

Titus 1:10–16

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[0 : 00] chapter 1, verses 10 through 16. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.

They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.

They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Thank you, Adam.

[1 : 08] It is a delight, really, to see our young people lead us in this way and serve in this way, and it is our desire as the congregation that all God's people serve all God's people.

And we pray that it would be increasing within us. Well, let me pray as we turn to the word. Father, your word promises this, that this is to the one to whom you would look, he or she who are humble and contrite in spirit and tremble at your word.

And so, Father, in these next moments, we want to tremble, certainly out of awe, that the God of heaven would speak to men and women, young and old on earth, that we want to tremble in reverence, knowing that you are our creator and we are just but mere creatures.

And so, would our hearts come before you with a posture of prostrate, really, in worship? We want to hear you speak. Help us, we pray.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I had the joy and privilege of attending college, I'll say it, in the promised land of California.

[2 : 40] And it happened to be in the city of Santa Barbara, California. Now, Santa Barbara, California is located on the coast, the central coast of California.

And my dorm room was literally from here to probably the back doors to the ocean. And each night, if I slept with the windows open, which you could do in California, summer, winter, spring, fall, I would hear the waves crashing against the cliffs.

And on occasion, I don't run, but I would walk along the beach, the cliffside. And you would come across signage, and it would just be warning.

And it would say, warning, beware of sharp cliffs. And every now and then, you would see a picture of a stick figure falling from a cliff.

Warning, beware. And those signs existed because along the way, if you walked and you were to stumble or fall, it could be fatal.

[3 : 52] It could lead to death. And so you would always be careful, especially going out there at night, which college students do for all sorts of unnecessary reasons.

But you would be mindful that there was a cliff there. And I opened that way this morning because this morning's text is a warning sign.

It's a beware. Watch out. And if you were to imagine, it has a stick figure falling. And it's not necessarily falling to temporal, earthly death, but I can envision it falling to eternal condemnation, death.

It's a warning. And if you've walked into Christ's church for the first time this morning, I want to let you know you've entered in the middle of a series that we've simply titled A Church Worth Joining.

It's a 10-part series, and we're in week three. And we are here working our way through the book of Titus. And you might be like, what do you mean working our way through the book of Titus?

[5 : 04] As a sidebar, you may be curious what type of church this is, Christ Church Chicago. Who are we in practice and in conviction? Well, we are a church that works systematically, methodically, chronologically, and consecutively through biblical text.

We believe that the Bible is inspired and it's necessary for all of life. I grew up going to a church that preached just the highlights.

And you live in a world, we live in a world of social media where we only want to see highlights. But we are not a church that preaches just highlights.

We are a church that works verse by verse and line by line because it guards us from showing you just the highlights. Because we want to show you the Bible in all its fullness.

We don't, we believe the Christian faith requires more than just likes and follows, as we'll find out this morning. To help you get oriented, to help us get reoriented, Titus is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a younger pastor.

[6 : 21] Titus, who was charged with oversight with newly found churches on the island of Crete. And the purpose of the letter in short is this, so that the church would grow in truth and in godliness, all matters pertaining to their salvation.

Last week, we were served with a sermon titled Leadership Matters. Leadership Matters, establishing the reality that as leadership goes, so goes the church.

Well, I've chosen to tag the sermon this morning, Beware of Bad Leaders. Beware of Bad Leaders. Bad leaders, Paul will tell us, sit within congregations, and even more frightfully, they lead churches. And this is the warning Paul gives to Titus, a young pastor, as he's charged to appoint new leaders. Beware, there are bad ones. And though the passage may seem more readily applied to church leadership, it certainly applies to us who come under church leadership.

[7 : 35] It's a pressing point because it's not inconceivable to see that one day we will have to elect and appoint new leaders. you may not know, but four of our elders that we're prayed for this morning have served as elders for 27 years.

Yes, longer than your lifetime. 27 years and counting and not tired. I look at it.

But it's conceivable that in the near future we'll be called to elect new leaders. And if we fail to take these verses into account, we may find ourselves with bad leaders.

So this morning, the Bible gives us a warning sign. Beware of bad leaders. and gives us three things that we can use to detect them in order not to be duped or manipulated.

Three things, three facets of a bad leader we are to detect from these verses. Paul writes to show us this, what they are, what they do, and what they want.

[8 : 54] What they are, what they do, or what they want. And if you want the alliterative version, Paul says, beware of their character. Beware of their conduct.

And beware of their... What was it? I took it from...

Oh. Beware of their cravings. Beware of their character. Beware of their conduct. Beware of their cravings. And we'll tackle it in that order.

Beware of their character. From the opening verse in verse 10, what we find, what's important to note is it isn't a few. That Paul wants us to know that there are many of these individuals.

It's not a minority group or an insignificant number. They were a large number, many who had embedded themselves in the church. They were teaching unsound doctrine, contradicting the true and trustworthy word from the apostles.

[10 : 05] It's not some small disruption. But it required Titus to boldly, according to verses 9 and 13, to rebuke them, to confront them. The effect of these bad leaders was so harmful that they were to be silenced.

Literally, their mouths are to be stopped or muzzled or gagged. What they are, they are bad. What we find is bad leaders have bad character.

And these bad leaders behave in such a way that pollutes and diseases the entire life of the congregation. They are, according to verse 10, they are insubordinate. Other translations have used the word disobedience.

They are those who reject authority. They are dishonest and misleading. They are deceivers, those that fool and trick people.

In Crete, specifically, you find at the end of verse 10, they belong to the circumcision party. Members of the circumcision party are likely Jews who have professed the Christian faith, but still held onto the necessity of religious ritual, particularly that of circumcision.

[11:16] In their eyes, salvation required faith, and also adherence to Jewish regulations. They are not only of the circumcision, but they are also Cretan.

And Cretan, one of their own philosophers or prophets said of Cretans, they are liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. The source of the quote is arguably from the 6th century B.C., possibly even the 2nd century B.C., but what they are saying is Cretans have this reputation of being deceptive.

They are liars. They are evil beasts, wild, untamed, rebellious. They are lazy, gluttons, slothful, and indulgent. Other cultural sayings from the time went along the lines of this way.

The island of Crete had no wild animals because it was inhabited by wild people. These bad leaders are those, according to verse 15, who had defiled minds and corrupted consciousness.

They have little internal change. They were just testable and disobedient. Their character is awful, appalling, and ungodly.

[12:33] And allow me to paint this picture because it's hard to imagine. It's the first century. Jesus has died, or Jesus has died, risen again, and ascended. And imagine with me you're in a world of the island of Crete.

There are certainly Jewish inhabitants. Judaism ruled parts of Crete. And there were few converts to Christianity that would begin to emerge.

They came out of a devout Judaism. They upheld strict standards. They yielded only to the high priest and to Jerusalem. And after a recent profession of faith, they find themselves in a house church because in those days there were no buildings of this sort.

They met and assembled in homes. Now a small group of believers meets in this home. And they begin worship and prayer and studying the scriptures.

believers. And all of them have recently emerged from Judaism. Among them is someone who is incredibly learned in Judaism.

[13:38] Charming and charismatic and highly educated. And he takes on the teaching responsibility. He is experienced in Judaism, but he's an infant when it comes to Christianity.

He does not know the apostles. He's never met Jesus. He's heard a few sermons here or there, so he's a little familiar with the apostolic teaching. And the church begins to look at this individual for leadership.

He's gaining social capital, social credibility. He's well liked because he's charismatic. He's beginning to get popular. And even though he knows little about the Christian faith, he teaches what he knows.

and over time he runs out of what he knows about the Christian faith and he begins bringing in content from his days of Judaism.

He begins teaching about the necessity of Jewish law, the primacy of Jewish fables and myths, and the requirement of rituals for moral purity. A community that was founded upon grace all of a sudden begins to understand themselves as a community founded upon law and works.

[14:56] It's a house church that was rescued and redeemed by the cross, but now it has become a household or a house or a family in verse 11 that is governed by the regulations of Judaism.

This leader is not only teaching that which is contrary to sound doctrine, but he is living an unchanged life. He's a Christian merely in words. He's a cretin in works and deeds.

He's been unchanged by the new faith. His character is still terrible. Bad leaders have bad character. That is what they are.

And it's worth pausing here because what we need to remember and understand is genuine Christianity is transformative.

It begins internally. One doesn't become a Christian so that their life stays the same. Just a heads up if you're considering it today.

[16:02] Christianity by definition is a reordering. It's a renovation, a divine renovation of sorts. The Spirit of God comes into the people of God and renovates the heart, moves the furniture, changes the affections, transforms the will, makes you aware of sin, gives you new habits and passions and practices.

You know you're a Christian when internal changes happen. To take the language of chapter 1, verse 8, you know what you're a Christian when you become more and more hospitable, when you

begin to love good more than evil, when you begin to demonstrate more and more self-control, when you behave uprightly and disciplined, when you hold firm, when this 30 minutes matters to you, when you want to hold firm and grab and seize the Bible.

That's how you know you're a Christian. This is the transformative effect of the Spirit of God. Christ changes our character.

However, for these leaders, their character was unchanged. They are therefore, according to verse 16, unfit for any good work, disqualified, as the athletic word, disqualified from any participation. The bad character exhibited by bad leaders makes them unfit to lead. What they are. Secondly, what they do, their conduct.

[17:48] Their conduct. Bad leaders have bad conduct. Interestingly here, these leaders are instructors and teachers. You have likely had one.

You may have had more than one. My children tell me they have them all the time, but if you've been in school long enough, you would have likely come across what you would label as a bad teacher.

There are many places in life where you come under the instruction of another, perhaps as a bad teacher or even a bad coach. Sometimes they are incredible, sometimes you know you're in it for a long quarter or a long academic year.

What makes for a bad teacher? Now there's all sorts of things and we don't need to list them here. But what if, at least in this text, the most awful teacher would be the one who does not know the material they are teaching.

In Crete, these individuals are noted to be empty talkers. They talk a lot but actually say nothing. They are meaningless talkers.

[19:00] They teach nothing substantial. They are teachers of nonsense. They may have charisma but they have no content. They are what students tend to do. They are the fluff that you add to your paper to meet the length requirements but it actually does nothing to the content, right?

Everyone's done it. I need to get to this number of pages. I've said everything I need to say but I will just extend sentences. I will, I don't know, I'll admit what I, I changed margins.

I increased font size. I did all sorts of things. But that's what they are in speech. They add to the content but it's meaningless.

They are, in the language of Timothy, irreverent babblers. with their instruction they are upsetting entire families, whole families.

This could mean one of two things. They are creating literal factions within a biological blood-related family. It could be this. An entire family has come to faith in Christ and now the bad teachers are coming up and dividing the family in matters of instruction.

[20:15] They're pitting family members against one another, maybe basing teaching on non-essential elements of the Christian faith. Circumcision is certainly an example. Upsetting whole families could also mean upsetting entire churches or the local church because as I mentioned, first century churches met in homes, not in buildings.

Households are where congregations met and family could refer to these churches. Regardless of whether it's biological families or faith families, they are disruptive and divisive.

They are devoted to Jewish myths and the commands of people. These are bad teachers that have majored on minor things. They have displayed central truths for preferences on the periphery.

They are caught up in chapter 3, verse 9, foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law. They turn human traditions into divine commands.

See, this type of people, this type of misplaced religious fervor even existed in Jesus' day. You may recall Mark 7, the religious establishment of Jesus' day.

[21:34] Jesus' disciples are caught eating without washing their hands. I catch my kids doing it all the time. But in those days, it wasn't for hygiene reasons.

It was actually for law reasons. The religious leaders come to Jesus and they say, hey Jesus, how come your disciples don't wash their hands before they eat?

The commandments, the human commandments require that they wash before they eat because the understanding is there's all these contaminants around.

It could be people, Gentiles, non-Jews. It could be defiled people. It could be all sorts of things. And if you touch those things and ingest them, they actually make you impure, unholy, unrighteous, unclean.

So your disciples ought to wash their hands. They believe that if you ingest evil from the outside, it actually made you evil on the inside.

[22 : 45] And certainly, there's some truth to it because we know bad company corrupts. But Jesus explains what actually makes a person evil is not what comes from the outside in, but it actually starts in here and goes out.

The heart is the source of our evil thoughts, our sexual immorality, our inclination to theft, murder, adultery, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these, according to Mark 7, evil things come from within and they are what defile a person. And here in Titus, the same mistake is being made.

They appear, according to verse 15, to be insisting on adhering to some human tradition to maintain moral purity. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but their minds, their consciences are defiled.

See, whether it be the washing of hands, the practice of circumcision or something else, Paul dismisses it and says, no, no, no. That's actually not what defiles a person.

[23 : 56] What defiles a person is what comes from within. And if your mind is unbelieving, if your conscience is defiled, then everything you do is impure and evil.

Instead, we Christians understand that when the heart is made pure, we remain pure despite human traditions. Christians. In Crete, the warning was that there are those undermining sound doctrine through wayward instruction, insisting on human teaching and traditions, practices required by the Christian life.

Unless we think it doesn't occur today, allow me to share a moment in my life. Right? I remember I was 17 at the time.

It was in journalism class and at the time we had a journalism lab with computers way back when. And I had a classmate named Chris who was also a professing Christian.

In conversation late one night while we're in the journalism lab, he tells me how to become a Christian. And he says, imagine this, Bing, you're looking to buy a bicycle. So you save up your allowance, you rake leaves, you mow lawns, you set up your lemonade stand, you wash cars, you have a bake sale.

[25 : 29] I didn't bake at the time but I'm just saying. But you do your best to store up what you need to buy the bike. And the day comes and you bring all your money in your pockets in your piggy bank, all the money you've saved to the bike shop.

It's been months, if not years, in the making. And there on the counter you empty your piggy bank, empty your pockets on the counter. You're filled with certainly anticipation and joy only to be met by the words from the bike shop owner that you do not have enough.

Your heart drops, your eyes begin to well up in tears only to feel your father's hand on your shoulder, hear his voice stating, I'll cover the rest.

Your heart is filled with delight and out the shop you go with your brand new bike. And I remember Chris would say, you see Bing, that's how we get into heaven. That's how we receive everlasting life.

I was moved. It sounded so compelling. It sounded so relevant. So off I go to youth group. And I'm like, hey guys, this is a great way to share about how someone receives salvation.

[26 : 50] Imagine you're looking to buy a bicycle and I tell the whole story and everyone's engaged. Captivated. Believing it's accurate and truthful.

Except, it isn't. It's not an accurate depiction of the gospel. It's not an accurate depiction of Christianity.

So my youth leader takes me aside and says, Bing, that is wrong. He literally rebuked me. That is not the gospel. I'm like, it's so good. It's so moving.

I get it. Save up all my money, do everything I can so I can get to heaven when I'm at those doors. I'm gonna empty my pockets, break down my piggy bank and if I need a little extra, dad's credit card comes over my shoulder and I'm in.

Did you catch it? It's so subtle. So small. What a story. What a lie. Because you and I will stand before that judgment seat one day and you may bring a Ferrari, you may bring a house, multiple houses, you may empty your pockets, but the reality is it doesn't matter what you bring because we all come broke with empty pockets.

[28 : 23] The gospel does not say, hey, do this, do this, work this way, add this, merit this, do all these things and if you can't make it, Jesus' blood will just top it off so you get in.

No. The gospel says, the gospel is the story of a savior who bought the bicycle for you without any of your contribution even when you were wretched and disobedient and rebellious.

But that's, you catch how it happens, right? That there are teachers, bad leaders who are bad teachers teaching what is not sound or healthy and if you don't catch it, you'll be duped and you will in being duped, you'll find yourself miserable, subtle, so subtle are the lies of the devil and yet we live lives all the time, I'm gonna buy that bike, I'm gonna buy it.

I have to demonstrate that I can buy it. We have to acquire our value, we have to earn our way, insist on washing our own hands when Jesus washes our hearts.

My friend, interestingly, was a Christian just of a different sort. He was a devout member of the Church of Latter-day Saints.

[30 : 03] He told the story with sincerity and substance, but they ended up being deceitful words, misleading, turning the hearer away from the truth.

Subtle are the ways of Satan. Beware of the content of their instruction. Beware of what they do. Beware of their conduct.

Bad leaders have bad conduct. And lastly, beware of what they want. Very quickly, beware of what they want. Their craving, what they are craving.

Bad leaders are detected by their character, their conduct, and what they crave. And it's made explicit in verse 11. What is their motivation?

Motivation. They teach for shameful gain. Shameful gain. These leaders are teachers who exploit the community of believers for profit.

[31 : 09] In the first century it is certainly monetary. Monetary gain. It's a type of behavior that's obsessed with money. Money that goes beyond livelihood and marked by excess.

They are in the business of religious instruction because of greed and selfish gain. One commentator writes, beware of ministers motivated by money. They love it.

They crave it. They talk about it excessively. Bruce Winter, an Australian New Testament scholar, well known for his scholarship in first century Greco-Roman life, said, there were many of this sort. And he notes this that's so interesting. He records, there was a speaking circuit where charismatic leaders would speak for money. And he writes this, quote, I quote, they were known to have little regard for education.

Instead, they were admired for their possessions. These were teachers that were known for their possessions rather than their message.

[32 : 17] beware of those who exude greed and gain over godliness. It is shameful gain because it leverages Jesus for self-profit.

It's shameful because it discolors the good news to turn a profit. It's shameful because the message of Jesus becomes a message that demands your finances instead of a message that demands your faith.

And as the world mocks affluent pastors for their lavish and luxurious lifestyles, the gospel is shamed. Jesus is shamed.

The church is shamed. Our weakness is weakened and we grieve because the church has been warned of these bad leaders.

It's the preacher who takes advantage of your suffering and says, I could promise you deliverance if you give me this.

[33 : 18] I'll heal for money. It's the preacher that promises success and miss failure. You want a job? I can get you a job if you give me this.

It's the preacher that assures you that your loved ones are eternally secure if you only see money to the church. It plagued the church in the first century in Titus. It drew the outrage of the church reformers in the 16th century when indulgences were required in the economy of salvation.

It should rightly draw our displeasure in the 21st century. God forbid that this pulpit, if there ever be a day that this pulpit is recognized more for the possessions than for the pastoral message.

May the three pastors die before that happens. Silver and gold I don't have. But what I do have, I give to you.

The most valuable thing you could possibly have, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. And the warning sounds in the first century and also in the 21st century.

[34 : 43] And what's incredibly ironic and sad is we're called to make sure we're not duped by these leaders.

but I think this passage also causes us to pause for self-examination because apparently according to verse 16 they profess to know God but they deny him by their works.

There is in the world of the church counterfeit Christians. There is in the world of the church fake Christians.

They profess to know God but deny him by their works. And the warning for you and I is not only to beware of those people but to examine yourself.

There are those who can live in such a way to profess to know him, to follow him, to believe in him and in their conduct deny him, denounce him, defame him, disavow him in behavior.

[36 : 11] This is the great hypocrisy. Acknowledging him with our lips, denying him with our lifestyle. You and I, the text wants to remind us, can be forgeries.

We can be fake, counterfeit. Outside we may talk a great talk but there is no evidence of you walking the walk.

You can sure speak or talk the game but the moment I hand you the ball and put you on the court it will become quickly evident that you are not the ball player you claim to be.

You can tell me you believe but you must show me how you behave. You can tell me all the doctrines you know but show me by all the duties you keep.

You can explain what is orthodoxy but you must show me in orthopraxy. You speak of faith but do you have the works?

[37 : 28] Can such a faith save you? And though our hypocrisy may be great, the text doesn't leave us hopeless and I'll close with this. Though we wound Jesus greatly with our hypocritical actions and grieve his spirit we are not eternally rejected and abandoned.

This is the glory of this text. Bad leaders, deceptive teachers, apparent enemies, hypocrites, they ought to be silenced but they are not cast away and discarded.

Did you catch it? We recognize them. We rebuke them. Why? Why? Verse 13. That they may become sound in faith.

The word sound in faith is a medical term that they may become healthy again. We recognize them. We rebuke them with the hope that they would be restored and corrected.

These bad teachers are unwell. bad leaders are unwell in faith and need to be brought back to good health. And it comes through the medicine of rebuke and strong correction.

[38 : 40] And in receiving the rebuke they can be remedied and restored. And the great beauty of this passage is I could be a Cretan.

I could be a bad leader and there are days where I probably am. But in the economy of God counterfeits can be corrected.

Forgeries can become genuine. Imitations and frauds can be transformed into the beauty and the image of God's beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

So beware. Beware of bad leaders. Beware of their character. Beware of their conduct.

Beware of their cravings. Beware. Beware of the individual self.

[39 : 47] Beware of your behavior. Beware of your conduct. Beware of your cravings. Well let us pray.

Father we thank you for the warning sign. And as we have read the sign and spoken of it we pray that we would take it to heart.

That in the mercy of God you would spare this congregation from bad leaders. That you would spare this congregation really from counterfeit Christians.

That we would be those who not only profess to know you but live in ways that show we do know you and love you.

And so keep us and watch over us we pray and empower us to do so. And as we stand and as we sing in response may our words stir our heart to greater affection towards you.

[41 : 05] We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. And why wait