

Idle Talkers And Deceivers (Tit. 1:10-16)

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I. Titus 1:10-16

A. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans *are* always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

II. Review

- A. Verse 5: Paul left Titus in Crete to "set in order the things that are lacking and to appoint elders in every city"
- B. Verses 5-8: Paul sets forth the character requirements of those who would serve as elders in the local church.
- C. Verse 9: the primary job description of an elder
1. . . . holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. (Tit. 1:9)
 2. Requirements
 - a) Knowledge of the Scriptures – having "been taught"
 - b) Faithful – "holding fast"
 - c) High view of Scripture – "the faithful word"
 3. Abilities – "that he may be able"
 - a) Exhort – come alongside and encourage to travel in the right direction
 - b) Convict – oppose and correct those who "speak against" the truths of Scripture
 - (1) Unbelievers – concerning salvation
 - (2) Believers – sanctification, how to live and grow in godliness
 - c) To resist . . . those who contradict
 - (1) The ongoing historical attack on the truths of Scripture
 - (2) By sound doctrine, literally "through the use of healthy, well-grounded teaching"
- D. Verses 10-16 – Paul now describes in more detail those who speak against Scripture.

1. Motives – what is it that fuels the destructive things that they do?
2. Characteristics – how can they be recognized?
3. Their core problem – what causes them to distort the truths of God?

III. Exposition

A. Titus 1:10-11

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

1. Two primary opponents of Christianity and Christian growth: idle talkers and deceivers.
2. FIRST: Idle talkers –
 - a) *Mataiologos* – speech contains “that which is ineffectual, idle speculation, foolishness”
 - b) Lacking in substance, easy to raise questions and spawn doubt without doing any real work in the Scriptures.
 - c) May seem sincere, but often only an external show of understanding.
 - d) Unwilling (and unable) to do the work of serious study and interaction.
 - e) Love debate for the sake of debate.
 - (1) Paul also warned Timothy concerning these individuals who are, “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2Ti. 3:7).
 - (2) The truth under discussion is not the real issue, rather than “being right” in debate.
 - (a) When their speculation or opposition is addressed, they simply shift their opposition to some other topic.
 - (b) Ministering to these is much like “tilting at windmills.”
 - (3) Elders must bear in mind: these are used of Satan to interfere with Christian progress primarily through distraction.
 - (4) Love blogs, online forums, and discussions – where they are unwittingly granted a platform which they would never obtain in a live fellowship.
 - f) Insubordinate - *anupotaktos*
 - (1) “not under orders”
 - (2) Unwilling to recognize God-given authority
 - (a) Scriptures – subvert the clear teachings of the Bible by twisting interpretation
 - (b) Elders – most frequently operating outside of the established local church
3. SECOND: deceivers

- a) *Phrenapatēs* – to “deceive the mind”, subvert understanding, insight, reasonable thinking
- b) More dangerous: why?
 - (1) Intentional and willful in their distortion of the truth.
 - (2) These will go to great lengths and exert enormous effort to further their aberrant views.
 - (3) Often an apparent sincerity – because they are deceived themselves
 - (a) “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2Ti. 3:13)
 - (b) The most convincing error is a fully-believed error.
 - (c) The apparent sincerity of a messenger is not a reliable measure of the truth of the message!
- 4. “especially those of the circumcision”
 - a) Jews – the primary opponents of the gospel at the inception of the Church
 - (1) The NT canon was not yet complete.
 - (2) The assumed experts in understanding the OT were the Jews.
 - (3) But, as Paul's life itself clearly demonstrated and Jesus told Nicodemus, a correct understanding of the Scriptures requires a spiritual birth (John 3:7-10).
 - b) A spiritual principle discernible in history and in our own day: having had great revelation, rejection of that revelation leads to great darkness.
 - (1) Jesus said, “And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:47-48)
 - (2) Such has been the case of those Jews who rejected their Messiah – the light of Torah has turned into obscurity.
 - (a) Concerning his fellow Jews, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:
But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. (2Cor. 3:14-15)
 - (b) One need but read the study notes on key passages in the OT found in the modern Jewish Study Bible to see evidence of this sad reality. The experts in the Jewish Law remain unable to see their own Messiah therein.
- 5. Motivation – dishonest gain

- a) "shameful advantage or privilege" - whatever elevates the individual through inappropriate, ungodly means
 - b) In some cases, financial.
 - c) In other cases, to gain a following.
 - (1) Paul warned the elders at the church at Ephesus
"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:29-30).
 - d) Fruit of "the power of pride."
 - e) Motivation other than obedience to Christ or a desire to see God's will come to pass in the lives of believers and in the world.
6. The preserving work of ministry will include opposition and conflict.
- a) "Mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households" (Tit. 1:11)
 - (1) It is not sufficient simply to point to the truth – we must also confront and expose error.
 - b) Our opposition to idle talkers and deceivers has a two-fold purpose
 - (1) **FIRSTLY:** to try and bring them to the truth with patience.
 - (a) . . . a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will. (2Ti. 2:24-26)
 - (2) **SECONDLY:** on behalf of those who are watching and listening
 - (a) Majority of the time – those we are primarily interacting with will not respond to our exhortation or conviction.
 - (b) But, their attack upon foundational truths of God adversely affects others – they, "subvert whole households"
 - (3) We minister in three primary directions
 - (a) To those who oppose the truth: in hope they will find repentance and accept correction.
 - (b) To those who are on the sidelines watching and listening: to help them resist the negative influence of the opponents of Scripture.
 - (c) To God: we minister God's truth regardless of its response. Our faithfulness regardless of reception is a living expression of devotion and worship.

B. Titus 1:12-14

One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans *are* always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.

1. "a prophet of their own"

a) The "prophet" mentioned here is Epimenides, a revered poet and reformer who died in the fifth century B.C.

(1) Not a true inspired prophet of God, but one who was widely believed to be a religious prophet by the Cretans themselves.

b) The same testimony concerning Cretans is found in other pagan writings, suggesting a notorious reputation.

c) "To Cretanize" meant "to lie" in ancient Greek literature.

d) "Lazy gluttons" is the translation of a phrase which may be rendered "unemployed stomachs," a reference to those who wish to eat without working to earn their living (cf. 2 Th. 3:10).

2. Jewish fables

a) "fables" is a word from which we derive the word "myths" (*muthois*)

b) Example of what Paul might be concerned with in our own day – Kabbalah

(1) "Kabbalah originally developed entirely within the realm of Jewish thought and constantly uses classical Jewish sources to explain and demonstrate its esoteric teachings. These teachings are thus held by kabbalists to define the inner meaning of . . . the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible)."¹

(2) Claims to originate in the authority of Scripture, but quickly departs from foundational truths to embrace deception.

(3) Followers are drawn by esoteric and imagined "deeper truths" beyond the surface of the written word.

c) Unstable spiritual mystics, always seeking deeper enlightenment groping in the dark

(1) Continually defers the difficult part of spirituality – application and obedience – to be forever put off by uncertainty and chasing after more.

d) The witness of the gospel is also at stake – to the degree Christians uncritically embrace fables and myths, they also discredit valid historical events such as the virgin birth and resurrection in the eyes of observers.

3. Commandments of men who turn from the truth

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah>

- a) Schemes for appeasing God which have the appearance of godliness, but which undermine the freedom and original intent of God's truth.
- b) Externals
 - (1) Commands which place greater emphasis on appearance and practice than the internal motives of the heart – which are God's ultimate concern.
 - (2) Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees:
Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' (Mat. 15:7-9)
- c) Seductive Appearance
 - (1) These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Col. 2:23)
 - (2) Self-imposed – not from God
 - (3) Imposition of man-made burdens in place of the freedom found in God's truth.
 - (4) Having begun our walk in God by the Spirit, we must not seek spiritual completion through religious works (Gal. 3:3)
 - (5) Paul told the Colossian believers that self-imposed religion is of “no value against the indulgence of the flesh”
 - (a) Those who teach and follow such commandments generally fall prey to sinful behavior because legalism serves to excite the flesh (Rom. 7:8-9)

C. Titus 1:15-16

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

- 1. Paul explains why the idle talkers and deceivers will always pervert God's truth.
 - a) Why? Because their very mind and conscience are defiled.
 - b) They are motivated from a defiled core – unable to handle purity without defiling it in the process.
 - c) Even that which is pure will wind up being defiled by their perversity – twisted to support their own rejection of God's commands.
 - d) The most wholesome relationships in scripture will be distorted in support of their own sinful lusts.
 - (1) The relationship between David and Saul's son Jonathan.

- (a) A website run by Christian homosexuals asks the question, "Did God bless David and Jonathan, a same sex couple, in romantic, committed, sexual partnership? The Bible devotes more chapters to their love story than any other human love story in the Bible. What does God intend us to learn from that dramatic emphasis? . . . If Jonathan and David did enjoy a romantic sexual relationship, the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel presents interesting challenges and immense opportunities for twenty-first century Christians. . . . Is it possible that God so carefully preserved the David and Jonathan story in scripture to encourage the church to welcome saved gays and lesbians as equal members in the body of Christ? I believe this was precisely God's purpose."
- (b) These same teachers go on to suggest the Bible condones the gay lifestyle through several additional homosexual relationships that are supposedly found therein, including that of Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth.
- (2) The virgin birth – denied by liberal Christians.
 - (a) "Most people do not literalize the story of Santa Claus. He is a symbol--a powerful symbol, but still just a symbol. I suggest that the birth narratives of Jesus, too, cannot be taken literally. They, too, are symbols, a religious version of Santa Claus. . . . Provocatively enough, and quite rare in the ancient world, Matthew adds four women to this lengthy genealogy-- all of whom are sexually tainted in the stories about them in the Hebrew Scriptures. . . . One wonders what he means to imply about Mary, who is the fifth woman mentioned in his genealogy."
 - (3) The relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene.
- 2. "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him"
 - (1) Profess to know God, but referred to as "unbelieving" - without faith.
 - (a) This is what Scriptures means by "deceiving and being deceived" - these teachers actually believe they are followers of Christ, even taking His name upon themselves.
 - (2) How do those describe themselves who teach that the Bible condones homosexuality by the example of several loving gay relationships found in its pages?
 - (a) "We are a joyful global fellowship of born again gay and straight Christians on the path of life together. We are authentic Bible-believers, swimming against the tide of Bible rejecting theological liberalism, upholding the truth of God's inerrant, infallible word."
 - (3) Where did the ideas originate implying the virgin birth was illegitimate?

- (a) "This series is drawn in part from Spong's book 'Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Virgin Birth and the Oppression of Women in a Male Dominated Church.'" John Shelby Spong is the retired American bishop of the Episcopal Church Diocese of Newark, NJ – another who "professes to know God.
- b) How do their works deny Him?
- (1) "deny" (*arnountai*) is the opposite of "profess" (*homologeō*)
 - (2) Their words witness to Christ, but their actions disregard Him.
 - (3) Paul is warning us: don't listen to what they say, look at what they do!
 - (4) They live in ways which deny the plain teachings of Scripture – for example by condoning and continuing to practice homosexuality.
 - (a) Jesus said that their fruit would reveal their true standing in relation to God "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? . . . Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Mat. 7:15-16,20-23)
 - (5) Paul inform us that these are not just "denying Scripture" but "denying HIM."
- c) Disqualified and rejected by God: abominable, disobedient, disqualified for every good work.
- (1) Paul's condemnation, inspired by the Holy Spirit, could hardly be stronger!
 - (2) Abominable – presently viewed as "detested, horrid ones" by God.
 - (3) Disobedient – ones who cannot be *persuaded* (*apeitheis*) into obedience.
 - (a) Not just disobeying God, but intractably opposed to His truth on the issues involved.
 - (4) Disqualified
 - (a) They believe they are serving God, even professing Him, but His evaluation is that they are disqualified for every good work.
 - (b) Disqualified ones (*adokimoi*) means "proven false," "failing to meet the test," "rejected."

IV. Points Of Application

- A. FIRST: Elders must able to exhort and convict those who contradict – through a proper knowledge and application of the Scriptures, primarily by teaching.

- B. SECOND: Elders must be willing to proactively oppose error when necessary. "Mouths must be stopped" or "whole households" will be "subverted."
 - 1. To the degree we refuse to take up the mantel of Godly confrontation where called for, we unwittingly facilitate the spiritual subversion of those whom Christ died for.
- C. THIRD: Don't be fooled by the teaching of Christians whose actions deny clear Biblical principles.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit has revealed that these are among those to whom Jesus will say, "I never knew you" (Mat. 7:23).
 - 2. Paul tells Titus they are abhorred by God and their works are disqualified.
 - 3. They are not among God's elect – no matter how vociferously they assert otherwise.
- D. FOURTH: As believers, we seek to remain pure in mind and conscience – less we fall into a similar self-deception as these ones Paul warns about.
 - 1. This necessarily requires some degree of separation from the culture which is intractably opposed to God.
 - a) Friendship with the world is enmity with God (John. 15:19; Jas. 4:4; 1Jn. 2:15-16)
 - b) We are "in the world," but dare not be "of the world." (John 17:15)
 - 2. The gradual pollution of one's mind and conscience can be a very subtle matter.
 - a) Like us, those Paul warns Titus about profess themselves to be believers.
 - b) How did they arrive in their predicament? Could the same happen to us?
 - c) This is why we must continually abide in His Word, immersed in truth as defined by Scripture (John 8:31).