

The Book of Titus: How the Church Lives Out its Mission in Challenging Cultures – Week Three

How Wise Leaders Address False Teachers

Titus 1:9b-16

Introduction: God calls us to be his missionary presence in all sorts of cultures around the world (John 20:21). Our efforts will achieve results because this is Jesus' mission (Acts 1:8) not ours. However, this means Christ-followers will encounter opposition in the realm of ideas. False religionists will arise seeking to rebrand the Christian faith in their own image for their own purposes. In this passage Paul equips Titus to address false teaching.

1. 1ST QUESTION – Who are the false teachers then & now? Titus 1:9b, 10, 13b

- A. Some principles about false teaching in Paul's writings
 - 1. Principle – Where the gospel is effective, false teaching will rise. Acts 20:29; Rev. 2:2
 - 2. Example – Paul cites characteristics of false teaching on Crete. 1:9b, 10a, 11, 14-16
- B. Some general truths about false teaching from history to present.
 - 1. Historically *then* – Heresy was based on incomplete information. Ex: Alcorn, China
 - 2. Historically *since then* – Heresy based on desire to make the faith relevant to culture.
 - 3. Psychologically – False teaching feels urgent because you combine legalism w/ authority.
 - 4. Definition – A FT alters doctrines, updating the faith, gaining power, minimizing glory.
 - 5. Today – FTs are primarily those inside the visible church messing up doctrines.
- C. Four specific styles of false teaching in American culture
 - 1. You harmonize non-Christian religions with Christianity.
 - 2. You undermine the historical basis for the Christian faith. Ex: Ehrman
 - 3. You teach a different basis for salvation.
 - 4. You change the ethics of the Christian life – especially in areas of sex & money (prosperity).
 - 5. You inject cynicism into the faith as opposed to gratitude.

2. SECOND QUESTION – Why is false teaching such a problem? Titus 1:10-13a

- A. First problem – False teachers were fracturing families. 1:10-11
 - 1. Households back then worked on the principle of patriarchy; it was a matter of survival. Remember that the death rate for women was high.
 - 2. Christianity injected new life in the family, but false teaching brought separation.
 - 3. Same thing happens today in a different way. College campuses.
- B. Second problem – False teachers inject cynical culture into the body of Christ. 1:12-13a
 - 1. This is a quote by the poet Epimenedes and a bit difficult to fit into Paul's argument.
 - 2. Paul is saying false teachers are cultural cynics and they must be stopped.
 - 3. What does cynicism do in spiritual cultures

3. THIRD QUESTION – What is the role of spiritual leaders? Titus 1:9b;13b-16

- A. Grow in knowledge – We need to be able to refute those who contradict. 1:9a,b
 - 1. This assumes that you're holding fast to the faithful word. 1:9a
 - 2. This assumes that you're growing in your skills in handling the word. 1:9b
- B. Develop spiritual passion – We need to reprove them severely. 1:13b-14
 - 1. Paul uses a strong verb and then strengthens it with a strong adverb. 1:13b
 - 2. Is this politically correct? When do we reprove? When do we not reprove?
- C. Embrace right motives – Our hope is that false teacher might be sound in the faith. 1:13-14
 - 1. They have a worldview problem. 1:15
 - 2. They have a works problem. 1:16
- D. Provide visionary leadership – We should lead people to a place of true freedom. Paul is telling us that we have wide ranging freedoms in the Christian life. 1:15a (See 1 Tim. 4:4; Mark 7:19ff.)

About reproof:

- This command is addressed to leaders in a local church. The primary issue is pastoral concern.
- You generally don't reprove someone outside the church. Example: Dan Wallace and Bart Ehrman
- You generally don't reprove someone publically.
- You don't reprove someone when they have already accepted the fact that they're wrong.
- You do use reproof to break through denial and deception.
- You don't sharply rebuke an older man. 1 Tim. 5:1