

## INTRODUCTION

Paul does not waste words in this letter; he is concise and direct. Having opened with his own apostolic authority and laid out the exact kind of men who must lead the young assemblies on Crete (Titus 1:1-9), he now turns sharply to the problem already at work in those same cities. Right after describing leaders who hold fast to the faithful word so they can encourage with sound teaching and refute those who contradict, Paul draws the line in the sand. There are the men who must be answered. The false teachers, especially those “of the circumcision,” stand in direct contrast to Titus himself, to the elders who meet the qualifications, and to the way every believer is called to live (Titus 2:2-10). This is not a side issue. It is the reason Titus was left behind. Sound doctrine is not an abstract ideal; it is the only thing that will silence error, protect households, and let the grace of God adorn the church from the inside out.

## EXPOSITION

Paul begins the contrast with an explanatory phrase, *for* “γάρ (gar),” in Titus 1:10. “For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision.” This explains why the instruction to appoint elders and the qualifications are set in verses 5-9.

The word “ἀνυπότακτος *anupotaktos*,” translated *rebellion* means not subjected to, insubordinate, unwilling to submit to authority. This is the same term used for unruly children in verse 6.

These men refuse to place themselves under Apostolic authority. They are *empty talkers* “ματαιολόγος *mataiologos*.” this word is only used this one time but is a compound word of two well-known words – “mataios” which means devoid of truth, purpose, use, or worth. And “logos” meaning words or message. Their message has no value, no worth of any kind.

*Deceivers* – φρεναπάτης *phrenapatēs* – mind-deceivers. They are after the mind of the believer, which is why Paul emphasizes knowledge, wisdom, and thinking throughout his letters and states “we take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The phrase *especially those of the circumcision* identifies the main troublemakers as Jewish false teachers who are already inside the assemblies. They are attempting to take control of these Judaism adjacent assemblies claiming that they are the ones who should be teaching, even though their message is worthless. Paul is naming the immediate, active threat to the new assemblies, the exact opposite of the qualified elders who must “hold fast to the faithful word” (1:9). For a local assembly this means everybody, especially leaders must

recognize when rebellion and worthless teaching show up. For the individual believer, it warns not to be impressed by confident talk that varies from or is in opposition to Apostolic truth.

Verse 11 explains the damage they do and the remedy: “who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.”

ἐπιστομίζω *epistomizō*, translated *be silenced*, means to muzzle, to bridle, to stop the mouth. These men overturn entire households by teaching what must not be taught, and they do it for sordid (disgraceful, improper) gain.

Paul is protecting the assemblies from men who exploit leadership for improper money or advantages, the direct opposite of the qualified leaders who teach accurately and serve God’s household (1:7-8).

The principle is clear: false teaching is not harmless error; it destroys unity and must be stopped. A local assembly must guard its households by refusing to let such teaching run unchecked. For the believer this means we test every teacher and every lesson by whether it is in accordance with the truth of God’s Word.

In verses 12-13a, Paul quotes one of their own against them: “One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true.”

He is not insulting the Cretan believers. The false teachers have taken this cultural slander and used it to discredit local leaders. They have entered local assemblies teaching a doctrine of Jewish superiority and that the Cretan believers are ineligible for leadership or teaching.

The very men who claim spiritual superiority prove the stereotype by their behavior. Paul is exposing hypocrisy in plain sight, showing how these insiders live in open contradiction to the orderly, above-reproach character required of elders (1:6-8). For the assembly this teaches that truth-telling sometimes requires calling things by their right name, even when it is uncomfortable. For the individual believer it reminds us that we must be careful who to follow. Believers must not get involved with false teaching or leadership that are unqualified.

Verses 13b-14 give Titus the direct command: “For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.”

*Reprove* is the Greek word “ἐλέγχω *elegchō*” and means to expose fault, to call to account, to have everybody see the error. In the full context

The adverb *severely*, “ἀποτόμως apotomōs” – sharply/with cutting force, shows the kind of reproof that is required. He is to not give them recourse, rebuttal, or a hearing. It needs to be public and direct.

The purpose clause, so that they may be sound/healthy in the faith, makes the ultimate goal evangelistic to the false teachers, conforming with the truth of the Gospel and apostolic doctrine. And it is restorative to believers who are caught up in their false teaching. They must stop listening to Jewish myths and man-made commandments.

Sharp reproof is an act of love aimed at bringing people back to apostolic truth, the very truth the qualified elders are to hold fast and teach (1:9). The principle for the local assembly is that qualified leaders must confront error head-on, but always with the aim of restoring people to sound doctrine. For the individual believer, this shows that even when we have wandered, the path back is through the truth we already know.

Verses 15-16 deliver the devastating diagnosis: “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. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.”

The contrast is absolute. Who are “the pure?” Believers. The “all things” are in reference to the content of the letter. This is all pure.

These men, however, are defiled, in opposition to pure. They are ἄπιστος (apistos) – unbelieving, this is a designation, they are unbelievers, unsaved, in opposition to truth and to God. To those rebels nothing is pure. Both their mind and their understanding are defiled.

Their profession of knowing God is out of alignment with their lives; their actions demonstrate their denial. What actions? Being detestable, unbelieving, and unproven for any good deeds. Most look at verse 16 as an evaluation of morality. It is not. The context shows it is an evaluation of doctrine and motivation.

We have to be careful; this is particular and speaking of these false teachers. Paul is, through the Holy Spirit, speaking of these men. We must be careful giving someone the designation of false teacher, but there is, of course, false teaching.

Then comes the pivot in Titus 2:1: “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.” After exposing error, Paul immediately returns to the positive charge: sound doctrine is the antidote. The false teachers tear down; Titus and the qualified elders build up by speaking what has been given by Paul and the apostles.

This verse is the hinge that launches the practical instructions for older men, older women, young women, young men, and bond-servants in 2:2-10, the exact opposite of the chaos the false teachers produce. Sound doctrine and sound work together to create harmony in the churches.

#### THE PROBLEM OF FALSE TEACHERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

This pattern is not unique to Crete. Jesus warned of wolves in sheep's clothing who come from within (Matthew 7:15). John dealt with antichrists who deny the Father and the Son (1 John 2:18-23). Paul told the Ephesian elders that savage wolves would arise from their own number, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples (Acts 20:29-30). The Pastoral Epistles repeat the warning again and again: men teaching strange doctrines (1 Timothy 1:3-7), paying attention to doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1-3), upsetting the faith with empty words (2 Timothy 2:16-18), and refusing sound doctrine while heaping up teachers to tickle ears (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Peter and Jude describe the same intruders, secretly introducing destructive heresies and exploiting believers with false words. (2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 4, 8-16). The marks are always the same: denial of sound doctrine, division of the body, and personal gain. The apostolic answer never changes - sound doctrine, qualified leaders, and lives that visibly adorn the Gospel.

#### PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATION

For Titus and the believers on Crete, this section was both a warning and a lifeline. The false teachers wanted to discredit the new assemblies by saying Cretans were unfit for leadership. Paul said the real problem was the rebellious insiders, and the solution was already in place: appoint qualified elders who hold fast to the faithful word, reprove error sharply so that people may be sound in the faith, and let every believer live in line with the grace that has already appeared. The slander would be silenced not by clever debate but by orderly, grace focused, teaching churches whose lives adorned the doctrine of God.

For local assemblies and individual believers today, the principles remain unchanged. We still recognize false teaching when it shows up as insubordination to apostolic truth, empty talk that tears down, or man-made rules.

We appoint and follow leaders who meet the qualifications of 1:5-9 and who can both encourage with sound teaching and refute error with the pure doctrine of the Word of God.

# Guarding the Church: Identifying and Silencing False Teaching

## THE ANATOMY OF FALSE TEACHERS



### Rebellious & Empty Talkers



Insubordinate individuals whose messages are "mataiológos"—devoid of truth, purpose, or worth.

### Mind-Deceivers Targeting Households



They target the minds of believers to overturn and upset entire families.



## THE APOSTOLIC REMEDY

### Muzzle the Error



Paul commands that they be silenced (*epistomizō*) to stop the spread of destructive teaching.

### Sharp, Restorative Reproof



Errors must be exposed directly to bring people back to a healthy faith.

## CHARACTER COMPARISON: THE PURE VS. THE DEFILED

	THE PURE (BELIEVERS)	VS	THE DEFILED (FALSE TEACHERS)
<b>Mind &amp; Conscience</b>	Pure and aligned with truth		Defiled and unbelieving
<b>Deeds</b>	Adorn the Gospel		Deny God through detestable actions
<b>Motivation</b>	Serving God's household		Seeking sordid, disgraceful gain

### Sound Doctrine as the Antidote

Teaching the faithful Word is the only way to silence error and build harmony.

