

Titus (Part Three): Rebuking False Teachers

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In my previous two sermons on Titus, I have stressed that Crete and Cretans make a good comparison to the situation we are in today here in this milieu of sin and bad character. As you recall, Crete had a low reputation in the Mediterranean world. If you mentioned the name Crete or a Cretan, somebody would probably come back and say they were crude, sneaky, lying people and did not want to have anything to do with them.

As I mentioned, one could Cretanize, anglicizing a Greek term there, by being duplicitous in your dealings with one another, or acting or dealing in some sort of an underhanded way. I mean, Cretans would lie to their grandmothers if they thought that there was an advantage in it. That is the reputation that they had for being just duplicitous, more than other people. There was a clear distinction there that they were just deceivers because they were out for themselves. So no one trusted Cretans anywhere in that area in the Roman empire because they had proven themselves for many generations to be a sly, out-for-number-one kind of people.

This is the situation that Paul throws Titus into and Titus knew what he was getting into, I am sure, because he had evangelized up and down the island with Paul. But by giving him this letter, Paul gives him specific instructions for dealing with the Cretans who had come into the church because you could not treat the Cretans quite like you could treat maybe the Athenians or the Corinthians even, or Ephesians. They were a special people, especially bad, and they had certain very bad traits that seem to run across the entire people on the island. And so Paul gives Titus really detailed instructions and descriptions so that it would help him in his leadership role in the church.

I can see though in my own experience around even here in Charlotte—this is the Bible Belt, the South—we face similar people out there. It might not be as bad as what it was on Crete where everybody seemed to be a lying, just duplicitous scumbag of one kind or another. But we come out of a kind of a

similar society in terms of people's character despite our being so much more advanced than what Crete was at the time of the apostle Paul and Titus.

But just like then, it is very difficult to trust people these days. We do not know what their angle is and they are always trying to take advantage. Everybody is out for himself, trying to get that edge so that they can make their later years better or just to score right now and enjoy the rewards of their bad character. So we have to face things like spam calls, texts, and people trying to scam the senior citizens or the vulnerable, either on the Internet or in emails or with a cold call, trying to get a yes from them so they can use it to do whatever it is once they get your account number or your social security number or something. So they can raid your personal information or your bank account.

We have to deal with that. I do not know how many of those calls my home phone number gets, and I am not telling anybody what it is—just kidding. We get probably a dozen a day, I do not know, maybe that is too many, I am not sure, but we get a lot of them and they are disruptive. We do not answer them but they ring and we have to look at the number and see, oh yeah, that is probably some sort of spam call. And it takes us a few minutes to get back into what we actually want to do.

I have noticed too—yes, Charlotte, Bible Belt, all that—people are equally, it seems, as crude and rude as the Cretans seemed to have been, especially in language and the gestures they show you out the car window. I think many people in this age, especially younger people for some reason, take it as a mark of pride to infuse their speech with profanities so that the curses outnumber actual meaningful words. I am guessing this comes from rap music, hip hop, and other things that they indulge themselves in for hours at a time in the day.

On Thursday I had taken dad into the hospital and I could not be in there with him and there was actually no place to even sit down where they had taken him. So I was out in the waiting area just kind of biding my time because I had to wait to find out what they were going to do with him, whether they were going to admit him or not. I just had all kinds of time to kill. And they wheel this man in in a wheelchair, and he was going 90 mph hour and every other word was an f-bomb or some other crude word,

profanity. He was cussing out the nurses, he was cussing out the security guards, he was cussing out the receptionist and she was just sitting there doing nothing, having nothing to do with what was going on. But I gathered, after I filtered out all the bad language, that they had brought him into the ER on suspicion that he had Covid-19 and they wanted him to go in there because he was acting strangely and seemed to have some of the symptoms. But he was adamant, and backed by all the profanity at his disposal, that he did not have COVID-19 and he wanted to go home and they were not going to keep him there. But ten minutes later he was asleep in his wheelchair, covered in blankets, because he had exhausted himself with his profane tirade. And it was peaceful for another half hour or so until he woke up again and then they wheeled him in and he was gone.

Paul says that the Cretans were full of lust and they are not just sexual lusts. He is talking about lusts for wine, lusts for food, lusts for money, lusts for whatever. They were just a people who were generally locked into their baser drives and urges and they pursued them with profane gusto. I would not have wanted to be sent to Crete even if the apostle Paul had said to go. I was more like Timothy, I would go to Ephesus or someplace, but I do not know if I would have the character or the internal fortitude to face the people in Crete. They were just horrible people from everything that we read. So this is the culture that Paul was setting sending Titus into. It was just brimming over with sinful overindulgence. But that seems kind of normal to us in these days. We see that on TV.

Finally, the Cretans would also have been quite against Christianity. Even in their profane state, they would have been against true Christianity because it was a new faith, somewhat like Judaism, and you do not trust the Jews so it must be bad. And one that was definitely not based on the old gods of Greece. That would have given a big strike to the church in Crete. Nor was it tied in any way to emperor worship, because they had to get along with the Romans too. So this would have been something that they would not have accepted readily.

And we to face the same kind of opposition today as the world becomes more secular. People look down on people who are Christians and have these old traditions that come out of an archaic book. They kind of sneer at us and, on the other hand, worldly Christians treat us like a heretical cult because we

do not believe in the Trinity or we do not keep Christmas or we do not keep Easter or what have you, whatever it is. Or that we do actually keep the the laws of God and we do really weird, Jewish things like keep the holy days and eat only clean meats. They think that we are just strange and heretical. There is no way that we could be Christians like them.

So there would have been a similar level of distrust of true Christianity in both cultures because it fails to fit into the normal categories. And it seems a little suspicious because we are not conforming to the way they live.

Now, last time we waded a short way into Titus 1, where Paul loads his salutation heavily with theology. Speaking of things like faith and God's election, truth, godliness, hope of eternal life, God's trustworthiness, and the preaching of the gospel or preaching of God's Word. Not to mention, he opens it up with his normal salutation of grace, mercy, and peace from the Father and the Son. So he hits most of the bases, most of the major spots of Christian theology, and it acts to refresh Titus' mind about the fullness of the way of God.

It is just little words here, little hints of much larger doctrines, but they would have filled Titus' mind with some of the teaching that he had gotten from Paul. This is kind of like a short list in which Paul is describing the whole council of God from what he said to the elders there in Acts 20. This would just be a quick way, a quick reminder of bringing Titus kind of up to speed with the theology that Paul is going to bring to him in the rest of the epistle.

Remember, we got down all the way to verse 9, we covered a lot of territory. But between verses 5 and 9, Paul prioritizes Titus' activities on the island. He tells him what to do first. He instructs him then to ordain trustworthy elders in each of the congregations that they had founded through their evangelistic efforts whenever they had gone up and down the island. He lists necessary godly traits, godly character traits of qualified elders and he emphasizes a few things: blamelessness, that is, having a good reputation and character, self-control, an elder needs great self-control, and faithfulness to what he had been taught.

Those are very important qualities. Elders need these traits both to instruct the church in a normal weekly way, as well as to contend with false teachers and wayward brethren. They need these qualities because they are going to be facing different kinds of people, different situations. They need to be of good character, of good reputation. They need to be self-controlled and they need to be faithful, and those character traits helped them in meeting some of these situations.

So we are going to pick up in chapter 1, verse 10 where we left off. Paul here, in the transition between the two paragraphs, goes from qualities of an elder that are necessary to the elders opponents. These are opponents primarily within the church or people who have glommed onto the church, and it has to do with how the elder must recognize such people and how to square off against them, because it is going to come to a point of contention at some point and the elder has to be prepared to face them and overcome them for the sake of the church. This will take us then, in this sermon, through the end of chapter 1. I knew I could not do this in three or four so this is going to be a longish series, I think. I am finding so much in the epistle to Titus that I hope will be helpful to you.

This section between verse 10 and verse 16 is very important in understanding the kind of people Titus would have to contend with. Now please keep in the back of your mind this similarity between Crete and Cretans and what Titus was facing, and what we face today in our own culture and within the churches of God even. If we do that, I think you will perhaps see application in your own circumstances and maybe some of the experiences *you* have seen through the years, especially since the church has broken up.

I want to get a running start into verse 10 so I am going to read from verse 5 so that we know what has been said and then we can just drop it then into Titus verse 10.

Titus 1:5-9 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or

insubordination. For a bishop [Or elder, as I mentioned last time. Bishop and elder are essentially the same.] must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 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.

So this was Titus' priority. He was to appoint faithful, blameless elders. He was to establish organization within the church. He was to shore up the congregations against false teachers and their teaching. He had a pretty big job to do right at the beginning because he and Paul had swept through, preached the gospel, and these little pockets of people who had turned to God had been left behind and now they needed to go back and kind of backfill with important things like leadership and organization and those sorts of things so that those small pockets of Christians would not dissolve because of lack of help.

So this was the job that Paul left Titus to do. Paul emphasizes here, as I have mentioned, that the elder must be blameless, above reproach, not accusable in any way, self-controlled and self-disciplined, and faithful to what he had been taught. I repeat them because they are necessary qualifications, both to lead the congregation and to fend off any false teachers or false brethren that are out there. So, those are the big three as I see them—blameless, self-controlled, and faithful.

Let us get into this paragraph, beginning with verse 10.

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.

Now, the first word "for" tells us immediately that this is linked to the previous paragraph. That he says, we need qualified elders, men of good character and faithful because—for—there are many insubordinate people in the church in Crete. So, qualified elders, that is why he told him to do this first, are for the purpose of bringing truth and peace to the congregations.

Titus could not be everywhere at once. He had to have men that he could trust in the local areas to do these things.

It was not an easy choice even to pick these men, much less give them enough training that they could do what they needed to do. But it had to be done. There was a lot of people that were going to be affected so this was something that he had to get on to right away. And, he says here, putting these two verses together, bringing truth and bringing peace to the congregation begins with Titus stopping the mouths of those who are subverting the church with their false doctrines.

Who are these people? Paul calls them insubordinate. He uses this word also in verse 6, where he talks about the kids of the elders that Titus would choose, not being insubordinate. They are, frankly, rebellious by nature. That is kind of what this word means. They are just rebellious people. Deep down, they are rebellious. They defy what they had been taught, even though Paul and Titus had come through and taught them the gospel, the truth. They rebelled immediately by defying what had been taught and they are the kind (and I know you know people like this) that feel they are subject to no authority.

It is almost like, remember years and years ago, 30 years ago, the sovereign citizenship movement? These people thought that the government, at any level, especially not the federal level, could tell them how to do anything. That they were themselves sovereign citizens. And so they would essentially, some of the weirder ones, the ones that are so far, I do not know, is that right? Or is that left? Or maybe it is where they meet coming back around. But they would do nothing that is normal for an American citizen to do because they felt like every time they they did this, they were showing that they were beholden to the government. It was just crazy. There is probably still some out there in the militias and what have you.

But that is kind of how these people were. That they were under no authority but their own. They were rebellious to any kind of imposed authority. Now, the commentators tell me this in terms of their understanding of the Greek and the way that Paul was using the Greek here, that Paul's language suggests he thought them out of line with recognized and respected norms. That these people were totally out there and they were all out for themselves.

Remember this is Crete, this is what a lot of the Cretan character was like. That they were all out for themselves and they would bow to no one or submit to no one.

So it seems like the church in Crete was brimful with such independent troublemakers. That is what they were. Totally independent troublemakers. And they were causing disruption to the church over the whole island, church-wide.

Now note there in verse 10 that Paul says these false teachers are both idle talkers *and* deceivers. He describes them. Not only are they ultra-independent and will submit to no one, but they are idle talkers and deceivers. This is how they deceived the people. This is the method that they deceived the people. So these—idle talkers and deceivers—are two separate types of these false teachers.

Idle talkers translates a word *mataiologia*. This word means "full of meaningless talk." They talk too much and say nothing or say very little. Other translators render this as "senseless babblers" or "wild talkers," suggesting out of control, unprofitable, time-wasting chatter. Like somebody will call the office and they will say, I just have a question that I need answered from you, if you would please. And then go on for the next 45 minutes or an hour not only asking the one question, but just talking over you, they just go on and on. I am not kidding. This happens frequently. People will call and they just waste your time with idle chatter, babble. These are the kind who try to convince others by sheer volume of words. There is no reason, they are just going to inundate you with words.

This reminds me of the proverb, "In many words, there is no lack of sin." These people are wearying, enervating people. They just sap you of strength and distract you and keep you from doing your real work and you wish they would just shut up! That is what Paul tells Titus to do with them. I will get to that in a minute.

Now the more serious one is the next word, deceivers. This is for *phrenapates*. This is what Charles Whitaker would always called a *hapax legomenon*. That means it only occurs once in the Bible, either in the Old or the New Testament. There is actually several of these *hapax legomenon* in

this paragraph, which is kind of interesting. Paul pulled out his thesaurus and gave us some really odd Greek words so that we can understand what he was talking about.

But this word deceivers means to "lead astray verbally." I expect the word deceivers, those who lead astray verbally, to be what it is, of course. But it suggests deliberateness and method. That these are the ones that have a design. They have a method, they have a pattern, they have a way that they go about purposely, deliberately, to deceive you. These are people who are really screwed up up here and they go and try to do what they can to convince you of something with a method, steps, whatever. These are the ones that are harder to refute because you cannot just tell them to shut up, be quiet. You have to actually reason back to them because they have an order, they have something that they are following to deliberately make you believe something else. I saw in one place, a commentator said that he thought the term should be translated "an intentional misleader."

Now Paul warns Titus here that most of these intentional misleaders are Jews, are of the circumcision, he says here, who are rehashing the old arguments from the Jerusalem Council about circumcision, the law, and justification through the law, and the traditions of traditional Judaism. Who knows if they were sent from Jerusalem or not, or whether it was just the local synagogue or how it worked out, but these were deliberately trying to take the church back to justification through law keeping, observing the purity rituals, and all the other stuff that Peter said, "Look, these were just a burden the whole time. They didn't do us a bit of good." And on top of that (I just gave it away. That is the word I was going to use.), they wanted to be on top of all of it. They were wanting to be the leaders of the church after they got their own ideas in there and changed things.

So what we have here in verse 11 is Paul exhorting Titus to find a way to shut both of them up. Both the idle talkers and deceivers. He uses a very blunt term here "for mouths must be stopped." It is *epistomizo*. This is one of those other words that is a *hapax legomenon*. It is only found here and it means literally "to stop the mouth." It is used of horses in terms of bridling them. It is used of dogs and others in terms of muzzling them. It means to squelch or to silence. In other words, Paul tells Titus, "Keep these people from talking. Don't give them any forum, shut their mouths."

I mean, you think, "Wow, Paul, a little rough there, don't you think?" But no, these people were dangerous, the deceivers more than the idle talkers. But these were dangerous people that were spreading terrible, terrible doctrinal error and they needed to be stopped. So Titus had to find a way to do that.

They had to be silenced because they were subverting or upsetting whole church families. They either did this by winning over a majority of those in a family or they would win over just one or two and cause all kinds of division and disruption within the family as the family itself argued the positions with each other. And since many of the churches in that time in the first century, were home churches where people got together in somebody's private home rather than in any kind of commercial building or what have you, just like we do today, Paul could mean here that they were disrupting whole churches, whole congregations, by this. So, these deceivers especially needed to be shut down by church discipline or even exclusion—disfellowship them if that was what was necessary—because they were causing disunity and confusion. And who knows, maybe even fist fights had broken out. I do not know.

But it was causing a lot of argument and problems within the churches and Paul told Titus, get this under control, shut them up because this is unprofitable for everyone. Clearly, as he says here, they are teaching things that were not approved, not approved by the church or the apostles in any way. Like I mentioned before, this teaching that they were teaching, we do not know exactly what it was, but it was heavily influenced by Jewish perspectives on things. Perhaps, I do not know, with some early Gnostic ideas. The commentators always throw that in there because they were fomenting in the first century, getting put together, and then they really broke out in the second century. But there might have been some early Gnostic ideas. Certainly there is some preaching in here. You can see in reading between the lines that there were some asceticism and with the Cretans, hedonism would have gone over real well. But we do not know exactly what they were preaching, but we do know that the Jewish influence was at its center, trying to drag the church back into justification by works.

And their motivation here is dishonest gain. Elsewhere this word dishonest is translated as disgraceful or shameful. It implies gain that is full of dishonor,

treachery, taking advantage to get the best for oneself, and it does not have to be money either. It could be position, it could be to attract a following, it could be for a lot of different things. Whatever the person thinks he needs to gain from the transaction that he is trying to do here with deceiving the people. I do not know. Maybe they want the tithes and offerings of the people. Who knows, it could very well be.

But the apostle is describing similar deceivers as Peter and Jude. If you go to II Peter 2 and Jude, you would find that the same things will eventually end in the book of Jude to see his description of some of these people. But the apostles, all of them seemed to have faced people like this. It was not just the false teachers on Crete that were like this. There were people like this all through the Mediterranean region and they all had to battle them. Satan was throwing everything he could against the church to try to undermine it while it was still young.

Turn with me to Romans 16. We are going to look at another instance of this where Paul warns the Romans about similar people. I just want to show by this that it was not an unusual thing in the first century church. So he says,

Romans 16:17-20 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

He is warning the Romans too that these people are out there. They are deceivers and you need to watch out for them. If you have to, put them out of the church. Do not let them speak. But protect yourselves, he says, because these are very destructive to the church.

Back to Titus 1. We will read verses 12-14.

Titus 1:12-14 One of them [meaning a Cretan], 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.

This is another portion of his description of what is going on there. Paul quotes the poet Epimenides. He lived around 600 BC so roughly 650 years before this. He was a Cretan, like he says, and he was well known as a Greek prophet across the entire old Greek empire. The reason for this is that he made a prophecy saying that Persia would not attack for 10 years and he was right. I do not know how he knew that. We will put it up to either really good guess or something was whispering in his ears. But he got a reputation for being a good predictor of things and so they called him a prophet. He did not spend a great deal of his time on Crete. He knew the place, and thought, "I'd better get out" so he spent a lot of time in Athens.

He knew his own people though and he generalized them in this way. He said, "Cretans are *always* . . ." He does not give them much of an out here and I will use different words so you understand what he is talking about: devious, they are always vile, they are always brutish, they are always lethargic, and they are excessive in everything. You would not want a Cretan for a neighbor.

So from what Epimenides says, Paul draws an inference and turns it into a command for Titus. He said, "Rebuke these troublemakers sharply." Meaning you had to do it because that is the only language they understand. They are just people who have their armor because of all their sinfulness, as he describes it here, so you have got to hit them hard, you have to rebuke them sharply. Rebuke is the same word that is used in Luke 3:19 to describe John the Baptist's rebuke of Herod when he married Herodias. And you know how sharply that must have been because he ended up getting his head cut off. So Paul is telling Titus here that he has to be a manly man against these guys and really bite their heads off.

I do not know how else to put it. He had to come at them, not with literal fists flying, but the same force in his words. I mean, the word can mean refute them or reprove them, but when you add the adverb "sharply" on it, it heightens the force of the command to a level of harshness and relentlessness that brooks no argument. He just had to be a hardhead against them. Kind of like Ezekiel that had the forehead of flint. That is kind of how Titus had to be. I think it was Ezekiel that God said he would give him a forehead of flint and Jeremiah the same way. He was going into a situation where he had to be very strong against them. So Titus could not appear in any way weak or indecisive or appeasing at all, but he had to be very robust and forthright in defending the truth.

And you know what? This would also not only put down the false teachers, but it would also help the brethren to know who and what to believe. They would come to his strength, they would rally around his strength. If he was strong against the false teachers, they would circle the wagons and help him in getting the rest of the deceivers out of the picture. So, yes, he was rebuking the deceivers, but simultaneously confirming the truth of the gospel to the faithful brethren. And that would have really helped smooth over some of the disruption and divisions that had occurred already.

Now, do not get me wrong. This very sharp rebuke was not punitive or vindictive in any way. That is not how Christian preachers are supposed to be. They are not supposed to be punishing or they are not to take revenge for the things that have happened already. It is intended to enlighten the person who is giving false teaching and needs to be enlightened on what is true. And it is also ultimately designed to restore that person if he is actually a part of the church, if he is a supposedly converted member. Although we know that in practical fact, it does not always end that way, that it ends up being enlightening or restorative. It is often not. Often when you come at somebody in terms of a sharp rebuke, they are offended, and they spout off all these things and go away.

Well, that was part of the purpose that they would go away, but you would really like them to come around and repent and be a good profitable member of the church. But like in these days, they have places to go. In the Worldwide Church of God they often did not. Somebody who got

disfellowshipped for doing something like this, they would go off into the world, and maybe you never see them again. Maybe they would find some fringe group, who knows?

But today, with so many different churches, they could go from one church group to the next to the next to the next. I have seen people do this because they have one doctrine or something that they are really adamant about and they will preach it wherever they go and they will get kicked out of one church after another because they are disrupting the normal good atmosphere that is within that church.

But, like I say, a pastor or an elder, whoever is doing the rebuking, is not supposed to come at it with evil intent in any way. It is supposed to be good so that person can be restored. Unfortunately, it does not happen that way nearly enough. I should just add here that it does not happen nearly enough because the person who is wandering from the way or who is trying to deceive others has to be willing to be corrected. But as you see in Paul's description of these people, they do not have the character, it seems, to want to really be corrected. They just want their own way. And so, like I said, it is a tall mountain for a minister to climb to try to turn one of these people back to the truth. Sometimes it happens and it is great. That is wonderful. But oftentimes people are offended and just go away.

Titus 1:14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.

Paul gives two opposite here to what he means by sound in the faith. He tells us he wants things, as he said there, that they may be sound in the faith. This is what the turning of this person is supposed to achieve. But he gives two opposites here so that we can understand in a negative way what he is talking about.

What he says here is he mentions Jewish fables or myths (actually, the Greek word is *mythos*), untrue stories, fanciful tales, apocryphal accounts that are linked to the Old Testament, what have you. And the second one is human commands by unbelievers. "Commandments of men who turn from the truth." So, he is talking about two different things that are unsound in terms of the faith. And I want you to see that he had talked about these things

before. Or maybe this one would have been just after. Maybe it stayed on his mind.

Let us go to II Timothy 4. Paul makes a prophecy here of the end time as well as his own time. It applies to both.

II Timothy 4:2-4 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables [*mythos* again].

So it was not just happening on Crete, it was happening where Timothy was, I believe he was in Ephesus. But wherever he happened to be, Corinth, I am not exactly sure, but it was happening across the Mediterranean that these stories that were supposedly biblical and true were going around, but they had twists on them. They were teaching things through these fantastical stories, things that were different from what actually came out of the Bible. And so they were giving people permission, if you will, to do things that were not good.

This is why he says, "Don't heed these Jewish fables, these myths that are going around because their teaching is not good at all." So the brethren needed to be warned against believing that they were in any way true and certainly not be turned away from the faith because of the moral freedom that they promised in these stories. Because many of them were stories that we are kind of based on some of the Greek or the Roman myths about the gods and you know how immoral those gods were. But they would change things, make their own myths, that allowed people of Hebrew extraction to believe some of these things, to go in some of those ways, and it was infiltrating the church through these Jewish false teachers.

Now, the commandments of men that he talks about here back in verse 14, are probably the same types of things that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7-9, where He talks about the traditions of men. They would rather keep the traditions of men rather than the commandments of God.

He calls them a little bit later in the passage, "your traditions." So they were things that people like the Pharisees had come up with and put into as an addition to the law and those things actually became more important to the people of Judah than the actual commandments of God.

So, I have got to ask the question here because he adds "commandments of men who turn from the truth" or who do not know the truth or who do not believe the truth. I mean, what credibility do we as members of the church give to unbelievers? We have to think about this. We are inundated with information and stories, myths, and whatnot from out there, even traditions of men, traditions of our country, traditions of this, that, and the other thing. Things that people are expected to do, and many of these things comes from secularists, atheists, people who believe *very* different from us in many ways. How much credibility are we giving them?

That is the question. Why should we believe anything from people who do not know the truth? Their connection with what is right and good is very tenuous. So why should we be absorbing it? It is the same sort of thing. If Paul were writing now, he would say be careful of television and movies and books and magazines and things you read on the Internet, because these are from people who are trying to get you to turn from what is good and right. And who are they, but people who do not believe? They are *not* good sources of truth or practice.

We have to be very wary of their instruction. This would even go for evangelical commentaries and people you see on Sunday broadcasts and whatnot. They do not believe the same thing as you, they are called the same thing as you, but they are not the same as you. Do not give them any credibility that they do not deserve. If they especially do not acknowledge God, we should give them scant or no attention at all. Why in the world would anybody believe the ramblings of Steve Jobs (the founder of Apple)? He was an atheist. He believed in Eastern religions, yet people consider him a kind of guru. And I have seen people in the church quote him. Why? He has no connection with the truth. Do not give him any credibility.

Let us go to Colossians 2. These are not things that are uncommon throughout Paul's epistles. He was constantly warning the church about things like this.

Colossians 2:6-10 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him [You have been baptized, you have received the gospel, now follow Christ, do what He says.], rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. [Be thankful that He has given you the truth, He has opened your mind and you can practice what is good and right. And then he warns us,] Beware [watch out, be careful] lest anyone cheat you [out of eternal life] through philosophy or empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world [which is a circumlocution for the demons], and not according to Christ. For in Him [in Christ, the source of truth] dwells all the fullness of the [divine nature] bodily; and you are complete in Him [Not in anybody else. We do not need anything from anybody else. We are complete in Him.], who is the head of all principality and power.

You might as well attach your wagon to the Great One, the one who is superior to all things and gives you the truth. Why are you taking in this philosophy and empty deceit that has its source actually in demons? Paul is telling Titus the same sort of thing, that these are the things that these deceivers and these idle talkers are going on about—these same sort of things. The traditions of men and the myths and fables of their Jewish tradition.

Let us get these final two verses here in Titus 1. This is a little bit of a turn in his argument here.

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.

We need to be really careful when we go into the commentaries on verse 15. Just a little warning, that if you want to follow up on what I have said or whatever, just be careful because you are going to get an eyeful of "You do not need to eat clean meats." That is the first thing they do with this

argument because the word "pure" is clean in Greek. And so they try to to *twist* what Paul has said, to talk about that. Mostly it is Protestant commentaries. They always turn this into a screed against keeping God's law.

So they say things like we have been sanctified by Christ so everything is now pure to us, nothing is unclean to God's people. That is basically their argument. "To the pure all things are pure," you have been purified morally, now all these physical impurities do not mean a thing. They are pure now. That is kind of how they interpret what Paul says here.

Paul is not using "to the pure all things are pure" in this way at all. That is not what he means. This is one of those Pauline texts that people twist, because well, frankly, they are difficult to understand, and if you do not understand where he is coming from, you are likely to get it wrong. That is what Peter said in II Peter 3:16. That they twist these things to their own destruction.

Now, as we begin trying to understand "to the pure all things are pure" here, we must understand that this is an aphorism, it is an adage, a maxim, a principle, something that was common, probably in the culture. Not just in the church, but probably all throughout the culture, there was this aphorism that to the pure all things are pure. It is a general saying of truth and Paul is using it to explain something, and probably did not do a great job for those of us who were reading it in a translation. But we have got to start from that basis, that he is talking about a saying that most people would understand and we do not necessarily understand all the implications of it as they did in the first century. It is not a specific argument against the clean and unclean laws that you find in the Pentateuch. Not at all.

Put simply, if I can put it simply, Paul is reminding Titus that those Christ has justified and begun to sanctify, are holy. They are pure, they are clean by what Christ has done. And the ritual traditions have been made obsolete. They have been wiped away, if you will, by the passage of the Old Covenant. Christ has brought a New Covenant.

So, we have been made pure, we are the pure because of what Christ has done. And so to us, everything is pure because those ritual impurities have been put aside. They are no longer a factor. They were part of the teaching of the Old Testament to bring the people—Israelites—to Christ.

I know, it is clear as mud. So all things are clean for us because that ritual stigma has been swept away with the passing of the Old Covenant. There are still things to learn from them, but we do not need to do them. What he is talking about here is mostly the ritual washings, not the clean and unclean laws that we found find back in the Pentateuch.

We need to understand this. Perhaps the clean and unclean laws are involved, but they are very much lower in rank than what he is actually talking about, which is spiritual purity. I know I am making this very difficult. Let us go back to I Timothy 4 and maybe we can get some clarification from another place.

I Timothy 4:1-5 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscious seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry [and here we go], commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. [Notice how he is beginning to make his wording specific. It is narrowing things in.] For every creature of God is good [see, all things are pure], and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

What we have done is narrowed this down very finely. What he is saying is, because the ritual laws have been done away, as it were, through the obsolescence of the Old Covenant, then we look at everything as good and pure and clean. But that does not do away with something like the clean and unclean laws in terms of meats, just to use that as an example. Why? Because we know the truth and we believe. That was in verse 3. And then he says "every creature of God is good." Okay, fine. "And nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving."

1) If it was received with thanksgiving, we normally do that, do we not, in prayer, which he mentions just in a minute. So we receive it with thanksgiving. But 2), it has to be sanctified by the Word of God.

Uh huh! What did the Word of God do? What does the Word of God say in terms of food for human beings? It is only those things that God has set aside, sanctified, as actual food for human beings. That can be found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Those are where He told us what food we can eat, what meats we can eat. So somebody cannot give us a leopard meat or something and we receive it with thanksgiving and eat it and be sinless because it does not satisfy all three claims here.

3) That we asked for God to bless it through prayer. The big one is number 2, that it has to be sanctified by the Word of God. It has to be set apart and told to us that we can eat it because of what God has ruled, as our Creator, is acceptable food.

What I have done here is showed you that their arguments are not good, even in the commentaries, about what it means "to the pure all things are pure." To those of us who have been enlightened, justified, and sanctified by God, we can look at everything as pure. What did God do when He created the earth? Everything was very good, right? We have that same perspective then on things in this world. We do not say that this is clean, this is unclean, this is common. We just say it is all good because of what God has done. This is His creation. These are all good things.

You understand how I am making this argument here that we do not have to look at things from this Jewish perspective of everything being defiled because of this or impure because of that or common because of this or whatever. We do not look at things that way anymore. We look at things that God has made all things very good, but He *has* sanctified certain things that we can eat, which we can find back in the Pentateuch, and these are good for food and they are to be received with thanksgiving and with prayer. Then they are fine. We do not have to worry that they came from an idol or a temple or the market that was there.

We do not need to worry about that. If it is good clean food, we can accept it with thanksgiving and with prayer because God said that sheep is good to

eat, or that goat is good to eat, or that bull is good to eat. That is fine to eat it. It is good. And if we could sanctify it through prayer and thanksgiving, plus God's Word, it is fine to eat.

So to the pure all things are pure. Do you understand what he is trying to get at here? We do not need to be like the Jews with all their little intricate laws about what this is or what that is in terms of cleanness, uncleanness, or being common. We do not have to make those distinctions anymore. We can look at them as pure.

I probably confused a lot of you, but it is actually fairly simple once when you come down to it.

So Paul is telling Titus that these arguments over Jewish traditional rituals are baseless and immaterial. And he goes on to tell his protege here in Titus 1 that the fact that deceivers bring them up even shows or exposes their own inner defilement and unbelief. They are trying to use these things as a way to split the congregation, as a way to get their own points across. They wish to take people back into the bondage of Pharisaical or ritual, rather than join the true freedom found in the gospel.

He says here in verse 15, they look around them and all they see is corruption. This is unclean. I am unclean, you are unclean. You need to do this washing or you need to do go through the baptism or the Mikvah or whatever. You need to wash your hands every time you you eat, you have to do this and that because you are corrupt. Not that you should not wash your hands before you eat. I am just saying they did it for ritual purposes rather than for cleanliness purposes. So, they look around them and see only corruption and instead of turning to Christ for forgiveness and true washing, true cleanliness, they look to human means of expiating their sinfulness, as if washings or some kind of asceticism could somehow cleanse them of sin.

Paul calls *them* defiled. They are corrupt. Actually, the word really means self-defiled, which means that they corrupted themselves through their constant sins and unbelief. And they are trying to get rid of all of this sin while trying to convince other people to join them in it. It is just really weird and strange. But this is how they were.

He goes further and says that their minds and consciences are defiled, corrupted again. They are just destroying themselves from the inside out. He says, you cannot trust their arguments because their reasoning processes are already skewed so terribly that it has affected their moral consciousness. They cannot discern what is good and evil. They are just trying to get for themselves and get a following of those people that they can deceive.

He concludes here in verse 16 by saying, just look at what they do. That is the real proof in the pudding. What they do is wholly contrary to what they believe, what they profess, because they are professing to believe in Christianity. But you can see by their actions that they are not actually keeping Christianity. They are keeping, in this case, a form of Judaism. So he says they are totally unsuitable to good works among the brethren. Their corrupt actions belie their professed beliefs. Their claim to know God proves false because their actions and works deny what God teaches in His Word, and through His apostles and ministers.

So they show themselves, he describes them here, as abominable. I mean, that is a really strong word. It means detestable, loathsome, vile, offensive, and disgusting. Just people you would not want to be around. He calls them disobedient. Of course, he means disobedient to God. But this word also has hints of not having any kind of good judgment. They are uncompliant and unpersuadable. And then he calls them disqualified. This word is really strong. It means worthless, unapproved, deficient, unqualified. If you look across the page at chapter 2, verse 14, it says there that Christ came to purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. But these deceivers, they were disqualified for every good work. Christ could not use them, not in any way, until they changed because they were corrupt through and through.

This is why Paul has to be so harsh in telling Titus what to do because these people were horrible beasts in the flock. Talk about wolves among the flock! That is what these deceivers were. And they needed to be gotten rid of as soon as possible because they were causing all kinds of division. They were clearly unfit to be a part of God's people like this.

I told you I would get to Jude. We will finish here in Jude. I do not want to leave this kind of down, depressing kind of sermon about these terrible

people without giving you a little bit of instruction through Jude about what we need to do when faced by these kind of people. So we will do my traditional hop, skipping, and jumping through this chapter here.

Jude 3-4 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jude 8 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.

Jude 10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Jude 16-21 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit [they are not of us]. But you [this is where it gets personal], beloved, building yourself up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

So Jude saw the same thing as Paul, wherever Jude was. I get the sense that it is often this way in the church because the church seems to attract these kinds of people who try to undermine it, divide it, and get for themselves. So we have to always be on guard against them.

But notice that advice in verses 20 and 21. It is essentially this: Keep your arms wrapped firmly around the trunk of the tree. Keep your eyes and your minds firmly set on what is above. That is, God and Jesus Christ. That, despite all the deceivers, is the path to eternal life in God's Kingdom.