

CONFRONTING A CORRUPT CULTURE

Titus 1:10-2:1

Some time ago, I read magazine article, expressing concern that ...

- * Credit's stretched thin; bankers are concerned about what will happen when government and people have to pay back what they owe.
- * Oil prices are increasing; fears growing that it's not going to stop.
- * Stock market is shaky; on verge of collapse?
- * Mass starvation is a threat in many parts of the world.

The time: 1920; or again, 1974. Sound familiar?

Whether we're talking economics, morals, or nature, we live in crisis!

The church has frequently been in crisis.

Crisis in 1st century Rome

Crisis in Crete

Crisis in Europe during Middle Ages ***It's in crisis today!***

What should God's people look like in a world gone mad—marked by economic and moral chaos?

That's what Paul's trying to tell us in Titus.

Value of blameless leaders is obvious when you consider reputation of people who teach a different message. **1:10-16 => 2:1**

When you see what their religion produces, who'd follow their lead?

People who possess truth should stand out, in such a culture!

When our neighbors see how Christ has changed our life, they'll have reason to look for answers. *What makes US different?*

Teachers reveal nature of their teaching by their lifestyle.

We watch how we live, so people can see how God changes us!

GOOD TESTIMONY REQUIRED OF GODLY LEADERS 1:5-9

Solution for producing a godly lifestyle in a perverted culture: **Blameless leaders:**

- * **Blameless in home and family life.**
- * **Blameless in personal character**
- * **Blameless in use of God's Word**

Essential prerequisite:

Godly leaders MODEL a good reputation!

Godly people IMITATE a good reputation!

Importance of our testimony emphasized by reputation of false teachers.

What kind of people teach such doctrines?

These aren't just innocent seekers of truth!

BAD TESTIMONY MODELED BY FALSE LEADERS 1:10-16 DESCRIPTION OF SOCIETY 1:10-12

Their character 1:10 *"For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party."*

-Rebellious – know what they *should* do, but do the opposite—consciously defiant! Rom. 1:32 *"Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them."*

"Spirit of the age" **rebels** against authority God has established— in church, in government, at home, at work, at school,...

God places people in authority. That's *His* choice.

They may not *deserve* it, but He chooses those He wants.

His people affirm: "*GOD sets up kings; He takes them down!*"

We may not *like* His choices –but HE's in charge–*NOT US!*

God's children submit to those He puts in charge!

Like our day, people in Crete didn't want to submit to authority.

They rebel against God, and those He places over them.

"No one's going to tell ME what to do!"—least of all, God!

-Empty talkers—lots of words, but no fruit—no results

Their words are "hot air!" –meaningless; don't affect their life.

-Deceivers—not innocent or ignorant—*know* what they're doing

Deliberately lead people astray, in name of religion!

Main movers are the circumcision => Judaizers

They promote salvation and living by works—as if we could satisfy God by *our* efforts. It can't be done!

Their works 1:11 "*They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families, teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.*"

—go house to house, leading people astray.

They must be silenced! "Take the wind out of their sails!"

How do you silence legalists? By telling them to shut up?

The *only* way to silence legalists is by a transformed lifestyle!

Demonstrate how God changes us, when we stop trying to do it

Most convincing argument: *BE* a light, in dark around us.

-Teach what they shouldn't teach: salvation by law—works

Their religion is legalistic. “Just keep the law!”

“You can do it!”

-Teach for the money

People *pay* to hear what they *want* to hear.

What do people want to hear? “You’re OK! You’re basically good. Try a little harder; it’ll be alright. God knows your intentions!”

They weren’t into telling the truth.

They were into making money!

Their reputation 1:12 *“One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’”*

No one taught Paul to be *“Minnesota nice!”*

Cretan writer describes them accurately:

-Liars—they’re deceivers. Lies and bribes are common.

Years ago: *The Day America Told the Truth*, describe our culture

* 91% of Americans lie regularly.

* When we stop lying, it isn’t because we think it’s wrong; we’re afraid we’ll be caught.

* 2 out of 3 Americans say there’s nothing wrong with lying.

Conclusion: “Lying is embedded in our national character... Americans lie about everything—usually for no good reason.”

Deception is such part of society we build in a “fudge factor.”
Teachers’ impossible assignments; students “divvy up”
work!

Speed limits set at 55, when everyone travels 70;
“if we set them at 70, they’ll go 85 mph.”

Deception has become a lifestyle!

-**Evil beasts**–Not complimentary! They aren’t *innocent*
beasts!

Poet, sarcastically: “***Absence of wild beasts was made up
for by people God put there!***”

They attack innocent victims

-**Lazy gluttons**–seek personal pleasure the easy way
*Have you found yourself asking how YOU can get in on
benefits of our great, litigious society? We all wish we
were in on it!*

Bumper sticker: “*Hit me! I need the money!*”

Wouldn’t you like these guys for neighbors?!!

Real problem 1:15-16 “*To the pure, all things are pure, but
to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; both their minds
and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶They profess to know God, but
deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for
any good work.*”

Misused: People participate in something wrong, saying:

“To the pure all things are pure!”

This is response to legalistic Judaizers.

Their doctrine: If you eat forbidden food you defile yourself; if you refuse that food, you become holier.
Opposite is true.

Christ points out: ***they have defiled minds and consciences.***

Food doesn't contaminate us.

"It's not what goes into a person that defiles him; it's what comes out!"

-Corrupt mind 1:15b:

"both their minds and their consciences are defiled."

Contaminated from inside out. Our heart's not right.

Problem isn't external activities—that's a *symptom!*

Problem is contamination *on the inside*.

We'll never fix problem of corrupt society by treating *symptoms!*

Legalism deals with symptoms, but it can't cure the heart.

It looks good on the outside, but it's whitewash on a grave.

The inside is rotten!

Only way to cleanse inside: change heart and mind.

When God changes heart and renews mind, externals change!

-Empty profession –practical atheists

Actions indicate they don't really know Him.

#1 cause of atheism: 'Christians'—proclaim God with mouth; deny him with lifestyles

Are YOU an atheist? Oh no, not me! I believe in God!

What difference does it make in our life?

What's in our life that can't be explained any other way, than that God has changed us?

-Worthless deeds–Conduct's corrupt! It's "repulsive."

SOLUTION FOR SOCIETY 1:13-21

How do you deal with such people?

3 clues for dealing with such "**brutes**"

1. Face the truth 1:13a "This testimony's true!"

No MN nice!

Don't whitewash it! Don't deny it! Don't try to justify it!

Recognize it for what it is!

You don't help things by acting like it's not really that bad.

Pagan society's rotten to the core! *WE live in pagan society!*

The only way to change it is from the *inside out!*

2. Help them see the light 1:13b-14

Rebuke them!–not attack!

"Reprove" = "**convince**"--**cause them to see the light clearly.**

"Severely" = firmly, energetically–decisive, firm correction

Not time for soft words–we must tell truth firmly, but in love.

=>"Such attitudes and conduct aren't appropriate for God's people."

Paul's words here are directed to Cretan *believers.*

"Speak sharply to them."

"So that" => to restore erring ones to spiritual health.

Don't try to get pagans to act like Christians.

But we *better* **Deal with Christians who act like pagans!**

If we want to attract people, we must model a unique lifestyle!

Paraphrase: “Americans are lazy, lying animals, living to satisfy themselves, cutthroats who devour one another to get ahead. Therefore, when you deal with them, Tell it like it is! Don’t mince any words! Speak firmly to them. Urge God’s people to be different—to live in a way that’s in harmony with solid Bible teaching.”

Leith Anderson: “There’s a danger that what is least important has become the most important focus of attention. Rather than argue politics and philosophies and strategies, is not our highest calling to “*live Christianly?*” Holding fast to the values and actions of Christianity in the tumult of change is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. If we live Christianly, we become more like Christ... Winning the values war is *more about how Christians live* than whom Christians fight.”

What is there about our life that’s so different from our friend or neighbor that only God’s presence can explain it?

3. Teach them to live in agreement with sound doctrine 2:1 “***but you... NOT, “teach sound doctrine!” BUT, “teach what agrees with sound doctrine!”***

Our lifestyle must adorn our doctrine!

Following verses explain it: a sound *lifestyle!*

In face of pagan culture around us, we have a different message; we *should* have a different lifestyle.

Sound doctrine produces spiritual health and godly living.

We model what we believe by *telling* the truth—by our words.

We model what we believe by *living* the truth—by our example

Our *lifestyle* should adorn good Bible teaching!

That's why our leaders *must* be models of godliness—so the rest have something to imitate, to attract friends, family to Christ.

WHERE ARE WE IN THIS PROCESS?

Have we dealt seriously with the reality of our culture?

Do we understand how *bad off* our culture really is?

Have we given up trying to change it from the outside?

Do we agree with God about how corrupt our society has become?

What difference has the good news made in our life?

Do we know how WE ought to respond in corrupt culture?

What does God want to change in US to attract others to Christ?