

Living with Opposition
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Titus 1:1-5; 10-16

Opening: Truth attracts intolerance. In a society that calls for tolerance **what is the irony for Christians?** Setting aside hot debates like same-sex marriage, abortion, etc. **what Christian beliefs cause us to be called intolerant? How can a follower of Christ stand for truth without being a “jerk?”** (1 Peter 3:15)

Firm belief in biblical truth attracts intolerance. Because we believe Jesus Christ is the only way to peace with God and eternal life, some will see us as “narrow-minded, unenlightened, or even bigoted.”ⁱ It can be a challenge to be firm on biblical truth while lovingly pointing people to Christ. Like Jesus when He came to earth, we must be “full of [both] grace and truth” (John 1:14.)

Big Idea: In a world filled with satanic deception Church leaders (and all Christ-followers) must be firm on biblical truth and stand against false teaching. We need to KNOW the truth, TEACH the truth, and LIVE the truth.

Meet Titus, a “tough and trust-worthy” pastor with the challenging assignment of organizing the early churches on the “truthless” island of Crete. “**CRETE** (Crēt) [is a] Long, narrow, mountainous island south of mainland Greece.”ⁱⁱ It’s the largest island in Greece. In Paul’s day it was a difficult place for church planting that required a leader made of strong timber. Paul saw those characteristics in Titus.

Reading chapter one of Titus we might feel like we are repeating what was covered in Paul’s letters to Timothy. There are similarities in their situations, but as we go deeper into this little book of we will see lessons that are unique from what Paul wrote to Timothy.

One difference is the contrast in the two pastors who received these letters. The two men were obviously very different in personality. Timothy was “timid,” and Titus was a “tough guy” that Paul had sent into tough situations. “He was entrusted with the delicate task of

delivering Paul's severe letter (2 Cor. 2:1–4) to Corinth and correcting problems within the church there (2 Cor. 7:13–15)ⁱⁱⁱ

One commentator contrasts these two pastors, *“Here, then, were two persons of very different training and influence. On the one hand, a person of kindly sympathy, of almost feminine mind and character; and, on the other hand, a man of strong will and vigorous intellect. Yet both have their gifts of leadership, and we can see that they are wisely chosen as the two persons to whom Paul addresses his Pastoral Epistles.”*^{iv}

The contrast of Timothy and Titus shows us there is no single personality type for ministry. God chooses individuals with different personalities, skill-sets, strengths and weaknesses, and equips them for ministry. Different personalities, yet a single mission: pointing sinners to the Savior.

Let's begin by reading Paul's opening greeting in Titus 1:1–5 (ESV):
1 Paul, a servant of God and 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, ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³ and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;
⁴ To Titus, my true child in a common faith:
Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.
⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

- As was his custom, Paul stated his role and authority in his greeting: He was “a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.”
- Paul's mission: He was “...sent to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives.”^v (NLT) Note that phrase, “know the truth” or “knowledge of truth.”
- This refers to the truth of the gospel as the “hope of eternal life” promised to people by God “who never lies.”
- The opening of this letter is about standing for the truth and standing against false teachers who “have turned away from

the truth^{vi} and were “turning whole families away from the truth by their false teaching.”^{vii}

- Paul left Titus in Crete to put the churches in order and to appoint solid, truth-defending elders as leaders of these young congregations.
- In verses six through nine Paul outlined the qualifications for elders. Since we recently studied this in 1 Timothy 3 we will not review them here.
- Beginning in verse ten Paul addressed the problem of false teachers in Crete and he did not mince words.

Titus 1:10–16 (ESV)

¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” ¹³ This testimony is true.

- Wow Paul, don't hold back on what you think about these people!
- The word “insubordinate” in verse ten also means “rebellious.” In other words, these people were not just “misguided” from the path of truth. This was an intentional effort to pull people away from the truth of the gospel.
- Some of them were “Judaizers (V.10.)” **What was their false teaching?**
- Some were “empty talkers” engaging in “meaningless talk.” **What kind of false teaching is that? Why would it be dangerous?**
- There's nothing wrong with motivational speeches and pep talks. But pep talks are NOT the same as teaching biblical truth. We can't confuse preachers and motivational speakers or truth teaching for TED talks.
- The gift for gab is not the same as the anointing of God!
- **Verse eleven, why was it a priority to silence these false teachers?**

- Jesus warned in Matthew 7:15 (ESV) ¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.
- It’s the job of the shepherd (church leaders) to protect the sheep.
- Bottom line, these false teachers were “deceivers.” Apparently that was a well-known problem in Crete. Paul used a famous quote from one of their own poet/philosophers: “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”^{viii} (A bit of hyperbole – not every Cretan always lied. Also a paradox – the poet was himself a Cretan -- was he lying or not?^{ix})
- Look at verse eleven. **What was often their motivation?**
- The Life Application Study Bible gives us some tips on spotting false teaching: *“You can recognize false teachers because they will (1) focus more attention on themselves than on Christ, (2) ask you to do something that will compromise or dilute your faith, (3) de-emphasize the divine nature of Christ or the inspiration of the Bible, or (4) urge believers to make decisions based more on human judgment than on prayer and biblical guidelines.”*^x
- Paul summed them up: ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.
- Verse 13 gives Paul’s “tough” prescription for dealing with these people: *“Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith...”*
- **What does he mean, “rebuke...that they may be sound in the faith?”**
- Ultimately, the problem of false teachers is a “heart” problem.
- ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.
- False teachers need “heart change.” In the case of these false teachers it appears they were NOT believers.
- The goal in confronting them was not only to protect the rest of the flock, but possibly to be an agent for the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin and bring them to repentance.
- One commentator makes the point: *“The motive comes not from an enjoyment of confrontation, or from the heady position*

of pointing out faults, but from an earnest desire that people will be sound in the faith. Encouraging and promoting healthy faith—correct belief and righteous behavior—should remain the goal of all who lead within the church.”^{xii}

- What if false teachers refuse to repent and turn to sound doctrine? What should believers and the church body do? Paul addressed this in Titus 3:10: ¹⁰ If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them. ¹¹ For people like that have turned away from the truth, and their own sins condemn them.

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So, What’s the Takeaway?

- In a world filled with satanic deception Church leaders (and all Christ-followers) must be firm on biblical truth and stand against false teaching. We need to KNOW the truth, TEACH the truth, and LIVE the truth.
- Warren Wiersbe writes, *“The attitude of some church members is, “It makes no difference what you believe, just as long as you believe something.” Paul would not agree with that foolish philosophy. It makes all the difference between life and death whether or not you believe the truth of the Word or believe lies. You can choose what you want to believe, but you cannot change the consequences.”^{xiii}*
- The best antidote to the deadly disease of false teaching is KNOWING biblical truth and practicing it in our every day lives.
- If we KNOW biblical truth then we can spot counterfeit teaching.
- As followers of Christ the stakes are too high to stand idly by while false teachers deceive our friends and family. We must be sensitive enough to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us to firmly but lovingly confront false teaching with the truth of scripture. Remember, the goal is not to win a fight; the goal is to bring people to “sound faith” based on biblical truth.

ⁱ Article on intolerance: <https://www.gotquestions.org/tolerance-Christian.html>

ⁱⁱ Hemer, C. J. (2003). [Crete](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R.

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- ⁱⁱ Hemer, C. J. (2003). [Crete](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 364). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Browning, D. C., Jr. (2003). [Titus](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 1601). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.
- ^{iv} <https://www.biblestudytools.com/classics/strong-popular-lectures-on-the-books-of-the-new-testament/the-epistles-to-timothy-and-titus.html>
- ^v Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 1:1–2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- ^{vi} Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 1:14). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- ^{vii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 1:11). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- ^{viii} **Epimenides**. ... For his reputed claim—cited by St. Paul the Apostle (**Titus 1:12**)—that all Cretans are liars, **Epimenides**, a Cretan, is credited with invention of the paradox of the liar, in which a sentence says of itself that it is false, thus being true if it is false and false if it is true.
- ^{ix} <https://www.britannica.com/topic/liar-paradox#ref1186450>
- ^x Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 176012-176014). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.
- ^{xi} Larson, Knute. Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: 9 . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.
- ^{xii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Tt 3:10–11). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.
- ^{xiii} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, p. 264). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.