

July 12, 2009

Titus 1:10-14

Good morning. Grab your Bibles and turn to Titus chapter 1. We are going to cover a larger than normal chunk this morning in our study of Titus. Remember we are studying Titus to see God's blueprint for establishing his church. We just finished last week the qualifications of elders, pastors, overseers – those God puts in place to lead his church. This morning we will a reason why. This passage has a lot of historical reality to it – lots of back and forth if you will in Paul's expression of his heart and through him the heart of God. So we will look at it together – then take it apart for understanding before we look at its importance for you and me. So **Titus 1:10-14:**

For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach-- and that for the sake of dishonest gain. Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.

Now having just spent 4 weeks or more looking at the task Paul gives Titus in Crete of appointing elders and looking at the qualifications that must be met for a man to be qualified to serve as an elder or pastor or overseer in God's church, in verse 10 the "for" that begins the verse connects all of that to what we just read – the horrible state of things in the leadership and churches on Crete.

The reason Titus must appoint ELDERS is because in their absence the wrong people have assumed positions of leadership and instruction.

The reason that the elders Titus must appoint must meet such clear and high STANDARDS is because without those God-given qualifications, again the wrong KIND of people get put in authority.

The reason the elders Titus appoints must be able to encourage and refute with SOUND doctrine (v9) is because of the PROBLEM the wrong people in leadership create. Which is what we just read about. It is not enough for elders to teach truth, they must silence certain people. So here we go.

Part of spiritual leadership is SILENCING people who should not speak. Verse 11 says "they must be silenced." Now before we get to how, let's look at who "they" refers to. Who must be silenced? ***How can the congregation and the elders tells who falls into this category?***

First in verse 10 he says **they are rebellious people.** That means **insubordinate – literally out of control.** They will not submit to authority – to biblical truth, to elder leadership, to spiritual authority. **These people want to associate with the church but they never want to come under its AUTHORITY.**

You may have seen that – people who get caught in their sin and the church tries to act authoritatively towards them and they bolt from it. They don't want anything to do with that. They don't want to submit to that. They want to be independent – not to have to answer to anyone for what they teach or for the un-truths they are holding forth and acting on.

Secondly **they are mere talkers.** That just means they are smooth and **persuasive** – good at talking if you will – but **they say nothing of VALUE** – nothing that does anyone any good in godliness. Macarthur says hearing them is like "sucking in flavored air." Mere talkers.

Third – **they are deceivers.** They mislead. **They make you think or more often FEEL like they are teaching the truth when in fact they are not.** This quality in the context of where Titus was is so central to the problem that Paul illustrates it in verse 12 by quoting a 7th century poet named Epimenides who was from Crete. Verse 12 says *"Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."*

That probably didn't make it onto the chamber of commerce brochure for 'take your vacation in Crete' but the truth was that the Cretans were known for lying so much that ancient Greeks used a form of the name Cretan as a euphemism for 'liar'- and these false teachers Paul is describing were examples of that exact kind of men – the ones who give proof to that assessment. And so after quoting Epimenides, Paul says – “this testimony is true.” They are deceivers.

And then fourth – **they are after dishonest gain** in verse 11. Our first thought about that probably has to do with financial gain. And that was assuredly the case in some instances – teachers often expected to be paid for their efforts in that day and time. And many of these men would assume the role of teacher or leader as a way of gaining materially. But that is not all that is in view here. These men basically wanted to extract something from those under their influence – whether it was money or power or material gain or support or follow-ship or praise or what – **they do what they do as a means of gaining something for SELF without regard for Christ.**

These people were characterized as rebellious, mere talkers, deceivers, and unscrupulously selfish. And again – historically – they were a part of a specific group. In verse 10 when he says “*especially those of the circumcision group,*” the word for “**especially**” **could better be understood as ‘NAMELY.’** Paul is calling them out – he's not messing around – he's basically naming names and the group he names is ***the circumcision group.***

Obviously we know by now this a reference to the **Jews** – specifically the Judaizers who were **trying – apparently pretty convincingly - to add circumcision and following the Jewish laws to faith in Jesus as NECESSARY for real salvation.** Not only do you need Jesus but you have to do this and this to be really saved. And that obviously wasn't all – there is a reference in verse 14 to “Jewish myths and the commands of those who reject the truth” and we will dig deeper in to that type of things when we get to chapter 3 verse 9 where Paul lines out the types of things these false teachers were using to destroy the church. But for now the issue is that this wasn't and isn't some vague warning about unreal threats but a head on acknowledgment and call to arms against a specific danger.

And verse 11 tells us why action must be taken. Paul says these false teachers – these rebellious people – these mere talkers – these deceivers – “*are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach.*”

Ruining indicates there is real DAMAGE going on here – maybe even without the victims realizing it. When he uses the term “**households**” it **may refer to literal FAMILY units and often that would be the case and is the case.** Deceptions set one family member against another – bring strife to a marriage – bring conflict to parenting relationships. But **more likely Paul is referring to house CHURCHES in that day where most of the Christian teaching was taking place.**

So he's saying false teachers – un-truth – destroys the church – keeps it from being established according to God's blueprint. If they – if we – neglect sound doctrine – there might still be an outward form of a Christian assembly, but inwardly the church dies and begins to breed all kinds of sin and deceit.

So now that we know why action must be taken and who it must be taken against, we can see and understand the strong language Paul uses to tell us what that action must be. Go back to verse 11.

They must be silenced.

The picture contained in Paul's words there is that of an animal with a muzzle strapped around its mouth. It's graphic. They must be silenced – they must be muzzled.

John Macarthur suggests a couple ways of doing that before we move on. First you silence them **by revoking their right to teach or speak. Give them no PLATFORM, no opportunity.**

On an organizational level, leadership gives those who they aren't confident in no chance to teach or share or any legitimate platform to speak. But on a personal level it falls to everyone in the congregation. In small groups – LINKS – classes – you do not surrender your attention to those who

spout half truths or unsound doctrine. The Word is always your filter – no matter who is speaking – so use it. And in the hallways and on the telephone and around the water cooler you give no ear to them either. What works in quenching gossip works in silencing the false teacher – give him no platform – no ear in which to be heard.

Secondly, you silence them **by overpowering them with the TRUTH**. You silence them with the truth. Jesus did that and He did it over and over again with the Pharisees and Sadducees. They would spew out their human philosophy and quasi-religious ideas and he cut them to shreds with divine truth. **Matthew chapter 22** is an awesome illustration of that in action. I won't read it all though I hope you will when you get home today but halfway through the Pharisees come and try and trap Jesus in his words but he handles them with truth and in **verse 22** *"When they heard [his response to their trap], they were amazed. So they left him and went away."*

Then in the next several verses the Sadducees come and try and again Jesus pounds them with truth and **verses 33** says *"When the crowds heard [his response], they were astonished at his teaching."*

And then right away **verse 34** says *"Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together."*

These guys didn't get it the first time – they want to get beat down again – and so they come and try to face Jesus again and this time by the end of the chapter in **verse 46** Matthew says: *"No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions."*

They must be silenced – they must be given no platform – they must be confronted with the truth. And in verse 13 Paul gives meat to his statement in verse 11. Verse 13 says – because of all we have seen – because of who they are – what they are like – what they are doing – verse 13 says: *"Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith."*

This word **rebuke is the same word used in verse 9 for what the ELDERS must be able to do – to refute** those who oppose sound doctrine. It is the same word used in **1 Timothy 5:20** for publicly rebuking elders who have persisted in a pattern of sin. It is the same word used in **2 Timothy 4:2** in relationship to the effective preaching of God's Word. And if that isn't enough, Paul uses the word again here in **Titus in chapter 2 verse 15** connecting it with the authority that is wielded by the proper use of God's Word. Paul says: *"These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you."*

Titus was not to give his OPINION about the behavior of the false teachers – he was to expose them by the continued teaching of the God's Word and the application of the gospel. Because the goal of this rebuke in verse 11 says *"so that they will be sound in the faith."*

There is a remedial or better a REDEMPTIVE heart to this. You aren't just rebuking them to damn them – you're rebuking them to show them their error – to show them the truth – in order that they might be sound – healthy, right, life-preserving – in the faith. There is a rescuing motif here.

But notice as well that Paul says to rebuke them sharply. So yes there is a redemptive heart to it, **but to give them a chance at being sound in the faith they must be rebuked SHARPLY**. The word there is *apotomos* – not hippopotamus – but *apotomos* – two words in Greek combined. One means to cut like with an axe and the other means off. So to cut off. Cut them off – severely. Very strong language.

As John Calvin writes in his commentary, "One of the most important abilities required of the [elder] (because remember all this is about why elders must be – why they must be who they are – and why they must do what they do) is to be able to adapt his teaching so that it applies to the people he addresses. He will not deal with the stubborn and insubordinate in the same way as with the meek and teachable. To the latter we should be gentle as this is appropriate for their teachableness, but the stubborn should be corrected with severity, for, as the saying goes, it takes a hard wedge to remove a hard knot."

I mentioned last week as we looked at the requirement of an elder to be personally passionate in and about God's Word and to use it to encourage and refute for the sake of sound doctrine that there has probably never been a time when God's Word was not under attack in one form or another. That is also true of God's church.

Whole New Testament books are arguments against false teaching that has intruded up on the mind and heart of God's church. Galatians is that kind of book – so is Colossians which we just spent more than a year and a half in – so is Hebrews – and in Titus and the letters to Timothy Paul says that resisting false teaching and protecting the church from its influence is a primary obligation of pastors and church leaders.

The things we have read and heard today may sound unpleasant to our modern Western ears. To characterize people with a different opinion of things as rebellious, empty talkers, and deceivers – to order that they be silenced and sharply rebuked sounds not only unmodern but judgmental and arrogant.

But each of these positions has consequences – inevitable and deeply important consequences. Someone is acting in truth and someone else in egregious error. The language Paul uses here makes perfect sense – in fact it is the only appropriate language if the truth is the truth. Listen to me – I need you to follow me here.

- If in fact God the Son – Jesus Christ – became man and lived among men and died and rose again for their salvation.
- If Jesus revealed himself and through his disciples the truth about God and man and salvation and the future.
- If a person's eternal destiny depends upon his response to that truth.
- If there is in the world a spiritual being of great evil and great power who is always at work subverting the truth in order to prevent the salvation of mankind.
- If there is that in our own sinful hearts that renders us vulnerable to and susceptible to deadly theological error.
- If Christ has entrusted his church with the responsibility of holding his truth without violation, both for the present and eternal welfare of his people and of the saving effect of the church's witness on the world as a whole.
- And finally if the history of the kingdom of God illustrates with dismal regularity the ease with which the church can lose her grip on the truth and enthusiastically embrace errors that weaken and finally break her relationship with God.

Then what we have proof of here is what JI Packer calls “the greatness and weight of spiritual issues.” These things matter. They bear on eternity. And to continue to quote Dr. Robert Rayburn “[With] the hatred of God in the fallen human heart being what it is, it should come as no surprise that the truths of the gospel, the teachings of the Holy Scripture should come under savage attack and have to be defended with might and main. We cannot rest because the enemies of the truth do not and will not rest.”

And remember – we are not talking here about non-Christian systems of thought. They are deadly enough but heresy – **false teaching IN the church is far more deadly because it not only destroys the souls of people in the church but cripples and sometimes renders entirely powerless the church's WITNESS to the world.**

Who is to speak the truth to the world if the church – the foundation and the pillar of truth – has lost it? How is the world ever to find the salvation of God if the church herself no longer knows from where it comes – what it is – or how it is to be obtained?

This is the history of the Christian message – wherever salvation has gone by the Holy Spirit, false forms of that message have come right behind it to extinguish its light. What this means for Titus – for elders – for us – is that there is not a doctrine or commandment of God's Word that has not been

spoken against by people *in the church who claim to be Christians and who want us to accept their teaching as authentic Christianity.*

And what that means for us as it did for Titus is that we must be prepared to stand for the truth because it will always be under attack. We must be prepared to state and defend the truth as it is revealed in Christ and His Word and refute those views that depart from it.

And please understand one more thing as I begin to wrap up. I guarantee you that these false teachers in Crete did not see themselves in Paul's description of them. They would not have accepted that they were deceivers or were after dishonest gain. They would have resented the accusations towards their teachings. And they would not have looked any different than anyone else. In fact they would have been friends with the very people they were deceiving.

All that to say that Paul is not just talking about confronting the nut job in the corner – but the friend we sit next to. I want you to get the next three statements in your notes:

Honest and loving though at times painfully blunt CONFRONTATION is the key to spiritual soundness.

When someone you know is consistently ACTING on a belief or doctrine that is wrong or worse is teaching, proclaiming, holding out that false doctrine as truth, we do the church – nor ourselves – nor God – nor them any FAVORS by letting it slide.

Anything less than God's truth DESTROYS churches – families – lives – eternities. There is too much at stake to be afraid of hurting someone's feelings or of making the wrong people mad or of losing precious numbers or money or influence or whatever.

As long as truth and error compete for the minds and hearts of men, there is no escape from the necessity of this battle – no escape from the hard work and hard words and hard choices it requires of those who would represent the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

There is more that we could say – and we will see more of this throughout Titus – but what we know about Paul from the totality of his writings is that he was very careful to distinguish between killing errors and more benign misunderstandings. He knew that real Christians sometimes gave place to boneheaded ideas. He knew how to be patient with people who didn't understand things correctly. He knew how to teach and instruct and refute in ways that made proper distinctions between various kinds of errors and various kinds of persons. He knew where to draw the line and where not to. The same thing was said of Augustine that he was gentle in his manner but unrelenting in regard to the issue itself. All of this is the task of the one who would contend for the truth and faith of God's people – for the elders, pastors, overseers in God's church.

But not just for them. What we see here is the hear the echo of **Hebrews 10:24** that you should spur one another on – the echo from just a few months ago in **Colossians 3:16** that you are to teach and admonish each other.

Very simply folks, that **if you love your souls and the souls of your children – you will care about the BATTLE that Paul is calling us to fight and you will care that you have elders, pastors, overseers capable of handling themselves FAITHFULLY and ably in that battle.**

May it be so in your home and our church – always.
Let's pray.