

Title: The Need for Biblical Elders

Scripture: Titus 1:10-16

Series: The Pastoral Epistles

1. Introduction:

- a. One of Titus's major responsibilities in overseeing the churches on Crete was to prepare them to counteract certain leaders' false teaching and immoral living. Paul charged Titus, and the churches, not simply to correct their false doctrine and denounce their immoral behavior but to silence them and remove such spiritual cancers from the fellowships.
- b. According to Paul, some of the false teachers in Crete were beyond saving because, as Paul says at the end of this passage, "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."
- c. We know that there are specific criteria that can identify false teachers. We have studied these criteria before and have concluded that we must be watchful in the following three areas:
 - i. Orthopraxy: Do they have the correct manner of living?
 - ii. Orthopathy: Do they practice the proper manner of loving?
 - iii. Orthodoxy: Is the subject matter of their teaching biblical?
 1. If any supposed teacher fails in any of these areas, he proves himself to be unworthy!

- d. Now we know that one day our God will intervene and forever silence all false preachers and teachers.
 - i. In the meantime, it is the church's task, especially its godly leaders, to silence those who associate with the body of Christ in order to pervert God's truth and confuse and corrupt His people. A minister accomplishes this goal in the following three ways.
 - 1. First, a godly elder opposes false teachers by overpowering them with the truth taught so clearly, precisely, and powerfully that those who spread error hide in humiliation when their falsehood is exposed.
 - 2. Secondly, godly leaders oppose false teachers by revoking their right to preach, teach, or otherwise have leadership in the church.
 - 3. Thirdly, the godly conduct of true believers condemns the false teacher. Error promotes sin, and people who teach ungodly ideas inevitably live ungodly lives.

2. Verse 10: The Proliferation of False Teachers: For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers, and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

- a. The reason why biblical elders are needed is here stated. **Many are insubordinate, empty talkers, and deceivers.**
 - i. The fact that there were many false teachers in Crete's churches made Titus's responsibility to

oppose them all the more urgent. Beloved, we find ourselves living this very same truth.

1. We cannot forget the warning of **2 Timothy 4:3**

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

ii. This is a sobering thought. Like in the apostles' time, we live in an age where many are **insubordinate, empty talkers, and deceivers**. The church is infested with a litany of false teachers. The danger they pose is genuine!

1. The church's history demonstrates that the most significant spiritual danger always comes from within the church.

a. **Romans 16:17-18** I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. (18) For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

b. Notice what type of men these are.

i. They are **insubordinate men**. Men who are actively living in disobedience to the word of God. In other words, men who are not orthoprax. Even when their erroneous doctrine and immoral living are exposed,

they defy correction and discipline by the true church.

ii. They are **empty talkers**. Their talk is often captivating and persuasive. Their words are smooth, and they cleverly disguise their falsehoods in terms that make them seem truthful, frequently using biblical words and phrases that are distorted and taken out of context

1. **2 Peter 2:17** These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

2. **Jude 1:12** These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;

iii. They are **deceivers** in that they corrupt the accurate way of salvation. A false teacher will always move our attention away from Jesus Christ and place it on others. In the case of what was going on in Crete, the false teachers we're adding to the work of Jesus Christ the legality of the law and the traditions of men.

1. We know that God hates all lying and deceit. God is light, and there is no darkness in him. God is always truth! God especially hates lying and deceit done in his name, specifically when directed at his people.

- a. **Jeremiah 23:32** Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the LORD, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the LORD.
2. Propheying falsehood in the name of a false God is evil enough, but false prophesying in the name of the true God is immeasurably worse!
 - a. **Jeremiah 23:13-14** In the prophets of Samaria I saw an unsavory thing: they prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray. (14) But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah."
 - c. The particular false prophets plaguing the believers in Crete were **those of the circumcision party**. These men are often called Judaizers in the biblical narrative because they attempted to obligate all believers to Jewish legalism, wanting to impose Old Testament ceremonial standards and sometimes even rabbinical traditions to the way of Christ.
 - i. Essentially, their teaching amounted to the following: Jesus Christ is not enough. You need Jesus plus something else.

1. **Acts 15:5** But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."
 - a. They regarded their circumcision as a mark of superior excellence.
 - b. Sound doctrine always points us to Christ alone!

3. Verse 11: The Peril of the False Teachers: They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.
 - a. The false teachers **must be silenced**. In telling Titus what should be done with such people, Paul uses the rare greek verb, *epistomizō*. This verb has its primary meaning "to stop the mouth utilizing a bridle, muzzle, or gag."
 - i. False teachers are wild beasts that must be stopped at all costs for the sake of God's people.
 - b. How do we silence such evil?
 - i. Anyone who persists in their evil ways must be shunned by the church and disciplined. The supreme measure, ex-communication, may have to be used to protect the church.
 - c. The reason for such drastic action is here given. We read that the false teachers were **upsetting whole families by teaching what they ought not to teach for shameful gain**.

i. In other words, they were distorting the teachings of Scripture and shipwrecking the lives of many.

1. Peter speaks about men such as these that twist the scriptures to destruction. We read in **2 Peter 3:15-16** And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, (16) as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

2. Their purpose is to acquire **shameful gain**, profit that is shameful because the men enrich themselves at the expense of others. False teachers carry on their destructive work for the money and fame.

a. Faithful ministers are commanded to shepherd the flock of God out of love and not for gain. We read in **1 Peter 5:2** shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

b. There is a marked difference.

4. Verse 12 and 13A: The Prey of the False Teachers: One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are

always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." (13) This testimony is true.

- a. The Cretans' disposition to false teaching was anchored in the immorality of their culture. Even one of their false prophets had correctly, says Paul, called them **liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons**.
- i. The Lord had saved those within the Church of Crete from their present evil age. He had saved them from lies, savageness, and self-indulgence. Those within the church were fighting a spiritual battle not to return to those things that God had saved them from. The danger for them was swinging to the other extreme. In longing to be free from their past, they could embrace the legalism of the Judaizers.

5. Verse 13B: The Purpose of Ministry: Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,

- a. Paul states that the false teachers and those who listen to them must be **rebuked sharply (cut open with knife or sword; here Scripture)** by the elders in hopes that they may become what they are not presently; **sound in the faith**. The purpose of the minister **rebuking sharply** then is to win these people to the Lord, if possible.
- i. Some men commit error, and God grants them repentance. Others, agents of Satan disguised as angels of the light to preach error, commit purposeful error. For these, there is no hope.

- ii. The goal always then is sound faith. To know the accurate way of salvation is to know Jesus Christ the Lord.

6. Verse 14: Error to avoid: not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

- a. The error for the church in Crete was its propensity to devote itself to Jewish myths and commands based on men's traditions. These types of errors, seen today as well, tended to add to the work of Christ unbiblically.

7. Verse 15: The Impurity of the False Teachers: To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.

- a. In other words, when a person is **pure** in heart and mind, his perspectives **on all things are pure**, and that inner purity always produces more purity.
 - i. Pure men are those who have been cleansed from their guilt by the blood of Christ and, having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, are being constantly cleansed by that same Spirit from the pollution of their sins
- b. To those defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, or can be pure because both their mind and **conscience are defiled**.

- i. The false teachers inside the churches of Crete were trying to reconcile Jewish bondage (ceremonialism) with Christian freedom.
- ii. Like every other form of legalism, Jewish legalism presumes that a person can make himself acceptable to God by meticulously observing certain ceremonies and traditions that were considered good and obligatory.
 - 1. To the gift of grace was added the unholy works of men. This is the idea that human beings can earn or enhance the work of Christ by their own goodness. This same dogma is prevalent in our culture today. It must be **rebuked sharply** by the teaching of the accurate word of God. All of salvation is a work of grace and grace alone through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and savior.
- iii. Jesus had combated this error.
 - 1. **Matthew 15:11** it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person."
 - 2. We are defiled from within by our sin, and no amount of ritual or traditions can cleanse us. Salvation must be a work of grace.

8. Verse 16: Disobedience denies Confession: They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

- a. If my confession is orthodox, biblically correct, but my orthopraxy denies my orthodoxy, then I am a liar, and the truth of God does not dwell within me
 - i. In other words, people who **deny** God in their lives do not know God at all. The Bible tells us that we shall know them by their fruits.
- b. Unrepentant false teachers who continue in their false ways prove themselves **detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.**
 - i. **Detestable:** this noun describes the Antichrist in the New Testament. It can be translated as abominable. In other words, these unrepented false teachers are the citizens of hell.
 - 1. The apostle John wrote about them in **Revelation 21:27** But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.
 - ii. They are **Disobedient** because they prefer men's traditions and man's laws to the work of Christ. They continue to walk according to the course of this world. They walk according to the Prince of the power of the air or the Spirit that is not working in the sons of disobedience.
 - iii. They are **unfit for any good work.** This phrase means disqualified or rejected entirely. In other words, these men are utterly incapable of performing any work that precedes from faith and brings God glory.

- c. Such individuals must be avoided at all costs for the sake of our spiritual well-being.

9. Benediction:

- a. **2 Timothy 2:21** Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

Public Reading of Scripture

2 Peter 2