

21st Century Men of Grace:

**In doctrine showing Integrity:
Believing Right so that you
Behave Right
Titus 2:7**

As we open our Bibles to Titus 2, do you remember few weeks ago, when I asked you to share with me what you MOST wanted to be taught from God's Word? The top three responses were as follows:

- Prophecy/Book of Revelation was the most requested; and then
- Key Chapters/Overview of the Bible was second; and
- Biblical Doctrine was third.

This morning as we return to Titus 2:7 we are looking at Paul explaining to Titus, how vitally Biblical Doctrine shapes the integrity of a believer's life.

Paul admonishes Titus to live a life of integrity that has the moral **purity** which lines up in secret, with the pure **doctrine** that he proclaimed in public.

This is the next desire God expresses in His listing of:

The Character of God's Servants

God is ever seeking for us to **live out His Truth in a World Adrift.**

v. 6 "Likewise exhort the **young men**":

1. "to be sober-minded", v. 7: First in any godly man's life is a firm resolve to **Live a Restrained Life in an Unrestrained World;**
2. "in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works": Next, these men seek to **Follow Christ In A Christ-less World;**
3. "in doctrine showing integrity"¹: This is the call to the personal integrity of **Believe Right so we Behave Right;**

The context of this third exhortation is that while the doctrine we teach is vital, there must be integrity. Our life must match what we say that we believe.

Paul has already challenged Titus to be an example of **purity in doctrine** in 1:9 and 2:1.

¹ The Greek text is: en te didaskalia (1319) aphthorian (90).

But now Paul turns to *the hand* that holds the Bible, *the mouth* that speaks the Word, and *the life* that is used in teaching others—that life must have consistency with that pure, orthodox, doctrine.

Listen to how the top translations render this next quality:

- KJV: ⁷In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: **in doctrine shewing uncorruptness**, gravity, sincerity,
- NKJV ⁷ in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; **in doctrine showing integrity**, reverence, incorruptibility
- NASB: ⁷in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, **with purity in doctrine**, dignified,
- ESV: ⁷Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, **and in your teaching show integrity**, dignity,
- NIV: ⁷In everything set them an example by doing what is good. **In your teaching show integrity**, seriousness

The word that the Holy Spirit guides Paul² to use is *aphthoria* [Strong's # 90: **purity**]. This word is actually a negative form of a descriptive word for being morally corrupt and vile—thus it means “not morally depraved”. In Paul’s day this word (without the “not” added) was often used of morally depraved people such as rapists, seducers, and abortionists.

Now as we turn back to Acts 20:17, may I remind you of an old truth? “There is nothing new under the Sun”, that’s what God’s Word said three thousand years ago through Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1:9). When it comes to the state of Christ’s Church, that truth is very helpful, because:

Satan’s Play Book Is Very Old

Satan has just one old playbook. His lies and tricks are old, have been used repeatedly through the centuries, and are all clear to spot. Each generation of believers faces very new and real attacks of these very old and familiar lies and deceptions.

Satan’s original pack of deceptive lies is in Genesis 3. They are still with us. Remember the tools Satan used in the Garden of Eden? Let me just state them again for you as we prepare to see them in action as we read our text. Satan convinced Eve to—

- **Doubt God’s Word:** “Hath God said” (An attack on whether God has even spoken);
- **Doubt God’s Plan:** “ye shall not surely die” (An attack on the Penal Substitutionary Atonement—only those who will trust in the perfect death of God’s Substitute will be saved).

² Writing also about the vital need for integrity in our personal lives, Peter uses a related form of this word when he says that false teachers promise “freedom while they themselves are slaves of *corruption*; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved” (2 Pet. 2:19).

- **Doubt God's Authority over Life:** "your eyes shall be opened" (An attack on Biblical Epistemology—whether God's Word is the source of truth to live life God's way.)

Now with Acts 20:17 open, please stand

Acts 20:17-36 (NKJV) From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

Pray

One of the current issues that we as believers face is a growing segment of the Evangelical Church that has drifting doctrine, decreasing orthodoxy and increasingly following the errors of the Emergent Church Movement.

When examined closely, we find similar errors present in each of the various forms of modern doctrinal drift away from God's Word.

But before we dive into the present, we need to see that modern errors are also the very same issues that Jesus confronted in the main stream of Bible believers in His day. In fact, we could say that—

Jesus Faced the Same Situation

Jesus confronted the four main religious groups in His day, who were Bible believing, but had drifted away from God's Word and had started to mix in false teachings and practices with the truth.

By New Testament times Jesus faced four different types of so called Bible (Old Testament) believers, within organized religion. All four based their actions upon some

part of God's Word (the Old Testament), but all had very serious doctrinal flaws that almost completely obscured any truth they might have rightly held.

Here is a summary of these four main Bible-believers or religious groups of the day, all of whom claimed to believe and follow God's Word in Christ's day.

1. **Essenes:** The most unique Bible believers of Christ's day were the Essenes. They were mostly unmarried men, who perpetuated their movement often by adopted children from other Jewish families. They lived in a secretive, exclusive, self-denying, and usually isolated communal settlements like Qumran, in ruins today on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. These men spent most of their time either copying or discussing the Scriptures. They produced the world famous Dead Sea Scrolls-discovered by accident in 1947. Essenes sought no contact with culture nor influence on society; and are not specifically mentioned in the New Testament.
2. **Pharisees:** The most influential of all the mainstream Bible believers of Christ's day were opposite of the Essenes. Pharisees were the very public, very influential, and very self-seeking. Though possibly even more exclusive than the Essenes, Pharisees could be found everywhere in the Jewish Society of Christ's day. Jesus exposed them as doing "all their deeds to be noticed by men..." (Matt. 23:5-7).

The Pharisees formed a self-righteous, "holier-than-thou" community within the society. They believed strongly in God's sovereignty and that they alone were right about God's Word. They considered themselves to be deeply spiritual; but this spiritual life was entirely focused on their external beliefs and practices—never their hearts. Their lives were driven by the doctrines that their revered spiritual "leaders had devised over the previous several centuries as supplements to God's Word."

"These doctrines were known collectively as "the tradition of the elders," concerning which Jesus gave the Pharisees one of His strongest rebukes, charging them with "teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Matt. 15:2-9). They loved to debate doctrine, but they often failed to live it. They emphasized God's Sovereignty but neglected His love³" as Jesus told them, "You have neglected (Matthew 23:23)".

3. **Zealots:** The least spiritual and most fervent of the mainstream Bible believers were the Zealots. Focused completely on political activism, blatant nationalism, and even violence, the Zealots were dominated with capturing their culture and society by any and every means, with what they perceived were God's goals.
4. **Sadducees:** Finally, the most powerful group of mainstream Bible believers were the ultraliberals called the Sadducees. They arose during the intertestamental period, but from among the priests (Acts 5:17). They cared little for religion,

³ MacArthur, John F., Matthew 13: *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, electronic edition) 1983. [74 words]

especially doctrine, and denied the existence of angels, the resurrection, and most things supernatural (Acts 23:6-8). They believed in extreme human autonomy and in the unlimited freedom of the will. Jesus called their belief system "leaven" because it led to spiritual pride, superficiality, "and no concern for the genuine inner spiritual life or for the welfare of their fellow man. The "leaven of the... Sadducees was the hypocritical, self-serving, dead externalism about which Jesus warned His disciples (Matt. 16:6)".

Fast Forward to Bible Believers Today

Throughout most of its history the church has had its own brands of Essenes, Pharisees, Zealots, and Sadducees⁴. "The Essenes were separatists; the Pharisees were traditionalists; the Zealots were activists; and the Sadducees were modernists. They represented the same primary types of religious factions that are common today."

As I read this list, instead of trying to pick out the faults of others you know, ask the Lord to show you if any of these elements are present in your view of God's Word.

1. In Christ's day, Essenes were separatists who believed the key goal of life in God's Word was as much separation as possible from the evils of the world.

Today, we have modern Bible believers who share the Essenes' emphasis that the goal in life is to stay as far away from any known sin or sinner as we possibly can.

2. In Christ's day, Pharisees were traditionalists who believed God's Word plus their system of doctrine. Their primary concern was learning the teachings handed down by revered teachers over the centuries. They focused on adhering to the teachers of God's Word rather than the Word, and totally relied on the teachings of their revered teachers to understand or interpret God's Word.

Today, we have modern Bible believers who share the Pharisees emphasis that the teachings of their revered teachers have become more authoritative than the Bible. They listen only to MacArthur, Sproul, Piper, or Calvin; or they only trust Beth Moore, Bill Gothard, or Ray VanderLaan. On and on we go as believers who know more about our Bible guru than the Bible!

3. In Christ's day, Zealots were activists who believed God's Word called them to radical political activism. They looked down on fellow Jews who would not append all their time trying to change society.

⁴ Adapted and "quoted" from sections of MacArthur, John F., Matthew chapters 7, 13, and 23 in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, electronic edition) 1983.

Today, we have modern Bible believers who share the Zealots emphasis and spend their lives trying to plug all the holes in the moral dike of American culture, and hold back the tsunami of sin in the world.

4. In Christ's day, Sadducees were modernists who focused on neglecting the authority of God's Word by denial and syncretistic (blending in pagan ideas) modifications that fit their own religious agenda.

Today, we have modern Bible believers who share the Sadducees emphasis that we can't be dogmatic about anything in God's Word, and everything is valid and to be considered.

But Jesus taught us that none of those ways were right.

- To the Essenes His Word says pleasing God is in a changed heart, not merely a disciplined body.
- To the Pharisees His Word says godly change is first internal, not external.
- To the Zealots His Word says to change individuals by conversion, not to change culture by revolution.
- To the Sadducees His Word says the Scriptures are given as the authority we follow, not some ideas of man we can blend in, to build our own system of belief and practice.

We need to be believers who guard doctrine with integrity.

Guard the Faith

Back in Acts 20 Paul told us that right from the start, Satan had a two pronged attack—first, sow Christian-look-a-likes in Christ's church as the tares among the wheat; and second, blend in error (syncretism) to distort the true doctrines taught by the gifted pastors and teachers.

Satan especially attacks all who wield the sword of the Spirit as Bible teachers. He seeks to destroy them, or disable them by attacking their physical health, or distracting them through disunity in the body—anything that hinders the Spirit-energized teaching of the Word, is Satan's method.

Satan was very successful, especially in getting the church to blend in pagan ideas (known as syncretism or religious syncretion). Within the first two centuries after the Apostles, every known heresy still with us today was being taught in the early church.

There has always been this same struggle within the church. A hundred years ago it was seen in what was called liberalism, today it is seen in what is being called the emergent church movement (ECM). Those same three lies that Satan pushed into Eden are now being pushed in Christ's Church.

- **Doubt God's Word:** "Hath God said"
- **Doubt God's Plan:** "ye shall not surely die"
- **Doubt God's Authority over Life:** "your eyes shall be opened"

And those old deceptions are what we need to stand against as Paul aid with doctrinal integrity. Here is a simple plan:

Doctrinal Integrity Action #1: Guard the Authority of the Bible

Modern doctrinal drifters centers upon a rejection of the absolute authority of the Bible. Here we ask questions like "Is the Bible inerrant?" And "In what sense the Bible is God's communication to us?"

Examples of this total loss of holding onto God's Word as authoritative can be seen in some of the modern theologians and ECM leaders irreverence which includes referring to God as a chick, and as a Cosmic Child Abuser (describing the crucifixion of the Son at the Father's will).

Their negation of the authority of God's Word has caused these doctrinally drifting writers to question God's sovereignty over and knowledge of the future, as well as a denial of the substitutionary atonement at the cross, a denial of the sin of homosexuality, and a denial of hell. **Guard the Authority of the Bible!**

Doctrinal Integrity Action #2: Guard the Cross

Modern doctrinal drifters and the ECM hold to grave errors about the cross of Christ. When some modern church leaders are asked questions like: "What is the meaning of the atonement?"; and, "Did Jesus actually pay for or purchase anything on the cross?" their answers are very disturbing. Jesus declared that He knew why He had to die; He came to die as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin. We cannot read the New Testament and conclude otherwise.

Matthew 20:28 "...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

But some modern theologians and ECM writers teach that the cross simply serves as a profound demonstration of the love of God. One writes that on the cross, Christ "absorbed all the pain, all the suffering caused by the breakdown in our relationship with God and in doing so demonstrated the lengths to which a God who is love will go to restore it." (Chalke)

The most visible leader and ECM writer says, "The Christian faith should become a welcome friend to other religions of the world, and not a threat." He goes on to write that not all people need to be Christians to follow Jesus. Some may be able to be "Buddhist or Hindu followers of Jesus." (Brian McLaren)

The doctrine of penal substitution--the understanding that, on the cross, Christ died in our place, bearing the penalty for our sin—is thus rejected by such ECM teachers.

As true disciples of Jesus Christ, we see the reality of sin in God's Word, and the necessity of personal salvation. The simplicity of the gospel is in the Cross Christ (I Cor. 1:18); and all that is rooted in a proper, high view of Holy Scripture (Romans 10:17).

When the Authority of the Bible is lost, then sin and salvation through Christ is no longer important, the Church loses its witness and conviction—and all that's left is a shipwrecked faith. **Guard the Cross!**

Doctrinal Integrity Action #3: Guard the Truth

A third concern with the doctrinal drifters and the ECM is concerning the very nature of truth. Here we ask questions like "What is truth?" and "Does Christianity give us an accurate picture of the way the world really is, and can we know it?" And, "Can we know for sure what God has said and confidently stand and proclaim that as Absolute Truth?"⁵

To many prominent theologians who are drifting away from God's Word, their answer is, "No!" They say and write that we can't be dogmatic, authoritative, or even sure about doctrines laid down in God's Word that have always been believed by evangelicals throughout all of Church History. **Guard the Truth!**

Back to Genesis

Satan has just one old playbook.

His lies and tricks are old, have been used repeatedly through the centuries, and are all clear to spot.

Each generation of believers faces very new and real attacks of these very old and familiar lies and deceptions. Satan's original pack of deceptive lies in Genesis 3, are still with us. Grace-energized believers who are sound in the faith, watch out for modern (or ancient) movements in the Church that use the same tools Satan used in the Garden of Eden—

- ***Doubt God's Word:*** "Hath God said" (An attack on whether God has even spoken); so we need to **Guard the Authority of the Bible**

⁵ Don Carson in his fine book called "Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church" explains that the fundamental issue is epistemology--i.e., how we know things or think we know things.

- ***Doubt God's Plan:*** “ye shall not surely die” (An attack on the Penal Substitutionary Atonement—only those who will trust in the perfect death of God’s Substitute will be saved); so we need to **Guard the Cross**
- ***Doubt God’s Authority over Life:*** “your eyes shall be opened” (An attack on Biblical Epistemology—whether God's Word is the source of truth to live life God’s way.) So we need to **Guard the Truth.**

Since doctrine from God's Word is so vital, next time we will see Lord willing, ***“Where else are Ancient Heresies springing up in the Church of the 21st Century?”***

The post-Apostolic Fathers as they are known in Church History are a veritable minefield of terribly wrong doctrines and practices. In fact, for just a moment, let me just list all of the old deceptions found among the writings of the early church leaders.

None of the Church Fathers (leaders, writers, and pastors from AD 100-300) could ever say with Paul, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9)—because they were not INSPIRED to write the very Word of God. We can trust the New Testament writers' God-breathed words completely. But looking at what they wrote and said is alarming.

Even a skimming of the writings of these church leaders yields immense doctrinal flaws, errors and even outright heresies. What were some of the false teachings they held? For example:

- **Irenaeus** (c. 115-202) was an early Church Father who believed that the bread and wine became the body and blood of Jesus when consecrated, as did John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem;
- **Tertullian** (160-220) was an early church apologist who became a supporter of the Montanist heresies, and a promoter of a New Testament clergy class, as did his disciple Cyprian;
- **Origen** (185-254) was an early church scholar that taught that God would save everyone and that Mary was a perpetual virgin;
- **Athanasius** (293-373) was a great defender of Christ's deity who taught salvation through baptism;
- **Augustine** (354-430) was the principal architect of Roman Catholic dogma that included his support of purgatory, baptismal regeneration, infant baptism, mortal and venial sins, prayers to the dead, penance for sins, absolution from a priest, the sinlessness of Mary, and the Apocrypha as Scripture⁶.

We can never say that all of these men were totally wrong; on the contrary, many of them were deeply used to preach the Gospel, protect the church from great errors, and help clarify doctrine. But, to just embrace them because they were from the early church and did many things right, is to walk through a veritable minefield of heresies.

Religious Syncretism Is Deadly

⁶ Dave Hunt, TBC Today email, "Ancient-Future Heresies", by *McMahon, T.A.*, February 28, 2008.