

Courageous Leadership, p.2

Beautifying the Bride, p.3

By Jeff Noblit

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Titus 1:10-16

Preached on: Sunday, April 30, 2023

Anchored in Truth Ministries

1915 Avalon Ave.

Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Website: www.anchoredintruth.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/anchoredintruth

All right, take your copy of the Scriptures and turn your electronic things off and look, look at Titus 1 as we continue with "Beautifying the Bride." Now we're in this letter of the Apostle Paul to his under-associate Titus, whom he's left on this tough, tough place, the island of Crete and, uh, his job is, to quote, set things in order. There's numerous churches on this rather large island and they're in a mess and he's saying, "Titus, I want you to get things straightened out, get these churches straightened out. And, um, it's going to be tough, and one of the first things," he says, "you're gonna have to do is appoint elders in all the churches." Elders are not essential for the existence of the church or a local church, but they are essential for the health and the well-being of the local church. We know that there were many churches established, uh, in the New Testament just like we have many of our Anchored in Truth church plants who don't have elders yet, they're just starting. But they are a church. But as time goes on, we we try to mentor them and they develop their elders and as time went on Paul and sometimes Titus, as in this case, his associate would appoint these elders to the end that they begin their work of overseeing, ruling over, literally the word means in the original, ruling over these local churches to get things back in on track. Now it was a daunting task on this particular island because these were some rough tough, woolly burgers. Is that a word? Well, that's that's, that's it was, it was tough. And so he's already talked about qualified elders. In other words, "You can't just go out there, Titus, in a point a bunch of guys to lead the churches because they're rough and tough. They may have to be that, but they've got to be biblically qualified with the kind of spiritual character necessary." Now he shifts gears. It certainly, uh, connects together, but now they're going from qualified leadership or elders to courageous leadership or elders. And so, Paul, writing to Titus, lays out why it's going to take courage for Titus and those elders he appoints in these various churches to be, create courageous.

Look at it, if you will. Titus 1:10 through 16. Paul writes, "For," in other words, connected it to what what he's already said.

10 For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially of the circumcision, 11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. 12 One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said,

"Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." [Wow.] 13 This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

Now what I've done in unpacking the exposition of this section is I've organized the various aspects into three main categories. As Paul writes this letter, it's one of the things that impresses us about the authority and inspiration of Scripture is that these men didn't write Scripture as if they went in some sort of trance and were unaware of what they were doing and wrote the divine word of God. No, God's bigger than that. God used their personality, their setting, their context, and in this case, the fact that Paul's writing a personal letter to a man, Titus. And so he's just, his thoughts are jumping here and there, just like you might do if you're writing a letter to somebody that's dear to you and you're just informing them of what's going on.

But I would like to take two primary sections and organize it under those two primary headings, if you would, and the first one we've already looked at, this is a review we won't be long here, but the deep incursion of false teaching into the churches. The deep incursion of false teaching into the churches Uh, I said this last time, you may be saying, "Pastor, we've talked about this over and over again." That's because Paul brings it up over and over again because faithful church elders, our pastors, have to deal with it over and over again, and faithful sheep, church members, need to support their elders as they deal with it over and over again. So here he goes again and he's talking to Titus here about why you're gonna have to be a courageous leader and why the elders you appoint must be courageous men because this is not an easy task.

"For," conjunctive word connects to the earlier verses. You're going to have to have qualified men because they're going to have to also be courageous men, verse 10, "For there are many rebellious men," he says. Men that just absolutely will not be submissive. Men that absolutely will not honor authority. You can't reason with them, deal with them, explain it to them. They're just going to be intent on coming into these churches and having their own way. They will not submit to the rule of another. So right off the bat, "Titus, do you understand? You're going to take some courage to deal with some hard-heads and troublemakers like that." Let me say something, we say that little tongue in cheek and I do that, but it's not funny that a man comes into the bride of Christ and tries to commandeer his own selfish way in Christ's bride. That's serious sin and it takes courageous men to deal with. We're not even started, gonna hurry on.

Also in verse 10 he says, "They're empty talkers. They just rattle off a bunch of stuff. They they have no real good points, they just almost use word salads and the amount of verbiage to try to impress people and draw people away from you, Titus, or the elders you appoint. So have courage and deal with these kind of guys."

In verse 11 he goes on and says "they're teaching things they should not teach," and then he says in verse 11, uh, "for the sake of sordid gain," that mean that means a base gain. They're they're just like any other worldly person. They they're out for profit, for power, for prestige, for popularity, just base stuff that the average non-Christian lives for, and they want to come into the church, manipulate and scheme to get their way to boost their own egos and profit themselves and bring popularity to themselves.

And then Paul goes on in verse 12 to talk about how the culture is known in general. He says one of their own prophets, that is a a former writer of I think this was like 400 years before this writing, but he was an esteemed a Greek, uh, uh, philosopher, and he always characterized the Cretans that they're always liars, this is verse 12, evil beasts and lazy gluttons, and I pointed out to you that there's a powerful parallel between this Cretan culture and American culture, I guess we could say Western culture today. Uh, uh, that that idea of being always liars, perpetually and incessantly sharing things and and using lying as a means to get ahead. Now all men have lied but not all men are liars. But he said the Cetans just they've made it an art form. I've been in Third World countries where where you were esteemed and you are honored if you could be crafty and and deceptive and and get by with manipulation lies to get ahead and get a get, get your way in life. That is radically opposite of a Judeo-Christian viewpoint in a culture. But that's the way it was in Crete.

And then, he says, not only they're always liars, they're they're just, generally speaking, evil beasts. This is a powerful statement and it so fits the culture of the United States today. It's the idea of a dangerous or wild beast. It's one who has a fierce nature and love of cruelty. They will not tolerate anyone to speak against them or try to thwart them and their pursuit of their beastly lust. Does that not sound like America today? Challenge some of this perversion that's going on in our culture today. You know, they used to have a saying that the, uh, the the inmates are running the asylum. Well, that's kind of what's happened in our country. When I see some of these people in Biden's cabinet, these people are idiotic. They're insane. They're psychotic. There's got to be mental illness there. It's bizarre. And you see them, and if you challenge them, they'll just rise up. And I just saw a little video blip this last week of this big, brutish looking guy, but he had makeup on and was trying to appear like a woman and he was just daring anyone to stop him from going into a woman's restroom. Brutish beast. That's where people get to when they get ungodly and hardened in their wickedness.

You know, I thought to myself, and I've thought this through many times, but if I'm in a public place and I have a wife or a daughter or granddaughter in the restroom and and that type of person begins to walk in, there's going to be a confrontation. So if you hear that your pastor's in jail. And by the way, if you're not willing to do that, you need to hand in your man card this morning. If you'd let that kind of thing go into a private, intimate setting with your daughter, your wife, your granddaughter, you're not a man of God. That's what the Bible means by meekness, men who know how and when to be strong and even dangerous if necessary but they keep that sheathed and under control until it's righteous to do so.

"We live in a difficult day, Titus. It's going to take some courage to deal with this crowd." And here's what he's saying, "That spirit is getting over into our churches. They want to have their way, do their own thing, even promote their own wickedness and rebellion, and they're gonna be tough to deal with because they're they're lustful beasts." Well, talked enough about that.

"They turn away from the truth," he says. In verse 14b. The idea is perpetual action. They keep on turning from the truth. It's not like they haven't heard the truth, and if they hear it, they might repent. Everybody needs to hear the truth and they might repent but these are folks who hear it and hear it and hear it and they don't listen. They don't turn from it.

Then down in verse 16 he talks about how they profess to know God. He said, "Titus, as you go into these churches and these guys have crept in, they're going to be guys who profess to be God-fearing, God-loving people," he said, "but by their deeds they actually deny the Lord," this is verse 16, "and they're detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good thing." Um, there's nothing new under the sun, and this whole concept of, um, uh, professing to know God but by their deeds denying God is it's like the old ancient, uh, what the scholars would call Jehovah Baal worship, or the Jehovah Baal cult of the Old Testament. When when Amos was preaching, he would preach against the wickedness that was in professing Judaism of the day and what they had done was they had turned themselves over to Baal worship. Baal worship is a worship of of sensuality and fleshly lust and sexual immoralities, and they had kind of begun promoting and and encouraging that in their synagogues, the Jewish synagogues, but they kept the a a remnant of the Jewish sacrificial system to give it a stamp of orthodoxy, a camouflage, a cosmetic of, "Oh, we're still God's people. We still keep the law too." Well, that's what's happening in these churches. They'd come in, they can say a lot of things that look orthodox and right and use a lot of the verses you and I might use, but in their lifestyle, I'm not talking about something they struggle with, but in their intentional lifestyle they indulge in wickedness that shows they profess to know God but by their deeds they deny him.

"So, Titus, these guys, this culture, the churches have drifted into some of these things, and it's going to take not only competent leadership, it's going to take courageous leadership to straighten these churches out." II. That's review. One of the other reasons it's going to take courageous leadership is because of the Master's rigid requirement to eliminate the false teach. Uh, Paul, writing by the authority of God, gives a very rigorous mandate of what must happen as Titus and his associates as he appoints these elders over the churches, how they must fix this problem.

Well, look at first, if you will, at verse. 11. Now this is the second category. We've looked at the the, uh, the deep incursion of false teaching, that's going to take courageous leadership, but also what you have to do to remove it now, that's going to take courageous leadership. That's the second category here. Well, in verse 11, he says, "who must be silenced." Well, who is that? Well, up in verse 10, the rebellious men, the empty talkers the deceivers, especially the Jewish authorities of the area. That's what he means by those of the circumcision because Jews circumcised their their male children. "Who

must be silenced," verse 11, "because they're upsetting whole families." That phrase "must be silenced" is the idea of putting a muzzle on a snout. Their mouths must be shut is what Paul is saying. They must be silenced. Now in the balance of Scripture, we know there's two ways to approach that. Number 1 is you reprove them and you rebuke them in truth, trusting the power of the Spirit to bring them to their senses and they would come to repentance and stop doing these things. But you're gonna have to have courage, because often they're reprov'd and they're rebuked and they don't change. They continue upsetting whole families and and and doing these things that they should not do. So the second step would be, if necessary, they're to be called out and removed from the church.

Um, Brother Steve and, uh, Brother James Vance and Brother Steve Bradley just returned from Senatobia, MS with our church planter, uh, Chris Twilley and and they were there because there was a man who came into the church with a following who was trying to commandeer and strong arm the church and take the rule of the church, if you will, disregarding Chris as the pastor and was causing divisiveness and trying to split the church up. And Steve and these brothers and some other of our Anchored in Truth pastors met them there because that church is still under us; their their members are our members until they establish themselves formally as a church. So it was right for our elders to go and oversee this and it was tough. Those people were ugly and mean and vicious in spirit and condemning and and they just had to come to a public meeting and, uh, with Brother Steve and them standing with the pastor, stand up and deal with that. That wasn't easy. That took some courage but the man and his following, like Korah of the Old Testament, were removed. And that has to happen sometimes and that's why these churches connect with us because if you've been around here several decades, you know, we've been through quite a lot of that. And I'm telling you, it's there's times when you're fearful but you purpose to do what's right, always repenting yourself because God has a way of showing you your own shortcomings when you're dealing with those public issues.

Well, Paul continues on. "You're gonna have to have courageous leadership, Titus, because these guys are doing this and they're upsetting whole families." There's a serious element here, uh, the idea is subverting whole families and what it means is they're they're, um, in in infecting and influencing large groups of people within the local churches. Uh, the word oikos for families here can mean, uh, associates and friends and relatives and house servants, so it could be quite a big group of people. And when he says upsetting whole families, the word "upsetting" is the same word that's used when Jesus turned the tables over of of the moneychangers in the temple. So he said he's he's just turning these people upside down. He's he's just tearing them up. He's greatly bringing them into turmoil and causing division in the church. So it needs to be stopped.

Now look at verse 13. He continues on with this rigid requirement to deal with this stuff and remove it. He says in verse 13, last half, "reprove them severely so that they may be found in sound in the faith." Reprove, reprove them severely means sharply or to cut. It has the idea of "put your strength into it, Titus, and cut this stuff out. Cut out the error that's come into the church." It's like a cancer that will metastasize in the church, and it cannot be tolerated. "So reprove them kindly when you can, softly when you can, of

course, but these kind of guys don't respond to that, Titus, you're gonna have to be strong and cutting to deal with these kind of scoundrels and that creep into God's church."

1 Corinthians 4:20 and 21 said, "the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power," and here's the Apostle Paul writing to another troubled church, the local church at Corinth. He says in verse 21, "What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?" Paul says, "It's your choice. The problem's in the church that I pointed out, you guys get it fixed, or if not, I can't come with love and gentleness. I'm gonna come with a rod and I'm gonna deal with it." It takes some courage to do that.

Then he gives that addendum, and I think he's talking about the truly true remnant of the local church here, verse 13b where he says, "so that the rest may be sound in the faith." So, rather, I'm sorry, "so that they may be sound in the faith." I'm saying that it implies to the rest, that is, the godly remnant, not the troublesome divisive ones. So the spirit here is to correct the error and preserve, if you will, the godly remnant so they'll not be led aside. Now, certainly if the rebel and the leader of the problem in the church can be reached and turned, praise the Lord for that too.

I've been doing this for 40 plus years and been in a lot of warfare and difficult situations. The last couple of years I've spent, I don't think I'd be exaggerating to say 20 to 25 hours with a large church that has been mentored by us and they went through some real difficult, um, failures among the staff and reinstalling a new pastor and and, uh, it was just, it was just quite an ordeal to kind of get them through that. But the point was to get them to the place where they weren't led astray on any error in these difficult seasons, but they stayed, if you will, anchored in truth.

Now, there are those today who say this kind of harsh language is not my language. Paul's language, rebuke them severely, Paul's language, say, "Well, that harsh and cutting correction is not loving." No, it may not be loving in your subjective man-centered definition of love, but it is loving in God's definition of love. The goal is the good of the church first and then the good of the individual, and the point was these guys are damaging the bride of Christ, the local church. So if they'll repent, then we can deal with them in love and gentleness, but if they keep infecting the church with their error and their divisiveness, then there's got to be some tough love administered to them.

You see, to leave, to leave a man who is in wanton, brazen rebellion, to leave him like he is is not love, it's not tolerance, it's a pseudo-love, it's a false love. The Bible says the wages of sin is death. If you love someone and they're in open willful sin and you don't try to call them to repentance, you're helping them destroy themselves. And even more importantly, you're helping them to dishonor the reputation of Christ in our community. It's a false love of God to allow rebellious ones to go on without a call to return. It's a false love of the church for their sin and their error will corrupt and defile the entire church, diminishing God's glory in the church and in the culture.

1 Corinthians 5:6 reminds as as there were for some folks in the local church at Corinth who were not dealing with a gross habitual immorality among a man in the church there, and by not dealing with it, they somehow we don't know exactly how they were boasting, but they were quite boasting about, I guess, that they were so long-suffering and loving and and caring and and, Paul said, "That, no, that's just, you're boasting about you, you've perverted the doctrine. Your boasting's not good," he says. "Do you not know that a little little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?" In other words, the Master has a rigid requirement for the church leadership to not allow insidious error and rebelliousness creep into God's church and corrupt the whole thing. Brothers and sisters, it would be, it would be a lot if we thought now how many professing churches have let error and compromise rule the day in their churches because the leadership did not have the courage to deal with it as the Master requires it to be dealt with.

Verse 14. He says, "not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth." Uh, not paying attention says not holding to, that's the idea there. Don't give these superstitious doctrines that really came from man and not from God, don't give them your attention, much less give them your assent. Some things do not deserve a hearing. Uh, I I don't know how to say this. I I hope that it's not true that I've gotten cold or calloused or hardened in my days but Brother Steve and I'll be talking sometimes about this church or this church plant and the problem they're going through and, by the way, he, at least as far as I remember, Brother Steve, you've always agreed with me and you'll bring up something, "Well, this guy's doing that." I say, "I don't care. That's not a, that's a non-issue." We don't even need to hear that stuff. Steve, don't need to spend his time, and I don't need to spend my time wrestling with that one. That's a clear cut case of evil. Just shut him out.

And that's basically what Paul says here. Just don't pay attention to that stuff. Some doctrines do not deserve attention, much less assent, do not even deserve a hearing and Paul says these are those kind that comes from Jewish myths and and in the old Jewish religion, they had left the word of God very often and gotten into just mythological, superstitious reasonings of men and they became the doctrines, the many of the the Jews of the day held to. He said, "This is superstitious nonsense. Don't listen to it. Don't give it a hearing." And again, I'd bring up the Jehovah Baal cult that was so common in the Old Testament, and that's what's happening in our Christian churches today. We've got secular indulgence and sinful indulgence coming into the church, and yet we hold to some of the the Orthodox doctrines of Christianity and, brothers and sisters, the two do not mix. Once you bring old Baal worship into the church, Jesus leaves. Not talking about brothers and sisters and true repenters who struggle with some sins. We all struggle. I'm talking about the old word, open, um, um, assent to and and affirmation of these kind of wickednesses in the church today. The number of, I'll say it, Southern Baptist churches, even high and prominent and influential Southern Baptist pastors who are beginning to toy with, I think morality has changed now they're suggesting. God's not necessarily opposed to homosexual behaviors, etc. etc. That is not right! The culture may make it legal, but it is not righteous and it is not holy. We love all people, no matter how much they're struggling, they're welcome to visit with us here, but this will not be a place that will embrace and celebrate out and out wickedness. "Titus, it's going to take some

courage to deal with these things that are coming upon you in the church." Well, the Jewish myths that he's to completely not give a hearing.

Hang on, I've got to find page 8. Found it.

What happens it it's, you know, it was astonishing as as you study the Scriptures, there's nothing new under the sun. A different names, a different setting, but the truth you may say. What happened when Moses went up on the mountain to receive the 10 Commandments? The people got restless. "Well, we we we we know how the the carnal pagan nations worship and what a good time they have in their worship ceremonies and Moses went up there, supposed to get us the law of God, we don't know where he is." And they were all restless and demanding something so Aaron said, "Okay, give me all your gold jewelry and I'll melt it down." And he melted it down and he fashioned it into a golden calf, the emblem of Baal worship, that sensuous, fleshly, sexually indulgent religion. And the people started partying and shouted, these are Jews now, having a ball while Moses was gone and Aaron made them a compromised religion that the culture loved. And you know what? They they're worshipping this golden calf of Baal worship and Aaron calls it worshipping the Lord Jehovah. "We'll just make the Lord like our lust. We'll make him like our own idolatry." That's what's going on in the church today, folks, the same basic stuff. Just bring the world's immoralities in. We'll just kind of call it, we'll we'll still love the Lord Jesus, but we'll kind of embrace these new sins. Well, you know what Moses did? He came down off the mount and he said, "What am I hearing? Is there a war going on?" He said, "No, they're just having a gigantic party calling it church, calling it a worship service." Now there's nothing wrong with genuine joy and a shout of Hallelujah every now and then, amen? But some of our church services are turning into absolute carnal recreation entertainment centers. It's nothing new. It's Aaron with the golden calf bringing some things of God with the things of Baal. Well, I beat that horse enough.

III. We've seen the deep incursion of false teaching in the church. "Titus, it's gonna take courage to deal with it." We've seen the Master's rigorous rigid requirement that the leaders must deal with this and clean it up. And then thirdly, I call this a clarifying and encouraging word for the courageous leaders. It's it's almost like Paul Paul's writing to Titus, "Titus, I wanna get right down to where the rubber meets the road. Titus, I wanna get right down to a simple truth that just kind of shapes all this up the way it truly is in the eyes of God." So in verse, uh, 15 he says, "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled," key phrase, "and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." So here's what Paul is saying. Now here's all these Jewish religionists who've gotten into myths and superstitions and kept elements of the old true Jewish religion, but they've perverted it, and now they're mixing it up with immoralities and lot of these guys are coming into our Christian churches trying to lead them astray and cause trouble and he says, "All of their viewpoints of superstition and works and rituals, all the stuff they would throw at you," by the way, and adding on immoralities, he said, "none of that can ever, ever, ever make a man right in the eyes of God." He said, "because to the pure all things are pure but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing's pure."

It's real simple. Real simple. You see, this word "purity" is a powerful word because believers are God's redeemed ones, believers are God's saved ones, believers are God's ransomed ones, believers are God's justified ones, believers are God's past tenses, the way the Bible puts it in past tense, we are already his glorified ones. In his eyes were already glorified with him. I don't know how that works, but it's true. Believers are God's foreknown ones. Believers are God's predestined ones. These are all Bible words. Believers are God's elect ones. Believers are God's chosen ones. And believers are now, according to Titus 1, God's purified ones. I like what Jesus does for us. Purified, he said to the pure, *katharos* is the Greek word. It has the idea of being cleansed from any and every spot or stain. Wow. That's powerful stuff. You say, "Pastor, you don't know the kind of stuff I've been involved in, kind of stuff I'm now involved in. It's some ugly, dirty, grimy stuff." Yes, but if you'll come to Jesus, confess your sinfulness before Jesus and say, "O Christ, I need You to save me," he will cleanse you from every spot and stain. Is that not good news?

Paul said, "Titus, that's real religion right there, not the Jewish legalist rules and rituals and rites, along with the immoralities from Baal worship they want to bring in. None of that, none of that can make a man right with God. Only Jesus can." Only him. He can make us pure. We were all previously defiled, all previously polluted and all previously corrupted by sin, but now we are purified by his blood, and that's far superior to anything these false teachers are bringing to the table. So back up to previous point, don't even listen to their nonsense. Don't let it in the door of the church. Don't give them a room to meet and talk about it. It's unnecessary. Matter of fact, every time you bring something of human effort, wisdom, human ability into your life to make you more pleasing to God, you only make yourself more defiled before God. You hear me? You come to God stripped naked of everything trusting only Christ. "Well, Lord, I've I'm trying to do this right and this right and I did this down at the church and that pastor down there, you know, the wild guy, the loud guy, did what he said on this and this," and the Lord says, "None of that matters. None that matters. It just made you more defiled because you took your defilement and created something out of it, and that just means more defilement, more impurity."

To the pure, all things are pure but to those, how does he word it there, who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure. Christ has made you pure before the Father. You are as pure as pure can be. You are as pure as Christ can make you. How pure can Christ make me? He can make you completely pure. Absolutely, completely pure. So it says to the pure all things are pure. "Well, Pastor, what does that mean, to the pure all things are pure?" Well, it doesn't mean that now you can indulge in sin because in God's eyes it's pure. That's not. What it means at all. And it's not that our thoughts and judgments are automatically right and we never have any, even a sin nature, our sinful motives again. We have some of those. We're still housed in this old unredeemed, sin-polluted humanity until we get our glorified bodies so there's still some thoughts and desires that in God's eyes are impure. That's not what it's talking about. What it means is that all things are pure when they're used according to God's word, or you might say, God's will.

Couple of examples. Some people say, "Well, money is evil. Money makes men impure." No, it does not. It's the improper love and use of money that's impure, not money itself. But when you've been regenerated of God and you're a believer, and you stand purified now in the sight of God and he's sanctifying you, now you can use money for good purposes, righteous Bible-based purchases. So the money wasn't pure or impure, it's the wrong use of money that makes it an impure thing and the right use makes it a pure thing.

Sex is impure. No, it is not. Sex is a blessing and a gift from God for the married couple. It's a wonderfully, matter of fact, it's even essential in the marriage relationship. But the improper use of the sexual drive, as our culture has gloried in and made a perverse art form out of, that is impure. See the pure knows how to take all things and use them in a pure way.

Now the contrast here is to the Jewish mindset that there were some things that were inherently evil or inherently impure and made you unclean. If you touched a certain person. If you touch the person with a certain disease. If if you touched pork, hog meat. And on and on we could go. The moment you were around it or touched it, God rejects you, you're impure. And what Paul is saying is none of that is right. Christ makes you pure, and then following God's word, all things you do in life are now pure. There's no inanimate things or people that you can be associated with that somehow cause you to become impure.

I had supper with an Orthodox Jew several years ago. He'd become a believer in Christ. I think he was a genuine believer in Christ. But I ordered ribs. I'd never seen... now we read about it in the Bible and we kind of laugh about it. I don't remember if he actually left before we got through eating, but he was terribly upset that he was in the presence of meat that came from a hog because it had just been drilled in him by his Jewish forefathers, "This makes you unclean, dirty, impure before God." You know what Jesus says? He says, "Peter," I like this, "kill and eat. Kill and eat. Have it all, all that food, hogs and all." Now we know you probably don't eat, eat a lot of that hog meat but it doesn't make you impure, it just might get you to heaven a little quicker.

So the stuff and, see, this had such a resounding note to these early Christians because Jewish doctrine was so in the culture. If they were non-Jews, the Greeks had that thinking, at least it had infiltrated their thinking to a degree, so they could get a lot of following. If you want to get a following, come up with a bunch of legalisms and be strong in your personality about it, and you'll get a big following. It's always been true. The only way teaching this works – are you listening – the only way teaching grace works is if the Spirit of God changes people's hearts. And by the way, he's still doing that. That's why we're still preaching this because I don't want a church that I can build on my cleverness, or manipulations, or legalisms. I want a church that Christ builds on his gospel and I have one of those, far from perfect, but I have one of those and I'm not going back to the other kind.

Romans 14:14 and 15 speaks to this, "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is

unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died." I'm at supper with that Orthodox Jewish brother who had become a Christian and I wasn't thinking. I should not have ever ordered a a rib plate with him sitting there. It was just too hard for him. To him, it was still a condemning thing and and Paul is referring to that type thing here.

Now, 1 Timothy 4:4-5, "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer." You've covered the word of God and you've prayed over it, then use it. There's no things that can make you unacceptable to God.

Look at the last part of verse 15. So we're talking about the pure and the the right use of the things God's given in this world are pure, they're fine. Verse 16, "They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him." I'm sorry, verse 15, jump up there, "but to those who are defiled and unbelieving," here's the other side, "nothing is pure." They can read the Bible, still impure. They can pray prayers, still impure. They can give tithes and offerings, still impure. They can join the church, still impure. They can go through the baptismal water, still impure. They can be faithful in everything the church is doing, clean up their life morally and ethically where the people in the community say, "That must be a Christian, look how clean they live," but if they've not come to Christ everything they do is impure. They're rejected of God as unclean and not welcome in his presence.

He uses the word "defiled" here in verse 15, "they are unbelieving and defiled." It's the opposite of the word "pure." It means they're still stained. They are still polluted. They are still corrupt, excuse me, corrupted by sin and there's no amount of works, there's no amount of religion or restrictions or self-denials or more reformation that they can put on themselves to remove their impurity. Only the blood of Jesus can do that.

He speaks of their minds being, uh, he says, their their mind and their conscience. The mind is the thoughts and motives of their heart and minds are hopelessly defiled and they can't be reformed. They can only hope in the new birth to change them. Their conscience, he says, is defiled. It's that faculty that enables us to know right and wrong. Sometimes we call it the moral conscious. The Bible says God's put a conscience in every man. Um, but to the unsaved, it's while it's in there, and the conscience is helpful to make you a better citizen or better neighbor perhaps, it cannot make you pure before God because at its core your conscience is defiled.

1 Timothy 4:2 says our consciences can get seared. 1 Corinthians 8:7 says our conscience can be weak. In other words, your your conscience picks up and processes data incompletely or incorrectly, I should say, until you're converted. Then you start informing your comfort conscience with truth. That's why, to the impure, nothing's pure people may say. "Well, well, follow your heart." There's not a more blasphemous error on earth than follow your heart. Your heart is desperately wicked the Bible says. It's deceitful beyond all things. Don't follow that rotten thing. Follow the truth. And say, "Old heart, get in line with this book." Let this book inform your conscience. Let your conscience be your

guide. Foolish. Foolish. Your conscience is defined, Paul says. You let the word of God be, you inform your conscious with the word of God, then you can start trusting maybe your heart and your conscience as the word of God has changed your heart and informed your heart.

So he says in verse 15, so to the impure, nothing is pure. The point is, no matter what they do or how they do it, they remain impure, they remain defiled, they remain unacceptable to God. In in the context, what's Paul saying? Paul's saying, "Titus, it's going to take some courage to deal with these guys because they're going to sound good. They're gonna be persuasive. They're gonna be viewed as godly and wise and brilliant and influential. But you see, they're still impure because they haven't come through the door of Jesus." Their works, systems, "Oh, we've got a new insight. If the church will just follow our new teaching, then you'll have everything you need." Paul says, "Don't even listen to it. Don't even listen to it. If you have Jesus that's all you need. You're pure in Him."

But other side of the coin again, to the impure, nothing is pure. No matter what they do or how they do it, they remain impure. They remain defiled. They remain unacceptable. And verse 16, uh, amplifying on that, "They profess to know God," They can talk good God talk, good religious talk, good Baptist talk, "but by their deeds they deny Him," because in God's eyes, last part of verse 16, they're detestable, in God's eyes they're disobedient, and in God's eyes they're worthless for any good deed because they trusted their ingenuity, their understanding, their teaching, their religion, their work system, whatever it is, they trusted that instead of simply and wholly trusting Christ. They cannot be fixed. They need a miracle. They cannot be reformed. They need a miracle. They cannot be improved. They need a miracle. They cannot get better. They need a miracle. The only fix for these guys it's the same fix for us, they need the new birth. They need to repent of sin and put their faith in Jesus Christ alone. Then they're pure.

"Titus, be courageous. Get this false reasoning, false teaching out of our churches. Set things in order, Titus, and it's going to take having competent men, but it's all going to also take having courageous men." You know, the wonderful thing about being saved is you don't have to be that courageous to get saved. In one sense, you don't have to be courageous at all. You don't have to be bold or strong or assertive. You just fall at the base of that bloody cross where Jesus is expiring and say, "Jesus, I bring all my fear, all my doubt, all my struggle, all my weakness, all my insecurity. I just bring it here. I bring to You what I am and that's a bunch of nothing." And Jesus looks down at you and he says, in a figure of speech, "Today you'll be with Me in Paradise." That's what he told that thief on the cross. "You couldn't bring me anything, but I'm going to take you all the way to Paradise. You're going to come home to My home because I I want weak, cowardly, fearful, insecure, proud, sinful beings just to look to Me for forgiveness. Then I'll change you." You're going to join a solid local church, and then we'll begin the process of becoming more like Jesus, helping each other until we get home one day.