

**Protect the Flock**  
Titus 1:9-16 (09//09/18)  
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*Titus 1:9-16 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.*

*10 For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. 12 One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.*

When God published the truth in the Garden of Eden, "In the day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die," Satan immediately published his lie: "You surely shall not die." Ever since then there has been a war between God's truth and Satan's lies. God has posted warning labels throughout the Bible – beware of false teacher who proclaim lies. Prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel warned about false prophets who dream dreams and see visions. Jesus warned about false prophets who stand near the narrow gate and point people to the wide gate that leads to destruction. All the apostles warned strongly about false teachers. Paul even said if anyone preaches another gospel than the one he preached, let him be accursed – Galatians 1:8.

Last week in Titus 1 we talked about trustworthy leadership for God's people. Elders must be men of integrity, of godly character. Paul ended in verse nine with the two major responsibilities any shepherd has for the flock. First, feed them healthy food. That's why we teach expositionally through books of the Bible. We feed on Romans and Ephesians and Hebrews and all the rest of the Bible. We feed on healthy doctrine, the gospel of Christ, the grace of God, truth that leads to godliness in God's people. The second responsibility of a shepherd is to protect the flock against the lies and poisonous doctrines of false teachers. Paul called them wolves in Acts 20.

*Acts 20:29, I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore be on the alert....*

In Titus 1:10-16 God gives Titus strong instruction on dealing with false teaching on the island of Crete, and Paul's instruction is for all church leaders. This is not for the fainthearted this morning. If you are a new Christian, you may wonder about Paul's words. Let me help you. You always want to be aware that not every voice you hear, or every book you read, or every YouTube or TV evangelist you watch will be telling the truth. You want to know God's Word so you can discern truth from lies. You would not go to a doctor who tells you lies, or take your car to a mechanic who tells you lies, or listen to a professor you know is telling you lies. You're not going to eat Kellogg's Honey Smacks – they've put the warning out loud and clear. They may make you sick. But false teachers aren't so easy to detect. They never announce they are false teachers and their message is usually very convincing and comforting. And often it isn't what they say but what they leave out that makes them a false teacher. A teacher may talk of how wonderful Christ was and all the good things He did, and that sounds pretty good. But if he never warns of God's judgment and eternal hell, he is a false teacher.

Remember, there is one truth for spiritual life, and that truth is Jesus Christ and the Word of God. All religions apart from Biblical Christianity are false. All false teachers within Christianity are telling lies, even if they don't know it. They can be deceived themselves (2 Timothy 3:13). So the only way you know the

difference is if you are learning the Word of God and developing discernment. That's why you need to feed your heart on God's Word. When you hear a speaker, you must ask, "Is what he saying biblical?" Paul warned us in Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." We're going to break our study into two parts: identify false teachers and silence false teachers.

**THEY MUST BE IDENTIFIED – "There are many rebellious men, empty talkers, and deceivers." (verse 10)**

Jesus said in Matthew 24:11, "Many false prophets will arise and mislead many." There have been many and there will continue to be many false prophets. Be warned. 1 John 4:1, "Many false prophets have gone out into the world."

They are rebellious against God's authority. They ignore the plain teaching of Scripture. They resent the authority of God's Word. A good teacher will be like David in Psalm 119:163, "I hate and abhor falsehood, but I love your law."

They are big talkers full of nothing that will help you spiritually.

They are deceivers or mind manipulators. They look good. They sound good. They have letters behind their names. They're on TV. Paul describes them like this:

*2 Corinthians 11:13-15, For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.*

They are often driven by greed (v. 13). Have you ever googled the worth of the prosperity preachers? They are fleecing God's flock, assuring people that God wants everyone healed and everyone wealthy and make sure you send in your "seed" money. They write books with titles like: Hidden Secrets Never Before Revealed, Blood Moons and the Second Coming, Secret Messages in the Bible, and The Bible Code. Mr. Hagee's book about blood moons isn't selling any longer. Now he's got The Earth's Last Empire for \$22 on Amazon with this description, "Before the rapture four powerful kings race onto the stage of world history. Mr. Hagee reveals who they are, where they come from, and what they signify. Also, we are now at the beginning stages of world war 3."

Peter calls them out:

*2 Peter 2:1-3, But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*

Verse 14 identifies two areas of false teaching. We don't know exactly what the myths and commands of man these false teachers in Crete were spouting out, but they were brazen about it. They were going into families and contradicting the pure gospel of the grace of God. False teachers either add to, take away, twist and change, or totally ignore the Bible. They give just enough truth to deceive and enough cleverness to fool.

Here's what we've got to keep in mind. Satan's main goal is to deceive God's people, and he does it through false teachers and false messages. Today it may be the health and wealth prosperity poison or it may be changing the gospel message to fit the culture of our day. So we have a growing chorus of voices wanting to be culturally relevant, engaging the culture, teaching the same thing the world is teaching. Anything added to the gospel of the grace of God, to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ

alone is false teaching. Adding any legalistic works to the gospel is false teaching. Adding sacraments and rituals and ceremonies to salvation is false teaching. Cults like Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Christ was God and add works to salvation. Christian Science denies there even is evil. Psychology has attacked the sufficiency of Scripture.

The false teaching of evolution has invaded churches by adding God to the process calling it "theistic evolution" which is like saying "healthy poison." False teaching changes what the Bible says about man and denies that we are totally depraved and dead in our sins. They deny that we are without hope unless God in His grace reaches down and gives us new life, which He does every time someone sees their need and comes to the cross. You will find they often ignore the cross of Christ. False teachers will exaggerate the love of God and say God loves everyone unconditionally, but fail to teach the justice and judgment of God.

Churches are pulling anything into the mix that makes the world feel comfortable with the message, including the LBGBT agenda. That's the old error of pragmatism which says, if it works, if it draws a crowd, if people like it, then it's good. 2 Timothy 4:3 describes false teachers as ear ticklers, telling people what they want to hear! The church is not to take its orders from the world; the church calls the world to repentance and faith in Jesus.

How in the world can I discern truth from error? Glad you asked. Immerse yourself in the Word of God and prayer, and don't be naïve. Listen to Paul again...

*Romans 16:17-18, Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. 18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*

In verses 14-16 you'll see they have turned away from the truth, their hearts are filled with selfish motivation, they brag about knowing God but as you watch their lives and their fruit, you'll discover they are false teachers. God says these men are detestable, disobedient, and worthless for any good deed (vs. 16). They have completely botched up the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ that changes people's hearts by God's grace and gives them eternal life. These are dangerous people. Thinking about the people in Crete, I can picture these people in market places or visiting homes contradicting what the apostle Paul had taught about the pure gospel of Christ, causing great confusion and upsetting whole families (vs. 11).

What about verse 15 – "To the pure all things are pure"? Only the gospel purifies the heart. So out of a pure heart what you do is pure. You aren't contaminated by eating pork or bacon or drinking diet Coke. But legalism, rules, ceremonies, rituals, genuflecting, kneeling, standing, crossing – none of this purifies the heart. Jesus said it's not what goes in but what comes out of the heart defiles the man (Mark 7:18-23). Only the gospel changes the heart. The unchanged heart is defiled and corrupt and no amount of rules and religion and requirements and discipline and asceticism and layers of external good deeds will change it. Sooner or later you'll see the depravity in the behavior. If your heart is cleansed by the gospel, your behavior will show it. You will bear the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23.

If your heart is not touched by the gospel and you just took on some religious trappings, started keeping rules, got baptized, submitted to a religious authority – Mormon, Islam, Scientology, even the Protestant or Catholic church – your nature is unchanged and your fleshly works will follow. Jesus called the Pharisees out for this. They were like whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside but inside totally corrupt, dead man's bones. Verse 16 describes false teachers perfectly – "They boast of knowing God, but are detestable, disobedient, and worthless for any good deed. Nothing they do pleases God."

**THEY MUST BE SILENCED – "Who must be silenced...reprove them severely." (verses 11,13)**

So what do you do about false teachers? Trustworthy leaders will blow the whistle. They'll bark. Our neighbor has a barkless dog – a Basinji. Elders cannot be Basinjis; they must be able to bark. Isaiah

56:10 calls out watchmen who are unable to bark, "His watchmen are blind, All of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, Dreamers lying down, who love to slumber." Trustworthy leaders will chase the wolves away. They'll call them out. What does Paul say we have to do?

Verse 11 – They must be silenced. The Greek word is really strong – to stop up their mouth, to muzzle them. How? By consistently teaching the truth and exposing them when appropriate.

Verse 13 – Reprove them severely. You'll notice in verse 12 the description of Cretans by the ancient Epimenides – liars, fierce, and lazy bellies. Paul is usually pretty mild, but here he knew the character of these Cretans and knew he had to get their attention. So Paul says, "Reprove them severely so they get back into healthy doctrine, back to feeding on that truth that leads to godliness." That requires humility and a learner's spirit. Sadly, often people following false teaching will not be open to the truth. Here's the good news: people like these Cretans and people like you and people like me are not beyond the grace of God! Regardless of how far down into the pit of depravity and corruption we may have fallen, no matter the amount of our guilt, there is hope in the gospel. Jesus came to save sinners, sinners of all sorts – lying sinners, violent and wild sinners, and gluttonous sinners. The Corinthians were drunkards, homosexuals, greedy, thieves, and revilers. Such were some of us! God doesn't leave us there. He sent Jesus to rescue us from our guilt and corruption. God washes us in the blood of His Son, gives us eternal life, and His grace is sufficient to totally transform our lives. Not by legalistic rules but by powerful heart changing sovereign grace!

#### SO WHAT?

For your protection against wolves, you need discernment to smell wolves' breath. Here is some protection:

1. When you hear something that sounds a little off, ask yourself, "Where does the Bible teach that?" When you read about the importance of your self-esteem, or that someone owes you an apology, or you couldn't help it, your needs weren't being met, or it's okay to be angry with God, ask yourself, "Is this in the Bible?"
2. Does this teaching exalt God or man? Do you get the idea that God exists for your pleasure or do you exist for God's pleasure?
3. Is this teaching feeding your pride or your humility? Is it convicting you of sin or making you feel good about yourself?
4. Are you actually learning more of God's Word or just more about the culture or a man's opinions and notions?
5. Is this teaching helping you grow in love for Christ, thankful for the cross, amazement for the grace of God, feeding your heart to pursue pleasing God and His holiness?

Ask these questions. Is this message confronting me with my desperate need to be saved from the curse and penalty of my sin? Is it reminding me that unless I come to Christ, I'm a sinner in the hands of an angry God and if I die in my sin I will spend an eternity in the lake of fire?

Thank God for His warnings and the call of the gospel to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.