

Main Reading: **Titus** 1:10–16

Over the last two weeks, we've been reading the beginning of Paul's letter to Titus.

And, as it turns out, Titus had been sent by Paul on a **mission**.

This week, we're going to look more at *why* this mission was going to be *such* a challenge.

It was—no doubt— going to be a challenge for Titus...

But I think it may *also* be a challenge for us, tonight.

These words of Jesus through Paul are going to sound harsh...

They aren't going to be *easy* to **swallow**.

Some of these words might seem impolite in our culture,

but sometimes we *need* to hear the **harsh** truth.

In dire situations, it's *necessary* to act without "manners" [kid running into the street, housefire]

We just read some of the characteristics of people in Crete (and elsewhere).

v. 10 — "For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers,

This is very similar to what Jude said about church **intruders**.

Many of them were "insubordinate" people—they would not listen to anyone in authority.

They couldn't care less what Paul, Titus, or another pastor had to say...

Outwardly, they claimed to have *only one* **authority** figure in their life...God.

But, inwardly, they would not even obey *Him*!

It's *always* a dangerous idea for a leader to be unquestionable or unapproachable.

Every person in leadership—*especially* in the church—needs to be held **accountable**.

The church is **not** a cult where the leader has *absolute* power.

There are elders, deacons, and overseers to help make the decisions, and they *all* should use the Bible as their frame of reference for everything.

There were also "**empty talkers and deceivers**" that Titus had to deal with.

Again, this is similar to what Jude said about "clouds without water..."

The things these people said had *no substance*...

Fast forward to the present day, here's what some churches are doing:

They train groups of **volunteers** to say "oooo," "ahhh," and "amen!" during the sermon.

Whatever that preacher is saying has such *little* substance, that they have to **ask**—or even *hire*—people to respond during the service.

Maybe this is what it was like in Titus' day...

Noe, the main culprits were "**...those of the circumcision party.**"

There was a group of people in the church called **Judaizers** or the circumcision party.

According to them, in order to be a *true* Christian, you had to get **circumcised**. **Acts** 15:1, 5

Not only that, you had to go on a strict **diet**. You had to celebrate feasts and **festivals**.

All of a sudden, you had to become like an Old Testament **Jew**...

So much of the New Testament deals with this group and their problems...

Acts, Galatians, Philippians, Jude, and Titus each mention *this* particular false teaching.

Anytime someone says, "In order to be saved, you gotta believe in Jesus *and* you have to _____,"

They are probably spreading some sort of **false** teaching.

In this case, it was “get circumcised.” And the irony is, *Titus* was **not** circumcised. **Galatians** 2:3

And yet, there were people darkening the doorsteps of the churches in Crete—where Titus had a position of authority—telling people to get circumcised in order to be saved.

v. 11 — Paul ordered Titus that these people “**...must be silenced...**”

This phrase is *literally* “put something over their mouth” [**barking dog**] [**screaming child**]

Titus’ job—as the lead minister—was to confront these people.

And yes, confrontation *is* a ministry. **Acts** 18:24–26, **Jude** 23, **Galatians** 2:11

The purpose **isn’t** to hurt, embarrass, or ruin someone...We confront them for their own **good**.

Letting someone continue in their wrongdoing or misunderstanding is unloving.

So, Titus wasn’t going to let these people continue to wreak **havoc** on themselves and others.

And this would be tough...they had some generous donors, who *wanted* to hear their theology...

Because, Paul said, they were “**teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach**”

And they were “**upsetting whole families**” over their ideas...

Now, this means (or could mean) several things:

First, imagine that the Dad of a teenage boy comes home from a men’s ministry event at the Cretan Church. After attending the event, the dad has picked up a new doctrine. He’s convinced that he—and his son—need to get circumcised...or else. This would certainly **upset** the mother and the son, plus the tension around the house could be cut with a knife (no pun intended).

Second, churches (at that time) were meeting in people’s houses, so this sort of outlandish teaching would’ve been even more personal. Perhaps, these teachers were traveling from Christian house to Christian house; taking advantage of others’ generosity, all the while spreading this unhealthy teaching.

v. 12 — On top of all that, Titus is warned that Cretans “...**are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.**”

Now, Paul wasn't being racist here—or playing on a stereotype...

In fact, someone from Crete said these words first.

Here, Paul is quoting an old, Cretan poet named **Epimenides** from around 600 B.C.

He wrote that people on the island were terrible,
and this bad reputation stuck with them for 7 centuries.

Later, **Cicero** (the famous Roman lawyer, writer, and orator [106 BC–43 BC]) would say this:

“Cretans regard highway robbery as honorable”

Now, you might think that it's strange for Paul to quote a Greek unbeliever...

But, *all* truth is God's truth. If something is true, God can use *anyone* to teach it.

[This includes any discovery in science]

QUESTION : ***If Paul wrote to a pastor today, what negative attributes about Americans might he warn him about?***

v. 13 — ***“rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,”***

Even though the people in Crete were receptive to bad ideas and had a *terrible reputation*,
Paul did not suggest that Titus retreat and run away from there.

Instead, he encourages Titus to stay put in Crete and work things out.

The place where people are furthest away from God is where the **gospel needs to go *the most*.**

So, Crete wasn't the last resort for Titus and Paul, it was the top priority.

v. 14 — ***“not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.”***

Now, your Bible may say “genealogies”—which means a family tree.

And I want you to know that this verse is not coming against all kind of **genealogies**.

QUESTION : ***How do people today put too much on emphasis on genealogies?***

In fact, 1 Chronicles 1-9, Matthew 1, and Luke 3 are all genealogy passages.

Family trees are good, until someone twists them into something bad...

In Paul’s day, *certain* people felt it was a spiritual badge of honor—even earning you salvation—if you could trace your lineage back to Abraham. **Matthew** 3:9

But Christians share Abraham’s **faith** whether or not they are his blood relatives. **Romans** 4:16

The “myths” that are mentioned—I’m convinced—refers to legends about Old Testament figures.

[Stuff like the apocrypha or the talmud.]

v. 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.”

This religious group, that was causing trouble in Crete, was likely very concerned about old, Jewish cleansing **rituals**.

You had to wash your **hands** before eating in this particular way [demonstrate]

And you had to wash a **cup** in a certain way before drinking out of it.

Now, you can see that this started out as God’s care for His people—
it’s a good thing to **wash** hands and dishes.

But these practices weren’t about hygiene, they had turned into a source of pride almost...

But these religious leaders failed to realize one thing...

It doesn’t matter how many cups you rinse, and it doesn’t matter how many times you wash your hands...unless God washes you from the inside, then you will *still* be **dirty**.

***“If your mind is impure, it cannot accurately inform your conscience,
so your conscience cannot warn you.” — John MacArthur***

But, when your conscience is accurately infused with God's truth,
it functions as the warning system God designed. 1 **Timothy** 1:18–19, 2 **Corinthians** 4:2

That being said, an unsaved person cannot have a pure conscience.

Actually, this is one of the things that the Holy Spirit does to us at salvation. **Hebrews** 9:14

As long as what you are doing isn't sinful, you can do it as a Christian with a clear conscience.

But the circumcision party was trying to enslave people's consciences
by convincing them that it was wrong to eat certain things.

They required adherence to the old Jewish diets, but listen to what Paul says...1 **Timothy** 4:3–5

And remember, Jesus said **Matthew** 15:10–11

***v. 16 — They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.
They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.***

Just like the people in Paul's day, the *vast* majority of Americans say they've found God.

But the truth is...Talk is cheap. People say one thing and do the other.

So, please remember that being a Christian is not just about a profession of faith by itself.

There must be a possession of faith—and this is evident through works (or “fruit”) **James** 2:14

In order to say fit (spiritually-speaking),
we can't just claim to be a Christian—we must be living it out. 1 **Corinthians** 9:27