

## Dealing With False Teachers

Call to Worship: Psalm 124

1st Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:1-11

2nd Scripture: Titus 1:5-16

Hymn #505- *All the Way My Savior Leads Me*

Hymn #671- *Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart*

Hymn #493- *Who is on the Lord's Side?*

### Introduction

Last time, we considered the purpose, for why, Paul had written this letter to Titus. And we saw, that he wanted to remind Titus about the two-fold reason that Paul had left him in Crete. First, Titus was to set in order the things that were lacking, and second, he was to appoint qualified elders throughout the cities of Crete, to exercise leadership over the church/es. And then, we spent the remainder of our time working through the list of qualifications which were to be met by any potential elders, whom Titus would appoint over the church/es (given in verses 6-9).

This morning then, as we move into verses 10-16, we will be given insight into one of the major elements of the “things that Paul found lacking” there at Crete, which compelled him to leave Titus there, and which needed to be set in order.

### I. The Infiltration of False Teachers

You'll notice that Paul begins verse 10 with the word “For.” He does this, immediately following the list of elder qualifications that he had just given, for two reasons:

1) Again, he is identifying the primary reason for why Titus has been left at Crete and given the tasks of setting in order the things that were lacking and appointing elders...etc. In this sense, the word “For,” takes us back to verse 5. [Read verse 5 and 10a...etc]

2) He is highlighting the necessity and importance of the last qualification that he has just listed, which deals with the pastor's required ability to teach. In this sense then, the word “For,” takes us back to verse 9. [Read verse 9 and 10a...etc]

Well, what then is the main problem, which necessitated Titus's work at Crete in these regards? There was an infiltration of false teachers, who had begun to poison the church/es at Crete with dangerous teachings and influences.

“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain” (verses 10-11).

Here, Paul describes some of the dangerous characteristics and motivations that are associated with false teachers, with whom Titus (and the pastors that he appoints at Crete) must contend. In one sense, even as Paul has listed the types of virtues that are to mark out those who are qualified for the pastoral ministry, here he lists several disqualifying vices, which mark out those who are false teachers. Notice then, how he describes these false teachers:

1) They are insubordinate: That is to say, they have no problem going around and disregarding biblical authority. They disregard the authority of the Apostles, of the Scriptures and of the elders who have been legitimately and biblically appointed as shepherds over Christ’s Church. They are usurpers of authority. In many ways, they self-appoint themselves, seeking to set themselves up as leaders, teachers and significant people of influence over the people of God.

2) They are idle talkers: They emphasize and talk about things that have no edifying relevance or value. They make spiritual mountains out of mole hills that have no true spiritual benefit whatsoever. They create meaningless laws and means of fulfilling those laws that are unprofitable, useless and contain no spiritual value. They babble and make a big deal about vain, empty, profitless things.

3) They are deceivers: They are insincere and they maliciously seek to deceive the people of God. They have ulterior, self-serving motives, which direct all their speech and actions. They pretend to be religious. They pretend to be zealous for the glory of God, but they merely use religion and God as a means of leading people to serve their own ungodly desires.

4) Especially those of the circumcision: Now, while these characteristics are applicable to false teachers in general, here, relevant to what has been going on at Crete (and at many other locations within the Roman Empire, for that matter), Paul states “especially those of the circumcision.” In other words, the Judaizers tended to lead the way, in causing these kinds of problems in the church. We have seen this in our study of 1 Timothy, regarding the false teachers at Ephesus, who were infiltrating the church with dangerous teachings. And furthermore, you

will find this to be true at Galatia and Colossae, based upon the Epistles Paul wrote to them, to mention a few additional examples.

Now again, it is important to realize that these Judaizers were not Jews who denied that Jesus was the Messiah. If that were the case, they would actually be less dangerous, in many ways. What made these Jews particularly dangerous is that they acknowledged the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. That said, they were unconverted and maliciously attempted to infiltrate the church by adding to the gospel, ultimately as a means of pursuing their own material interests, as we will see in the remaining portion of our text. Suffice it to say for the moment that these were Jews who settled in Crete (Jewish Cretans), more than likely, as a product of the dispersion that took place many years earlier, following the Babylonian captivity. Many such Jews, who were settled throughout the Roman Empire, and who were less than sincerely committed to Old Covenant Judaism, saw the spread of Christianity as a means of padding their own pockets and securing their own interests.

5) Before continuing on to reveal further characteristics and motives of these false teachers, Paul adds a statement that, once again, carries Titus back to the importance of fulfilling the tasks that Paul has given him: “whose mouths must be stopped.” The biggest danger posed by these false prophets is that which comes out of their mouths. By their words, they poison the churches of Christ, seeking to contaminate and defile the pure gospel, which alone saves and sanctifies needy souls. And so, their mouths must be stopped.

And the assumption is that by Titus setting things in order that were lacking, and by raising up elders in the church/es, that is exactly what Titus and these appointed elders would be commissioned to do. Recall again, verse 9, “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both *to exhort and convict* those who contradict.” By way of exhortation and conviction, grounded in the teachings found in God’s Word, Titus and the appointed elders would stop the mouths of these false teachers (and all who contradict, for that matter). Through the faithful proclamation of God’s Word, aided by the Holy Spirit, this is the way that they would stop the mouths of the false teachers.

6) Moving on then, Paul adds, “who subvert whole households.” With their mouths and their false teachings, they undermine the faith of the brethren, seeking to rend them from the

foundation that is fixed on Christ alone. And they are not satisfied with gaining power over the individual, but rather, they seek to bring down whole households. They dig for the mother load, attempting to pervert the whole church with their deceptive lies.

7) How do they do this? “Teaching things which they ought not.” They either add to, take away, or add to and take away from the Word and will of God, teaching things to others, as Doctrines of God, which God has neither authorized nor given His approval to. That is why they would be called “false teachers.” And in doing this, they uproot whole households from the truth of Christ, tearing them away from the gospel foundation, which alone saves and sanctifies lives.

8) And why do they do all of this? What is the compelling motive, which would drive them to ruin the lives and souls of others? “...for the sake of dishonest gain” (vs. 11b). Ahh, there is an underlying motive, which drives these false teachers to do what they do, in deceiving others. They are by no means innocent or simply misinformed. They are driven by a desire for material gain. They do what they do for the sake of dishonest gain; that is, gain that comes to them, not by hard work, not by working with honesty and integrity unto a legitimate wage. No, they twist and misuse God’s Word; they wrap malice up in a nice smile and a Christian bow, and they manipulate and sway the minds of others, to the end of padding their own pockets and increasing their material gain. They are, what most of the money hungry, televangelist preachers of our day are...charlatans!

And they know this to be true. In fact, Paul moves on to state that one of their own prophets correctly made this assertion about them (that is, his own people; the Cretans, in general, wherever their original ethnic background finds its root): “One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth” (vs. 12-13).

One of their own prophets has stated the label so well. He’s exposed, very clearly, what is at the root of all their religion. They are deceivers, evil beasts and lazy gluttons. And Paul says, “Yep, that’s exactly right. That’s what I’ve found in my assessment of the Cretan culture. And here, what they are seeking to do to the church, only confirms all the more, what this prophet has said.” They were living out of the playbook of their own acknowledged identity. It’s

not even hidden. It's written on a billboard, as it were. They deceive and act in malice because they live for their own appetites (their bellies), and they refuse to work even to satisfy their own gluttonous desires. They are lazy, and so they deceive and manipulate others, to support their own idolatrous, self-indulging purposes.

This being the case, Paul, referring back to the commands that he has given Titus ("set in order what is lacking, appoint elders in every city...etc"), tells him how he must deal with them, so as to break them out of their wicked practices. "Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth." Most rebukes are not to be harsh, but some are to be sharp, and all are to be done in love. Due to the malicious, deceptive and intentional nature of the sins of these false teachers, who are seeking to subvert whole households and destroy the church, they must be rebuked directly and sharply. Their wicked intentions, words and actions must be called to the carpet, for the good of their own soul, as well as, the good of the church. And the hope is that as they are confronted, exposed and laid bare, they might be led to be sound in the faith. That is, they might be led to repent and to embrace and proclaim the true gospel, in accordance with the will of God.

Their commitment to, and dispensing of Jewish fables and commandments of men, that pretend to produce godliness and holiness, must be abandoned, and they must pursue true godliness in accordance with the teachings of God's Word, grounded in the gospel. They need to see that denying the enjoyment of certain foods, and forbidding customs (like marriage), which God permits and ordains for good, does not produce true holiness, and in fact, it often leads to contradicting it, or at the very least, taking the focus away from the true areas of sanctification that God calls for. Such a practice of forbidding what God doesn't forbid and of proclaiming gnostic and Jewish traditions as Gospel, is a turning away from the truth.

Hence, Paul moves on to say, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled" (vs. 15). To those who are pure in heart; to those who have been purified through the gospel and the shed blood of Christ, and whose lives reflect that by pursuing true, biblical holiness, all things are pure. Whatever they eat or drink, whatever they seek to enjoy that suits the natural desires within the context of God's revealed will, is purified in the giving of thanks to God. Indeed, God

is glorified by such enjoyments, when they remain ordinate desires, not transforming into inordinate lusts. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving; to those who remain in their sin, separated from the cleansing power of Christ's blood, even their greatest works and religious acts are yet impure. What they are on the inside, defiles whatever they do outwardly. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit. For the mind and conscience of such people, out of which, comes even the seemingly noblest of actions, is defiled. The root is defiled, and therefore, no matter how pure the outward fruit may look; no matter how pleasant and sincere they seem, what's at the root defiles all that they say and do. For, without faith, it is impossible to please God. But, even their actions and words, when held up to the standard of God's Word, are found to be problematic and lacking.

Indeed, Paul adds that, "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work" (vs. 16). They speak wonderful things about their alleged love for, and commitment to, God. They profess to know Him well, and to be on the Pilgrim's journey, which you are on. But, their works ultimately betray them. Their true motives are soon exposed. And because all that they do is hidden under the guise of the Christian label, all the more they are abominable (atrocious and worthy of God's wrath and judgment), disobedient (contrary to God's real revealed will), and disqualified from every good work. Nothing they do, whatsoever, is commendable before God, because everything they do is defiled by their impure, unregenerate, Christless state.

And so, such is the sobering and frightening description of false teachers, as described by Paul. And while, he is especially directing this toward the Judaizers from Crete, who were destroying the church in their pursuit of personal gain, the "*especially*" doesn't eliminate the general application here, that is to be taken and directed toward all false teachers, of which, there is no shortage in our own day. Suffice it to say, in all of this, we find Paul's compelling motivation for leaving Titus at Crete, to set things in order and to appoint biblically qualified elders in every city. These false teachers needed to be stopped. They needed to be rebuked sharply, to be exposed plainly, and to have their mouths stopped, unto the preservation of the church, and possibly even the salvation of their own souls, should God be pleased to rescue them from their present corrupt ways.

## **II. Closing Thoughts and Applications**

1) Notice again, the real danger of false teaching. Brethren, we must exercise caution when considering the types of religious books, pod casts, TV and media programs...etc, which we set before our eyes and ears. False teaching is nothing to be trifled with, and it is often very subtle, generally mixed with enough truth to get you to swallow a large pill of life changing deception.

And you know, in our age, we have something that the people of God in the first century didn't have to be concerned about...the internet. And anyone with a smart phone even, can tap into that sphere of influence and direct shiploads of people into all manner of destructive teachings and heresies. Brethren, there are no small amount of self-appointed ministers on Facebook, instagram, Twitter...etc, who direct boatloads of people to their blogs and podcasts and livestream videos...etc, where they take it upon themselves to instruct and influence the people of God, from all over the world! People, who gain hundreds and thousands of followers and subscribers to their YouTube channels, are in essence, pastoring flocks, at least in a preaching/teaching format, without having to go through the trouble of actually knowing the sheep. Now, I'm not saying that everyone of these influences is negative, and there are several who serve under the broader canopy of their local churches, but we need to be cautious, because there are many, many, unqualified wolves out there, who are itching to sway people into the sphere of their own ideas and teachings, and they can, and do, subtly harm the people of God by them. Be careful and "don't be deceived, because evil communications will corrupt good morals." Remember, God's means of providing leadership is through the local church and not the media, where accountability is easily bypassed.

2) Recognize, that at the inner root of all false teachers, who are unregenerate and do not have the Holy Spirit of God, there must be ungodly motives, directing all that they do. In other words, no matter how nice they may seem on the inside, they are serving the devil, and their inner motives must be impure. We can know this, not because we can see the heart, but because the Scriptures tell us that they are ultimately deceivers, desiring some form of material gain and/or they are on a power trip. They may have nice smiles, welcoming accents and a veneer of all kinds of lovely virtues, but they are ultimately devils, led by the devil himself, to deceive many

by way of their angelic countenance. I've heard many say such wonderful things about the Pope. "Pope Francis is the people's Pope, so nice, so kind, so likeable, so friendly..." He's a devil in a white gown, and more people are being carried to hell by the Pope, through his liberal, gospel contradicting teachings than we can number. At times, the antichrist will cloak himself in all kinds of gentle smiles and delicate auras, to sway the people away from the truth and into the way of destruction. And there are no small amount of alleged evangelicals who deliver souls over to the vicious talons of Satan, by playing nice and gently petting people with their heinous, gospel contradicting heresies. Let us not be blinded by faux kindness, and let us ever be alert to what God says about those who add to, or take away from, the gospel of His beloved Son!

3) If Paul boldly acknowledged some of the cultural vices of Cretans (in general), and gave instructions for Titus to boldly expose and rebuke them (deceivers, evil beasts and lazy gluttons), ought we not to consider, perhaps, some of the American vices which entrench our own culture, and to likewise boldly confront them...perhaps, by first addressing how they might be influencing us? At the least, brethren, let us bring our lives, our traditions and our cultural values, all before Scripture, and see if there are habits and traditions, which we have become so comfortable with, that God might just be calling us to cut off, for the sake of His kingdom and glory. I think we would all do well to give an honest assessment of how well the American culture/dream (which is so consumed with entertainment and sports and ease of life and materialism...etc), lines up with the radical call of Christ to "take up our crosses, to lose our lives, and to forsake all," for the sake of following Him. In other words, brethren, I am not saying that all (or even any) of these things are sinful in themselves (or in moderation), but at some point, we must consider if our "Americanism" is leading us to create obstacles which prevent us from wholly and completely committing ourselves to following Christ. What does it mean to "lose one's life for the sake of Christ?" How far do we take that? At the least, an honest assessment ought to be made, with a whole-hearted willingness for us to forsake all (even, deep seated, cultural traditions) for the sake of Christ, if necessary [Calvin- The human heart is an idol factory...].

4) To the unbeliever, know that you cannot please God, one iota, apart from being joined to Christ by faith...etc. The gospel! Amen!!! Benediction: Jude 1:24-25.