

Last week we began a series in Titus entitled – *Invasion*. An invasion is a hostile word referring to an unwanted intrusion by another w/ the intent of occupation.

As noted last week, in most cases, an invasion isn't a good thing – at least not by those being invaded. But I do believe there's an occasion when an invasion isn't an *intrusion* but an *infusion* – and that's when God's grace invades the life of a condemned sinner to bring them freedom and life.

This is where we landed last week. If you remember, we started our study in ch. 3 b/c that's where we find the doctrinal heart of this letter. Paul reminds Titus that everything rises and falls on the cross. He explains that *the heart of the matter is a matter of the heart*. So if Christ has invaded your heart then it'll change everything in your life.

Which brings us back to Paul's intent in this letter. Paul is concerned w/ the war being waged b/w Spirit and flesh, the church and the world. And he concludes – *if the world invades the church, then the world will invade you; but if Christ invades you, then you will invade the world*.

So as he begins his encouragement, he offered his protégé direction/insight to help him in leading the church in Crete.

## I A Clear MANDATE

*Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness – in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.*

Paul's greeting is clear regarding his intent in ministry – **he lived to further the faith**. His singular focus was reaching people for Christ, helping them to grow up in the faith, so they could go into the world in Jesus' name.

**Which is our purpose for life in Christ too!** If we've been rescued by the grace of God, then God has left us here so we too might go back into our own world to influence our family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues for Him – we too have been called to be His hands, feet, and voice.

## II A Concise MESSAGE

*To Titus, my true son in the faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. The reason I left you in Crete was so you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed.*

If you remember, Titus was a young, Gentile who came to faith under Paul's ministry. He showed such promise Paul took him under his wing to disciple him. Titus was so solid that Paul ultimately placed him in Crete to serve as the pastor of this challenging church. In the process, he offered Titus (2) guiding principles: Get things in order and raise up/disciple some key leaders. **Apparently, the church had been invaded by a selfish, worldly ideology that was turning the church inside/out.**

put in order (*epidiorthoo*) from *orthos* from which we get the *orthodontist* and *orthopedics*. If you've had the joy of paying for braces you know the job of this dental specialist is to align and straighten crooked teeth. Or if you've ever broken a bone – an ortho dr. resets the bones to straighten it.

Paul was charging Titus w/ correcting and setting straight sound doctrine/practices among the believers in Crete.

To appreciate this directive, we have to recognize the culture in Crete and the climate of the Christian faith in Crete.

Throughout the Roman world, Christians were experiencing persecution for their faith while trying to be faithful in the faith. Often, in an attempt to find acceptance/relief, many believers were allowing bad doctrine/practices to be mixed in w/ their faith to make their faith more palatable to the world around them. This was true in Crete.

It'd be easy to condemn them for watering down the Gospel, and yet, the Romans were having a heyday using them for sport, feeding them to the lions, boiling them alive, and lighting the streets of their cities. So I get it. The Christians were saying, I want to live for God, but I also want to live and not have to endure great tragedy for my faith. So they were allowing error to be mixed w/ their doctrine to make it more palatable to those outside the church – and it made a mess inside the church – and it had to be straightened out.

Are we not facing the same dilemma today? No, we're not facing some terrific form of physical persecution, but we are faced w/ mixing error w/ our doctrine/practices to make our beliefs more acceptable to the secular world around us. Sometimes it's obvious, while at other times it's subtle; yet all of the time it's challenging. And yet we will always find ourselves under this threat. The danger is if we consent to culture, we'll become less Christ-like; even non-Christian.

Should we choose to mix Christ w/ error, it doesn't become less Christian; it becomes non-Christian. Why? It is b/c you can't mix truth w/ lies and have it remain the truth. Truth mixed w/ lies is a lie. It isn't tainted truth; it's untruth. And all untruth is cancerous. That's the problem w/ cults. Some would have you believe JW's and Mormons are Christian, but they're NOT! It's tainted doctrine wrapped in a church wrapper. It may sound good, look good, and even feel good; but it's untruth leading people away from truth.

This compromise has made its way into the most orthodox of churches in the name of reaching people for Christ. **BUT** any church, no matter how popular/culturally accepted it may be – if it teaches Christ w/out commitment (if it promotes a Christ of convenience) then it's a truth mixed w/ a lie.

Your faith doesn't have to go looking for a fight to be real; but if your faith is real, the world isn't going to approve and will put up a fight. Yet if we mix the Gospel truth w/ lies to be accepted – **it will no longer be Gospel.**

This is where Paul's challenge to Titus hits home w/ me. It should be the responsibility of our pastor/church leaders (anyone who takes spiritual responsibility for others) to make sure our doctrine/practices are straight and true and in alignment w/ God's truth. This must be one of the primary roles of our staff – **GOSPEL CLARITY.**

**There's more.** As mentioned last week, not only was this a pagan society where Christianity wasn't in vogue, but there was a group of people known as *Judaizers* inside the church who were teaching a Jewish/Gnostic heresy inviting people to revert back to a Jewish practice of Law and circumcision. Furthermore, there was a problem w/ older believers shirking their responsibility to influence those younger in the faith. Apparently, the older, more mature believers thought the younger believers should be caring for them instead of them investing the Jesus in them into the following generations.

Folks – this is HUGE! Sadly, in too many churches today, there are those who are older, more mature in the faith – who've decided to retire not just from their jobs but from Jesus and his church too. Some even to the point where they are mad b/c the younger generation isn't taking care of them as they think they should. Folks, this ought not be. So long as we have breath in our lungs we should be investing the Jesus in us into the lives of those behind us.

If we're going to protect the Gospel in every believer, we must be on our guard to insure the world doesn't get into the church.

### III A Competent Team – MATE

*An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> charge to Titus was to appoint elders – which begs the question – What is an elder? This is a loaded question as there's a great misunderstanding of this role in the church.

elder (*presbuteros*) the original word refers to any older man, but the term has come to refer to an official title for church officers of the noblest of character.

As I've studied the N.T. and early church, there's no doubt this is a vital role in the church; and yet I'm certain it's been misapplied into a role of governance in most churches today. Some say elders are pastors while others believe they're lay leaders. As I've studied, I've come to see that elders were the local *house church* leaders, appointed through Apostolic witness, to influence/teach a small group of people.

In the context of the early church, elders were an extension of pastor to the people. Titus was the pastor, but b/c the church couldn't assemble as we do today b/c of persecution, Titus was charged w/ appointing/discipling elders (house church leaders) who in turn taught/discipled the people.

If we translated this concept in our church today, the elders would be our LIFE Group leaders charged w/ using their influence to take spiritual responsibility for any person under their immediate care – under-shepherds of the pastor charged w/ making disciples of a small group of believers.

**Notice the expectation of their lives.** These people are to be of high character/spiritual integrity. They're not to be new believers but believers seasoned in the faith whose lives and families reflect a true sense of God's presence and power.

Can I tell you what I think happened? This church found themselves in a bad spot needing people to plug holes/fulfill roles so they put people in roles of great responsibility who didn't meet the standard of the faith – and things got catawampus. They fell prey to the age-old problem of needing a warm body b/c **the perceived need for help often became greater than the actual need for health.**

**Point** – Paul reminds Titus there's nothing more critical than Godly leadership b/c everything rises and falls on leadership

#### IV A Challenging MISSION

*For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, b/c they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach – and that for the sake of dishonest gain. One of Crete's own prophets has said: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

## A The CHALLENGE

The challenge before Titus was he was the pastor a church of stiff-necked, rebellious people whose hearts were hard – and somehow these carnal/lost people gained a place of influence. So Paul calls him to steer the church back to truth by silencing the heresy and re-directing the misguided.

Can I tell you this is my least favorite part of being a pastor?

There's nothing more thankless than confronting someone whose life is out of alignment w/ God. They don't usually take the confrontation well. In fact, I've found more often than not, most out-of-sync church people are like camels and llamas – they bite/spit – and they not very nice about it. And the reason is simple – they are out of alignment w/ God.

Paul helps us all out by providing us w/ (4) character traits:

### 1 A DEFIANT Manner

rebellious (*aupotaktos*) *a*–w/out; *hupo*–under; *tasso*–in alignment – refers to a man who refuses to align under God.

### 2 A DECEPTIVE Message

meaningless talk (*mataiologos*) one who is an empty talker – referring to people who impress others w/ their theatrics, but whose words lack substance.

**deceiver** (*phenapates*) one who intends to lead others astray.

### 3 A **DISRUPTIVE** Mentality

**disrupting** (*anatrepo*) to overturn (money changers) These people may talk a good talk, but if you look closely, they're ultimate ambition is to tear down the church, rip people apart, and over turn lives sending people into chaos.

### 4 A **DISHONEST** Motivation

Why do they do it – for the cash, the credit, and the control.

## B The **CONFRONTATION**

Paul makes it clear these types of people must be silenced b/c of their ill-effect on the church, but interestingly enough, Paul directs Titus to seek to reprove them over remove them.

**severely** (*apotomos*) to cut out – referring to the bad doctrine – these people are in need of guidance and repentance.

So if we're going to keep the world at bay in the church:

- 1 We need Godly pastors who will confront untruth
- 2 We need Godly trained leaders to partner w/ the pastor
- 3 We need grace/patience w/ each other w/out compromise