

Titus 1:10-16 sermon

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Titus 1:10.

Practically since the church was first established, there have been false prophets and false teachers who have tried to infiltrate it and spread its false teachings. And if you read almost any book of the New Testament you'll see warnings about them.

- **Jesus** warned about false prophets who look innocent on the outside but on the inside are like ferocious wolves. (Mt 7:15-16).
 - And in talking about the signs that will accompany the end times he said one of the signs will be the appearance of these false teachers (Mt 24:11-12).
- The **apostle Paul** warned the leaders at the church at Ephesus that false teachers will arise from within their own ranks (Acts 20:29-30)
- And then several years later he writes back to Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus, and exactly what he'd warned about had happened (1 Timothy 1:3-4)
 - In his second letter to **Timothy**, Paul describes a time which sounds eerily similar to the condition we have today in many churches. **2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NIV)** *For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.*
- **Paul** also mentioned the existence of these false teachers at the churches of **Galatia**, **Colossae** and **Crete**.
- Similarly the **Apostle Peter**, the **Apostle John** and **Jude** all warned against false teachers who will be coming into those recipients own churches and distorting the truth of the Gospel (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:26; 4:1 and Jude 1:4-5)

Similar to the condition at the beginning of the church, so also today, there are plenty of false teachers around today. And much of the content of their false teaching is the same today as it was back then. Some of the more popular false teaching that you may have heard of or even been taught would be:

Content of False Teachings:

- You need to earn your salvation through good works.
- Since we're saved by grace we can live anyway we want.
- The Bible is full of myths, stories and errors.
- The many miracles in the Bible never really happened.
- All spiritual roads and beliefs lead to the same God.
- It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere.
- Jesus never came, wasn't the Son of God and never rose from the dead.
- God wants you healthy and wealthy and if you're not it's because of your lack of faith.
- The Bible is old and outdated and irrelevant to today's culture.
- It's possible to have sinned too much for God to love and accept you.
- Everyone must speak in tongues to be acceptable to God.
- You need another human being to intercede between you and God.
- God is often mad at you because of your sins.
- We don't need God to help us with our problems – we can figure them out.
- God is in everything (the rocks, the trees, the plants the animals etc.)
- Man is simply an advanced form of life via evolution.

And the list can go on and on.

The best way to prepare to recognize these false teachings is not to study the current false teachings but rather to become very familiar with the real thing – God's Word through reading and studying it. That's the best way to prepare to recognize a fake – by becoming very familiar with the

real thing. And everyone can do that. You don't have to attend a Bible college or seminary to become familiar with God's Word. You become familiar with it by spending time in it daily. Paul told Timothy that God's Word is the key to becoming equipped for all the good work God has in store for each of us (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and that we each have the responsibility to spend time reading and studying it (2 Timothy 2:15).

With that as a backdrop, let's look at what Paul had to say to Titus specifically about the false teachers that were wreaking havoc at the churches on the island of Crete.

One of the primary responsibilities Paul instructed Titus to do was to establish leaders in every church in every town on Crete. And so, Paul gave Titus a list of qualifications to look for as he appoints the leaders. And the last qualification he lists is: *A leader must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.* (Titus 1:9 (NIV)) and immediately after this Paul launches into talking about the types of people they will need to refute. Please follow along as I read Titus 1:10-16. and as I read, notice the seriousness with which Paul writes about dealing with these false teachers.

Did you notice the seriousness with which Paul writes this section? He's not joking around. These false teachers are disrupting whole households. He says that they need to be "*silenced*". The literal translation of this Greek word would be to "*put a muzzle on them.*" He also says that they need to be "*rebuked sharply*". Paul's not messing around when it comes to dealing with false teachers within the church. This hard line approach to these false teachers may not set well in today's culture of *sensitivity* and *tolerance*. But Paul's more concerned about the welfare and protection of the people of God than he is with being sensitive and tolerant. The stakes are too high to fall on the side of sensitivity and tolerance and allow everyone to have their own opinion and everyone's opinion has equal standing and is correct in its own way. That approach undermines the absolute and unchanging truth of God's Word. If anyone's teaching, mine or anyone else's, is contradicting God's Word and leading you away from its truth then it's potentially leading you away from God's truth and even God Himself. And that's a very slippery slope.

And it's not just that these false teachers are just mistaken in a certain doctrine. Paul says that they are teaching falsely "*for the sake of dishonest gain.*" They know exactly what they are doing. Does that sound vaguely familiar to you? You can turn onto a religious station and here various preachers or teachers calling for you to send in your money and if you do so God will bless you far more than what you've given. They may even claim that you'll be healed of all of your infirmities by simply sending in your money to support this false teacher. And people buy into this stuff because they want to be healed or be rich. Paul is obviously quite upset over these people's practices and that's why he calls Titus to silence them and to rebuke them sharply.

But notice carefully that Paul's instructions aren't just *punitive* but *redemptive*. "*Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith.*" God's not interested in merely rebuking and condemning these false teachers. God is always about taking our messes and using them to redeem us and bring us back into a right relationship with Himself.

Notice the last description of these individuals: "*They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*" (Titus 1:16 (NIV)) They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good – but they don't have to remain that way. They can be brought back into a right relationship with God by turning around from their current life, (which is called repentance) and head back to God. God is so good and gracious that He meets us where we are, identifies very clearly what we're doing wrong, and invites us to turn from that life and embrace the life He's always planned for us to live.

Notice also, that these aren't just outsiders attacking the church. These are people who claim to know God. You see it's one thing to claim to know God, even to act like you know God, but eventually their actions say something entirely different. You've no doubt known individuals like

this, maybe even you were once like that or even still are. With your mouth you claim to know God and claim to be a follower of God but your actions say something quite different.

Jesus said a very similar thing when describing false prophets. On the outside they look like innocent sheep but on the inside they are really ferocious wolves ([Mt 7:15-16](#)). It's by their fruit, their outward lifestyle that you'll be able to tell what they really are on the inside. The pages of church history is riddled with all sorts of preachers and teachers who could deliver powerful sermons or Bible studies but their life was preaching a far different message. I remember several years ago there was a very successful preacher of a church in Brainerd that my in-laws attended who appeared to be a very committed Christian, and perhaps he was. But while he was away leading a marriage conference it was discovered that he'd been cheating on his wife. And when he arrived back in town he was dismissed as the minister of that church. The words he was preaching weren't consistent with the secret life he was leading.

Conclusion:

Satan hates Christians and he especially hates the church because he wanted to be praised and glorified and every time we gather to praise God it's a vivid reminder to Satan of what he wanted and tried to take but failed. And so Satan will do whatever he can to destroy the church. And one of his most effective tools is to teach false doctrine about God from within. He desires to use false preachers and teachers to preach and teach lies about God. Therefore, we all need to be prepared to recognize false teaching and the courage to confront it when we see it. And the only way you'll recognize the false teaching is if you are familiar with the real thing. Read God's Word daily and spend time immersing yourself in it. And then listen with a discerning mind and heart to everything you hear. Don't automatically believe everything you hear, but test it against God's Word. And don't let sensitivity or tolerance of others' beliefs keep you from challenging false beliefs and teachings.

And the call is especially to the elders, the leaders of this church, to protect the flock from false teaching.

Titus 1:10-16 Sermon Outline

False prophets and teachers:

- Jesus warned about them and said they look _____ on the outside but on the inside are like ferocious wolves (Mt 7:15-16)
- _____ spoke about false teachers in many of the churches.
- The Apostle _____, Apostle _____ and _____ warned about false teachers.

Content of False Teachings:

Have you been impacted by false teachings?
How and what was it?

What's the best way to prepare to combat false teaching?

Titus 1:10-16 what action does Paul say should be taken against the false teachers:

- S _____
- R _____

Paul's instructions aren't just p _____ but r _____

What's God's goal for these false teachers lives?

Have you ever known anyone who claimed to know God but their actions told you differently?

What did Jesus say would be a distinguishing mark of real believers? (Matthew 7:15-16)

Application:

What false teaching do you see prevalent in churches today?
Why do you think this teaching is so successful?
How are you preparing yourself to combat false teaching?

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