

Paul'S Letter To Titus (Part 1)

False Doctrine and Teachers vs. Sound Leaders

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The Apostle Paul's three letters of I Timothy, Titus, and II Timothy were probably written in that order. These are commonly called the Pastoral Epistles because Paul addressed them to Timothy and Titus, who were pastors of the scattered churches of Asia Minor.

The Pastoral Epistles are primarily practical rather than theological. Paul was emphasizing the defense of doctrine, rather than its clarification or elaboration. The distinctively doctrinal passages comprise only a small part of the whole; but nevertheless are very important. Timothy and Titus had already been thoroughly instructed on doctrine. They did not have further need of specific instruction on the details of doctrine, but just on emphasizing it to the brethren.

Paul wrote I Timothy about 62-66 A.D., and he wrote Titus about the same time period. Then following those he wrote II Timothy somewhere around 65-67 A.D. It had to be written before the winter of 67 A.D. since Emperor Nero, who committed suicide in June of 68 A.D, put Paul to death. Also, in II Timothy 4:21, Paul asked Timothy to come to him before winter, and that was the winter of 67-68 A.D. So, this gives us an idea of the period in the first century of when these books were written by Paul to these pastors.

The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy and Titus that virtue and sound doctrine, in combination with order, serve as a hedge against destructive false teachers who threaten the spiritual health of the churches of God. These letters will prove themselves over and over again, down through the history of the church, as being very valuable information to not only the pastors, but also the members as a whole.

Titus and I Timothy deal with the same general subjects: rejecting false doctrine and rebuking false teachers, maintaining order, appointment of sound leaders, and producing good works. Titus was in Crete, and Timothy was in Ephesus. The problems in both places were very much the same.

Titus, like I Timothy, was written by Paul after his release from Roman imprisonment, and was written to his associate Titus. Titus was given the job of organizing and supervising a large work as Paul's representative.

Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to 'set in order the things that are lacking', in the words of Paul. Not long after Paul's departure from Crete, he wrote this letter to

encourage and assist Titus in his duty. It stresses sound doctrine and warns against those who distort the truth. A conduct manual emphasizes good deeds and the proper conduct of various groups within the churches.

Paul wrote to Titus to advise him to appoint elders, men of proven spiritual character in their homes and businesses, to oversee the work of the church. But elders are not the only individuals in the church who are required to excel spiritually.

Men and women, young and old, each have their vital functions to fulfill in the church if they are to be living examples of the doctrines that they profess. Throughout his letter to Titus, Paul stresses the necessary, practical working out of salvation in the daily lives of both the elders and the congregation. Good works are desirable and profitable for all members of God's church.

To understand the climate in which Titus and Paul worked, let us look at the background of Titus' converted life. The first mention of Titus in the Bible is recorded in Galatians 2:1-5. This is the incident when Paul went from Antioch to discuss his commission with the leaders in Jerusalem. He took Titus, an uncircumcised young Greek, along as an example of a faithful Gentile member of God's church.

Paul and Barnabas had preached the gospel in several Gentile areas, and many Gentiles had believed. Some Jewish Christians claimed that the Gentile converts should be circumcised. Apparently it became a huge issue among the Jewish converts. The apostles gathered at Jerusalem to resolve the controversy.

Paul convinced the other apostles that Gentile members should not be under obligation to be circumcised. He said even the faithful Titus did not feel compelled to be circumcised. Paul respected Titus' level of conversion so much, that he used Titus as an example of a dedicated Gentile convert at this conference in which circumcision was discussed.

After much discussion, Peter concluded that the Gentiles need not be circumcised. James, leader of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, agreed. Circumcision is not required for Gentile converts. In this conference the apostles concluded that circumcision was not necessary for salvation for anyone.

It is not a commanded religious ordinance that a Christian be circumcised. Yet, when people read Genesis 17:10 they still wonder whether circumcision is necessary today.

Genesis 17:10 "This [is] My covenant which you shall keep, between Me

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and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;

The ordinance of circumcision was an outward, physical sign of one's acceptance of and obedience to the Old Covenant with God. It served as the main symbol of God's covenant with Israel and as a symbol, in turn, of Israel's commitment to keep His covenant.

Under the New Covenant, God is calling a spiritual nation composed of individuals converted and regenerated by His Holy Spirit. God's people now are all to be "circumcised" spiritually. Physical circumcision is no longer necessary for religious purposes. It was only a forerunner or type of what God really wanted—circumcision of the heart.

Over the years, I have heard much confusion in God's church, over this issue as well.

Deuteronomy 10:16 Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

So, we see here the emphasis on attitude, not on the actual physical operation. In addition, Moses wrote that the attitude of the heart should be one of loving God with our all!

Deuteronomy 30:6 And the LOORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LOORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

We see there that is emphasis on love.

Jeremiah charges the whole of Israel with being "*uncircumcised in heart*." Whether they practice physical circumcision or not, there is no difference between Israel and all the other nations who really are uncircumcised.

Jeremiah 4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LOORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem....

To the Roman converts, Paul makes the basic point of the uselessness of circumcision if a man breaks God's law. Spiritual circumcision is a process of conversion. That Christ circumcises us spiritually is made plain in:

Romans 2:25-29 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

In Philippians 3:3, Paul tells us that the saints are the true circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus. Circumcision of the heart requires putting off sins, and that is overcoming them.

This is not the main subject of the message today. It is just some background material to Titus.

Colossians 2:10-11 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Christians have been circumcised in Christ because they have been given a new heart by the Spirit. This is why the assembled apostles and elders of the New Testament church declared circumcision to be one of the physical requirements of the Old Testament which is not necessary for Christians.

Acts 15:24-29 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" —to whom we gave no such commandment—it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have

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therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

Galatians 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."

Thus the establishment of successive covenants radically changed the symbolism of circumcision. An ancient ritual becomes the primary mark of a keeper of the Old Covenant. And after Christ, it serves as an emblem of the inferior nature of the rituals of the Old Covenant that cannot save.

Hebrews 8:7-11 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—"not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. " None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

What God is looking for is not whether one is circumcised or not, but if one is living by faith and practicing His way of love.

Today, circumcision is done for non-religious reasons to promote cleanliness and health.

Just a side note: Some physicians recommend circumcision of baby boys, but by a competent surgeon. Often though, surgeons are neither knowledgeable nor competent in circumcision because they do so few any more. I have heard no end of stories about botched circumcisions. Some cut off too much, some cut off too little, and some make very jagged cuts.

On the other hand, Jewish Mohels [Moyals] are very knowledgeable, practiced and competent. They are experts; and, often much less expensive than surgeons. The website—<http://www.findthemohel.com> provides the names and phone numbers of Mohels around the world. Just as a test, I checked the Charlotte, NC area. The one recommended has done more than 17,000 circumcisions. That is experience! What I found interesting, I do not know if it applies to non-Jews, but he does them for free.

In the Jerusalem Conference the apostles concluded that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. Then why did Paul circumcise Timothy, as we are told in Acts 16:3?

Timothy was half Jewish, "the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek." The Jerusalem Council had not dealt with such a situation. It is very likely that many would have said Timothy ought to be circumcised. When Paul circumcised Timothy, he eliminated a situation that could have caused criticism and unnecessary offense.

Another reason it was wise to circumcise Timothy was that Paul wanted Timothy to travel with him. Paul usually went to Jewish synagogues and he wanted Timothy to be able to come with him. Many Jews of the area knew that Timothy's father was Greek and apparently they knew that Timothy had not been circumcised. They would consider him and his companions, even Paul, unclean.

So Paul circumcised Timothy, *"because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek."* And so, it actually opened Jewish doors for Timothy.

Eventually, Titus was ordained a minister and sent to areas of the Gentile world, such as Crete, Achaia, Thrace and Macedonia. Today, this is the area we call Greece.

Years after the conference in which the circumcision controversy was put to rest, and after Titus' ordination, Paul sent him to Corinth on at least three separate trips to firm-up the congregation from the devastating false teachings that were creeping in, and from the lackadaisical approach the congregation had toward morality.

Apparently shortly after writing I Corinthians, near Passover 55 A.D., Paul again sent Titus to Corinth to help straighten out the confusion in that congregation and to counter the work of false teachers.

As a minister to various Gentile congregations, Titus was faced with growing opposition to the teachings of Christ established by the apostle Paul earlier. Paul knew, through

experience, the tendencies of the Gentiles and warned Titus of them from a minister's perspective.

The congregations of God's church to which Titus ministered, continually experienced both subtle and open attacks on doctrine and the ministers themselves, not just from outside the church, but mostly from within. The situation was very similar to what we have today. There was striving over doctrine and little respect for God's inspiration through the ministry.

Eventually, Titus went to Paul in Macedonia with the good news that his difficult assignment to Corinth had been successful. Titus told Paul that the Corinthian members were sorry for their harsh attitudes toward the ministry, especially toward Paul. Their repentance was so genuine they were looking forward to Paul's next visit.

Paul was so encouraged by their attitudes that he wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians in the winter of 55/56 A.D. and sent it back with Titus, instructing him also to complete the collection at Corinth for the suffering congregation in Jerusalem.

Paul gave Titus his strong recommendation, assuring any critical Corinthian member that Titus could be fully trusted as one motivated by Paul as he followed Christ.

In II Corinthians 3, Paul asked the Corinthian brethren if letters of commendation for the men he sent were really necessary to establish the trustworthiness of a minister of God.

II Corinthians 3:1-6 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Paul believed that evidence of God's Holy Spirit working in a minister, his speaking true doctrine, and the fruit of his labor should be enough to enable brethren to discern if a minister is trustworthy. Jesus Christ magnifies the law and God writes it in our heart enabling us to sense the motives of others. In a general sense, I think that is called

discernment.

II Corinthians 1:21-24 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

So it is God who establishes the members of the church with the ministry.

Paul and Titus' joint labors in Crete apparently did not last long, but long enough for Paul to realize the confusion that the self-seeking, self-proclaimed teachers were causing in the local congregations.

Because of the unstable condition of the members in Crete, Paul knew that Titus faced resistance to his authority and ministry. Paul's purpose in writing the letter to Titus was aimed at reinforcing Titus' authority in working among the congregations in Crete. The problem with the members not accepting all of the ministers that Paul sent was a problem throughout the entire Gentile world, in Corinth, Ephesus and here in Crete.

This letter to Titus was "written authorization" for Titus to minister to the Cretans, giving proof to them that he was working in accordance with Paul's own instructions.

This was partly needed because the Cretan members did not know whom to trust. They tended to ally with those who were the most forcefully convincing. That is something that we saw in our last affiliation, people tended to ally with people who were of name or who were forceful personalities.

The situation was much the same as we see today, with issues of: grace, works and salvation; eating meat or not eating meat; defilement, and the Ten Commandments done away. Satan uses the same deceptions repeatedly—because they work.

I thought it was necessary to give you an idea of why the book was written, and what Titus was up against with the Cretans. The theme of the epistle of Paul to Titus is to encourage and strengthen Christians living in an immoral society. It mostly deals with ministerial duties and social relations, so it does apply directly to us today.

The salutation to Titus is actually a compact doctrinal statement, which lifts up God's Word as the source of the truth that reveals the way to eternal life.

Titus 1:1-3 Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;

The method in which God has chosen to reveal His word containing His plan of salvation for mankind is through preaching as Paul states here.

Titus 1:4 To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

Paul calls Titus his true son in the faith. The Greek word for "*true*" in verse 4 is *gnesios*. It means legitimate born, or genuine. Here it is through "common faith." This shows that Titus rightly represented Paul's authority in Crete.

Titus 1:5 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—

Paul is about to give minimum requirements that all Christians should meet, especially the ministry. Since the letter is from an apostle to the pastor of a church quite a bit of the emphasis here is on Titus' own virtue as well as how to check false teachers and how to improve the conduct of the Cretans, which we will see was a major job.

The subjects of the things that are "lacking" are covered by Paul in this letter. He points to the lack of organization in chapter 1:5; unchecked false teachers in chapter 1:10-11, and chapter 3:10-11; and the need for instruction in true doctrine and right conduct in chapter 2:1-10, and chapter 3:1-2. So we see there some of the major themes in this book.

Titus 1:6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

The same word for blameless used to describe the Cretan elders here, is applied in I

Timothy 3:10, to the Ephesian deacons reflecting the need for an irreproachable moral standard in all types of Christian office.

In I Timothy the bishop or overseer must maintain an orderly discipline over his children, but Paul adds a further requirement. The children must be 'believing,' and must not put themselves in a situation where they can be charged with being wild and disobedient.

The word "dissipation" in verse 6 in the Greek is *asotia* which means literally '*inability to save*,' therefore; metaphorically it is speaking of wasting money on one's own pleasures and so ruining oneself. They must not be guilty of insubordination. Paul regards the Christian home as the training ground for Christian leaders.

Titus 1:7-9 For a bishop 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.

In verse 7, we see the reason why a bishop or overseer must be blameless; he is entrusted with God's work. Paul uses a metaphor 'a steward' here that is drawn from secular life in which he pictures a manager of a household. Whoever holds a position of Christian responsibility must similarly be beyond reproach in order to serve as a true example to others.

Paul knew it was important to establish some type of checklist that Titus could use as an additional confirmation that he was choosing wisely. A great deal of care is required in the selection of elders in the church, especially in Crete, where the character of the people is seen to be generally unstable and unreliable. This process is something that takes years of observation.

Verse 8 begins a list of positive qualities. 'Hospitable' implies a real commitment to the spiritual welfare of others. 'A lover of what is good' can include things as well as people and carries with it the quality of gentleness.

This checklist does not list any unusual or exceptional qualities because Paul is using a realistic approach here. He is approaching this subject from the standpoint of practical application. Honest, upright, and decent is primarily what is required on the moral side.

Verse 9 gives further qualifications on the doctrinal side. A Christian representative must

hold fast to the true inspired message as it has been taught by Jesus Christ through the prophets and the apostles. The message is described as trustworthy.

A minister of God must have clear convictions and an understanding of the word of God. That brings to mind an incident that I ran across. When we were looking for a place to temporarily meet in this area, I thought I would go back to the Days Inn that we had occupied a decade ago. When I went into the room there were strollers in there that people had left, and Bibles left on their chairs. The lectern was set up and there was a ragged Bible lying there. I thought what does this minister read at home? Is this the only time that he reads it when he is preaching? Ministers must have a thorough knowledge of scripture. A minister of God must have clear convictions and an understanding of the word of God.

He must be prepared to hold firmly to the truth even in the face of opposition. The 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, nicknamed 'Honest Abe,' is credited with saying, "You can please some of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time."

That statement is never truer than when it is applied to a minister holding steadfast to the truth. Criticisms are plentiful! But a minister who tries to please all the people all the time is not a true minister of God. A faithful minister must be loyal to God's truth first and foremost.

One of the problems that has plagued God's church through the ages is those who have an obsession with doctrine. There are people who are very concerned about doctrine and theology, but their obsessed interest seems to be purely theoretical and intellectual.

There is nothing that they enjoy more than arguing about theology, but their interest seems to be entirely detached. There is nothing that they enjoy more than intensely "discussing" theology, yet they do so the whole time as if they were arguing about some abstract science, something far removed from life, something significantly separate from practical living.

Very often, of course, they do this in what we might call a 'party spirit.' In other words, as they read the Bible they are not as concerned as much about arriving at knowledge of truth as they are about discovering arguments to support their own particular theory or idea.

It is dangerous for a person to allow his own tendency to swing from one extreme to the other, either no interest in doctrine or the wrong interest in doctrinal truths. There is a

certain type of mentality that finds nothing more fascinating than a theological discussion about obscure trivia in the Bible. Prophecy is probably one of the subjects in which this happens the most. In Crete, it was doctrinal squabbling.

We always have to compare scripture with scripture. In arriving at an interpretation of specific texts we have to always avoid anything that is going to put us in a position of contradicting some other statement in scripture.

However, we have to be very careful to avoid the tendency to find scriptures merely in search of texts to prove our own pet theories and ideas. Doctrine must never be considered in and of itself.

Isaiah 28:10 For precept [must be] upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little."

Scripture must never be divorced from life. It always has a practical application to the plan of the salvation of humanity.

On the other hand, people take positions of disinterest in doctrine. This seems to be the greater tendency today. Some say not only that they are uninterested in doctrine, but that doctrine is really unnecessary. They maintain that Bible knowledge and truth may be of great interest to those who like to pursue that kind of study, or to those who have the inclination and time to spend; but what really matters is experience and the kind of life that people live.

Some tend to think like this, and they might word it this way, "We are not interested in your various ideas as to the precise explanation of how the atonement of Christ works. These things are of no concern to us. As long as we are living a good life and producing good works, that's all that matters." I received an e-mail like about a year ago, that I had to answer.

So, what about that attitude? Well, whether they like it or not, to speak like that is, in and of itself, to speak in a doctrinal manner. To make statements along that line is, in actual practice, to commit oneself to a particular doctrine. The doctrine of such people is a doctrine of works.

Nevertheless, they claim that they are not interested in that kind of terminology. But that is exactly what they are saying. In other words, you cannot speak about Christianity and religion without being doctrinal. You may reduce the whole of Christian doctrine to just

one term, but it is your doctrine all the same.

In other words, whether we like it or not, we cannot avoid doctrine. And we can say the same thing about religion as we can about doctrine. There is no such thing as an irreligious person. Everyone has his or her religion, if you mean by religion that ultimate philosophy or view of life by which people live. Evolution is a religion. Humanism is a religion. Environmentalism is a religion. Globalism is a religion. They are views of life by which people live.

There are many who say that they do not believe in religion. But not to believe in religion is their religion! You cannot speak about these things without automatically and inevitably committing yourself to some particular doctrine or teaching. So there is no way of avoiding the consideration of doctrine. You must be prepared to consider it whether your doctrine is true or false. Another reason why such people are altogether wrong is that the whole Bible is full of doctrine. So to refuse to consider doctrine is not only to refuse to believe that the Bible is the inspired written Word of God, it is insulting to God Himself.

Sometimes a person will have the attitude that he is not interested in doctrinal terms such as justification, sanctification and atonement. He says he believes in God and that he is living as good a life as he can in order to please Him. But, how can he please God if he refuses to consider the very terms that God Himself has revealed to the men who wrote the record?

This is God's truth, and God has chosen to give us this truth in this specific form. Our sense of obedience to God compels us to discover as far as we can what He means by what He has inspired in His written word.

The Bible is never tired of pointing out that to attempt to divorce conduct from belief is always fatal. The apostle Paul put that in a memorable verse in writing to the church at Corinth, when he said:

I Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

He was dealing with the doctrine of the resurrection, and he said in effect, 'It is no use your saying, "We are not interested in doctrine, we are concerned about life"—If your doctrine is wrong, your life will be wrong.'

In verses 10 and 11, the apostle Paul proceeded to describe those who contradict doctrine and ministerial authority. They are apparently numerous and are characterized

by three undesirable qualities.

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.

The phrase "*there are many insubordinate*" is a general statement of the danger that faced the Cretan congregations. The worst offenders were those of the circumcision—the Jews, but they were not the only ones. The Gnostics also had their part to play.

The many false teachers are described as:

"Insubordinate" ? that is, rebellious—refusing to subject themselves to any authority. This type of person is constantly manipulating others to get his own way.

"Idle talkers"—that is, empty-headed people who are fluent and impressive in speech but accomplish nothing constructive or truly beneficial. This type of false teacher rarely, if ever, produces any spiritual fruit in his life. The teacher who simply provides his students with pleasant intellectual, speculative and entertaining stories is teaching in vain.

"Deceivers"—that is, self-deceived and consequently deceivers of others; people whose articulate tongues exercise a fascination over the minds of their dupes and lead them astray. These people can talk circles around others with the illusion that they have inspiration and understanding directly from God. But they really have their own agenda. Also, there is an element of confusion in what they say. You do not walk away feeling encouraged and with understanding, you walk away with the feeling that they have confused you.

These false teachers, apparently Cretans by birth, are not easily identified with any specific heresy. Apparently they were Gnosticizing Judaists who, as professed Christians, sought to infiltrate the churches with their misguided opinions. They seemingly sought to attach to true doctrine various aspects of Judaism and to present the hybrid as a teaching containing higher philosophical insights.

That is exactly what some of the leaders of Worldwide did with the original doctrines that Herbert Armstrong brought back. They claimed that they were not getting rid of those doctrines but that they were clarifying them or that they gave them teaching containing higher philosophical insights. They were deceivers. Instead of leading people to the truth they led them away from it. Their teaching upset whole households, as Paul states there.

There are two things to notice here. First, their teaching was fundamentally upsetting. It is true that truth must often make us rethink our ideas. Christianity does not run away from doubts and questions, but faces them fairly and squarely. But, it is also true that teaching which ends in nothing but doubts and questions is bad teaching. In true teaching, out of the mental disturbances should come in the end a new and greater certainty of God's way of life.

Second, they upset households. They had a bad effect on family life. Any teaching that tends to disrupt a Christian family is false, because the church is built on the basis of the Christian family. Of course, the cornerstone is Jesus Christ. If the family is sick, then the church is also sick.

Their teaching was designed for gain. Power and greed motivate such people. They were more concerned with what they could get out of the people that they were teaching, than with what they could put into them. They were not interested in serving, but being served. Sometimes that attitude of being served was having a captive audience.

Verse 11 says that their mouths must be stopped. The Greek word means to 'muzzle,' but it became the normal word for 'to silence a person by reason'. The way to fight false teaching is to offer true teaching.

Paul warned Titus about divisive people among the brethren of the church of God. As today, the members during Paul's time were bombarded with enticements by false teachers to follow unfamiliar doctrine. The false teachers and some of the people attending God's church were committing spiritual adultery. In other words they were loyal to things other than God's church, God's ministers, Jesus Christ, and God the Father. This was partly caused by their itching ears, figuratively speaking.

This is what Paul was warning Titus about. He was warning him that false teachers were enticing members away from the doctrines that lead to salvation with new ideas and beliefs in things that had nothing to do with salvation. Some members were being led to commit spiritual adultery with unfamiliar or strange doctrine.

Titus 1:12-14 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.

Paul obviously does not mince words there. But you will see why it was not just truth through Paul's experience but by the entire Roman world.

In history, no group of people has ever had a worse reputation than the Cretans. They were infamous throughout the Roman Empire, especially among the Greeks, for drunkenness, insolence, untrustworthiness, lying, and gluttony.

The Cretans were so notorious that the Greeks actually formed a verb "to cretize," which meant to lie and cheat. The quotation which Paul makes in verse 12 is from a Greek poet named Epimenides.

The Cretans were notorious liars and cheats and traitors, but knowing that, and actually experiencing it, Paul does not tell Titus to leave them alone because they are hopeless cases. He told Titus, "They are bad and all men know it. Go and convert them."

Paul's letter here shows that he was an eternal optimist, who refused to regard anyone as hopeless. It was Paul's conviction that there is no sin too great for the grace of God to conquer. But God does it according to His will, and according to His time-frame.

In verse 14, Paul hammered Judaism for its thousands of rules and regulations, and Gnosticism for its vilifying of the human body and elevating human reasoning. Judaism branded this, that, and the next thing unclean and taboo.

When Judaism and Gnosticism joined hands even the body became unclean and the natural instincts of the body were held to be evil. The inevitable result was that long lists of sins were constantly being created. It became a sin to touch this or that food; it even became a sin to marry and beget children. Things which were either good in themselves, or quite natural, became defiled.

The last phrase in verse 14, "*commandments of men who turn from the truth*," is similar to the ascetic tendencies in the Colossian heresy which are described as 'human commands.' False teaching and false practice are usually close companions, and they find willing allies in people who are occupied in turning others from the truth.

Paul states in the beginning of this letter that *"the acknowledgement of the truth,"* which is in harmony with godliness, is a qualification of a servant of God. The truth is foundational to all church doctrine, and they are inseparable! But these Judaizers and Gnostics claimed truth is relative. It is exactly what the Protestants and even the Catholics are professing about truth—that it is relative.

When Pontius Pilot asked, *"What is truth?"* in John 18:37-38, what he meant was, how can anyone know what is really true? What is the right standard for truth? Where can we go for the source of truth?

Christ said, *"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."* But most people do not want to know the truth. Paul warned the Roman converts that it is in the nature of people to suppress the truth even when they know that the facts show they are lying.

The Cretans were known liars but only the truth would free them. It is ironic that people by human reasoning reject the very thing that can free them. The Judaizers suppressed the truth and promoted their own self-serving teachings. Paul had to point it out here to the Romans.

Romans 1:18-25 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

I have read that many times in sermons, and it does give an apt description of the world we live in today and it also describes what Paul and Titus were dealing with in their time.

The amazing thing about truth is that it gives us a realistic view of everything in life:

Paul's Letter to Titus (Part 1) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Religion, Politics, Science, and History are all useless to us, even detrimental to us, if they do not advance the truth. Isaiah tells us, *"No one calls for justice, Nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity."* This is typically how the world is run.

How can we know which god to worship, if we are being lied to about who He is, and what His purpose is?

Psalm 145:18 The LOORD [is] near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.

This scripture automatically eliminates all of mainstream Christianity from those who have a true connection with God. How can we know which politician or leader will do what he promises if he is lying to us? In contrast:

Proverbs 29:14 The king who judges the poor with truth, His throne will be established forever.

Such a simple and true principle but the politicians ignore and follow the very opposite.

How can we know that God created us if science falsely claims we evolved from nothing? How can we know what really happened in history when historians write from a biased viewpoint? How can we know what is really true?

About a year ago, maybe two years ago, I came across a story that talked about a finding that some archeologists made of the remains of some ancient individual. When they dated it, it predated any of the Native Americans in America today, therefore showing that other people were there before the Native Americans. When this was found out and they went to get it to take it to a safe place it had been removed, destroyed and it has never been seen again. Since the archeologists were the only ones that had access to it, then apparently it did not fit their politically correct motives. So, especially in history we cannot know what has really happened. Who is given credit for all of the wonderful knowledge and findings? The Greeks—when it all pre-dates them. God no doubt revealed much of it to Solomon, and before that to Abraham, and much of it to Adam and Noah.

In all things we must search for the truth. If we do not we are incapable of making wise decisions. David said:

Psalm 51:6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

God wants us to love the truth from the heart and to really appreciate it for what it is. When the powers that be begin to take away the truth even from us then we will definitely appreciate the truth that we have within our heart that is internalized, and that we understand and know.

Truth applies to all things in life, even such things as buying a car or house, developing and building a friendship, and choosing whom to marry, and how to raise children. None of these things can be done successfully without a basis of truth.

Wars are engaged in because much of the dialogue between nations is an exchange of lies. The citizens of a nation give their support to their leaders to engage in war following a propaganda effort based on "half-truths," flat out lies to convince people to support the cause.

II Thessalonians 2:7-12 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Obviously truth is going to play the key role in who God's people are, and who the ones with the mark of the beast are.

So, what is the truth? Here are four scriptures that succinctly state definitions for truth:

Psalm 25:10 All the paths of the LORD [are] mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Psalm 119:142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy

law is the truth

Psalm 119:151 Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.

Ephesians 4:21-22 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,

That means that we can arrive at the truth, acquire the truth, by His teachings, His inspiration and example.

From these verses it is quite easy to deduce that: All the paths [ways] of the Lord are truth; God's law **is** truth; all God's commandments are truth; and now the way to understand the truth is in and through Jesus.

In verse 15 of Titus 1, Paul echoes Jesus' own words found in Luke 11:41 and Mark 7:15.

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.

A pure mind cannot be spiritually contaminated by physical contact, and the purest of minds will not seek fulfillment in defilement.

The strongest condemnation that could be made against those who claimed to be pure, but were not, was the fact stated by Paul, that for those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. Paul is repeating Christ's teaching that it is what comes out of a person that defiles him, not ceremonial impurity.

In verse 16, Paul uses three words to characterize the false teacher's conduct.

The first word is 'abominable,' or, detestable, or repulsive. It is an expression of disgust at their hypocrisy. This word may be used ironically, in the sense that those who claim to track down abominable things are themselves detestable. There is something repulsive about a person with an obscene mind, who is a master of the off-color innuendo.

The second word in progression is 'disobedient,' which follows from their virtual denial of the true character of a holy God who demands holiness. A person who cannot obey the will of God cannot be anything else but an evil influence, and is therefore unfit to be an instrument in the hand of God. Paul is very strong in the words that he uses here, he is very powerful.

The third word is 'disqualified,' or, 'unfit for doing anything good,' which translates a word Greek word that means 'rejected after testing.'

The word Paul uses here is another way of saying that these false Christians have become 'useless' to God and to his fellow human beings. This word in the Greek is *adokimos*.

It is used to describe a counterfeit coin which is below standard weight.

It is used to describe a cowardly soldier who fails in the testing hour of battle.

It is used of a rejected candidate for office, a man whom the citizens regarded as useless.

If a stone had a flaw in it, it was marked with the letter 'A' for *adokimos*, and shoved aside, as being unfit to have any place in the building.

The ultimate test of life is usefulness, and the person whose influence is always toward that which is unclean is of no use to God, or to his fellow human beings. Instead of helping God's work in the world, he hinders it; and uselessness always invites disaster.

This is a real contrast to the constant call to do good works in the apostle Paul's three Pastoral Epistles. In the cases of these false teachers, good works are not even possible. But for us, all things are possible with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 2:7-8 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

This is how we are to deal with false teachers and people who pass on false doctrines.

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The duty laid on Titus was the tremendous responsibility, not of talking to people about Christ, but showing Him to them. This required that Titus teach the true doctrine of Christ, not the doctrine of human reasoning as the Judaizers and Gnostics did.

If our teaching and usefulness in the church is to be effective, it must be backed by the witness of our own righteous lives. We must be the demonstration and the example of all that we teach and all that we say.

Matthew 5:19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Remember we are all teachers. We are teachers of our own children, we teach each other. The ministry are the teachers with the greatest responsibility in that area.