

Combatting False Teachers in the Church

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[0:00] I'm glad y'all were here this evening, and you know, this April, we're trying to rush through.

I've got to finish chapter one before I can go to two, and then we'll go to chapter three, and then we're going to be closing down until September. But I do want to get through Titus. You know, Paul did not live in the 20th or the 21st century, at least not on earth.

He's alive. But I have to wonder if he somehow didn't see our time. He certainly seems to write about these days that we live in, and today we're going to come to Titus chapter one.

Cover verses 10 to 16. And Paul is writing to Titus, and I told Jonathan at last day, basically he's telling Titus there's some men in the church that need to shut up. And I also told Jonathan one of my favorite quotes was that I was talking to somebody one time, and there's a woman that didn't agree with everything in the Bible, and she said, do you think women should be silent in church? I said, yes, and so should most men. But he's going to tell Titus, and he softens it a little bit, there's some men that need to be silenced within the church. And we probably don't think about that very much. You know, men that need to be silenced in the church, but it was true in Paul's day, and quite honestly, on a global or certainly a national scale, it hadn't gotten any better in our day. There are some people that need to be silenced. They're all over television. Now to understand our passage today, we must understand what was happening to the churches on Crete. Titus had been handed a major role in overseeing the churches on that island, and much of his work had to do with counteracting the false teaching that was being promulgated, that was my big word for the lesson, by many of the so-called leaders of the church. Now it wasn't enough to merely denounce their false doctrine and try to correct that in some measure. These men were a cancerous blight on the cause of Christ. And like a cancer, it had to be removed from the fellowships that made up the various churches on the island. Doesn't mean there couldn't have been eventual restoration if they got their hearts right and their theology straight. But until then, they were a cancer on the church.

Now Paul had a great experience with this. He'd already dealt with false teachers in Ephesus. And he was becoming very adept at dealing with these issues. But in Ephesus, Paul instructed young Timothy to merely correct the men that were teaching false doctrine. Crete, though, was different.

[3:48] These false teachers, many of them, their leaders anyway, were beyond repair. And Paul declared them to be disobedient and detestable. He said they were worthless for any good deed. And while that may seem overly harsh, we must also remember that the ultimate author of that stinging indictment was the Spirit of God Himself. Now, we live, of course, in a time of tolerance. In fact, we represent the only people on earth that cannot be tolerated. You know, evangelical Christian believers. Church discipline in many quarters is a thing of the past. Individual beliefs are rarely challenged.

But that is not the biblical model. And that is certainly true of evil men and imposters who are out to deceive many in the church. Pastors, teachers, elders, and leaders in the church have standing orders directly from the commander in chief, that's Jesus, to guard what has been entrusted to them. And you can read about that in 2 Timothy 3.13. And as we studied last time, we are to refute those that teach error and false doctrine, Titus 1.9. So how are we to combat false teachers in the church? Well, the first thing we are to do, and I think the best thing, is to overpower them is to overpower them with truth. We bring biblical truth to the table. Nothing can be more humiliating than to be exposed as teaching falsehood. And in this regard, truth can be viewed as a spiritual weapon, probably the greatest spiritual weapon in our arsenal that is able to destroy those things that are false. A second line of attack is to oppose those who teach false doctrine by revoking their right to stand before a group or the entire congregation and teach. Now, that's hard to do, but it may become necessary someday. Put simply, they should never be given the pulpit in the first place. In our day, we should never support a false teacher by watching them on television, buying their

books, or supporting their ministry. I remember many, many years ago, probably going back 30 years ago, a Baptist preacher actually was up getting ready to preach, and he got into his message, and he's on a platform, much like our church, and he's looking down at the congregation, and he said, have you ever thought why I'm up higher than you all? And they, of course, no one answered, but they kind of sat there waiting for what was next, and he said, because I, as your pastor, am your mediator between you and God.

Well, that's right out of Roman Catholicism, and the chairman of deacons was about 80 years old, had the presence of mind to slowly get out of his, and walk up, and he took the microphone, and he said, church is dismissed, the deacons will meet at two o'clock this afternoon. And that evening, they had church, and some deacon was preaching, and the pastor was packing his house up because he was gone. Took a lot of courage to do that. Took a lot of courage. A third way to oppose false teachers is to live godly lives and teach others around you to do the same. Righteous living undergirds the truth being taught.

Now, in our lesson tonight, Paul will provide a general description of the false teachers in the church who are to be silenced. And what are, he's going to teach us what our reaction to such men is to be and how to evaluate their lives. How should we look at these guys? And first of all, let's deal with the men who must be silenced in verse 10 and following. For there are many, how many, how many was there? Many. There are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons. This testimony is true. I don't know why Paul shades it. He ought to just tell it like it is and let the chips fall where they will. This section starts out by revealing the proliferation of those who must be silenced. The scriptures say there are many. And there was an urgency in the work that Titus had been given because they were false teachers all over Crete. And guys, Crete's an island. You couldn't get away from them. You know, you just go in a circle. It was the responsibility of Titus to oppose them. And one of the ways he did that was to appoint godly men to the role of pastor elder. And you may recall for the last two weeks, we've been looking at God's qualifications for those men. And that's what Titus was looking for. Men that met the biblical qualification. I've said before, every time I read the qualifications for an elder, I don't know why I don't resign.

[10:10] My gosh, it's a high calling. It's a high calling. The many spoken of here, and here's the danger. The many Paul is talking about were within the church. These aren't guys at the local newspaper writing into toils against Christianity. These are people inside the church. They're teaching. They're sitting in the fuse. They had their bus ministries all over Crete, you know, bringing kids and talking, I guess, chariot ministry maybe. Within a year of writing this letter, Peter would issue a warning that false teachers had spread throughout the church and were teaching destructive heresies. You can read that in 2 Peter chapter 2. The greatest, mark this thought down in your heads, the greatest spiritual danger always comes from within the church. That's the greatest spiritual danger. Paul issued warnings to the church at Rome. He issued warnings to the church at Ephesus to be on guard from those on the church roles. And, you know, religion always battles the true church. I tell people Jesus was put to death basically by religion, condemned by religion and turned over to pagans to be executed. False teachers are to be silenced at all costs. We should employ every, underline this word, godly method to remove such deceivers.

Paul warned that even an angel is not to be believed if that angel preaches a gospel contrary to the true gospel that Paul taught. You find that in the first chapter of Galatians and teaching that on Sunday morning if you're tired of the class you're in. That was just a little advertisement here.

I didn't mean to look at Mike when I said that, but we're into Galatians and Paul was very, I mean, he said it, scared me to death, haven't he? Paul said anybody that teaches another gospel is the anathema of God, the eternally damned of God. That's a serious deal. It's a serious deal.

Now, false teachers can be identified by their behavior. We can look at their behavior and say, whoa, got a false teacher here. Rebellious men, empty talkers, hand deceivers, especially those of the circumcision.

First, false teachers are, by definition, rebellious. Why? Because they do not recognize the authority of God's word, nor do they recognize the authorship of the Bible by God's spirit. They reject both of those.

[13:19] When exposed, they will often defy church discipline. And you know what happens to a lot of them? And you know, you could think of guys on the national level that this has happened to. A lot of them, when they're exposed, simply slide over into a more tolerant denomination. Happens all the time. Many of these defrocked men, and I'm being very blunt here, end up in the charismatic ranks. There, the criterion, and I don't want to put a blanket over everyone in that movement, but especially the high-profile TV guys, the criterion is not wholly living. It is, have you had the experience? Have you had the right experience with the sign gifts? And if you have, you're in. Ed Saucy, a former pastor, I was very solid, but we were joking at lunch one day. He said, you know, if I wanted to go out and speak in tongues, obviously I'd get the right Buddha fellowship from the Baptists, but I could slide into the charismatic movement, and I'd become a millionaire, because he really had a great gift of preaching.

But it's if you've had the experience. That's the criteria. Second, the false teachers, Paul says, are empty talkers. They offer words that are clever, captivating, persuasive, smooth. By them, they are able to disguise their falsehoods by speaking in religious terms. They frequently use biblical words or phrases that are taken totally out of context. Totally. Joel Osteen just had 35,000 people out in L.A. Come listen to him. And they were weeping, and they were praising, and oh, he's wonderful.

And I was listening to MacArthur, who's out there in the L.A. area. He's saying, he's a pagan. I mean, John's another one. And John said, you know, Apostle Paul's my hero, so I probably talk a lot like him.

But he said, he's a pagan pantheist. Anyway, we'll move on. False teachers are deceivers.

[15:40] And I said earlier, they disguise their deceit with Bible words and Bible terminology. And a lot of people buy into their deception. And these guys really and truly have no lack of followers.

In fact, there are people that want to have their ears tickled. That's the day in which we live. They accumulate teachers that teach in accord with their worldly and demonic cravings.

God makes it very clear that he hates those things that are evil. He holds a special hatred for those who pretend to represent him, yet speak lies and deceit.

There are men in this town, and I know them personally, posing as pastors who claim that God is pro-abortion, pro-homosexuality, and against anti-Christian fundamentalism.

They're against Christian fundamentalism. And they're preaching in this town, and they have a following. They're held in high regard. One of them opened the city council meeting tonight.

[16:52] And I know him personally. Paul points out to Titus that many of the problems that existed in the churches of Crete were actually caused by the Jews in the congregation.

Now, that's Paul, the great Jew himself. But these guys were the Judaizers. And they wanted to impose the rigors of the ceremonial law on new converts of Christianity.

And Paul devotes the entire book of Galatians to that heresy. And you have to remember, the Judaizers viewed Christianity as merely an offshoot of Judaism.

It was just a little splinter group, and they would control them. Well, these false teachers on Crete were having an impact. In verse 11, they must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach.

There's an urgency in Paul's words here that he's giving to Titus. It appears that the false teachers of Crete were making a great impact, and there's no evidence that they were meeting with large groups.

[18:07] It appears they were meeting with small groups and even families. The danger of meeting with large groups is there could be somebody in the audience, some man willing to stand up and refute their error.

But small groups of very impressionable new converts are especially prone to attack. That's really what the cults do in our day.

They come to your door. There's a couple of them. They knock. You know, they want to come in. And they really try to devour people with their sweetness. And no one, and I'm getting close to stepping on toes.

I hope not in here, but no one looks more like an angel of light than a young Mormon elder. Literally. They come to your door. But Jesus said, such are wolves and sheep's clothing.

Paul says the danger is that entire families are being upset with their falsehoods. And the false teachers have a motive for the sake of sordid gain.

[19 : 15] You know, that's a new word to me. I'm 67 years old. I thought it was sordid. I've been pronouncing it S-O-R-I-T for 67 years. It's sordid gain.

Sordid gain refers primarily to ill-gotten gain. And this is especially true in our day because of the power of media.

Instead of asking a few people for financial support, they can ask people in millions at a time for support. And I think of a Robert Tilton, and there are some others, who have been exposed a number of times as a charlatan.

They lay out for a few months or a year, and they come back seeking more millions, and they get it. They get it. And like the con men of every age, the more outlandish the story, the greater the response.

They just make up bizarre, bizarre things. The desire to cheat Christians out of their money has been going on since the church was founded.

[20 : 29] The false teachers used their positions and slanted messages to promote their own financial gain. And that is why God has called pastors and elders to protect the flock.

I told you a couple weeks ago, and I heard him myself, Creflo Dollar, good name. He wants people to donate \$68 million to buy him a brand-new 20-passenger private jet.

He said, just think of how we could spread the gospel. Well, \$68 million will buy you a lot of airplane tickets, you know, and you can send people to some of the places VOM goes.

We had two guys leave this morning for India. One of them formally connected to our church, Mike Durkis, on their way to India to take the gospel. Well, what about their character?

And here we come into Mike's favorite philosopher. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.

[21 : 37] And I love Paul. He adds this, that testimony is true. That's Paul. I would classify that as fairly direct.

And the above is the testimony of one of their own. And Paul is speaking about a Greek poet named, now I practice this all day, Epimenides.

Epimenides. Epimenides. There, thank you. He was from Crete, and he was known very well. He was not speaking out of malice.

He's talking from knowledge. He knows his own people. The greatest lie the Cretans were known for, remember this is an island. They put out the false claim that Zeus was buried on the island.

They're trying to generate some, you know, tourism. You know? I mean, have you ever been to the place where they shoot out at the OK Corral?

[22 : 44] Depends on which corral you go to. They had more than one. It was a false ball and I thought it would be. Yeah, I mean, they had more than one. So they put out the word, hey, come visit Crete.

Zeus is buried here. Now, there's two problems with that. First problem is, we know Zeus never existed. He's a figment of Greek writing.

But even the pagans who believed in Zeus should recognize how absurd that claim is. After all, in their world, Zeus was immortal.

So how could he be buried on Crete? They thought he was one of the gods that lives forever. Why would they buy into it? And yet they were going down there, you know, their ships.

I'm sure some tried to fly and whatever. But they wanted to see the burial place of Zeus. Citizens of Greece, of Crete, were so involved in falsehood that a phrase was coined.

[23 : 51] It said, the phrase was, to cretinize. And that was a figure of speech. Everybody knew what it meant. It meant a lie. He's cretinizing.

He's telling a lie. That's like to be from a culture, you know. Oh, they cretinize everything. Boy, that'd be bad. Now, in addition to being liars, Paul says, and actually the poet says, cretins were also evil beasts and lazy gluttons.

To live like an evil beast is to behave like a wild animal. Those types of people live for their own sensual appetite, their own passions.

Now, lazy glutton speaks for itself, and I don't want to get too personal here. Cretins liked to eat. They hated work, but they liked food.

Now, you got an oxymoron there. How are you going to get the money to buy the food? But that's true. So what is to be done with the men who must be silenced?

[25 : 01] Well, listen to what Paul says starting in the second part of verse 13. For this reason, reprove them severely. And then he adds, so that they may be sound in the faith.

He's still holding out some hope some of these guys will come around. Now, some, he was ready to give them the right Buddha fellowship. For this reason, reprove them severely, so they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.

So Paul instructs Titus to confront the heretical teaching and ungodly living of the false teachers. And he was especially hard on Judaizers. And first, he says, you got to reprove these guys. You got to have the courage to stand up and reprove them. And reprove them, he uses the word severely. By the way, that comes from a Greek word meaning cut with a knife. Perform surgery on them. And as always, that rebuke needed to be corrective. The goal was to turn some of these men around so they would become sound in the faith.

[26 : 20] Paul, in some respects, was a tower of patience. He is probably viewed as a very impatient man. But, you know, he had to have patience.

After all, he dealt with the church at Corinth. I mean, he was there for a year and a half. And if you're going to be around Corinth for a year and a half, you had to have patience. And Paul also says we're to repudiate such men not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.

Paul did not want men paying heed to error. What benefit is there in that if you're going to believe an erroneous doctrine?

And, you know, there's world religions all over the place. What profit do you have if you're going to follow a false religion? Paul expressed this most directly and clearly when he wrote to the church at Corinth.

Listen to what he said in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 14 to 18. Do not be bound together with unbelievers.

[27 : 35] Pretty easy to understand. For what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Or what harmony has Christ with Belial or Baal? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? Okay, Paul, we're getting the message here. For we are the temple of the living God.

Just as God said, I will dwell in them and walk among them. And I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore, remember what therefore just was said.

Because we just said that. Come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean. And I will welcome you.

[28 : 42] And I will be a father to you. And you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty. Hell, shall I? The Lord commands us there, don't be linked together with unbelievers when it comes to religious or spiritual matters.

Now, many are in the workforce and you work around unbelievers. I mean, that's the nature. I'm not talking about that. But he says don't link up with them if we're talking about spiritual things or religious things.

Only evil can come from that. A little leaven does what? Corrupts the whole loaf, right? I mean, what's a half truth?

It's a lie. It's a lie. So he says don't link up with false religion or false spirituality. Because the whole thing will be corrupted with evil.

That is why Paul tells Titus, be on guard against false Jewish myths and man-made commandments.

[29 : 54] Now, a lot of theologians, not everyone agrees, but the conservative theologians, which obviously are correct, say this could well be a reference to Jewish traditions that had been handed down.

And you may recall by the time Jesus came around, those traditions had become equal to God's law. I mean, even the father of works.

You know, on the Sabbath you can't walk over 1,500 feet. And be careful because you might get a nail stuck on your sandal. And that would be bearing a burden on the Sabbath. And if you see a man that's laying down and he's been wounded, you can stabilize him.

But if his condition improves, you've worked on the Sabbath. And they had 639 or 600. They had a gaggle of these things. And a gaggle is always a lot.

Paul then says the men who must be silenced must first be evaluated. Verse 15 and 16. To be pure, all things are pure.

[31:06] And guys, let me just tell you. You can't live what I would call a bifurcated life. Two lives. And you can't say I've never enjoyed church more than now.

I really am into the singing. Bible study on Monday night and Wednesday night has been superior. And my giving is at an all-time high.

I just hope my wife doesn't find out that I've got a girlfriend. You can't do that. And pick any sin. I mean, that's your strongest spiritual point.

That's the point of that sin. Or weakest, I guess we'd say. But people that try to do that, and there's been some high-profile ministers do that, right? They leak all over.

They leak all over. So, I mean, it's either total spirituality or you leak all over. To the pure, all things are pure. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure.

[32:16] But both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God. But by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

Now, Paul here is evaluating the men in the churches of Crete using two standards. And those standards have not changed.

Okay? Just because we're in this wonderfully enlightened 21st century, the standards haven't changed. He looks at their inner life, and then he looks at their outer life.

Pretty simple. The inner life of false teachers is corrupt. The outer life of false teachers is hypocritical and debauched.

Plain and simple. The inner life of the false teachers has nothing pure about it. The false teacher has his mind and conscience defiled.

[33:28] When we strive for purity, we're doing it God's way. And I've said many times to you, we're not talking about perfection. We're talking about direction.

Perfection will come when we see Jesus. But it should be the direction of our life. And inner purity always produces outer purity.

You'll know them by their works. The reverse is not necessarily true. One can give the appearance of outer purity and be full of all manner of corruption.

Jesus said that to the Pharisees. You look like whited sepulchers. You know, you've been beautifully painted. But inside, you're full of dead men's bones. What was Jesus saying?

You stink like a grave. You stink like a corpse. If you've ever had that experience, trust me, don't seek it out. But men can give the appearance of outer purity and be filled with all kinds of corruption.

[34:33] Jewish legalism was like any form of religious legalism. And those who hold to legalism believe that a person is capable of making themselves acceptable to God by observing ceremonies and traditions and rituals.

And, you know, that's the majority of the unsaved within the Christian belief system.

That they're trying to observe ceremonies and traditions and rituals. It exists in Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, and other religious systems of the world.

The heresy of every false religious system is a belief in a system of works righteousness. And, guys, let me just say there's mainline denominations in the world today and in America that believe in a works righteousness.

It's scary. It's scary. It's scary. That is an abomination to God. You are joining Christ with something. And it is not grace plus.

[35:56] It never has been. It never has been. The place for works of righteousness is after salvation.

Not to obtain it, but it's after. And you can read that in Ephesians 2.10. Many of us have memorized Ephesians 2.8 and 9, but don't leave out 10.

For your God's workmanship created unto good works. The outer lives of false teachers will eventually manifest itself.

It will eventually manifest itself. Such people profess to know God, but their deeds give them away. They give them away. They are in reality deniers of the faith.

One of the marks of the work righteousness system is an air of superiority among its followers.

They claim to know God better than anyone else. And I got to tell you, I think we're on the leading

edge of a great move in the church toward a works righteousness to embrace all forms of homosexuality.

[37 : 11] I think you're going to be seeing that. And certainly it's going to be supported by the government. And we can tell that's coming. These people are proud.

They feel superior to other people. But in reality, Paul says they're detestable and disobedient. God says they are worthless for any good deed. That word detestable, by the way, is the same word Jesus used to describe the abomination of desolation when the Antichrist stands in the rebuilt temple and declares himself to be God.

That's pretty strong language. Very strong that the Spirit of God had Paul use there. Disobedient lives betray a faith professed.

So you could talk all about your faith, but if you live disobedient lives, it's just shot full of holes.

These were the false teachers in Paul's day and the false teachers in our day.

They still fall within the same definition that Paul gave Titus on the Isle of Crete. So very many years ago.