

Silencing False Teachers! - part 2

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Date: 22 September 2024

Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0:00] Amen. Amen.

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Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. As we've spent the past several weeks in the first chapter of Titus dissecting the qualifications of elders, we're reminded again this past week of the difficulty of the high standard that is set for these leaders in the church.

[29:22] On Thursday, September 19th, 73-year-old lead pastor of Trinity Bible Church in Dallas, Texas, Dr. Stephen J. Lawson was indefinitely removed from all ministry activities due to an inappropriate relationship he had with a woman.

While many people may not know or have heard of Dr. Lawson, he's not without a tremendous amount of influence. He's the founder and president of One Passion Ministries, which is a training ministry for pastors in the form of expository preaching.

He's the dean of the Doctor of Ministry Studies at the Master's Seminary in California. He's a teaching fellow and board member at Ligonier Ministries, which is the ministry founded by R.C. Sproul.

He's an author of 33 books and the host of the podcast, Men Who Rocked the World, among other responsibilities he's had. Personally, some of the ministries that Dr. Lawson has participated in has helped shape, refine, and shape my own preaching ministry.

So this was a particular blow for me to find this out. The moral standard set up for leaders in the church is hard to reach and maintain, especially in our own strength.

[30 : 45] The spirit must be actively working in our lives to teach and sanctify us, because there is a lot at stake. And this man, who has impacted thousands of people, many thousands of people, now has let them down and has disgraced the name of Christ.

Austin Duncan referenced this at the Men of the Word Conference, which happened just a few days ago, a conference that Dr. Lawson was expected to be the opening speaker at.

And he made this statement that stuck out to me. He said, And you think about that.

I mean, over the years, how many people have been found in scandal, disqualified from ministry for the different decisions that they have made and the actions they've carried out, the disgrace that they've brought on the name of Christ.

And the world is quick and long to cling to it. And, you know, to pull down the name of Christ and the reputation of Christianity as a whole because of these men and their actions.

[32 : 10] So I'll just say that again, what this man, Austin Duncan, who is an associate pastor at Grace Community Church out in California, made and was leading this conference.

He said, The integrity and trustworthiness of the church's leadership is essential to the credibility of its witness. And those who are in leadership must take note of that.

And 1 Corinthians 10, verse 12, you know, take heed lest you fall. Right? So we need to be careful. So now coming to Titus 1, integrity and trustworthiness is not just essential for a church's witness, but it is necessary for its protection. An elder cannot merely be a hired hand who's going to bail out when things get hard.

He must be a good shepherd who's willing to protect the sheep at all costs. And looking at Titus 1, verses 10 through 16, we see that an elder must protect the sheep from false doctrine.

[33 : 14] So let's go ahead and read. Actually, we're going to start in verse 9 through the end of the chapter. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

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. Then going into chapter 2, verse 1. But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

[34 : 42] What do we learn about the reality of false teachers from this text? Well, as we looked at last week, first that there are many false teachers. The Apostle Paul does not say to Titus that they'll pop up from time to time, or you'll get a few, or this will occasionally happen.

But there are many. They're always present one way or another. We're also told that they are insubordinate.

They do their own thing. The church can't control them. They don't respond to spiritual authority.

They don't respond to the authority of the elders in the church.

They don't even respond to the control of Scripture or the Holy Spirit's conviction in their lives.

There is no authority over them. They themselves establish their own or are their own authority.

Those were the two points we looked at last week. There are many. They're insubordinate. Now we pick up with they're empty talkers and deceivers. The NIV offers the translation, they're full of meaningless talk.

[35 : 56] Simply put, they talk too much. In the words of Shakespeare, they are full of sound and fury signifying nothing. Not only do they talk a lot, but they also have the intention of misleading others.

Their words are smooth and they cleverly disguise their falsehoods in terms that make them seem truthful. Frequently using biblical words and phrases that are distorted and taken out of context.

I've mentioned before that I've been visited by this one individual Jehovah's Witness. His name is Keith. Several times we met, I think, last spring of 2023.

I was making a dump run and he showed up in his SUV. There were four of them all finely dressed. A couple guys in suits. A couple ladies in their dresses sitting in the car.

I was concerned when I saw the guys in suits. I didn't know what to make of it. My wife is convinced that my family has ties to the mafia. I don't know if that's true, but I'm not going to deny it either.

[37:04] So thankfully that wasn't the case. And he just wanted to get out and, you know, proselytize me as a Jehovah's Witness and bring me along. So we've had several discussions.

I haven't heard from him in months. Until the other day when I was in the office. And trying to get work done in the midst of chaos and craziness and all that. I get a text from my wife.

Keith is on his way up. I was like, what? I haven't heard from him in months. And he's on his way up. And he's bold. For a Jehovah's Witness to walk into a church building.

To sit down with a pastor to talk. About their doctrine. That shows boldness and confidence in what he believes. Or what he knows about their faith.

And he's been at it for 40 years. So he knows his scriptures really well. I say his scriptures, not necessarily the word. You know, because they have their own version of the Bible.

[38:04] And so he came down the hall and sat down and we talked. He had an apprentice with him named Cyrus. And so we talked a bit. And it was probably, I say a bit.

It was probably over an hour. I'm a talker. And he's a talker. And so he'd bring something to the table. And I'd poke a hole in his argument.

But he'd have the patchwork to put over that. And so there's this constant back and forth and such. And I say all that to say this. Is that they use terms that sound biblical.

Or they're biblical terms. And they'll use phrases that are Christian phrases. That we may be, that we are used to. And, you know, so we say them without, like, you know, we know what we mean by what we say them.

When we say them. But when a Jehovah's Witness, when Keith says these words, I have to ask him to define what he means. Because they're not the same. Or they have a slightly different take and understanding.

[39:12] For instance, in Isaiah 9, 6, you know, you've got the passage where he shall be called, you know, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, Mighty God, Everlasting Lord, right?

I brought him to the passage. He knew that that was talking about Jesus. And so I said, all right, well, you know, and we're talking about the deity of Christ. And I said, well, how do you deal with this Mighty God phrase that he's called Mighty God?

And he spun it. He said, well, he's not Almighty God. Oh, okay. I see where you're going with that. And so that's the thing. Like, they use phrases and words and such that sound close but have a different meaning.

And they'll give you that meaning. They'll give you that definition. And it sounds like, oh, yeah, okay, I can see that. And all that. You've got to be careful. These are, you know, these false teachers. They are empty talkers and they're deceivers.

They've got lots of words. They've got lots of answers. They've done their homework. And when they go in and they talk to you, like, we want to, you know, out of concern for their soul, for sure, like, we might say, oh, well, I invite a man to, you know, to sit down and have a cup of coffee or whatever.

[40:25] Or, you know, and I say, you can have your time and I want my time. They have no interest in giving you any time. They'll take their time and your time, too.

So we need to be very careful and guarded in that. That we're not just giving them the opportunity to talk. Because given enough time to talk, they start to sound convincing. And you can easily, I don't want to say easily, but you can be led astray.

So you've got to be careful. They're empty talkers and deceivers. And so, you know, what this reveals, and my experience with Keith has revealed, is that a false teacher can take an inkling of truth and produce a harvest of false doctrine.

It can be the smallest bit of truth, you know, the kernel, that little bit, that seed of truth, and then harvest a whole false doctrine off of it. You've got to be careful.

So we must be careful not to give a free ear to those who are not honest with the whole counsel of God. And one way that elders oppose false teachers is by overpowering them with truth taught

clearly and precisely.

[41 : 35] One way that we refute false teachers is by equipping you with the truth of the Word of God divided rightly, appropriately.

Right? Turn to Matthew 4 real quick. So Matthew 4, let's read verses 1 through 11. Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit.

Pause for a second. Anyone in my Sunday school class, this is your initial reading for next week.

You can think about it throughout the week. Verse 1.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.

But he answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you.

[42 : 45] And on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. Jesus said to him, Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.

Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, All these I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.

Then Jesus said to him, Be gone, Satan, for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve. Then the devil left him, and behold angels came and were ministering to him.

You see here in this passage, in this text, you know what I'm getting at, you know what I'm going to say before I say it, because you've heard it so many times, but Jesus as he is being tempted, as the devil is bringing one temptation after another and testing him, Jesus is constantly going back to the word of God to refute the arguments, to refute what Satan was saying and bringing up.

And notice in that second temptation, right, verse 5, when he takes him to the holy city and sets him on the pinnacle of the temple, he quotes scripture to Jesus.

[44 : 04] The great deceiver uses the word of God and twists it. Matthew 22, verse 29, Jesus in answering the Sadducees, he answers them, You are wrong because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God.

We must be firmly grounded in the truth of the word of God and what it says and what it means and know what it means.

You know, what do you believe as a Christian and why do you believe it? I think if you're in church long enough and often enough, you've been to enough Sunday schools, enough sermons, you know, or you grew up in a Christian home, you know the right answers to say, well, I know what I'm supposed to believe as a Christian.

But why do you believe it? Can you back it up? Can you make the biblical case for it? Can you? Here's just a, this came up the other day, right? So can you make a biblical case for the deity of Jesus? Sounds easy, doesn't it? Put yourself on the spot.

[45 : 20] I'm sure you're being flooded with verses right now, aren't you? How well do we actually know what we say we believe?

As an elder, as a teacher in the church, it's my job to try to make that clear to you and to help you along. If you don't know something, let me help you along.

Let me and Josh know we're here, you know, to assist. False teachers will not always be silenced when confronted by God's truth, but his truth will always be the primary weapon for combating error. We must know it. We must commit ourselves to it. It's not about what somebody says. It's not about what some guy says, what you read in some book somewhere. What does the word of God say? What does God say himself? I feel too often we have other authorities in our lives and we put the word of God aside. It happens so frequently and it bugs me.

[46 : 24] We need to bring the word of God back to bear and be in the front and center authority in our lives and let every other authority bow down to it. 2 Corinthians 10 verses 4 and 5 say, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but of divine power to destroy strongholds.

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ. That's our weapons.

It's not flesh. It's divine power. It's the word of God. We need to bring everything in subjection to this. Turn to Jeremiah 14 real quick.

We're going to look at a few verses over there. And forgive me if I sound weird while I'm talking. I'm trying not to cough throughout this whole thing.

So Jeremiah 14. So how does God feel about false teachers? How do you think he feels about false teachers, guys? Would you, like, God hates false teachers.

[47:31] We focus so much on the love of God and love for people. God hates false teachers. Can I just say that? He hates them. Jeremiah 14.14. We're going to go here, then we're going to go to Jeremiah 23.

Just look at a few verses of God's opinion of false teachers. Jeremiah 14.14. The Lord said to me, the prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them.

They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. Oh.

It's a warning from God. I want to keep reading. Verse 15. Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy on my name, although I did not send them, and who say, sword and famine shall not come upon this land.

By sword and famine, these prophets shall be consumed. There's a warning. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them, them, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, for I will pour out their evil upon them.

[48:41] God does not, he does not put up with it. There is a time right now where we have false teachers, where God is permitting these people to continue to exist.

But the day is going to come where he is going to pour out their evil on their heads. That's what God thinks of false teachers. Turn in Jeremiah 23. Starting in verse 2.

I've just got a few verses picked out here. Jeremiah 23, verse 2. Actually, I'll start in verse 1. Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, declares the Lord.

By the way, when God says woe, that's a very serious word of condemnation spoken towards an individual. It's not just a word to be put into a sentence, but it has a deep meaning of judgment and condemnation towards somebody or somebodies.

You got Jesus with his woes towards Capernaum and other cities, right? And Matthew. So, Jeremiah 23, verse 1. Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture, declares the Lord.

[49:54] Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people, you have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them.

Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the Lord. Woo! God is like, no. I'm coming after you. Go down to verse 21.

I guess that's like two pages over. He says, I did not send the prophets, yet they ran. I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied.

If they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds.

He's saying, I've not sent these people. They've gone on their own accord for their own purposes to destroy and scatter. Had they been in my council, my people would have benefited from that.

[50:51] But these people haven't. Verse 32, or verse 31, excuse me, Behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who use their tongues and declares the Lord.

Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, declares the Lord, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness when I did not send them or charge them. So they do not profit this people at all, declares the Lord. We'll stop there. There's way more we could get into there in Jeremiah. But the fact is this, God hates false teachers.

He detests them and He will bring their evil upon them. People who go running into a situation or go running into a teaching opportunity without having consulted God first or without actually bringing the Word of God in a situation.

And let me tell you something, that is a big, that's a big thing that's happening in our churches today.

[51:54] You've got people who get up and they've got their little sermonettes or they've got their TED Talks, they throw them open, they maybe read a verse of Scripture, take it completely out of its context and make it an application that doesn't even make sense but it makes the people who are listening to Him feel good.

Let me tell you, God's going to bring their evil upon them for their misappropriation of His Word. God hates false teachers and they will answer to Him.

We must warn them. Prophesying falsehood in the name of a false God is evil enough. But false prophesying in the name of the true God is immeasurably worse.

Because you don't have to answer to the false God. But you will stand in judgment before the one true God. We must take warning of this as well.

Back to Titus 1. So there are many of these false teachers who are insubordinate. They don't have authorities over them. They're empty talkers and deceivers.

[52:59] They have many words with which to deceive. And it says, especially those of the circumcision party. This is the observation. This is the takeaway I took from this.

These ones that Paul is talking to specifically for Titus I think applies for us here is that they come from a common background. The circumcision party, the Jewish backgrounds, I mean, we have the Old Testament in our background and foundation.

And you go, you know, if you give the, well, I'll just go ahead with my notes rather than going off the cuff. Excuse me. I'm trying to hold back from coughing. Jews within the church called Judaizers.

So Judaizers attempted to infiltrate the church with their teachings and to obligate all believers to Jewish legalism, basically.

They believed Jesus is the Messiah but also believed that everyone needed to keep the law. That's what a Judaizer was. They wanted to impose Old Testament standards, ceremonial standards and rabbinic traditions on Christians.

[54:09] And this was brought up in the book of Acts in Acts 15 at the Council of Jerusalem. They dealt with these people and some of their doctrine, ultimately claiming that the Judaizer doctrines were out of line, that they were not consistent with what had been given to the apostles by God to give to the churches.

But as is true with false teachers, being told they're wrong didn't stop them from infiltrating churches and bringing their doctrine with them. And here we see that they had infiltrated the church in Crete and Titus had to deal with them.

Paul's concerned about these believers, these young believers, as they're hearing the gospel. Now you've got somebody who, oh, this guy's been a Jew forever. He's known God since he was born.

And he's trying to infiltrate them with some doctrine, some teaching. Hey, you need to do this. You need to keep this law. You need to do, you know, wash this right and all that.

It doesn't matter what it was. The fact is that they were bringing legalism to bear also with the grace of God in the gospel. They're saying you're not truly saved unless you're also a Jew in these practices.

[55:18] So many false teachers today, you know, this is what we can take away from this. Many false teachers today claim a similar background or origin as the church and try to sneak their doctrine in through the back door. I'd say Jehovah's Witnesses fall in that.

Well, we have the same scriptures, right? We've got the same background, the same origin story. We all believe in Jesus. Mormons, a different twist on these doctrines.

You know, we have false teachers who are in the churches that are saying, hey, we all believe the same thing. This is just a little different than what you're used to, but this is how it's truly understood. And it's these little bits of concessions, when we give these concessions, that we can be led astray and taken off the path fully. Thus, we must know what we believe as Christians and why we believe it.

We must be well acquainted with the counsel of God. And it is up to God-fearing elders to lead the way through their sound teaching. And the last thing I wanted to bring up in this section, because it's more of the same up through verse 16, but verse 11 is that they must be silenced.

[56:28] They must be silenced. Not quieted, not ignored, silenced. That doesn't mean like, you know, you bully them.

You send Mandy to them to, hey, you know, you need to stop this. I'm going to beat you up or something. You know, it's not that. I like the way John Calvin put it in his epistle, in his commentary

on this.

He says, a good pastor ought to be on the watch so as to not to give silent permission to wicked and dangerous doctrines to make gradual progress or to allow wicked men an opportunity of spreading them.

You know, don't just sit there quietly. You know, as elders, we can't sit quietly and let false doctrine be proclaimed and said. We need to silence it, quiet it.

False teachers who seek to infiltrate the church with their teaching must be overpowered by the teaching of sound doctrine. That's where it starts.

[57 : 27] We need to be teaching sound doctrine. They must be instructed by the church to be silent, so by the elders, yes, by the church as a whole to be silent. And if necessary, they need to be banished from the assembly so that they have no opportunity of doing harm.

They need to be asked to leave and not come back. How many people are ready for that conversation to ask somebody to leave and not come back because they're teaching false doctrine?

Because a lot of us have this love for people and this, oh, well, you know, maybe if they hear the truth a little more or they need people to really come alongside them.

Yeah, they do. They need to hear the truth and they need people who know the truth to come alongside them. But they cannot, you cannot put the poison in the water. You cannot bring the poison into the church and expect it not to make an effect.

So elders, are you ready to silence people? Are you ready to leave the church when that needs to happen? Let's pray. Father, I thank you for your word and I thank you, Lord, that you make clear that you hate false teachers and you hate that they come in and lead astray your sheep.

[58 : 46] Lord, I pray that we would be diligent to proclaim the truth of your word, sound doctrine, Lord, that we would raise up this flock, Lord, to know you, to know your word thoroughly, Lord, to unashamedly proclaim the truth of the gospel and Lord, when the opportunity arises, Lord, that we would be firm to silence doctrine that is not consistent with the truth of your word, doctrine that deceives and leads astray, Lord, help us to have that boldness to stand on the foundation, on the rock that is the word of God.

We want to do so to your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.