

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 7, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



TITUS STUDY

“Tough Grace in a Difficult Place”

GUARDING THE FLOCK

Titus 1:10-16

¹⁰ For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”-Titus 1:10-16 (NKJV)



BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TITUS:

- (1) **Author: Apostle Paul** - Authorship by the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:1) is essentially uncontested.
- (2) **Date: A.D. 62-64** - Titus was written between A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments,
- (3) **Literary Type: Pastoral Letter** - Along with 1, 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are traditionally called “The Pastoral Epistles.”
- (4) **Place of Origin: Nicopolis** – Paul wrote this letter most likely from Nicopolis in Macedonia (some have suggested that the letter might possibly have been written from Corinth. (cf Titus 3:12).
- (5) **Recipient: Titus** - This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name 13 times in the New Testament. The title in the Greek New Testament literally reads “To Titus.” Titus, like Timothy, had become a beloved disciple and fellow worker in the gospel. Most likely, Titus served with Paul on both the second and third missionary journeys. Paul’s last mention of Titus (in 2 Timothy 4:10) reports that he had gone for ministry in Dalmatia—modern Yugoslavia. The letter probably was delivered by Zenas and Apollos. Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile, met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey. **Later, Titus ministered for a period of time with Paul on the Island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work.** After Artemas or Tychicus arrived to direct the ministry there, Paul wanted Titus to join him in the city of Nicopolis, in the province of Achaia in Greece, and stay through the winter. Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians, where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (in 2 Corinthians 2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (in 2 Corinthians 8:23) The young elder was already familiar with Judaizers, false teachers in the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic law. Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject.
- (6) **Setting: Crete** - Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (see Acts 27:7-9, 12, 13, 21).+ He returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue the work, much as he left Timothy at Ephesus, while he went on to Macedonia. He most likely wrote to Titus in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.
- (7) **Occasion: Pastoral encouragement and counsel** - Like Paul’s two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches where he ministered. Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches.

(8) Theological Themes: In contrast to several of Paul's other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the book of Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus' theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers.

Theological/Doctrinal Themes Affirmed in Titus:

1. God's sovereign election of believers (Titus 1:1-2)
2. His saving grace (Titus 2:11, 3:5)
3. Christ's deity and second coming (Titus 2:13)
4. Christ's substitutionary atonement (Titus 2:14)
5. The regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior in Titus, and the saving plan is so emphasized in that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care, but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers' primary preparation for evangelization was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers. How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony

You all know the story of Little Red Riding Hood. When she went to visit her grandmother, the Big Bad Wolf knew that she was coming. So he got rid of Grandma and disguised himself to look like Grandma in bed.

Little Red Riding Hood may have suspected that something was out of order, but she kept inching closer, commenting, "My, what big eyes you have, Grandma!" "The better to see you, my dear," answered the wolf.

"My, what big ears you have, Grandma!" "The better to hear you, my dear!"

Finally, Little Red Riding Hood said, "My, what big teeth you have, Grandma!" To which the wolf replied, "The better to eat you with, my dear!" He leaped out of bed to grab her, and Little Red Riding Hood barely escaped with her life.

The moral of that story is that without discernment, you put yourself in serious jeopardy. **Discernment will keep you from flirting dangerously with enemies who want to destroy you.**

Many Christians need to take to heart the lesson of Little Red Riding Hood. Many wolves in sheep's clothing prey upon God's flock. Some are masters of deception and disguise. They talk like Christians. They use the Bible. They seem like nice people. They are so loving! But they will draw you in to eat you for dinner!

I recently saw an article from *Newsweek* (msnbc.msn.com, Feb. 5, 2007) about a minister in a church in Florida. He is Puerto Rican by nationality, and he says that he is Jesus Christ. At first glance, his congregation in Florida looks like a typical Hispanic evangelical church. But when Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda walks on stage, the crowd goes wild, shouting, "Lord! Lord! Lord! Lord!" They're referring to him. Someone on stage announces, "It's Jesus Christ himself!"

You would think that not many would be fooled by such deception, but in fact, Miranda presides over an organization called "Growing in Grace," which includes more than 300 congregations in two dozen countries. He counts more than 100,000 followers and claims to reach millions more through a 24-hour TV channel, a radio show and several Web sites. The article reported that his organization has many wealthy, generous donors and he lives lavishly, including diamond-encrusted gold rings and fancy cars.

Miranda's view of himself has evolved over the years. At first, he didn't claim to be Christ. He was a pastor spreading his mixture of false and true doctrine: that "under a new covenant with God, there is no sin and no Satan, and people are predestined to be saved." But as his following expanded, so did his claims. In 1998, he claimed that he was the reincarnation of the apostle Paul. Two years ago, he declared himself to be Christ. And, about six weeks ago, he called himself the Antichrist and revealed a 666 tattooed on his forearm. He explains that since he is the second coming of Christ, he rejects the continued worship of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda is only one of many false teachers who profess to know God, but by their deeds, they deny Him. Satan has always been active in raising up false teachers to oppose the truth. It was happening in Crete, where there were "many" deceivers (1:10).

FOR DISCUSSION

What are some of the more common and dangerous examples of "false teaching" – according to Scripture – that are popular where you live? What makes them so popular?

How do you discern what is true and what is false? How do you determine what teaching you will listen to and what teaching you will reject?

Application Questions

1. Can a person be a member of a cult and yet be truly saved? Why/why not?
2. Why is a de-emphasis on doctrine (as in the Progressive Church Movement and the Emergent church) dangerous? Where will it lead?
3. Some react against an emphasis on doctrine because they have been “beat up” by an insensitive dogmatist. How can we hold strong doctrinal convictions and yet not assault others?
4. This study is going to mention several cultural trends in our day that may affect the church today and may create false teaching and ideas in the church. What are some of those trends that we may see today? How can we guard ourselves against these trends that often are blind spots?

How do you respond to the following statements/quotes?

“The greatest danger to the church today is not humanism, paganism, atheism or agnosticism. The greatest danger is not increasing hostility against our faith from the culture. Our greatest danger is apostasy on the inside, arising from false teachers-theological liberals who deny and distort biblical doctrine and lead others down the same path.” — Mark Hitchcock

“False teachers, false religions, and cults have capitalized upon the failure of the Christian church to understand their teachings and to develop a workable methodology both to evangelize and to refute cult adherents. Within the theological structure of the cults there is considerable truth, all of which, it might be added, is drawn from Biblical sources, but so diluted with human error as to be more deadly than complete falsehood. The cults have also emphasized the things which the Church has forgotten.” —Dr. Walter Martin, “The Kingdom of the Cults”

“Think fake news is scary? Try false teaching. The Christian equivalent to journalistic misinformation commits the same kinds of deception with much more at stake. Like fake news, false teaching has enjoyed a long history. The original misinformer appears in the earliest moments of human history, whispering into Eden’s atmosphere, ‘Did God really say?’ In a smooth turn of phrase, Satan does what liars do best: Muddle together a heady cocktail of fact and fiction, twisting the very words of God to prey on fear and desire. The pattern for false teaching was set.” -Jen Wilkins

IS IT FALSE TEACHING OR BIBLICAL TRUTH? Read each of the following statements and indicate whether it is “false teaching” or “Biblical truth” by placing a check [✓] in the box beside your chosen response.

TEACHING STATED AS BIBLICAL	FALSE TEACHING	BIBLICAL TRUTH
If you pray with enough faith, God will grant whatever you ask	[✓]	[]
By good works it may be known that one is a Christian	[]	[✓]
You can earn God’s favor through good works	[✓]	[]
Jesus Christ was/is fully God and at the same time fully man	[]	[✓]
Sickness and trials are the result of your personal sin	[✓]	[]
Baptism is an essential sacrament for salvation	[✓]	[]
God wants you to be happy, so do what makes you happy	[✓]	[]
If you do not have the Holy Spirit in you, you are not a Christian	[]	[✓]
You can’t lose your salvation, so live as you please	[✓]	[]
You can lose your salvation, so you better not sin	[✓]	[]

Those represent just a few of the fins (shark fins) circling in the present currents of Christianity. As with fake news, each appeals to fear or desire. Each distorts the truth, relying on a partial knowledge of what God really said. False teaching also enjoys unprecedented momentum and reach in this digital age. In the onslaught, Christians must train themselves to discern the credibility of the teacher, the scriptural accuracy of the message, and the dangers of credulity (gullibility naivety).

3 Important Passage That Warn Us of False Teacher:

- (1) **Matthew 7:15-20** - ¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” Jesus gives us a warning about false teacher. He states, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.” What Jesus was warning was/is very serious. He is telling us that false teacher look, act, and sound like real thing... like Christians. However, that is only in external appearance. One can parade as a true believer for a time, but eventually one’s words, actions, and especially one’s beliefs--their “fruit”--will give one away as a counterfeit.
- (2) **Matthew 24:23-26** – ²³ “At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear

and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it.” In this passage Jesus, Himself, warns us that as His return draws near, there will be an increase in false prophets who will ensnare many in their false teachings.

- (3) **2 Peter 2:1-3** – “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³ In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.” In 2 Peter 2:1-3, Peter warns us that false teachers will even arise from within the church.

Why is False Teaching in the Church So Dangerous/Deadly?

- (1) **There is eternal destiny at stake** – The true is the distortion of the gospel and way of salvation in any way is absolute catastrophic because some will likely be lost because of it. Salvation, eternal life, and heaven are too important to allow it to be squandered by false teachers who pervert the truths of God’s Word and the gospel. The effects of false teaching have been devastating and damning. That is why the Bible calls them damnable or destructive heresies which lead men to destruction. And I believe that as we get closer to the coming of Christ, these deceptions, lies, and falsehoods, misrepresentations will increase.
- (2) **There are the spiritually vulnerable to consider** – We should be conscious as leaders, preachers, teachers and the more mature believer that there are those among us that are particularly vulnerable to false teaching at time; those who have not been a Christian for long, or who may not have grown very far in their faith, there are also those who are going through circumstances in life that make them more vulnerable (grief, undue stress, hurt, disillusionment for one reason or another). These we should be more protective of and pay closer attention to because the enemy may take extra-liberties to entice these with false teaching. It is a cause that makes false teaching particularly dangerous to these who are particularly vulnerable.
- (3) **There is the reality that they are always present** - The people of God have always been plagued with false doctrine. The invasion of false prophets, false teachers, false apostles, false christs has been something which the people of God have endured through all the ages of time. Satan attempts to oversow the truth with lies. He attempts to confuse the world so that they cannot perceive the truth of God by drowning them in a sea of deceit. It was Satan’s evil intended and clever misrepresentation of truth to Eve that plunged the whole of the human race into sin. We have existed in the morass and the muck of sin ever since, drowning in an ever-deepening morass of deceit. The steady stream of false teaching has been cumulative so that it is wider and deeper now than it has ever been in human history. False teaching about God, about Christ, about the Bible,

about spiritual reality is pandemic, and the father of lies is working to destroy the saving, sanctifying truth that God has given to us in His Word and in His Son.

The coming and rising of false teachers in the world and even in the church should not be a surprise, nor catch us unaware and unprepared. Jesus and His disciples warned us of this, but what are we to do with this information? Why is it given to us? What is our responsibility as believers given the fact of false teacher that have many times even infiltrated the Christian church and their rise to prominence in our world today?

In our day, the number of cults and false religions that profess some link with Christianity is astounding.

- Mormonism is one of the fastest growing religions in America, if not in the whole world
- The Jehovah's Witnesses have their tentacles in countries all over the world
- Other cults are thriving

Because the enemy is so active in promoting destructive heresies, Christians must be grounded, and pastors and leaders in the church must be men and women of the Word who vigilantly guard the flock. They must be able to refute those who contradict, "*for there are many rebellious men....*" In our text, Paul shows that...

Christian leaders and believer must guard the flock by refuting false teachers and by correcting any believers who have followed false teaching.

Frankly, this is never a pleasant task. I would rather focus on the positive. If the world were free of all disease, we wouldn't need doctors or hospitals and we could all live very happily. But we know that the world isn't like that. It is pervaded with many serious diseases, and so we need doctors.

If the spiritual world were free of spiritual errors, we wouldn't need pastors and spiritually mature believers to confront and correct these deadly spiritual diseases. But, the world isn't like that, and so pastors and those mature in the faith must guard the flock by exposing and correcting the many errors that keep creeping into the church. So,

CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND MATURE BELIEVERS MUST GUARD THE FLOCK BY REFUTING FALSE TEACHERS

Paul tells Titus that these men (*he is called to appoint as pastors in these churches on the island of Crete*) must be silenced (1:11). While it may not be possible to stop them from talking, it is possible to stop them from spreading their errors within the church. This would include...

3 Essential That Should be Included to Stop the Spreading of Error in the Church:

- (1) **Guarding the pulpit and the Bible teaching branch of the church from false teachers** – In other words not just the pulpit but also guarding against their infiltrating smaller groups (Sunday School classes, Bible Study groups, etc.) in the church.
- (2) **Equipping saints/believers to recognize and refute false teachers/teaching in the church** – In other words the leaders of the church (pastors, teachers, spiritual leaders) must contribute to the grounding of believers in the Word of God and doctrinal soundness.
- (3) **Insisting on a commitment and firm reliance to the Word of God as ultimate source of authority above all else in the church** – In other words the programs of the church, the emphasis of the church, the practices must always be centered on the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, even to the omission of other possible good and likeable things. Music is great, fellowship is good and even important, programs that may include fellowship and unity building games are good, but none of these are more important nor superseding to the proclamation of the Word of God... ever!

Paul says that these men were *“upsetting whole families.”* Smaller groups give false teachers a more convenient setting in which to spread their lies. The cults today will try to get a believer or a family to “study the Bible” with the cultist. They prey on an individual or a family who are not well-taught and draw them in.

Note two things about such false teaching...

2 Things About False Teaching:

- (1) **False teaching always damages people** - I have a book titled, *The Cruelty of Heresy* (by FitzSimons Allison [Morehouse Publishing]), and the author is right. Heresy is cruel because it damages souls. Thus to confront error is an act of love. If you care about people, you can't let them go into destructive heresies without warning. *Today we have such dangerous impostors in the church that are identifying as “Progressives” (Progressive Christianity), or “Emergents” (The Emergent Church), “Postmodern Theology,” “Social Justice Movement,” ... a new kind of Christian.* Those in these movements are saying that doctrine isn't very important, that what the Bible teaches isn't literal, or important, or applicable to our lives today, or trustworthy, or infallible. Rather, we need to experience the Christian faith. But that's a false distinction. Of course we must experientially know God through Jesus Christ, but if our experience is based on false doctrine, it is not the true Christ that we are experiencing, but some false Christ. Sound doctrine is essential.
- (2) **The greatest danger for false teaching comes from within the church** - These false teachers that Paul is warning Titus about and encouraging to confront, professed to know God. No doubt they seemed to be nice men. Satan is smart enough not to use men who look like evil villains. Nice false teachers have you over for a meal. They invite you to their gatherings. Everyone makes you feel like you're a part of the group. But their

teaching is deadly! Beware, smooth talking, slick appeal, charismatic personality, types! Watch what they are peddling! Always be discerning, putting their words and their appeal up against the Word of God, and be sensitive and heeding of the Holy Spirit in you!

Our text reveals at least three ways that pastor, and spiritually mature believers must refute false teachers:

3 Ways That a Godly Leader or Mature Christians Must Refute a False Teacher:

(1) **Refute false teachers by teaching sound doctrine** - As Paul wrote in Titus 1:9, pastors, Christian leaders, godly Christians must be able to *“by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince those who contradict.”* He goes on to tell Titus in Titus 2:1, *“But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.”* I sure don’t get the impression that we are to downplay theology or doctrine! But, rather than always focusing on the false, a teaching elder must emphasize the true.

I’ve read that when the government trains an agent to detect counterfeit money, they do so primarily by having him study genuine money. If he knows what real money looks like, he will be able quickly to spot a counterfeit bill.

There word, “sound” doctrine means healthy doctrine. It leads to healthy spiritual growth and maturity.

- Teaching that does not confront the cancer of sin is not sound teaching.
- If teaching just feeds curiosity (as much modern prophetic teaching does), it is not sound teaching.
- Properly taught, Bible prophecy should lead to the fear of God and to holy living, not to mere speculations.

But, sometimes it is necessary to focus on false doctrine as a means of warning the flock:

(2) **Refute the false teachers by exposing their false teaching** - There is a common notion that it doesn’t matter *what* you believe, just as long as you’re sincere and believe something. But that is nonsense. You can believe with all your might that you can jump off the edge of the Grand Canyon and fly, but believing that lie will not help you to fly!

It is the same spiritually. Certain things are spiritually true because the God of truth has revealed them to us in His Word. Other things are spiritually false because they come to us from Satan, the father of lies.

Paul says that these false teachers have turned away from the truth... look verse 14 of our passage (Paul says), *“Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.”* This means that spiritual truth is knowable and absolute,

not vague or relative. While we don't know the specific errors of these false teachers in Crete, we can surmise that they were promoting three common errors:

3 Common Errors of False Teaching and False Teachers: *(these almost always apply and are common in almost ever false teaching)*

1. **False teachers add works to salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone** - Paul refers to them (1:10) as *"those of the circumcision."* This was a group of Jewish people who claimed to believe in Jesus as Messiah and Savior. But they insisted that those who professed faith in Jesus were obligated also to keep the Jewish ceremonial and dietary laws to be saved. Especially, they taught that a man must be circumcised to be saved. They could not bring themselves to accept Gentiles into the church on the basis of faith in Christ alone. They must also live like the Jews. Paul and Barnabas had great dissension with such false teachers in Antioch, which led to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). The conclusion reached at that important council was that all people, whether Jew or Gentile, are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, apart from keeping the ceremonial laws of Moses. But in spite of that decision, these zealous Jews kept promoting their errors. They especially dogged Paul's steps, going into the churches that he had founded, perverting the gospel of grace. Paul writes against them often, but especially in Galatians. He said there that if anyone preaches another gospel requiring anything to be added to faith in Christ for salvation, then that person is accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

Satan is always introducing false teaching on the way of salvation. Scripture is clear that saving faith is not merely intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel. Those in the non-lordship salvation camp claim that if you say that repentance from sin is necessary for salvation or that good works are an evidence of saving faith, you are adding works to faith. They think that they are preserving salvation by faith alone, but they are in error about the nature of saving faith. Scripture is clear that genuine saving faith includes repentance and results in a life of good works (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:37-38; 11:18; Eph. 2:8-10). But most false teaching goes to the other extreme and adds human works to saving faith as a necessary condition for salvation. In addition to faith in Christ, false teachers say that you must add your own good deeds, whether baptism, witnessing, keeping the Sabbath, going to Mass, or whatever, to merit salvation. But Paul is very clear that we are justified by faith in Christ, apart from anything that we contribute (Rom. 3:24, 28; Gal. 3:6-14).

Let me remind you of a couple of important passage that you must not forget that sharply refute the idea that we can be saved by our works of something we do:

Ephesians 2:8-9 – *"⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast."*

Galatians 2:16 – *“¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”*

Titus 3:5 – *“⁵ He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”*

2. **False teachers do not focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ** - Paul says that they paid attention to *“Jewish fables (myths)”* in **verse 14** (1:14). This was probably the same error that Paul refutes in 1 Timothy 1:4, where the false teachers paid *“attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.”* This probably involved fanciful interpretations and stories built around some of the Old Testament genealogies and apocryphal literature. But Paul says that it is mere speculation. It didn't further God's administration, which centers on faith in Jesus Christ.

Every false cult, and false religious movement, and false teaching from the first century onward has erred on the person and work of Christ.

- Some have said that He is God, but not truly human (Docetism).
- Others insist that He is human, but not truly God (Arianism).
- Others say that He is some sort of hybrid “god-man” (Witness Lee taught this).
- Many have said that He is our great teacher or example, but they have denied the necessity of His shed blood as the atonement for our sins.

All cults and false teachings supplement the Bible with their own writings or traditions, which invariably contradict the Bible and supersede it. **But as Christians, we must believe in the Bible alone as our authoritative source of truth.** And all of Scripture centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is the eternal God, who took on human flesh to die as the substitute for our sins on the cross (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47).

3. **False teachers promote legalism, not God's grace** - Paul says that these false teachers promoted *“the commandments of men”* in **verse 14**. Notice Paul's words in **Colossians 2:20-23**;

“²⁰Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—²¹ “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”²² which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”

What is Paul's concern here? How does this relate to his words to Titus? Why would the be a concerning across the New Testament world of Paul's day and in these churches?

Think of this... (Let me give you some characteristic of "legalism")

- Legalism involves emphasizing certain non-essential external matters to the neglect of certain essential heart matters.
- Legalism focuses on outward conformity to man-made rules, rather than on inward conformity to God's righteous commands in Scripture.
- Legalism always appeals to the flesh. It feeds the proud human heart that thinks that it can attain righteousness on its own apart from being humbled before the cross.
- Legalists congratulate themselves for doing their religious duties and they self-righteously condemn those who do not do these things. But they do not judge the sin in their hearts or seek to please God from the heart.

That's what **verse 15** in our passage refers to, ***"¹⁵ 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."*** Paul does not mean that if you think something is not sinful, then it is okay. Rather, he was referring to the Jewish ceremonial and dietary laws. The false teachers claimed to be pure because they kept these rules, but in God's sight, they were unclean because their minds and consciences were defiled. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse our consciences so that we can serve God (Heb. 9:14; 10:22).

Paul is making the same point that Jesus made (Mark 7:1-23), where He accused the Pharisees because they kept all of their manmade rituals, but their hearts were far from God. Jesus said that external things, such as eating certain foods, could not defile a man, but rather, what defiles is the sin that comes from the heart.

The cults today (and many false religionist) may not be into Jewish dietary laws, but invariably, they are into legalism. They teach that you can commend yourself to God by doing certain manmade commandments (knocking on doors, being baptized in certain underwear in a particular church). But they do not deal with the defilement of the heart, because they deny the cross.

By the way, legalism and licentiousness (immorality, shamelessness, dissipation, depravity) are not at opposite ends of the spectrum, with grace as the balance point in the middle, as is often taught. Rather, legalism and licentiousness are the flip sides of the same coin. Both are rooted in the flesh and neither produce true godliness.

That's why when Jesus reproved the legalistic Pharisees, He said (Matt. 23:28), "*So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*" These religious legalists were actually lawless in their hearts! But, God's grace is opposed to the flesh, because it comes through the Holy Spirit. As Titus 2:11-14 shows, God's grace results in true holiness both inwardly and outwardly.

So Paul shows that elders must refute false teachers by teaching sound doctrine and by exposing false doctrine. Also...

(3) Refute false teachers by exposing their sinful behavior - Bad doctrine always results in evil behavior. On the surface, false teachers often seem like nice, moral people. Sometimes, the veneer of morality is due to their legalism. But as Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees, legalists look like beautiful, whitewashed tombs, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness (Matt. 23:27).

Note how Paul describes the behavior of these false teachers in **verses 10-11** of our passage, "*¹⁰For there are many insubordinate (disobedient, defiant, rebellious), both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.*"

- They were "**rebellious**" (1:10). This is always at the root of false teaching. Sinners refuse to submit to God's Word, so they invent teaching that fits with their sinful lifestyles.
- Further, they were "**idle-talkers and deceivers**" (1:10). Like a dishonest salesman, they could talk well, but their motive was to deceive for their own advantage.
- These men were *greedy* (1:11). False teachers often exploit their followers, milking them for more money while the false teacher goes first class all the way.
- Furthermore, they are *liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons* (1:12).
- They are *defiled, unbelieving, detestable* (the word means to stink), and *disobedient, worthless for any good deed* (1:15, 16).

Get this, false teachers are not usually so honest as to say that they are atheists or the antichrist. Rather as Paul says in **verse 16**, "*They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him.*" As First John makes clear, the true test of genuine faith is our behavior. 1 John 2:3-4 says, "*By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*" (1 John 2:3-4). Jesus said that you can identify these wolves in sheep's clothing by their fruits (Matt. 7:15-16). So one of the unpleasant, but necessary, tasks of elders is to guard the flock by refuting false teachers.

But, also...

CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND MATURE BELIEVERS MUST GUARD THE FLOCK BY CORRECTING ANY BELIEVERS WHO HAVE FOLLOWED FALSE TEACHING

There are many ways of doing this, but Paul mentions two...

2 Ways of Correcting Believers Who May Have Fallen for False Teaching:

(1) **Correct by warning of cultural trends and tendencies** - Paul cites in verse 12 of our passage, *“¹² One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”* He is quoting the Cretan poet, Epimenides (Epp-a-men-a-adees), who lived about 600 B.C. By calling him a prophet, Paul does not mean that he was a true prophet of God. He is saying that one whom they recognized as their own prophet denounced them.

By quoting a Cretan against the Cretans, Paul strengthens his point. The quote encompasses the famous liar paradox, *that if all Cretans are liars and a Cretan told me so, then he was lying, so he must have been speaking the truth.* Paul is making a tongue-in-cheek point, that Cretans are generally liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons, as their own prophet confirmed. So he is telling Titus to warn the Cretan believers about their cultural propensity towards these sins, which marked the false teachers, so that they would not blindly fall into the same sins.

So, think of this... ***“What trends would Paul warn us about if he lived in our culture?”***

There is certainly the cultural sin of thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3).

- This week the news reported that a psychologist discovered that American college students are more narcissistic than they used to be.
- He attributed it to an over-emphasis on self-esteem, where we tell every child that he is a winner, so as not to damage his self-esteem.
- I have also read that criminals have higher self-esteem than the rest of us do!
- There is also the American trend that being tolerant and non-judgmental are the supreme virtues.
- The main sin is to say, “That is wrong and this is right!”
- Another cultural sin is our materialism and over-emphasis on leisure.

Time forbids further comment, but we’re all prone to swim with our cultural stream. One way to counteract this is to read godly authors from the past. They had their own cultural stream, but since they weren’t swimming in our stream, they often expose the errors of our day.

(2) Correct by **convincing strongly** of the importance and narrowness of the truth – Notice, Paul writes in verse of our passage, **“¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith ”** “Them ” may refer to the false teachers, as the preceding context would indicate. But, being sound in the faith would point to believers.

- **“To rebuke (or reprove)”** means to convince of the errors.
- **“Severely (or strongly)”** means sharply, as one cuts off something with a single blow of an ax. You don’t correct error by hints or nice suggestions.
- **“Being sound”** means being spiritually healthy. It implies that if you don’t correct these spiritual errors, like a serious disease, they will lead to spiritual demise.
- **“The faith”** points to a well-defined, narrow body of truth. We can know when others or we are in it and we can know when others or we turn away from it.

CONCLUSION

Christopher Columbus was stranded in Jamaica and needed supplies. He knew that a lunar eclipse was to occur the next day. He told the tribal chief, “Unless you give me supplies, the God who protects me will punish you. The moon shall lose its light!” When the eclipse darkened the sky, Columbus got all the supplies that he needed.

In the early 1900’s, an Englishman tried the same trick on a Sudanese chief. “If you do not follow my orders,” he warned, “vengeance will fall upon you and the moon will lose its light.” The chief replied, “If you are referring to the lunar eclipse, that doesn’t happen until the day after tomorrow.”

That Sudanese chief was protected from deception because he knew the truth. It is the job of pastors, preachers, teachers, even mature Christian believers to protect the flock from deception by teaching God’s truth and by refuting the many false teachings that prey upon the untaught in our day.

3 Key Principles to Guard Against What is False:

- (1) Know the truth**
- (2) Teach others to know the truth**
- (3) Hold all else up to the truth you know**