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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH (Titus 1:10-16)

So far in the book of Titus, we've seen Paul's goals for creating a strong faith in believers, his assignment to Titus on Crete, and the characteristics of being a godly leader. It follows that he would transition into the flip side of good character to show Titus what to avoid and look out for.

As Titus appointed elders to serve the churches, he was to confirm certain observable qualities in their lives. The final quality Paul mentioned in his list was the ability to handle the Scriptures well so that the gospel could be effectively defended. In the next few verses, Titus receives a tutorial on the type of person who would need corrected and would be his most difficult detractor. False teachers were present in the first century just as we see them operating today.

Titus 1:10-16 - For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, 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 devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. 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. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

THE CHARACTER OF FALSE TEACHERS

Even this early in the life of the church, teachers had seeped in and begun to lead people away from the truth of God. Not only did Titus have to locate and train solid leaders for the churches, but he had to simultaneously

ward off harmful false teachers who possessed the antithesis to godly character.

It says here they were **rebellious** (not recognizing the authority of God's truth.) They were **mere talkers** (tickling the ears but not touching the soul with truth.) They also **deceived** (deliberately misled others with falsehood.)

They were rascals of low character who personified the reputation of many on Crete. Paul even quoted one of their own secular poets who described them as liars, brutes, and lazy gluttons. In Roman times, to say a person "Cretanized" meant they stretched the truth by lying.

Whatever is only almost true is quite false. And among the most dangerous of errors, because being so near truth, it is the more likely to lead astray.

- Henry Ward Beecher -

These false teachers were also called **imposters** by Paul. They claimed to know God, but denied him by their actions. Any teacher with ulterior motives will be revealed sooner or later.

Nothing is more difficult to counterfeit than virtue.

- John Calvin -

THE PROBLEM WITH FALSE TEACHERS

Verse fifteen of this passage is a perfect description of an unbelieving teacher. They are impure - both their minds and consciences are corrupted. Nothing is pure to them because of who they are on the inside, regardless of how they act on the surface.

The problem is they haven't been transformed in their heart. All true teachers of God's truth will be changed by the gospel to seek God and want to obey him.

THE GOAL OF FALSE TEACHERS

It's clear from our verses what prods a false teacher to continue – money. They teach what they shouldn't for the sake of dishonest gain. Be very careful as you watch the ministries of current pastors and teachers. It's a red flag if they are living in serious luxury, far above the means of their congregations. The Bible rightly promotes that ministers should be taken care of financially, but a lavish lifestyle does not reflect a teacher who has the right priority. A wise teacher will know the difference.

THE EFFECT OF FALSE TEACHERS

There's a very sad phrase Paul uses to show the utter devastation left in the wake of a teacher who leads people astray. Paul says here that as these "ministers" do their work, teaching false doctrine, they ruin entire households.

We can be sure that when false teaching happens, the ultimate casualty will be the home and family. The Scriptures lay out a clear and loving plan by our Creator for how a home is meant to operate, from the makeup and attitudes in a marriage to parenting and expectations of children. When false teaching invades, the family suffers and once that foundational institution is affected, communities and then societies are sure to crumble as a result.

THE REMEDY TO FALSE TEACHERS

To take care of the problem of false teachers, Paul realized that there is only one real action that works – take it on directly. The confrontation he advocates here is not easy or comfortable, but is necessary to head off the devastating effects this type of teaching can cause.

He says they have to be silenced through confrontation and rebuke. This may mean direct conversation with the offender but can also mean warning those who could be negatively impacted by their teaching. At the

very least, it means taking some initiative to confront it. Waiting for the problem to go away on its own will not happen. This contending for the faith.

There are three things to keep in mind in this confrontation. First, silencing them does not mean limiting their freedom to share, but trust God to confront them with his truth. The desire is to get them to see their error and turn from hurting others with their wrong message.

Second, there needs to be a rebuke and it may have to be sharp. We love and care for people, but if they are causing harm, the good of the innocent has to take precedence. That requires directly confronting the falsehood.

It is neglect of the Bible which makes so many a prey to the first false teacher whom they hear. The plain truth is that they are lazy and idle about reading the Bible, and do not like the trouble of thinking for themselves. Nothing supplies false prophets with followers so much as spiritual sloth.

- J.C. Ryle -

Last, the goal of rebuke is always restoration. Paul uses the phrase here that they will be sound in faith. With loving correction and prayer, that is the end desire any time we have to rebuke. There is such thing as objective truth and it is not up to us to decide what that is. That's why God revealed himself in his Word.

No person, no matter how clever and deceitful, can indefinitely hide a character that is rotten and out of tune with God. It demands too much. It demands more than any person has in himself, and when God's divine power is absent in a person's life, the charade cannot last long.

- John MacArthur -

BIBLE STUDY

Legislators and Staff (During Session)
Thursdays, 8:00 a.m.
Room 153, House Office Building