

The Antidote to False Doctrine

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Bible Text: Titus 1:15-2:1

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We are finishing up Titus chapter 1 today. And actually dipping our toe into chapter 2. And all God's people said, "wow, I didn't think that was actually going to happen at any point soon." God is good to us. I hope you're being helped by our time in this letter to the First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Crete, through their pastor Titus from the apostle Paul. Allow me to begin in verse 10. As we read, I'll be reading from the Modern English Version. [Titus 1:10-16] "For there are many unruly men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced, who subvert whole houses by teaching for dishonest gain things they ought not teach. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, 'The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and idle gluttons!' This witness is true. So rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who reject the truth. To the pure, all things are pure. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. Even their minds and consciences are defiled. They profess that they know God, but in their deeds they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and worthless for every good work." The grass withers and the flower fades but the Word of our God stands forever.

Brothers and sisters, false doctrine can easily be both who we are and what we do but God gives us the antidote. God gives us the antidote. We've read about leprosy over the last few weeks and, you know, sometimes in the Scripture reading you think, why are we reading this verse by verse? What is the- the point? But we must remember that ALL the words of Scripture point us to Christ. Remember back in Sterling when we hit the Song of Solomon and the session there, as most sessions, are very dignified men and they read they- they would do the Scripture readings and they read through the Song of Solomon with all dignity and seriousness. But I'll never forget the first session meeting after we finished the Song of Solomon and one of- one of the elders there, one of the longest standing, he's about 45- between 45 and 50 years an elder there. "I'm so glad the Song of Solomon is over! I could-- you know, it was a little awkward there a couple times, you know, the things that we were-- we were reading." But we- we read word by word, verse by verse, because all of Scripture points us to Christ. And we read about that- that infectious nature of that disease, that it even would impact their clothing, either the warp or the woof or anything made of leather, right. And how even that had to be dealt with, even burned in the fire to be dealt with. God gave an antidote to those leprous moments that would cause uncleanness and cause them to be separated and out of fellowship with the rest of the people. Even being in the camp but outside of the tent for eight days. It was a challenging reality. And here, as we read and work through Titus, we see the infectious nature of works righteousness, of- of clinging to that old system in which there were particular days and seasons and works that needed to be done and dietary restrictions that needed to be upheld as a type of what Christ was going to do in His church. And there are some who wanted to walk away from the Gospel of grace. But they wouldn't see it as walking away from the Gospel of grace, they wanted to walk with one hand in the Gospel of grace and

the other hand in the old way of doing things and call it good. This is not what Christ has called us to. This is not the freedom for which we have been set free.

As Paul begins to build on this reality, that there are some paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who reject the truth, he says this. "To the pure, all things are pure. But to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. Even their minds and consciences are defiled..." We see, firstly, the authenticity of false doctrine. There can be talk many times of things being authentic. Go to a new town and- and- and our family, we- we love Mexican food, or what's called Mexican food. The gringo version of Mexican food. And you want the authentic thing. You go to different parts of the country and when you're south of the border, and by that I mean in Texas, you want-- you want authentic tex-mex. You want that rich, red, flavorful tex-mex. When you're-- when you're out in San Diego, you want cali-mex, it's a little fresher, it's a little more dynamic, it doesn't cause a nap quite as quickly. You want those fish tacos, you want-- that's what you want, you want the authentic thing. The authenticity of life. Is someone who they say they are? Are they that way to the core? Or are they simply that way superficially? Well, the thing about false doctrine is that it goes clear to the bone. So as I said, this points back to verse 14, these Jewish myths and commandments of men, where this clean/unclean distinction that went away with Christ was still being clinged to as if it was doing something for them. As is easy for us to do, they- they're missing that the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. What determines cleanness is-- and uncleanness is not hooves but toes. The feet walking around going various places, the hands doing various things, and the heart connected to them. That's what determines clean and unclean. The way- the way Paul states this, it's almost like: if you believe the truth, you can do no wrong. And if you believe the lie, you can do no right. "To the pure, ALL things are pure." This, of course, isn't saying that Christians can do whatever they want; because we know that there are sinful acts. But it comes to the created order, it's how you use it, it's the thoughts and intents of the heart, not the created order itself. This points us to Romans 14 [vs 23] "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because it is not from faith, for whatever is not from faith is sin." The ACT isn't sin, but the attitude is. Jay Adams says this: "... and he should repent. There is no such thing as false guilt," Adams says, "there may be a faulty basis for the guilt, but the guilt is real." What is this authenticity of false doctrine? False doctrine isn't content to stay in the belief or speculation categories. False doctrines seeks, like yeast, to work its way through your whole being, right down to every single attitude or perspective. Reminded in First Samuel 16 [vs 7], "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees. For man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'" Brothers and sisters, there are those who seemingly outward do all the right things, but it is out of a heart that is inflamed with PRIDE, that is inflamed with the sinful perspective that "I am doing something for myself by doing these things." And there are those who seem to struggle, forget week to week or day to day, from moment to moment. They seem to be waging war against the flesh and struggling and yet they know that they are nothing without Christ. They know that there is no hope. See these- these folks that were hanging out in the First Reformed Presbyterian Church of Crete wanted to do something on the outside that would address the inside.

We're celebrating my father's birthday and Emma's birthday this week and I- I had to include this because it was kind of funny. Emily got some bath salts from a family member for her birthday and she was reading it and she said, "I don't think the person that wrote this was too good with English." I said, "well, why?" And she handed me the box and said, "read the description of some of these bath salts." Well, there is one bath salt that she was given that will-- it doesn't help with anti-inflammatory things, it helps with anti-incriminatory things. Wouldn't that be nice? Just take a bath, put in some bath salts, and all incriminatory things just are taken away like a Calgon commercial. But isn't that the tale of the ages? "Tell me what I can do outside of me to take care of the guilt inside of me." When page after

page after page after page Scripture reminds us that only Jesus can remove our false doctrine and all of its effects, all of its guilt from our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Secondly, we see the action of false doctrine. "They profess that they know God, but in their deeds they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and worthless for every good work." This is quite a slight on the part of Paul against these people. All they are trying to do is good works and he says they are worthless for good works because they are warping them and distorting them and turning them into moments of judgment against others who are not doing exactly as they are doing. They were trying nothing but to do good but they were failing at it miserably. Whatever is not from faith is sin so if you are acting without faith it is sin. It is sin. This seeks to remove sin from us, not by action (see in verse 15), it was "what can I do outside of me." Here we see that it's a matter of existence, that foods and drinks, etc. are inherently sinful so if I just avoid those, then I'm righteous, right? No, see they profess that they know God, but in their deeds they deny Him. The action of false doctrine, even in trying to do good works, is merely heaping guilt upon guilt upon guilt. Just because we're doing something and that something that we are doing seems like it's a Christian thing does not mean that we are acting righteously or in accordance with true doctrine. If our hearts are inflamed with pride and self-righteousness, if we are judging those around us because they are not doing exactly as we would be doing. And all it does is create more guilt. All it does is harm us and harm the body of Christ. Well, if we look at a church body and we see these types of things going on, the temptation is to go to the workshop, get the book, find the lecture that we're going to get in here and we're going to do this, we're going to get the right media plan, we're gonna-- we're going to social media our way through this problem. I need to send an email to try to fix this and all of these things. But what is the antidote that Paul gives to Titus? You can imagine for a new pastor, it's his job to establish the eldership in this-- on the isle of Crete and there's a lot facing him, he sees this. You know, might be thinking, "well, everybody seems to be acting this way, I guess I'm going to have to pick somebody and, you know, people are-- they're going to have to elect somebody for the eldership that- that is participating in this." But what- what does-- what does Paul give as the antidote to false doctrine? [Titus 2:1] "But as for you, teach what is fitting of SOUND doctrine."

We see this all around us, we see this- this circumcision mentality, if we could call it that. This hasn't gone away. It is still with us even in our beloved Reformed Presbyterian Church. We've been guilty. We've been guilty of taking on these same types of doctrines and so, therefore, the same types of actions. And so, what does address it? It's the faithful, consistent teaching of the truth of God's Word week after week after week after week. As tempting as it is to participate in this type of false doctrine, it's also tempting to try to fix it by some other means than simply teaching the truth. And we will see Paul apply the good news of Jesus to various categories of people. The Gospel in its purity doesn't mean we don't DO anything, it means we do things in accordance with sound teaching, with healthy teaching, with-- in accordance with the words that lead to spiritual vitality, not enslaving people to the commandments of men but helping them see that they are sons and daughters of the Most High God in Jesus Christ. We are given the antidote to false doctrine and that's simply sound doctrine. And all God's people said, "Well duh, Joel. That's so obvious, it's as plain as the forehead on your face." Yeah. Then why do we keep missing it? It is so plain, it is so clear, it is so obvious and yet we so quickly want to veer off into just another version of works righteousness to fix the version of works righteousness that we don't like. "... can't believe that you would submit yourselves to THOSE commandments of men. I'm perfectly happy over here submitting myself to THESE commandments of men." Rather than all of us together submitting ourselves to sound doctrine, some would say the true truth of Scripture. False doctrine is completely authentic, it takes no prisoners, it wants every cell of your body to be acting in service to it, to be believing wholeheartedly those false doctrines. It wants you to do in accordance with that to go ahead and say you believe in God but your actions will prove otherwise. Your actions will

prove you really belong to me, false doctrine says. What is the antidote to that? But as for you, Titus, teach what is fitting of sound doctrine. Remember that this letter was going through Titus TO the church. And so Paul would tell YOU, Trinity Church, but as for YOU, BELIEVE what is fitting of sound doctrine. Let this not be a moment where the categories of proper church order allow anyone to escape. "Well that's right, the pastors, they need to teach sound doctrine." Well brothers and sisters, you must believe sound doctrine and, consequently, you must do sound doctrine. You must do the works that are the fruits of believing rightly. You must walk in obedience to the Lord. It is so easy for false doctrine to be both who we are and, consequently, what we do. But as we recognize that in ourselves or in other people, let us not be quick to run to some other false doctrine to try to fix that. Let us be careful to take the true antidote, the true anti-incriminatory. Let us cling to Christ. Let us cling to the good news that is Him crucified, dead, and buried, risen, ascended, and coming again to save God's people.

Stand with me as we pray.