“Guardians of the faith and flock”

Titus 1:10-16

based on the sermon preached on 14-4-24,
available at https://lwac.org.au/sermons or on the podcast

CONTEXT AND KEY IDEAS

1. Paul is writing to Titus, who is on the isle of Crete, to appoint elders/leaders in the churches who are mature Christians of character who will be responsible to guard the flock and the faith.
2. False teachers had arisen, teaching error and straying from what is sound doctrine, confusing and misleading the churches.
3. These false teachers must be called out for their errors and rebuked.
4. Christians are called to purity, which is displayed in the consistency between what we say and what we do.

CONNECT

- Have you ever had to be a guard for something or someone, provide protection? What was that like? What or who were you protecting? What were you protecting them from? What did it feel like to shoulder this responsibility for guarding? Share as you are able.

STUDY

Read Titus 1:10-11

- Paul identifies people who merely talk and/or by their talk deceives others as rebellious. We don’t normally think of people who mislead or deceive others by their talk or speech as rebellious, yet that is what Paul identifies. Can you think of someone who has deceived others by what they have said? It could be someone you know personally or someone you only know about. We often think of salespersons or politicians as being more likely to deceive us by their speech, but it could be anyone. How might their deception have been rebellious?

- "The circumcision group" were Jewish Christians who claimed one needed to embrace Judaism, through submission to the process of circumcision, before one would be positioned to receive salvation. Explain in your own words why and how this runs counter to and undermines the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ.

- What are some other "false teachings" which trouble the church today? (Be gracious in your discussion here as not everyone may agree on what constitutes a false teaching.)

Read Titus 1:12-13a

- Paul describes the Cretans as: 1) careless about the truth (a preference for lies or relativity); 2) being controlled by their sensuous desires and appetites; and 3) both slothful and greedy. Does this seem overly harsh to you? Why or why not?

- How closely does this describe many people in our larger dominant secular Western culture today? Perhaps not many of your friends, but what you see in secular society, through the media and across the internet? If you don't think this describes people today in Western culture, how *would* you describe people in our secular Western culture?

- Why do you think Paul is so blunt with Titus about the Cretans? Does it make a difference to begin with an accurate understanding of what challenge is before you?

Read Titus 1:13b-14

- Why do you think Paul commands Titus to rebuke the Cretans described in v. 12 sharply?

- What does rebuking them imply about their spiritual status? Were they inside the church or outside?

- What are some examples of human commands, actions, attitudes or behaviours some people "add on" to the Christian faith to make us more acceptable to God, more worthy? Make a list of these human "add-ons" which we sometimes think (consciously or subconsciously) make us more acceptable to God.

Read Titus 1:15-16

- Look up I Corinthians 10:23-33. What is the main theme of this passage? What light might this passage shed on Paul's statement in Titus 1:15 about purity and impurity?

- What are some actions, which, if you saw or became aware of someone who claimed to be a Christian doing them, might constitute a denial of their profession of faith? Make a list by yourself first, then share that list or some items from it with the larger group.

- What is it about the actions on your list that might cause you to question whether someone can be engaged in this behaviour and also be a follower of Jesus Christ? What if it were only a one-time action? What if it were habitual, on-going or a life-style, would that make a difference?

APPLY

- Make an individual list of the key Christian doctrines which you believe. Working as a group and using your individual lists, construct a list of essential Christians doctrines.

- Examine your heart and life to see if there are any attitudes, thoughts or actions which are inconsistent with your profession of faith in Christ. Talk to God about this.

- As you are able and as appropriate, pray for one another about these inconsistencies

- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?

- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.

  1.
  2.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

- According to need.