

Elder Mark Beall
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834

C1213 – April 18, 2012 – Titus 3:9-11
Foolish Controversies/Factionous Men

Three weeks ago we talked about Titus 3:1-3 and how we, as believers, are to interact with our government and unbelievers. Last week we talked about Titus 3:4-8 – the doctrinal foundation for the instructions in Titus 3:1-3. We summed the passage up like this - when we were unbelievers we were spiritually dead, enslaved to sin. Because of nothing we ourselves did, God delivered us out of that condition and changed us. He justified us, washed us of our sin, gave us new spiritual life, and made us beneficiaries of eternal life. God did it all for us, through Jesus Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. He did it as an expression of His kindness, love, mercy and grace. God has this attitude toward men and He expressed it in what He has done in history through Jesus Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. So - we have no reason to be arrogant towards unbelievers – we were just like them until God saved us – and we should show them compassion because they are still enslaved to sin. We should also imitate God and demonstrate kindness, love, mercy and grace to unbelievers. Knowing these things should motivate us to submit to governmental authorities, to be obedient to them and ready, willing and able to serve them. It should also motivate us to avoid speaking maliciously about anyone, to avoid being contentious or quarrelsome, and to show every consideration to everyone – including unbelievers.

Tonight, we are going to talk about Titus 3:9-11. In Titus 3:9 Paul tells us some things to avoid, and in verses 10 and 11, he tells us how to deal with those in the congregation who are divisive. So - let's read the passage. **Titus 3:9–11 - ⁹ But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰ Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, ¹¹ knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.**

Verses 9-11 contain instructions to Titus about what to avoid and what to do about a person who insists on being divisive. These verses give us the qualities of the things that are to be avoided – they are “unprofitable and worthless”, and verse 11 gives us the qualities of a person who insists on being divisive – that person is perverted, is sinning and is self condemned.

So, let's start with verse 9. In verse 9, Paul instructs Titus to avoid “**foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law**”. Before we get into the specifics about these things, we need to consider something. Notice that the passage starts with the word “but”. This word – “but” – means Paul is contrasting something. The contrast is between the instructions Paul has given Titus regarding what Titus should do versus the instructions Paul is about to give Titus regarding what he should not do. Paul is saying – Titus you should do this, but you shouldn't do that. You should act this way, but you shouldn't act that way.

In verse 8, Paul just got through telling Titus what he should do - he should “speak confidently” about the Cretans' behavior toward governing authorities and unbelievers, and about how they are to remember that they were just like the unbelievers until God saved them and demonstrated His kindness, love, mercy and grace. What was the purpose of this instruction? So that the Cretan believers would produce good deeds. And what does verse 8 tell us about good deeds? They are “good and profitable for men”.

Titus is supposed to speak confidently about the doctrine and behavior in verses 1-8, and in verse 9 Paul contrasts this instruction by telling Titus what to avoid. The word “avoid” in verse 9 means “to go around/to shun”. It has the idea of “stepping around” or “standing aside” from these things. Titus is to have nothing to do with them. Why does he tell Titus to avoid these things? Because they are “unprofitable and worthless”. The fruit they produce is exactly the opposite of the fruit that is produced by things Titus is supposed to teach.

In giving this instruction to Titus, Paul probably has the false teachers and the things they taught in mind. So – let's go back and review what we learned about the false teachers in Crete. Remember, we dealt with this when we discussed Titus 1:10-16. Look at what **Titus 1:14** tells us about what the false teachers were teaching -¹⁴ **Jewish myths and**

commandments of men who turn away from the truth. So - 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. And apparently these fables were being taught in the churches as having some kind of spiritual significance. The “commandments of men tells us that the teaching involved commandments - do this, don’t do that – and that these commandments are sourced in men – not God. Men made these up.

Now, let’s go to **Titus 1:10**, it gives us more information about the false teachers - ¹⁰ **For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision.** Notice, these false teachers were “empty talkers”. They had nothing to say. They just talk to hear themselves talk. What do empty talker’s engage in? Pointless discussions. Pointless arguments. They may sound good. They may sound intelligent. They may sound intellectual. They may sound spiritual. But they are worthless. **Titus 1:10** also tells us these false teachers are deceivers. They deceive people into thinking that they know what they are talking about. What they teach may appear to be orthodox on the surface. It may be wrapped up in great terminology. It may appear to be very spiritual. But it is worthless. Finally, **Titus 1:10** tells us that the false teachers were “especially of the circumcision.” This means that most of them were Jewish. And may even have been Jewish believers.

Now, let’s go back to **Titus 3:9** and look at what Paul tells Titus to avoid. First, he is to avoid “foolish controversies”. What are “foolish controversies”? “Foolish” when describing a thing – such as controversies – means absurd, ridiculous, stupid and pointless. The word “controversies” describes controversial questions, discussions, debates and arguments. So – what Paul is describing here are absurd, ridiculous and pointless discussions or debates. What could these things be? Possibly the Jewish myths referred to in Titus 1:14 and the speculative genealogies and laws that Paul refers to later. Maybe other things. Consider how worthless it is to waste your time engaging in discussions and debates about things that are themselves absurd and ridiculous. Jewish commentaries provide examples of these kinds of things such as - should a Jew eat an egg laid on a festival day? What sort of

wick and oil should a Jew use for candles he burns on the Sabbath?¹ These are foolish controversies.

These are not legitimate discussions or debates about Scripture and Titus is to avoid engaging in debate with the false teachers in Crete about the stupid things that they may have been teaching. It is a waste of time. The false teachers are teaching things they should not teach, they are upsetting whole families, and, instead of giving them some sort of legitimacy by engaging them in debate, Paul said “they must be silenced” in **Titus 1:11**, and in **Titus 1:13**, Paul told Titus to “reprove them severely” so that they may be sound in the faith. Titus isn’t supposed to get involved in debate and argument, he is to chastise them.

Think about it. The things they were teaching were wrong. These teachings were damaging the church. They were leading people astray. They were making them into people who were “detestable, disobedient and worthless for any good deed”. And we know how important it is for believers to be careful to engage in good deeds. To engage in any discussion or debate about these things – other than to silence the teachers and to rebuke them – is itself damaging and worthless. They don’t need to be discussed, they need to be stopped.

Next, Titus is to avoid “genealogies”. In context, this is dealing with the genealogies that were part of the false teachings. Not all genealogies. There are many genealogies in Scripture that are important and we need to know them – such as the genealogies of Christ in Matthew 1 and in Luke 3. Paul is not talking about that. But, apparently, the teachings about these genealogies went beyond Scripture. They may have started off with Scripture – as much false teaching does – but then taken to another level – into the realm of speculation and fantasy taught as fact – which was then given some sort of spiritual significance apart from Scripture. The “Jewish myths” referred to in Titus 1:14 might also have involved genealogies. Here is one description I found of what may have been going on – *“The lists of bare names in Old Testament genealogies were easily expanded into fictitious histories, supposed to illustrate God’s dealings with His people and an example is still*

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003), Tt 3:9.

preserved to us in the apocalyptic Book of Jubilees. The practice, indeed, was so common that the word 'genealogy' was often used in the sense of mythical history, and this would seem to be its meaning in the present verse."² They were making up some mythical history and giving it spiritual significance. These things were worthless and Titus is not to have anything to do with them.

Next, Titus is to avoid "strife". The word translated "strife" can be described like this - "engagement in rivalry especially with reference to positions in a matter." It involves rivalries, divisions, jealousy, and quarrels. Strife can occur in many different ways. Many times it is based on people - like teachers. Maybe one teacher is more eloquent than another. Maybe one has a different teaching style than another. An example of this was the situation in Corinth when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians – the Corinthian church had divided itself into rivalries based on their identification with Paul, Apollos and Peter. And apparently Paul was being attacked by the followers of the other groups because he didn't concern himself about the things or present himself in the ways they considered to be up to their standards. And Paul says this about them in **1 Corinthians 3:3-4 – ³ For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?** The "strife" referred to in 1 Corinthians 3 is the same as our word for "strife" in Titus 3:9. Rivalries had developed between believers who called themselves followers of Paul and others who called themselves followers of Apollos and others who called themselves followers of Peter. And these divisions produced rivalries – each trying to assert itself over the other. Paul calls this fleshly and condemns it. And in Titus 3:9, he tells Titus not to have anything to do with it.

Does this mean that Titus should not do anything that could result in strife? No. Titus will be doing things that people don't like and this could potentially lead to strife. For example, Paul told Titus to silence and rebuke the false teachers. I suspect that some of the false teachers and their followers will not like this. The elders that Titus will appoint in the churches will also be reproving or rebuking the believers within their churches. I bet that some of

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003), 1 Ti 1:3.

these believers will not like this. All these things can, and very likely will, lead to divisions and strife within the Cretan churches. However, are Titus and the elders supposed to back down from confronting false teachers and others in the church who need to be corrected just because it might cause strife within the church? Absolutely not. When Titus and the elders are doing what they are supposed to do – fulfilling their responsibility as stewards of their church accountable to God – they are not the creators of strife. The ones who are creating strife are those who defy them and will not conform their teaching or their behavior to the truth – to proper doctrine. When these people refuse to conform, they are disobedient, they are sinning, and they compound their sins by creating divisions and strife within the body.

We are not to back down from fulfilling our responsibilities because it may result in strife. However, we are not supposed to participate in it, either. We aren't supposed to play the same games those walking in the flesh play. We are supposed to teach the Word, use it to reprove, rebuke and correct, and, as we will see later, if someone is defiant, we are supposed to reject them – remove them from the church.

The last thing that Paul tells Titus to avoid is “disputes about the law”. What does this mean? In the Greek, it just says “battles about law”. An interesting thing to note is that the Greek word translated “battles” is only used in the New Testament concerning battles that are fought without weapons. So – we aren't talking about physical battles. We are talking about verbal battles – disputes, arguments. The NASB translates this “disputes about **the Law**” which indicates the translators decided that Paul was talking about the Mosaic Law. Is this what Paul is talking about? Maybe. Remember that the false teachers were probably Jewish, and remember in verse 1:14, they were paying attention to “Jewish myths”. Since the flavor of the false teaching was Jewish, it is very likely that these disputes had something to do with Judaism – maybe involving the Mosaic law, and maybe involving the “Oral Law” or all the religious legalisms of Judaism that went far beyond the Mosaic law. These may have been the same thing Paul was referring to in Titus 1:14 when he referred to the “commandments of men”. Titus is to have nothing to do with disputes about these things.

The rest of the verse tells us what “foolish controversies, genealogies, strife and disputes about the law” produce. What their fruit is. These things are

“unprofitable and worthless”. The word translated “unprofitable” basically means “of no advantage, useless”, but can also mean damaging. The word translated “worthless” means empty, vain, futile, fruitless. As I said before, the fruit of these things are exactly the opposite of the fruit of good doctrine and the behavior that conforms to good doctrine – the fruit of those things is “good and profitable for men.”

We need to remember that Paul’s instructions to Titus about what to teach the Cretans were intended to apply to the leadership of the churches once Titus appointed elders. They also apply to us, as well. So – let’s briefly go back through the book and review what we are supposed to teach. First, look at **Titus 1:9** - to qualify as an elder, a man 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.** This tells us that elders are to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. So – in the local church – the “faithful word” – God’s Word, the Bible – is to be used to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. The elders are to teach the word of God – in the context of both exhortation and rebuke. Look at **Titus 2:1 – ¹ But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.** That’s pretty clear. We are to teach sound doctrine and the behavior that conforms to sound doctrine. Remember that Titus 2:2-10 describes what some of this behavior is from the perspective of the different groups within the church – the older men, older women, young women, young men, Titus (as a leader in the church) and slaves. And remember that Titus 2:11-14 gives the doctrinal foundation for this behavior – that through Christ, God demonstrated godly living and set us free from the power of sin with the intention that we would live godly lives and be zealots for good deeds. And **Titus 2:15** again tells us that we are to teach these same things and use them to exhort and reprove with all authority. Then we move on to **Titus 3:1-7** where we learn about how to interact with governing authorities and unbelievers, and the doctrinal foundation for this behavior – God’s kindness, mercy, love and grace as manifested in what He did for us. And in Titus 3:8, we are told **“...concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.** Once again, we are to teach sound doctrine and the behavior that is consistent with sound doctrine.

One of the things that comes across loud and clear from this whole book is this. We are to know sound doctrine. We are to teach sound doctrine. We are to teach behavior that is consistent with sound doctrine. We are to exhort and reprove and rebuke using sound doctrine. If our church does this, then each of us will be able to grow in the knowledge of truth with the goal being our godliness as Titus 1:1 says. We will be able to “deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” as Titus 2:12 says. We will intent on doing good deeds as Titus 3:8 says. We will be the church God intends us to be.

But if we don’t teach these things, and if we don’t silence false teaching and if we engage in foolish controversies, we will have strife. We will have disputes. We will have dissensions and divisions. And we will be like the false teachers described in **Titus 1:16** – of whom Paul said - ¹⁶ **They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.** We will be acting just like unbelievers. And we will be worthless for any good deed.

So, that is why we are so concerned about teaching in our church. It is our first and foremost responsibility and the only way to grow spiritually and equip ourselves for service. Like **2 Timothy 3:16–17** says - ¹⁶ **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;** ¹⁷ **so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

Let’s move on to Titus 3:10-11. These verses give us instructions about how to deal with a “factious man”. They say - ¹⁰ **Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,** ¹¹ **knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.**

First – what is a “factious man”? Basically, he is a “division maker”. He is divisive. He divides the church. In the context of Titus, he is person within the church who opposes the teaching, exhortation and rebukes that Titus does, and – later – the elders do in fulfillment of their duties as God’s stewards of their church – for example, a false teacher, or the follower of a false teacher. Basically, a factious man is a person who defies doctrinal teaching, reproof and correction. And by doing this, he divides the church. He doesn’t really need to be public about it – like stepping up in front of the

church and declaring his opposition. He may be very subtle about it and keep his opposition relatively private – within his group of friends. But that is still being divisive – and because it may be unknown to the rest of the church, it may be worse because it grows in private and the church can't deal with it right away.

Now, I need to make it clear that, like the Bereans, when something is taught here, all of us should examine Scripture and make sure that it is true. When the elder board does something and there is a question about it, all of us should examine the Scripture and make sure it is correct. And if there is any question about anything that is taught or done, we should work through it together using Scripture as our authority. There is right way to do this – with humility, patience, gentleness, peaceableness. And there is the wrong way - the fleshly way – with gossip, arrogance, quarreling, and fighting. A factious man is one who chooses the fleshly way.

Now, are all divisions bad? No - this is just like we discussed when we were talking about strife. When the church is doing what it is supposed to do – when the elders are doing what we are supposed to do – fulfilling our responsibility as stewards of the church – teaching proper doctrine, exhorting and correcting with Scripture – somebody may not like it. They may oppose it – they may defy it. This will create divisions. However, the elders are not the ones who are being divisive. They are not the ones who are dividing the church. The ones who are dividing the church are those who defy Biblical teaching, exhortation and correction. The church leadership cannot back off from fulfilling its responsibility just because it may result in factions or divisions. Leadership should do its job and let God take care of the consequences. This is not being factious. This is being obedient. The factious ones are the ones who are defiant – these are the ones who are sinning.

This verse goes on to tell us what we are supposed to do with a factious person. We are to reject him after a first and second warning. We are to warn the factious person twice. We need to note something about the word translated “warn” – the word means “counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct”. It is admonishing or rebuking. It has the idea of instruction, but with a warning. The word is translated “instruction” in 1 Corinthians 10:11 which says - ¹¹ **Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom**

the ends of the ages have come. Also in **Ephesians 6:4** which says - ⁴ **Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** Some sort of instruction is involved in the warnings described in Titus 3:10 - it is instruction using Scripture to reprove and correct him in an attempt to bring conviction and repentance. So - we are not simply to warn the factious man – “you better stop it or else”. We are to warn him with Scriptural instruction. Hopefully, he will listen to Scripture and repent of his sin and be restored. This is what we are supposed to do with defiant believers within the body.

What happens if the factious man refuses to repent after the first instruction and warning? We are to try again. We are to go back and warn him again with Scriptural instruction. What happens if the factious man refuses to repent after this second instruction and warning? We are to reject him.

What does it mean to reject him? The word translated “reject”, in this context, means to discharge, dismiss or drive out. We are to drive him out of the church. In other words, we are to excommunicate him. This is a command. It is not a choice. It is not optional. If we want a healthy church, we must kick this person out. Verse 11 tells us why it is so important that we take this action.

Verse 11 tells us that, if we have tried twice to instruct and warn this man, and he has twice refused to listen and has not repented, we now know something about this person that we didn't know for sure before. Verse 11 tells us what we now know - ¹¹ **knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.** The word “perverted” means to cause to turn aside from what is true or morally proper. It's the idea of turning aside from the truth. In this verse “perverted” is in the perfect tense – meaning that this man has been perverted and continues to be perverted. By this time, he has made a settled choice. He isn't just mistaken about the truth. He chose to turn away from the truth and continues to choose to do so. Because of this, he is sinning – he is persistent in his sin - and he is self condemned. “Self condemned” means “he judges against himself” - in his rejection of the truth, after two clear warnings, he has declared himself to be guilty of turning away from the truth and that he deserves to be rejected.

If this person continues to be defiant after the first and second warning, we now know for sure that he is perverted – that he has turned away from the truth, and that he will be persistent in his sin. So – if you think about it - the two warnings have two purposes – the first purpose is to convict the factious man to repentance. This is the first goal - and you hope and pray that this is what happens. Hopefully, he is not so far gone that he has chosen to turn away from the truth. If he hasn't – great. He will repent. However, the second goal of the two warnings is to confirm that the person is perverted – he is so far gone that he has chosen to turn away from the truth. If he refuses to repent after two instructional warnings, we know that he has made the choice to turn away from the truth. We know that he will be persistent in his sin. By his refusal to repent, he judges himself guilty. And we have no choice but to reject him – to kick him out of the church. He cannot stay. The health of the church depends on it.

This passage is describing church discipline, and we need to remember that a primary goal of church discipline is to restore the sinning believer – in this case the factious man. **Titus 1:13 emphasizes this with regard to the false teachers** – remember Paul told Titus to reprove the false teachers – “...severely so that they may be sound in the faith. The warnings are intended to convict him and bring him to repentance. If these don't work, rejection – kicking him out of the church – is intended to put more pressure on him by removing him out of the fellowship of the church. Hopefully, this will work to convict him and bring him to repentance.

However, there is another purpose of discipline that needs to be remembered, as well. As much as we hope that the sinning believer will be convicted and repent, he may not. If he won't, he cannot be allowed to remain in the church to infect the other believers. Look at what was happening in Crete – the false teachers were “upsetting whole families” according to Titus 1:11. They were teaching bad things. They were bad examples. They and anyone who followed them were, according to Titus 1:16, detestable, disobedient and worthless for any good deed. They would drag others down with them and the church would be corrupted and worthless. He has to go to protect the others, to protect the church, and to protect the name of Christ.

Now, let's think about some things. First, who is supposed to be warning this person? Who gives him the first and second warning? You have to look at this

two ways – who is going to deal with the immediate problem in the short term and who is going to deal with these kinds of problems later on an ongoing basis. In this verse, Paul is specifically addressing the short term problem – the immediate problems currently existing in the Cretan churches. The verb “reject” in this verse is a second person singular imperative. Second person singular means he talking to Titus - he is instructing Titus to do this - Titus is commanded to reject the factious man, and this implies that Titus is also the person who is going to give the “factious man” the warnings. This makes sense in the context of the leadership status in the Cretan churches at that time. Who was the authority in those churches at the time Paul wrote the letter? Remember, no elders had been appointed – that was one of the reasons Paul left Titus behind in Crete – to appoint elders in every church. That hadn’t been done, yet. So – in the short term, Titus is the one who will be handling the problem. He may do it with the assistance of the elders that he appoints, he will certainly need their support, but he is the one who is instructed to do it.

So - let’s think about what is about to happen. Since there were many false teachers in these churches, there was an immediate problem, and this problem is going to be compounded when Titus appoints elders and disciplines these false teachers. When he silences them and rebukes them – as Paul told him to do - there are going to be more problems with some of these men and their followers. They aren’t going to like it and there is going to be a period of time when there is strife because the defiant ones are going to create this strife. Remember, they were teaching the false things for “sordid gain”. So – in addition to the hit they are about to take against their status and pride - Titus is about to jeopardize their income – this is going to hit them in the pocket book. The Cretans loved money – they would do anything for money. Some of them may repent and change their ways. The others who remain defiant aren’t going to like it – they aren’t going to go away easy - and they are going to make life miserable for these churches. They are going to create strife. That is the nature of rebellious men – that is who they are – you can pretty much count on it. What Titus is going to do isn’t going to be easy – it’s going to be hard and messy – and some people are going to be kicked out of the assembly. And if people were the same then as they are now, many of their followers will be defiant and are probably going to go with them. Remember that, in each town, there was only one church. If the Cretan churches were relatively new churches – which may be the case

because they did not have elders – then some of the churches may have been relatively small with people who were closely connected – family connections, business connections, etc. If the churches had been around a while, some of them may have been larger – with groups meeting in houses – and the house groups would probably have developed these kinds of close connections. Whether a particular church was small or large, what Titus is about to do is going to be hard and it's going to deeply affect the people in these churches. It's going to create dissensions and upheaval. But it is necessary. Not only is it necessary, it is commanded. Confronting these people is not an option. And the more entrenched the false teachers and their followers are, the more upheaval there is going to be.

Now, let's talk about the long term problem. Titus was going to leave shortly. He wasn't going to be there all the time. And the problems in the Cretan churches were not going to end. So – who is supposed to be warning the “factious man” after Titus leaves? Who is supposed to reject him – kick him out of the church if he doesn't repent? The elders. This is their job. **Titus 1:7** tells us that the elders are “overseers” and are God's stewards of the local church. An overseer is a guardian or supervisor. As overseers, the elders are God's stewards – meaning that they are managing the church for the benefit of God. The elders' responsibilities as overseers and stewards go hand in hand. They have been entrusted with managing and safeguarding the church for God. Taking care of false teachers and factious men is one of their responsibilities. That is why, according to **Titus 1:9**, one of the qualifications of an elder is that he must hold fast the faithful word – he must completely accept and be devoted to the word of God. If he does, he will be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to rebuke those who contradict. So – when Titus has appointed elders in a church, they become responsible for silencing the false teachers, rebuking them severely, warning the factious man, and kicking him out if he continues to be defiant.

Now let's get personal and think about how something like this would play out in our church. The elders at Fredericksburg Bible Church have the exact same responsibilities as the elders in the Cretan churches. They are the overseers and God's stewards of this local church. So - let's make this really hard and say that Jeremy somehow goes off track and starts to teach something unscriptural. Maybe he becomes a Gomarist and hyper-Calvinist (you can ask Jeremy what a Gomarist is). We all know him and we all know

how carefully he studies, and how knowledgeable he is, and he will be very convincing. We have a big problem and the elders have to deal with it. And it is going to be hard.

First, someone in the church has to recognize that what Jeremy is teaching is false. If we have qualified elders – elders who are know and are devoted to the Word – the elders should recognize this. They should at least detect if something sounds wrong and then investigate it. And if the church has been doing a proper job teaching doctrine, and if the congregation has been paying attention and studying on their own, someone in the congregation should detect that something sounds wrong. Notice how critical it is that we all know biblical doctrine well. If we don't know it, and know it well, no one will be able to detect that Jeremy is leading us astray. This is scary. There are many churches out there that depend on one person – the pastor – to know the Bible and teach it to them. And there are many congregations who don't want to be taught – they want preaching, application, motivation, but not doctrinal teaching – and they hire pastors who will give them what they want. That is a recipe for disaster - complete reliance on the pastor and no desire for doctrinal teaching. That pastor can pretty much take them anywhere he wants and no one will question it.

So, now we have detected that something has gone wrong with Jeremy. What do we do? According to **Titus 1:11**, the first thing we have to do is to silence him. He can't teach what he is teaching. And at the same time, according to **Titus 3:10**, the elders must meet with him, and warn him - with instructions about why his teaching is false. And we need to publicly correct what he has been teaching. Once again, it requires a lot of doctrinal knowledge on the part of the elders in order to do this. And once again, this emphasizes how critical it is that the elders be independent in their study of the Word and not totally depend on the pastor to teach them. They have to correct what Jeremy taught and they have to be able to explain to Jeremy where he has gone wrong. If Jeremy sees the light and accepts the correction, the church is back on track.

What happens if Jeremy doesn't agree and wants to continue in his false teaching? The elders will need to meet with him again and warn him again. If he continues to insist on his false teaching, **Titus 3:12** says we now know something about Jeremy. He has been perverted – he has chosen to turn away from the truth. He has been presented with the truth and warned about

his teaching – twice – and has decided to continue anyway. **Titus 3:12** tells us he is sinning and, because he has defied the warnings, he is self-condemned – he has judged himself guilty of this sin. And the consequences of this is that he must be rejected – removed from the church. The elders must do this – they don't have a choice. No matter how much we like Jeremy.

Now, obviously, our church will not remain unaffected by this. It will be very hard on our church. Now, Jeremy is not a factious man, but if he was, he will not take being silenced very well. And he may defy the elders and try to continue to teach somehow. He may complain to his friends about how he is right and the elders are wrong. Things start happening behind the scenes. Before the elders can get to the second warning, Jeremy starts gathering up his followers. He does this because he is a factious man – he's divisive. If he doesn't agree with the elders, he should just leave. But he won't. He thinks he is right and he needs a job. So he stays. And real quickly, the church will start taking sides – Jeremy will have his followers (which could be quite numerous) and others will side with the elders. And others (probably a lot of others) will just leave. Even after Jeremy leaves, there will be damage within the church that may take years to overcome.

The point I want to make is this – application of Titus 3:10-11 will in all likelihood be very messy. We are dealing with a “factious man” and a “factious man” by definition creates factions. It won't be easy to deal with him. From the elders' perspective, we need to realize how messy it can be and do everything we can to avoid making things worse by how we handle things. This takes constant vigilance, prayer and commitment to following Scripture. Obviously, one of the best things to do is to handle a problem like this as soon as it comes up and to communicate clearly with the congregation about what is going on. The longer we wait, the harder and messier things will be. We must be committed to properly fulfilling our responsibilities as overseers and stewards of this church, and not let the potential consequences turn us away from doing our duty. We are accountable to God for obeying His directions about how His church should be managed and cared for, and we better do what He says; knowing that He is in charge of the consequences - and have complete confidence and faith that the consequences of acting in obedience to Him are far better than the consequences of disobedience. Obedience and loyalty to God is the point. That is always the point. The elders must obey God and let God take care of the consequences to the church.

The congregation needs to understand this, as well. Even if the elders are obediently doing their job – and maybe particularly if the elders are obediently doing their job – there may be periods of strife in the church because of things like this. When these things come up, the temptation that the congregation will face will be to start taking sides, and forming factions. The congregation should not compound the problem by responding in the flesh – by participating in the strife, quarreling, and divisiveness. The congregation should support the elders in fulfilling their responsibilities as overseers and stewards charged with protecting the church. Like the elders, the congregation must be vigilant and understand what is going on, and respond with prayer, grace and commitment to following Scripture.

These are the kinds of things Titus, the elders and the Cretan churches were going to have to deal with when implementing Paul's instructions regarding the false teachers and factious men. And these are the kinds of things our churches today must deal with, as well. There will always be false teachers and there will always be factious men. The elders are responsible for dealing with them. The congregation is responsible for supporting the elders in dealing with them. These are hard things to do, they are unpleasant and messy, but if something like this becomes necessary, the elders must fulfill their responsibilities and do it, no matter how hard, unpleasant and messy it is.

Next week, we will finish up Titus.

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