



TITUS

A HEALTHY CHURCH

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: A HEALTHY CHURCH

TITLE: A HEALTHY CHURCH TAKES TRUTH SERIOUSLY

SCRIPTURE: TITUS 1:10-16

DATE: AUG. 9, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Last week's lesson taught us that a healthy church takes leadership seriously. Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders who were qualified both in *character* and *competence*. Their lives were to be above reproach—not arrogant, quick-tempered, violent, or greedy—but hospitable, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. They were also to hold firmly to sound doctrine and be able both to teach it and refute those who contradicted it.

As we turn to today's passage, Paul explains *why* these qualifications matter. The church must take truth seriously because truth is constantly under attack. That attack comes in two forms: *orthodoxy*—what people believe—and *orthopraxy*—how people live. Elders are called to guard both.

The early church was not immune from false teaching. Nearly every New Testament letter warns believers about false teachers, and Jesus Himself warned that they would arise. The greatest danger is not simply that falsehood exists in the world—that is expected. The greater danger is when falsehood

finds its way into the church. Healthy churches therefore need qualified leaders because healthy churches take truth seriously.

Text

Titus 1:10–16

¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.^[h] ¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹² One of the Cretans,^[i] a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”^[j] ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

Explanation

The Danger of False Teachers (vv. 10–11)

It is worth considering whether the lack of appointed elders in the churches of Crete created an opportunity for these false teachers to gain influence. Titus had been left behind specifically to establish godly leadership, and until that happened, the churches may have been especially vulnerable. Paul observed that there are “many” in the churches of Crete that concern him.

Paul immediately describes these teachers using three characteristics: they are insubordinate, empty talkers, and deceivers.

The fact that they are insubordinate suggests they refused to submit to proper authority. False teachers often elevate themselves above accountability, presenting themselves as the final authority or claiming unique spiritual insight. Whenever someone refuses biblical accountability, error is rarely far behind.

They are also empty talkers. Their teaching sounds impressive but lacks true spiritual substance. Sometimes this happens when Scripture becomes secondary to entertaining stories or illustrations. Other times it occurs when teachers obsess over minor issues while neglecting the central truths of the

gospel. At the end of the day, empty talk fails to point people to the gospel and fails in application towards godliness.

Ultimately, they are deceivers. Whether intentional or not, false teaching always leads people away from Christ rather than toward Him. The focus often shifts from God's truth to the personality or influence of the teacher. Other times, false teaching will fail to confront people with hard truths because they seek to win the approval of people.

Paul identifies many of these teachers as belonging to "the circumcision party." This suggests they were promoting a Jewish form of legalism, emphasizing circumcision and observance of the Mosaic Law as necessary for salvation or spiritual maturity. Yet Paul had already addressed this error in Galatians:

“Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^[a] by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love (Gal. 5:2-6).

Circumcision contributes nothing to our standing before God. Salvation comes through faith in Christ alone.

The Church Must Confront False Teaching (vv. 11–14)

Because the danger is so serious, Paul gives a strong command: “They must be silenced.” That language may sound severe, but it reflects how seriously God views the teaching ministry of the church. Truth is never something the church can treat casually. Paul gives two reasons these teachers must be stopped.

First, their influence is spreading. Whole households are being upset. Rather than merely becoming upset emotionally, the idea is that entire families are being spiritually overturned or led astray. Since many churches often met in homes, the damage could quickly spread throughout an entire congregation, producing division and instability.

Second, their motives are corrupt. They teach “for shameful gain.” This motivation appears repeatedly throughout the New Testament. Peter, Jude,

and Paul all warn that false teachers often use ministry for personal profit (2 Peter 2:1–3; Jude 11; 1 Timothy 6:3–10).

Paul deliberately contrasts this with his own ministry. He repeatedly reminds the churches that he did not preach for financial gain (Acts 20:33–35; 1 Thessalonians 2:3–9; 1 Corinthians 9; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 11:7–12; 12:14–18). This does not mean pastors should not be supported financially. Scripture clearly teaches they may receive support (1 Corinthians 9:3–14; 1 Timothy 5:17–18). Rather, it means faithful shepherds serve Christ rather than money. As Paul already said in Titus 1:7, an elder must be "not greedy for dishonest gain."

The Gospel Must Be Different Than the Culture (vv. 12–14)

Paul now does something surprising. He quotes a well-known Cretan saying: "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

Paul is not insulting every individual Cretan. Instead, he quotes one of Crete's own respected writers to illustrate the culture's reputation. This may be similar to how people today speak of cities or regions. New Yorkers are often stereotyped as rude. Los Angeles is associated with image and celebrity culture. Miami is known for flashiness. Such stereotypes are broad generalizations, not universal truths.

Paul's point could be that false teachers are living up to the worst reputation of their culture. That there is false teaching shouldn't be surprising given a place like Crete. The people there may have been particularly prone to deception as well.

But the church should never simply reflect the surrounding culture. The gospel creates a different kind of people. Believers are called to display lives transformed by God's grace rather than confirming the world's expectations. The leaders and teachers within the church certainly must be different. And as we will see in next week's lesson, men and women both young and old are to be self-controlled, dignified, and sound in faith among other things (Titus 2:1–8).

For that reason, Titus is instructed to **rebuke them sharply**. The rebuke is direct because false teaching is serious. Titus must give clear evidence between what is true and false. Yet it is also hopeful because the goal is restoration: "...that they may be sound in the faith." Biblical correction always aims at repentance and spiritual health.

Sound Doctrine Produces Pure Living (vv. 14–16)

Paul now gives us more insight into what these teachers were promoting. They devoted themselves to Jewish myths and human commands rather than God's truth.

Throughout the Pastoral Epistles Paul repeatedly warns against myths because they encourage speculation instead of faith (1 Timothy 1:3–7; 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:4). Likewise, human commandments substitute man-made traditions for God's revealed Word. Jesus confronted this same problem with the Pharisees when they elevated their traditions above Scripture (Mark 7:1–23).

Verse 15 may seem like a sudden change of subject, but it actually follows Paul's argument. Since these false teachers had a Jewish emphasis, they were likely preoccupied with ceremonial purity laws—questions about what foods could be eaten and what made a person ceremonially clean or unclean.

Jesus addressed these very issues during His earthly ministry. The Pharisees believed outward ceremonies produced inward purity. Jesus taught the opposite. Defilement comes from within the heart, and true purity must begin there. Mark 7:14–15 succinctly explains, “And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” Through His death and resurrection, Christ cleanses people from the inside out. As a result, all foods are now clean (Mark 7:19), a truth further confirmed to Peter (Acts 10).

With that background, Paul's statement becomes much clearer. Those who have been made pure through faith in Christ no longer depend on ceremonial regulations to become acceptable before God. They have already been cleansed by Christ. Those who reject Christ, however, remain defiled regardless of how many external rules they keep. Their problem is not ceremonial uncleanness but an unconverted heart.

Paul closes with one final indictment: “They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works.” This brings the entire section full circle. False teaching is never merely an intellectual problem. It eventually produces ungodly living. Conversely, sound doctrine always bears fruit in a transformed life. Right belief leads to right living. Healthy churches therefore guard both the truth they proclaim and the lives that display that truth.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Paul spends so much time discussing church leadership before addressing false teachers?
- Why is false teaching often more dangerous when it comes from inside the church rather than outside it?
- What are some modern examples of "empty talk" that sounds spiritual but lacks biblical substance?
- Why is accountability important for anyone who teaches God's Word?
- What qualities should Christians look for when deciding whether a teacher or ministry is trustworthy?
- Paul says the false teachers taught "for shameful gain." Why do greed and false teaching so often appear together in Scripture?
- How does Paul's own ministry provide a contrast to these teachers?
- What dangers arise when churches avoid difficult conversations in the name of keeping peace?
- How can we lovingly correct someone while genuinely seeking their restoration?
- Paul emphasizes both sound doctrine and godly living. Why is it important that Christians pursue both rather than emphasizing one over the other?