

Facing The False Teachers

Titus 1:10-16

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Paul wrote to Titus in verse 5 and told him to "...set in order the things that are wanting," and the things that needed to be corrected. Titus was on the little island of Crete, and he was in charge of the churches in Crete. Paul wrote to him to straighten and organize what was going on. Paul told Titus to ordain elders. He gave the qualifications for those elders or pastors, and came to the end of that in verse 9. I want to start there. Paul told him, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," the reason is, "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake," or for dishonest gain. "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; 14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. 15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. 16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

I want you to notice that this section, verses 10-16, is a section dealing with false teachers. This section actually starts with the word "For." Basically, what preceded it now is given the reason for what preceded it. What preceded it? As I pointed out, the qualifications needed for pastors. Now, the word elder, bishop, and overseer are synonyms for the same individual, that is, the pastor. The word "elder" means he should be mature. The word "bishop" means he should oversee, and the word "pastor" means that he should feed, lead, and protect God's people. It's that protecting part of God's people that he kind of goes into in verses 10-16. The verse opens with the conjunction "for" or because, so the reason Titus is to appoint elders in every city on the island of Crete and to ensure that they meet the standards Paul lays down, is that there are many false teachers who are leading people astray.

A couple of principles I want to draw from that before we unpack these verses is that there is such a thing as false teachers. That may sound simplistic, but it's not, and it's not unimportant. We live in a politically correct culture today. Sadly, but is so often the case, the culture has come into the church, and we have in the church people thinking that it's wrong to say, "You're wrong," and it's wrong to say, "that religion is false," and it's wrong to speak against someone and think that you're right and they're wrong. We also have relativism and this idea that there is no absolute truth. All of those have actually filtered into the church. We need to take a stand biblically and not think culturally. We need to make sure that we're thinking biblically and not thinking as the culture around us so that we can be salt and light and have an impact on them.

The simple fact is there are such people that exist that are classified as false teachers, false

prophets, or false preachers. Not everyone that claims to be a preacher from God is from God. We need to be discerning. In the Old Testament, read the book of Jeremiah as he was called by God to rebuke the false prophets in the land of Israel. Jesus came on the scene, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees," you are like wolves in sheep's clothing. He talked about their false traditions of men, how they've negated the Word of God, and He rebuked them.

When Paul met with the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20, he said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," and they will try to "draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch," in all things and be careful. You need to realize wherever God is at work, Satan is at work as well. Wherever there is good seed being sown, there's going to be bad seed being sown. Satan is the master of deception, and he wants to lead people astray.

We studied last Sunday morning that what we believe determines how we behave, and that really ties in with our lesson tonight as well because if you believe false doctrine, you're going to live a false life. Sound doctrine leads to sound living; false doctrine leads to falsehood and hypocrisy and all sorts of horrible things result. We also need to realize the best long-term strategy for dealing with false teachers is to multiply the number of true teachers who are equipped to rebut and to refute the error. That's one of my passions as well, is to train God's people to be able to stand strong against false doctrine by teaching the truth and warning of error. When you have a Jehovah's Witness knock on your door or a Mormon come to your house so that you're equipped in God's Word and able to answer them, or when you're watching Christian television and a man gets up and opens the Bible and makes these claims that don't seem like they're really biblical, you need to be a Berean and search the Scriptures and see whether those things be so. I don't think I've ever seen a time before in the church when people are more gullible and more susceptible to error and to false teaching, and it does matter. It is very, very important.

In light of this context where he's to appoint elders, and they were to be qualified and apt to teach, and I love it in verse 9, they're to hold "fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine," we get our word "hygiene" from that word "sound." It means healthy or life-giving. "...both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," or the opposers. The best anecdote for error is preachers and teachers of truth—Amen?—that we have young men who are preaching and teaching God's Word.

Paul instructs Titus, and us, how to face the false teachers in three important ways. Again, as I say, everything we cover tonight is not in fashion, not en vogue, not really acceptable by our culture, but we're here to hear God's Word. These are the three ways that he is to deal with or to face the false teachers, if you want to write them down. The first is he explains who they were (verses 10-12). He explains who they are. He gives a description of them. The first is their identity (verse 10). He identifies them. He says, "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision." That means that they are Jewish, and I'll talk about that in just a moment. Notice it says in verse 10, "...many unruly," so not everyone but a good majority or number of them in the churches there of Crete were unruly. That word

“unruly” means that they were insubordinate or you could translate that rebellious. They don’t submit to authority. They’re not under authority.

What a contrast in verse 9 with those who are faithfully holding the word of God, and they are able to, with sound doctrine, exhort and to convince the gainsayers, but not these individuals. These false teachers are rebellious. They don’t submit to the Word of God. They don’t submit to the truth of God. They don’t submit to leadership in the church, and they are not under authority. When you confront them and try to talk to them, they’re rebellious and oppose authority. Beware of teachers who will not put themselves under authority and are law only unto themselves. They’re not accountable to others in the church.

Notice they’re also called, “...vain talkers.” I wish that I could adequately convey this concept. They basically are smooth talkers, eloquent talkers. They’re gifted orators and great communicators, but it’s all a bunch of empty nothing. The reason I emphasize what this “vain talkers” means is because there are so many today that look for style over substance in the pulpit. I don’t think the preacher should be boring, and I’m sure that sometimes I might bore people to death, but I think the priority isn’t your natural charisma, your oratory ability, your humor, your wit, or to be able to charm people with how wonderful you are, but your ability to make the Scriptures clear and to teach the authoritative Word of God. That’s what you should look for.

Sometimes I’ll meet people that talk about somebody that I know is teaching things that are in error or that are wrong, “Oh! He’s such a wonderful preacher! Oh! He’s such a wonderful teacher! Oh! I just love him! He’s so awesome. He’s so dynamic!” I’m thinking, “Well, what is it you like?” “Well, he’s really funny.” There are sometimes people say that to me, “Oh, Pastor Miller, I really like your humor.” I’m thinking, Well, that’s great, but I hope you like God’s Word more than you like my jokes, okay? Because I’m not called to be a comedian. I’m not called to be funny. If I can use humor to convey truth, great, but that’s not the reason I’m in the pulpit—to just crack jokes or to tell stories or to just move you emotionally or to just wow you with my oratory ability. That’s not what I’m here for.

Many times people are wowed and they’re excited because the person is so dynamic in the pulpit. Sometimes I’ve seen some of their television shows on Christian tv (and not all preachers on tv are bad), but people are saying, “Amen!” and they’re excited. It’s like a high school pep rally, and they’re clapping and they’re pumped up and all excited. I’m thinking, The preacher hasn’t said anything. It’s like a high school pep rally, “Give me a J! Give me an E! Give me an S - U - S! JESUS!” “Yeaaaaah!” There have been times I’ll hear them say something that’s, “Really? I don’t even know what he just said,” and people are, “Mmm, hmm, Amen! Yeah, ooooh that’s good!” It is?! I don’t even know what he said! I think that the sad thing is that your person in the pew so often doesn’t think biblically when they’re listening to preaching and teaching. I’m convinced that a lot of Christians don’t even know what good preaching or good teaching really is. These are vain talkers. They are speaking with empty words. Their preaching lacks health-giving substance. There’s no content. There’s no meat. There’s no substance to what they’re saying, and that substance and meat should be biblical.

Thirdly, they are described as being deceivers—yes, they deceive. They lead people astray. Not only does their talk fail to edify, they actively lead people away from Christ. Many times their preaching is drawing disciples after themselves rather than after Christ. When somebody preaches a good sermon, you should be saying, “Isn’t Jesus wonderful? Isn’t God’s Word amazing?” Instead of, “Isn’t the preacher wonderful? Isn’t he amazing?” It’s, “Isn’t God’s Word wonderful? Isn’t God’s Word amazing?”

Notice, fourthly, they were Jewish. It says in verse 10, “...of the circumcision.” I don’t believe that these were the Judaizers (these were Jews that would tell Gentiles that you have to become Jews in order to be Christians, so they weren’t what are called Judaizers, trying to make Christianity a Jewish sect), but these are just Jews who are teaching a combination of legalism and mysticism. They were kind of mystic and legalistic, and they were interpreting the Scripture with all kinds of bizarre understandings. They were just aberrant in their doctrine, and they weren’t teaching truth. What were they teaching? Paul didn’t really say, but it did have legalism. It was man-centered on traditions, and we’ll get to that in just a moment.

Jump down to verse 14 real quickly. It says, “Not giving heed to Jewish fables,” so they were Jews and they were giving fables. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he said, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts,” or desires, “shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables,” same word, and today we have many people that are following fables. These are some of the dangers that they needed to look out for.

Notice their influence in verse 11. It says, “Whose mouths must be stopped,” why? Because they “subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not,” and their motivation is, they’re doing it “for filthy lucre’s sake.” They’re doing it for selfish gain, for ill-gotten gain, or for money. Notice that it says they must be silenced, “Whose mouths must be stopped.” Again, today in our culture you think, Paul, that’s not very nice. That’s not very Christian. That’s not very loving to say they need to be silenced. It literally means that they need to be muzzled. He’s saying, “It’s time to take action. You need to silence them through argument and through discipline,” verse 13. We’ll get it. It’ll be, “You need to rebuke them sharply by teaching the truth.” The best way to combat false doctrine is to raise up good teachers to preach the truth and to live in righteousness—to shame them by your righteous lives—and to confront and rebuke them.

Today we promote them. We sell their books and their magazines. We put them on the radio and on Christian tv. You can go into a Christian bookstore (which is becoming a thing of the past, by the way), and there are books in there that are false teaching, full of false doctrine, and they’re under the guise of being a Christian book because it’s popular and people are buying it. It’s really sad and tragic. You need to know the truth so that when an error comes along you won’t be deceived, so you confront them.

Notice why they should be confronted. They are ruining whole households, which is an interesting statement in verse 11, "...who subvert," or overthrowing, "whole houses." Churches in those days met in houses. We don't know if Paul's talking about house churches, being congregations that met in homes, or if he's talking about families. Either one is apropos or would apply. Their doctrine ruins churches. I have seen churches destroyed when the leadership of the church did not take a stand against false teachers entering in among them. It's like a shepherd letting wolves come in and devour the flock. They didn't stand up and protect the sheep. I've also seen marriages and families destroyed by false teaching and by false doctrine.

One of the blessings of my heart is to see people come to Revival Christian Fellowship and sit under the teaching of the Word and be restored and renewed and be healed. I've seen that so much. People come and say, "You know, we were in a church where they were preaching false teaching or false doctrine or was legalistic or controlling and it was kind of like a shepherding-type thing. We came to Revival and got washed in the water of the Word and built up in the Word. The people loved on us and our lives have been restored, our lives have been renewed." Years ago, in my former church, I'll never forget one evening a fellow met me in the foyer. He was just all messed up, all twisted around with all kinds of cooky ideas, but he kept coming and coming and kept coming and he kept hearing the Word. I saw his life transformed—his marriage transformed, his family transformed, and his children transformed—just by the positive sound doctrine, the healing doctrine of God's Word.

Notice they were teaching things as well (verse 11), "...teaching things which they ought not," to teach. They're teaching things that are unbiblical or unscriptural. They are of man's origin or man's traditions. Notice also that their motive was dishonest gain. They had two motives. They were given to filthy lucre. Their motives were dishonest—they were lying and evil brute beasts (verse 12), and lazy gluttons. Think about that. Paul's description of them is so graphic. They were ruining families, ruining churches, teaching things they ought not to teach, and their motive was dishonest gain. In verse 11 it says they did it, "...for filthy lucre's sake." Both in the preceding qualifications, in Titus and in Timothy, and when Peter wrote to the elders who are the pastors, he said you are to be pastors not for filthy lucre's sake—not for money's sake. No man should ever be in the ministry for money. The motive should be that you're called by God and you're doing the work of God for the glory of God. The same thing should motivate you and me to serve the Lord. We don't do it for recognition or for credit. We certainly don't do it for ill-gotten gain.

Write down 1 Timothy 6:3-12 where Paul again talked about false teachers there. He came to the point in that passage where he mentioned the fact that they taught that godliness was a way to get rich. He said, "...from such withdraw thyself." These people who teach that your faith is going to mean riches to you, you need to resist them, run from them, flee from them. It said for those that desire to be rich, "pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Notice their character in verse 12 as we wrap up this first section. It says, "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said," we can't be absolutely sure what prophet from the Cretians it

is, but there was a prophet by the name of Epimenides in the sixth century. This seems to be a direct quote from that prophet. He was a Cretan, but he said, "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." Can you imagine that on a city brochure welcoming people to your city? "Come to our city: We all lie, we're evil beasts, and we're slow bellies." Titus had his work cut out for him. He was in a culture that was very wicked and very evil. This idea here in verse 11, that they are, "...always liars," means that they do not speak the truth, "evil beasts," this is probably a metaphor for they act like wild animals, that they're kind of savages and beastly. They operate by their natural instincts, which are evil. That crazy term in the King James translation, "...slow bellies," literally means lazy gluttons. It means they're not only lazy, but they're gluttons and just sit around and eat all the time. They're not motivated to do anything. They're just into their own selfish gain, and they do it for dishonest reasons—lazy gluttons—but Christ can change a person. When you get to Titus 2:12, we see that those that were in Crete had been changed and transformed by the power of God's Spirit.

The second thing Paul moves into (verses 13-14) is exhorts Titus on what to do with these false teachers. He describes them, gives us a description of their character, their nature, and what they're like, and tells Titus, and us, how he needs to deal with them—what he should do. He said, "This witness is true," so Cretians are all liars, but this is true. This is what you need to do, "Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; 14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth." Now, again, I couldn't help but (as I've studied this passage for tonight) keep thinking about that one theme as of how contrary to our culture these words are. I mean, the world basically goes crazy, the idea that you would rebuke them, "Who gives you the right?" "What gives you the authority?" "Who do you think you are?" and, believe it or not, whenever I teach a passage like this, I get somebody upset with me. "Gee, I can't believe that you would say that," and "That's not right. You shouldn't talk about false teachers," and "What makes you think you're right and they're wrong?" As I said, the Old Testament is full of it, Jesus warned of it, they were in the book of Acts, and all through the epistles Paul warns us about false teachers, but we don't hear much about it today.

What are you supposed to do? "...rebuke them sharply." You're to put blame on them. You're to stand up to them and speak out against them. How do you do that? With the truth of God's Word. You do it in love. You don't do it in anger. You don't do it attacking them personally, but you attack the content of their preaching and their teaching and their doctrine with truth. The best way to combat the lie is to bring the truth of God's Word. Just let the Word of God come forth and defend itself. The reason why you rebuke them, by the way, in verse 13, is so "...that they may be sound in the faith." You don't rebuke them to hurt their feelings or to put blame on them, you rebuke them to straighten them out to try to win them so that they will be sound in the faith. That same word that we see in verse 9, "sound doctrine," we also find here in verse 13, "...that they may be sound in the faith." They will have that healthy, life-giving faith, the doctrine of the Word of God, the word of the apostles found in Scripture. That's the purpose, is pastoral. The rebuke is not to humiliate them but to rescue and restore them. That's the important point.

I want you to note also (verse 14) that there are two more reasons for the rebuke. They should,

“Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and the commandments of men,” and “that turn from the truth.” Paul didn’t want them to pay attention to Jewish fables, or the word means myths. This is where they were, most likely, teaching mysticism; and they were doing all these crazy fanciful weird ways of interpreting the Scriptures. The Jews were good on taking the Old Testament Scriptures and would allegorize, spiritualize, and find hidden meanings in them.

A few years ago we had the Da Vinci Code, and then we had another book called, Bible Codes. Christians went bonkers over Bible Codes. They were studying all these Bible codes, and books sold by the thousands and thousands of books, millions of books, Christians buying them up. Everybody is all excited about something that is made up and not really even intended by God to be in the Scriptures. Listen, if you have to be initiated into something secret that no one else sees, no one else knows, no one else has discovered, and you found these hidden meanings in the Bible, be careful! If it’s true, it’s not new; and if it’s new, it’s not true. “Hey, did you hear about the new book, Bible Codes?” They would take the name of Abraham, the Hebrew letters had numeric numbers, and they would get the numbers and come up with these ideas and would draw from that in hidden codes and meanings and all this stuff. It’s just crazy. God said what He meant and meant what He said, and you can read the Bible in its historical context. You can take it in its historical and you can interpret it literally understanding that the Bible uses similes, metaphors, allegories, parables, and figures of speech. Some of the literature is poetic and prophetic, but you still take a literal approach to the Scriptures.

If you read the newspaper and it said there was an automobile accident on the corner of Scott Road and Antelope Tuesday afternoon at three o’clock, would you go, “I wonder what it really means? This is really secret code for satan’s coming. It means in three days—the word “Scott” means three and “Antelope” means four—it means Jesus is coming.” It’s like, “Where did you get that?” “I don’t know. I found it in the white spaces.” They’re reading things into the text that aren’t intended to be there. Christians have a propensity for that. They kind of like to follow that, and it’s just so crazy and silly, and the whole mystic ideas of: The Bible isn’t the authority, the experience is. Myths and mysticism was really a part of their teaching.

Notice the legalism as well (verse 14), “...and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.” They had mysticism and legalism, “...and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.” You don’t want the commandments of men, you want the commandments of God. Amen? You don’t want the doctrine of men, you want the Word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man,” or woman, “of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Be careful. Jesus talked about the Pharisees who abandoned the doctrines of God for the commandments of men, teaching things that they should not.

There’s a third and last point I want to make (verses 15-16) where Paul the apostle talks about the evidences of their error. Let’s read it. He says, “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” Mentally and morally they are defiled. “They profess that they know God,” it’s a profession, but it’s false, “but in works they deny him,” it’s one thing to say you know God, but

how do you live? Your behavior betrays your belief. "...being abominable," which is detestable, "and disobedient," they cannot and will not be persuaded, and they're disobedient to God's Word, "and unto every good work reprobate," which is such an amazing word. It means that they are worthless or useless or good for nothing. I like the definition of this being, "don't work." They're broken. They're just worthless.

There are two things that were the problem, evidence of the error. They had a false view of purity—they saw it only as external and legalistic (verse 15)—and they had a false profession. They said they know God, but in their works they deny Him. Notice in verse 15, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Now, don't take this first statement in verse 15, as has often been the case, and take it out of context, misinterpret, and misapply it. I can't tell you how many times I've had people say—they're doing sinful things and say, "Well, if my heart's pure, it's pure." I talked to one young man that was viewing pornographic literature and said, "Well, Pastor, my heart is pure," and he quoted me this verse, "Unto the pure all things are pure." "There must be something wrong with you if you think it's bad. You know, I think it's pure, and to me it's pure and unto the pure all things are pure." This is not talking about moral issues. You can't take what God says in His Word is sin and try to justify it because your motives are pure. Your good motives do not justify something that is sinful, and the truth is the end does not justify the means in your actions, either. "Well, I did it for a good reason." It doesn't matter. What you did was sinful.

What it is talking about, in the context, is ceremonial purity. It's talking about things like food and drink—meats and holy days—those kinds of things. Let me read to you from the scholar D. Edmond Hiebert. He said, "To the pure all things are pure. In this maxim, the reference is not to moral purity but rather to ceremonial and ritual purity. All things refers not to things morally wrong, but to all such outward things as meat and drink to which the distinctions of the pure and impure could be applied. These false teachers place great emphasis upon such outward distinctions and rites connected therewith, and the whole tendency of their teaching was to lay the stress upon the merely external, outward. These who keep their external regulations, they considered pure. These who did not were condemned as being impure and unclean." What he's saying there, they feel like if you don't touch that and you don't eat that and you don't do that, then you're pure; and it's all outward exterior external religion. This is what we call legalism. It's not an inward work of the Spirit in the heart, it's an outward kind of conformity that they press you into its mold—you've gotta dress like that, you can't wear certain clothing, you gotta have a certain kind of haircut, and, "You can't live in that house, it's too exotic!" You can't dance, and you can't do this and you can't do that. They put regulations—you can't go to this movie, that movie, and do this and do that. Some of those are a matter of Christian liberty, but we can't be legalistic.

People have asked me, "Is it okay for Christians to dance?" I say, "Well, it's a matter of Christian liberty, whatever you want. Now, Christians that I've seen dance, shouldn't dance." When they ask me, "Can Christians dance?" I say, "Some can and some can't. The ones I've seen dance are embarrassing, shouldn't dance." Can Christians do this? Can Christians do

that? Can they listen to this? Can they go to the theatre? Can they play cards? I was actually raised in a church that was quite legalistic. In the youth group you had to sign a code of holiness—you won't play cards, you won't go to the movies, you won't dance, you won't do this—and you signed it on the dotted line, as though that brings righteousness. You have to be born again of the Spirit—have the life of God in your soul. You have to be regenerated. Christianity is a work of God in your heart. Now, it does work its way out in holy living, but it's not coming from man-made traditions or legalistic rules.

Jesus dealt with this. He said, "It's not what goes in your mouth that defiles you." The Jews were really really big on certain foods. "If you really want to be spiritual, you won't eat meat," or "If you really want to be spiritual, you won't eat pork," and they have their restrictive dietary laws. There are people that will put you under that same thing, you know, "If you're a real spiritual Christian, you won't eat certain foods." Jesus said, "It's not what goes in your mouth that comes out, it's what comes out of your mouth that's important because it comes from your heart." He listed those evil things that come from the heart.

Remember when Peter in Acts 10 was on the housetop of Simon the tanner in Joppa by the seaside? He was swinging there on a warm afternoon (like we had today) in his hammock. Oh, praise God for hammocks! He was just having a nice little nap. They were cooking the meal downstairs, and he fell asleep. What could be better? Hanging out in a hammock, sleeping, waiting for the meal to be prepared, but he had a dream or a vision and it was this great big sheet coming down from heaven. On this great big sheet held by ropes in each corner, there were all these animals on this sheet that according to Jewish dietary law were unclean and forbidden. The Lord told Peter, "Peter, get up and kill them and eat them." Peter was appalled. He was freaked out. He said, "No way, Lord! I've never eaten anything common or unclean." The vision reappeared several times. Now, in that vision, He was preparing Peter for the mission he was going to have to go to Cornelius in Caesarea who was a Gentile. He was preparing Peter to realize that Gentiles were going to be saved, and they should not be considered unclean. It's interesting that all these animals that are contrary to dietary laws and code, that the Lord told Peter to get up, kill them, and eat them.

In 1 Corinthians 8:8, Paul says, "But meat," food, "commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse." It doesn't matter. Food isn't a thing that commends you to God. In Colossians he talks about that false teachers were telling them what to eat, what to drink, and what day to worship on putting them under legalism; and so many today have the same false view of purity. If you wear certain clothes or cut your hair a certain way—you do certain things—that you're a godly person; but God looks at the heart. God doesn't look as men, on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart.

Paul also says they had a profession that was false, as we wrap this up in verse 16. "They profess that they know God," and that's so true. It doesn't matter what you profess, the question is: What do you possess? It's one thing to say, but do you have a true relationship with God? The problem was in their works they denied Him. We need to be careful as believers as well. If we profess to be a believer in Jesus Christ, we need to make sure that our works don't deny

Him. Amen? It's that we live consistent with what we say, so they were professing. Notice also that they had been defiled in the fact that they were, "...being abominable," or that they were detestable, "and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate," or useless, worthless, or good for nothing.

All of this is just pretty powerful stuff from Paul's pen, and what it should do when we read it, it should educate us as believers not to be critical or fault-finding. In Matthew 7, Jesus said that we shouldn't judge, lest we be judged; but when He used that word "judge," He meant don't have a critical, fault-finding, judgmental attitude toward others. We should come in love and humility, but we must take a stand for biblical truth.

Let me give you some reasons and things to wrap this up. First of all, we need to see that it perverted the gospel. Legalism perverts the gospel. The gospel is the gospel of God's grace. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." You don't go to heaven because of what you don't do; you go to heaven because of what Christ did for you. Amen? You don't go to heaven because you don't smoke, you don't chew, and you don't hang out with those that do. "I don't play cards. I don't go to movie shows and I don't dance, so I'm going to heaven." I mean, you might not want to do those things because they can cause someone else to stumble or hinder your walk with God, but that isn't what gets you to heaven. Legalism gets in the way of the gospel of God's grace.

Secondly, it dishonors the person and the work of Christ. Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. The work is finished. It is done, and we enter by faith and receive that finished work. Thirdly, it's damning to men's souls. They end by being damned to perdition. I actually believe that Titus 2:1 (which is one of my favorite verses in Titus) should be the last verse of chapter one where Paul actually tells him, "But," contrast, here's what you, Titus, "speak thou the things which become sound doctrine," so the greatest defense to error is an offense—of speaking the things which become sound doctrine.

Let me give you three tests to apply to any religious teacher, system, or organization. First, ask yourself its origin. Is the origin divine or human? Is it revelation or human tradition? Are they giving me man's ideas? Does it originate from man's tradition or is it God's revelation? Secondly, ask yourself, what's its essence? Is it inward or outward? Is it internal or external? Is it spiritual or ritual? Those are the questions. Is it spiritual or is it ritualistic? Is the essence spiritual? Thirdly, ask, what are the results? Is it a transformed life or merely a formal creed? Let me tell you something, the truth will transform lives and bring glory to Jesus Christ. God's Word taught in truth will transform lives and glorify Jesus.

John Stott said that Christianity is divine in its origin, spiritual in its essence, and moral in its effect. I love it in Philippians where Paul says, "For we are the circumcision," we are the true Christians, "which worship God in the spirit...and have no confidence in the flesh." Amen? It's,

Not the labor of my hands, can fulfill the law's demands; these for sin could not atone; thou

must save, and thou alone. Amen?