varsigma \text{ } \zeta \omega \eta \nu \text{ } \acute{\alpha} \iota \omega \nu \iota \omicron \nu$  (1:16). Therefore,  $\acute{o} \text{ } \lambda \acute{o} \gamma \omicron \varsigma$  most likely cues, not the exact citation of a fixed expression, but a report of a basic gospel truth;  $\chi \rho \iota \sigma \tau \acute{o} \varsigma \text{ } \acute{\iota} \eta \sigma \upsilon \acute{\iota} \varsigma \text{ } \eta \lambda \theta \epsilon \nu \text{ } \epsilon \iota \varsigma \text{ } \tau \acute{o} \nu \text{ } \kappa \acute{o} \sigma \mu \omicron \nu \text{ } \acute{\alpha} \mu \alpha \rho \tau \omega \lambda \omicron \upsilon \varsigma \text{ } \sigma \acute{\omega} \sigma \alpha \iota$  serves as one expression of this word or proclamation.<sup>42</sup> Following Paul’s personal reflection upon his status as a beneficiary of “the grace of God” in 1:14, the formula, “the word is faithful and worthy of full acceptance” would seem to function as an emphatic confirmation, as if he were saying, “in view of the blessing of God’s grace that saves

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<sup>39</sup> Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 34; Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 171–72; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 90; Roloff, *Der Erste Brief an Timotheus*, 63, n. 44.

<sup>40</sup> Towner proposes, “The purpose of this sort of polemic was apparently more to create a general impression than to itemize the failings of the opponents . . . it is clear from the verbal assault that the false teachers rejected, undermined, diluted, or otherwise perverted the apostolic gospel” (*The Goal of Our Instruction*, 25); cf. idem, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 108. Similarly, Van Neste writes, “The letter opens with a reminder that Timothy’s role is to ‘command’ [ $\pi \alpha \rho \alpha \gamma \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \lambda \lambda \omega$ ] and the ‘command’ [ $\pi \alpha \rho \alpha \gamma \gamma \acute{\epsilon} \lambda \iota \alpha$ ], or basic message, is summarized. A chain of related words then runs through the letter, signifying the message which Timothy is to proclaim in contradistinction to the opponents” (*Cohesion and Structure*, 109).

<sup>41</sup> Knight states regarding this occurrence, “This saying as a whole summarizes and epitomizes the Gospel” (*Faithful Sayings*, 47); cf. idem, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 99–100.

<sup>42</sup> Rendall writes, “On the first occasion [Paul] added a definition of the Word by way of explanation [1 Tim 1.15]: it was ‘the word, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ Now this definition does not point to any single message of grace and mercy elsewhere recorded, but to the Gospel as a whole. It thus furnishes a key to St. Paul’s conception of the Word, as the entire revelation of the Father’s love manifested in the incarnation” (“Faithful is the Word,” 316). This also seems to argue for  $\acute{o} \tau \iota$  as an indicator of indirect discourse, rather than direct discourse, contra Knight, who identifies the  $\acute{o} \tau \iota$ -clause as one indicating direct discourse (*Faithful Sayings*, 32; cf., idem, *Pastoral Epistles*, 100). See also, Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 145–46.

even me, indeed, the word regarding this grace is faithful!”

Assuming another form, that same gospel appears in 2:5, in the testimony εἷς . . . θεός, εἷς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ὁ δὸς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων. Furthermore, it is significant that Paul follows this formulation with the remark in 2:7, εἷς ὃ ἐτέβην ἐγὼ κῆρυξ καὶ ἀπόστολος, . . . διδάσκαλος ἐθνῶν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. Considering that Paul already has stated that he was entrusted with “the gospel of the glory of the blessed God (1:11),” and considering that he now claims that his apostolic appointment exists for the sake of advancing this most recent formulation (2:5), the only way to reconcile these two claims made by Paul lies in construing the “faithful word” as a reference to the basic apostolic gospel proclamation, which, in less than two full chapters, has assumed at least two different though very compatible forms.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, whether one writes, Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἁμαρτωλοὺς σῶσαι, or εἷς . . . θεός, εἷς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, ἄνθρωπος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς, ὁ δὸς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων, either of which may serve as a reasonable expression of the gospel, “the word” remains “faithful.”

With respect to the most widely disputed instance of πιστός ὁ λόγος, found in 1 Tim 3:1a, a sense of what Paul is doing in the second chapter of the letter may help one come to terms with his usage of πιστός ὁ λόγος. In 1:15a the expression πιστός ὁ λόγος came after, and likely in response to, Paul’s reflections upon his own position as a beneficiary of God’s grace. Likewise, in 3:1a, there is a similar reflection or assertion in close proximity that pertains to the gospel proclamation and that may account for the affirmation πιστός ὁ λόγος. From the beginning of chapter two, Paul urges Timothy to call the believers in Ephesus to a renewed focus upon what they must be doing as a matter of course. To the community at-large, he issues a summons to prayer for “all peoples.” Then, Paul addresses two distinct segments of that community. First, the men are to pray with holy hands, as opposed to hands polluted by “anger or quarreling.” Next, the women are instructed to concentrate upon the faithfulness and holiness to which they are called. Then they are assured that, if they do so, they will not lose the promised salvation brought to light in the gospel proclamation. Here then, in the words of assurance to the women of Ephesus, lies the remark that triggers the statement of confirmation, for “the word is faithful,” and they too may rely upon it.<sup>44</sup>

The third occurrence of πιστός ὁ λόγος in 1 Timothy lies in 4:9, near the conclusion of a literary unit that occupies 4:6–11. In 4:6, Paul gathers all of the teaching of 4:1–5, if not previous material as well, into the pronoun,

<sup>43</sup> Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 42–43; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 65–66; Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 28–29; Quinn and Wacker, *Letters to Timothy*, 188–89; Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 22; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 216.

<sup>44</sup> Rendall, “Faithful is the Word,” 319; Van Bruggen, “Vaste grond onder de voeten,” 44. See also Van Neste, *Cobesion and Structure*, 39.

ταῦτα and encourages Timothy to remind the body of “these things.”<sup>45</sup> If Timothy carries through with this reminder, Paul writes that he shall show himself to be καλὸς . . . διάκονος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐντρεφόμενος τοῖς λόγοις τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς καλῆς διδασκαλίας ἧ παρηκολούθηκας. In this statement, Paul explicitly links “the words of the faith” with “the good teaching,” which corresponds to the “sound teaching” that stands in accordance with τὸ εὐαγγέλιον of 1:11. Consequently, one may surmise that “the words of the faith” also correspond to this same gospel, with which Paul was entrusted and which he proclaimed.<sup>46</sup>

Paul then admonishes Timothy to keep himself clear of “profane and silly myths” and instead to γύμναξε δὲ σεαυτὸν πρὸς εὐσέβειαν. The justification for this admonition lies in the principle ἡ γὰρ σωματικὴ γυμνασία πρὸς ὀλίγον ἐστὶν ὠφέλιμος, ἡ δὲ εὐσέβεια πρὸς πάντα ὠφέλιμος ἐστὶν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔχουσα ζωῆς τῆς νῦν καὶ τῆς μελλούσης.<sup>47</sup> Consistent with what we have seen in previous instances of πιστὸς ὁ λόγος in 1 Timothy, the formula materializes here as if to confirm the assertion regarding the timeless worth and promise of godliness.<sup>48</sup> In the absence of any kind of citation indicator, and in view of the causal link with the subsequent clauses (εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ κοπιῶμεν καὶ ἀγωνιζόμεθα, ὅτι ἠλπίκαμεν ἐπὶ θεῷ ζῶντι), it seems most plausible to construe πιστὸς ὁ λόγος as a reference to the apostolic gospel proclamation in which Paul and Timothy have labored and in which they have placed their hope. Thus, as with the previous occurrences, ὁ λόγος here most likely does not refer back to or forward to something cited, though the affirmation πιστὸς ὁ λόγος surely does pertain to adjacent material. In this case, the promises that attend godliness also are witnessed in the apostolic message, namely “the life to come” (4:8), or “eternal life” (1:16).<sup>49</sup> Once again, “the

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<sup>45</sup> Ταῦτα possibly may reach further back to include Paul’s instructions in 3:1–16 as well. This extended reference is the position taken by Bassler (*1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 83), and Collins (*1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 120), though Bernard limits the range to 4:1–5 (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 68). See also, Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 193.

<sup>46</sup> Johnson writes, “So Timothy is to shape the community ethos according to the ‘words of faith’ that come from the Scripture and the Gospel” (*The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 243). Reflecting upon the whole of 1 Tim, Towner remarks, “The closing instruction of 1 Tim 6.20 urges that he ‘guard the deposit [*paratheke*], that is, the core of the apostolic tradition” (*The Goal of Our Instruction*, 30).

<sup>47</sup> See Bassler, *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 84; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 104; Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 250; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 197.

<sup>48</sup> See Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 70; Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 31, 69; Bover, “Fidelis Sermo,” 75; Duncan, “ΠΙΣΤΟΣ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ,” 141a; Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 42, 121, 126; Fairbairn, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 182–83; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*, 105; Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 250; Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 49, 51; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 201; Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 554.

<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Van Neste writes, “4.8 provides a ground for 4.7b, a reason for exerting oneself in training for godliness, namely that εὐσέβεια brings with it the promise

word is faithful.”<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

Two things warrant mention at this point. First, while the analysis proposed in this essay has not proceeded from the premise that each occurrence of *πιστὸς ὁ λόγος* *must* pertain to salvation or salvific material, it has been argued that, in all five occurrences, the formula probably *does* pertain to such concerns. Second, while internal coherency does not necessarily translate into the most compelling interpretation, the question of coherency nevertheless must be satisfied in order for any proposed interpretation to receive adoption. On this point also, it must be acknowledged that the approach and interpretation proposed in this study does result in a coherent reading of each text in which *πιστὸς ὁ λόγος* occurs. Consequently, the construal advocated here, that *πιστὸς ὁ λόγος* serves as an affirmation and confirmation of the firm reliability of the apostolic gospel message, at the very least may stand as a plausible solution to the riddle of the formula and its referent in each instance and in each letter.

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of eternal life” (*Cohesion and Structure*, 49). See also, Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 250; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 200–1.

<sup>50</sup> Van Bruggen writes, “Opnieuw geeft Paulus de uitroep in 4,9. Hij heeft zojuist gezegd dat de godsvrucht een belofte van leven inhoudt voor heden en toekomst. Godsvrucht behoudt. Waarom? Omdat Christ behoudt. Betrouwbaar is het woord van het evangelie en volkomen geloofwaardig!” (“Vaste grond onder de voeten,” 44). Rendall’s stirring summation applies his proposal to each instance of *πιστὸς ὁ λόγος* accordingly, “In the First Epistle to Timothy the remembrance of God’s personal mercy in committing that glorious Gospel to a blasphemer and persecutor like himself calls forth this first outburst of thankful adoration. ‘Faithful is the Word, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief’ (i.15). Thoughts of God’s all-embracing love and of the Gospel’s saving power for all classes of society, for all men, for woman as well as man, run in succession through the second chapter, till at its close he winds up with his apostolic amen, ‘Faithful is the Word’ (iii.1). The pernicious delusions of the latter times rise up before his prophetic eye and call forth his apostolic warning; but he is inspired with a new courage by the thought, ‘Faithful is the Word’ (iv.9). The second epistle dwells with equal earnestness on the value of the Gospel whereunto he had been appointed a preacher and an apostle, on the sound words which Timothy had heard of him, and the good thing committed to Timothy, which he charges him to commit in his turn to faithful men who should be able to teach others also. For its sake he gladly suffers as an evildoer, even unto bonds: he exults in the contrast between his own bonds and the freedom of the Word of God, which is not bound, but has power to save; and breaks out once more into the ejaculation, ‘Faithful is the Word’ (ii.11). The Epistle to Titus, though largely occupied with the practical requirements of Christian life, strongly urges the importance of sound doctrine as the basis of Christian morals, and couples the duty of holding fast the faithful Word with blamelessness of life: here again St. Paul’s faith in the Word finds fit expression in his favourite ejaculation, ‘Faithful is the Word’ (iii.8)” (“Faithful is the Word,” 318–19).

More importantly, unlike conventional construals of *πιστὸς ὁ λόγος*, the analysis offered in this study achieves coherency within the texts of the three letters on their own terms: without forcing texts, without disregarding the syntax of the text of the letters (especially the conjunctions), and without treating all three documents or all five instances of the formula collectively. At the same time, all five occurrences of the clause—each interpreted within its own discrete context as it is—nevertheless exhibit a consistent function and sound a consistent message; the word of God, the gospel entrusted to his apostolic servants, is a faithful and reliable word. Therefore, we who profess to be his people have every reason to hold fast to that word, to all that it promises, and to all to which it calls us, even at great cost.