SESSION 11
LIVING WITH OPPOSITION

TITUS 1:1-5,10-16

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness, in the hope of eternal life that God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.

In his own time he has revealed his word in the preaching with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Savior: To Titus, my true son in our common faith.

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town. ... For there are many rebellious people, full of empty talk and deception, especially those from the circumcision party. It is necessary to silence them; they are ruining entire households by teaching what they shouldn’t in order to get money dishonestly.

One of their very own prophets said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith and may not pay attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people who reject the truth.

To the pure, everything is pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; in fact, both their mind and conscience are defiled. They claim to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A Paul wrote this letter to Titus around AD 62–64, one of three Pastoral Epistles written to teach Christian living in response to the gospel.

B People God chose because they received Christ

C God gives believers the direction they need so they can please Him with their lives.

D "Confidence" (NLT); "divine guarantee" (AMP)

E "He doesn’t break promises" (The Message)

F God commissioned Paul to deliver this message.

G Titus, one of Paul’s missionary companions, helped him in Corinth, Galatia, and now in Crete.

H A spiritual son, just like Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2)

I A 35-mile Grecian island, Paul passed through Crete on his way to Rome (Acts 27:7-21). Neither the island nor the church there is mentioned anywhere in the New Testament but in Acts and Titus.

J "Set right what remains unfinished" (AMP)

K False teachers who deceived believers

L Cicero wrote about Crete’s moral decadence: “Moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans ... consider highway robbery honorable” (Republic, 3.9.15).

M “Jewish folk tales” (TLB)

N The faithful who trust in Christ’s forgiveness

O They claim to be Christians but how they live reveals the true intention of their hearts.
1. SERVANT’S HEART (Titus 1:1-3)
- Paul introduced himself as a servant of God, who was called by God to share the gospel and encourage the spiritual growth of believers.
- God entrusted Paul’s work to him.

2. PURPOSEFUL ACTION (Titus 1:4-5)
- Paul addressed this letter to Titus, a person he had led to Christ.
- Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to help establish, organize, and strengthen churches.

3. OPPOSITION ADDRESSED (Titus 1:10-16)
- Paul highlighted Judaizers who were disrupting the Cretan believers. He characterized them as talkers and deceivers, dedicated to myths.
- Paul called them out, pointing to their behavior as evidence of their lack of credibility.
- Note that Paul applied the quote about Cretans to the false prophets of Crete, not the Cretans in general.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers are accountable for rejecting false teachers and teachings.
- Believers have a gospel trust that must be shared with others.
- Believers are called on to help establish and strengthen local churches and church leaders.
- Believers must be willing to address false teachings head on.
**FOCUS ATTENTION**

What are the dangers of encountering false teaching or opposition to God’s Word for unbelievers? For believers?
- Unbelievers who get sucked into false teachings may never discover the truth.
- Immature Christians who aren’t grounded in the truth of Scripture may experience confusion and doubt.
- More mature Christians may respond with controlled but strong righteous indignation, which forces them to confront the liars.

**EXPLORE THE BIBLE TITUS 1:1-3**

Considering the way Paul characterized himself in this passage, what would help shape a twenty-first century Christian’s identity in Christ if they adopted the same mind-set?
- Paul’s sense of servanthood was so deep he dubbed himself a slave; he no longer controlled his own life but spent it in service to God.
- Beyond being concerned with his own spiritual security, Paul built the faith of others through knowledge of God and His precepts.
- Paul unfailingly pointed people to Jesus as the hope of eternal life.

**TITUS 1:4-5**

What was Titus’ relationship to Paul? In what ways were they alike?
- Paul had led Titus to Christ.
- Titus followed in Paul’s footsteps by picking up where Paul left off, helping to establish and strengthen the church in Crete.

How did Titus’ relationship with Paul help him become another role model for contemporary Christians?
- By virtue of being called Paul’s true son, we know that Titus and Paul shared a faith that looked strikingly similar, not just to others outside of the family but to each other.
- Titus used the example Paul set for him to reach others for Christ.

**TITUS 1:10-16**

How would you characterize Paul’s advice to Titus?
- When referencing the opposition, Paul didn’t try to whitewash their rebellion but called them out for their defiance, greed, and dishonesty.
- Silencing the opposition with sharp rebukes protects others from being led astray.

Why would Christians, whom God generally calls to come down on the side of mercy and grace, need to employ such strong tactics to stand up for truth? How do we know when to go that far?
- Good-hearted people must not be naive but recognize that those who willfully rebel against God have seared consciences.
- Just as Christians’ good works testify to their godliness, those who reject the truth give evidence of their rebellion through their own works.
- Any false teaching requires correction, but those who intentionally contradict the Bible should be confronted with the truth for everyone’s sake.

What litmus test did Paul suggest to help us distinguish the enemy’s lies from truth?
- People may claim to speak truth, but their actions will give them away.

**SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE**

How can we uphold truth when we encounter opposition?
- Identity in Christ results not only in devotion to Him and His church but requires that we take strong stands as needed to defend the truth against opposition.
- Having the heart of a servant fully devoted to Christ will result in encouraging the spiritual growth of other believers.
- Looking out for others’ spiritual growth by working in and strengthening the church will encourage that spiritual growth.
- Standing up for truth against those who oppose it will protect others’ faith.
- Personal Challenge: Just as you grow in knowledge and faith, you can practice standing up for truth. Unkindness is not required, just firm honesty. The next time you encounter direct opposition to God, ask Him to help you confront it. It could be a simple but well-worded line on social media or a sentence or two in a private conversation with a friend. Remember that an unconfronted rebel may lead others astray while a timely word may cut off that opportunity.
TWO SPRAY BOTTLES, WATER, AND BLEACH

Gather two empty spray bottles, a container of water, and bleach. Call attention to the two spray bottles and fill both bottles approximately two-thirds full. Add bleach to one and more water to the other. Make sure to remember which one is which.

Ask: If you were wanting to clean a bathroom, which bottle would you choose, and why? Notice that both bottles look the same from the outside but only one contains the cleaning product bleach. Compare the bottle containing only water to the teachings Paul directed Titus to oppose, portraying them as ineffective and destructive. State: If you cleaned the bathroom with water only solution, then you’re simply moving around the germs. The water is ineffective. Lead the group to read Titus 1:10-16, and then discuss how Paul highlighted the false teachings as ineffective.

Guide the group to identify ways of determining which bottle is which. Emphasize the responses that focus on testing the product or solution. Ask: If you knew your spouse or child was using an ineffective cleaner, would you alert him or her? Why? Explain that as believers, we must be willing to alert people to false teachings.

Close in prayer, asking that we would put forth the effort to recognize and reject false teaching.

FALSE TEACHERS

Paul recognized a serious problem in the Cretan churches, and he directed Titus to address it. The problem involved false teachers who were confusing believers and leading them away from wholesome walks with the Lord (Titus 1:10-16). The false teachers had been declaring that the gospel of Christ as Paul shared it fell short of what people needed to do to be saved. They insisted that salvation involved more than simply repenting and trusting Christ. For them, becoming a Christian meant becoming Jewish. Therefore, they argued that believers had to keep the Mosaic Law in order to be saved.

The churches in Crete weren’t alone. Other churches that Paul started or encountered in his missionary work had to contend with the same erroneous instruction. For instance, Paul had to deal with the problem in his Letters to the Romans (Rom. 2:17-29; 4:9-12), Corinthians (1 Cor. 7:18-19), Galatians (Gal. 2:3-12; 5:2-11), Colossians (Col. 2:11; 3:11), Ephesians (Eph. 2:11), and Philippians (Phil. 3:1-3). In each of these churches, false teachers contended that true Christians would want to honor the Jewish rite of circumcision.

False teachers have constantly tried to add or take away something from the simple gospel of Christ. Their heresies about Jesus cropped up and continued to take root throughout the history of the church. Not long into the church’s second century, certain so-called spiritual leaders in the church declared that Jesus wasn’t completely human. Such a claim ignored the straightforward message of Scripture. The account of His agony in the garden of Gethsemane alone verifies His humanity (Matt. 26:36-46). That’s only one claim about Jesus that false teachers made in the story of Christianity. They contradicted what the Scriptures clearly declared about the Lord. In so doing, they made the same sad mistake that the false teachers in Crete had made. They attempted to add something to the simple gospel message of salvation through repentance and faith in Christ alone.

The efforts to change the gospel message haven’t stopped. Christianity in America has more than a few names of heretical teachers who littered the pages of history. The damage done by their erroneous doctrines continues to distract and deceive God’s people. Each name and every cult verify the need for believers today to heed Paul’s warning to Titus centuries ago.