

Sermon on Titus 1:10-16 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Titus 1:10-16

The good news of Jesus silences the lie of self as savior and gives us hope for eternal living.

This week I have been thinking a lot about disinformation.

We mourn what has happened in Israel. Praying for resolution and peace. And I was struck by how hard it was in the first days to get reliable reports of what was happening. Overwhelming disinformation being spread... X accounts were posting old videos, giving fake accounts of what was happening and who was responsible, and groups with disdainful motives were promoted as trustworthy.

This is a reminder that technology has not only increased our access to helpful information but it has vastly increased the opportunity of those that would have you believe false narratives for dishonest gain. Purposeful disrupting of stable institutions, rebellion... and it can be dangerous, sparking reaction, violence.

We all need our own team of fact checkers! At least three times a week I find myself asking people “oh, where did you hear that?!”

It can be so exhausting that we find it easier to shut it all out.

Christians are to be truth-tellers, and truth-seekers. Sadly however, we are prone to fall for disinformation... and end up calling evil good and good evil.

Even when it comes to things of faith, we can fall for myths or merely human commands.

It always follows the warnings of the New Testament that in the final days people will collect teachers that scratch their itch rather than tell the truth.

In the church, we see it in popular books, podcasts, the youtube videos we watch.

How do we wade through it all? How do we discern what is true?

These questions are not new, this is not just a modern problem though modern tools spread meaningless talk far and wide.

On Crete, as the church is being planted, there are a raft of false teachers disrupting households like Russian bots in our day.

That which anchors the church, that silences the lies that deny the Lord, is sound doctrine - knowledge of the truth. The gospel, the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus for us and the implications that follow forgiveness and new life in him.

The reason Titus is on Crete is to appoint elders who will cling to the gospel and refute those who oppose it.

In our text for this morning Paul outlines who needs to be rebuked. Through it I think we gain some insight against the lies in our day that still must be silenced and our hope that overcomes it all.

The Lie

The lie is told from a couple of angles but both tell the same punchline. We can uncover it in relation to the problem on Crete. False teachers. This description directly contrasts with what elders should be.

Where elders, believers really, are to be increasingly godly champions of truth, false teachers are empty talkers and deceivers.

Paul compares them with worldly Crete.

Titus 1:12 “One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” (ESV)

“Crete was a stand out in the ancient world for its moral decadence. Cicero the Roman philosopher and consul said, “Moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans ... consider highway robbery honorable.” The ancient historian Polybius wrote that it was “almost impossible to find ... personal conduct more treacherous or public policy more unjust than in Crete.”

Cretean culture is no model to hold up and Paul is saying the false teachers are indistinguishable from this mentality...

“Paul references the quotation to show that the Cretan false teachers behave like stereotypical Cretans. They do not tell the truth. They behave like “evil beasts” and as such are vicious and unreasoning. They are “lazy gluttons” who live for their appetites. Such behavior is rotten, and Paul says that it is clearly evidenced by these false teachers. Knight concludes, “Paul is not making an ethnic slur, but is merely accurately observing, as the Cretans themselves and others did, how the sin that affects the whole human race comes to particular expression in this group.”

This is the fruit of self as priority over all things.

“Do as you please and be pleased as you do.”

Exactly the mentality we are familiar with. “Yo” above God. Disregard of what is right, true and good. Mantra of the age, if you want it take it, if you feel it, act on it. Without restraint, without reason. See it unfold in cultural conversations on gender.

Romans 1:18–23 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.” (ESV)

This is the lie that glorifies creature over Creator. This is where the teaching and living of the false teachers arrives.

Titus 1:16 “They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.” (ESV)

But it is more than being “worldly” that living the lie here.

It is actually quite religious, especially those of the circumcision party. Jewish believers promoting the requirement of ritual acts to be Christian, an embrace of elements of the law that give root to comparison among people in the church - who is actually Christian.

“What is this emptiness and deceit about? The reference to these opponents as being of “the circumcision party” tells us. Paul uses such references elsewhere (see Acts 10:45; 11:2; Galatians 2:7-9, 12) to identify former Jews who joined the early church with a “gospel-plus” message. “Yes,” they say, “what saves you is faith in the work of Christ plus special, religious knowledge, diets, rites, or practices that qualify you for Heaven.” This unsound message has nothing to it. Rather, it exalts matters that are worthless to God, and it deceives people into thinking that their heavenly status is determined by human accomplishments.”
BC

Upsetting whole families in the church. Teaching guilt to fill their coin purses.

It's not just the burden of Jewish tradition that is the rod. It is on Crete. But in Corinth it will be the possession of certain gifts of the Holy Spirit. To some it will be the grasp of “higher knowledge” not available to all. Through history it will be alignment with political ideology, among other things.

That which I add to Jesus to prove I am a better Christian than the next bloke. And it is just as corrupting as the mentality of the world.

“If we ever add anything to the work of Christ as the basis of our security with God, we inevitably entrust our eternities to the work of human hands. There are only two possible results from such an error—spiritual pride and personal despair. If our spiritual security depends on anything that we do, then our standing with God is ultimately a matter of comparison—of being better than someone else. Because our actions will never be entirely pure or holy before God, the doctrine of gospel-plus creates the Christianity of competition with others. Even if the behaviors such a doctrine advocates are morally good, the results are spiritually ruinous.” BC

The lie here is that my behavior and actions save. It is self-justification that the false teachers promise. This is just as much of a denial of Christ as the debauchery of worldly Crete.

“Paul identifies fallen humanity’s fundamental problem as a corrupted heart with distorted desires. Emphasizing ritual purity, food laws, and external conformity to the law does nothing to address the corruption of the heart. “To the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure”—that is, coercing a sinful heart into godly behavior does not make it pure (v. 15; cf. Matt. 15:11; Rom. 14:17–20). The external conformity urged by the legalizers merely papers over hearts of idolatry (seeking to gain God’s benefits by human efforts).

Even worse, those with defiled hearts will try to use religious activities for their perverse ends, using religious accomplishment for self-justification, self-exultation, and self-indulgence. Such religion, Paul says, for all its lofty language, is “empty” and “deceptive” (Titus 1:10). Ironically, the false teachers share a fundamental union with the licentious in that both live in and by the flesh rather than through hope in God’s grace (v. 16; cf. 3:3–7).” J.D. Greear

The lie in both is self. Rejection of God and rejection of truth. Makes us slaves to sin and the unending pursuit of justification in ourselves.

Paul graciously uses the examples of errant leaders in the Cretan church to identify a path leading away from the gospel and says to us, “Don’t go there.”

The church is to live opposite the world and the false teaching of myth and ritual.

Titus 2:1 “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.” (ESV)

This is the truth that silences the lie.

Our Hope

Titus is called to sharply rebuke, to repudiate the error or rejecting the truth and call the false teachers to repentance. He is to do so teaching what is appropriate to sound doctrine. What accords with the gospel.

...the announcement that Jesus has brought the reign of God to our world through his life, death, and resurrection from the dead. It is good.

“The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.” Tim Keller

Romans 5:6–10 “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—[8] but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. [10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” (ESV)

“The unpolluted gospel that God loves us in our imperfection because Christ’s righteousness has been applied to us holds the only true hope for turning from ourselves to God.” Silencing the lie of self. That we are his.

Galatians 4:3–7 “In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. [4] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. [6] And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” [7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.” (ESV)

This is the sound doctrine that is to shape the life of the church. That we teach one another. That we hold firm to and that we proclaim in rebuking false teaching that everyone may be sound in the faith.

Our hope is not self as god or self as savior but Jesus, who gives his life to secure ours for eternity, who calls us to bring the peace of hope in him everywhere we are. To be the fragrance of Christ.

It's in this hope we experience forgiveness and freedom from the tyranny of sin. In this hope we stir each other on to that which Jesus prepared for us ahead of time.

In this hope we invite others in.

Ephesians 2:8–9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (ESV)

Our boast is Christ. Our hope is Jesus.

“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.” Live in light of the gospel. Free. Fearless. Faithful.

The good news of Jesus silences the lie of self as savior and gives us hope for eternal living.

Hold Firmly to the Trustworthy Message - Repent of the lie of self, believe in Jesus that he gave his life for you, and that was enough. The way to silence disinformation is to be more acquainted with the truth. Dive deeper into the gospel.

Galatians 5:1 “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (ESV)

Remind Each Other - Stir one another to eternal living in union with Christ. You are as safe and secure as Jesus is. All the charges against you have been dropped. Preach the gospel to yourself and each other when we forget.

Tell Someone in Need of Hope - The purpose of the church in Titus is to broadcast the good news of Jesus by how we live and how we use our relationships, our voices, for the good of others. The gospel takes root where we least expect it.

Spurgeon ““This testimony is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith and not pay attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people who reject the truth.” This was bad soil, but it had to be

plowed, sown; and, with an Almighty God at the back of the gospel plower and sower, a fruitful harvest came even in Crete. We need not be afraid of the adaptation of the gospel to the lowest of the low. If in any quarter of the town the people are more sunken in vice than anywhere else, there the gospel is to be carried with more prayer and more faith than anywhere else. Depend upon it: God can bless his Word anywhere.”

The good news of Jesus silences the lie of self as savior and gives us hope for eternal living.

The finished work of Jesus is not clickbait. It is the truth that leads to godliness in the hope of eternity.

May we be a people sound in the faith, that others would see and savor Jesus.