

“False Teachers”

Penetrating a Dark World

Titus 1:10-16

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Bruce: Great is Thy faithfulness every morning, Lord Jesus. Thank You, thank You, thank You. I don't know what we would do if we did not have the faithfulness and the blood of Christ cleansing us day by day, moment by moment, amazing us with Your grace. Father, remind us that You alone are adequate to live the Christian life. Help us to realize that we are not dependent upon our own resources, but upon You, that You give us the resources we need through Your Holy Spirit. Father, we would just pray now that You would be pleased to open our eyes once again, that we might behold You more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen and Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Continuing in our study of the book of Titus, I call your attention to chapter 1, verses 10-16. I'll be reading from the English Standard Version of the Scripture. Titus chapter 1, verses 10-16.

“For there are many insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, because they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, 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 devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. 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. They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen. Last week we went through the qualifications of leadership in the church. The three primary words we discussed last week were the words *elder*, which has to do with the maturity of the person, of a man and the description of his character. It reminds me of those character qualities. The word *elder* describes his character, a mature character. The word *overseer* describes his work, as the man is ministering in the church as an overseer to the flock. And the other word that we looked at last week is the word *steward*. Remember that a steward is a manager of what somebody else owns.

Men, we need to realize that we don't own the church. It is not our church; it is Christ's church. And if you're part of the leadership in the midst of your local church, God is giving you through the Person and work of Christ the authority to function in His name and manage what He owns. And one of these days the Lord is going to return in all of His glory. And I think that to the elders of our churches He's going to say, “Give account for the management of My resources, of My property. Give an account of your management.” A steward is somebody who manages somebody else's ownership.

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So we need to realize that, being in a leadership position, that we are overseers, but we are also managing Somebody else’s property.

So it’s no wonder, then, that Paul goes right into verses 10-16, dealing with false teachers. Notice verse nine. Verse ten is really a conjunction that refers again to this verse all the way to verse sixteen.

Look at verse nine. “*He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.*”

Now notice how that transition moves. It’s rather obvious that Paul wants us to deal with people in the church called *false teachers*, people who destroy or distort the gospel. And so it’s no wonder that Paul deals with that as the very first issue and responsibility of one of the elders, the overseers, those who are the managers of God’s property in the local church.

It didn’t take long for those teachers to sneak in and arrive at the early church. And the same thing is going on today in our culture. Whenever God sows the truth, we have to know this: that Satan is quickly going to try to disrupt it. So whenever truth is proclaimed, one thing he’s going to try to do is to have somebody come along and try to distort it.

Now Titus faced many of the enemies very much described in 1 Timothy—a mixture of legalism, manmade tradition and mysticism.

Now notice one thing about this. Paul’s first injunction and instructions to Timothy is to deal with the church. And it doesn’t have to do with immorality in the church. I’m not saying that’s not important. Understand what I’m not saying.

Now notice this. Paul’s intolerance is not about morality. It’s not about scandal within the church. It’s doctrinal confusion. Where do you get the immorality in the church? Doctrinal confusion. Where do you get such things as scandal? Doctrinal confusion. So Paul is not telling the elders to deal with immorality or scandal, but to deal with doctrinal confusion, denial of the truth, distortion of the gospel. That’s what we really need to deal with, those three things. Paul’s concern is *doctrinal confusion, denial of the truth, and distortion of the gospel.*

Paul tells Timothy, and we must do the same thing. We must deal with distortion in the church today. And it’s also the distortions in our culture that we must deal with. One of the reasons that we don’t deal with it too much in my judgment is this. Either we don’t think that it exists, and we’re just not aware of it, or we don’t think that it matters anymore because the world itself doesn’t think it matters anymore. We have to take this seriously.

The world wants tolerance. The world wants syncretism, the gathering together of all religious ideas. It’s basically this attitude. If you believe that, that’s okay. You can believe that. But I don’t believe that. This is what I believe, and you’re obligated to accept my belief system as much as you do yours. That’s essentially what they’re saying. That’s syncretism, a mixture of all sorts of gathering together of religious ideas. I don’t believe

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what you believe, but you’ve got to believe what I believe. That’s essentially what the world is saying.

And what Paul is telling Titus, and what I think the Scripture is teaching us today, is that the church needs to deal with three things—doctrinal confusion, denial of the truth and distortion of the gospel. And notice what Paul says first of all. *“They must be silenced.”*

And the reason why the passage on eldership and overseeing and stewardship in verses 1-9 above is so important is because the ones who are going to have to deal with doctrinal distortion are Titus and the elders. And for us in our day and age it is the elders of the church who must deal with that. That’s why you must have the right men with the right qualifications at the right time doing the right thing for the right reason, for the health of the church. That’s why there’s such a good understanding of that bridge between verses nine and ten, all the way to sixteen. The ones who are going to have to deal with this are those men who have been raised up to be the shepherds of the flock, the overseers. They are the ones who are going to have the responsibility to silence these false teachers. Paul wants us to understand this very, very clearly.

Take a look at verse nine. There again, we have the qualifications for the right men at the right time for the right motive, for the health of the church. *“He 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.”*

Now some people are going to say this about Paul. They’re going to say that a statement like that in verse nine is part of his insensitive intolerance. They’re going to say that Paul was intolerant. They’re going to say that he was harsh, a description of his unloving spirit to those who did not agree with him. That’s what people are going to say. That’s what they’re going to say about those in the church when we draw a line in the sand. They’re basically saying that you’re intolerant.

I’ve had that label thrust upon me for many, many years. “Bruce, you’re just intolerant.”

I’ll say, “Well I’m tolerant, but not at both ends. I’ll listen, but I draw a line in the sand.”

Some people are going to say this about Paul. Now you’ve got to understand that Paul is expressing great sensitivity here, and there’s nothing wrong with that. He’s talking about the shepherding role. He’s talking about the role of somebody guarding the flock, but he also does it with a sensitive spirit. But some people are going to accuse Paul of being harsh, of being intolerant and having an unloving spirit. But Paul basically had nothing good to say about these men, these false teachers.

Notice the contrast, if you would, between the character of the elders in verses 5-9, and contrast that with the character of the false teachers in verses 10-16. That’s the way you need to understand this. Take a look at the different character qualities. We went through those character qualities last week in our study of church leadership and the qualifications for church leaders. Now contrast that with verses 10-16, and you’re going to see the need for us to deal with this, studying the issues that are distorting the gospel in the church.

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Now what does Paul say about these false teachers? Take a look at verses 10, 12, 13 and 16. First of all, he says this. And I want to say this, men. I don't want to be in the position of being judgmental. But we've got to be discerning. There's a difference between being judgmental and being discerning. We need to be discerning about what's going on in the church today.

And so as we go through these descriptions of the characteristics and qualities of these false teachers, I think we can learn a lot when we are discerning about what's going on in our culture and in the church today. So here are some of the characteristics and how Paul describes them.

Now notice. He had nothing good to say about them. First of all, they were what? They were *insubordinate* or *rebellious*. They were people who would not submit to authority. And they rebelled against all sorts of authority because they'd set themselves up as their own authority. They would set up authoritarianism. It's the basic characteristic of a sinful heart, and that is what? To rebel. That's what Adam and Eve did. It's an indication of the sinful heart—rebelliousness or insubordination.

And you'll notice those kinds of people in our culture today. They set up their own authoritarianism because they have become their own authority. And one of the first indications of doctrinal discord is the fact that they do not submit to authority. They're insubordinate.

I give you the example of Adam and Eve. Now let's go to Genesis chapter two and Genesis chapter three. Turn back there for a moment. In Genesis chapter two God gives the instructions about what they can and cannot eat.

Then in Genesis chapter three, giving us the fall of man, notice what the serpent, the evil one, does. The first thing he does is that he comes along and what does he do? He plants a doubt. And how does he do that? By asking a question. “*Did God say?*”

You see, that's where it all begins. This is Satan's primary technique. He follows this sequence, men—*doubt, distortion, denial, death*. That's how rebelliousness manifests itself. And the first thing that Satan is going to do is to come along and say, “Did God really say that? Is that really what God means? Oh, that's just your interpretation.” It has many different manifestations, but the point is that he's going to ask the question. Did God really say that?

Now notice that Eve's response is different than what God had really said. When you compare Genesis two to Genesis three, you'll see that she came back and gave a different answer. And it was a distortion generated by a doubt. She came back and gave a different answer.

And then Satan came back and said this. “God surely will not kill you. I'm sure that He'll not do that.” That's a denial, and there's your sequence: doubt, distortion, denial, death.

And one of the reasons that Paul is saying that we must deal with these false teachers is because there is a distortion of the gospel that is generally produced by doubt—such things as this. Here's a question that somebody might ask us in our culture, dealing with the doctrine of election. How can God be fair? You see, right away, what does that do? That begins to plant a seed of doubt in your mind that maybe God isn't fair. Maybe He

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isn't fair. And so then you take that presupposition that's implanted by Satan in a doubt. And you take that presupposition and you feed it, and you begin to say, "Well God isn't fair." And then you begin to deny that because of the distortion. This is just a classic example of it.

But the sequence is always this. Satan is going to do this when dealing with truth: doubt, distortion, denial and death. Bill, you had your hand up.

Bill: Well, that whole concept of what you're saying there goes back to people chastising Paul. They just sit there and say that Paul was just writing his own book, because by definition they don't accept the fact that Scripture is God-breathed. If they believed that Scripture is God-breathed, they wouldn't sit back and abase Paul.

Bruce: You see, the bottom line is this. Part of our rebellion is this: our resistance against the sufficiency of Scripture. That's our rebellion. It's against the sufficiency of Scripture. You cannot submit yourself to the Lordship of Christ and not submit yourself to the sufficiency of Scripture. Those two things are married together. You cannot submit yourself to the Lordship of Christ and be rebellious against the sufficiency of Scripture. Those two things go together. When you're submitting to the Lordship of Christ, you are submitting to the sufficiency of Scripture.

Now a lot of people are saying, "The Scripture is my authority." That's a nice statement. But the real battleground is this. Is it sufficient? Is the Scripture really sufficient for all things?

That's why Paul takes this so seriously, because it is a distortion of the truth which is prompted by rebelliousness in people. And we have to realize that some of these false teachers are going to set themselves up to be their own authority. Their first characteristic is rebelliousness. Yes, Don?

Don: And Bruce, you were talking about denial. The problem is that our culture by and large, at least in academic circles, denies that we have any truth today. It's been said that we live in a post-truth culture. Another example is that yesterday there was an article about what's happening in Great Britain now. There were street preachers who were quoting John 14:6, and they're being prosecuted because that's hate speech.

Transcriber's Note: John 14:6. *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

Bruce: That's hate speech?

Don: Yes, because Jesus is the only way.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: Discriminatory.

Bruce: Discriminatory, there you go. Well, men, we're called to battle, aren't we? We have to realize that we're involved in battle. Yes, please?

Participant: Bruce, you mentioned the difference between discernment and judgment. Can you draw some more contrasts between judgment versus discernment?

Bruce: *Discernment* is taking that which we're examining and taking it up against the Scripture to see which is true. So I go back to the sufficiency of Scripture. I'm discerning something when I take it back to its standard. Oftentimes, when we are judgmental, we set ourselves up to be the standard. I am that standard. Therefore I can do this. There's a

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difference. Judgment is something that we do ourselves. We need to be discerning and have the Scripture be the means by which we have the standard of what it is revealed to us.

Participant: Thank you.

Bruce: Bishop Rodgers, can you add anything to that?

Bishop Rodgers: Discernment, basically, is dealing with God’s truth and how it relates. Judgment is often me being unloving to somebody, trying to act as if I were able to make the final judgment that only God can make.

Bruce: Amen to that. You see, in *judgment*, I set myself up to be the final authority. In *discernment*, Scripture is the final authority. That’s the difference. We need to be discerning. We need to be gentle. We need to be kind. We need to be compassionate. We need discernment. Oftentimes in our judgment we are harsh, bitter and angry. There’s a huge difference between judgment and discerning.

And men, we need to be discerning in the church, not judgmental. In fact, we’ve never been given the ministry of discerning anybody else’s motives, have we?

Participant: No.

Bruce: We’ve never been given that ministry. That’s the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will convict, convince, convert and comfort. That is not our role. We’re not to discern somebody else’s motives and to make a judgment on their motives. But we need to be discerning and have Scripture be the basis by which we take our standard, and go back to the Scripture as our final authority.

So what I’m saying is this, men. I think it’s very critical that we understand the balance of this. You cannot put yourself under the authority of Jesus Christ without putting yourself under the authority of the sufficiency of Scripture. You can’t separate those two things.

Paul tells us that the first characteristic is that you’ve got to watch out for these false teachers because they are rebellious, and they’re going to set themselves up to be their own authorities. We need to be discerning.

Next in verse ten it says that they are “*empty talkers*.” Now this is a very interesting word. About this word John Calvin says, “*Empty talkers—a ready tongue concealing an empty head*.” (*Laughter*) Did you ever notice that when someone does not submit to the sufficiency of Scripture, they have a great deal to talk about that doesn’t make much sense? You see, when they rid themselves of the sufficiency of Scripture, they have to come up with their own authority. And have you ever noticed that the people who do that spend a lot of time talking but it doesn’t make much sense? Calvin was right. A ready tongue. They’re always ready to talk and say a lot of things. But it doesn’t make much sense because it’s concealing an empty head because they’re not submitting to the Scripture. They’re talkers; they’re gossipers.

Thirdly, in verse ten, we see that they are “*deceivers*.” They not only deceive themselves, but they are also deceiving whole families by persuading them to believe what they are teaching themselves in their own deceived spirits.

Now historically, in this particular case for Paul, it was the circumcision party that was deceiving the people by teaching the people that circumcision was necessary for

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salvation, or an obligatory act for salvation. Now one of the things we can say about deceiving is this. Somebody is going to come along and say, “This is necessary for salvation.” And then they’re going to say that it’s obligatory after salvation. You must do the same thing.

That’s exactly the model we see from the circumcision party. These Jews were coming along and saying that if they’re going to mix grace and law, they have to be circumcised because that will appeal to the Jewish culture. And then after that, they were saying that after you come to Christ you must do it anyway. It’s obligatory afterwards.

One of the things about the assumption is this. They’re going to set up a whole new standard, which means that coming to salvation through faith in Christ has a second thing you have to do which is obligatory afterwards, and after salvation you continue doing that.

So they were not only empty talkers. They were not only rebellious. But they were also deceivers, deceiving whole families.

And lastly in verse sixteen, they were *hypocrites*. Their lives did not agree with their lips. “*They profess to know God.*” But in their conduct they acted as though they had never heard of Him and His righteousness. You see, they were hypocrites. They lived abominable, disobedient lives, devoid of every good work. That’s how Paul defines it. And how do you know that they lived these kinds of lives? Because there were no works that were done for the glory of God.

Then in verses twelve and thirteen Paul says that they were typical Cretans. Now Epimenides was a Greek poet who lived in about 500 B.C., a national hero who wrote that the Cretans “*are habitual liars, evil beasts, evil men controlled by their base animal instincts and appetites. They had slow bellies. They had bellies that were so slow and lazy that they hoped to be filled without doing any type of labor.*”

Now that’s what a typical Cretan was described as by a historic poet around 500 B.C. What Paul is basically saying is that you could take that as truth. That’s who they are. That’s who these Cretans are. They were dishonest. They were brute beasts. They were lazy and they were gluttons.

Now how would you like to have that be a description of your national legacy? Now I wonder what people would say about Americans. How would they describe us as Americans? That’s how Paul described the Cretans. He said, “Titus, you’ve got to realize that this is their nationalistic heritage. That’s who they are.”

What would people say about us as Americans? Who would they say we are, especially Americans who follow Christ? What would they say? How would they describe us?

Participant: Liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons. (*Laughter*)

Bruce: I think they would have said the same thing, wouldn’t they? That was my point. Essentially they would have said the same thing. What Paul was saying about the Cretans would be the same thing they would say about Americans! Yes, Jim?

Jim: He wasn’t being judgmental. He was just being discerning.

Bruce: He was being discerning. That’s right. (*Laughter*) He was quoting one of their own, Ted Wood. (*Laughter*) You see, he was saying, “Even you know who you are.” And

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Paul says that you’ve got to be careful about those people because they’re going to distort the gospel, and doctrinal confusion will arise.

Now it’s interesting. There’s a Greek word, “to Cretanize.” In fact this was so predominant in the Greek culture that they created a word *to Cretanize*, and it meant this: to incite a person to be dishonest and corrupt. If you were to Cretanize somebody, you were going to encourage him to be dishonest and to be corrupt. That’s who Paul was dealing with. And so he says that you’ve got to be careful that these men don’t come in and mess up the whole household.

Paul is telling us this: that the whole testimony against the Cretans is still true. “It’s still true today, Titus.” These false teachers exactly fit the poet’s three charges. And so they most clearly describe the majority of people living on the island of Crete.

So these Cretan Christians living in a society of liars, evil beasts and sluggards must be careful in guarding their doctrine and their conduct. Let’s take a look at that little statement. Our culture, in one sense, is no different from the Cretans. We have the same exact moniker placed upon us. And what does that say to us? It says that you’ve got to be careful in guarding your doctrine and your conduct. Remember this. Doctrine precedes practice.

Why do you think Paul is talking to these elders who deal with false teaching and deal with the distortion of the gospel and deal with the distortion of the truth? Because he knows this. If you violate the doctrine, you’re going to violate the conduct. Character precedes conduct, because who we are precedes what we do. And who we are is determined by our belief in the gospel of Christ. (*Unclear*) Doctrine precedes practice. If you’re going to help people in their conduct, you’re going to help them understand the doctrines of grace. We need to be careful in the midst of a culture the Cretans described that is very much like America today that we make sure that we are careful in guarding our doctrine and guarding our conduct, because one must lead to the other and the other confirms the former.

Now what is their influence? We see this in verse eleven. We’ve seen the characteristics. And again I would encourage you to look at verses 5-9, the qualifications for church leadership—elder, overseer and steward. Look at those characteristics and then compare those to verses 10-16, where Paul describes the false teachers. Look at the contrast, and you’ll understand why it is so important, men, that we have in the church the right men with the right qualifications at the right time for the right reason, for the health of the church. Verses 9-10 help us to understand why it is so important to have the right men in the right spot with the right qualifications.

We have to take a look at their influence. What was the influence of these people on the island of Crete? Well in verse eleven we’re told that whole families were being affected by their unhealthy doctrine—whole families. And the first thing that’s going to happen with doctrinal distortion is that it’s going to disrupt the family, because the church is made up of families. If the families are destroyed, the local church is destroyed. One of the great demises in American society today is the destruction of the American family. The destruction of the family is one of the great causes of the deterioration of our culture.

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They were teaching Jewish legalism. You can read about that in Titus chapter 1 verse 10. It talks about circumcision as a means of salvation. They were not teaching inward righteousness, but outward conformity to laws and regulations that had already been fulfilled by Christ.

Now here’s a good discernment to be brought up, men. Do the teachers teach you inward righteousness or outward conformity? In summary, that was the contrast between Paul’s admonition to Timothy and Titus about false teachers. The true teachers are going to teach inward righteousness, a work of grace by the Spirit. False teachers are going to teach outward conduct and outward conformity to things that have already been fulfilled and completed in the Person and work of Christ. That was the situation in Crete.

We have the same ideology in our culture today. Are people coming into the church teaching outward conformity, or are they teaching inward righteousness? That’s the contrast we must be discerning about. Yes?

Participant: A third one is *inner peace*, as opposed to inner purity, or being changed by the Holy Spirit. It’s inner peace, wanting to feel better. That’s a third thing.

Bruce: That’s true. Those things are consequences of inward righteousness, when you’re teaching biblical doctrine and truth. Inward righteousness will produce peace. But those starting with peace have a means of conforming outwardly. They’re saying that if you do these things externally, then you’ll be peaceful. The Scripture says that inward righteousness will produce that peace. It can only be what God gives—the peace that passes understanding as a result of God’s grace.

What about their *motives* in verse eleven? Take a look at their motives. We’ve seen their characteristics. We’ve seen their influence, how they destroy the family. And now we’re going to take a look at their motives.

Their main motive would be *to make money*, what they call “shameful gain,” or “filthy lucre.” You’ll notice that in Titus chapter 1:11.

Do you notice one of the qualifications of an elder? He’s not to be involved in filthy lucre. What are the motives of the false teachers? Filthy lucre. In other words, they were not discerning with their finances. They were not ministering with their finances. They were not ministering to the church. They were using the ministry of the church as a means of gaining prosperity, to fill their own pockets.

That’s why Paul says this. Not giving into filthy lucre is one of the requirements for an elder. That’s the very thing that these false teachers are going to come and do. There’s the contrast between the role of an elder, the characteristics of an elder, and the characteristics of these false teachers.

A preacher of God does not minister for personal gain. He ministers to help others grow in the faith. When financial motives enter into the gospel, we must exercise suspicion and great care, as this is one of the marks of departing from the sufficiency of Scripture. We’ve got to be very, very sensitive to that.

A lot of people have asked me, “Do you have a model of how you give your tithing to your church and how you give your offerings above and beyond the church?” Let me say the three things I’ve done in my life to help me understand to whom I should consider praying about giving. (*Unclear*)

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First of all, *is the organization free of waste?* Look at their finances. Look at how much they spend. Are they free of waste, or are they in debt? That’s one of the things that I look for. Is the organization itself free of debt, free of waste? Now there may be a difference between being free from debt and being free from waste. Are they wasting their money?

The second thing would be this. *Do they beg for money or make their needs known?* There’s nothing wrong with making your needs known. If the Lord be pleased to help you in this ministry, and let their needs be known, the Holy Spirit might use you in that person’s life to support that ministry. But the real issue is are they begging, or do they make their needs known?

And thirdly, for me, the big priority would be this. *Does their lifestyle and quality of life and leadership demonstrate their commitment to their mission?* In other words, is the lifestyle of the leader consistent with the mission of the organization?

Those are the three things that I look at when I prayerfully consider to whom I should give my finances, because we have to realize that many of these false teachers are doing it for financial gain. And one of the qualifications for leaders in the church is not being given to filthy lucre. You’ve got to be able to manage your finances with integrity. That means not only the way we manage, but also the way that we consider and the way that we give.

Those are three things that I just use for myself. I’m not saying that this is absolute. First of all, is the organization free of waste? Do they beg for money, or do they let their needs be known? And thirdly, is the quality of the leadership and the lifestyle the same as the financial position of the organization? We need to be responsible for how we deal with that, because the false teachers come along for the wrong motives and the wrong reasons.

So how, then, are they to be treated? We’ve seen their characteristics. We’ve seen their influence. We’ve seen their motives. How are these false teachers to be treated? You’ll see that in verses nine, eleven, thirteen and fourteen. Paul says this. *They are to be silenced.*

The word *silenced* means to stop the mouth by means of a bridle, muzzle or gag. (*Laughter*) It’s a rather serious accusation—to stop the mouth by means of a bridle, muzzle or gag. In other words, these false teachers must not be tolerated. Practically speaking, what it means is this. It’s that they’re not going to be given a platform to speak. They should not be given a platform.

Now notice. Who is to deal with these false teachers? It’s Titus and the elders. It’s the elders of the church who are to deal with it. They must not be given a platform to teach.

Departing from or distorting the gospel is like a poison. Now look at this practically. What do parents do to keep their kids away from poison?

Participant: Lock it up.

Bruce: Lock it up. You put it up on the shelf. Don’t let them have access to it. They don’t get into a platform to use it. Even manufacturers will say this. “Keep out of the reach of children.” That’s the seriousness of the distortion of the gospel. We need to keep

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it out of the reach of children. We need to lock it up. We need to silence them. We don't give them a platform to speak.

Oftentimes, people will come along and say that we need to hear a different description of what's going on. To discern some of these things, we need to know their characteristics, and we don't give them a platform. They must be silenced. They must be stopped with a gag, with a bridle. Don't give them a platform. Now in the church today we often tolerate distortions of the truth for the sake of tolerance that is oftentimes demanded by the masses.

Now there's a positive and a negative way as to how you deal with these false teachers. There's a negative way and a positive way. The positive way is this. It's through *the ministry of rebuke*. The ministry of rebuke needs to be a very, very sensitive and a very, very delicate action. A father rebukes his children, doesn't he? He does it with a loving attitude.

Now the first step is that it must be positive. We must try to bring them back into the fold if possible. We have to take a look at that Scripture where it says to bring them back into the faith. That may mean that you might need to take the Scriptures and sit down with the person and talk with them, and let the Scripture be the convicting agency to help them to reveal their error. Those may be the efforts you need to exercise on the positive side.

The picture of this would be that of a shepherd. What is the leader of a church? He's a shepherd, isn't he? And the shepherd has a shepherd's crook which has a staff. It has that hook on the end. The way the shepherds restrain the sheep is that when the sheep starts running away from the fold, he would take that shepherd's crook and they would put it around the neck of the sheep. That's why it was bent, so it would fit around the sheep. And they would pull it back in.

Now that's what Paul's picture is. It's this. It's the picture of the shepherd trying to pull his sheep back in, and the first step in doing it positively is rebuking them. Now Scripture is the means of the rebuke. But we do that with an attitude that basically says that I'm going to try pulling you back into the fold so you can become a member of the true faith.

That's the first thing he says. But if that doesn't work, there's the negative side. Paul says this. Rebuke them by not giving them a platform to create distortion. You don't give them a chance to speak.

You might try to win them with the positive side to draw them back in. But if you see that that's not the case, you don't give them a chance. You don't give them a platform to speak. They must be muzzled. They must be stopped.

Now notice the reason that Paul says that they do the things they do. The problem is that they do not know God. Look at the last verse. They do not know God. They say that they do, but they really do not know the God of the Scripture, the God who is sufficiently portrayed for us in the Scripture. As long as you and I are really making an effort to know who God is based upon the sufficiency of Scripture, we're going to be okay. But when we start veering away from the sufficiency of Scripture which describes who God is, we're in

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trouble. Men, there’s a difference between the Jesus of human imagination and the Jesus of Biblical revelation.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You can walk down the streets of Pittsburgh and ask people “who is the Lord Jesus Christ?”, and they will give as many answers to the question as the people you ask. And oftentimes it’s just their imagination. That’s not the God that we follow. The God that we follow is the God of Biblical revelation who reveals His truth in the Person and work of Christ.

We need to be discerning about what is mentioned in the church, to try to get involved. We need to be discerning. And we need to have elders, to have the right men with the right qualifications at the right time for the right reasons, for the health of the church. Take false teachers on and silence them. Don’t give them a platform. Yes, please?

Participant: You know, some churches today are bringing in and inviting Muslims as teachers to speak and to come into their congregations to try to inform the people about the other side, or another way.

Bruce: There’s another denomination which says that one of their litmus tests is this: that you bring Muslims to worship together with them. Create a service of worship to breed unity in the church. And one of the tenets is a litmus test that says, “can you bring in the Muslims to worship with us?” There’s a denomination that has made that statement. It’s because we all worship one God. He just has a different name. That’s their premise.

You cannot submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and not submit to the sufficiency of Scripture at the same time. Men, the battleground in my judgment is this—the sufficiency of Scripture. Yes, Ted?

Ted: But Bruce, most men in this group do not go to churches that do that. They would rather go to churches that perhaps say that the doctrine of election and predestination is not there. I would add this. Is it a false teaching to deny the doctrine of election?

Participant: Yes.

Ted: And if it is, why do people in this group still go to those churches? *(Laughter)* Let’s get away from all the liberal denominations that are doing all this craziness. The real story should be where we’re going to churches which are nice, conservative, born-again Bible-believing churches that are saying—and I’m thinking of one church in particular—that I don’t believe in the doctrines of grace. I believe in three of them, but not two of them. *(Laughter)*

Bruce: It’s the whole thing about free will.

Ted: Yes.

Bruce: Free will. Is that a false teaching? Of course it is. How do dead men have a will? You see, there’s a great issue for us, men. Ted makes a wonderful point of application. We don’t come here Fridays just to learn to be intelligent and to gain facts. Learning does not stop at information. It must go on to living. The real nature of this is what am I going to do with what I’ve just learned?

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There are a lot of distortions of the gospel that are being proclaimed under the name of conservative Christianity, and we have to be very discerning. It's a responsibility you have before the Lord. I can't tell you what to do. I cannot be the Holy Spirit for you. But all I can do is proclaim the truth the best that I can and let the Holy Spirit convict, convert, convince and comfort you in that process. But the responsibility that you have as we go through the teaching of the book of Titus, the responsibility that you have is to ask yourself the question. What am I going to do about what I've just learned? May God give us the grace to be honest enough to ask and to answer that question ourselves, personally.

Let's pray. Father, You've given us much to consider. Much of it is very, very convicting to our own hearts. Father, we just pray that Your Holy Spirit would descend upon us and give us the grace to be discerning in all that we should do individually. We cannot be each other's Holy Spirit,. As we work out the goal of being closer to Christ. But Father, may we remember this. We cannot exercise our commitment to the Person and work of Christ and at the same time not commit ourselves to the sufficiency of Scripture. And may it be so for Jesus' sake, that we will apply that specifically, by the power of Your grace. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!" (*Applause*)