



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Titus 1:10-16

“The Shepherds and the Sheep Stealers”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] I did want to say one or two more words regarding the Pine Cove Conference on the weekend of the eighth through the tenth. That is, as you know, Escape the Okies Weekend, and this is a way for you to get out of the way of the influx of visitors from the north. Now, Mr. Prier is an Okie, and so that's why I'm laying a great deal of stress on this, of course.

But seriously, we are, of course, to have a prophetic conference and the stress of all of the meetings will be on the prophetic word. On Friday night there is to be a buffet supper a little late so that those of you who come from Dallas may still participate. Then afterwards, we expect to have some fellowship and also a little bit of time for discussion and perhaps some instruction. Then on Saturday, as one of our big days, Dr. Bruce Walkie is coming to speak to us. And then afterwards, we are having a panel on the general topic of "Where are we heading in the light of the prophetic word?" And the participants will be Mr. Prier, Dr. Waltke, Dr. Edward Bloom, assistant professor of New Testament at the seminary, Mr. Bill McCrae and yes, Dr. Johnson.

And we have, we want to have these men participate in this way. Mr. Prier is going to speak for a few moments on the subject of the present situation in the scientific world in the light of the prophetic word, Mr. McCrae on conditions in the religious world

in the light of the prophetic word, Dr. Bloom on the moral and spiritual conditions in our contemporary society in the light of the prophetic word, Dr. Walkie on the political world in the light of the prophetic Scriptures, and I'm going to speak for a few moments on the economic situation in the light of the prophetic word. And then we're going to open it up for discussion and questioning on the part of all of you who are in attendance.

Now this will be your opportunity to ask the experts questions, and I will take your questions and pass them out to the experts. And we expect to have a good time in the panel. And then on Saturday night, Bill McCrae will be speaking on one of the important prophetic themes. And on Sunday morning, there will be two messages by Dr. Bloom on prophetic themes. So this is our opportunity to bring ourselves up to date in the prophetic Scriptures. There is still room for a few to come. So, if you are interested, do what Mr. Prier said.

Now one thing that we discussed as he came over to the chair, the seat, if you cannot come on Friday night, but would like to come for the day on Saturday, that is possible. And so, all you need to do is to get up and have a fairly early breakfast. It's only about an hour and a half, I think, to Pine Cove on Highway. Is it twenty or thirty? Howard, do you know offhand? Start on twenty, well, I hope you, anyway, get directions. It's not hard to get to. And you may be there all day, participate and we invite you to come if you cannot come for the weekend. Of course, you'll have a little more opportunity for Christian fellowship and interaction if you come for the entire weekend.

The Scripture reading is found in Titus chapter 1, verse 10 through verse 16. This is the third of our studies in this short epistle which the Apostle Paul wrote to his apostolic deputy who was asked by Paul to do some work for him on the island of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea. And we have been studying in our last time together, the qualifications for elders set forth in verses 5 through 9. And the apostle has just said that elders should be men who hold fast the faithful word as they have been taught, that they may be able by sound doctrine to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. And this

thought of convincing gainsayers is the occasion for the development that follows. Paul says, verse 10,

"For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the instruction which is come to us through the Scriptures. And we thank Thee for that which comes concerning the false prophets, for we know that wherever there is a work of God, there Satan begins to work also. And we thank Thee for the guidelines given us in holy Scripture, the means by which we may combat the errors of the wicked one. Enable, Lord, the elders to be faithful in their duties and in their responsibilities. Enable us who are the sheep to have the perception to distinguish the truth from the error and to cleave to that which is sound doctrine. We thank Thee again for the day in which we live, for we know, Lord, it is Thy mind that we be here. It is no accident that we are here, no accident that we are in this auditorium. And we pray that the work that Thou dost desire to be accomplished through us and in us may be accomplished. And may in this hour the Scriptures build us up and strengthen

us. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ and ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon it. Enlarge it through the evangelization of the word of God.

We pray Thy blessing upon Mr. Graham as he preaches his final meeting. May, Lord, it be fruitful and profitable and a useful meeting for building up the church of Jesus Christ in this area. And we thank Thee too, Lord, for the fact that Thou hast given to us the means whereby we may be able to solve the problems that face us as individuals. And we know, Lord, there are many in this congregation who are troubled and disturbed, whose experiences in their families are unhappy, whose experiences in their businesses, perhaps, are unhappy. And we pray, O God, that Thou wilt work in our hearts and cause us to know the way whereby we may apply holy Scripture and its teaching to the needs of our lives. We pray particularly for the young people who are here and ask, O God, that Thou would work in their hearts. Enlarge their vision. Prepare them for the future. Give them the courage that comes from the conviction of the Holy Spirit in their hearts concerning truth. And wilt Thou, Lord, use this generation that is coming to reach their own generation with the Scriptures with our Lord? We commit the remainder of our meeting to Thee and pray Thy blessing upon us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today, the third in our series of studies in Paul's letter to Titus, is “The Shepherds and the Sheep Stealers.” The provision of under-shepherds or elders for the flock of God is a tribute to the love and care of that Great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ. But as is manifest in all of the experiences of the saints in the Old Testament and the New Testament, after the coming of the work of God, there come the wolves. Wherever sheep are found, there the wolves gather. And they gather not only without, but also within.

In the 20th chapter of the Book of Acts, when Paul calls the Ephesian elders for his conference at Miletus, in the course of that message that he gave to them (they were the shepherds of the flock at Ephesus) he said to them,

"Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

And so, wherever God has been at work, there have been the wolves. In the Old Testament when Nehemiah began the work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem there, there appeared Sanballat and Tobiah. When Jeremiah prophesied, there appeared Pashhur and all the false prophets. When Jesus Christ came, there also appeared Annas and Caiaphas, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and those that were gathered together against him in unbelief. When Paul carried on his ministry, there was Alexander the coppersmith who did him much harm.

And then historically, down through the centuries as the Christian church has sought to carry out its responsibility, there have been the heretics. When the apostles passed off the scene and the apostolic fathers came, there was amartia there. There was a Julian the apostate. There was a Celsus. When Athanasius sought to be faithful to the person of Christ, there was an Arius. Or when Augustine sought to be faithful to the free grace of God in our salvation, there was a Pelagius. And there was a Socinus when the Reformers came. When Luther appeared on the scene, specifically there was a Leo the tenth and a Tetsul. And in modern days, as there has been a renewed interest in the exposition of the Scriptures, there has appeared Joseph Smith and Ellen G. White, and Mary Baker Eddy, and in more recent times, Harry Emerson Fosdick and Bishop Pike. Wherever the word of God is proclaimed, there the heretics gather.

The apostle has been telling us something about the elders. They are the shepherds of the flock of God. They are the ones who are responsible to feed the flock.

They are to lead that flock. They are to guide that flock. And as we shall see, they are to guard and protect the flock. And he has just said in the 9th verse that one of the things that the elders should be able to do is to convince the gainsayers. And that provokes Paul to a description of the evil and heretical influence of the false teachers in the Cretan churches.

But the influence and heretical teachings of the false teachers in Crete is only an adumbration, an illustration of what we face today, because what Paul says here concerning the false teachers then speaks in resounding accents in the 20th century. And if you have had any contact at all with the Christian church in the 20th century, you will know, of course, that the things that Paul has been speaking about are things that apply to us in our own day.

Today we hear the cry of modern scholarship. Or we hear the cry of the new theology. And we even have people suggesting that there is some discrepancy between scholarship and the teaching of the Bible, or the theology of the apostles and the theology of the twentieth century. I have never really, I must admit, liked the expression modern scholarship. It's like the cry of the street vendor in Cairo, "In the name of the prophet, figs." Because you see, scholarship is an excellent word, but I'm not quite as sure about the word modern.

Scholarship is a word that I revere. True scholarship, I have a great deal of appreciation for. True scholarship has a great deal of authority with me. But modern scholarship does not. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that the term modern scholarship is a newcomer with a pretentious desire to seize and exclusively appropriate to itself the term scholarship. And so, consequently I must say that I am a little suspicious of the pride that seeks to arrogate to itself all the accomplishments of scholarship. Modern scholarship, so august, so impressive, so imperial, why you would think that men like this must at least be partially inspired. But such is really not the case.

I must admit I am reminded of the Gibeonites who came to Joshua in false guise. You may remember that when Joshua led the children of Israel into the land, it was their task to stamp out all of the opposition, which they were doing with dispatch and with great ability because God was doing it through them. And the Gibeonites, seeing what would happen, thought that perhaps they could come to Joshua and the Israelites and wilyly, the Scriptures says, present themselves as those who come from a far country, make the Israelites make a covenant with them, and then they would escape the destruction and catastrophe that had befallen their neighbors.

And so they came to Joshua with their old sacks upon their asses, wine bottles, old and rent, and bound up; with clouted shoes, old garments that had been worn long ago and had the obvious effects of age upon them. They came with bread that was dry and moldy. And they said to Joshua, Joshua we come from a long ways away. And we would like for you to make a covenant with us that you not destroy us. And the children of Israel were taken in.

And I must say, I think of modern scholarship like that. They come to us with their clouted shoes, and their old garments, and the old sacks upon their asses, with their wine bottles old and rent, and with bread that is dry and moldy. And they say to us, modern scholarship, but I recognize the Gibeonites beneath it all. They are actually just the same old heretics that the Christian church has dealt with since the time of Celsus and Julian and the rest of them.

As a matter of fact, it is not modern at all. When you study modern scholarship today with its heresies, you discover that almost all of the heresies of the twentieth century are the same heresies with which the Christian church has been faced down through the centuries. It is really true, there is practically nothing new in all the world. Study Christian Science today and you will discover that it is first cousin to the Gnosticism of the first century, and so on. And so really, what we have in modern scholarship is nothing but the old errors of the years past.

And what is sad about it, really, is that the claims of modern scholarship is, to the effect, that they are scientific, and those who believe the Bible are imposters who have foisted it upon the world through treachery and deceit, the fundamentals of the Christian faith. And we're expected to believe that this gigantic fabrication captured and held such men as Copernicus who revolutionized the currently accepted conception of the universe, Kepler and Newton who gave us the laws of astronomical science; Linnaeus and Cuvier, the founders of natural science; Herschel, the explorer of the stars; Lychnus the metaphysician, Lavoisier, the discoverer of modern chemistry, and unnumbered other scientists who have believed the Scriptures down through the centuries. We are expected to believe that modern scientists have suddenly discovered truth that exposes all of these men down through the centuries. The Christians and the scientists who have opened up science to human investigation have all been wrong.

Now, I find it difficult to believe that. And particularly when I discover that in Protestantism today, which is supposed to be the defender of the word of God as over against the traditions of the church, I find that in Protestantism today, it is Protestantism that is tearing down the foundations of the Christian faith. But that is, they are trying to, they never shall succeed. For the new theology of today will be the old theology of ten years from now. They never shall succeed. But surprisingly, within Protestantism, it is there that men are seeking to destroy the foundations of the Christian church, while Roman Catholicism, surprisingly today, in parts at least, is taking to itself the title of King Henry the VIII, that is, becoming the defender of the faith.

Someone might say *O tempora O mores*. We do live in unusual times. We are taught, for example, in some of our large congregations of Christians that the ancient beliefs of the Reformers are wrong, that we cannot accept *sola scriptura*. We cannot really believe that the Bible is inspired.

When I said this, this morning at 8:30, as I walked out of the auditorium, a young girl came to me, a teenager, and said, Dr. Johnson, I'm a member of a certain church and

what you said this morning caused me to remember something that my minister has said to me. And then she went on to say how he had been talking about the Bible, that it was not really the word of God, and that we could not believe all the things that were in the Bible, that sola scriptura was not really right. She didn't say it that way, but she was saying what I was, putting words in her mouth at that point.

But I took out of my notes something that I had not said in the 8:30 meeting, and I said is it like this? And I referred to this paragraph written by a Presbyterian. She came from a Presbyterian church. And this Presbyterian minister and leader in the northern Presbyterian church had said, "Unity among Protestants themselves is out of the question as long as there are those who affirm that God's word is in the Bible, but the Bible is not God's word, that the Bible is inspired, but it is not without error, that it is a divine book, but also human and therefore acceptable only in parts. She said, Yes, that's exactly what he's saying.

So you see, under the guise of modern scholarship, men are seeking to tear down the foundations of the Christian faith. What shall we do? Well, Paul has a prescription. He has more than this to say, but one of his prescriptions is found right here in Titus chapter 1. And it has to do with the responsibilities and with the character of the shepherds of the local congregation. You see, the shepherds of the local congregation are the elders. They are the ones who have the responsibility before God to shepherd the flock of God.

Now in Believers Chapel, I happen to be one of the elders. And so, I am one of those who, under God, has the responsibility to convince the gainsayers and to exhort you in sound doctrine, seek to build you up in the faith. I am only one of the elders. It is possible for us to have a gifted man in our midst who is a pastor-teacher who is not one of the elders, at the moment at least. That is possible, for gifted men are not necessarily official men.

Now Mr. Bill McCrae has been recognized by us as a pastor-teacher laboring in our midst. He is also a shepherd. He is a gifted man. He is at the present not one of the elders. But all of the elders are shepherds. And it is their responsibility to see that the saints are protected from the wolves that invariably come in.

Now in Believers Chapel, we probably have some wolves who are sitting in the audience. I do not know who you are. I would hope that I would have the grace, if I knew who you were, to come to you before this and say: I think I can perceive the outlines of the kind of animal that you are. And I would also like to perform my scriptural responsibility with respect to you. So if you are here as a wolf, you are at the moment undetected. But I hope you shall become detected. It is the responsibility of the elders to seek out such, for they will surely come. And if you think for one moment that they will not come when God is doing a work, and he has been doing a great work in our midst, well then, you are sadly mistaken.

Well, let's look at the description that Paul gives of these errorists. Now, you will notice he has said the elders should be able "to convince the gainsayers. For." I learned a long time ago in reading Scripture to notice the small words as well as the big words, for the small words often are the clues to the apostles' or the author's thinking.

An elder must be able to convince the gainsayers. Why? For, because, this is why they ought to be able to convince the gainsayers, there are many who need his attention. "For there are many unruly men."

"Unruly men." What types of men are unruly men in the congregations of the Lord? Well, this word is a military word. So these men are like disloyal soldiers who refuse to accept authority. And so the unruly wolves who enter into the flock of God are the men who refuse to accept the authority of the Scriptures and, of course, the authority of the elders so long as they are in accord with holy Scripture.

Now we must never equate the authority of the elders with the authority of the Scripture. But so long as the elders are in harmony with the Scripture, then we are

responsible to be under them, so Paul says. And I hope, when the day comes that I no longer serve as an elder, I shall have the grace to be subject to my elders in the local church of which I am a part. So Paul says that they are disloyal soldiers who refuse to accept the authority of the word of God.

Now as many of you know, because I've said it many times, my ecclesiastical background is Presbyterian, southern Presbyterian. And so I have kept up with my friends who are in the Presbyterian church. My family is still in that church. My father, until his recent death, was an elder in that church. And I have followed fairly closely the things that have happened in our Presbyterian churches, not only in the south but in the north and also in the reformed churches of the continent who are much the same kind. And I have noticed a startling thing, particularly in the northern congregations of the Presbyterian church. They are seeking at the present time to arrive at a confession which they can agree with.

Now, it's a strange thing because many, many hundreds of years ago, they agreed that they should accept the Westminster Confession of Faith, certainly a noble document in many ways. And one with which most Christians who are genuine Christians would have essential agreement.

Now, it's a startling thing that believers supposedly who are, or men who are supposedly the leaders in congregation, when they come together cannot really agree over essentials of the Christian faith. And it has been most interesting to see how they have finally come together with a confession, and then the revised confession, that men who do not believe the Scriptures are the word of God can agree to with those who do believe that the Scriptures are the word of God. And so, by a marvelous agreement, they have come to almost agree in a document that an unbeliever in the Scripture may agree with as well as a believer may agree with. Now that, I tell you, takes a lot of exegetical leger to me. But nevertheless, that has almost been done. And it is an evidence of the

deception that is at work in the midst of our Christian churches. Paul says they are "unruly men."

And secondly he says concerning them, and of course I'm speaking of the ones in Crete, the dispositions of which manifest themselves in the twentieth century, they are "vain talkers," that is, they mingle with the truth elements of their error. They are like the Devil's cooks who serve up the meat for the saints, but as they serve it up, they mingle a little bit of the impurity of error with the wonderful food of the truth.

Now the man who ministers the word of God and who teaches the word of God is responsible to take the Scriptures from God and bring them to the saints of God and feed them with the pure milk of the word, or the pure meat of the word, the sound meat of the word. But when we take the Scriptures and mingle with the Scriptures a little bit of human impurity, then we make the saints sick. And that is what has happened. They are vain talkers. They often can give us beautiful, eloquent discourses which are rhetorically sound and very moving. But when it comes to the truth, they do not have the truth that builds up the saints. And you can see it when someone comes to the deathbed, for then what we believe really comes to light. And the great facts of human existence, death, exposes the nakedness of the Christian who has been exposed to teaching that has not built him up in the Christian faith.

Paul says they are "deceivers." As a matter of fact, all of the false teachers who parade as Christians are deceivers. They profit by the things that the truth has built up, but they themselves do not believe the truth. Paul said concerning the false teachers of his day, they were deceitful workers. And he says here that they are deceivers.

He says that they are especially in Crete of the circumcision. I would gather from this that since Crete was a Gentile isle, that while the deceivers were not entirely Jewish, nevertheless they were largely Jewish in their national makeup. So he says they are "specially of the circumcision." That would indicate probably, what is to be seen later, that they were men who mixed a little bit of the Mosaic law, the prescriptions of the

Mosaic law such as the ceremonial law, with the truths of Christianity to come out with a mixture that was neither Christian nor strictly speaking Mosaic law. And they also apparently mixed with it a little bit of the gnostic heresy of the 1st century. And so Paul speaks of them as "especially they of the circumcision."

Now, they were not blatant unbelievers, these false teachers. They did not say I would like to have the pulpit for a moment and I would like to speak against the Scriptures. No, they said, we would like to give you a good understanding of the Scripture. We would like to give you a wise understanding of Scripture. We would like for you to know spiritual things. That's why we are known, that's why we call ourselves Gnostics, because we know.

And the things that we know comprise these. We believe that it is important that one believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and that one commit oneself to him. But, we believe that you do not really commit yourself to him if you have only simple trust in what he has done for you. And if you're relying simply upon the principles of grace, oh no, we believe that the message is Jesus Christ, but it is more than Jesus Christ. We must also believe, so the Gnostics said, we must also believe in a string of eons or angelic beings by which we may have contact with God, for God is holy and the creation is unholy. And an unholy God cannot have anything to do with an unholy creation, and so as the eons have emerged from God, finally one came out unholy enough to create this world.

And we would like to tell you how we regard Jesus Christ as a great person. We don't regard him as God, but as a great person. And it's important to believe in him, but you must believe more than Jesus Christ. And further, if you believe that you are a Christian on the basis of simple trust, now we would like to say to you that there is more to it than that. You must also keep the prescriptions which we have been given revelation concerning.

For example, you must not handle certain things. You must not taste certain things. You must not touch certain things. For if you do those things, you sin and you displease God. So if you believe in Jesus Christ and believe in grace, but also believe in touch not, taste not, handle not, then you may be acceptable to God. So they believe that we must believe in more than Christ, and we must also be saved by a principle that involves more than simple grace.

So far as we can tell, this is essentially the kind of false teaching that the apostle was faced with in the first century. But we have the same thing today. In our Christian churches we are taught from the pulpit that Jesus Christ was the son of God, but he was not God. We are taught that it is true that Jesus Christ had within him a relationship that was unique among men. He above all men lived a life that was pleasing to God, and he is a tremendous illustration to us. But he is not really "very God of very God" as the ancient theologians said.

And further, they teach us today that while it is true that the Christian did at one time believe that men were saved on the basis of grace through faith alone, they talked about sola gratia and sola fide, but that was in another day. Today, we must look at the Scriptures as we understand them in the light of modern scholarship. And we cannot really accept a way of salvation that suggests that it is the only way, the way of grace, the way of faith. You mean we are not to do anything? Surely, one cannot believe things like that in the twentieth century? And so, when we read "especially they of the circumcision," if we translate that into the twentieth century, we see their counterparts on every hand. And if you do not see it, it is because either you have made no effort to see it, or you are blind, for they are here with us today.

Further, we read that they "subvert whole houses." Now there are two effects in false teaching, from false teaching. One is that it is destructive individually. Any man who listens to false teaching will sooner or later be within himself disturbed and upset, and he will have no certain resting place, for false teaching is essentially upsetting. It

creates doubts. It creates fears. It creates disturbances. It creates within the person no sense of assurance and no happy foundation upon which to rest.

And further, the second effect, it often subverts whole homes. It destroys the family life. And I could tell you illustration after illustration in my thirty years, almost, of preaching in which families have been disturbed by false teaching.

Just a couple of years ago, there was a church in Oklahoma City which made great claims. It was supposed to be a New Testament church. There were some believers within it, but some very confused. They were largely led by a woman who claimed to be the high priest. Why she didn't claim to be high priestess, I don't know, but they all called her the high priest. But anyway, they called her the high priest. And it was largely her instruction that determined the course of that church.

I was thrown into contact with a young man, who had been married and had about three or four children, through one of his bosses who happened to know from another friend that I was a Christian in Dallas. And this man contacted me for counseling and wanted to know what he could do. He himself was not a Christian, so far as I could tell. And it was by the grace of God that he was brought to faith in Jesus Christ. But this division that had come in this home was a division over the faith. And the organization in Oklahoma City was anxious to preserve their teaching to the extent that they were willing for a divorce to take place in this family over the Christian faith, over their interpretation of the Christian faith. Their doctrine, their false doctrine was subverting that whole house. And by the grace of God, though a divorce took place, a remarriage took place. And that family, while like most of us they still have a few problems, they are now united in the truth of the word.

False teachers, Paul says, "subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake," money. Why, do you know my dear friend, if it were not true that in Christianity we were taught to give as God has given to us, if we were not taught to give freely and liberally, why, the false teachers and their cults could not survive. They

survive because of the Christian doctrine of giving and because they prey on Christian congregations. If it were not for Christianity true and pure, there would not be any Mormonism. There would not be any Jehovah Witnesses. There would not be an Seventh Day Adventists. There would not be any Christian Scientists. There would not be any Unity. And we could just go right down the line of others.

For you see, it is of tremendous motivation to an evil man to proclaim a Christianity which he does not know in his heart for the sake of gain. And it was customary in Paul's day for the elders to be given money. Paul said, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those that labor in the word and teaching." And so why not labor in word and teaching and receive from these gullible, simple, naïve Christians, who are so filled with love, their gifts and their money. Paul says an elder should be a man, in the 6th verse or 7th verse, who is "not given to filthy lucre." But the false teachers are men who for filthy lucre's sake teach.

Now Paul concludes by quoting one of the Cretan's own poets. He says, "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, and slow bellies." And we're inclined to say in the twentieth century, yes, that's the Cretians, but we're different. No, and you could put the Fort Worthites, and the Austinites, and the Lubbockites and the Chicagoites, and well, I don't know whether you could put the Dallasites there are not. But I think you know whether we could.

Now apparently to Paul it was not something that he did not feel was wrong to cite one of the heathen poets, Epimenides, who is the poet that he cites, has expressed a truth. By the way, there is a famous syllogism in connection with this which illustrates what we can do with rationalism. Paul said the Cretians were always liars. But Epimenides who wrote it was a Cretan. And so consequently, the things that Epimenides says are not true. Therefore, the Cretians are not liars.

Now a Christian commentator said about that syllogism, well, this is one time when a Cretan told the truth. But Paul says they are "liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." And when he says that, he is saying what may be said of human nature.

Now he turns to Titus, and he says in verse 13, "This witness is true." And Titus is to do what elders must do. What are the elders to do in the light of the false teachers? Why he says, "Rebuke them sharply," reprimand without compunction. Do not have any sense of compunction whatsoever about speaking sharply to the false teachers. So rebuke them sharply. And will you look at verse 11. I omitted this because I wanted to bring it in here. "Whose mouths must be stopped."

Now, I want you to look at that carefully because there are lots of people who think that if a person comes up and speaks to a false teacher sharply, that's being unloving. Paul says, "Whose mouths must be stopped." And the Greek word is a word from which we obtain the word muzzle, for it means really to put something over their mouth like you would a dog. For they are dogs, that's what Paul calls false teachers elsewhere. They are dogs, and so what they need is muzzling. We would say in the twentieth century, false teachers are to be gagged. They are not to be allowed to teach their teaching.

And by the way, if the Christian church, if my own denomination had fifty years ago done what the Scriptures say about the false teaching that Paul does when it arose, we should have a purer denomination today. It is because, you see, we failed to exercise discipline that error gains a foothold. And soon, as it permeates like leaven the congregations of God, the truth is in the minority. And so, it is the responsibility of an elder to gag the errorist whose mouth must be stopped. And I would gather that that means that there is an occasion in which you should speak sharply too.

If I were to see your house on fire, and I would come over to you walking very slowly and quietly and gently and say, Pardon me, sir, I hope you won't think I'm intruding. I know this is a little bit rude and Amy Vanderbilt might not approve, but your

house is on fire. You would wonder what in the world is the matter with me. We would, of course, rush up to you and almost bowl you over and say go home quickly, your house is on fire.

And so, when we come to the errorists in the Christian church, we should not speak to them in love in the false sense of love, but in the true sense of love, we should speak to them sharply. We should attempt to gag them, muzzle them, in order, Paul says, that they might become sound in the faith, for sometimes it is necessary to speak sharply before one wakes up.

That's the way our Lord spoke. He said,

"Beware of the false prophets. (He said you know these false prophets, they) "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name?" (Have we not spoken in tongues in Thy name? Have not gifts of healing taken place in our congregations in the twentieth century in Thy name? He says, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then Jesus said) "I will profess unto you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Our Lord doesn't hesitate to speak plainly and clearly.

And you remember Peter, first pope you know, so we're told. [Laughter] So we're told. He's quite a bit different from the political popes of the twentieth century. They don't speak anything sharply because they're trying to please everybody. But when Simon Magus came to him and saw that through the apostles' laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit was given, he walked into Peter's hotel room and he said, "Give me also this

power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit." And Peter said, Now, my dear Simon Magus, you have not received sound instruction in the word. And I want you to come on home with me and stick around a while, and after I've won a hearing with you due to my kindness and care of you, my wife will feed you and help you out, and after a little while, we'll discuss these things. No, he didn't say anything like that. He turned to him and said, "Thy money perish with thee."

Now, I said, I've often said this, and I really believe it. The only way to translate that in the twentieth century is to say, "To hell with you and your money," because that's what Peter is saying. Thy money perish with thee. Listen, thy money perish with thee. And he goes on to say your heart's not right with God. "Repent therefore of this wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." And Simon said pray for me. Now the early church said that he became a Christian. We have no evidence of that, but Peter was careful to speak the truth sharply to him that he may be sound in the faith.

And did you notice that expression in verse 13? "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." And the word for sound is a word that is frequent in the pastorals, and it really means, well, it comes from a Greek term that means to be healthy. Sound doctrine in the pastorals is healthy doctrine. So in apostolic language, the man who is healthy is the man who knows his theology.

Sadly in the twentieth century, it's often thought the man who's unhealthy is the man who knows theology. The man who's healthy is the fellow who's all caught up in emotion and in all of the things that happen in some of our Christian congregations. But in the Bible, it's the man who has the sound doctrine that is healthy, and the man who is unsound in his doctrine, in his theology, is sick. That's apostolic understanding. The true theology of the word of God is healthy. And you cannot be healthy in the Christian faith until you know the theology of the word of God.

Suppose I would ask you a few questions about theology. What's the doctrine of reconciliation? What's the doctrine of propitiation? What's the doctrine of the filling of the Spirit? What's the doctrine of the two natures of Jesus Christ? That could be a little more complicated, you know. What's supralapsarianism? And how would you distinguish that carefully and correctly from infralapsarianism?

You see, some of you are beginning to feel a little ill. [Laughter] Well, you're beginning to discover really what you are if you have not sound doctrine, for it is sound doctrine that makes you healthy spiritually. And it's the unsound ignorance that we have as Christians that makes us sick spiritually. So, rebuke them that they may be sound in the faith.

Now Paul denounces them in the last two verses, and I only want to say one or two things about this. He is speaking, of course, primarily of the ceremonialism and asceticism that the Cretan false teachers sought to impose on the Cretan churches. And so he says, "Unto the pure (that is, the pure in heart) all things are pure" ceremonially. I can do anything if I am pure in heart, that is, anything that the word of God has not spoken against. All things are lawful for me, Paul said elsewhere, but all things are not necessarily expedient. All things are not necessarily, all things do not necessarily build up the saints. But all things are lawful. To the pure all things are pure.

By the way, this does not mean if a man is pure in heart, he will not be affected by anything else. That's not something that Paul says. But he says to the pure in heart all things are permitted. In other words, you may taste this, you may handle this, you may touch that if the word of God has not spoken specifically against it.

"But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving (in heart) is nothing (really) pure." Even the things that you can do according to the gnostic teachings, you corrupt because your own mind is corrupt. And you see, what Paul is saying is essentially that the person who in his inner mind and heart is out of touch with God is impure in heart, unclean, and

everything he touches becomes unclean. Even the ancients who weren't Christians understood that.

Horace said, "Unless the vessel is pure, everything you pour into it grows bitter." Seneca said, "Just as a diseased stomach alters all the food which it receives, so the darkened mind turns everything you commit to it to its own burden and ruin."

You see, the sad truth is, my dear friends, because of our human nature, holiness is incommunicable. You cannot communicate holiness. But unholiness is communicable. And so the unholiness of the man out of fellowship with God touches everything that he does. That's why we believe that one of the sound doctrines is total depravity. That doesn't mean everybody's totally bad. It means that everybody has been touched by sin in all the spheres of his being.

Then Paul says, "They profess that they know God." They go about their little ascetic exercises professing that they know God. "But in works they deny him," for in effect they say, you must not touch this, you must not handle that, you must not taste this when God has given us all things to enjoy. One of their doctrines was you must not marry. Another was you must not partake of this type of food or that type of food.

Now, we don't have these things in the twentieth century. We have manufactured our own little taboos, our own little ascetic taboos. And in the Christian church, sadly, evangelicals, thou shalt not go to the movies. Thou shalt not wear lipstick, not in the south. Thou shalt not wear lipstick, movies, dance, et cetera, all of our little ascetic things which we've added to the gospel.

Now, I am not trying to preach for everyone of these things. But my point is that they are not in the Scriptures. They're not in the Scriptures. They are the little taboos which we have added to the word of God. Nietzsche once said, "If I'm going to believe in your redeemer, you must look more redeemed, you Christians." And most of the Christians are infected. Or many of our Christian are so infected by legalism and burdened with these little things that the freedom of the joy of the gospel of Jesus Christ

is never seen. And the result is, Paul says, is that they are "disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

Now I don't have time to turn over to 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 17, but you will notice that the effect of the word of God is to thoroughly fit a man unto every good work, the Greek says. I think the plural is used in our English version. And so the precise opposite effect of the word of God on a man, which is to fit him for every good work, is produced by the person who becomes entangled in the legalisms and the asceticisms of the false teachers. They become reprobate, disapproved for every good work.

May I conclude with this? Paul's language is addressed to the elder. He's to feed. He's to lead. He's to guard the flock. And woe to the elder who neglects this because the flock belongs to Jesus Christ and is exceedingly precious to him. If we reflect as shepherds of the flock upon the fact that the flock of Jesus Christ is the product of the blood shed upon Calvary's cross, and if we realize that God has in his wisdom given over the flock purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ to a group of elders to shepherd them, oh, the responsibility of the elder who has within his power the shepherding of the flock for which Christ died. It is a solemn thing to be an elder.

But my dear friend, if you are here in the audience and you have never believed in Jesus Christ, you are not part of the flock. And so I point you briefly as I close to the cross where Jesus Christ did shed his blood and where you may obtain everlasting life if you turn to him and say within your heart, Lord, I know that I need Thy saving work, for my heart is touched with sin. I know that I stand guilty before Thee. And I thank Thee that Jesus Christ died for my guilt. I take him as my Saviour. And if that decision is made, you become one of the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the ministry of the holy Scriptures. And wilt Thou, Lord, in Believers Chapel keep our elders true to Thee? And may we also

“The Shepherds and the Sheep Stealers” by S. Lewis Johnson
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be healthy through healthful doctrine, subordinated to Thee and used by Thee. May
grace, mercy and peace go with us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.