

Titus 1:10-16

This week's paragraph finds us looking at Titus 1:10-16. The larger thought runs from verses 5 through 16, but for the sake of our approach we will consider this thought in two studies.

In our previous study, we saw the two-fold task of Elders. They are to "give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (v. 9). This two-fold task controls the flow of the Letter. In our current paragraph, Paul instructs Titus to "rebuke those who contradict sound doctrine" (v. 9). The second part of the Elders' task of instructing in sound doctrine comes out in chapter 2:1-10.

There is an intentional contrast between those appointed as Elders and those who are contradicting the teaching. The character and conduct of the Elders are antithetical to that of the false teachers.

This passage, like many, show us the function of the Elders inside of a local church.

- ²⁸ "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

Why is this function so important? What is at stake? Often the façade makes one believe everything is okay. But what we do not see is the creeping and pervasive decay of the internal soul rot. Heresy is big business. Gullible Christians allow the heretic to make merchandise of the people of God. Why is such the case? Why are we so naive? Because we do not believe Jesus is enough in this life and in the life to come. Why are we so susceptible? Because we do not believe the JESUS SEED always produces GOSPEL FRUIT, and thus we believe we are responsible to create our own happiness and victory. We have come to believe we can "do it alone," that somehow the believing community is of no consequence in the bigger scheme of God's redemptive purpose. We have believed the lie that we can have it our way.

It appears the failure is an inappropriate application of the Old Covenant to the New Covenant Christian. It is suggested that this Judaizing element offered a "next step" or "inner circle" or "deeper life" approach to the Christian life. They were agreeing that JESUS WAS NECESSARY, but taught that JESUS WAS NOT ENOUGH. More needed to be done in order to climb that ecclesiastical ladder.

If I were to ask you if you are satisfied with your life or your Christian walk, how would you respond? Depending on your theological bent, you would probably say you want more, that there is a level of frustration or dissatisfaction with your relationship both vertically and horizontally. What if I could give you five things you need to do to make everything better?

That what I offer would change your life forever? And what if this solution and promise would happen for a mere \$59.99 sent over four easy installments, and if paid right now would eliminate one of the four payments? Would you bite? Well this is what they were doing in Crete.

That same misalignment consistently shows itself in today's evangelical church. Today's church has become so use to this false teaching that what Paul attacked, many embrace. I am of the opinion that the early church struggled with "works righteousness" regularly because of the misappropriation of the Old Testament Law. If they understand its role and design, they would have no problem. This, however, was a big problem.

The descriptive of the false teacher and teaching is sobering. The outcome is tragic. Paul identifies such individuals as those who are no different from their unsaved peers (v. 12). They are just like the ungodly Cretans (v. 12). In fact, those who have the JESUS SEED always produce GOSPEL FRUIT and those without the Jesus Seed do not (v. 15). The conclusion Paul makes of such people is dreadful, "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works." (v. 16). What have they done? They have done one of two things. Either they have separated the FRUIT from the SEED or they have made the SEED a consequence of the FRUIT.

Paul identifies such people as "detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work" (v. 16). "This is the only place where this strong expression is used in the New Testament. It signifies that the life and actions of these men, who professed to be His servants, had made them hateful in the sight of God."¹ This is an **abomination** of the **JESUS works** principle. How many of these people still occupy the pulpits of many local churches? The number would shock us.

In the language of systematic theology, this theology has separated their justification [i.e. the Christ life] from their sanctification [i.e. the Christian life], or they taught that their own righteous works earn their own salvation from sin and death. They spoke of a form of Christianity that was without Christ. Jesus was necessary, but not enough. Truly, this is appalling. But more profoundly is the continued impact such thinking has on the current state of Christianity. Many today still separate one's justification from their sanctification. They identify their justification as a work of God, but openly teach their sanctification as a work of man. They separate the Christian Life from the Christ Life by seeing their justification as what God has done for them and their sanctification as what they do for God. Paul would find such teaching repugnant. Not only this, but they also confuse the order by believing their justification is based on their work for God, not God's work for them. This too is a theological abomination and a damnable heresy. Such strong language can appear harsh and foreign to the modern ear, but the apostle would have nothing to do with such teaching. Why? Because it struck at the very core of what constitutes the GOSPEL. Jesus, in his person and work, secures for his people salvation from sin and death. There is nothing for his people to "do" but humbly receive the gift.

May God help us to identify openly this error and then seek to pour deep pylons whereby we keep the main thing the main thing and not be moved by the theological error of our day. May such teaching withstand the persistent assault by the serpent's seed.

¹ Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers on Titus 1:16.