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Silencing False Teachers

Last week we talked about the selection of Elders in Titus 1:5-9. Paul left Titus behind in Crete to put things in order and, one of the things he needed to put in order was to appoint elders for each church – a council of elders for each church. We went over the list of elder qualifications and, to sum them up - He must be a man, who has a blameless reputation, is faithful to his wife, and has children who are faithful and obedient to him and who are not wild or rebellious. He must not be self-willed, quick tempered, an alcoholic, addict or substance abuser, a bully, or greedy. He must be hospitable, love good, sensible, just, devout, and self-disciplined. He must also be completely devoted to the Word of God so that he can exhort in sound doctrine and rebuke those who contradict. These elders needed to be in place and active very soon so that they could start dealing with the problem in Crete we are going to talk about tonight – the false teachers. As overseers – God’s stewards – of their church, they are responsible for protecting their church against these false teachers.

As we all know this is not a situation limited to first century Crete. It has been and always will be a problem, until Christ returns and deals with it. Think about it, if you were Satan, how would you attack the church? You would attack the truth of the Word of God – and one way to do this is to distort it, corrupt it. Make it into something else.

First, let’s go back to Titus 1:9 and define “false teaching”. Turn to Titus 1:9. Remember that an elder is supposed to ⁹ **...[hold} 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.** Notice the phrase “those who contradict”. What are they contradicting? The

“faithful word”. What is the faithful word? The Word of God. Anything that contradicts, or opposes the revealed Word of God, the Scriptures, is “false teaching”. Also, Christ said this in Mark 15:7-9 - ⁷ **“You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: ⁸ ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁹ ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ ”** The Pharisees were teaching their tradition as doctrine, as if God had revealed it to them. This is adding to the Word of God. Which is also false teaching.

So, we have the definition of false teaching – how can we recognize it? The only way to recognize it – the only way – is to know the Word of God. If we don’t know Scripture, how can we recognize false teaching? We can’t. And we leave ourselves wide open to it. Sure, there are going to be some things that we hear or read that are obviously false. If someone denies the deity of Christ, for example, we all know that that is false. However, much of false teaching is not that obvious. It is very subtle and may - on its face - when you first hear it, sounds ok. However, if you compare it to Scripture, it isn’t ok. And if you let it into your thinking, it corrupts you and corrupts your faith – it turns you away from the knowledge of God and stunts, or even stops, your spiritual growth - your spiritual maturity – your pursuit of godliness. Remember Titus 1:1 – what was one of the aims of Paul’s apostleship? – the “knowledge of the truth” which leads to what “godliness”. **2 Peter 1:2–3** says- **² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.** How do we have life and godliness? Through the true knowledge of Him who called us. The true knowledge of God. So – you recognize false teaching by knowing the truth. You know the truth by studying Scripture. If you don’t study, you don’t know the truth. If you don’t know the truth you don’t have true knowledge of God. And if you don’t have true knowledge of God, you will be sucked in by false teaching, because you have no defense. You can’t recognize it.

That is why false teaching is so devastating. And that is why we must be so very, very careful about our doctrine. If we tolerate false teaching, it will infect us. It will cut our knees right out from under us, and make us ungodly and worthless as believers. And we don’t even know it. We think we are in

the game, but at best we are on the sidelines, and at worst we are taking other believers out of the game and helping the other team.

The Word of God is right here. He's given it to us through the prophets and apostles. He's preserved it through godly men, many of whom gave their lives for it. It has come to us at great, great cost. Why would we ever ignore it? He expects us to study it and to know it. It is our defense against false teaching.

And before we start looking down on the people of Crete and the other believers of the first century, we need to realize something – they lived in a transition period. The Jewish believers, in particular, were trying to get their heads around these changes – they are thinking – what happened to the Law? What about all these Gentiles that we used to avoid and now were supposed to fellowship with? The Gentiles were trying to figure out how they fit in – are they subject to the Law, how are they supposed to behave? God was revealing these new things to them, through Peter, Paul, the Jerusalem Council and others, but it takes time for the word to get out, and then it takes time for people to get it. They didn't have the completed canon of Scripture, like we do – it was still being written. So, you can kind of understand why they might have a tendency to follow these false teachers – the things that they are teaching might sound like what they are used to – they may be being taught by people they have listened to all their lives – people they trust. We – on the other hand – have the completed canon of Scripture. We've had it for over 1900 years. We also have the benefit of over 1900 years of progress in the articulation of orthodox doctrine. So – we should be more able than the first century believers to recognize false doctrine. And we would be if we would just spend time in the Word.

So, we have defined false teaching and how to recognize it. Now, let's talk a little bit about what they were teaching in Crete. The first thing to note is that Paul does not give much detail about what they are teaching. Mainly what he does is generally describe its character. So – you have to pick up clues from the book and then try to fill in the blanks. Which means that – when I talk about what they are teaching, there is some speculation.

First, look at **Titus 1:14 -¹⁴ not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.** This tells us that two of the components of the false teaching in Crete involved “Jewish

myths” and “commandments of men”. Myths are fictional – not real history. They are fairy tales, legends, fables. They are patently not true. And apparently these fables were being taught in the churches as having some kind of spiritual significance. Paul doesn’t tell us what the Jewish myths are and the commentators and academics – the guys who spend a whole lot of time trying to figure it out – don’t really know for sure. One commentary mentioned that “Jewish myths” be “concocted stories related to the “genealogies” spun out from those given in the OT”.¹

Turn to **Titus 3:9** – for an additional clue about the false teaching in Crete - ⁹
But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Apparently, what was being taught involved controversy, genealogies, and arguments about the Law. Once again, something that has a kind of Jewish flavor to it. These things produced an environment of strife and contentiousness within the churches.

Turn back to **Titus 1:14** and let’s consider the description “commandments of men”. This tells us that the teaching involves commandments - do this, don’t do that – and that these commandments are sourced in men. God is not the source of these commandments – man is. Men made these up. Which means that these commandments have no authority behind them – no power. Moreover, they are contrary to God’s Word – which does have the authority and the power. Remember Titus 1:1 where the source of the gospel is God. That is what the Cretan churches must learn and pay attention to – not some garbage made up by men. This is similar to what Jesus was describing in **Matthew 15:1–9** – let’s turn to that passage - ¹ **Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,** ² **“Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”** ³ **And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ “For God said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,’ and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.’ ⁵ “But you say, ‘Whoever says to *his* father or mother,**

¹ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 300.

“Whatever I have that would help you has been given *to God*,”⁶ he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And *by this* you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.⁷ “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:⁸ **‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ⁹ **‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ ”****

Now, the false teachers in Crete were probably not teaching the same things that the Pharisees taught – I’m not saying that - but we are looking at this passage for the principle. The principal is this – the Jews had created their own commandments (their tradition). They had this “Oral Law” that they used to supplement the Torah. Here’s how the Jewish Virtual Library describes the Oral Law – *“The [Written Law](#) is another name for the Torah. The Oral Law is a legal commentary on the Torah, explaining how its commandments are to be carried out. Common sense suggests that some sort of oral tradition was always needed to accompany the Written Law, because the Torah alone, even with its [613 commandments](#), is an insufficient guide to Jewish life. For these three reasons-the frequent lack of details in Torah legislation, the incomprehensibility of some terms in the Torah, and the objections to following some Torah laws literally — an Oral Law was always necessary.... ”*

Once again, I’m not saying that the “commandments of men” described in Titus 1:14 is talking about the Oral Law. We really don’t know what these commandments of men were. However, the “Oral Law” of the Jews is a good example of what a commandment sourced in men is. Men didn’t like what God said and decided to improve on it. They assumed the authority of God and made their own laws and tried to pass them off as God’s laws. And what does Christ say about it? Teaching the precepts of men as doctrine is worshipping in vain. It is not worship, it is not pleasing to God and it is rebellious, disobedient and worthless.

Look at what Paul says about the “commandments of men” in Colossians – first, turn to **Colossians 2:8** - 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.** The tradition of men is “empty deception” and is based on the principles of the world and not Christ. Look at **Colossians 2:20** - ²⁰ **If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the**

world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹ “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” ²² (which all *refer to things* destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? ²³ These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are of no value against fleshly indulgence*. Notice he says that these “commandments of men” have the appearance of wisdom – they are attractive to us - (meaning, if we aren’t careful, we can be sucked into it because it sounds good). But it is really self-made religion – and of no value against fleshly indulgence. Worthless.

Another thing to consider - these Jewish myths and “commandments of men” being taught in Crete may have been similar to the false teaching in Ephesus at about the same time. So – let’s look a little bit at that. Look at Paul’s instruction to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:3–4 – Remember, like his letter to Titus, Paul wrote First Timothy after he was released from his first imprisonment and before his second imprisonment. So – the two books were written at roughly the same time, and tend to address many of the same things. **1 Timothy 1: 3-4 - ³ As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, ⁴ nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than *furthering* the administration of God which is by faith.** In this passage in 1 Timothy, the false teaching involves “myths and genealogies”, and they give rise to “mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith”. Sounds a lot like Titus 3:9 - **“foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.”** It may be that some of the same things that were going on in Crete were also going on in Ephesus.

This scarcity of details about the content of the false teaching leads to a question – why didn’t the Holy Spirit give us more information? The short answer is I don’t know, but I do know this – if we needed more information, we would have it. So, we must not need it. And, knowing how our brains work, if we had the details, we would probably misuse it. We might look at it legalistically - and really try to avoid that particular heresy, and think –

“well we’re not doing that, we must be ok.” Meanwhile, if something else comes up, and it doesn’t exactly fit in the box, we might think that it is ok.

Scripture does give us plenty of information about the nature of false teaching and the false teachers – so we must need to know this. Why? To avoid the temptation to follow it. If we know the nature of false teaching, in general, we are less apt to be sucked in. For this, let’s look at Titus 1:10.

Titus 1:10 - ¹⁰ For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision. First, let’s remember where we are. Last week we talked about the qualification of elders and the last one, in Titus 1:9, says that an elder must - ⁹ **[hold 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.** “Hold fast” means “cling to”, be devoted to. And the reason for this was that he would be able to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. According to Titus 1:10 - why must the elder be able to refute those who contradict? – for there are many false teachers out there. “Many” means a relatively large number. There is a lot of opposition out there. Remember, there were churches (plural) in Crete, and apparently these false teachers were a problem for all of these churches. None of them had elders – Titus was supposed to appoint them – so it was basically Titus and any informal leaders in the churches against these false teachers. And Titus couldn’t be in all of them at one time. That’s a formidable job. That’s one reason why it was very important for Titus to appoint elders for each church. They would be there and have the authority, and the ability, to defend the churches against these false teachers.

Look at how Titus 1:10 describes the false teachers. Notice also that it also describes the nature of the false teaching itself. “Rebellious” – refusing to submit to authority. The word implies that there is some authority that is being rejected. And what does it mean if I reject an authority? It means that I think I have the authority to reject that authority. What does that make me? The authority. So – a false teacher makes himself the authority over the authority of God. He says – God, you are not the authority in this matter – I am. I know better. And what’s so arrogant about that is that – when you are dealing with spiritual matters, matters of God – I am saying that I know more about these things than God does. I know more about how to please God

than He does. I say – God, I know you said that we are justified by faith alone, but I don't think you meant it – I need to do something to earn my justification. I need to do something to make myself acceptable to you. I am telling God what He wants. False teachers are rebellious. Which means the content of the teaching is rebellious content. It does not submit itself to the authority of the Word of God.

Titus 1:10 also tells us these false teachers are “empty talkers”. This means that they are windbags. They have nothing to say. They just talk to hear themselves talk. Since the false teachers are “empty talkers”, guess what that makes their message? Worthless. It may sound good and, in our flesh we may like what we hear – we may like having our “ears tickled” as 2 Timothy says. Sounds great - but says nothing of the truth. Like a big, beautifully wrapped Christmas present with nothing inside. Attractive nonsense. Kind of like political speech. Hope and Change.

Finally, Titus 1:10 tells us these men are deceivers. They deceive people into thinking that they know what they are talking about. Many of them probably have deceived themselves. Satan is the great deceiver and it is no surprise that these men would be deceived and deceive others about the truth. It is very likely that some of these false teachers believe what they are teaching. These men are “useful idiots” – they think they are doing good, but Satan uses them to attack the church. Since the false teachers are deceivers, the content of the teaching is what? Deceptive, misleading. It may appear orthodox on the surface, and weak believers take the bait – hook, line and sinker. It may be wrapped up in great sounding evangelical terminology – sounds good, uses the name of Jesus – but it is rotten inside.

So, false teachers are rebellious, empty talkers and deceivers. And the content of their message is rebellious, worthless, and deceptive. Once again, how do we fight them? **Titus 1:9 - 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.**” This is how everyone should be – not just elders. If all of us were this way, false teaching would not be able to corrupt as many people – and churches - as it does.

The rest of Titus 1:10 give us more information about the false teachers. It says that the false teachers are “especially of the circumcision.” This means that most of them are Jewish. And may even be Jewish believers.

Let’s move on to Titus 1:11. It says these false teachers ¹¹ **...must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain.**

First, Paul tells Titus what must be done about these false teachers. They “must be silenced”. The Greek translated “silence” means “to put something over the mouth, silence”. Basically, they must have a gag put over their mouth. They must be stopped. You get the distinct impression from the language that this had to happen and it had to happen right away. Why? Because the false teachers are upsetting whole families. What does it mean that they are upsetting whole families? First, it means “whole families” – entire households. What does it mean to upset them? The Greek word translated “upsetting” means “overturning, destroying, ruining.” So, the false teachers were ruining whole households. How is this? I don’t know for sure. But, if you think about it – what can false teaching do? First and foremost, since it affects doctrine, it affects faith. The false teaching had to be ruining the faith of these households – their spiritual walk - making them worthless for service to God. The teachings might have been attractive to them - turning them away from the truth. The **“foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law”** referred to in Titus 3:9 could have been ruining the households – particularly if the controversies and strife were within the family. The commands of the false teachers – the do’s and don’ts they were teaching could have been ruining the households. Although First Timothy 4 is talking about the future, it gives some examples of certain “commands of men” that could certainly affect households, and maybe they were around in Crete then - **1 Timothy 4:1–3 says: ¹ But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, ² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, ³ men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.** Forbidding marriage could have a big affect on a household. However, we really don’t know specifically

how these households were being ruined by the false teaching, but we know that they were.

Finally, their motivation for teaching is “sordid gain”. They are teaching for some sort of profit or gain. This is most likely money, but could be anything that profits them somehow - like power, prestige, other things the world considers to be gain. Compare their attitude to Paul’s attitude in **Philippians 3:4–8** - ⁴ **although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. ⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.”** Before he was saved, Paul put his confidence in the flesh and gained a lot to himself in the flesh, but he considered all that fleshly gain to be worthless compared to his gain in Christ. This is completely opposite from the attitude of these false teachers.

Titus 1:11 describes the false teacher’s gain as “sordid”. The word for “sordid” means “socially or morally unacceptable, shameful, base, disgraceful”. The motivation of the false teachers is money, profit, some sort of fleshly gain. The fact that they are using false teaching to obtain this gain makes their gain disgraceful, immoral. It is not that getting paid for teaching is wrong – what is wrong is that they were using false teaching to obtain the gain. You can see that every day on TV if you watch some of the “health and wealth” gospel teachers. They use false teaching to get people to send them money. And they can make a ton of it. That’s sordid gain.

In Titus 1:12, Paul relates the false teachers’ motivation for sordid gain to the culture in Crete. Basically, sordid gain was right up the Cretans’ alley. **Titus 1:12** - ¹² **One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”** We talked about this a little bit several weeks ago in the introduction. As we know, Crete had a horrible reputation. In this verse, Paul is probably quoting from Epimenides of Crete

(a poet/philosopher who lived between 600 – 500 BC). Notice that Paul calls him a “prophet” – this is the only time in Scripture that a pagan is referred to as a prophet. So - why did Paul refer to him as a prophet? Because that was his pagan reputation – he was considered by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and others to be a prophet. Why would Paul quote Epimenides? Because it gives authority to the statement – one of their own, their own esteemed prophet – one who would really know them – said they were liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. It’s hard to argue with one of their own.

Just to be clear on some terms – Paul says the Cretan are “liars” – we know what that is. Cretans were especially known for lying. There is a Greek verb - κρητιζω – which meant “to play the Cretan” or “to lie”. “Evil beasts” – means they were beastly, animal like, boorish, wild. “Lazy gluttons” means that they thought only of satisfying their physical appetites.

Here are the quotes we saw a couple of weeks ago:

Polybius (a Greek Historian who lived from 200 – 118 BC) said this about them: *“So much in fact do sordid love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them that the Cretans are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful”*. Cicero (a Roman philosopher who lived from 106 BC to 43 BC) said about them: *“Moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans ... consider highway robbery honorable.”*

Sordid love of gain. Lust for wealth. No gain is disgraceful. Highway robbery honorable. What a great culture.

What’s worse is that Paul is not exaggerating. In the first sentence of **Titus 1:13**, Paul says **“This testimony is true.”** He confirms that the Cretan’s reputation is true. Paul is saying this is not an exaggeration, but a fact. The Cretans could be counted on to be this way. Titus should expect it. Even from the ones who have become believers – they came out of this culture and its values and ways of thinking – they grew up in it – they were immersed in it – and this makes it very hard for them to grow out of it and very easy for them to fall back into it. But, through God’s grace by the enablement of the Holy Spirit, they could do it. They could grow spiritually, they could mature in Christ. And we are no different – we are immersed in our culture and all its messed up values and ways of thinking. We grew up in it, we live every day

in it, and it affects what we value and the way we think about things far more than we can imagine. And, like the Cretans, it is very hard for us to get out of it and very easy for us to fall back in. But, also like them, we have the same Holy Spirit who enables us to walk in godliness.

Paul's point is that these Cretan false teachers were acting consistent with the Cretan culture and that this is a cultural sin pattern that Titus, and the church elders, would have to deal with.

Let's move on to rest of **verse 13 and 14** - 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.**

First, it says "for this reason" Titus is to reprove them severely. For what reason? Go back to verse 11 – **they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain.** They need to be reprovved severely because of the nature of their behavior. Their behavior is not good intentioned – they aren't trying to teach correctly and just getting it wrong. You certainly correct a person who's trying to get it right but gets it wrong, and you do it right away, and you make sure that the congregation knows it was wrong. But you don't reprove them severely unless they continue teaching what they know to be wrong. That's when you reprove someone severely. These particular men were teaching wrong "for sordid gain". They apparently didn't care if they were teaching the truth, what they cared about was they could get out of it. They would teach whatever would make them money – the Cretan way. This is why they needed to be "reprovved severely".

I also need to point out this is a command – Paul is commanding Titus to reprove them severely. We talked about the word "reprove" last week. It is the same word used in Titus 1:9 when it says "**refute those who contradict**". As I said last week, the word "refute" in Titus 1:9 is too narrow because "refute" has the connotation of a debate, without consequences. The Greek word can mean "expose", "convict", "reprove", or even "punish" or "discipline". I think all those ideas come into play here. And Titus is supposed to do it severely, sharply, rigorously. Titus is not commanded to handle this with kid gloves – it is too serious and too

damaging. As I said earlier, the false teachers are to be silenced, “gagged” – stopped immediately. And he is to correct them severely.

Titus has seen this done before – he’s been directly involved. Does anyone remember when? Remember in the introduction when we talked about the situation in Corinth. After Paul left from his first visit to Corinth – he’d been there about 18 months - the Corinthian church developed some big problems – primarily because of the influence of the Corinthian culture on the church (they had their own cultural sin pattern) -- the development of factions based on personality cults, immorality in the church, abuse of the Lord’s supper, false teaching about the actuality of the resurrection, among other things. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to correct these problems. When you read 1 Corinthians, much of it sounds pretty severe. However, after writing 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians indicates that things got worse in Corinth. Paul probably made a short trip to Corinth to deal with these problems - which apparently didn’t fix the problem - and 2 Corinthians indicates that Paul wrote a letter after he returned to Ephesus from this short visit – a “severe letter” intended to convict the Corinthians and bring them to repentance. Titus was the one who delivered this letter and, **according to 2 Corinthians 7:15, they received Titus with “fear and trembling”; and the letter convicted them to repentance.** This must have been some letter. It must have been much more severe than 1 Corinthians. I wish we had a copy of it – it would probably make our hair stand on end. And Titus is the one who presented it to the Corinthian church. Titus knew what “reprove them severely” meant. He’d done it before in Corinth.

Titus 1:13-14 tells us what the goal, or purpose, of the reproof is ...¹³ **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.** This goal is that they may be “sound in the faith”. The word for “sound” in this context means “free from error, correct”. In this situation, the goal of Titus’ reproof is to make them “sound in the faith”. They need to be restored to a sound understanding of “the faith” – the true doctrine of the Word of God which will make them sound in their subjective faith – their trust in God. Their doctrine is horribly wrong and they need to become sound in their doctrine. But since bad doctrine makes bad faith – their subjective faith, their spiritual walk, also needs to become sound. This passage confirms to me that these false teachers were believers within the Cretan churches. Titus’s

reproof was intended to restore them – to make them sound in the faith. The severe reproof was discipline – and discipline is only for believers – and the goal of all discipline is what? – Restoration - Conviction of sin, leading to repentance, resulting in restoration. However, just like all discipline, some people may respond positively, and others may not.

These false teachers need to be reprovved so that they can be convicted to repentance. They need to quit paying attention to false teaching – these fables and commandments that are fabrications of the rebellious and depraved human mind – and pay attention to the truth – God’s Word. They are men who are turning away from the truth, and they need to turn back. The phrase “turn away from” means to reject, to repudiate. This is in the middle voice – so the sense is that they are turning themselves away from the truth. They are doing this intentionally and they are doing it to themselves. They are intentionally turning themselves away from – intentionally rejecting - the truth of the Word of God. The severe reproof is intended to turn them back.

I need to point out one other big thing to keep in mind. As we know, this letter was written to Titus, but it was intended to be presented to the churches. These churches will soon have elders. When they are appointed, these elders will be responsible for silencing and reprovving the false teachers. That’s part of their job description as the overseers, or guardians, of their church. So – everything Paul is commanding Titus to do with the false teachers applies to what the elders are to do with them. They may not have the experience Titus has, but they will at least have been able to observe his example. He’s certainly had the experience and they will be able to watch him and see how he does it. If you think about it, that would be something that would be very valuable – you could see first hand how serious the discipline imposed by Paul, Titus, Timothy and the others could be. Knowing how it affected the Corinthian church, I bet it could be very severe and convicting.

Now, Let's move to verse 15 - **Titus 1:15 - 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.** First, let’s define the terms – “pure” means clean – nothing tainting it – like pure water – no bugs, no germs, no particles – nothing but pure water. It can mean ritually

pure (like the clean animals or foods of the Mosaic Law – which God declared were fit to eat) or it can mean morally pure, free from guilt. The word “defiled” can mean ritually unclean (like the unclean animals or foods of the Mosaic Law – which God declared unfit to eat), or morally unclean. This verse is making a point about both ritual and moral purity.

The first question, though, is – why does Paul even bring this up? Probably because of what the false teachers were teaching – we talked about this earlier – the way Paul refers to the characteristics of this false teaching in Crete makes it sound like some sort of asceticism – involving commands about eating, drinking, maybe marriage and other things. Apparently, according to these teachers, certain things were ritually unclean and failure to observe these commands would make you morally unclean. So – in verse 15 Paul reminds them of a basic doctrine – a basic principle - about spiritual purity and defilement. Then he will apply that principle in verse 16.

Let's read Titus 1:15 again - 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.** This is the basic principle. This is the same principle Christ revealed in **Mark 7:18–23** – I will read it, you don't need to turn there - ¹⁸ **And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?”** (*Thus He declared all foods clean.*) ²⁰ **And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. ²¹ “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. ²³ “All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”** Basically, the principle is this - the things God created don't defile the man – all things are good, all things are pure and fit for use - it's the things that are inside the man that are defiling. As **1 Timothy 4:4** says - ⁴ **For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude.** If a man is pure – inwardly, spiritually - (meaning that he is a believer who is walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh) – all things are pure to him and fit for use - he won't be defiled by enjoying these things. He is free to enjoy them as God intended. But, if a man is defiled – inwardly,

spiritually - (meaning an unbeliever or a believer who is walking in the flesh), he defiles everything, nothing is clean, nothing is fit for use – including his mind – his intellect – and his conscience. He can't think straight and he has no moral compass. Everything to him is defiled. This is your condition if you are an unbeliever. This is your condition if you are a believer who is walking in the flesh. That's the basic principle.

If you are a believer, your spiritual purity depends on your spiritual walk. Are you walking in the spirit or in the flesh? I'm not talking about whether you are saved or not – if you are a believer, you are saved, you have been justified – bathed clean. But we still sin. And when we sin we defile ourselves and need to confess our sins and be cleansed. Like Jesus said in **John 13:10** – **“He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean”**. We don't need to be bathed again (we are already justified), but we need our “feet washed” to get back into fellowship with God so that we can walk in the Spirit and please Him. Remember 1 John 1:9 – if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and what? – cleanse us from all unrighteousness. To a believer walking in the Spirit - everything is clean because he is walking in the Spirit. However, if a believer is walking in the flesh, and doesn't confess his sin and get back into fellowship, he is defiling himself and it doesn't matter what he does – he is not clean and nothing he does is clean. Everything to him is defiled.

Titus 1:16 applies this principal to the false teachers - **Titus 1:16 - ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.** “They” is talking about the false teachers. These false teachers claim to know God – but their actions aren't consistent with their claim. If they are believers – which I think they are - they are walking in the flesh. They continue to reject the truth of God and by this rejection deny Him whom they claim to know. But they can't do anything else - they are defiled - they are “detestable”, “disobedient” and “worthless for any good deed”. The Greek word translated “worthless” means unfit, disqualified. In their present spiritual condition, they can't do anything pleasing to God. Their minds and their conscience are defiled. This is where they are if they don't turn back to the truth, and this is where the people who listen to them will be, if they don't turn back to the truth.

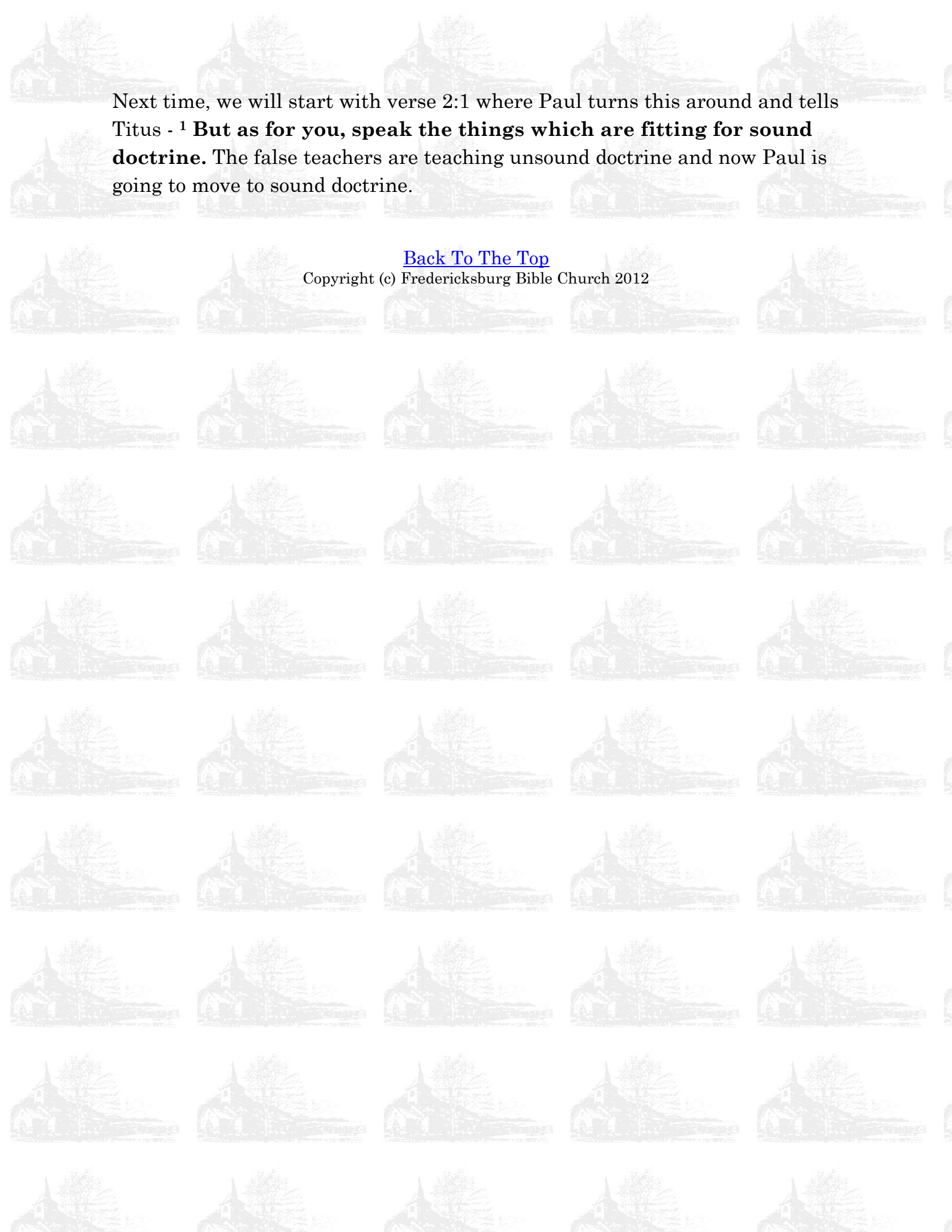
We can't let ourselves be those people.

Let's end with this except from an article I found on the Hill Country Hebraic Roots Church in Kerrville – a Messianic Jewish Church (I couldn't pass this up):

Most of the original commandments cannot be kept today because they were for the priests and kings of the day; and some were only for men, some for women. However, there were some commandments God gave to everyone to last throughout eternity, and these include:

- **The Ten Commandments (Exodus 34 - which included several "forever" commandments).**
- **The Seventh Day Sabbath (Exodus 31:13; Exodus 31:16-17; Leviticus 23:3). God told us that the Sabbath would *forever* be a *sign* between Him and the children of Israel. In the end times (which many believe we are in now) the seventh day Sabbath will distinguish TRUE believers from the "lukewarm" - especially when the Antichrist starts putting pressure on people to conform to his rules:**
- **The Biblical feasts are outlined in Leviticus 23 which states after each feast: *"it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations."***
- **Keeping kosher. Yes, eating "clean" foods was a "forever" commandment. For a complete outline, See Deuteronomy 14:1-21 and Leviticus 11.**

So – tonight we learned some things about false teachers and false teaching, and that the job of the elders is to silence them - to prevent them from doing more damage – and to reprove them severely, to hopefully convict them to repentance and restore them to a sound faith. We also learned that if a believer is pure (walking in the Spirit), he doesn't defile himself by enjoying things as God intended. However, if a believer is defiled (walking in the flesh), his intellect, his conscience, everything about him is defiled and he is detestable", "disobedient" and "worthless for any good deed.

The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of a black and white illustration of a church building with a steeple, set against a light background. The church is shown from a side-on perspective, with a large tree in front of it. The pattern is consistent across the entire page.

Next time, we will start with verse 2:1 where Paul turns this around and tells Titus - ¹ **But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.** The false teachers are teaching unsound doctrine and now Paul is going to move to sound doctrine.

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