

Handling Bad Elders

Titus 1:11-14

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 24, 2019

Turn with me to the book of Titus. And as you're doing that, it might interest you to know that Titus is the 17th book in the New Testament, 17th in order of appearance, and it is the 18th book in size. It's kind of an interesting fact. But there are only four books that are shorter than the book of Titus in the New Testament. There's Philemon, Second John, Third John and Jude. Other than that, this is one of the smallest books in the New Testament, in the Bible actually. For example, just to give you a comparison, the book of Acts has 18,000 words in the original Greek, 18,000 of them. Titus has 700. So, it is 25 times smaller than the book of Acts. If you want to do a Bible study, and you're short on time, do Titus. Acts will take you a little while. Another book to compare it to, the Gospel of John, which we studied last year, has 15,000 words in it. So, Titus is 21 times smaller than John. And the book of Romans (this is helpful) has 7,000 words in it, which is interesting because Romans was a letter. Like the book of Titus, Romans was sent out through the ancient postal system, but the difference is that when Romans was rolled up as a scroll, it would have been huge and weighed a ton, and the book of Titus could have been carried under your arm. It was just so small. You could have rolled it up and put it right next to you on the plane or the ship and forgotten all about it. It was so tiny.

And because of this, Titus has been forgotten about in some ways in church history. You don't read about it a lot. Whereas the book of Romans was used to start several revivals in the church and lead several key people to Christ (men like Martin Luther and John Wesley came to Christ reading the book of Romans), Titus couldn't claim that. As far as I know, it didn't lead any major figure in the church to Christ. And very few people wrote about it. You see some commentaries on the book of Titus, but none that are famous. There's no churches or Bible colleges named after it. You don't hear of Saint Titus' Church. Have you guys ever heard that before, or Titus University? But it is a very important book when it comes to the church. It's a shame that it's kind of been forgotten about because there's so much we can learn about it from it today.

In fact, if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in the middle of a series called the "How to Plant a Church" series because that is what the book of Titus is about. It was written to tell us how to plant a church and how to get it started and off the ground.

As many of you know - and if you're new to us, you may not be aware of this - Grace Fellowship Church is a church plant. We're still starting things around here. We're still getting it off the ground. Our church started in the basement of someone's home in the fall of 2015, which means we're about four years old now. Some of you can't believe that, right? Four years have gone by since this church was started. But that means we're still in our formative years. We're still putting all the pieces together. Which means the book of Titus is a gold mine for us, because it tells us how to do that. It tells us how to plant a church.

If you look in Titus 1:5, you can see this for yourselves. Paul writes and he says, "For this reason I left you in Crete (so this is the reason for this book being written), that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you." I've told you before that the

word for “set in order” in Greek comes from the word *ortho*, which we get the word “orthodontist” from. It means to straighten things out. Just like an orthodontist straightens out teeth, so it was Titus’s job to do that in Crete. Just like a dentist comes in and puts things in their proper place and removes the unhealthy elements and builds up the healthy ones, this was Titus’ job in the church. The church had already started, things were already in motion, but now it was his job to come alongside and get them organized.

And in some ways, that's been my job since I've come to Grace Fellowship Church. When I came here, the church was already started. Things were already in motion. You guys out of your love for the Lord and your love for His Word, you had a lot going on. I was blown away with how much you had going on here. You already had a name, you already had a website, you had a meeting place. You had a worship team, an usher team, a children's ministry going on downstairs. You were tearing up the basement before I even got here with all the kids down there. There are crayon stains down there that will never come out of that carpet. You had a doctrinal statement. So, it was my job to just come alongside and organize some of that, to get things in order. This is what Titus did on the island of Crete.

And one way Paul tells him to do this is to train up new leaders. If you look in verse 5 again, you see that phrase. He says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you had set in order what remains and appoint elders.” And in fact, Paul spends (if you've been with us the last couple of months) the whole first chapter talking about this.

I've told you before Titus 1 is a very simple outline. It's easy to follow. In verses 1 through 4, Paul introduces himself and his ministry. He talks about his own leadership. Then in verses 5 through 9, he talks about good elders. And in verses 10 through 16, he talks about bad ones. That's the outline of the first chapter. That's what it's about. Very simple. Paul introduces himself and then he talks about good elders and bad ones; the kinds you want in your church, the kind of leaders you want to have working with you, and then he talks about the kind you don't.

Just to make sure all the spectrum is covered here about leadership, Paul gives you the good and the bad side of this. Because it was Titus’s job (and you can imagine how fun this would be) to get the bad guys out of the church. It was his job to remove them. For whatever reason, some bad men had come into the church in Crete. We don't know how. Paul doesn't say how they worked their way in, but they were causing damage, and it was Titus’s job to stop them. They say you can't build something without tearing something down first. You can't lay a foundation without breaking ground and removing the debris and taking out the trash. And it was Titus’s job to do that in this church. He had to come in and take out some trash.

I don't have to tell you this, but a lot of churches would be better off if they took out some trash, amen? You can say amen to that, it's okay. This is a safe place. They would be better off if they threw some garbage out. Several years ago, Lifeway Christian Research did a survey in which they discovered that half of all the Christians they talked to believe that they are basically good and all roads lead to heaven - half of them. And then they found (and this was even more shocking) 78% of them, a huge portion believed that Jesus was the first of all God's created beings, and that the Holy Spirit is a force and not a person. And I think it's safe to say that they

got those ideas from somebody. They didn't just have a meeting and make it all up. Somebody taught it to them in the church. Somebody fed them some trash.

For another example of this, back in 2010, Larry King interviewed the pastor of the largest church in America, a man who preached to 40,000 people a week. That's half the population of Chilliwack. And he asked him, Larry King asked this man, he said, "Do you think that you have to believe in Jesus to go to heaven? Is He the only way? Can people from other faiths get in?" And the pastor said, "I don't know." That was his answer, "I don't know. I have no idea." So, Larry King asked him, he said, "Do you believe in hell then? Is there such a thing as a lake of fire?" And the man said, again, "I don't know." Seven times in that interview, he said, "I don't know" to those kinds of questions. And the interesting thing about that is that later on, shortly afterwards, the same man wrote a bestselling book called "Your Best Life Now" in which he said that God wants to give you your best life now. He wants to make you healthy, wealthy, and wise. And the ironic thing is that he knew that, but he didn't know who was getting into heaven. He knew that God wanted to make you richer or whatever, but he didn't know who was going to hell.

The Bible's very clear that everything that glitters is not gold. Every sermon is not truth. Every book you read, everything you see on television is not real. Some of it is a lie, and it needs to be taken out of the church.

John Macarthur says that the church today is possibly more susceptible to false teachers, documental saboteurs and spiritual terrorists than at any other time in history. Biblical ignorance within the church may well be deeper and more widespread than at any other time since before the Protestant reformation. I've heard it said that before the Protestant Reformation, we were in the Dark Ages because we didn't have enough information. There were no books, there was no literature. Today, we're in the Dark Ages because we have too much information. You can't weed through it all. When you think about it, there are television channels today that are devoted entirely to doing nothing but propagating false teaching. They do nothing but pump lies into your living room 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They don't rest, they don't sleep, they just teach it, teach it, teach it.

And there are seminaries and Christian colleges devoted to this. You can get a PhD in heresy today. You can get a Master of Divinity in deception and put it up on your wall. There are Christian websites, bookstores devoted to this. There are Christian publishing houses that print book after book after book, while the Bible tells us simply to avoid it. Do you get that? The Bible tells us simply to stay away from that stuff. Don't watch it, don't read it, don't enjoy it. Take out the trash.

Just a few verses on this just so we can get our minds around this passage today. This is very sobering stuff, but this is what the Word of God is talking about this morning. A few verses if you want to jot these down. First John 4:1 says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." John says, test the spirits, examine the spirits, have discernment with the spirits. Why? Because not all of them are true. Many false prophets have gone out into the world. Not a few, not a handful, not a smidgen. There's many of them. Matthew 7:15-23,

15 “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21 Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” 23 And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”

That's scary stuff. Jesus says, some people are so deceptive, they are so deceitful that they can perform miracles while lying to you. They can prophesy and cast out demons. All the while Jesus will say to them, “I never knew you.” So, you have to avoid them.

Which brings us back to the Book of Titus, because in this Book, Paul tells us what to do about that. He tells us what to do with the false teachers in the church. John said to test them, to examine what they say. Jesus said to be aware of them. Second Peter 2:1 says, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you.” So, Peter says, “Don’t be shocked when you see them.” Now the Book of Titus tells you what to do about them.

You would think that in a letter like this, Paul would give Titus some encouragement here because church planting is hard. You guys have been church planting for a couple of years now. You've been part of this. Is it easy? It's hard, right? You would think this would be something of a pep talk at the end of chapter 1. “You can do this. Don't give up, high five!” Instead, this is a warning. It's a word of caution. And Paul says, “You need to remove certain people from the Church.”

And he tells them how to do it in verses 11 through 14. So, if you're taking notes this morning, at the end of the chapter here, almost at the very end (this is our sermon outline for today), Paul gives us three ways to deal with the false teachers in the church. We're going to look at three ways to deal with false teachers in the church. Three ways to deal with bad elders. Last week, I showed you how to spot bad elders and how to identify them. Just some points so that you can look at and you can tell that someone is not fit for leadership. This week Paul tells us how to deal with those guys.

And the first way is this, three ways. The first way to deal with a false teacher is this - you need to silence them. If you're taking notes, that's the first point this morning. You need to silence false teachers. We said a little bit about this last week, but this one sounds kind of harsh. But the idea here is that false teachers want an audience. They want someone to speak to, and you have to remove that from them. You have to keep your people safe. And if someone is teaching lies, the best thing you can do is take away their ability to teach. If you read in verses 10 through 11, it says it like this. Paul writes and he says, verse 10, “For there are many rebellious men, empty

talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain."

Just a few things to point out here. If you notice, verse 10 gives us four descriptions of a false teacher that we looked at last week; four ways to identify them. And it says in verse 10 that a false teacher is rebellious, an empty talker, a deceiver and of the circumcision. Which means that he believes Christians have to be circumcised to be saved, or to be in the church. He thinks they have to keep the law.

And also, if you notice, just like it is today, Paul says they were many of these guys in the church. So many times we want to complain about the state of the church today and say things are so bad, they're so terrible, but they've always been that way. There's always been false teachers. There's always been problems. And in fact, if you look in verse 11, Paul says that there were so many of them, they were upsetting whole families. They were driving people apart.

One mark of a false teacher is that they divide people. A true teacher unites them. A false teacher tears them apart. They were tearing apart families, they were doing it for the sake of sordid gain, or shameful gain, as some of your translations say. They were teaching for money. So, Paul says, "You need to silence them."

The word for "silence" in Greek is *epistomizó* which means "to stop the mouth" or "to silence it". It comes from two words, *epi*, "upon" and *stomizo*, "the mouth." It means "to come upon the mouth and strangle it", figuratively, of course. It doesn't mean you have to go choke these guys, but literally that's what the word means. In some sources, it means "to muzzle like a dog". And the idea is you stop their mouth from teaching. In other words, you can't be passive about heresy in the church. You can't sit back and say, "Let's just see what God will do. Let's just wait," because they're hurting people. These guys are ruining their lives, so you can't wait, you can't be passive, you have to silence them now is what he's saying.

There's going to be a temptation among Christians today to be tolerant of everything. You guys know what I'm talking about? Look, let's be honest, Canada is a wonderful place because it's the land of toleration, right? We tolerate everything; bad traffic, forest fires. We tolerate everything here. And there can be a temptation to bring that into the church and say, "Well, it's not our place to judge. It's not our place to correct people." But Paul says, it is in this sense, "You need a silence those who are hurting people. You need to correct those and confront those who are leading people astray." The idea of absolute toleration is found nowhere in the Bible. We're never told to tolerate heresy, ever. We're never told to tolerate lies; we're never told to tolerate sin. In fact, in the Old Testament, Israel was told to kill false prophets. If you want to talk about being intolerant for a moment, that's pretty intolerant. Some people say, "Boy, I'd like to go back to Old Testament days." Really? It was a command. If you want to write this down, Deuteronomy 13:1-5, it said, "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and says, 'Let us go after other gods whom you have not known and let us serve them, you should not listen to the words of that prophet. But instead, that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death.' And Moses says, "So you shall purge the evil from among you." It was a serious thing to be a teacher in Israel because if you say the wrong thing, you might die for it. They were told to kill false prophets, to purge or to get the evil out of Israel. Which when you go to the New

Testament, it softened up quite a bit. We're not told to kill people anymore, thankfully. But we are told to do something.

The New Testament gave us several commands for handling false prophets. For instance (this one is interesting), in several passages, we're told to call them out by name, or we're given that example - to call them out by name. People get a little uneasy today when you start naming names of false teachers or those who are propagating heresy. But they did it all throughout the New Testament. So, if you read several books, you'll see the names of men like Demas and Diotrephes. Remember those guys? You'll read about Hymenaeus and Alexandria and Simon Magus who tried to by the Spirit's power with money. You'll read about Phileas and the seven sons of Sceva who tried to cast out demons in the book of Acts, but they were run out of town because they were doing it incorrectly. And the reason those names are mentioned is to tell the church to stay away from these people. Don't come near them.

The New Testament also tells you not to let false teachers into your home. That's another way to deal with them. Second John 10 through 11 says, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive them into your house and do not give them a greeting, for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." I've heard some people ask, "Does that mean you can't invite Jehovah's Witness and Mormons into your living room?" And that could be an implication of this. But actually at this time, that was referring to letting them stay the night. In the first century, they couldn't pay the traveling teachers. Most churches didn't have the money, so they would give them room and board for the night. And John is saying, "Don't do that with these guys. Don't give them room and board."

Taking it one step further, the Scriptures also talk about ending a relationship with false teachers, turning away from them. Romans 16:17 says, "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you've learned, and turn away from them." But it all goes back to this idea here in the book of Titus of silencing them. It all goes back to the idea of strangling the words out from the church, muzzling them up, removing their place to teach.

And let's be honest, this is unpleasant stuff, isn't it? Does anybody enjoy studying this this morning? You should not enjoy hearing, "Boy, I can't wait to go muzzle somebody. I can't wait to go strangle somebody. There's been people in this church I've been wanting to strangle for years." That is not what this is about, alright? That's not the point here. The point is you need to be willing to protect the church. You need to be willing to guard the body of Christ.

Here's the idea guys, at the end of the day, here's why this is important - you won't have a church if you don't do this. You won't have anything left. False teachers will take and take and take, and they will pump lies and lies and lies into the church until everything in it is dead. You can go around Chilliwack right now to several churches that are closing, and you can ask them, "What happened? Why are you closing?" And if they were honest and had the discernment to see it, they would tell you it's because they let false teachers into this place. They let people in that are teaching lies and pumping in trash to the point that it killed the church. They have nothing left.

You can go to colleges, you'll see the same thing. For example, you could look at the history of a school like Princeton Theological Seminary in the United States. When it was first started, Princeton was established as a school to teach pastors. It was called the "Log Cabin College" because it was founded in a log cabin on the core beliefs of the Bible and the historic truths of the faith. But as time went on, they let false teachers in, and it changed all that. In the early 1900s, like much of the world at the time, Princeton's faculty began to embrace liberalism and the theory of evolution. They began to adopt the idea that the Bible is old fashion and just a collection of stories. Until, in the words of one scholar, the seminary killed the seminary. It said, "There's no spiritual life left in it." It said, "The institution that hired such brilliant men as Jonathan Edwards and B. B. Warfield has now abandoned everything they stood for." You can go to Princeton and you can look on the walls and see the pictures of men whose voices you do not hear in the classroom anymore. You can go to the cemetery there and see where these men are buried and the truth was buried with them, because they listened to false teachers (the school did). They refused to silence men like this. There is so much at stake here.

Which leads to the next way to deal with a false teacher in the church. The first way is you have to silence them. You don't really have an option there. Someone comes in here and teaches that the Bible is just a bunch of made up stories. If they teach that Jesus was the firstborn of God's creation, He's just a human being and nothing else, if they teach those kinds of things, you have to silence them. This brings to a second way to deal with false teachers that Paul gives us here, and that is to reprove them severely. First, you need to silence them or take away their ability to speak. Second, you need to reprove them severely. Which means that you need to let them know why you're silencing them. That's the idea of this next one. You need to let them know why they can't teach anymore. It's one thing to silence a man, it's another thing to tell him why. And Paul goes on to say, you should tell them why. If you look in verses 10 through 13, he says,

10 For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. 12 One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith.

Now, there's a lot in here, but let me just walk you through some of this. If you notice, after telling Titus to silence the false teachers in Crete, Paul makes an interesting statement in verse 12. He says, "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.'" That's a reference back to verse 11, where it says, "They teach for the sake of sordid gain." Cretans were notoriously greedy people. They loved money and the power that it brings. And so, Paul quotes one of their own prophets to attest to that. Some believe this is a reference to the poet Epimenides, who is considered to be one of the seven wise men of the ancient world. He was a Cretan, so he understood the Cretan people. And at one time, he even said there were no wild beasts on the island of Crete because the Cretans made up for it. They were wild enough on their own. They didn't need any wild beast. And Paul says, "As a result, that wildness needs to be reproved severely."

That's a strong phrase in Greek, which referred to the act of violently removing or cutting away dead flesh. This is actually the second violent command in this passage. If you notice, this is

interesting, but first Paul says, to violently silence these guys, put your hand around their throat and cut the air off. Then second, he says to surgically, violently remove them and cut away their dead flesh. The idea here is that they are dead themselves. There is deadness in the church and you have to cut it out verbally. The word “reprove” or “rebuke” is the idea of a verbal cutting.

You explain what you are doing to them. Verse 13 says, “So that they may be sound in the faith.” In other words, you do this with the intention of helping them, not hurting them. You do this with the intention of bringing them back to the faith. Some of you have had surgery recently, and you'll know surgery is intended to help you, right? It doesn't feel that way at the time, it's very uncomfortable. But the idea is you're doing it to help these people, but you have to do something.

Let's say it this way, there comes a time when you have to be sharp with people in the church. There comes a time when you have to cut. I don't like that, personally. I grew up in a home...My dad was a public relations guy for the Goodyear Tire Company, and one principle of public relations is you're always nice to everybody. I grew up like that, so it's a great way to grow up. But Paul says, “There comes a time when you can't be nice anymore. These people are being forceful, you have to be forceful too. These people are hurting, you have to stop them.”

The Greek scholar A. T. Robertson once said, “Sometimes it is necessary to appear rude for the sake of safety. If a house is on fire, it is no time to be polite and observe good manners. You have to yell.” John Calvin said, “Even a dog barks when his master is attacked, and I would be a coward if I saw God's truth attacked and I didn't bark.” Listen, friends, I would say there's far too little barking going on in the church today, amen? There's far too little yelling. We are way too polite and mannerly sometimes. We watch the house burning down all around us, we watch our master getting attacked, and we stay quiet for fear of offense. Everybody raise your hand to that. We've all done that. Or we go in the opposite direction and we moan and gripe and complain about all this on Facebook, but that's it. That's all we do. We don't give any hope, we don't give any truth, we just attack, attack, attack and blast and blast and blast without giving anybody a chance. And Paul says, “You have to avoid both extremes when you deal with false teachers in the church. You have to avoid attacking, attacking, attacking, and you have to avoid saying nothing.”

I just told you about the largest church in America, 40,000 people, it's in Houston, Texas. But the largest church in Canada (or the largest church building I could find) is Saint Joseph's Oratory in Montreal, Quebec. I don't know if any of you guys have been there before. It holds 10,000 people a week, very large. It hosts several million visitors a year and it contains one of the largest church domes in the world. It's 40 storeys tall. I don't study domes myself, but that sounds very tall, very big. But it's a Roman Catholic Church. It's affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. And so, they believe that the pope is the Vicar of Christ and that you should pray to Mary. They believe you should do penance for your sins and keep all the seven sacraments in order to be saved. They believe in purgatory and things like that (or they're affiliated with a group that does). And it can be easy to look at all of that, and for the sake of peace, say, “Well, we're not all that different from them. We can all be friends in the faith. They believe in Jesus, we believe in Jesus. They believe in God, we believe in God.” I've heard people say that. Paul says, “You can't do that in the church. And if someone tries to bring that idea into the church, you have to stop them.”

On the other hand, there can be a temptation to go in the opposite direction and look at a group like that and just say, “What a bunch of fools.” Right? “What a bunch of silly people.” And Paul says, “You can't do that either. Both of those things are wrong. You have to reprove them severely so they can be sound in the faith. You have to rebuke them sharply for the purpose of winning them back. There's a balance here. You got to mix truth and love. You have to put tenderness and toughness together when you're dealing with these people.”

In one of his books, D. A. Carson tells a story of the time a pastor befriended a Jewish rabbi in his hometown, and the two of them became good friends, and they went out to coffee and visited with each other. Until the rabbi finally said, “Of all my Christian friends, you're the only one who tells me I'm going to hell.” He said, “I know a lot of pastors, I know a lot of Christians in this town, and you're the only one who says that I am wrong, but I know that you love me.” He says, “I know you care.” I think that's how you should treat people in the church when they're an error. That's how you should treat deceivers. You tell them they're wrong, but you do it in a way that shows that you care. Silence them and rebuked them severely, get them out of leadership, but do it out of love. And we have to pray for God's help in balancing these things because they are very difficult. But it leads to one more way to deal with false teachers in the church. One more way to respond to bad elders.

Just to review these other ones, first, Paul says, you need to silence them. That's the first way to do this. Remove their ability to teach and spread lies in the church. Then secondly, he says, you should reprove them severely. You need to tell them why you are silencing them. Tell them why they can't teach anymore “...so that they may be sound in the faith.” This is a rescue operation. This is a recovery act. You want to win these people back if you can. That brings us to a third and a final way to deal with false teachers in the church, and that is to ignore them. Everything kind of leads to this. This is the culmination of all Paul has said so far in this passage. But you silence and reprove, because ultimately, you have to ignore them or ignore what they say. Let me say it that way. You have to ignore the doctrine they're presenting to you. The worst thing you could do with a false teacher is listen to them. Does that make sense? Do you guys get that? The worst thing you could do with the devil is pay attention to him, and the same thing goes with his people. And if you read in verses 12 through 14, Paul says, he says,

12 One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” 13 This testimony is true. And for this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.

As Paul is writing out these instructions to Titus and he's telling him what to do with the evil beasts and lazy gluttons of Crete, he says, finally here, not to pay attention to them. That word is *mei prosexo* in Greek, which means “to turn away from something.” Verse 14 says, “They have turned away from the truth,” so he says, “You need to turn away from them.” You can almost see your face and your body going in the opposite direction. “They've taken their eyes off of God and His Word, so you need to take your eyes off of them. Turn the TV off, close the book. Don't go to their seminaries and colleges.”

Specifically here, it mentions not paying attention to Jewish myths and the commandments of men. The Jews were notorious for believing in myths or crazy ideas. One idea I saw, they believed that Abraham sat outside the gates of hell to block any circumcised Jew from getting in there. That's crazy. No man has the power over heaven and hell. But they believe that kind of stuff. They were also notorious for adding commandments to the Bible. Commandments of men, especially if you read in the New Testament and Jesus interaction with them, they just add law after law after law. And Paul says, "You have to ignore a person like that. That's how you respond to them. You go in the opposite direction and here is why: because none of that stuff can get you into heaven," right? Myths and commandments and rules and laws, it can't get you there. They will not help you in that department. Believing that God wants to give you your best life now, and that's it, that's all that He wants, can't get you into heaven. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand, but how many of you are living your best life right now? Life is hard. As a Christian, it's difficult. Your best life is coming later, amen? That's what saves you. That idea is what gets you to heaven. Believing that the pope is the Vicar of Christ and that you should pray to Mary; believing that you have to do penance and keep the seven sacraments in order to be saved, that won't get you there either. Martin Luther called people that tried to get into heaven through works, he called them "Satan's martyrs" because they work and they work and they work and they can't get into salvation. But it all goes back to what you believe. It all goes back to who you're listening to. Follow the wrong guy and you end up in the wrong place.

Follow the wrong teaching and you will go the wrong way. And Jesus said, if you follow a blind man, then you will fall into a pit. Both of you will. He says, if you follow a son of hell, you will become a son of hell yourself. Therefore, you need to follow the truth. You need to follow a man who will take you to Christ and Christ alone. You need to follow a man who will teach you grace and grace alone. You need to follow someone who will teach you the Bible.

Let me say it this way, because this applies to what we're trying to do as a church at this stage of our ministry together. As we're talking about appointing elders and affirming new men for leadership, we need to take a cue from this passage and we need to appoint some men with a backbone. Amen? Does anybody here want to follow someone without a backbone? Does anybody want to follow a coward? You need to find a man who has some courage. If a man doesn't have the courage to confront people, he shouldn't be an elder. If he doesn't have the ability to say, "This is right and that is wrong and this is what we're going to stand on, the right thing," he doesn't need to lead. It's been said that courage comes from conviction. No conviction, no courage. If you don't believe the Bible, then you can't stand up for it. And we want a man in leadership who will stand up for the Bible. We want people who believe it with all their heart. It's also been said that you can't stand in front if you don't stand on something. And we want a leader who will stand on the truth, stand on something. J. C. Ryle said one time in one of his writings, he said, "You don't want to follow a man with a jellyfish soul." It's what he called it. You want to follow a man with some courage.

Some of you have heard of the name Hugh Latimer before, Hugh Latimer, the famous English reformer? But at one, Latimer was called to preach before the court of King Henry the VIII, the one who beheaded all of his wives. Now, if you can imagine what that would look like - you're going to preach before a man who beheads his wives. And understandably, he was nervous about it because Henry was very unstable. He had a terrible temper. And so, the night before the

sermon, Latimer said he found himself pacing up and down his room and saying to himself, he said, “Latimer, Latimer, remember you are speaking before the high and mighty King of England who will cut off your head if you offend him. So be careful with what you say, choose your words wisely.” (I have never preached in front of someone who cuts heads off before. So, I don't even know what that would be like.) But he said that in his journals, he said as the night wore on, that really bothered him. He said it didn't sound right. And so, as he kept pacing in the early morning hours, he changed it to say this, he says, “Latimer, Latimer, remember that you are speaking before the High and mighty King of Kings and Lord of Lords at whose throne Henry himself will bow.” And he said, “Be careful with what you say before Him. Choose your words carefully in His presence.” And Hugh Latimer did that. He came into King Henry's court and he preached the Gospel there with tremendous effect, but we could all learn from his example, and especially our leaders. But listen, friends, whatever your position in the church or in life, you stand ultimately before God. Whatever you watch on TV, you stand before God. Whatever you read in the books, you stand before God. We will all answer to Him one day for what we do with His church. Let's remember that and stand up for the truth. Let's remember that and protect the church from false teachers. Let me close us in a word of prayer.

Father, we pray this morning as we've studied a very sobering passage, just sobering because of the reality of it. We pray for Your help in applying it to our lives. We don't want to study Your Word, Lord, just to go away and forget it. We don't want to read it and then not do what it says. We want to protect Your church, Lord, but we want to do it in the spirit with which Paul has written these words. We want to win people back to the faith. We want to show them that we love them. At the same time, Father, we don't want lies to be taught in Your house. So, we pray for grace with applying these words in the days ahead.

Lord, I pray for our people here this morning, they are being bombarded with stuff. And it's all over the place; the internet, the radio, just a mixture of good and bad ideas for the church floating around everywhere. Lord, would You give us discernment this morning? Would you give us courage as we talked about today, to stand up for the things that are taught in Your Word and to reject those that are not?

Father, I pray for those who are attending the churches we talked about this morning, that are attending the seminaries and watching the stuff on television - You would have grace and draw some of them out of the fire. And for those who are teaching it Lord, I pray they would repent.

And Father, we do pray, as we come to your Lord's Supper, that You would help us to honour You with this event. This is how we remember what Your Son has done, and this is how we uphold the truth. Christ has been crucified for sinners, and we believe that with all our heart. We do not get into heaven any other way, but through Him. May He be honoured this morning as we remember that in this memorial supper. We pray this in Christ's name, amen.