

A Word Study On "Didaskalia"

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Introduction: The Greek word "didaskalia" means "teaching" or "doctrine." "Didaskalia" is "Teaching, especially the substance or result of teaching."^{1,2} In the Greek culture "didaskalia" is intellectual teaching with a view to knowledge.³ It is that which is taught, (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; Rom. 16:17)⁴ The Greek word "didaskalia" appears 21 times in the New Testament. The following facts can be learned from these passages.

1. DIDASKALIA IS NOT AN EXCLUSIVE TERM.

"Didaskalia" can refer to a wide variety of "teaching" or "doctrine" since the word was used with many groups such as: the doctrine of "God," (1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:10); the doctrine of "Paul," (2 Tim. 3:10); "every wind" of doctrine, (Eph. 4:14); the doctrine of "men," (Col. 2:22); and, the doctrine of "demons," (1 Tim. 4:1).

2. DIDASKALIA CAN BE SOUND OR FALSE.

Not all "didaskalia" is sound or good "didaskalia." The commandments of men are often falsely given to people as God's "didaskalia." This was true of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Old Testament Law in Jesus' day, (Mt. 15:9; Mk. 7:7).⁵ They taught outward heartless traditions and regulation.^{6,7} Paul talks about "sound" or "healthy" didaskalia, (2 Timothy 4:4). It should be noted that "didaskalia" based on God's Word is sound and "didaskalia" based on man's thoughts alone would not be sound "didaskalia."

3. DIDASKALIA CAN BE IMPROPERLY MIXED WITH THE O.T.

All Scripture is to be used for the church's "didaskalia," (2 Tim. 3:16). This is true because all of Scripture reveals doctrinal truth about a wide variety of things. This is where the church gets the truth that comprises "systematic theology." However, I do not believe that Paul was saying that the "didaskalia" of the Old Testament Mosaic Law is the same as the "didaskalia" for the New Testament church. Many of the truths of the Old Testament are applicable to life, but subjecting the New Testament church to the Old Testament Law would violate grace, (Rom. 4:1-5; 7:4,6; Gal. 2:16,21; 3:12,19; 4:5; 5:1,4; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Tim. 1:9).⁸

4. DIDASKALIA OF THE O.T. WAS FOR THE CHURCH'S LEARNING BUT YET DISTINCT FROM DIDASKALIA OF THE N.T.

The things written in the Old Testament were written for the church's "didaskalia," (Romans 15:4). Paul was being dispensationally distinct. He was encouraging the New Testament believer to study how Israel responded to Yahweh and how Yahweh responded to Israel because it will bring patience, comfort and hope to the believer in his relationship to Christ. However, I do not believe that Paul is stating everything within the Old Testament Mosaic Law is designed to be applied or superimposed upon the New Testament church.

5. DIDASKALIA IS DIFFERENT IN THE O.T. AND IN THE N.T.

The Old Testament Law (i.e the "Mosaic covenant") was written for sinners, the ungodly and anything that is contrary to "sound didaskalia." The New Testament contains new "didaskalia" that is called "sound didaskalia" for the saints. There is a dispensational distinctions in "didaskalia" from the Old Testament Law (i.e. the "Mosaic covenant") and the Church, (1 Tim. 1:9-10).

6. DIDASKALIA FOR THE CHURCH HAS THREE BASIC GOALS

The church's "sound didaskalia" is related to three factors: to "godliness" and to the "Words" of Christ, (1 Tim. 6:3-4), and also, to a life that is "adorned after the Savior," (Titus 2:10).

7. DIDASKALIA IS CENTRAL TO THE CHURCH AND THE PASTOR

The church, especially the pastor, is "to give attention" to "didaskalia," (1 Tim. 4:13); "to take heed" to "didaskalia," (1 Tim. 4:16); "to labor" in "didaskalia," (1 Tim. 5:17); "to nourish" the brethren with "didaskalia," (1 Tim. 4:6); "to speak" didaskalia," (Titus 2:1); and "to exhort and convict" with "didaskalia" those who contradict us, (Titus 1:9). Those churches that have "sound doctrine" are truly the one's blessed of God.

8. DIDASKALIA IS A GAUGE OF FELLOWSHIP

The church's "didaskalia" is to be according to "godliness" and the church is to withdraw from anyone not conforming to this "didaskalia," (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

9. DIDASKALIA RELATES TO ONE OF THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

One of the spiritual gifts given to the church was "didaskalia," ("teaching" Rom. 12:7), which recognizes what the "church's" "didaskalia" is, how this "didaskalia" is different from other didaskalia," and uses it correctly to teach others the proper "didaskalia."

10. DIDASKALIA WILL NOT ALWAYS BE ACCEPTED BY THE CHURCH

The church will not always "endure" sound "didaskalia," (2 Tim. 4:3). Homer Kent comments about the people Paul was addressing, "These people will not 'hold themselves upright' (Greek "anexontai") under the healthy teaching of the Gospel. They are motivated solely by their own desires (Greek "epithumias")."⁹

11. DIDASKALIA WHICH IS NOT SOUND IS DANGEROUS

"Didaskalia" that is not "sound didaskalia" is based on: one's own desires which opposed God's desires, (2 Timothy 4:2); deceptive teaching through the trickery and cunning craftiness of men, (Ephesians 4:14); teaching that has the appearance of wisdom and a religious flare, but has no value against the indulgence of the flesh, (Colossians 2:22); teaching that is lawless or based on the gratification of the flesh, (1 Timothy 1:9-10); teaching that fails to make a distinction between dispensations, (1 Timothy 4:3-5); teaching things that are fraudulent with no guilt, (1 Timothy 4:2); and teaching that causes one to depart from the faith because it is open to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons, (1 Timothy 4:1). Those churches that do not have "sound didaskalia" are in danger.

12. DIDASKALIA IS IMPORTANT TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The truths which the church and the pastor dispensationally apply to life from the "Word" of God become "sound didaskalia," (1 Tim. 5:17; 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:9; 2:1). This is how sound "didaskalia" has "integrity, reverence, incorruptibility," (Titus 2:7) and can be "adorned" by the Christian, (Titus 2:10).

Conclusion: I believe that "didaskalia" is, (1) a body of truth containing Jesus' teaching, (2) and containing the Apostles' teaching as found in the Epistles, (3) which addresses the Christian life, (4) and is applied to the Christian life by leaders of the church, (5) with a goal of helping an individual believer into godliness (i.e. becoming more like Christ), and (6) is used to expose and refute those who walk contrary to the Christian faith." Churches today are missing "sound didaskalia."

End Notes:

¹A Critical Lexicon and Concordance, Ethelbert W. Bullinger, Zondervan; Grand Rapids, 1975, p. 232

²A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, By William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1979, p. 191

³The New International Dictionary Of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Ed., "Teach" by K. Wegenast, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1971, Vol. 3, Pp. 668-770

⁴Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, By George W. Knight III, New International Greek Testament Commentary, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1992, Pp. 88-89

⁵The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Frank E. Gaebelein, Ed., "Matthew," by D. A. Carson, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1984, Vol. 8., p. 349

⁶Ibid., p. 678

⁷The Gospel of Mark, by William L. Lane, The New International Commentary On The New Testament, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1974, Pp. 248-249

⁸The Pastoral Epistles, by Homer Kent, Moody: Chicago, 1958, p. 290)

⁹Ibid., p. 294