Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Men Who Must Be Silenced, Part 2
Scripture: Titus 1:12-16
Code: 56-11

Let's open our Bibles to the Word of our faithful God, Titus chapter 1. And we are returning to verses 10 to 16, the second half of this first chapter in Paul's wonderful letter. The subject of these verses, "Men who must be silenced." Frankly, I have the feeling the way the world is going, the way our nation is going, the way the church is going that there's going to be an effort to silence the wrong people and give voice to people who should be silenced.

Paul is very clear in instructing Titus about this duty. Down in verse 10 we read, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain."

God hates a lying and perverted tongue. Particularly a lying and perverted tongue that says it speaks for Him, but does not. In fact, the psalmist speaks of God's judgment, silencing such perversion in Psalm 120 verses 3 and 4, he says that kind of person who has a lying tongue, a deceitful tongue, misrepresenting God will feel the sharp arrows of the warrior and the burning coals of the broom tree. Very vivid imagery. God will silence that liar by the plunging of sharp arrows slamming into his body. God will silence that liar by the use of fire. That imagery of the burning coals of a broom tree follows a custom that really was a frightening thing. If you wanted to destroy your enemy, you would get the dried branches of such a tree and you would ignite them. And then in the night when he was asleep in his tent you would set them about his tent and set it on fire and rapidly incinerate him before he even knew what happened. Serious and final judgment God holds for those whose tongues misrepresent His truth. The day will come when God will silence them. In the meantime it is the church's responsibility, Paul tells Titus, to silence them.

James reminds us as we noted last time in chapter 3 that the tongue is a torch that can set a whole circle of life on fire with the very flames of hell. Certainly we know that riots and revolutions and wars and murders and massacres and heresies and false religions have all been set in motion by the tongue. It is a devastating instrument of destruction not only in the world but in the church.

So Paul is instructing Titus that in setting things right in the church, as he says in verse 5, and in appointing or ordaining elders in the church, he must also be ready to silence some damaging voices. There are men who must be silenced. We have the same need today. The church is certainly irresponsible in many cases in silencing them. They threaten the very truth of God. They threaten the

purposes of God. They threaten the people of God.

I suggested to you last time that there are three ways to silence them. One is by taking away their opportunity, taking away their platform to speak. Two is by overpowering them with truth, that is to say making the arguments against what they say so profound that no one listens to them. And thirdly, discrediting them by virtue, by holiness. In other words, being so holy and so virtuous that it becomes apparent who holds the truth because of the virtue of their lives. It's a very crucial aspect of church life. Those who preach and teach error must be silenced. They are not to be given platforms for their deception. They are not to be put on television or radio or books. They are not to be given places to distribute their tapes, to hold seminars, conferences. They're not to be given professorships, teaching positions. They are to be silenced. They harm the Kingdom. They disturb the King's authority to rule by His truth. They deny His Word. They create chaos among His people.

Anybody like the Apostle Paul who has a passion for truth will have a passion for silencing those who speak error. His letters, frankly, are full of this, dealing with error, dealing with deception, dealing with false prophets, false teachers. In fact, I was telling someone this week...they asked me, "What are you preaching on Sunday?" And I said, "Well, I'm...I'm preaching on false teachers." And they said, "Oh, you're into that again?" And my response was, "I'm into that because I'm into the New Testament and the New Testament is into that." It's all over the place. We certainly need to be continually warned about it and the New Testament is not negligent to do that.

Paul really stands in a partnership with a great Old Testament character. If Paul is the pattern of our Lord in the New Testament as one who stood against false teaching, in the Old Testament the pattern would be Jeremiah. The champion of silencing the mouths of false teachers in the New Testament is Paul. The champion of silencing the mouth of false teachers in the Old Testament is Jeremiah.

Before we look further into Titus, go back to Jeremiah 23 and I think...I think you'll benefit by understanding what the Lord said through Jeremiah because you will see that there is continuity in Paul's attitude. It has always been such that the Lord has concerned Himself with the silencing of those who teach error. The people of Israel had been under the leadership, the tutelage and the shepherding of some very, very false shepherds. They misrepresented God. They misrepresented God's truth. They gave wrong messages. They spoke whatever they wanted out of their own dreams and visions, self-made rules and regulations. And they are indicted in chapter 23 and God promises to silence them. Just to start any way. Verse 1, "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture." The word "woe" means damnation, cursing, judgment. And God is pronouncing here sentence. This is not the trial, this is the sentencing. Woe, judgment, damnation to the shepherds destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture. They're sending them out from the green pastures. They're sending them away from the still waters. They're sending them out where they're unprotected. Verse 2, "Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people, you have scattered My flock and driven them away and have not

attended to them. Behold, I'm about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds, declares the Lord."

So there is in verse 1 and 2 a straight-forward sentencing of these false shepherds who led the people astray. Now drop down to verse 9 and in verse 9 you have running all the way to the end of the chapter in verse 40 the specifics of indictment that led to the sentencing. The indictment is very specific and very straightforward. The first note in the indictment is their wickedness. God is going to punish them for their wickedness. Verse 9, "As for the prophets, my heart is broken...writes Jeremiah...within me. All my bones tremble. I have become like a drunken man, even like a man overcome with wine because of the Lord and because of His holy words." This is an amazing statement by Jeremiah. He is saying, I'm like a drunk. I'm staggering around like a man completely out of control. Why? Because my heart is broken within me. I've lost my ability to control my feelings and my emotions. I have been crushed and terrified by the judgment of God coming upon the people because of the false teachers and the false shepherds...breaks the prophet's heart to see his people deceived, to see his people led into ruin by wicked men who promise them peace, prosperity, success and well-being. He is so distressed that he loses control of himself and he acts like a drunken man. In verse 10 he says, "For the land is full of adulterers, for the land mourns because of the curse. The pastures of the wilderness have dried up. Their course also is evil and their strength, or might, is not right."

He says these false shepherds and false teachers are spiritual leaders supposedly suppose to lead the people but instead they have led them into their own life style...immorality and adultery. And the land is mourning over the curse that has fallen and the place is dry spiritually. Their course, that is what they pursue, is evil and their might, their strength is dissipated in iniquity, in adulteries, idolatries and doing what is not right. This is their wickedness.

Verse 11 shows you the extent of it. "Both prophet and priest are polluted, even in My house I have found their wickedness." Their adultery and their idolatry has found its way into the house of God, they desecrate the house of God, they deceitfully feign devotion to God. They live for self, sexual indulgence and sin. Verse 12, "Therefore their way will be like slippery paths to them, they will be driven away into the gloom or the blackness and fall down in it, for I shall bring calamity upon them the year of their punishment, declares the Lord." They're walking on a slippery path that leads into the blackness. They're going to fall without the light of God. God will reject them and will silence them.

Then in verse 13, most interesting, he says, "Moreover, among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing." They offended Me too. They prophesied by Baal. They led My people Israel astray. "But...look at verse 14...among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen an horrible thing." That's a worse statement than an offensive thing. This is the most extreme thing. Something more horrible than what they prophesied in Samaria from Baal, a horrible thing, "The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood and they strengthened the hands of evil doers so that no one has turned back from his wickedness, all of them have become to Me like Sodom and their inhabitants like Gomorrah."

What's the point here? The point is this. He says the prophets of Baal in the northern kingdom were guilty of lies and deception, foolish speculations, superstitions, sinful and offensive blasphemous teaching but at least they were honest enough to say it came from Baal. What's happened here in Israel is they're giving the same lies and the same deceptions and the same speculations and superstitions and the same blasphemous teaching only they're telling you it came from Me. This is a more horrible thing.

"Therefore...verse 15...the Lord of hosts says concerning the prophets, I'm going to feed them wormwood...that's bitter...and I'm going to poison them with poisonous water because from the prophets of Jerusalem pollution has gone forth into all the land." They're convicted and sentenced because of their wickedness. Secondly, their hypocrisy, verses 16 to 22 discusses their hypocrisy. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They're leading you into futility. They speak of vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord. They claim to speak from Me, they're fakes. They're phonies and they're hypocrites. They do not speak from Me. All they're doing is filling you up with wind, hot air, and lies. They're fogging your minds." Verse 17, "They keep saying to those who despise Me, The Lord has said you will have peace. As for everyone who walks in the imagination or stubbornness of his own heart, they say calamity won't come upon you. They preach prosperity. They preach happiness. They preach everything is going to be fine. And they say it came from Me. They preach positive thinking, peace, prosperity." Verse 17 tells us that they're lying, in effect. Verse 18, "But who has stood in the counsel of the Lord that he should see and hear His Word. Who has given heed to His Word and listened?" Nobody really listens to me. Nobody checks with me. They just listen to the false prophets." "Therefore," judgment will come," in verse 19, "the storm of the Lord has gone forth in wrath, a whirling tempest. It will swirl down on the heads of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart. In the last days you will clearly understand it."

And then He says in verse 21, "I didn't send these prophets but they ran. I didn't speak to them but they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel then they would have announced My Words to My people and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds." These hypocrites said they spoke for God, they didn't. If they had they would have made a difference. They ran in a big hurry into the assumption of the prophetic office and they spoke but they weren't true, they were hypocrites.

Thirdly, they were sentenced for their presumption. Not only their wickedness and hypocrisy, verse 23, their presumption, their amazing foolish and ignorant audacity is shocking. Can you imagine speaking for God when you don't? How audacious is that? To say you speak for the Almighty God when you don't is the ultimate audacity. "Am I a God," verse 23, "who is near?" Am I like your idol?,

he's saying. Am I like that little graven image in your temple? Am I like that little graven image in your house? That little thing you made out of wood or stone? Am I like that little thing that you can touch and hold and handle and move and relocate and polish? Am I so near you can fool with Me? Am I so much in your control? Am I subject to your hands? Am I earthy? Can you touch Me?

Oh no. "Am I not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him, declares the Lord? Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" You know who you're dealing with? You think you're dealing with one of your little stone idols? You think you can say you speak for Me as if I was some little wooden thing that you made with your own hands? Am I not a God far off? I am a transcendent God. I'm not one of your local deities. I'm not one of your household gods. I dwell where no man approaches and no one touches. You're dealing with the transcendent eternal God of the universe. It is audacity to say you speak for Me when you do not.

Verse 25, "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name saying, `I had a dream, I had a dream.'" I hear that. They're giving you their own stuff, their own concoctions. They dreamed up their own lies. As I've often said, they make up their theology if not out of a dream they make it up even as they speak. Their purpose is selfish and God knows it. Verse 26, "How long? Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsely? Even these prophets of the deception of their own heart who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal?" They're peddling their dreams. They're peddling their own visions, their own fantasies, their own delusions. They peddle their lives from house to house, door to door. They lead people astray. They are the agents of Satan, brazen, shameful, bold, presumptuous. And all the while saying they speak for God.

Verse 28, "The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream." If he has a dream, let him tell you he had a dream and it was a dream. "But let him who has a word from Me, My Word, speak My Word." If you had a dream, tell people you had a dream, don't call it the Word of God. God's Word is God's Word, your dream is your dream. And I love what He says at the end of verse 8, "What does straw have in common with grain?" Your dream is straw. My Word is grain. Your dream is chaff. My Word is pure wheat. Don't you ever mix My Word with your dream. That's what He's saying.

We have so much of that today. A little bit of God's Word and a whole lot of imagination, fantasy, visions, revelations, dreams. Don't you add anything chaff to the pure wheat of God's Word.

Verse 29, "Is not My Word like fire, declares the Lord? And like a hammer that shatters a rock?" Anybody who dares to mix the chaff with the Word will be burned and broken, incinerated and crushed. Verse 30, "Therefore behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who steal My words from each other. Behold, I'm against the prophets, declares the Lord, who use their tongues and declare the Lord declares. It's their tongue, not Mine, even though they say the Lord declares." Verse 30 says, "They steal My words from each other." You know what the false prophets always

do? They've got their visions and their dreams and their revelations and they steal some truth and mix it. And they put the pure grain with the chaff. And He said I'm against them. They use their tongues but they say it's Me speaking.

Verse 32, "I'm against those who prophesy false dreams, declares the Lord, and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting. Yet I didn't send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit." They're good for nothing. Not the slightest benefit.

Finally, they are indicted for their blasphemy. Their wickedness, their hypocrisy, their insolent presumption, their blasphemy. Verse 33 to 40, I won't read it all but it just says they basically mock the idea...what is an oracle? Where is the oracle of the Lord? They say, Well where is the Word of God? Where is the voice of God? If it isn't us, where is the voice of God? Where is the oracle? And God says, "You tell them they're the oracle?" And what He meant by that is your judgment is the oracle. They're mocking the truth of God. Their mocking souls are going to be crushed. In verse 40 it says, "I'll put an everlasting reproach on you and an everlasting humiliation which will not be forgotten."

Jeremiah says God's going to silence the mouths of those who say they speak for God when they don't. It's in that same spirit that we come back to our text. Let's go back to Titus chapter 1. God is very serious about false teachers. And obviously on the island of Crete in the many, many cities that were there and the churches that had been planted around that island, false teachers had made significant inroads. That's why it was so important back in verse 9 that those chosen elders be able to hold fast the faithful Word in accordance with the teaching so that they could exhort with sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. Elders had to be able to keep the church pure and protected from error. And here the Apostle Paul gets very direct and say, "Now look, there are some people that you must silence. Take away their platform, overpower them with truth and virtue."

And we started to look at this text last time. I remind you that we started with the description of these men...the description of these men. First, their proliferation, verse 10 says there were many of them, their behavior is described. They are rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers. Their effect, verse 11, they must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they shouldn't teach. And their motive? They do it for the sake of sordid gain. And that leads us to the fifth sub-point there, their character...their character.

Now we already know at the end of verse 10 that they are of the circumcision. That is they're Jews. These false teachers come from among the Jews. And we'll see more about that in verse 14. But look at their character in verses 12 and 13, and look how he approaches the description of their character, fascinating. "One of themselves, that is a Cretan, a prophet of their own...who, by the way, was named Epimenides we know where this quote comes from...said, `Cretans are always liars, evil

beasts, lazy gluttons.'" I don't think that showed up in the chamber of commerce brochure or in the "take your vacation in Crete" brochure either for that matter. But the Cretans had developed a bad reputation. For Paul to have acknowledged how bad they were might not have been acceptable to them so he quotes one of their own. He quotes one of their own prophets, a man by the name of Epimenides.

Epimenides was a very revered Cretan. One of the most famous Cretans of all history. He was a poet. He was a teacher. He was a writer. He was obviously a pagan. He was in the sixth century and born in the city of Cnossus on the island of Crete. He was ranked as one of the seven wise men of Greece, a profound intellect, apparently, a very gifted orator and poet. He was a hero. And the poet originally characterized his people in a familiar hexameter, it's a form of poetry and it goes like this, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." The Cretans, he said, are basically chronic liars. They had given testimony to the world about their ability to lie in a lot of ways. One of the most famous ones was that they prided themselves on having on the island of Crete the tomb of Zeus.

You say, "What's wrong with that?" Well Zeus was a deity who couldn't die. So it would be a little difficult to have the tomb.

They also claimed that Zeus was in it. Of course, the greatest of gods, according to their mythology, couldn't die and so he couldn't be buried in a tomb, so it was a classic example of the brashness of their lying.

They lived up to their bad reputation. They became notorious liars, cheaters, gluttons and traitors. And the false teachers, he's saying, really are not too surprising because that's kind of how it is in Crete. And they are perfect examples of the worst of Cretans. Cretans are always liars, was his statement. By the way, in verse 13 Paul says in affirmation, "This testimony is true." Epimenides was dead on. He was exactly right.

In fact, they were such liars that there's a Greek verb, there's a verb in the Greek language that means to lie. There's a verb that means to lie. You know what it is? It's the verb kritizo(?). They were so associated with lying that the verb is the name of Crete. It's very much like the verb...the verb that we associate with the city of Corinth. You remember Corinth was engaged in all kinds of prostitution. And to Corinthianize was to go to bed with a prostitute. To kritize(?) was to lie. They were liars. So we're not surprised that they're propagating false teaching. This is kind of characteristic of the people there. This is not characteristic, of course, of everybody there, but this is typical of the worst of the Cretans. So we're not shocked. I mean, even their own...their own pagan philosopher says they're always liars, they are literally chronic liars. So we shouldn't be surprised that they're lying about what God says.

Secondly, if that's not enough, he adds, does their own prophet, "They are evil beasts." They are base animals. They function on the sensual level. They are ruled by passion and instinct. They are savage, vicious, rapacious, malicious. And if that's not enough, to top it off they're lazy gluttons. Literally in the Greek, two words, slow bellies. They're big bellies that go slow. It pictures somebody who has overindulged, oversatiated, fat, doesn't work, uncontrolled lust, uncontrolled greed, self-indulgence. Nice characterization. Fat bellied, lazy gluttons who function on sensual passions and are chronic liars. So you shouldn't be surprised that some of them are hanging around the church propagating lies from their own minds.

You know, the Bible is never very nice when it identifies false teachers. Have you noticed that? It doesn't say, "Oh, we certainly want to accept them, they do have another view but we want to be..." It doesn't accept them that way.

The next time you see a false teacher, you might say, "You rebellious, empty talking, deceitful, lying, evil beast, slow-bellied glutton." And you would certainly be within the framework of Scripture. You might have to cope a little bit with 2 Timothy 2 verse 25 which says, "We are to rebuke them with gentleness." So say it kindly.

Paul with respect to this reputation affirms the assessment of Cretan character in verse 13, he says, "This testimony is true." He says, "It may have been said in the sixth century, it's sixth century B.C. It's still true 500 to 600 years later." The evidence of this is the present of lying, vicious, consuming gluttons who feed their desires at the expense of unwitting souls in and around the church.

So we've seen the description. Let's move to the second point, the reaction. What is the reaction to the men who must be silenced? There's two things stated, one in verse 13, one in verse 14. Verse 13, first reaction is to reprove them. He says, "For this cause reprove them." For what cause? "Severely reprove them for the reason that they may be sound in the faith." It's remedial. You're not just reproving them to damn them, you're reproving them which means to confront them and rebuke them for their error, showing them the truth in order that they may be sound in the faith. There's a remedial issue here. You want to go after them not for the sake of just damning them but for the sake of rescuing them. Try, first of all, to lead them out of their error. Take them on. Don't ignore them. Keep on reproving them, is the Greek text. Keep on. Remember what Paul said to Timothy, the same thing, he said, there are going to be times...right back one page there, 2 Timothy 4...when people aren't going to endure sound doctrine. They're not going to listen to sound doctrine. Well what do you do? Do you just damn them? No, back in verse 2 you preach the Word, you do it in season and out of season, you reprove and you rebuke and you keep doing with patience and instruction...whether they want to hear it, that's in season, or they don't want to hear it, that's out of season. Whether it's popular or unpopular, tolerated or not tolerated, you keep doing it, you keep reproving, you keep rebuking and use the Word to do it.

Notice the word "severely" in verse 13. Rebuke them severely. Boy, that's a strong word, apotomos. It comes from two words, temno, to cut you know with a knife or an axe, apo, off, cut off. Cut them off severely. It's used for one who cuts off the branch of a tree with one blow of an axe, just severs it. Cut off their opportunity, silence them. Very strong language. Obviously you want to do it with patience, you want to do it with kindness. You want to do it with instruction as 2 Timothy 4:2, I just read. As Paul said in the same epistle, chapter 2, so that God may grant them repentance and lead them away from the error into which they've been made captive by Satan. You want to cut them off. You want to stop them and rebuke them and halt them. And you do that by taking away their platform. You do that by confronting them with truth and demonstrating to them godly virtue because godliness is always associated with truth. And they'll recognize that they don't have that. You cut them off and it's remedial. The true surgeon of the soul, says one writer, only cuts to achieve a cure. And you cut them off that there may be a change and that they may be sound in the faith. They may have healthy doctrine.

What does it mean? What's healthy doctrine? Healthy doctrine produces wholeness, righteousness, growth, not disease and death.

So the first thing is to reprove them. That's part of the mandate. That's why we do what we do. That's why we point out error. That's why we speak on it and write on it and confront it.

I used to write a editorial column for our magazine "Masterpiece," called "Cutting it straight." And every month that that came out I would write an article that was incisively designed to attack some current issue because I feel this is how you protect the church. And it didn't...it didn't attempt to attack the individual like the old ad hominem argument where you just discredit the individual, but to bring the truth to bear on the error. And you literally attack the error from the vantage point of the truth. That's part of it. We have to rebuke and reprove, using the truth to cut off the platform and the opportunity of those who speak error.

Now after reproving them he says a second thing, basically reject them. Verse 14, "Not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth." Not paying attention means not devoted to. You don't devote yourself to it. You don't listen to it. You don't heed it. Avoid listening to error at all costs. You've reproved it now turn away from it and reject it.

Paul gave very similar instruction to Timothy. First Timothy 1:4, "Don't pay attention to myths and endless genealogies which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith." I watch people who start out somewhat of an evangelical perspective and they listen to error and they listen to error and they listen to error and they never rebuke it and they never reprove it, they just listen and listen. And you watch them leave the basis of the Christian faith and just drift, set loose by the confusion stimulated in their minds because they exposed themselves to

endless error. First Timothy 4:7, "Have nothing to do with worldly fables," pay no attention to them. Stay away from them.

Now the particular heresy that he's talking about here and there are myriad of ones in church history and many today, it's hard to even keep up with all of them. But the particular one that he's talking about had to do with Jews, as we noted back at the end of verse 10, they're of the circumcision. Now he defines it a little more in verse 14 without labeling it or giving us a lot, we still get a little feel for it. You need to reject these Jewish myths and commandments who come from...which come from men who turn away from the truth. The bottom line is the people purveying this have turned away from the truth. That could mean the truth of the gospel and they're not saved. That's very reasonable to assume. It certainly does mean the truth in regard to what Scripture affirms from which they turn in favor of their own concoctions and their own speculations and their own dreams and their own visions and their own allegories and their own mystical comprehensions and whatever. It's...there's every reason to assume that these false teachers are not Christians, some of them might be, but there's every reason to assume that if they've turned away from the truth that might even include the truth of the gospel, it could even include the truth of the trinity, the truth of Christ, the truth of His atoning work, His resurrection, who knows what. But whatever, they are men who do not espouse the truth and you are to make sure that you reject them.

In the case of Crete, they were espousing Jewish myths and the commandments of men. That's not too hard to really figure out. There were two things that had run pretty much through Judaism, two aberrations. On the one hand, Jewish myths and on the other hand, the commandments of men...two things the Jews tended to do.

First of all, Jewish myths. The Jews tended to take the Old Testament and interpret it allegorically and mystically. I mean, they came up with some of the wildest and most bizarre interpretations of the Old Testament. And I'm not going to belabor the issue by pointing out many of them but that they would come up with very silly kinds of allegorical mystical fanciful interpretations. One, for example, would be that if you take the name of Abraham...and this is in the Talmud...if you take the name of Abraham and you drop all the consonants out you have three...all the vowels out, pardon me, you take Abraham's name, drop out the vowels you have three remaining consonants. In English we would know them as "r" and "b" and "m". And if you take the numerical value of those, because in the Hebrew letters had numerical value, if you take the numerical value of those and add them up you get 318. And every time you see the name Abraham what it really means is there were 318 servants of the Lord. So you get all of these kind of fantastic mystical concoctions and they become...what they become is the private myths that these people hold to that elevates them above everybody else because they know the secret things. Very much like what you have in secret societies today among those who believe there the initiates into the secret levels. It's very much like Gnosticism and certainly the incipient Gnosticism of the day of Paul and Titus would have fed into this, when people were believing that if you could ascend to mystical and transcendent levels of experiences with the

deities you would ascend and you would rise above the normal hoy poloy, the normal crowd. So these Jews felt that they had insights into the secret meanings of the Old Testament. They could read between the lines. They were stuffing things in the white spaces between the letters, between the words, the sentences and the paragraphs. They were taking the genealogies, they're noted also in 1 Timothy, taking the genealogies of the Old Testament and sticking names in there, names of mystical characters that they invented and concocting all kinds of stories about these mystical characters. And all this secret knowledge allowed them to rise above the crowd. It's really a sad thing because they weren't true believers, because their lives really weren't given to God, because they didn't possess the life of God they were trying to fill the vacuum with these supposed ascending mystical things. It was going on in Ephesus and that's what Paul was talking about when he wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy in 1 Timothy, and here it is going on here. Fictitious names in the genealogies of Moses and all kinds of mystical speculations that caused them to believe they had transcended the normal people and they were living on a higher plain and knew God in a mystical way.

The second thing that's come through Jewish history is obviously ceremonial legalism. The Jews who believed that all God wanted was a sacrifice, all God wanted was a ritual, all God wanted was a ceremony. And if you did all of that stuff you pleased God. And so since God wanted that they invented more of those things, more rules, more laws, more commandments, more traditions. And you just kept them all and that's what pleased God.

So the two heresies that have always kind of hung around and hovered around Judaism...one, this mystical kind of ascending thing, and the other, this legalistic deal where you just keep spinning off and spewing out new rules. And if you keep the rules then God's going to accept you. That's what was going on. Some form of that kind of concoction of traditional legalism with mystical Judaism meshed together in some form of heresy being taught in Crete.

You say, "Why don't we have more details?" We don't need anymore details. You don't need to know anything more about error than to know it's error, right? And there's no sense in telling us a whole lot about it because it just finds different forms as history goes on anyway.

So what is our reaction to this? First of all, we rebuke it and reprove it. And secondly, we turn and reject it, we don't sit and listen to it.

I grieve in my heart as I watch young men go to seminary and sit under this kind of junk and think it's education and think they're going to be equipped for ministry in the future by being exposed to this. Keep running from that stuff, it says. These lazy bellied beasts who devour and upset whole houses with their deceit and feed themselves with the profit are up to no good, they are absolutely useless. They provide absolutely nothing. They are of no benefit, as Jeremiah 23:32 says. They do nothing for anybody, reprove them and rebuke them and then reject what they say.

Now that leads us to the last point...the evaluation of these men who must be silenced. And here's a divine evaluation, really. This is the Word of God. It's quite interesting. God evaluates them inwardly in verse 15 and outwardly in verse 16.

Verse 15, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." Now when you start to read that, the continuity of it may not seem very obvious to you so let me help you. Now remember, the context is Jewish and remember they believed in this...whatever this cultish thing was that they were espousing, they believed that if you did all the ceremonies and kept all the traditions, fulfilled all the commandments of men, everything that you were supposed to do, you would purify yourself. In other words, they were working from the outside in. That's, by the way, what sacramental religion does, that's what legalistic religion does, ceremonial religion of any form and it was certainly true in Judaism. If you maintained the Jewish ceremonial law, if you kept all the traditions and all the rituals and all the clean and unclean distinctions in food and everything else in life, you would make yourself pure on the inside. That's right. If you didn't touch anything defiled, if you didn't touch anything forbidden, you'd make yourself pure.

But if you didn't keep the commandments of men and if you didn't follow these mystical traditions, whatever they might have been, and if you touched something unclean, and if you violated some of these deals, you would defile yourself and you'd become defiled before God. The whole idea of all of that stuff is to say that what you do on the outside affects your inside. That's the whole idea. And that's what all sacerdotal religion is. That's what all sacramental religion is. You can tell every practicing orthodox Jew and every sacerdotal, sacramental Protestant the same thing...you are functioning under this very assessment. You believe that if you light the candles, pray the prayers, run the beads, kneel down, walk the steps, do the whole nine yards, genuflect, bow down, say your prayers, look to the east, whatever it is, you will somehow cleanse your insides. That is what sacramental religion believes.

But Jesus said, "It is not that which comes into a man that defiles him but that which comes out of him." And so Paul says they are dead wrong. To the pure all things are...what?...pure. If you're pure on the inside, then everything you do is pure. Everything you touch is purified because the issue of true religion is on the inside, not on the outside. That whole...that whole thing is at the very heart of this confusion about ceremonial religion, people who believe that because they do things on the outside, because they have certain mystical experiences, dreams and visions or whatever, because they carry out certain functions, they by doing those things and experiencing those things purify the inside are dead wrong and they're damned if they believe that. To the pure, all things are pure. If you're pure on the inside and you're right with God, everything you do is pure, everything you touch is purified. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving on the inside, then nothing is pure. If your insides are rotten, you'll make everything you touch rotten. If your inside is impure, you're going to

make everything you touch defiled. You're going to desecrate everything you touch. Very important truth.

If you're a Jew and you don't know God through Christ, you can keep all the Jewish ceremonies you want and all you do is defile them...all you do is defile them. And you take communion as a Roman Catholic and you don't know Christ personally, and your insides haven't been cleansed, you defile that very ceremony. You desecrate the cause of Christ and the name of Christ. You make it impure. It's a mockery. It's a blasphemy.

You see, what happens on the inside is the issue. To those who are defiled and unbelieving on the inside like these false teachers, everything they touch is defiled. This is a devastating blow, by the way, to the false teachers who think that you can become pure by your legal observances or your mystical experiences. And everything they touch is contaminated. All their religiosity is sickening to God. Patrick Fairbarren(?) said years ago, "They have a fountain of pollution which spreads itself over and infects everything about them. Their food and drink, their possessions, their employment, their comforts, their actions all are in the reckoning of God tainted with iniquity because they are putting away from them that which alone has for the soul regenerating and cleansing efficacy." They push Christ away, they push the truth away, they take mystical experiences and ceremonial observances and try to purge the inside with that doesn't do it.

Since the inside is defiled and filthy, everything they touch is defiled. In fact, they're so defiled on the inside, he says in verse 15, both their mind and their conscience are defiled. He's trying to show you the depth of their internal defilement. Their mind means their intellect, their conscience means their discerning faculties. Their mind is defiled...their thoughts, their desires, their purposes are defiled. So whatever theology they concoct is defiled. Their conscience...what does that mean? Their moral judgment, their sense of right and wrong, their morality, their discernment...that too is defiled. So you can't trust what they say. Why? Their mind is too defiled to conceive of truth and they are too defiled to make true judgments. They're defiled deeply. They'll touch everything and defile it.

People who come along and say, "Well follow this sacramental religion...follow this sacerdotal religion...do all these external deals and you'll purify your inside." No. That won't do it. People who come along and say, "Have these visions and revelations and mystical experiences and you'll transcend and you'll come up to the high level of knowing God and etc. And this will...this will purify your inside." That's wrong. First of all, you come to know Christ, He washes you on the inside and then everything you are, everything you do becomes purified. That's the evaluation of the inside.

Look at the evaluation of their outward part in verse 16. "They profess to know God but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." Now the next time you're speaking to a false prophet you can add these three words too...detestable, disobedient and worthless. This is a description of the outside. They profess to know God.

Now what do you mean by that? They claim to be Christians? Of course they claim to be Christians, obviously they are around the church hovering like vultures and they claim to be Christians. But I don't think that's the limit of what he's saying here. They profess to know God not just as Christians know God, but they profess this transcendent knowledge, this Gnostic knowledge, this knowledge above knowledge, like we are the ascended masters, you know, we have been elevated to the higher level. We by our mystical experiences and the secret knowledge of the Old Testament which you can't know by the comprehension of these private allegories and all of these other fantasies, we by observing all of these traditions and commandments and ceremonies and all of that have ascended to a higher level of knowing God than all the rest of you...we know God. And they're elevating themselves in their pride. And he says they profess to know God higher and more grand than anyone else, they think they have a superior knowledge of God. The truth is, take a look at their deeds and by their deeds they deny Him...they deny Him.

They don't know God on a more intimate level than those who are His children. Their deeds...just look at them. Their fruits reveal them, as Jesus said. Like it says in 2 Timothy 3:5, they have a form of godliness with no power...avoid such men. Their conduct proves they're liars and hypocrites who don't know God at all. In fact, they are detestable...that is repulsive, abominable, despicable to God...a very strong word, a very strong word, bdelukos, it's used of heathen images and heathen idols, it's the same root as the word abomination. They are disobedient to the Lord, to the Word, to the church, to the elders and they are worthless for any good deed. That's the final commentary. They are absolutely worthless, takes you right back to Jeremiah 23:32, they're useless, they provide nothing, hot air, wind, they fog up your windows, that's all. And you have to turn on the defrost of truth to clear them back. In spite of all they claim all they do is confuse.

These are the people who have to be silenced because they do damaging work in the church. They do damaging work in the Kingdom. They harm the purposes of Christ.

I guess you could say it's all summed up magnificently in verse 1 of chapter 2, "But as for you, speak the things which are healthy, doctrine." Speak the things which are healthy doctrine, suitable for spiritual growth, spiritual wholeness. I kind of feel verse 1 really should have been tacked on to the end of chapter 1, don't you? That's really the culmination.

We need to understand the description of false teachers. We need to know who we're looking for to silence. We need to understand the proper reaction...we reprove them and then we turn away and reject them completely. And we need to understand God's evaluation of them, that their whole approach is wrong. They think you can clean the inside by what you do on the outside. The Bible says you have to clean the inside by coming to Christ and that takes care of the outside. They reverse that and that's why they are detestable, disobedient and worthless to produce any noble spiritual accomplishment. They're good for nothing. As for you, speak the things suitable for healthy

teaching. That's the call of God for those in leadership in His church.

Father, as we close out that chapter and reflect on what has been said, we realize that this is a difficult task. It's difficult because it's unpopular. It's difficult because it's demanding. We need to be able to understand Your truth so well that we can see the error. It's difficult because we need to do it with love and patience and gentleness and not in a combative way, we need to do it in a compassionate way, rescuing these people from error that they may be sound in the faith. We need to do it gently, hoping that You would grant them repentance that they may be taken out of their captivity that they have been brought into by the devil himself. We need to do it with a balance love and compassion. The terms are so strong, Lord, in just reciting them they're just almost overwhelming. But, Lord, the issue is important to You because the preservation of Your truth is crucial, it is everything. Help us to be faithful to do our part, to silence those who need to be silenced. Take away their platform, overpower them with the truth and show them the virtue of truth so that they and others can see where the real truth is is where the real holiness is. May they be silenced that Your truth may reign. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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