

## **Bad Elders**

Titus 1:10-11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 17, 2019

As we're talking about bylaws and elders and just various church things, I want to invite you to a book that addresses all of that. Open your Bibles with me to the book of Titus. And as you're turning there, if you're new to our church, we are currently in a series called the "How to Plant a Church" series, because that's what the book of Titus is about. And it was written to tell us how to plant a church, or how to get it started and off the ground. In fact, the churches in this book were already started. They were already planted on the island of Crete, but they weren't really off the ground yet. They had a lot of work left to do. And it was Titus's job to step in there and help them, especially in the area of leadership. The first chapter of this book is devoted entirely to the topic of leadership, because this was something these churches needed a lot of help in. They were really, really weak in this area.

I'm not going to read the whole chapter for the sake of time because Stan already did that, but if you want to follow with me in your Bibles, if you notice in chapter 1:1-4, Paul gives us an introduction to the book. He gives us his own experience as a leader and tells us why he was qualified to write this letter. He was a bond-servant of God and an apostle. He did his ministry for the faith of those chosen and the knowledge of the truth. Then in verses 5 through 9, he tells us what true leadership should look like. He tells us what kind of man should lead in the church. And in verses 5 through 9, he says that an elder must be "above reproach, the husband of one wife..." and that long list that we've been going through in previous weeks. Then in the rest of the chapter going from verses 10 through 16, he shifts gears and he tells us the flip side of that. And Paul shows us the kind of man who shouldn't lead the church. That's how chapter 1 is laid out in a nutshell. It talks about Paul's leadership, good leaders and bad leaders. Paul gives you his experience in ministry. Then he tells you the type of man that should be an elder and the type of man who shouldn't. But he ends with the type of man who should not be an elder.

I don't have to tell you this, but not everyone should lead in the church. Not everyone should be in the ministry. Some men shouldn't do that because they haven't turned away from their sins yet. That's how he ends chapter 1. Some men should not be in office because they haven't gotten victory over their sins.

One author says there are people in the church that dress like sheep, but they howl like wolves. They look like shepherds, but they act like butchers who want to come in and fleece the flock. And Paul ends this chapter by telling Titus how to identify them. That's how chapter 1 rounds off. It tells you how to call out the wolves.

Let me say it this way because this is important, and it should be a warning to us. I don't like to end on bad notes, I don't like talking about negative things, personally. I don't want you guys going out and thinking, "Oh, the church is really bad." That's no good. But this is how the chapter ends and this is important. And I want to tell you (I'll say it this way) did you guys know the bad state of the church today is a result of the bad state of its leaders? Does that make sense? Did everybody get that? The bad state of the church is a result of the bad state of its leaders. The

reason so many churches trip up and mess up and slip up and fail is because their leaders do that. It starts with them because the church follows their example. Which means Grace Fellowship Church, all this stuff about bylaws and conferences and Bible studies won't mean a hill of beans if you put the wrong men in office. Amen?

In a recent study by the Francis Shaffer Institute, they found that 75% of all pastors surveyed said that they felt unqualified for the ministry. They thought they weren't ready. 75%. Now, I don't know who surveyed them and what kind of questions they asked, because surveys can be misleading. But that is still a shocking statistic, isn't it? Three out of every four guys said they shouldn't be doing this. And it gets worse when they said that 77% of them said they had a bad marriage. 71% said they were burnout and 30% said they had committed a sin that was so serious that they should not be in the ministry anymore. And you hear all of that and you say, "Well, no wonder the church is a mess. No wonder it's in trouble." The church is a mess because the leaders are a mess. The church is in trouble because the leaders are in trouble.

Just a few months ago (another example of this), a major denomination announced that it would not allow homosexual or transgender pastors in the pulpit. They made a good stand on that. Some of you may be familiar with that story, and they were commended for it in the Christian media as they should be. They did a good thing there. But what the media didn't say is that that denomination stood for this while abandoning the atonement and the deity of Christ. For years, that particular denomination has waffled on very important issues like the inerrancy of the Bible and the resurrection of Jesus, which they say is a spiritual resurrection, not a physical one. And they take that stand because their leaders do. They come up with those ideas because their seminaries and colleges and pulpits have been teaching that for years.

You can't overstate the importance of having bad leaders in the church. They tear down everything. They bring the whole thing crashing down. Which is why the Bible tells us...(And we're building up chapter 1 here)...But this is why the Bible tells us over and over and over again to make sure you put the right men in leadership. The Scriptures say over and over and over again to be careful who you put in office.

Just a couple of passages on this. You don't have to turn to these, if you just want to write them down. In Acts 20:28-31, Paul tells the elders at Ephesus in his last meeting with them, he says,

28 Be on guard for yourselves and for 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 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore [he says it again] be on the alert, [be on guard] remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one of you with tears.

Paul says, "Be on guard, be on the alert. Admonish people day and night like I did, because the wolves are coming, and they are savage." And he says, "They're coming up from among you." And the idea of savage wolves there is the idea that they don't care who they hurt, they don't care

who gets in the way, they don't care what happens to the people. They just want power. Paul says, "Be on guard for that."

Second Timothy 4, another passage here. Second Timothy 4:3-5. It says,

3 For the time will come when the church will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry.

Can I just say there's a lot of churches today that need to sober up a little bit. They are too interested in having their ears tickled and their eyes dazzled. And as a result of this, men are coming in (Paul says) and teaching horrible things. There's a temptation among Christians today, and I feel it as well. I come from the south. The south is a very polite place. We have Chick-fil-A there. "It's our pleasure to serve you." That's what you hear all the time at Chick-fil-A. We don't like fighting unless it's over a football game. And there's a temptation among Christians today. It's here in Canada, it's in the States to say, "Why do we have to fight all the time? Why do we have to talk about doctrine? Why can't we just love each other? Why can't we just get along?" And the answer is because the Bible never tells us to get along that way. It never tells us to love each other by pushing doctrine to the side. We love each other by talking about doctrine, we love each other by fighting for it. It's not an option for Christians. You have to stand up for the truth.

J. Gresham Machen, who had a real passion for this (the founder of Westminster Theological Seminary), he said one time, he said, "Men tell us that our preaching should be positive and not negative, that we can preach the truth without attacking error. But if we follow that advice, we shall have to close our Bibles and abandon its teaching." The New Testament is a defensive book almost from beginning to end. "Every great Christian utterance, it might be said, was born out of controversy." Did you get that? If you read your New Testament, every great utterance in there was born out of controversy. He says, "It is when men have felt compelled to take a stand against error that they have risen to the really great heights that have created our faith."

As many of you know, a couple of weeks ago, a lot of us, several of us here in the church got a chance to go to the Shepherds' Conference, which was a really great time. It always blows me away that such good truth can come out of such a dark place like Los Angeles. But I just looked around, I think, "Boy, it's just a dark place. There's so much darkness there." And then you go and then you hear such wonderful truth. But one privilege for me to go there is I get to see friends from the past and from seminary. And this year I was being dropped off at the airport by a buddy of mine, and I'll never forget what he said as we were getting out of the car. It's very simple. He said, "Hey, take care of the church up there. Okay? Take care of the church up there."

And it struck me as I was studying this passage that this is how you do that. This is how you take care of the church; by fighting for doctrine, by standing up for the truth. By going to men that are unqualified and graciously telling them, "This is not for you." You do it by fighting for the right things, by having discernment. The word "discernment", it's from a Latin word that means "to separate things and divide them apart". And so, that when you have discernment, you divide

truth from error, fact from fiction. And here in Titus 1, you divide good men from bad ones for leadership. That's how the church takes care of itself. That's how the church protects its ministry.

If you notice in the progress of Titus 1 (just going back to this chapter again), just so you see kind of how this lays out here, verse 10 starts a new paragraph in your Bibles. It actually matches the Greek New Testament. The Greek paragraph starts there too, which is important because in the Greek language, an idea is always found in a paragraph. English is a little different. We kind of put our ideas mostly in sentences. In Greek, if you want to understand an idea, you look at the paragraph as a whole. And when you do that, you come up with the outline I gave you earlier. In verses 1 through 4 (the first paragraph) talks about Paul. Verses 5 through 9, the second paragraph (talks about good elders). And then in verses 10 through 16 (the last paragraph) tells you about bad ones.

But to remind you to have discernment, to remind you to make a divide, Paul says, “Here are the guys who should lead and here are the guys who shouldn't.” That's how Titus 1 is laid out. “Here are the guys who are qualified, that should be in office. And here are the guys who are not.” As a matter of fact, as you read this chapter, you're going to see not only are these guys not qualified to be in office, but some of them were already in office. Titus had a mess on his hands. It was his job to come into the church and in some ways, do some invasive surgery. We don't talk about this a lot, but ministry is not always fun. Sometimes you have to tell people bad news, and this was Titus's job on the island of Crete. And let's talk about this morning.

I want to talk to you this morning - if you're taking notes, in Titus 1:10-11, I want to give you four disqualifications for an elder in the church. That's our outline for today. That's what the passage is about. It's pretty simple as it comes straight from the text. Four disqualifications for an elder in the church, or we might say, four ways to spot a bad elder because that's what this is talking about. It's very practical for us as we're talking about appointing new elders and expanding the elder board. It's helpful to know what not to look for. We've spent about a month talking about what to look for, the positive side of this, because that's most important to us. But Paul actually doesn't stop there. To fill out the whole idea, he tells us what not to look for in four points or disqualifications.

And the first one is this. The first disqualification for an elder in the church that Paul gives us here is rebellion. The first way to spot a bad elder in the church is rebellion or the act of resisting authority. That's what a rebel is. It's someone who resists authority. And I don't mean bad authority. I don't mean Satan's authority and error and lies. You're supposed to resist those things. But I mean this is someone who resists any authority; good, bad. They just want to do whatever they want to do. Paul says you need to resist a man like that. Don't put this person in leadership. And if you read starting in verses 8 through 10, he says it this way – he says,

8 But an elder should be hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.  
10 For there are many rebellious men...

If you notice verse 10 there starts off with the word “for” which ties it into the previous passage. In other words, an elder should do all these things in verses 8 through 9. He should hold fast to the faithful word, exhort in sound doctrine, refute those who contradict, “For there are many rebellious men...” That's his motivation for doing those things. That's his reason. The churches in Crete were full of rebellious men. Not just a few of them, it says many. Not just a handful, there were a bunch of these guys in the church.

When I was at the Grace Advanced Academy a couple of years ago, I asked the question to one of our teachers, I said, “What's the biggest counselling issue in church plants? What's the biggest struggle people have?” And the instructor, without even hesitating, said, “Power struggles.” He said when you're planting a church, there's oftentimes a leadership void just because that's the way it works when you're planting. And oftentimes, rebels work their way in there. It's what happened here in Crete.

And the word “rebellious” there, it's an interesting word. It refers to someone who is out of control or literally the word means “above submission”. It refers to someone who thinks they're above submitting or following any leadership whatsoever. They think they're too good for it, they think they're too high or smart or holy. Some of your translations have “insubordinate” there. That's a good word, or the word “unruly”. But this is someone who opposes the current leadership out of pride or arrogance. In fact, this has nothing to do with the current leadership. They would feel this way about anybody. No matter who's in charge, no matter who they're under, they don't like it. That's what this word implies. This is the kind of person that goes from church to church to church and causes trouble, or they go from place to place starting fights over silly things sometimes; the colour of the carpet, the paintings on the walls, size of people's shoes. And one commentator said this, he said, “They're like disloyal soldiers who refuse to obey any word or command.” Or another one said, “They're spiritual insurgents who are a law unto themselves and representing the rebel Satan. They do not recognize the authority of God's Word or His Spirit.”

It's a pretty sobering thought here. But Satan was a rebel, wasn't he? I mean, Satan turned heaven against itself. He took a third of the angels with him when he left, and some men want to do that in the church. They want to take people with them. They want to divide the church against itself. And Paul tells Titus, “It's your job to keep them from doing that. Have a pleasant ministry. See you later, Titus. It's your job to stop these guys.”

When you consider the history of Crete, this is not surprising that this was an issue because Crete was known for being a rebellious place. They had a nasty reputation for being unruly there. It was an island. It was on its own out in the ocean. And so, they had an overinflated view of themselves there. They thought they were above authority. They were such a problem to the Romans that the Romans pretty much left them alone until the Cretans turned into pirates and started robbing and stealing from their neighbours. And then the Romans came in, and that was the end of that. But Paul says the spirit never left them. He said, “When these people got saved on the island, that rebellious attitude made its way into the church and Titus has to come in and deal with it.”

You guys get this, I know, but I need to say it anyway. An elder can't be rebellious. He can't have an overinflated view of himself. You could say it this way, because an elder is not the highest authority in the church, Christ is. Amen? A pastor is not the highest authority. He doesn't sit on top of the church, Christ does, and he needs to put himself under Him. He needs to have a humble position in the church. He serves the same God the people do. He submits to the same God they do. He will answer to the same God they do, and therefore, he shouldn't have an overinflated view of himself.

I heard one pastor say that he would never sit on the stage at church for this reason, because he wants his people to know he worships God the same way they do. There's nothing wrong with sitting on the stage. As a matter of fact, most times when I sit up here, I sit in the chair off to the side. You can't see me anyway because I'm short and this pulpit hides me. So, it's fine. But it's a good point though, right? Or another one said that he doesn't want a special place in the parking lot because he isn't special, and neither is his car. His car is the same as everyone else's.

You see this several times in the Bible. Paul tells Timothy in Second Timothy 4:1 he says...I remember Carl Hargrove preaching this to me when I was sitting right there in my installation. He's a big man when you're sitting right there. I remember he mentioned this passage...Second Timothy 4:1, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word." Why does he say that? He says, "Timothy, you're going to be judged by God for this. God is the highest authority in the church, not you. He stands up above everything else, you don't. And you need to handle His Word accordingly."

For men who are outside of any submission now, there's a day when they're going to submit to the King of Heaven for what they do in the church. We all are. James 3:1 says, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that they we will incur a stricter judgment." That doesn't mean judgement in hell, that just means they're going to answer to God for what they do with His church. Christian leadership is not a free for all. There will be a day of reckoning for what men do in the church. So they need to be careful with what they say.

To say this another way (and this is important), one way to identify a true leader from a false one is that true leaders make peace in the church. They don't make war. And I don't mean they don't fight the lies coming in. I mean, they don't fight everybody in here. They make peace. History tells us that at one point in his work in the city of Geneva, John Calvin was in trouble. He passed a law that was very unpopular, and the city was in an uproar. To such an extent that an armed mob formed outside of his office carrying clubs and knives threatening to kill him. I don't think I've ever upset anybody that much. Not that I can remember, anyway. They were plotting his murder, until John Calvin came out of his office, walked up to the mob and bared his chest to a man carrying a knife, and he said something like this - he said, "Put that thing right here or put it down. It doesn't honour God." And the mob stopped. He stopped the riot by putting his life on the line. But that's what a leader does. He stops riots. He doesn't start them. He uses his words to make peace. He doesn't go up to angry people and say, "You got a problem with me? Oh yeah, let's fight." He doesn't say, "Do you know you're talking to? I'm the boss. I'm the one in charge, now do what I say." He makes peace.

Calvin himself said, he says, "Since the unity of the church is dear to God, it ought to be dear to us. Since He died to unite us and bring us together, no man should ever tear us apart. If he does, he's a heretic and should be avoided at all costs. If a man divides us and that's all he does, then whatever else he is, he's not fit for the ministry." Which leads us to the next disqualification for an elder in the church or the next two. We're going to put these next two together. But the first one is that he's rebellious. Paul says, a man is disqualified when he tries to foster rebellion and disunity in the church, bringing us to a second and a third disqualification.

And that is that he's an empty talker and a deceiver. These two go together. But a second and a third disqualification or a second and a third way to spot a bad elder is that he's an empty talker and a deceiver. Which is another way of saying a man is disqualified when he spouts rebellion from his mouth. That's where the rebellion comes from. That's where the disunity begins - with his words.

And if you read on in verse 10, it says, as Paul is describing the situation in Crete. He says, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers." The word "many" there is a catchall for everything in this verse to highlight the problems they had in Crete. Because not only did they have rebellious men, but they had many rebellious men. They were everywhere. And not only did they have empty talkers and deceivers, but they had many of them too. Crete was just a mess. It was a church in bad shape.

The word "empty talker" here, it's a compound word in Greek. It comes from *mataios* – "empty" and *logos* – "word". It means that their words were empty. Their talk amounted to nothing. We would call them wind bags. They blow hot air, or chatterboxes who talk and talk and talk, but they don't say anything edifying. They don't say anything that lead you to God.

Which leads naturally to the next one in the list here that says they were deceivers. That word is for *phrenapatés* in Greek, which means "seducers or deceivers of the mind." In other words, this is where the deception takes place. This is where the lie takes root in your mind. They play mind games with you. They mess with your head. They don't just blow hot air. They do it for a purpose to deceive you and lead you astray. They don't just talk and talk and talk, they do it for a reason. They want to lie to you. Another way to say this is that they use Biblical words without Biblical meaning. Jay Adams used to say, it's not the words that are most important in the church, it's the definitions. And they use Biblical words, but the definitions are not Biblical. Their talk is captivating and persuasive. It's sounds smooth and inspiring, but at the end of the day, they don't teach you the Bible. They don't explain to you what it means. You hear them speak and afterwards you say, "That was powerful. It was amazing, but I have no idea what they said." Or you go to their conference and you buy their books and you say, "What an incredible speaker, but they didn't teach me the Bible. They got me all worked up. I don't know about what."

I just mentioned the denomination to you that turned down homosexual pastors and how they abandoned certain doctrines like the deity of Christ and the resurrection. And they've kind of waffled on that. So, some in the denomination uphold it, some don't. But it's just a mess. And the interesting thing about them is that the ones who have abandoned it, have never admitted to doing that. They've never said they don't believe the Bible on those things. What they say is that

they've modified it a little bit or they brought it into the 21st century; to say that Jesus is still God, but He's not 100% God. He's not fully God. Or He resurrected, but not literally. His soul resurrected, His body is still in the grave. And they did that because they're deceivers. They want to play mind games with you. They don't want to come right out and say, "I'm a false teacher." I've never heard anybody say that in the church. You guys ever heard anybody say that? Has anybody ever come into church with a tee-shirt that says "heretic"? They don't do that, which is why they're a heretic. They might lose funding if they do that. They might lose money.

I had one professor say, these are the men that come into churches with little old ladies and they deny everything those little old ladies stand for, but they take their money. And oftentimes, without a hesitation. They're like the man who told his pastor, "Pastor, before you came here, I didn't care about God or the devil. But now after sitting under your preaching for years, I love both of them. I can't tell the difference." And Paul's point is you don't want that in leadership either. You don't want rebels in the church, and you don't want people that are going to lie to you for good or bad reasons.

This is nothing new in church history by the way. Deceivers have been around since the beginning. Well, you're reading about them right here. This is the first century church. If you ever wonder "Why is the church such a mess today?" Well, it's always been messy. I just mentioned John Calvin to you a moment ago, some of the things he dealt with or just the way that he dealt with them, the manner that he dealt with them. But when he was ministering in London in the 1800's, Charles Spurgeon found himself embroiled in a controversy called the "Downgrade Controversy". Some of you might have heard of this. It's an interesting controversy because Spurgeon was a very likable guy, had a really fun personality, told a lot of jokes. But he said that this particular controversy led to his early death. He died a young man.

The Baptist Association he was part of, had begun to...the doctrine of evolution - Charles Darwin had just come out...and they had bought into the idea that supernatural things in the Bible were a myth. They didn't occur. Now, if you think about the implications of that, what do you have left if you take the supernatural out of the Bible, you have nothing. And so, Spurgeon spoke up, he said, "This is a downgrade." He said, "We're not taking our churches this way. We're going that way." And eventually it got so heated that the London Baptist Association threw him out. He was the most famous Baptist preacher in the world and his denomination kicked him out.

But he wrote a lot about this and he sponsored a lot of articles about this controversy in his magazine, *The Sword and the Trial*. And one of them, he published an article that said this...(I don't think Spurgeon actually wrote this. He published it though)...It's about as blunt as you can be. He said this,

A new religion has been created that is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese. And this religion, being destitute, of any moral honesty, pawns itself off as the old faith with slight improvements. And on this plea, it usurps pulpits which were erected for Gospel preaching. The atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is denied. The Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, and the punishment of hell is turned into a fiction, and the resurrection into a myth. And these enemies of our faith expect us to call them



brethren and maintain a confederacy with them. I say no. For what does a believer have in common with a non-believer? What does Christ have in common with Belial?

Well said, isn't it? Those are powerful words from the grave. Friends, you can't form a confederacy with men like that. You can't unite with them. There has to be a divide here. There has to be a separation on these issues. William Tyndale said, "You can't join Christ with anti-Christ. You have to preach for one and against the other."

Which means that as someone in the pew, you have to pay attention when you come to church. You have to listen to what is said. You can't come in here and zone out and daydream. You need to take what I say or what anyone says in the pulpit and take it back to Scripture, back to the Word of God. Because men are not going to come in here and tell you they're a false teacher. And it's your job to have discernment.

Which brings us to one more disqualification for an elder in the church, one more characteristic. And this is an important one. So, I've tried to save some time for it at the end. Just to review these other ones. First, Paul says that a man is disqualified from being an elder when he is rebellious. He's disqualified when he thinks he's above submitting to any leadership outside of himself. Second and third, he's disqualified when he's an empty talker and a deceiver. When he speaks lies from the pulpit and things the Bible doesn't say. You see this thing everywhere today. It's very applicable right now. Which brings us to a fourth disqualification for an elder, a fourth way to spot a bad elder in the church. And that is this, they're legalistic. Paul says just to round off the list here, he says, a man is disqualified from leadership when he's legalistic or when he turns things into laws that aren't. That's a good definition of legalism, by the way. It's someone who turns things into laws that aren't laws. They make things into commandments that aren't commandments in the Bible. We'll talk about that in a minute.

But if you look in verse 10, Paul says it this way. He says, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision." "Of the circumcision", that phrase at the end of the verse there, it's another way of saying "of the Jews" or "of the legalistic Jews". It refers to Jews who still held on to circumcision as a rite of passage into heaven. The Old Testament had placed a high value for the Jews on circumcision. It never said it was a rite of passage into heaven, but it did say circumcision set Israel apart from the nations. It was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham. So, it was very important. It was a good thing.

But when the New Testament came around, the apostles said that didn't carry over into the church. It wasn't a law for us anymore. A couple of passages; Galatians 6:15, it says, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but what matters is a new creation." That doesn't mean circumcision was not a law for Israel. It just means it's not a law for the church because what matters in the church is a new creation. In the church, what matters is our relationship to Christ. Galatians 5:6 says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working itself through love."

And yet, as the New Testament was being developed, what we see here is that some Jews in Crete disagreed with that. (We'll get into this a little bit next time.) But some said, "No, Christians need to be circumcised too. They need to do what we do," and the idea here is because

they were adding laws to the Bible that weren't there, they turned their opinions into God's commands. They said (and tell me if you've heard this before), "If you're really a Christian, if you really want to be part of the church, then you need to do what we do." Have you guys ever heard that before? "If you really want to be holy, if you want to take it to the next level, you need to be circumcised. You need to obey the Old Testament too." That's the idea here.

When Paul says, "For there are many rebellious man, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision," he's highlighting the problem this was. Legalism wasn't a special problem in Crete, it was widespread. And again, we'll talk about that more next time, but I think it's important to mention here because legalism is still a problem today, isn't it? I don't have to tell you this, people still add laws to the Bible. They still say, "If you're really a Christian, then you would do this and this and this."

The term "legalist" can be a little confusing because it's used in a lot of different ways. But to simplify things, I think there's two main ways it's normally used. For one, it's normally used to refer to someone who says the law saves you. That's one branch of legalism - you're saved by works. And there's another branch that says, that just simply adds laws to the Bible. Not for salvation but for sanctification. They add things that are not previously there. And I think that second type is everywhere.

In preparing for this sermon, I wrote down a list of areas where Christians do this, where they can be legalistic. And we probably all have struggled in one of these areas at one time or another. But some of the areas I wrote down included the areas of music, clothes and entertainment. I think we've all seen someone bend out of shape over one of those. We've all seen someone say, "If you're really a Christian, then you should listen to what I listen to. If you're really saved, you should wear what I wear." My list also included the areas of diet and exercise. That's very popular today. "Eat what I eat, run like I run. That's what the real Christians do." We could also put parenting styles in this list and schooling choices. We can put Bible translations in this list. I've seen Christians almost come to blows over Bible translations. And you've got to step back for a minute, we're talking about the Word of God here. They almost punch each other out over it or hit each other in the head with the Bible. How to celebrate holidays, whether to put the nation's flag on the stage or not, who to vote for in the upcoming elections. And we could go on and on. But my point I'm trying to make is the Bible gives us freedom in those things, it gives us liberty. There are principles to follow in those things. There are guidelines and passages we could talk about, but there's not laws. The Bible doesn't tell you who to vote for in the upcoming election. The name is not in the book. And the Bible doesn't tell you how to celebrate Christmas. You can have a 10-foot blow up snowman on your front yard if you want and you can drive by and shake your head at that if you want to too. That's fine. Careful when you're going up Weeden Drive though because there's a curve right around where that snowman is. I think we've caused some people last year... People are just, "What?" It doesn't tell you parent your kids this way, this way, this way in every specific scenario. Again, there's principles but not rules. We could go on and on. And when someone tells you how to do all that in the church, when a leader or a pastor or an elder comes in and says, "I know God's will for your life in this. You do this or you're in sin," you need to be worried. That's legalistic. They're acting like they are of the circumcision. And again, we're going to get into this some more next week.

But it all raises this question, what should you do when you see someone acting like this in the church? What do you do when you see someone being legalistic or teaching legalism? We could tie this into all these other categories. What do you do when you see someone rebelling? And when they come up and teach and yet they're teaching is driving you away from everyone else in the church. What do you do when they're behaving like an empty talker and a deceiver; they're just saying things that aren't true?

Paul tells you in verse 11 if you read from verse 10 all the way through verse 11, he says this, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers, and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision who must be silenced because they're upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain." Paul says, this was the issue in Crete. This was one of the big problems with these guys. They were upsetting whole families. They were turning them against each other and turning them against the church. Their teaching wasn't leading to peace, it wasn't leading to unity. It was leading to war and division. Paul says, "This is what you should do with guys like that. This is how you should treat false teachers. You should silence them."

That word "silence" is actually a very strong word in Greek. It means "to muzzle them like a dog". Now, I don't think the idea there is that you're supposed to physically attack them. I think the idea there is you just get them out of a position of teaching. They want a platform to teach, you don't give them one. They want to spread those ideas in the church, you don't let them. I've heard of churches where people have gone outside the property of the church, people from other groups or maybe even someone who's left the church disgruntledly and started handing out literature against the church. You silence that. You don't get to do that. Or they pass out CDs or things of teachers there to teach totally against what the church stands for. Paul says, "You can't let them do that."

Verse 13 says, "To reprove them severely." That's a stronger way of saying that. Verse 14 says, "Don't pay attention to them," but it's all coming at the same idea. You should take away their right to teach. This is serious business, but this is how much the church means to God. This is how much he loves it. Say the wrong things in the church and you get silenced. Teach things that hurt people, hurt their families and you get muzzled.

I don't know where everyone is at in their relationship with the Lord this morning. I know we have some guests here today, and we're always very thankful for the new people we see among us. But I don't know if this is new information for you or not, but Jesus died for the church. That's how much it means to Him. That's how precious it is to Christ. He sealed it with His blood. He gave up His life for it. He was crucified for the church, which means that no one can come in here and mess around with it without consequences. It's important to Him and it should be important to us.

Let me say it this way and tie some of this together. We want men in leadership who act like Jesus, right? And Jesus didn't act like this. We want elders, we want leaders who are not rebellious and deceitful, legalistic and saying empty words. When you're looking for men to appoint into the office, one way you can prepare for this is to identify the things you don't want. And Paul gives you a list right here. You want men who act like Christ.

Some people love to put bullies in the pulpit. It's very popular on social media, isn't it? I mean everybody wants to attack. And they love to listen to someone who beats up on people and tells it like it is and tells you what to think and say and where and do. God doesn't want that in a leader. He wants shepherds, not bullies. He wants men who love His people, not boss them around, because that's what Christ did.

A man was once taking his son to see a relative they had never met before. And when they saw the relative way off in the distance, the man said, "That's him, I could spot him anywhere." And the son said, "Well, how do you know that? You've never met him before?" And the dad said, "Because he walks like his father." That's how you can recognize a leader in the church. That's how you can recognize an elder. They walk like their Father, they act like Jesus does. My prayer as we move forward in appointing elders is that we would identify men who are like that.

And if you don't know what that looks like, if you don't know Christ today, I want to tell you that you can know Him. You can draw near to Him right now. You can be loved by Him as we just talked about and sealed with His blood, if you would believe in Him, if you would trust in Him. Jesus lived a sinless life. He never sinned once, and He kept all of God's law, the real law, the actual thing. Where you and I broke it, He kept it. Where you and I messed up, He never did. And yet in His mercy, God is offering to give you His reward and to put Jesus' righteousness on you and your sins on Him if you would believe. And will you do that today? Will you trust in Him? Will you trust in Him so you can walk like your Father too? Let me close us in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you so much for the sacrifice of Christ, that this church that we are talking about and all these things we're looking at in the book of Titus, these serious things about false teachers and men who want to hurt the church, these are all said in context of what Your Son has done for us. Lord, we want to take the church seriously because You have. We want to love the church and love what it stands for because Your Son gave His all for it. And Father, we pray for Your help in protecting it.

Lord, I pray for our people this morning, that their hearts would be warmed to the things of You in passages like this that are kind of sobering. They may be negative in some ways, in other ways, it will give them a greater love for the truth and a greater desire to know it so that they can have discernment.

Lord, I pray for those who are here who don't know Christ this morning and some of this stuff may be lost on them. But Father, I pray that they would know, that You would draw them to the Saviour, that they could have forgiveness of sins.

For those who are saved and they've trusted in His precious blood, Father, may every Sunday that we're here together, every time we come together for worship, would it just draw us near to Him and nearer to the one who saved us.

Father, thank you for the privilege of being in the church. We pray for the church worldwide. As we talked about, there's a lot of churches that are in bad shape right now. Father, may we do everything we can to encourage local bodies among us, local churches near us here in Canada.

May the Gospel go out from these walls and from many walls today, we pray in Christ's name, amen.