

# The Foes of the Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. So we're going to be looking tonight, or at least beginning to look tonight, at Paul's final remarks in this letter.

! Very short letter. It hasn't taken us really all that long to go through it, maybe longer than some might think it would, but we've kind of taken our time and had a few gaps in there.

So we are now to the very last section of the letter, and we really could call them kind of closing remarks, kind of in one sense a summation of some of the things that Paul put in his letter, kind of wrapping that up, especially the part that we're going to be looking at tonight, which deal with an issue that Paul dealt with a number of times in the letter, that is the issue of false teachers.

So in these final remarks, we could say that these remarks concern friends and foes. That's kind of how I've entitled it, as you notice, kind of final word concerning friends and foes.

And I put it in that order because that's usually the way you put that expression, friends and foes.

Although, Paul is going to begin with the latter of the two, and that is the foes.

[ 1 : 36 ] So I want to go ahead and read the passage, even though we're just really going to look at three verses, and then we'll finish the rest of it up next week.

And so here it is, verse 12 of chapter 3 of the letter to Titus, verse 9 rather. I really like the way the New King James has translated that.

Such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. When I send Artemis to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenos, the lawyer, and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. All right, so these are his closing remarks to the letter. And he begins with the foes, or he begins with what I have called the foes of the faith.

[ 3 : 06 ] All right? That's what we'll focus on tonight. Really, really the first of a two-part kind of outline, foes of the faith. And Paul really identifies two categories, for lack of a better word.

I don't know if categories would be the best word, but I'll just stick with that. Two categories of foes. They're kind of two categories. Though, you know, some commentators really lump these together under one category, false teachers.

But really, there are two categories here. First, the false teachers, and that's one of the categories. False teachers who were doing what?

They were promoting fictitious teachings. Now, you don't need to fill out anything in your outline yet. I'm not there yet, so you may have to scratch that out. All right, that's the first category, false teachers.

And what were they doing? They're promoting false teaching or fictitious teaching. And then second, the second category I would call their surrogates, kind of their allies inside the church.

[ 4 : 20 ] And what were they doing? They were causing factions in the church. So these are kind of the two categories that we could lump under one, false teachers. But he's really not going to be addressing directly false teachers as much as he's going to be focusing on false teachings and what we ought to do about that.

Now, it's interesting, I think, and this is still all kind of introduction. It's interesting to compare verse 9 with the verses that have preceded it, verses that we've already studied.

In verse 9, Paul begins with the word but, that conjunction. And it's so key. It's such a strong conjunction, really, in human language, in English language.

But he begins with that strong conjunction but, and he does so to signal a kind of a major shift in his focus. Because in verse 9, he is going to be talking about false theology.

Whereas the verses that have preceded verse 9, verses that we've studied in the last couple of times, really all about correct theology. All right, so we've been talking about correct theology and some great theology about salvation, about Jesus, about the very, really the very essence, very, very essence of our salvation.

[ 5 : 50 ] And we studied that last time. And now he's going to shift to false theology or at least he's going to be shifting to how we address that in certain circumstances.

That's what we'll get to here in just a moment. But not only does he then compare theologies, but he also compares behaviors, certain behaviors in the church.

All right, so to the correct theology bunch in the church, he wrote in verse 8, for example, those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.

These things are good and profitable to men. So that's what he said in verse 8. But then to the false theology group, he wrote in verses 9 and 10, for they are unprofitable.

See, he even uses the negative form of the word profitable they've used in verse 8. Now he uses the negative form of that in verse 9. And they, that is the false teachers, are unprofitable and useless.

[ 6 : 59 ] Actually, not so much the false teachers, but in this sense, their teachings or the arguments concerning their teachings is unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning.

All right, so he makes a comparison and a big shift from verse 8 and what precedes that now to verse 9. But, and now we're going to focus on the kind of false theology side, the false teachers inside the church.

Now, Paul's purpose in these closing words is to instruct Titus on how he should deal with these foes, how he should deal with them. And since he divides the foes of the faith into two groups, as I've said, his instruction to Titus is twofold.

All right, so there are two points, two sub-points. And here's the first one. Now you can start filling in the blank. Actually, I guess your first blank to fill in is foes, foes of the faith.

But the second sub-point, the first sub-point is resist foolish arguments. All right, this is what, this is his focus. Resist foolish arguments.

[ 8 : 15 ] So look again at verse 9. But avoid foolish, and by the way, the Greek word is moros, from which we get our word moron, or moronic.

In fact, we could translate it that way. Moronic disputes or arguments, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and useless.

He said, avoid these things. So we are to resist foolish arguments. And actually, this is sort of a backdoor approach to slamming false teachers.

Because Paul's focus here is not so much concerned with the substance of their false teaching. He's already dealt with that back there, actually, very strongly.

In chapter 1, for example, in verse 11 of chapter 1, teaching things which they ought not for the sake of dishonest gain. That's addressing the substance of what these false teachers were teaching as well as their motive.

[ 9 : 20 ] And verse 16 also, for another example, they profess to know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

That's verse 16 of chapter 1. All right, so here in the passage, these closing remarks is not so much talking about the substance of the teaching.

And Paul's focus here is not really about how to deal with false teachers directly.

That, too, he has already dealt with back in chapter 1. For example, in verse 11, their mouths must be stopped. That's pretty strong language, isn't it? All right, that's how you deal with false teachers in the church.

Stop their mouths. Now, he doesn't exactly tell us how to do that. How to go about doing that legally without committing some kind of crime.

[ 10 : 22 ] He also says in verse 13 of chapter 1, Rebuke them sharply. So this is how you ought to deal with false teachers in the church. But even that is not so much the focus here in these closing remarks in the book.

So what is his focus here? Well, Paul's focus is on how we should deal with arguments over false theology. That's what he's focusing on.

How should we deal with argumentative arguments over false theology? And he essentially tells us, to use an old kind of colloquialism, don't suffer fools.

That's what he basically is saying here. An idiom, an old idiom that means don't waste your time arguing with foolish people or moronic people.

So that's what Paul's saying. Don't get embroiled. This is good instruction for us. I wish some people I have known over the years would get this.

[ 11 : 33 ] You know, they have a tendency to cut their nose off in spite of their face, you know. And Paul's saying don't get embroiled in a debate over false theology.

In arguments over false theology. He calls it foolish disputes. Again, moronic arguments. And what does he say? He says avoid them. Avoid them, which comes, by the way, from a Greek word that basically means to turn oneself around.

Turn your back to those who want to be argumentative about their theology. Don't get sucked into that. Don't be a part of that. Now, that doesn't mean that he is telling us not to speak the truth.

That's a different thing. Yeah, we ought to stand for the truth and proclaim the truth. But we don't get ourselves involved in arguments with people over false theology.

He says don't do that. And why not? Because in the end it will not accomplish anything. That's what Paul says. Won't accomplish anything.

[ 12 : 40 ] He says for they, not false teachers but foolish disputes, arguments, are unprofitable. And they're useless.

That means they're worthless. That is they won't accomplish anything. So don't suffer fools. And, you know, the truth is the false teachers might accomplish something with you if you get involved in an argument with them.

You know, very few of us are good at arguments. Very, very few of us are good at open debate with people who are believing in some false truth.

You need to be prepared for something like that. And even if you are prepared, it's ill-advised to be a part of anything like that. And the danger, part of the danger, though Paul didn't address it here, is that the false teacher might accomplish something with you.

And so don't give them the opportunity. That's one reason why I have, over the years, counseled people not to invite Jehovah's Witnesses into their homes.

[ 13 : 52 ] Now, if you want to talk to one, do it outside. I've done that a number of times. Just me and that Jehovah's Witness, or maybe two, because they usually will visit in pairs.

But don't bring them into your home, where your family is. And, of course, that apply to any of us here, but where your young children might be. Don't bring them in there, because it's going to lead to an argument, because that's their approach.

They're going to argue their theology. And they're good at it. And why are they good at it? Because they've been trained to do that. They've been trained to argue their theology, or get you into an argument.

And though you may never be swayed, there may be others present who are hearing it, maybe in the next room, or maybe in the room with you, who are younger in the faith, or maybe immature, like children, more susceptible to the effects of a very persuasive argument.

And maybe they could be swayed, or the groundwork might be laid for them being swayed toward a false doctrine. So you shouldn't do it.

[ 15 : 07 ] If you're going to talk to a Jehovah's Witness, even then I wouldn't get into an argument with them. You can speak the truth. Say, you know, I understand you believe differently.

This is how I believe. Take it or leave it. But I'm not going to get in an argument with you. So this is what Paul is saying.

Don't suffer fools. Okay? And even though you may not be swayed, there may be others. But you might also be swayed in some way.

Or there is some danger there that you need to be aware of. And the Bible, I think, issues several warnings about listening to the arguments of false teachers.

And I've given you six of them there. These come straight from Scripture. First place, they might unsettle your soul. That comes straight from the passage in Acts, actually Acts chapter 15 verse 24, where the Bible says, Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls.

[16:25] Context is these words are false doctrine. And unsettling your souls, saying you must be circumcised to keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment.

That is, this is not true. It's not the Word of God. Number two, they might shipwreck your faith. First Timothy 1, 18 to 19. Of course, he's speaking of Timothy here.

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some, having rejected, concerning the faith, have suffered shipwreck.

Their faith has been shipwrecked. Number three, they might lead you to blaspheme, to even speak words of blasphemy. First Timothy 1, 20.

Of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme. Now there are different views about, you know, the spiritual condition of Hymenaeus and Alexander, whether they were saved people or unsaved people.

[17:35] I think delivering them to Satan is to deliver them to his torment and so that they would learn something. It would discipline them not to blaspheme.

Number four, they might lead you to ruin or to those who are trying to, that you're trying to lead rightly. This kind of goes back to my illustration about the Jehovah's Witnesses. If they don't lead you to ruin, others who are present, maybe even involved in this kind of disputation or argument, might be damaged.

And 2 Timothy 2, 14, remind them, and he's speaking of workers and teachers, leaders in the church, remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit to the ruin of the hearers.

Number five, they might produce ungodliness in you. 2 Timothy 2, 16, but shun, that's, by the way, the same word that he uses in our passage here in Titus, translated a little bit differently in the English, but it's the same Greek word.

But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And then finally, their false doctrine might spread in the church like a cancer, 2 Timothy 2, 17, and their message will spread like cancer.

[19:03] So you don't allow the argument to come into the church, and this is a word to leaders, as well as other members, because just the teaching or the speaking of that false doctrine can take root and cause it to grow like a cancer in our church.

So don't give the false teachers a voice, even for purposes of debate. You know, we always approach those opportunities to think, well, maybe I can change their mind or sway them. It rarely happens. Not that way, not through argument. It just won't work, and this is what Paul says. So don't suffer fools.

Paul mentions four categories of error promoted by the false teachers. These are really broad categories. The first word he uses is the word disputes.

At least that's the word that New King James uses. I think some other versions, like New American Standard, use the word controversies. And these are just kind of futile arguments over theologies that are based upon human reason and rationalism rather than based upon God's word.

[20:24] That's important to note because false doctrine, false theologies are usually promoted and argued on the basis of human reasoning and rationalism.

For example, arguments over the Genesis account of creation. That's a good example. There are many who have argued against that, but not based upon what the word says, but based upon reason and rationalism.

You know, the whole difficulty that they see in reconciling the Genesis account with known science. And rather than just believe in what God has said, we have to somehow change it or kind of make it more allegorical so that it jives with our understanding of science.

And this is what disputes or controversy is all about. Or another one would be arguments over the virgin birth of Jesus. You know, again, kind of looking at biology, say this can't be, so it must mean something else.

And that's just simply arguing a theology based upon human reason and rationalism. Yeah, we could go on. I mean, it would encompass all the arguments over most, if not all, of the miracles recorded in Scripture.

[21:47] You know, I've said this many times before, I get so irritated. I can't watch it for very long, but I don't know how many, you know, public broadcasting stations or programs I've seen on trying

to substantiate the Bible, the miracles in the Bible, to substantiate them, explain them by some natural cause.

You know, rather than just simply being a miracle, you know, like the parting of the Red Sea. Folks, it was just a miracle. You don't have to explain it by some strong wind, you know, or whatever. Or God turning the, you know, Moses turning the water into blood. You know, they've come up with all kinds of ideas about how that could be possible scientifically. I'm not interested in it being scientific.

You know, like Adrian Rogers, you say, you know, someone's going to find the bones of some whale with Jonah's initials carved in its, in its rib, and say, see there, the Bible really is true. That's ridiculous. It was a miracle. All right? So these are controversial disputes. It's just futile arguments over theologies based on human reason.

[ 23 : 05 ] And then he mentions genealogies, and this one's a little bit more complicated because it's so far removed from our thinking, though there is, you know, certainly this revival of interest in genealogies, but not really on a theological basis.

But to the Jews, genealogies were very, very important. And so, you know, they're all the time looking at genealogies and talking about genealogies.

And the problem is, you know, we have genealogies in the scripture. And so, Paul is not, you know, criticizing our focus on those genealogies.

They were put in scripture for a purpose. And really, the importance of genealogies for the Jewish people, the ancient Jewish people, was really for purposes of establishing or proving the lineage of the Messiah.

But now the Messiah has come, and so there's no need for this focus on genealogies anymore. But apparently, there were Jews in the church who were focusing on genealogies and they were, you know, they were even trying to attach some saving significance to their genealogies and so forth.

[ 24 : 23 ] And then, third, the word contentions. and these are, you know, another form of argument, but they're kind of prideful arguments over just which group has the correct theology.

And we're pretty accustomed to that kind of thing. I mean, why do we have so many different denominations, you know? My theology's right, yours is not. Get out of here.

I don't want to have any fellowship with you. And this was the problem. Arguments that would exclude people. Now, we're not talking about arguments concerning core biblical doctrines. Those will always divide us if you don't believe the core truths of Scripture. Then, we can't have fellowship. But there are peripheral doctrines that, you know, we can disagree on but still have fellowship with one another.

But even that is not what was happening here. These were on theologies that had nothing to do with Scripture. You know, about certain holidays, about certain star formations, and, you know, whatever.

[ 25 : 40 ] And what they, their theological significance, and if you don't agree with me on that, then, you know, you're not with the right group. So, this is what the contentions are.

Arguments that, you know, I have the right theology. It reminded me, you know, I hope this doesn't offend anybody's sensibilities, but when I was in seminary years ago, and one of my professors, old, old, old guy, he's been with Jesus for many years now, but very known and highly respected theologian among Southern Baptists, Dr. Roy Beeman, and he, one day in our class, was sharing with us about the controversy back in the early 40s, 30s and 40s and 50s, the controversy between, in our convention, between fundamentalists and what they called moderates, you know, which are just simply liberals.

and it was a big struggle, has been for many years in our convention between fundamentalists and moderates, and he said he was attending the Southern Baptist Convention one year, and I think this was like back in the 40s sometime, and he met a guy that he knew who was a known moderate, very outspoken moderate, and he, you know, he didn't want anything to do with anybody, didn't agree with his view of scripture, which was not much of a view at all, and so he said to Dr. Roy Beeman, he said, I, he said, I'm part of the moderates, the moderates, and you're part of those fundamentalists, seriously, and, and so this kind of is the flavor of what was going on with these false teachers and their surrogates in the church, and we'll get to the surrogates here in just a minute, but very elitist in their theological view, and if you don't agree with me on every part of this, then I don't want to have anything to do with you, and not only that, but you're damned, and so

pretty serious.

The fourth one is strivings, or some versions use the word quarrels, about what? About Mosaic Law, the Mosaic Law, and I know the word Mosaic is not in the passage, but this is what he's talking about, the Law of Moses.

And, of course, this particular category or issue is the keystone theology of the false teachers, basically arguing that obedience to the law, the Old Testament law, the Old Covenant law, that's the condition for salvation.

[ 28 : 44 ] That's basically what the false teachers were teaching. You know, about circumcision and other things that belonged to the shadow rather than the substance. Those things that were precursors to, pointing to, and were ultimately fulfilled when Jesus came, when the Messiah came.

Alright, so, here is Paul's instructions to Titus. Don't suffer fools. Don't get sucked into the debate, to a debate with false teachers.

believers. Just don't do that. Turn your back on that. You're not being a coward. You're not, you know, somehow shirking your responsibility as a believer.

He's not saying, you know, compromise in your faith and your belief in the truth. You're saying don't get into arguments with these people. Don't let them bait you into that argument.

Resist foolish arguments. It's unprofitable and useless. There's a second part to Paul's instructions and this concerns those in the church that were followers of these false teachers.

[ 29 : 55 ] They were disciples of the false teachers, I guess. I've called them surrogates because they were very involved in trying to accomplish something in the church, something evil.

and they were attempting to persuade others in the church to follow the false teaching. And by doing that, what were they doing?

They were causing disunity in the church, divisions, factions. And so, what is Paul's instruction concerning these people?

Well, here it is. Reject factious agitators in the church. So, first, resist foolish arguments, and then second, reject factious agitators.

Verses 10 and 11, reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. Now, there's several words I think need to be defined here.

[ 30 : 58 ] First of all, the word reject, and basically means have nothing to do with them. It's a pretty strong word. We're not just rejecting, told here to reject what they're saying.

We're to reject those who are speaking the false duck, not have anything to do with them, that are causing divisions in the church, don't have anything to do with them.

The second word we need to define is the word divisive. I guess really that's a pretty straightforward word, but it is kind of interesting, and this comes out pretty clear in the King James, but it's a translation of the Greek word hereticos, from which we get our word heretic, and in fact, in the King James, it's translated that way, although it's translated, looks like a misspelling, it's heretic with a K on the end.

That was the Old English pronunciation, and actually, all the King James translators were doing, were bringing the Greek word into the English transliteration, heretic, but that has great meaning to us, doesn't it?

But the word itself just basically means to choose, so it's a very simple word, to choose, but it's not what the word means specifically, like you would find it in a dictionary.

[ 32 : 25 ] dictionary. It's the meaning of the word as it, the meaning that it had taken on when Paul used the word here. And so, it had come to signify an act of choosing self-determined opinions, or theologies, over and above the truth of God's word.

So, you can kind of see how that would become what we understand about heretic. It's a belief system or a doctrine or theology that is absolutely contrary to the teachings of God's word.

But it is to choose that over and above the truth of God's word. It's to choose that doctrine. And to do so in spite of the authority of God's word as well as God's leaders in the church.

So, it's pretty strong stuff here. And the result was that it's those who would choose in a self-determined way, that decided, determined, to believe this certain theology, and I don't care what the Bible says.

It doesn't matter what it says. This is what I believe. that's heretic. And to do so in spite of the authority of God's leaders in the church.

[ 33 : 57 ] And so, the result was to create factions in the church body. And that's what always happens with heresy. It always causes division, of course.

in Southern Baptist life, I think we've seen this happen many times over heretical teachings, or those that maybe some would not categorize as heretical, but how many churches have split wide open over the issue of tongues, and not just tongues, but other false theologies that have caused division in the church.

And third, the word warped. Again, I love that word. These people are warped. It almost doesn't sound like it's a word you would find in the Bible.

There it is, at least in the New King James. And it comes from a word, a Greek word, that means to turn inside out, to be turned inside out, or twisted.

And you can see that. I mean, it's someone who has a distorted way of thinking. And they've been distorted, they've been turned inside out, twisted, warped by false doctrine.

[ 35 : 21 ] So, it's not just someone who believes wrongly. We need to understand it's not just simply describing someone who believes wrongly about a certain theology or doctrine.

It's not just that. that. It's someone who's been warped by that. Someone whose entire way of thinking has been perverted, twisted, warped.

And it's the kind of person that no matter what you say, you're not going to change your mind. No matter how forcefully you argue and smartly you argue for the truth, it's like they can't get it. their minds are just twisted. They're warped. And then the fourth word is sinning. And you say, well, I already know what that word means, but it's really the form of the word that we need to pay attention to here.

And it's a participle and it speaks of ongoing determined sinfulness. It's ongoing in sinfulness. And we'll put all this together. I mean, it's easy to put all this together in the passage, but just identifying each of these words.

[ 36 : 33 ] And then the last word I want to focus on or highlight is that word self-condemned. And this is perhaps the most important word in the whole passage. That is in the sense of conveying the meaning, Paul's meaning here.

And it refers to this person's direct participation in his own condemnation. You know, and why? Because of his persistent or her persistent sinful behavior, even after being given two opportunities to repent.

It's a persistent. All right, so here's a person who has believed in and the mind has been twisted by a certain heretical theology that they have bought into from a false teacher.

And they're not just content to believe it themselves, but now it's their mission to get everyone else in the church to believe it too. Otherwise, you know, either they'll never be complete without this doctrine or they are hopeless at lost without this doctrine.

And so they're determined to propagate this heretical view, this false doctrine, even to the point of causing factions and divisions within the church.

[ 37 : 51 ] And they have been confronted by the leadership to repent, but they haven't. repented. So they've been confronted a second time to repent and they haven't repented.

And so what Paul is saying, by your reaction and your resistance to the truth and to the call of God to repent of your heretical false teaching and belief, because of that, you're actually participating in your own condemnation.

temptation. You are self-condemned. In effect, you become the best evidence of your guiltiness. That's really strange to think about it.

Your actions and what you continue to do is the best evidence, if we were to take it to a court of law, that would be the best evidence against your guiltiness. Your resistance, your persistent unrepentance is proof of your warped and sinful mind.

That's what Paul is saying. And so what is to be done about these people? Well, it's pretty straightforward. Paul says first, they should be warned.

[ 39 : 09 ] The word is admonished in the New King James, but it's basically be warned about it. Second, they should be warned.

warned a second time, assuming they have not repented. And then third, they should be not warned, but rejected.

Should be rejected. Again, which means have nothing to do with them. Now, Paul doesn't go into details about, you know, like Jesus does in his passage on church discipline.

They go into details about, you know, going to the person and going with a witness and then bringing them to the church and, you know, all of that and then to be. He doesn't go into details about just, you know, whether they should be expelled from the church, excommunicated from the church, whether this proves they're unbelievers or believers that just need to discipline. He didn't go into those details. He just, very matter of factly, says warn them once, warn them twice, and then reject them. Have nothing to do with them. I mean, it's three strikes and you're out. [ 40 : 22 ] Basically, and we have to just leave it there. This is what Paul said. And so, the foes of the faith, and the next time we'll look at the friends of the faith. So, Paul ends on a positive note, friends of the faith, and we'll deal with that next time. . .