

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

01.18.2026 | Something Worth Defending | Titus 1:10-16 | Dr. Tim Wiarda

We've been going through the New Testament book of Titus, so we're back in Titus this morning, and our passage is chapter one, verses 10 to 16. You may want to open a Bible or your Bible app and look along. Titus was written to one of Paul's missionary team members who was assigned to be on the island of Crete to look after the newly planted churches there. And our passage this morning is part of what Paul writes to Titus.

So chapter one, beginning at verse 10. "For there are many who are insubordinate, "empty talkers and deceivers, "especially those of the circumcision party. "They must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families "by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach." One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. "This testimony is true. "Therefore, rebuke them sharply, "that they may be sound in the faith, "not devoting themselves to Jewish mess "and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. "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. "They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works. "They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."

So I first need to say something about Paul's mood. He's being negative, and he's moved by strong feelings. I mean, he's calling people things. I mean, this passage is seven verses long, and look at all the negative nouns and adjectives about people. Verse 10, "Insubordinate, empty talkers, deceivers." Verse 12, "Liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Verse 15, "Defiled, unbelieving." Verse 16, "Detestable, disobedient, unfit." And he's accusing people of things. They teach for shameful gain. Verse 11, verse 16, "They profess to know God, "but deny Him by their works. And even specifies one specific group among the believers in Crete, who are especially causing trouble. In verse 10, he talks about those of the circumcision party. Now that's the English Standard Version that I'm reading from.

The word party is actually not in the Greek text. So versions like King James and New American Standard just say those of the circumcision. In other words, the Jewish believers among the church there in Crete. Now that's not a blanket statement about all, that whole section, all the Jewish believers among the Christians on the island of Crete. I mean, Jewish believers were the backbone of the early church. Paul and all the apostles and leaders were Jewish believers. So he's not talking about Jewish believers as a whole, but he is pointing to a subgroup among them who are active there on the island of Crete, who he says are, verse 14, devoting themselves to Jewish myths and commands of people who turn away from the faith. Verse 15, we find out it has something to do with purity. He says, "To the pure, all things are pure." But somehow that's an issue for them. And if we look over to 1 Timothy, another one of the pastoral epistles, we do read about teachers who forbid marriage and require abstinence from certain foods. So that's a group he's zeroing in on. But then at one point, he's not just thinking about those teachers, he's criticizing everybody. In fact, everybody on the whole island of Crete. Cretans, they're all liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. And even the instructions that Paul gives to Titus, they're all negative, silence these teachers, rebuke them sharply.

I remember a faculty meeting several years ago at the seminary where I was teaching. And you know, once a month or so, the faculty get together and part of it was the president's report. And he'd tell us how things were going with the seminary and often commend us for the good job we were doing. And one day, all of a sudden, the tone was a little different. And the president was speaking in a strong, firm way and he was kind of scolding us. And after the meeting, one of my older colleagues said, "Wow, the president was cranky today." Well, maybe, I mean, that was certainly not his usual tone, but he wasn't just having a bad day. I mean, the president was committed to what the seminary should be. He had expectations of the faculty, what we should be doing. And I guess he saw some things that kind of looked like we were getting a little complacent and not fully sharing that committee. So yeah, he sounded a little cranky. We probably needed him to speak that way to us.

Well, I get the impression Paul's a little cranky here. How does that mesh with the Paul we know from the book of Acts and 13 New Testament letters? Well, Paul was a man of passion and deep feeling. He was a man of courage and action. He was also a theologian, a man committed to teaching. He was a missionary and evangelist who went deep and detailed in his teaching about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, about sin and salvation, about the church and the struggle of the Christian life, about the glory to come. And as we look at what he's saying here, we see that he is most of all a man

devoted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I mean, Romans 1.16, he says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel." Is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek. There was a passage in 1 Corinthians 9 where he's saying how much he's, what he goes through for the sake of the gospel, he says, "I've given up my rights, become a servant of all. I do all things for the sake of the gospel." He was a man of strong friendships and affections, but also strong reactions. When he thought the gospel was threatened, he spoke up.

He tells us in Galatians that once Peter, who was the leader of the early Christian church, came up to Antioch where Paul was having some ministry and he kind of backed away from having fellowship with the uncircumcised Gentile believers. And Paul says, "I opposed him to his face." Because he was harming the gospel. Later on in Galatians, there was a group of teachers who was saying that these Gentile believers had to get circumcised. Paul actually says, chapter five, verse three, literally, "I wish they would castrate themselves." So Titus 1, 10 to 16, these are strong words from a man with strong convictions. And they're an important part of God's word for us to hear.

So let's talk about a situation in Crete and our situation today. Okay, Crete, the Christian church, mid-60s. First thing to see, there's a chain of influence involving four players or groups, each with a different level of authority and responsibility. First, there's Paul, he's an apostle. He's hearing directly from Jesus Christ. And then there's Titus, he's got kind of oversight over all the churches on the island of Crete, these newly planted churches. And then a third level is a group of elders who are appointed in these little local house churches. And Paul talks a lot about them and what Titus is supposed to guide and appoint them in the earlier part of chapter one. That's what Pastor Ben preached about last week. And then a fourth level, all the rest of the church members.

Another thing about the situation there in Crete, it was a new and still developing movement, not highly organized. These are new players, not much experience and maturity. They knew some basics, but fuzzy on a lot of things. And the third thing about the situation there, they were facing a threat. There was this teaching on the part of some of the Jewish believers had something to do with purity, something about prohibitions to marriage maybe and foods, some kind of myths. And as you look at what Paul says closely, you can kind of distinguish two groups. On the one hand, there were those who are actively promoting these ideas, the teachers and talkers and influencers. But then there was a second group who were allowing themselves to be influenced. So in verse 11, when Paul says they must be silenced, he's talking about the teachers and influencers. And when he says rebuke them sharply, in verse 13, he may be talking about those who are letting themselves be influenced. But as Paul saw it, the problem involved the whole church.

Well, what about the church situation today? We know we've got a chain of influence as well. For us, we could probably identify five levels of authority and responsibility. I mean, to the highest level, we don't have a living apostle like Paul, but we have scripture. I mean, especially the whole New Testament is just the Holy Spirit inspired writings of the apostles, the early followers of Jesus. That is our ultimate authority. At a second level, we don't have an authoritative regional supervisor, someone like Titus, who tells all the churches in the Bay Area how to follow the Bible. But what we have are just this strong guidance we get from creeds, statements of faith, denominational leaders, seminaries. I mean, last fall we went through the apostles' creed. It's part of our overall guidance for all the churches, not just in the Bay Area, but around the world. But then at a third level, we've got local church leaders. And we've got especially elders and pastors, those who are ordained, those who have that spiritual authority, that teaching authority to guide the church at the local level. But then in First Baptist and probably most churches, there's a fourth level that doesn't exactly show up in Titus, we don't quite know if they had anything quite the equivalent in that early stage. But here we have other church leaders. I'm talking about leadership team members, deacons, Sunday school teachers, small group leaders, not elders, not pastors, but definitely having a level of authority and responsibility. And then finally, a fifth level members. All the rest of us with our various gifts, various levels of maturity.

Compared with Crete in the 60s of the first century, we're a lot more organized, a lot more developed. We've got structures and processes for appointing leaders. We've got 10 core beliefs you can find on our website, 10 core values, and things are a little bit more spelled out. And what about threats? Well yeah, we've got threats. Not the same false teaching that was troubling the churches in Crete. Not any one single threat that I'm aware of at First Baptist Church that's immediately upsetting our congregation. But just a little bit off stage, in the air all around us, there are dangerous teachings that can mess up our knowledge of God, Jesus, and salvation.

So looking at what Paul told the church, and told Titus about the church in first century Crete, and applying that to our church today, I wanna ask four questions. And I think they're printed in your bulletin. The first one is, what is there to defend? Well first and foremost, truth. Verse 14 of our passage, Paul's opposing teachers who turn away from the truth. Why did Paul think truth was so important? On verse 13 he says he wants the Christian believers to be sound in faith. Faith speaks about their relationship with God. And he knows that if they're gonna have strong faith, they need to have a clear knowledge of the truth. Truth is necessary for healthy faith. Look at the very opening verse of the book of Titus. Titus 1.1.

Paul begins this way. Paul, and he identifies himself. That was typical in Greek letters. Paul, a servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's elect, and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness. He's talking about his life work, what it means for him to be an apostle. And he mentions three things. It's for the sake of the faith of God's people, for their knowledge of the truth, which is in accord with godliness. Faith, knowledge of the truth, godliness. There's three things that are linked, and truth is right in the middle. If the knowledge of truth gets messed up, faith will get messed up. If understanding of truth is distorted, how can believers lead godly lives?

You know, hunger for truth emerges in our lives at different times, different kinds of situation. Sometimes it comes when we're trying to find a solution to a problem. You know, we wanna get something done, and it's like we're fumbling in the dark trying to find something that'll work. You try this, you try that. And the more you look, the hungrier you get for a solution. And then you think of a new possibility, and you give it a try. Check a few things, gather a little more evidence, and suddenly you see that, it fits. And you know you've got it. You say yes. You've discovered something that's true, and that's gonna work. Maybe sometimes hunger for truth comes when you read the news, and you're reading these conflicting claims, and you feel you can't trust anyone. Because you know someone for sure is lying, or at least someone is totally wrong, but you have no way of knowing for sure who it is. I mean, where are the reliable and authoritative sources of information about current events? I mean, places where you used to go and feel you were on solid ground now seem like quicksand. And you just wanna get beyond all the falsehoods. Or maybe hunger for truth comes at a time in your life when you're asking very deep questions.

I remember when I was a college student, I took a class in 17th century English literature. I mean, I had to take an elective and I heard the professor was good, so I signed up. Difficult, old-fashioned English. Complicated images, long sentences. But one line in one poem stood out for me. A poem by John Dunn. This line. On a huge hill, cragged and steep, truth stands. And in this poem, he is talking about all the confusing religious options in his day. He runs through five options. There's Rome, the Roman Catholic Church. He talks about Geneva, that's the Protestant reformers at that time, talks about the Church of England. And then he mentions there's the option, well, none of this is true. And a fifth one is all are equally true. And the situation seems hopeless with all these different voices circulating around. But then that line, when Dunn is saying the hill is high, the way up is cragged and steep, but truth is there and it's life and death important. And me as a student, encountering all kinds of philosophical positions, I liked that.

I remember having conversations with one classmate about relativism. I mean, I guess I knew there was a philosophy out there that everything is relative. But here I was talking with an advocate who was really pushing hard for that. And in conversations with him, it was kind of hard to get a foothold against what he was saying. Every argument I tried to bring, he just said, well, that's just the perspective that circumstances have led you to adopt. That's just your truth. I remember thinking, no. I'm with John Dunn. It's not that everything is totally relative, that everything is true, but nothing is really true. And a high hill truth stands.

So Paul would have agreed with John Dunn. Truth is there and it's life and death important. But he might have said, you don't actually have to climb a huge mountain to find it. He would have pointed to Jesus Christ and would have said, in Jesus Christ, God has spoken. Colossians 2.3, Paul describes Christ as one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. You know, Paul belonged to a promise-wading people. Like most Jews of his day, he was waiting for the fulfillment of promises made to his forefathers, promises of spiritual renewal, national resurrection, a righteous king. And generations have been waiting I mean, there were defeats and exiles and foreign domination and they were waiting. And Paul met the risen Jesus and he knew that all those promises were fulfilled and guaranteed in Jesus. Jesus was the truth of kept promises.

There's this really important thing there's this really kind of cool passage in 2 Corinthians, first chapter. Paul had some kind of opponents in Corinth. People were causing him some trouble. And he had told them he was planning to come at a certain time to Corinth to be there. And he didn't show up. And some people were saying, yeah, he's insincere. And he's writing in the opening chapter to say, no, that's not the way it was at all. So let me read you what he said. Second Corinthians 1, 17 to 20, because I want you to catch his point here. He says, was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to the flesh, ready to say yes, yes, and no, no at the same time in other words, do I say yes when really secretly inside myself I'm saying, no, I'm not really gonna do that. He says, as surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been yes and no at the same time. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who we proclaim to you, Sylvanas and Timothy and I was not yes and no, but in him it is always yes, for all the promises of God find their yes in him. And that's why it is through him, Jesus Christ, that we utter our amen to God for his glory. In other words, how could I be saying yes to you and not really mean it? We proclaim Jesus Christ the Son of God and every promise God ever made is yes in him. So how could we as a servants make promises when we don't really mean it? All the promises of God find their yes in him. What God did through Jesus' death and resurrection was the fulfillment and guarantee of every promise God had ever made to Israel. Jesus is the truth of kept promises.

There's this him you may know, be thou my vision. It's an old him, I guess it goes back to the 10th or 11th century in Ireland. The third stanza I think it is begins with a line I really like, be thou my wisdom and thou my true word. Be thou my true word. Be thou my true word. Be thou my true word. Not just true facts and ideas, but truth wrapped up in a divine person, the eternal Son of God. And not just my own private truth. Truth for me, what's true for me, but truth about the universe itself. Truth to speak to all the world. God's true world to us, true word to us, and my ultimate true word to myself and to others.

On any debated issue about values, meaning and purpose, right or wrong, the source of life, the division, the definition of success, where joy lies, where I can find hope for my future, all wrapped up in one living word, the word become flesh, truth become flesh. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. He isn't just true, he is truth, he is the truth. Excuse me a minute. Do you realize what a treasure we have in Jesus Christ? Not just the truth of problem solving or getting beyond the mess of conflicting claims, but truth as it exists eternally beyond the farthest stars come down to us. And it's not a bitter truth, it's not a disappointing truth, but a truth full of promises, good and life-giving truth, truth in the light of which everything else fits. Truth I am made for. So if you have this truth, when it is threatened by something false and foolish, you defend it.

So that brings a second question. What are the threats? Okay, when I think about churches and Christians, I've known over several decades, four movements or types of teaching stand out for me as the biggest threats to what the gospel says about God, Jesus and salvation. I'm talking about the big ones. Teachings that arise from within the church itself carry life and death consequences and exert persistent and widespread pressure on thousands of churches. Number one, modernism. Some people would call it theological liberalism. A denial of any core Christian belief on the grounds that it doesn't accord with Christian or with human reason. Core beliefs like virgin birth of Christ, bodily resurrection of Jesus, second coming, atoning death of Christ, eternal judgment.

In the church I attended as a child in Michigan, there was a strong awareness of this threat. My church was one of the smaller Baptist denominations that had left the mainline American Baptist denomination in the 1930s. And even a generation later, when I was growing up in that church, I knew there was something out there called modernism and it was a problem. In the 1970s, I went to an evangelical college and graduate school and a big part of the way the curriculum was slanted, it was geared to deal with that threat, defending the reliability of the Bible, defending the historicity of gospel claims. In the 1980s, the Southern Baptists went through a period of intense struggle against the modernist drip. So I think maybe in our day, some of that sense of threat has receded a bit, but it's still out there. Maybe the most prominent form now would be the push to loosen biblical standards relating to sex and sexuality.

Second threat, works righteousness theology. The idea that salvation depends on your good work outweighing your bad works. You know, the church I went to as a child and a youth, very aware of that old Reformation battle insisting on salvation by grace and by faith. And we were always hearing, you can't earn your way to heaven by doing good works. Because works righteousness kind of was the default theology even to many Protestant Christians at that time. You know, whenever Bible teaching weakens, this seems to be just the attitude that quickly comes and fills things in. Well, I try to

be a good person, I hope God will accept me. And forgetting that we depend on the righteousness of Christ who paid the price for our sins and salvation is a gift of grace received by faith. Well, that works righteousness, it's still out there.

A third one, one I never heard of growing up in church till quite recently, the prosperity gospel. Teaching that the gospel is primarily about God giving you wealth and earthly success. Talking about more than just an emphasis on God meeting your daily needs, but the kind of teaching where almost nothing is said about sin and righteousness, or even about the centrality of having a relationship with God through Jesus, but it's all about God meeting your monetary needs. And it's an extreme emphasis on wealth, a totally distorted and one-sided appeal to what the Bible teaches about money, it's just a different gospel. Now, to many of you, that may just seem like quite a fringe thing. But in many parts of the world, it is massively affecting churches. And even here, I mean, people, we do have sometimes financial issues, and this is a very appealing thing. It's online, it's in books, there are mega churches with crowds, people lining up, and it seems, wow, this is fantastic, people lining up to go to church. And if you get inside, what you're hearing is really the prosperity gospel.

And then finally, one I would not have thought of 10 or 15 years ago, Christian nationalism, a movement that merges Christian faith with a particular vision of American greatness. Teaches that a Christian should use political meaning means to make America a Christian country and should align themselves tightly with non-Christian nationalists to achieve that end. Now, in a mild form, Christian nationalism might just be a matter of trying to use our political voice to advance Christian values in America. And who could argue with that? I mean, tomorrow is Martin Luther King Day. Martin Luther King was a Baptist pastor, and many would say that his involvement in politics had a positive impact on both American society and on the reputation of the Christian church. But that's not the kind of influence I'm talking about. Talking about a movement that merges the Christian gospel and American nationalism in a much more intimate way.

So let me just mention three reasons why I would include this on the list of the four big threats. The Christian nationalism of the 2020s mixes the gospel with politics in a way that compromises the biblical opposition between sin and righteousness. I mean, fundamental to scripture is a complete radical opposition between sin and righteousness. And Christian nationalism compromises that opposition. It tries to mix a Bible-based, gospel-centered agenda with a political agenda developed in large part by people whose strongest influences, values, and philosophy of life do not derive from Jesus, but from the unbelieving world. Like trying to serve two masters, one who demands you turn from sin to righteousness, and one who expects your support in projects that may not be righteous.

Second, the American Christian nationalists of the 2020s align the holy name of Jesus Christ with goals, methods, and leaders that do not reflect his character in teachings. Christian nationalists endorse worldly politicians in the name of Jesus. Not just say whether they vote for somebody or not, but they just endorse them in the name of Jesus. And they allow those politicians to make use of the name of Jesus, or to use Christian symbols like crosses, Bibles, prayer meetings. So that in the eyes of the nation and the world, the name of Jesus is associated with people who present a false image of who Jesus is and what he stands for. And if that happens, it dishonors Jesus.

Finally, Christian nationalism makes a purely human vision of American greatness the measure of what pleases God. Instead of letting the Bible tell us about what pleases God, and then making that the measure of American greatness. So I've listed four threats. Why are they life and death serious? Well, because they involve a denial or a serious distortion of the gospel itself. I mean, the gospel demands faith in God's power and God's word. And Jesus wants the Sadducees, sort of the modernists of his day who said there's no resurrection. Jesus pointed down to a small testament scripture. He says, you don't know the power of God or the scripture.

So if anybody comes to you and says, you can't let yourself be guided by something written 2000 years ago, you say, I put myself in, I put my confidence in God's power and God's word. The gospel message is that salvation is found in Christ, given to us by grace, we receive it by faith. So if someone comes to you and says, we have to work hard to merit our salvation, you say salvation is in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. The gospel is a call to repentance and offer forgiveness and an invitation to a restored relationship with God. So if anyone comes and says, if you just have enough faith, God will make you rich. You say salvation is first and foremost about getting into a right relationship with God, not about gaining worldly success, wealth, or even physical health.

I mean, four men once came and brought a paralyzed man to Jesus. And they obviously, they lowered him through a roof to where Jesus was. And they're waiting to hear Jesus say, get up and walk. The first thing Jesus says was, sign your sins are forgiven. Later on, he did heal the man, but he knew the real issue was not that. The gospel says, Jesus is your one master and he calls you to uncompromising holiness. So if anyone comes and says, let's join forces with worldly leaders, you say Jesus demands my total loyalty. He is holy. He stands apart from and far above every nation on earth. And furthermore, you can say, my most important identity marker is that I'm a citizen of heaven. My deepest social bonds are with my co-citizens in the worldwide church of Christ, no matter where they come from. So there's truth and there are threats. I just wanna say a couple of quick things about the third and the fourth question. Third question is, where do I fit into the chain of transmission and deposit guarding?

Let me explain that. Two fundamental ideas underlie this passage that we've read from the book of Titus. One is that the gospel is a deposit to guard. Paul talks a lot about that in 1 and 2 Timothy. 1 Timothy 6, he's talking to Titus who was kind of a colleague of, I mean to Timothy was a colleague of Titus. And he says, Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Second Timothy, he says, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. That deposit is the gospel. The true teaching about Jesus Christ, it's precious. It will be attacked. You need to guard it.

The second idea is that the gospel is a deposit to transmit. Jesus had transmitted it to Paul. He'd entrusted it to Paul. Paul transmitted it to pastors and teachers like Timothy and Titus. According to 2 Timothy 2, 2, Paul says to Timothy, and he would say the same thing to Titus, what you have heard from me, what I received from Jesus and what you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, that's the first link in the chain, entrust to faithful men, these elders, that's a second link in the chain, who will be able to teach others also. There's a third link in the chain, and there's no indication that that chain of transmission ever stops.

So when I ask, where do you fit in to the chain of transmission and deposit guarding, this is what I'm talking about. Now, it's not too hard to see how Pastor Ben and Pastor Clark and Pastor David fit into all this. And I think it's not too hard to see the next level of leadership. If you're a deacon, an LT member, Sunday school teacher, small group leader, okay, you're not a pastor, but you are definitely part of the chain, and you have a part to play in the church guarding and transmitting that good deposit. What about all the other first SF members? Well, none of us is totally exempt from this. You know, Colossians 3, 16, Paul says, to all the members of the church, let the word of Christ, that's the deposit, dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. First Thessalonians 5, 11, encourage one another, build one another, how do you do that? You build one another up with the word of Christ, with the word, with that good deposit. The little things we say or don't say, all influence our fellow believers every week in a hundred different ways. And a lot of those little things that we influence people with have the potential to reinforce, guard, or transmit the good deposit of the gospel.

A word from the pulpit has weight. But words spoken by a friend or a peer in the course of everyday life have a different kind of weight. In the 1980s, we lived in Algeria, Muslim country in North Africa. I taught English in a public high school. And one day I walked into class, and just at the beginning of class, I looked over and there on a window sill, somebody had left an old crust of bread, a piece of litter, and I walked over and I got it, I walked back and threw it in a waste paper basket. And immediately one of the students said, "Oh, sir, it's a sin to throw away bread." I thought, what? I mean, there's a piece of moldy trash, somebody just too lazy to dispose of property, and this kid is citing some legalistic little tradition, it's a sin to throw away bread.

But I looked and all the others were nodding their heads. I'm thinking, okay, they know I'm a Christian, I don't mind getting into a little discussion, some point of religion and ethics now and then with them. Then I thought, hmm, I seem to throw away bread. Do I as a Christian really want to debate a class full of Muslim students on that issue? So I took that piece of bread out of the waste paper basket, and walked over to the window, put it back on a sill. Now I won't say that that student's comment had a life-changing impact on me. I mean, it wasn't somebody I'd normally go to for theological insight on sin or what you're supposed to do with leftover food. It wasn't even one of the good students who sat in the front row. I wouldn't have trusted him not to cheat on an exam. But at some level, whenever I'm thinking about what to do with leftover bread, his comment still echoes a little bit. And maybe it's just a little bit of influence on me. So what I'm saying is, don't underestimate the influence of an on-the-spot, honestly spoken word not coming from a pulpit, but just

from an everyday person. An everyday member of the church. Somehow, wherever you are, whoever you are within the first SF membership, you're part of this chain of transmission in deposit guarding.

Finally, I don't really have much to say, how do I play my part? Just, I mean, that would be a subject of a whole sermon. Just, first of all, try not to be part of the problem. Hold firmly to the trustworthy word as taught. Be sound in faith, these are Paul's goals. Let the word of Christ well in you richly so that when a counterfeit comes along, you can not get sucked up in it, but recognize it. And be a sound teaching peer model. You might not teach, but you can model sound teaching. Just in the course of your natural interactions, you can just kind of breathe out the kind of things that are in line with Christ-centered teaching. In situations where it's appropriate and necessary, maybe you speak up. Somewhere on the gentle to sharp spectrum. But really, unless you're Titus, 99% of the time, it's gonna be on the gentle end of the spectrum. Titus 3.2, instructions for the whole body say, remind them, the average members, to be gentle, to show perfect courtesy toward people.

And don't try to be what you're not. Don't feel you need to, if you're shy, not sure if it's appropriate, don't feel you somehow gotta speak up to somebody where it seems awkward, but there may be times when you do need to send a signal. You know, there's this little ad you see, friends don't let friends drive drunk. Well, if you see a church friend who's under the influence of off-base thinking, and figuratively speaking, is about to hop in their car and cause some damage to themselves or to somebody else, well, maybe you need to send some little signal. We need to look out for one another.

So, to sum up, we have a good deposit to defend. There are some serious threats lurking about. You are part of a 2,000 year old chain of transmission and deposit guarding that goes back to Jesus himself. And you're called to play your part. Let's pray.