

True and False Purity Contrasted

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I invite you to turn to the book of Titus as we continue studying through this letter from the Apostle Paul to his delegate Titus on the island of Crete. Titus 1. We're going to be looking at verses 15 to 16. Last time, we saw how to speak to a wolf and just by way of reminder before we read today's text, you look at verse 10 and Paul tells Titus that "there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision," those of Jewish persuasion and Jewish teaching, "who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families." Paul says, "For this reason," in verse 13, "reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith." This issue of true and false teaching is not one of minor consequence. It's not a matter of just a difference of theological opinion. This is a matter of truth versus error, it's sheep versus the wolf and it's matters that we must pay close attention to and understand with clarity so that not only that our teaching from this church would be true and accurate, just as importantly equally and in addition to that, they would be clear in your mind where your righteousness comes from and if you have any sense that something you do, religion, rituals or things that you do somehow contribute and add to righteousness so that you have a better standing with God, it's a good thing you are here today because we need to get this straight in our minds. The only righteousness that avails before the throne of God is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. There is nothing that you or I can do to add to that righteousness and to make our standing better before God. We're going to see that in what we study here together this morning.

Look at Titus 1:15 as we look at our text, these concluding two verses of Titus 1. Paul says,

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.

Paul has just given a description of the false teachers that were influencing the body of believers there on the island of Crete. What he is doing here in these two verses, is he's contrasting the position of true believers in Christ with the false position of the teachers who needed to be silenced. Remember that Paul has a polemic purpose. He is making a

negative argument against false teachers in this whole passage and the whole need to appoint elders was so that these false teachers would be silenced and the truth would be properly taught. So that people could understand. So that people could come to a saving knowledge of truth unhindered by false views being propagated by those who assumed a teaching position in the church. So we're going to look at a contrast today between true and false purity. True and false purity. We're going to see first of all, the true purity of the sheep which is a statement of what the realities of true salvation are. Then we're going to contrast that with the false purity of the wolves. By the time we're done today, just so you know where we're going and what your heart should be aiming at in the next 55 or 60 minutes or so, you should have such an elevated view of Christ, such a great appreciation for the perfection of his work to secure your salvation and such a love for his righteousness, that you would realize by contrast that there is nothing that you could do to add to it and you would not even try. You would simply rest in Christ and in his finished work and in his perfect position before the Father as your only hope of heaven, as your only hope of righteousness. That's what we're going to see here this morning. We are looking to point ourselves to the perfection of Christ and all that he's done for us here today.

So first of all, this first point if you are taking notes: the true purity of the sheep. Look at verse 15 with me. Paul presupposes so much in this initial line that he sets forth in verse 15. There is so much packed into this. He says, "To the pure, all things are pure." What does he mean by that? What is he saying? Well, when he talks about the pure, he's talking about "to the true Christian" and he's using "pure" in a couple of different ways here. To the pure, those who have been purified by the work of Christ on their behalf, those who have truly been born again, he says "all things are pure" and we're going to see what that means. But he's talking about those who have been purified by faith in Christ from their sins. He says, "They have a freedom in life because their righteousness has been secured by the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul is saying here, as we're going to see as we look at this passage and some other Scriptures, Paul is saying that, "You as a Christian are not burdened by the necessity of meeting external regulations about food and ceremonial conduct because Christ has already fulfilled the law of God on your behalf." When Christ lived on earth, he fulfilled the law of God perfectly. He sustained a perfect sinless life and he met every demand of the law on behalf of those who would believe in him.

Now, having put your faith in Christ, God applies that perfect righteousness of Christ as a free gift to your account and it means that in the presence of God on the legal books of God, you have a perfectly righteous position before him that cannot be improved upon. There is nothing that you can do to make the righteousness of Christ somehow better. What that means is: we rest in Christ and we are free from false regulations about what we need to do or things that we need to go through in order to somehow make ourselves more acceptable to God. But to get to that point, you have to understand how we got there. Paul lays this out for us elsewhere in the book of Titus. Let's go back to your life before you became a Christian and start there and remember what you came from and who you were. The Bible makes it very clear that before you were a Christian, you were defiled. You were utterly unacceptable to God because you were dead in your trespasses and sins. There was nothing that you could do to improve your position. There were no

religious rituals that you could do. The idea that you could go to church and kneel here and say this prayer and somehow make yourself acceptable to God is utterly, totally false and Paul makes that very obvious by what he says about the nature of your life before Christ.

Look at Titus 3:3. You need to see this and to recognize that Paul had this in his mind when he was talking about the purity that we enjoy as believers in Christ. Here is a description in the Scriptures, you can see a mirror of what you were like before you came to saving faith in Christ and for those of you who are not Christians that are here today, perhaps some of you young people in particular, what you need to realize is that this verse that I'm about to read is giving a description of the inside of your heart. It is describing what you are like now if you are not a Christian and the picture is not a pretty one. Look at Titus 3:3. He's writing to true Christians here and he's reminding them of what they were like before they became a Christian and he says in verse 3, "We also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." Beloved, this is true of you and it's true of me: before Christ intervened and saved us, your spiritual life was one of total defilement. No matter how externally religious you may have been, no matter whether you were a good girl growing up and people would have looked at you and said, "Oh, what a good girl" you were, inside is this true scriptural description of what we were like: disobedient and rebellious toward the law of God, untrusting in Christ, in love with ourselves, enslaved to lust and various pleasures, hateful and hating toward anyone who would cross your path and those that were sympathetic to you were simply tools and instruments of your own self-fulfillment. You used people and those that didn't agree with you, you detested. You were enslaved by desires that you gladly pursued. This is a description of everyone who is outside of Christ. What you need to see from that brief description is this: you were totally the slave of sin. You were enslaved to that condition and there was nothing that you could do to get out of it. There were spiritual chains on your soul that prevented you from being any different than what you were and in that condition, you were under the wrath and judgment of God and if God had left you to die in that condition, the outcome of that would have been eternal hell and judgment.

For those of you that are here that don't know Christ, that's your present condition and the future is one of a threat from God to you. This is very profoundly serious. You were a slave. You were unable to free yourself. You and I could not cleanse ourselves from sin. We couldn't do anything to change our condition. The leopard can't change its spots. The Ethiopian cannot change its skin. The sinner cannot convert his own soul. That's where we were. We could not do anything to improve our lot with God. We were lost. We were dead. And we were helpless. And because of that, beloved, what must be clear in your mind, what must be absolutely clear in your mind is that there was no merit in your life that commended you to a holy God in that condition. You not only didn't have the power to change yourself, there was nothing about you that a holy God would have found acceptable and something for him to receive and to embrace in his holy presence. There was nothing about you that deserved eternal life in heaven. Nothing. And what you see is that the biblical assessment, the biblical diagnosis of our souls is one that utterly excludes any pride in ourselves, any claim to our own self-righteousness. We just have to humble

ourselves before the accurate testimony of God's word and say, "I was totally lost." And if you're not in Christ today, that's a present tense statement to you. You say to yourself, "I am totally lost. God knows the wickedness of my own heart. I stand exposed before him and I can't do anything to change it." And the weight of your guilt and shame should crush you in his presence.

Now, stay with me here Christians, that's what we were like before Christ. It's obvious that from that condition we did nothing to save ourselves, right? You can nod your head and say that. There was nothing that you did or ever could have done. If you had 1,000 lives to live in that condition, you couldn't have taken one holy righteous step toward God. We were lost and what does that mean? How is it then that we're here today gathered as a group of believers in Jesus Christ, forgiven and restored? How can that be? Well, it is obvious that something from outside of ourselves happened to us. Someone did something on our behalf that we could not do for ourselves. It obviously had to be that way because we couldn't do anything by ourselves. We were dead and splattered on the street with no way to pick ourselves up. What happened? Look at Titus 2:14, actually peek at the end of verse 13, Paul is speaking about our great God and Savior Christ Jesus. Our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, about whom we've been singing all morning. Christ Jesus, crown him with many crowns. Can it be that he did something on my behalf? Verse 14, "He gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Look at that verse carefully with me and understand that you were on the receiving end of an act of grace and mercy by Jesus Christ. He gave himself for you. He redeemed you from your lawless life. He purified you for himself so that you would be changed as our youth sang earlier, so that we would be made new. Beloved, you must understand, it must be anchored in your mind that you are on the receiving end of grace. You did not contribute something that forced God to respond to you as in response to some conjectured righteousness that you might have in your mind. That must be clear. Christ, speaking very simply, Christ helped us in our sinful state because we could not help ourselves. Okay? The magnitude of that mercy and grace that our Judge became our Savior, that the one who could have slayed us was instead slain himself on your behalf. The magnitude of that is so glorious, it's so majestic, it so transcends anything of this earth.

Keep that in mind because it's very important for what Paul is saying. Christ bought us at the price of his own blood, at the price of his own perfect life. Christ bought us out of our spiritual slavery and made us free. You were a slave and Christ came and broke the chain and brought you to himself. You were dead and Christ came and breathed new life into you. The spiritual realities of that are so lofty and noble and magnificent that we could spend the rest of our lives talking about the different implications of that and not even begin to exhaust them. The wonders of Christ on our behalf exceed the ability of the human tongue to give full voice to them. Our blessed Savior purified us. Our blessed Savior set us apart by an act on his own initiative so that we would live a life of good deeds for him. If you're a Christian, Christ looked on you by name and had mercy on you and saved you from the wretched sinful soul that you were beforehand. True of you, true of me. We are leveled at the foot of the cross.

Now watch this, this is very, very, very important: our Lord Jesus Christ did not save us through religious rituals. He did not prescribe a list of things for us to do and then watch with arms folded to see if we would do them and keep them and then decide to save us. You were saved totally apart from any kind of religious ritual apart from ceremony, apart from any human ancestry that you might have had, you were saved by the work and the person of Jesus Christ. Look at Titus 3:4. Watch how he saved us. Look and learn and love. Look, learn and love what you see in front of you here in chapter 3, verses 4-7. I can't wait until we get here for the full exposition of this as we go through the book of Titus. Look at verse 4. How did he redeem us? Paul had been talking about that in chapter 2. Look at this inspired, inerrant description of the work of Christ on behalf of your soul, on behalf of every soul that he ever saved. Verse 4, chapter 3, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us," watch this, "not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness," not from anything that you did, did he save you. He saved you not according to your works, not according to anything that you did or said or prayed. He saved you apart from your effort. "But," in the middle of verse 5, by contrast, "not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently."

None of your religion contributed to the salvation of your soul. You were purified by a work inside you that was beyond your power to procure and it was a work done by the Holy Spirit who took the death and resurrection of Christ and applied it to your heart to purify you in a spiritual way from spiritual sin. No religious ritual could have ever done that. You could've counted beads for the next 10,000 years and it wouldn't have cleansed one sin from your soul. You could've gone to church every day for 50 years and you would have been just as lost as you were when you started. It would have been a waste of your time. You see, salvation is a matter of an inward transformation that only God can accomplish. We didn't achieve it through our human effort. We didn't achieve it through human ritual and that has great consequences for the way that we interact with life around us now. You see, external ritual, ceremonies and all of that stuff, before you were saved, did not contribute a thing to your salvation. It didn't do anything to help you achieve the righteousness of God. That was a gift given to you by the Holy Spirit when he brought you to faith in Christ. It was a gift! There wasn't anything you did or anything that you could have done. If God had withdrawn his Spirit, if God had left you alone in that condition, you would have perished in your sin.

So, here we are purified by a work of grace inside our hearts apart from anything we did on the outside. Now watch this, that means that there is nothing that we can do now as Christians on the outside that contributes to our righteousness either. We can't increase our purity by anything that we do. We already have received a perfect righteousness from Christ and as a result of that, there are no religious rituals or ceremonies that we engage in now that can make us any better positionally before Christ than what we already are. So for example, Scripture makes a big issue of this, for example, to a believer all foods

are clean. Look over at Mark 7 and all of this that we're about to see in the moments to come, we're looking at Mark chapter 7 now, there are no external things that we can go through to improve our position in Christ. He's already given us everything in Christ, every spiritual blessing, Ephesians 1 says, he has given to us in the heavenly places in Christ. He hasn't withheld anything from us and so external ritual has nothing to do with the salvation of the human soul. Look for example at Mark 7, beginning in verse 14. We are free from the threat that somehow a failure to do external rituals will somehow contaminate our souls. Mark 7:14, Jesus "called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, 'Listen to Me, all of you, and understand.'" You are meant to know and understand this so that your life will reflect the glory of Christ as it should and that your conscience would be free from the false shackles that false teachers try to put upon it. Verse 15, he says, "there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man." Verse 16, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. When he had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. And He said to them, 'Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart,'" into the spiritual seat of his personality. It doesn't go there, "but into his stomach," verse 19, "and is eliminated." Watch this, verse 19, "Thus He declared all foods clean."

What Scripture is teaching us there: once you have been purified by faith in Christ, there is nothing that you can eat that would somehow rob you of that purity. There is nothing that you could eat that can defile you. Now I realize that people watch what they eat for medical reasons but it doesn't do anything to improve their spiritual righteousness and staying away from certain foods doesn't make you more righteous than you already are in Christ and eating food doesn't diminish that righteousness in any way. So despite the animal rights activists, despite the nannies that try to tell us what we can and cannot eat, we are under no obligation to worry about any food regulations whatsoever. If you want to go to a good steakhouse and order a 20 ounce rib eye slathered in butter, go for it and enjoy it to the glory of God. It's not going to spiritually defile you. There is nothing wrong with that. God has given us all things richly to enjoy. You see, there's a greater point at stake here. There is a much greater point at stake here. This is about the purity. This is about the perfect righteousness that Christ has given us. It's about the way that he has purified our souls. Beloved, pay attention here. Christ has purified you as a Christian so perfectly that nothing external can diminish it. Christ has purified you so perfectly that nothing external that you do can improve it and therefore, don't worry about that kind of stuff because it can only tie up your conscience and bind you in a way that will distract you from loving the glory of Christ.

Turn over to the book of Colossians 2. Colossians 2 makes this very clear. When you are clear about the work of Christ on your behalf, your conscience is set free from a lot of fake external religiosity and you seek to protect the purity of the gospel from those who try to add religious requirements on top of it. Those things cannot help your soul. They can only diminish the clarity of your conscience, the freedom that you have in Christ and distract you away from his perfect work on your behalf. Colossians 2:16. Actually, let's pick it up in verse 13. This would be more helpful to set the context. This is just a

repetition of what we've already been saying from a different passage of Scripture. "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh," you were dead, "Christ made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." All of your failures and all of the things that could be said against the condition of your soul, Christ has taken that away and he has nailed it to the cross so that it will never be raised against your account again. He did a perfect, complete work for the salvation of your souls and he finished it at the cross. That's what he said, "It is finished." The work of redemption was fully accomplished when he hung on that cross.

Now look at verse 15, he said, "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." He's saying, "Christ has done a perfect work of salvation on your behalf. Your soul is thoroughly and completely redeemed. Your soul is perfectly and thoroughly purified from the sin which formally stained it in the presence of God." You have a crystal white garment that you wear in the presence of God, the robes of righteousness that are acceptable to him without anything else being added to it. It's perfect! Rest in it! Rejoice in it! Receive it!

Now he goes on and says in verse 16, there are always people who are trying to impose something else upon the perfection of Christ's sacrifice. They come and say, "Do this or do that if you really want to walk with God. Keep this ritual. Follow these food regulations. Observe this ceremony. Observe this day if you really want to be serious." Beloved, what you have to understand is that while that stuff sounds wise and appealing, while it might sound even biblical with the way that some of the Scriptures are twisted, it is absolutely wrong to submit your conscience to that kind of bondage. You don't do that. You don't need to do it because Christ has already done everything that is necessary to secure the purity and salvation of your soul. Look at what it says in Colossians 2:16, "Therefore," because of this great work of Christ that he finished at the cross, "therefore no one," no one, "is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day, things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." He says, "Don't let someone bind your conscience with statements about rituals that you need to conduct and perform and fulfill as a Christian." He says, "All of that stuff is just at best a shadow, you already have the reality, you have the substance in Christ, the other stuff passes away as a result. Don't let someone judge you. Don't submit your conscience to that. Let your conscience rest in Christ, not in the things that you do or what someone else tells you to do." If you don't protect your conscience on that regard and you start keeping these things thinking they are necessary for the sake of righteousness, you'll start to develop a greater pride in yourself and less appreciation for Christ because you're going to start to think, "I'm doing something here that helps my righteousness in the presence of God." It's not true. It's utterly false.

Paul goes on in verse 20 of Colossians 2, he says, "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world," if Christ, listen, if Christ saved you apart from religious ritual, Christ saved you at the cross, saved you with the perfection of his blood

and you stand complete in him, then why would you go back to the earthly stuff that never had power to save you to begin with? Why would you do that? Verse 20, "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!'" It's all external stuff. Verse 22, "which all refer to things destined to perish with use in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence." He says, "These things look like they are spiritual. They look religious but they are utterly worthless so don't even start down that path." Rest in the perfection of the work of Christ on your behalf and realize that what that means is that as you walk the rest of your days in this life, that the call of God is not for you to go back to religious ritual but rather to enjoy what he has given you with a grateful heart. This is beautiful. This is beautiful. Rather than being caught up in rituals and religions and festivals and all of that stuff, God says, "I have fulfilled righteousness on your behalf, therefore, what I want from you is not external compliance with man-made stuff. What I want is for you to receive the gifts that I have given you and enjoy them and give thanks to me." That is the beauty and the wonder of the Christian life. It's a life of gratitude, not slavish obedience to external religious ritual.

Look at 1 Timothy 4 and you'll see this all wrapped together here. "To the pure, all things are pure." We're seeing the purity of the sheep comes from our Lord Jesus Christ, not compliance with the rules and restrictions of men. 1 Timothy 4. Paul goes even further and says that these kinds of restrictions are more than just the commandments of men, they are actually the doctrines of demons. 1 Timothy 4:1, "The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith." He says, "There is a threat to the truth of the gospel in what I'm about to say and I want to protect you from that threat because some are going to fall away, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." "Paul, I want to stay away from that. What's important for me to know at points like this? How can I protect myself from that kind of demonic doctrine? And what are you talking about? Doctrines of demons? I haven't seen a red horned spirit in a long time. What are you talking about?" Verse 2, "by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron." Verse 3, he gets specific, he says, "men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods." He says, "They put these ascetic requirements on your life. They tell you that you have to do these external things and avoid this and avoid that if you want to be pleasing to God." If you read verse 3, it looks like a catechism from the Catholic Church. Paul says, "That is not it at all. That is doctrines of demons. Don't pay attention to that kind of stuff." He says, "They tell you to stay away from foods. They prescribe things and say that you're not supposed to eat them and somehow that makes you more acceptable to God." He says, "Nothing could be further from the truth. They tell you to stay away from these things which God has actually created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth." He says, verse 4, "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." He totally overturns the traditional way of looking at religion: talking about rituals, talking about do this, don't do that. He turns it all over. Spiritually speaking, he's gone into the

temple and he's turned the tables of false religion over and said, "Let me clarify for you what the reality of it is here. The reality of it is that God is a good God who has created good things to be enjoyed by his people." What he wants from us is to understand that and to receive these things with gratitude. So when you sit down to that 20 ounce rib eye slathered in butter, you look at that and without pang of conscience from people telling you you shouldn't eat food like that, you look at that or whatever meal it is that pleases you, you look at that and say, "This is a gift from God to me. God, thank you for allowing us the privilege of sharing in this of which you have created, set it apart to us. We are thankful. We know that we can receive this based on what you've said in your word. Amen. Let's eat."

The whole concept of spirituality is completely different from what false teachers try to impose upon us. It's not about increasing righteousness by abstaining from food. How could that ever be the case? And watch this, this is what I really want you to see: where did our righteousness come from? It came from the work of Christ on the cross. It came from him shedding his blood, suffering on our behalf, redeeming us out of the deadness of our sin. A great and powerful work by the holy eternal Son of God. Oh, that is glorious and noble and lofty and holy! And makes us love him. Then, a teacher comes along and says, "Let me tell you about how to achieve righteousness. Don't eat this. Don't get married. Do this prayer. Go through this ceremony. Do these seven sacraments." When you compare that kind of external compliance, that external made-up stuff to the glory of Christ, I hope that you see that external stuff for, to use a scriptural word in Philippians 3, the real dung that it is. That stuff could never be a means of increasing righteousness when you consider it in light of the glory of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. So because we love Christ, we refuse the teaching that tries to impose that stuff upon us because we are zealous to protect the teaching, the doctrine that has delivered our soul from sin and that has delivered us to joy and the freedom of a pure conscience in the presence of God. So we reject that stuff. We don't give any credit to it. We don't say, "At least they're trying to be religious." We recognize that stuff for what it is. The Bible says that it is doctrines of demons. How can we ever affirm something like that as having some measure of good in it? It is a direct assault on the person and work of Christ, is what it is. It's a deception to men lost in sin to think that they can somehow contribute to righteousness, that they can do something to get God to receive them and accept them. It's all a deception that leads men who are not saved into eternal damnation and binds the consciences of Christians and robs them of the freedom and the gratitude that should mark the life of a true believer.

That's what Paul was telling Timothy: to rebuke and to silence when he wrote this letter. You see, the glory of true redemption is threatened by false teachers who emphasize external ritual based on their own self-appointed authority. It's a threat. And usually it's a threat from a wolf dressed in sheep's clothing. You know, he'll talk about Jesus, he'll point to Scripture verses but at the heart of it he says, "Listen to me. You must do what I say if you want to be righteous before God." And what you and I have to do is see through the smoke screen, look beyond the disguise, tear the mask off and say, "What you're really talking about is a works based righteousness that robs Christ of his glory and would hide the gospel from those who need to hear it. I'm sorry, that's not welcome here

in this church and that's not welcome within the heart of what I believe." Because to the pure all things are pure. That's the true purity of a sheep freed from all of that external stuff. Free to rest in Christ and love him and rejoice in him. Cling to that, beloved, don't ever let that go. For food? No, that couldn't possibly be right.

Now, that's the true purity of the sheep. Let's look at point number two by contrast: the false purity of the wolves. The false purity of the wolves. Paul here just takes a surgeon's scalpel and just slices these false teachers and exposes them for everything that they truly are. Remember, just by way of reminder: Titus was dealing with false teachers who somehow were emphasizing Jewish traditions instead of true salvation in Christ. Paul doesn't get specific about what he's talking about but we see that there is a Jewish element in this in the things that he says throughout the letter. Chapter 1, verse 10, what is it that wolves that Paul was addressing in Titus, what is it that marked them? Verse 10, "there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision," that's a word for the Jews. Look at verse 14, he says, "reprove those so that they may be sound in the faith," verse 13 now verse 14, "not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth." Chapter 3, verse 9, "avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the law for they are unprofitable and worthless." There was some manner of teaching about external compliance, external ritual, in keeping with Jewish tradition that these false teachers were saying was a part of true Christianity. Paul writes to Titus and says, "Rebuke that. Stop it. Silence it. It is unprofitable, detestable and worthless."

Well, how can we recognize that when it comes? What's the common thread that we're going to see as we encounter, brush up against false teachers? Well, Paul exposes the threat both internally and externally as he exposes the false purity of these wolves. It's not true purity, it's actually impurity. Look at verse 15 with me. Paul says, "to those who are defiled and unbelieving," there they are. They don't really believe in Christ. They may talk about him but they don't believe in him in a saving sense with a repentant heart. They are defiled and unbelieving, to those like that, "nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." They profess to know God but by their deeds they deny him being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

Beloved, here's the basic principle that you need to recognize. Any teaching whether it's in a really ritualistic church or whether it's in a church that professes to be Christian but that just consistently talks about rules and regulations, do this and don't do that, any teaching like that that emphasizes compliance with external rules is doing this: they are substituting a false purity for the true purity that is presented to us in the gospel. When you walk away from a teacher or from a church with the sense impressed upon you, "I've got to do this, this, this, and this if I'm going to be acceptable to God," realize that they are turning your head and your attention away from Christ. You should be walking out of the teaching of the Bible exalting Christ and rejoicing in him and mindful of the fact that, "Jesus paid it all for me and I am forgiven because of what he did on Calvary. Christ paid it all. I'm free. I'm forgiven in him." That is the mark, that is the effect of true teaching. When a teacher leaves you walking away thinking about all of the external stuff that you now need to do to be somehow acceptable before God, you just encountered false purity.

That external stuff apart from Christ can do you no good. It appears wise. It appears advanced. It appears serious. But it's actually worthless and condemned. God condemns that which hides the glory of Christ. He condemns that which hides the perfection of the work of Christ on the cross. He condemns that which makes you think that somehow you are righteous apart from Christ. There is no such thing. We are either righteous in Christ alone or we're not righteous at all.

Now, Paul dealt with this repeatedly in his ministry and you say, "Ah, but they are really sincere about it." Turn to Romans 10:3 and here's what you need to see about what is really going on here. Paul again is speaking of Jews. Romans 10:2, "I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge." They are zealous but it doesn't do any good because it's not true. It's not zeal based on truth therefore it's worthless. What are they doing when they do that? Verse 3, "Not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they do not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Man-made regulations teach people that they can increase their righteousness with God by what they do. That denies the gospel. That's an attack on Christ. It's not innocent. It can't be excused.

What can we say about the false teachers who promote such things? Very quickly, we're going to look at their internal impurity and their external impurity. When you see teachers who are wrapped up in that kind of external stuff, you can know that inside they're all messed up. No matter how suave they may look on the outside, inside they're messed up. They don't have the faintest clue of what they're doing. That's what Paul says. Verse 15, these boastful teachers are actually completely defiled. Completely defiled! Verse 15, "To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." Watch this, look at that at the end there: what is going on inside them? What is internally true about them? Scripture tells us: their mind and their conscience are defiled. They are impure. They are talking about impurity while they themselves are living models of the grossest form of impurity in this way. Their mind is defiled because it's not thinking rightly about the truth. If you were thinking rightly about the truth, you would be talking to people about Christ not about keeping rules. First of all, their mind is not thinking rightly about truth. Paul goes on and says their conscience is defiled. Their conscience is defiled because it employs a false standard to measure righteousness. It says, "If you do this, you will be righteous before God." That's wrong. Their conscience is all mixed up on what the right standard is to determine what proper behavior is. So they are thinking wrong, their conscience is defiled inside, they are a total hypocritical mess. They are not in any position to lead you to God.

And at the root of all of it is them trusting in self-effort and teaching you to trust in self-effort rather than the finished work of Christ. They create the impression that God wants ritual from you rather than repentance, that God wants you to go through motions rather than to present to him a heart that is broken and contrite over your sin. Rituals obscure all of that. They obscure the internal reality for the sake of external compliance and people can go through the rituals without any true change and just get baked into their hypocrisy. This stuff isn't innocent, it's demonic. It robs Christ of his glory and the fact that people

may be zealous as they do it doesn't rescue it from condemnation. You see, beloved, when that's what's driving a man's view of God and salvation, the whole fountain from which he speaks is polluted and a polluted fountain cannot produce fresh water to drink from. Ritual never produces righteousness but a broken and contrite heart. Turn over to Psalm 51, I want to see this. Psalm 51. Hadn't planned to include this but we'll just take a brief detour. Just a brief one. Psalm 51, I think it's in verse 16. "You," speaking to God, "You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:3 and 4, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." The measure of purity is the measure of a broken spirit over sin that trust in Christ for redemption, not an insincere man going through the motions so that he can go on with life. There is an internal impurity that allows a man to speak of rituals in that way.

So we recognize the false purity of wolves by recognizing their internal impurity. Finally, we recognize their external impurity and we'll close with this. Their external impurity. Look at verse 16. "They profess to know God." They not only profess to know God and if you have any personal experience with them, you realize that they will carry their attitudes with an air of superiority, "I know better than you." They are condescending toward you and your humble trust in Christ. "I know God. Let me help you out with yours." Let me help you out with a ball bat. God gives the verdict on them. What they say is not consistent with reality. Their deeds, by their lives, they deny him. They are detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed. Based on what Paul had said, you can recognize these wolves, you can recognize their inconsistency, they are marked by rebellion, they are marked by empty talk, they are marked by an emphasis on ritual. they are marked by lives that are inconsistent with the true righteousness that God requires. There is a total inconsistency. Don't listen to their talk, look at their walk. Don't listen to their lips, look at their lives. If there is an inconsistency between the two say, "There is something wrong here." Step back before you ever give men like that any position over your conscience or your understanding of who God is. By the testimony of Scripture, men like that, their lives and their ministry, look at verse 16 with me, their lives, their ministry, Paul ends it up, "it is detestable. It is disobedient. It is worthless for any good deed." Paul can speak with that way because he loves the true sheep of Christ and he says, "These men are a threat to that. They are a threat to the security of the sheep. They are a threat to those who need to hear the gospel. They obscure it all. They are a threat. They devour people and so yes, they are detestable. Yes, they are disobedient to the word of God. Yes, there ministries are utterly worthless."

Nothing good can come from those who obscure the gospel for the sake of the rituals that they want to put you through. The whole religious system shows that they don't know the first thing about the true purity God requires and therefore collectively as the people of God, it is our prerogative and it is our responsibility to reject their profession and silence their influence when it manifests itself in the church. Beloved, we must protect the purity of the gospel. We must protect the purity of the church. Not only for the sake of our own freedom in Christ, we need to protect it for our children. We need to protect it for others

who have not yet heard and we can't let men pollute it, speaking about external things that have nothing to do with the real purity that Christ procured for us on the cross. We guard against it.

Let me just say this as I close for those of you that don't know Christ: trying to keep rules doesn't help. Going out of your way to be in church Sunday by Sunday doesn't help if you haven't given your life to Christ. You can't make it better by what you do. You have to stop and you have to humble yourself. Pray to one that you can't see based on what he's revealed in his word. Say, "I hate my sin. I know I'm defiled. My only salvation and purity can come from you. Will you please give that to me?" You young people who sang up here, God bless you. Is that the testimony of your own heart? You parents that brought them, is that what you teach them? Is that what you know by experience? We have to point each other to Christ. We have to trust in him and him alone for our righteousness.

Let's bow in prayer.

For those of you that do not know Christ, I invite you today. Christ pleads with you right now through his word. Come to Christ today for salvation.

Lord, for those of us that know you, thank you for saving us from sin. Thank you for delivering us from our bondage. We just ask, Father, that we would walk in grateful response, that we would enjoy what you have given to us, that we would bless your name for it and that, Father, when it's all said and done, we would be found faithful to a truth to a message that talks about a purity that comes from God rather than a purity that men can achieve. Father, when we have that as our focus, it's going to drive us to Christ and away from reliance and confidence in our self-effort. Help us to that end and help us to be faithful to such a glorious gospel we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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