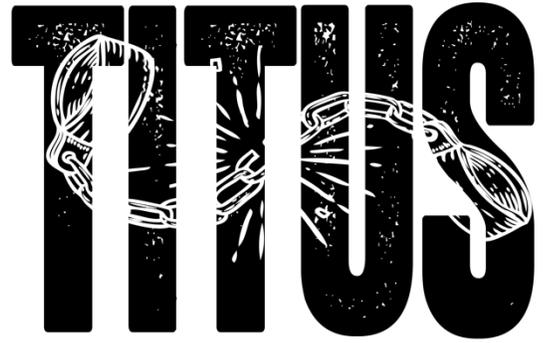


**October 6, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON**

**Wolves In Sheep's Clothing**  
**Titus 1:10-14**



Jesus, Paul and the apostles use graphic language to warn against what they call false teachers, false prophets, apostasy (heresy):

- Jesus says that false prophets will arise. They will perform signs and wonders and their purpose is to lead astray (Mark 13:22-23, Matt 24:24).
- Paul warns the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, "Fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. They will teach perversions of the truth to draw the disciples away after them." (vs. 29-30)
- Peter says that false prophets will "arise among the people and will infiltrate the church with destructive heresies, even to the point of denying the Master who bought them." (2 Pet. 2:1)
- In another pastoral epistle, Paul says, "The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth." (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

Most of us believe this: "False teaching exists out there but it really doesn't affect us. It doesn't really impact our kids either. We are the good guys! We are the church that teaches the Bible every week and has precise doctrinal statements. Somehow the arms of false teaching can't reach us."

Here's the truth. As long my heart and your heart yearn for security, protection and provision, there will always be false teachers, false voices offering to address our pain and brokenness - sometimes in subtle ways, sometimes in not so subtle ways. But it is always there, every day, all day long.

- As you struggle with sin and addiction, someone will come alongside of you and tell you exactly how to conquer your problem by following their prescribed, legalistic equation. Or someone will explain a lengthy, complicated process of addressing the demonic powers that are keeping you in bondage.
- Or while you walk through cancer, in your desperation you will hear a message that God's will is that every true child of his will be healthy and wealthy. They will ask you, "Why haven't you claimed these promises?" And as you sit in that horrible room getting your next chemo treatment, you will think - Why haven't I?
- Or someone will promise hope for your marriage. They have the secrets to heal your marriage, but it will cost you! It almost feels like someone is making a lot of money off your broken marriage, but you are so desperate you will pay it.

The question is not whether you ever hear the voice of false teachers. You hear their voices all day long; your kids hear their voices all day long. The real question is - can you tell the difference between truth and lies?

Remember Paul's charge to Titus in vs. 5: 1) set in order what remains and 2) appoint elders in every city. In Crete the churches were broken and twisted. "Set straight" comes from the Greek term *ortho* (where we get the word the "orthodontics" and "orthopedics"). These churches were all twisted up and needed to be properly aligned and healed.

How could these Cretan Christians identify these false teachers? Well, the Apostle Paul doesn't pull any punches with false teachers, he never does. Neither does Jesus. Neither should you. Paul tells you exactly how you can identify these false teachers.

**Titus 1:10--For there are many rebellious people, idle talkers, and deceivers, especially those with Jewish connections.** Paul says these false teachers are “full of meaningless talk.” These false teachers teach nonsense and they are gifted in peddling nonsense. Idle talkers and deceivers prey on the things you want most out of life. They have the answers you have been looking for, what you want most for your kids and family - security, protection and provision.

The NET Bible says that many of these false teachers have Jewish connections (it literally says, “especially the ones of the circumcision”). In the early church, there were Jewish groups that would follow Paul from church to church and try to convince vulnerable, new Christians that Jesus wasn’t enough. These Judaizers would preach opposite of the Gospel and they continued to want to divide the church in two groups: the circumcised and the not circumcised. They preached that the path of Jesus had to go through the gates of Judaism (Acts 15:1, Gal 5:11, 6:12-13), that you need to be circumcised and follow the dietary restrictions and the holy days to be saved (Titus 1:14, 15, 3:9).

**Titus 1:11--who must be silenced because they mislead whole families by teaching for dishonest gain what ought not to be taught.** What do we do with false teachers in the church? Paul uses *epistomizo* to describe what he is asking Titus to do. *Epistomizo* means you gag them, silence them, prevent them from spreading false teaching and you protect the flock. Why does Paul want Titus to silence false teachers? Because they aren’t good hearted, they mislead whole families by their teaching. They are disrupting Christian households and leading young believers astray and they are doing it for money. Chuck Swindoll (Titus, pg. 315) says, “Often false teachers fall under the same spell they cast over their followers. They adopt a brash, shameless spirit of entitlement when demanding financial support. As their financial base grows broader and deeper, false teachers naturally become more flamboyant, even eccentric; they lack the moral compass and checkpoints of Scripture and community.” Paul says - we don’t peddle the Word of God! We are not trying to make a buck by manipulating people spiritually. In the sight of God, we speak in Christ. (2 Cor. 2:17)

**Titus 1:12-13a--A certain one of them, in fact, one of their own prophets, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Such testimony is true.** Paul quotes a mysterious Cretan pagan prophet named Epimenides. The irony of Paul’s statement is this - this prophet is from Crete and he proclaims, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This the crazy land of Crete - lies of liars, but this liar is telling the truth because Cretans really don’t have morals. They steal and are “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”

**Titus 1:13b-14--For this reason rebuke them sharply that they may be healthy in the faith and not pay attention to Jewish myths and commands of people who reject the truth.** Paul tells Titus to rebuke these false teachers sharply, but with the hope that they would become healthy and be restored to faith. In Crete there was probably a combination of Greek philosophy with Jewish mythology that led to the false teaching. I call it rabbit-trail theology. People still do it today. They take an obscure story in Scripture or a very minor point in Bible and they build their whole theology on it. One of the most significant signs of our maturity is that we aren’t “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” (Eph. 4:14)

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### **ARE YOU SUSCEPTIBLE TO FALSE TEACHING?**

Of course you are! As long as our hearts yearn for security, protection and provision, there will always be voices, false teachers offering things that falsely claim to mitigate these deep needs.

The question is not whether you ever hear the voices of false teachers. You hear their voices all day long; your kids hear their voices all day long. The real questions are:

1. Can you tell if the voices speak truth or lies?
2. Are you distracted by false voices and teaching this morning?
3. Can you hear Jesus’ authoritative voice in all the chatter?
4. Is your heart trained to cling to the words that come out of Jesus’ mouth?