

Sermon Series: Book of Titus
Sermon title: Putting False Teachers into Order
Scripture reading: Titus 1:9-2:1
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Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church
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God has created so many interesting animals. Most animals have some kind of defense mechanism. Snakes have venom. Fish use speed and camouflage. Cats have claws. Turtles have shells. Skunks can spray stinky liquid. Sheep? What about sheep? When they get scared they actually crowd together for defense, which makes it easier to catch *more* than one. They can also flee but their pretty easy to catch.

Did you know that sheep have no real good defense mechanism?

Oh yeah, they can bite a little, or head butt you or they can "baaahh". But a sheep's best defense mechanism is.....a Shepherd.

The book of Titus is a letter that Paul is writing to a man named Titus, whom he left on the island of Crete. He left him there to put some things in order and over the last 2 weeks we saw that he wanted him to appoint Elders in all of the churches in all of the towns.

Elders are a group of men who are called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee the local church and teach them the word of God.

So, one of the jobs of Elders is to feed the sheep, and what do sheep eat? What do Christians eat? The word of God.

But there is another job that Elders or Shepherds are to do. They are to protect the sheep from wolves or other wild animals.

Open your Bible to Titus 1 and we will be starting in verse 9 today.

9 He [an Elder, overseer, shepherd] must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. **10** For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. **11** They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. **12** One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." **13** This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that *they* may be sound in the faith, **14** not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the

commands of people who turn away from the truth.

15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. **16** They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. **Titus 2:1** But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

So, I want to be a little methodical this morning.

What I want to do is look at 3 things:

- 1. What is the nature of these false teachers on Crete? What are they teaching?**
 - 2. How is Titus to deal with the false teachers?**
 - 3. How can we safeguard ourselves against false teachers?**
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So, let's get right into the first one.

- 1. What is the nature of these false teachers on Crete? What are they teaching?**

We are told that the Elders must be able to give instruction in what is called 'sound doctrine' or healthy doctrine..that is, teaching that is in accordance with what the Apostles taught them, consistent with God's

revelation in the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

They must know the word of God well enough to be able to *'rebuke those who contradict it'...*and there are many it says in Crete.

I'll list the things we know about them [there's a lot we don't know] so that we can try to figure out just exactly what they are teaching.

- insubordinate, which means rebellious.
- empty talkers
- deceivers
- circumcision party
- teaching for shameful gain, which is \$\$.
- Jewish myths
- commands of people
- defiled and unbelieving
- profess to know God but deny him by their works
- detestable
- disobedient
- unfit for any good work

First, there are a few clues that tell us that they are Jewish. We have the words, *'Circumcision party'* and he refers to *'Jewish myths'*. Later in chapter 3 verse 9 he says, "avoid foolish controversies, genealogies,

dissensions, and quarrels about *'the law'*, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

On the island of Crete, there was a large population of Jews. These were supposed Jewish Christians who were teaching some strange things in the churches. In fact, Titus isn't the only place that this is mentioned. False teaching was being confronted all over the New Testament.

Another thing we know about these false teachers is that they were teaching people for money. Paul calls it *'shameful gain'*.

So, we have some Jewish false teachers who are upsetting whole families by teaching some strange things. Paul says they are rebellious, probably meaning against the Apostles teaching. They are deceiving people. They are empty talkers. And they are doing it for money.

So, what exactly were they teaching? They had added some extra stuff to the Apostles' teaching; being concerned with Jewish myths, genealogies, and it somehow shaped how they viewed the Old Testament law and matters of purity. Let me give you 2 categories for what they were teaching.

1. **Esoteric**- this is something that is special, only certain people know it. This is what the '*myths*' and '*genealogies*' are all about. These guys were saying, "We have some special knowledge." "We know the secret things." This is very common among False Teachers.
2. **Ascetic**- this is a radical self-discipline and abstaining from certain things that might pollute you. This phrase in verse 14 which says, '*the commandments of men*' is a phrase that has to do with special rules added to make one pure. It is also why in verse 15 Paul talks about purity and defilement. When we compare [Colossians 2](#) and [1 Timothy 4](#), which are similar false teachings, we see that they were probably teaching people to abstain from certain foods and not to marry. Maybe their motto is seen in [Colossians 2:21](#), "Do not handle. Do not taste. Do not touch."

It will suffice to say that **the false teachers on the island of Crete were Jewish Cretans from within the church who were teaching for money that they had a special knowledge that needed to be known and they were commanding certain ascetic practices in order to be pure before God.**

They had added things to the gospel. In order to be pure before God, you needed these other things. The grace of God through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection was not enough. You needed something more.

2. How is Titus to deal with these false teachers?

There is both an offensive way and a defensive way to deal with them. A way to confront but also a way to prevent.

Look in chapter 1 verse 9.

He is to [rebuke](#) those who contradict sound doctrine.

[Verse 11](#) says, '[they must be silenced.](#)' This means to muzzle them or to shut their mouths.

[Verse 13](#) says, '[rebuke them sharply.](#)'

In [3:10](#) he says, '[after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him.](#)'

Now, these are pretty tough words. I'd say that in today's culture where tolerance is king, this is going to be hard to swallow. A few things about this.

We aren't talking about rebuking sharply or silencing or warning people that don't agree with your preferences. We are not to rebuke or silence people who don't baptize the way we do or take the Lord's supper the way we do or have church services the way we do. That is not what is going on here.

This is not about minor differences.

Titus is dealing with false teachers who are adding something to the gospel. So, don't read these verses and start rebuking people for not doing things the way you like.

Souls are at stake and people's eternity is at stake, so Titus and the Elders he is to appoint, must stand up against false teachers who are leading people astray. And we should do the same to false teaching.

So, Titus and the Elders he is to appoint are to be on the offensive and rebuke, silence, and warn these false teachers. This doesn't mean to resort to violence but it means to correct them and run them off if they don't stop. (3:10)

But there are 2 really good ways to stop these false teachers with a prevent defense.

First, get Elders into these churches. **Proverbs 11:14.** [Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.](#)

So, one of the reasons this heresy CAN happen is because they don't have Elders. Elders who have sound doctrine will prevent this. One man could be overrun by a group of false teachers but not a group of solid Elders.

Secondly, Titus is to teach what accords with 'sound doctrine'. **Sound doctrine is a force field against false teaching.**

Do you know how counterfeit experts learn to spot a fake dollar bill? By knowing the real thing so well! The best way for the churches in Crete to be protected against a counterfeit gospel is to know the real gospel.

Which leads us to point number 3, which is...

3. How can we safeguard ourselves against false teachers?

Personally and as a church body we have to know the Bible. And we have to surround ourselves with others who know the Bible. Isolation and 'hearsay' can quickly lead to heresy. That's why it is so important to be in a small group. That's why it is so important to be in a Life Transformation Group where you are guzzling scripture.

For there are many out there who are false teachers. There are many out there today who are devoting themselves to myths and secret things and ascetic practices.

Let me close with reading to you from **Acts 20:28**, where Paul is speaking to the Elders of the church in Ephesus.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night and day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Be alert brothers and sisters by devoting yourself to the word of his grace and sound doctrine. There is a lot of false teaching around. Are you able to recognize it? Test all things. Hold everything up to the Scriptures!

So, the false teachers on the island of Crete were Jewish Cretans from within the church who were teaching for money that they had a special knowledge that needed to be known and they were commanding certain ascetic practices in order to be pure before God.

Titus and the Elders that he is to appoint are to feed the people with the word of God so that they have sound doctrine— and are able to refute, rebuke and protect the churches against false teaching.