

TITUS: ADDRESSING WEAK CHURCHES IN DETERIORATING CULTURES
Part II: The Need For Church Leaders To COUNTER A Decaying Culture's Errorists
(Titus 1:5-16)

I. Introduction

- A. In today's declining cultures, individuals influenced by their culture can deceitfully, abusively or without self-control rashly threaten to overturn God's truth as it is taught and held in a local church, Tit. 1:10-13.
- B. Paul describes how this emergency situation is to be handled in Titus 1:5-16 as follows:

II. The Need For Church Leaders To COUNTER A Decaying Culture's Errorists, Titus 1:5-16.

- A. Paul noted Titus worked on Crete, an island with a deceitful, abusive, intemperate culture, Titus 1:12-13a.
- B. Such a culture brewed threats to the doctrinal purity of churches that had to be strongly addressed, 1:10f:
 - 1. Because of the Cretan culture's influence toward deceitful, abusive and uncontrolled behavior, many unruly, empty talkers and deceivers came to misuse the Old Testament for dishonest income; in the process, whole households of believers were spiritually subverted into Judaistic error, Titus 1:10, 11b.
 - 2. Hence, something **potent** was needed to **check** this problem so the Church could remain oriented to the truth, and thus stay faithful to Christ, Titus 1:11a; 1 Timothy 3:14-15.
- C. God's solution was for Paul to call Titus to finish putting the churches in order by his appointing **church elders** who would **POTENTLY stand** for God's truths **OPPOSITE** such errant teachers, Titus 1:5-16:
 - 1. Paul left Titus on Crete to appoint elders in every city, a task Paul said these churches **needed**, 1:5.
 - 2. Such elders were to be men of a sterling character and stout commitment to God's absolute truths:
 - a. Titus was to select men who stood opposite the deceit, abuse and lack of self-control in the Cretans: they were thus to be blameless, one-women-husbands, having believing children who would be free of charges of wildness or disobedience. These men were not to be overbearing or quick-tempered, not given to substance abuse or be violent or seek dishonest gain, but to be hospitable, loving what was good, self-controlled, upright, devout, separate from sin (holy) and self-disciplined, Titus 1:6-8.
 - b. Of note, these men were to hold **firmly** to that which was **doctrinally right** as it had been taught by godly precedents, so they could **confront, refute** and **exhort** others on truth and error, Tit. 1:9-13a.
- D. **In fact, if opposed by teachers who in a deceitful, abusive or uncontrolled way impressed others to turn from the truth unto error, the godly leaders were to REBUKE such errorists SHARPLY, 1:13b.**
 - 1. The word "sharply" (KJV and NIV) is *apotomos*, meaning "severely, rigorously", Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Engl. Lex. of the N.T., p. 101. In the New Testament, it is used **only** in Titus 1:13b and in 2 Cor. 13:10 where Paul spoke of rebuking believers "sharply", Ibid. Literally, *apotomos* means to "cut off," and is felt to have referred to the sharper weapons given to gladiators to **replace duller** ones for keeping the attention of the demanding masses in stadiums, Moulton & Mill., Voc. of Grk. N. T., p. 71.
 - 2. Now, in 2 Cor. 13:10, Paul noted he did **not want** to use such a **sharp** way of speaking, that Christ had called him to nurture rather than to harm. Yet, if forced by brazen, carnal opposition to do so, Paul warned he **would** be "harsh" in "tearing . . . down" such antagonists, 2 Corinthians 13:1-2, 10 NIV.
 - 3. Thus, **if** one in a deceptive **or** abusive **or** uncontrolled manner contested God's truth before a group of believers, a church elder was to confront the errorist with a sharp, "cut off"-type-of rebuke, Tit. 1:13b.
- E. This verbal sharpness was **necessary** for the eventual spiritual health of the local church, Titus 1:13-16:
 - 1. Paul said the goal of such a rebuke was to direct the errant away from extra-biblical myths, and that would leave them to rely on Scripture alone for truth, Titus 1:13-14 in light of 2 Timothy 4:1-4.
 - 2. Paul noted such teachers could not even adequately discern right from wrong, their consciences being corrupt, so they had to be countered sharply, their error being checked for the church's health, 1:15-16.

Lesson: Though Scripture calls elders generally to be gentle (1 Peter 5:1-4), in view of the influence of decaying cultures, and thus to protect the church's health, Titus 1:10-16 orders elders to rebuke sharply those who rashly counter the truth before groups of God's people, 2 Cor. 13:10 with Acts 13:8-12.

Application: (1) If we are in a subordinate role in the local church in a decaying culture, we need to pray for the establishment and encouragement of leaders who stand as Titus 1:5-16 says. (2) If WE are such a leader, we must heed God's leading to make even tough stands for the welfare of God's people!