

Message #5

Titus 1:10-16

A couple of weeks ago, a family from Sarasota, Florida came home after being gone a couple of days and as they walked into their home, something didn't seem quite right. As they looked around they saw an intruder who started coming at them with a baseball bat. The husband and father had a gun and he shot and killed the intruder. The police determined that he was completely justified in what he did because he was protecting his family.

Who protects the family of God from intruders? Whose job is it to see to it that doctrinal intruders don't sneak in and start demolishing the flock? Paul says it is the job of the Elders.

The island of Crete was a wild party island and Paul wanted a church in every town. There was a lot of religion on this island. There was Jewish legalism; there was Greek mythology and Roman polytheism. People were religious, but they weren't right with God. This island needed solid churches in every city.

In order to have that, Paul left Titus on the island and it was his job to go from city to city and appoint Elders. He was to find men who were solid, stable, spiritual men and he was to appoint them to be leaders. **One of the primary reasons that Elders were to be appointed was so that they could protect the church from people who sneak in and speak and act in unstable, unbiblical and ungodly ways.**

When Paul met the last time with the Ephesian Elders, he told them that one of their primary responsibilities was to keep a lookout for wolves who try to sneak into the church to attack the flock (Acts 20:17, 28-31). In other words, Elders were to keep watch over people already inside the church and coming in from the outside to make certain they were protecting the flock from wolves who promote unsound doctrine.

A few years ago there was a new movement that swept across this country called the "Emerging church." The idea behind it was strong teaching and doctrine is not important, but practical experiences are important. Well Paul saw it differently. The church was to be a place that carefully taught the Word and sound doctrine and when someone would come into the church who started to propagate that which was not sound, they were to be silenced.

It is the responsibility of the leaders to make certain that no one in the church gets away with teaching that which is not true and sound and if anyone comes into the church or rises from within the church that starts communicating distorted doctrine, it is the responsibility of the Elders to silence them.

Carefully notice how **verse 10** begins, with a conjunction "for." That conjunction introduces us to a section that explains why Titus needs to select stable, well-taught Elders who hold fast to the Word of God:

THE ELDERS NEED TO BE STABLE, GODLY MEN WHO ARE WELL-TAUGHT IN THE WORD OF GOD BECAUSE PART OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO PROTECT THE CHURCH AND GUARD THE FLOCK BY SILENCING THOSE WHO SAY THINGS THAT ARE NOT SOUND, GODLY OR BIBLICAL.

Elders must be stable men because they deal with people who aren't stable. Now in this part of Paul's letter to Titus, there are three responsibilities that an Elder has:

RESPONSIBILITY #1 – Elders must silence rebellious and unsound people. **1:10-11**

These two verses are eye-opening. In a world gone wild, people still go to church and some of those who go to church are not there for good reasons. Now from **verse 10** we learn five facts:

Fact #1 - There are many who come to church who are not interested in truth or being right with God. **1:10a**

Many people will come into the church. They are not there because they love the Lord and love the Word or want to be taught the Word. There is a potential in every church for many to visit who are not there with pure motives.

Fact #2 - There are many that are rebellious. **1:10b**

The word “rebellious” is a specific word that means not subject to authority. When you have a church sitting in a wild, unruly world, some people who hate any authority duck into church and the church is to be a place of Biblical authority, not an unruly free-for-all.

There are some people who hate authority in the church. They will not submit to the authority of Jesus Christ; they will not submit to the authority of the Scriptures, or the authority of the Elders or the Deacons. Leaders are to keep a lookout for people like that.

Now specifically these people would not submit themselves to apostolic instruction. They were “defiant in their opposition” to the truth of God.

Fact #3 - There are many who are empty talkers. **1:10c**

When people go to worship services, they should go to listen and learn and not talk. Solomon said, “Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools...do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought. Let your words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2).

There are some people who can come to church not with the goal to listen and learn, but with the goal of talking. They want to promote their meaningless doctrines and empty, vain, religious arguments. There are many people who are empty in their knowledge of God and His Word.

But these people love to wax eloquent about their empty beliefs. They carry on pointless discussions and present meaningless ideas.

Fact #4 - There are many deceivers. **1:10d**

The Greek word means these people are deceivers of people's minds, including their own minds (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 473). There are those who can talk religion and they are able to get people to listen to their views and are very deceptive.

Fact #5 - There are many who appear very religious. **1:10e**

The big group known for this was the religious "circumcision" group. These were religious people who wanted to mix in a little O.T. law into grace. These people were those who appeared very religious. They were typically legalists who tried to filter in some legal codes or commitment to O.T. law. These people are not atheists and they do have some knowledge of the Bible. They appear to be educated and they talk like a good religious person should talk.

But they are wolves and Elders need to be on the lookout for them. They must be stopped for two reasons:

(Reason #1) - Because they upset whole families by their teaching. **1:11a**

False teachers destroy families. They will destroy the family of God in a church. If the Elders permit empty talkers to teach and postulate their beliefs and doctrine, they will destroy a church family. They will ruin a church with their non-sensible and non-biblical and inaccurate religious talk.

We know of people connected to this church who have really come to terms with God's grace and it has put a rift between them and their families, who go to churches that promote law.

(Reason #2) - Because they are not teaching to communicate truth, but for evil gain. **1:11b**

The motive for people not teaching truth is a dishonest motive. It is a motive of gaining power or prestige or preeminence or it could be money. When a person is a leader in a church and is not interested in the truth, the motive is not pure. There is some selfish, sordid motive. You can know this every single time.

I read of one false minister in California who told people the more they gave to him the more God would bless them. For his birthday he convinced them to give him a Rolls Royce and when he didn't like the color of the interior, he convinced them to pay for a new color of the interior. This minister does not teach the truth of God. This minister does not systematically teach the Bible.

Now **verse 11** says when you spot these kinds of people in the church, you must silence them. You cannot stop them from talking in the world, but you sure can stop them from talking in the church. It is the job of the leaders to see to it that they have no opportunity to postulate their empty talk. The leaders have a responsibility to shut them up.

John Calvin faced this very issue in his own life and ministry. He saw men who were tampering with the truth about the Sovereignty of God. In the 1500's there were some people who were starting to elevate the sovereignty of man and Calvin took a hard-line position. He said you need to tell people what is Biblically sound and demand that they be silent and if they don't listen, you excommunicate them and throw them out of the church.

Now we are not talking here about those who have honest questions about God and the Bible. We are not talking about someone who has a belief that may be immature for lack of knowledge. We are talking here about someone who sets himself up as some authority and tries to sway a person to believe something that is not sound. It is the job of the leaders to spot that person and silence that person.

Years ago we were involved in a church in which a man who viewed himself as a self-proclaimed scholar on the Bible started telling people that if they were not carrying a King James Version of the Bible, they could not be spiritual and may not be saved. He actually had split the church right down the middle. When I got to the church, I had to pick up the pieces. Frankly that man should have been silenced. He had no idea what he was even talking about. He knew nothing about Biblical languages or manuscripts and he split a church. He should have been silenced.

RESPONSIBILITY #2 – Elders must rebuke those living a godless and faithless lifestyle.
1:12-13

The people on the island of Crete had quite a reputation. They were known for three godless types of behavior, each that begins with a word starting with the letter “L”:

(Godless Behavior #1) - They were known for being liars. **1:12a**

One of their own prophets made this statement about them. Paul used a quote from Epimenides, a Greek poet and philosopher, who lived about 600 years before Christ. The reason he made this statement is because the Cretans made the claim that the king of the Greek deities “Zeus” was buried on their island. Epimenides knew that this was not true so he said the “Cretans are always liars.” Epimenides was himself a Cretan. So by saying this he is admitting it about himself.

(Godless Behavior #2) - They were known for being licentious. **1:12b**

The Cretans behaved like evil beasts with no restraints. They had no moral compass. In fact, Cicero, the great Roman orator said that “moral principles were so corrupt that they considered highway robbery as an honorable method of making a living.”

(Godless Behavior #3) - They were known for being lazy. 1:12c

The point here is that the Cretans were lazy gluttons bent on fulfilling their bodily appetites without even going to work. They did not want to work for a living. They just wanted to enjoy a good party life.

That was what Crete was like. It is amazing that God even wanted His churches on this island. But you see God does some of His greatest work in people and places just like this. God can use His church to communicate His truth so that people are saved and transformed.

But notice the responsibility of the Elders in **verse 13**—they were to “severely reprove” them. They were not to tolerate them or debate with them or appease them or make them feel good about themselves. They were to sharply rebuke them. Sometimes this is what a leader must do because if he doesn’t, they will affect others.

The word “reprove” is the same word used in **verse 9** which means to show them from the Word of God they are wrong. One time, I told a woman she had no right to divorce her husband based on the Word of God and the mother of the daughter got mad at me. I was telling the truth and showed from Scripture the truth, and you would think I was the problem.

Now obviously there were those in the church who were telling these people that they were okay in their lifestyle. Paul said to Titus you pick leaders who will tell them it is not okay.

RESPONSIBILITY #3 – Elders must rebuke false doctrine and teaching. 1:14-16

Some of the people were coming into the church and making up stuff. They were promoting Jewish myths and commandments invented by men and they were turning people away from the truth. They were not carefully studying and expounding God’s Word. They were teaching stuff invented by men.

These were Jewish legalists and one of the common denominators of these kinds of people is their emphasis on their man-made rules. They made things up and based their beliefs on their traditions. They would then tell the people they had to follow their man-made rules and codes.

Apparently from **verse 15**, one of the doctrines they were attacking was the doctrine of Christian liberty. They promoted some religious legalism. They made up their own code of conduct and condensed it into their rules and made people follow their convictions. They probably made up rules about what you could eat or drink or what you could or could not do on a specific day. Paul said to those who are pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure but their own rules. These people do not live by Grace, but by law.

According to **verse 16**, they professed to know God. They told people they were right with God. But notice how God viewed them:

Way #1 - They denied God.

Way #2 - They were detestable to God

Way #3 - They were disobedient to God.

Way #4 - They were worthless to God.

This is the way God views those who are not dedicated to His Word and to the amazing grace found in Jesus Christ.

Now the Elders need to be on the lookout for these kinds of people and silence them. When leaders spot these intruders in the church, they are to put a stop to them.