

*Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021 10 am*

“Watch for the troublemakers, stand firm in Christ”

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See service sheet online at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org)

Welcome David Stansbie to lead today

Main reading: Gal 5:1-16, Titus 1:10-16

Sermon “Watch for the troublemakers, stand firm in Christ”

Closing hymn In Christ Alone

Close -----

Listen to today’s sermon by clicking on the link at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org).

The audio file is [21\\_02\\_28.mp3](#).

### *Welcome and pray*

There are widespread measures in place to stop Covid from destroying our lives. Boris Johnson in his colourful way refers to the Covid as a monster to be subdued, an adversary to be tackled head on, beaten away. It’s a war cry

There is almost no expense spared in this fight, it is very much akin to resisting the onslaught of a sly foe, the confronting of determined enemy.

Many are fearful that this unseen enemy will take hold and overcome them.

People expend great efforts to protect themselves - and their family that there will be no-one giving way and be done in by it.

✚ **Are you taking precautions? being vigilant, etc. Yes, of course.**

Yet right now, Christians, you and I are undergoing a threat as equally serious as any Covid virus might be. It is more serious for it is not an attack on your body but on your soul. Physical attacks are temporal - an attack on your soul has eternal consequences.

How concerned are you about this? For many, - it’s not that much.

✚ **The destruction of a Christian’s faith - and the destruction of the church and its witness in our land must be our greater concern.**

Both the virus and a spiritual attack are hidden enemies. The media bombard us with one, and we respond, the Bible speaks clearly of the other, are you responding?

Today Paul warns Titus, and all of us here of an attack on the Christian’s faith and the witness of the church. Let it stir us up to action! It’s a war cry!

Today’s passage is 1:10-16, it is easy to look at it and see a blob of text. The content seems all mixed in together, like a well tossed salad. So let me point out the main items:

1. There are the believers in Crete.
2. There are those bothering them.
3. There is how this is happening.
4. There is how Titus should confront the troublemakers.
5. There is what Titus should say to the believers.

Let’s break this down simply into the problem and the solution – what those believers faced - and what we face now - and how we are to stand against it.

### *The problem*

“**10 For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group.**

“**circumcision group**” who are they? Have you met any? Are there any of the “**circumcision group**” in Kings Norton? Put your hands up

This has nothing to do with me at all I hear you murmur as you ease the seat back and quietly nod off, thinking “thankfully he is not a noisy preacher”

**It does have something to do with you – otherwise it would not be written.**

All Scripture has something to do with you. Someone said when we looked at a passage about marriage “that has nothing to do with me because I am single”, yes it does. You should be supporting and praying for those married, just as those married should pray for, and help, singles.

So what of these troublemakers? - They are **rebellious**. Some render it *unruly*, headstrong, ambitious of power, stubborn and intractable. They are not helping but hindering, they are not ‘peacemakers’ but ‘troublemakers’.

They are full of words **mere talkers** – they are not burning down the building by night, no, - it is much more serious than that, their main weapon is their tongue - and their strategy is deception. They are ‘**deceivers**’ x2. They don’t confront openly but subtly, through trickery, *softly, softly catch your monkey*

They say they are with you - and have faith like you - but actually it is false.

16 **They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.**

And so they are against you. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They do great harm to the flock so Paul doesn't mince his words, he says: **they are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.**" was Paul a Scot?

And the bad news is that **'there are many'** there are many of them who are active in misleading men by their false teaching, v10 *They are grace destroyers*

What of the damage they cause?, burned out churches can be easily be put right - but not burned lives: **they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.**

And the nature of their attack? What did the Christians need to watch out for? We are given several clues, firstly a great danger to beware of is "10 **especially those of the circumcision group.** This phrase along with v14 - that they were peddling **Jewish myths. Shows they are Jews, "the Judaisers"**

The key clue is: v15: **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.**

Put all this together and you have commands probably prohibited the use of certain things as unclean things

Timothy was similarly warned in Ephesus about those who "**order them to abstain from certain foods.** Paul had to say, and he says it twice, that **everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,**" (1Ti 4:3-4 NIV) So too with the church in Colossae **Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.**" (Col 2:16 NIV)

These are things, as opposed to moral actions more easily seen as wrong.

**We could now have 45mins, or longer if you wish, on the Jewish food laws, However, to explain the principles is sufficient to see and make the point.**

Most of these Christians were born Jews, they were brought up to adhere to the law of Moses, the festivals, special days, circumcision, to observe clean and unclean animals and a host of laws written down for God's people to observe.

They were to observe them as a sign that they loved God.

6. Most laws pointed forward symbolically to Jesus and were fulfilled in Him.

7. Some laws were there because they were 'one nation' together under God.

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8. Some laws to show they were distinct from the heathen nations around them.

9. Some laws were there for hygiene reasons.

10. Some laws for no known reason.

Bg= by grace

These, all of them are there so God's peoples could say "I will keep these as a sign that I belong to you and I love you".

If anyone thought that they would be declared righteous by God in keeping these laws the scripture says that to do so you would need to keep all the law all of the time – and no one did that.

Attempting to keep these laws did not remove the curse and bring God's bg blessing, that was only possible through Christ's shed blood on the cross. bg

**You cannot do anything, there is nothing you can do to earn God's favourbg**

Forgiveness, and eternal life is a gift from God based on Christ giving up of his righteous life, this one sacrifice alone enables forgiveness of sins, - nothing else. Turn in repentance from your sin and look to Christ alone and his finished work on the cross and you will receive eternal life. It is a gift.bg

How wonderful the Gospel of Christ is. Yet naturally you and I hate free grace, "what receive everything from God! never, not me. I hate it."

The problem was, and is, that people tried to keep some of the laws so they could feel good about themselves, - they became self-righteous.

They say "I'm fine because I observe these laws Moses gave, I'm fine because I have been circumcised, keep the Sabbath, give my tithe". Etc. etc

There are plenty of self-righteous today. To do so is to live in a deluded world, to be a hypocrite, thinking you are better than you are, a Pharisee. How ugly pride is. It destroys grace/

Those in Crete had come to Jerusalem and been convicted of their sins under the preaching of Peter. They returned full of the Joy of sins forgiven and the grace of God. No doubt others were being added to their number.

Returning home, they would have started to sense that the attitude of those in the synagogues was not the same as theirs, increasingly they had less in common and would read the scriptures with like minded believers in new groups and at home. It was to these that Paul told Timothy to go and appoint elders so congregations could be formed that would be able to focus on their new faith without the bad influence from those in the synagogue. However, these Jews were soon on their backs. Some were old friends, it was difficult

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because they were persuasive, and what they said was plausible, after all they had grown up with these Jewish laws.

These new Christians fell for it, - and why are they falling for it so easily? Why were they finding it hard to shake off? v12 **Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."**

Paul here quotes a poetic line of the Cretan philosopher Epimenides, who wrote about 600 BC. In remarkable language Paul calls him a prophet, an interesting title for a philosopher! The quotation was probably well known. Paul endorses this saying: v13 **This testimony is true.** And everyone knows it!

**Certainly Cretans had in the Greek world a proverbial reputation as liars.**

That is a bad list, Cretans were so prone to dishonesty it had become a national trait, **evil brutes** for their sly hurtfulness and savage nature, and one version calls **lazy gluttons slow bellies** for their laziness, more inclined to eat than to work or live by some honest employment.

So now that they are Christians they have suddenly changed and their old ways don't bother them? Right?? If only!

✚ **Only a true believer will be able to understand what I am saying here.!!**

Having a new nature, puts me at odds with the old, and although the new nature is stronger the old nature being hostile to God does not give in - but puts up a fight. God in his wisdom after we have finished the work the Lord has called you to do for him here on earth - removes the old body in readiness for the new; a perfect body ready for the life of perfection.

■ **Minnie is a step ahead, we will soon follow.**

We all have fleshly weaknesses that the devil will exploit. For the Cretans they had a readiness to fall for things untrue – picture the scene.....

So along comes my old friend Josh, and he says OK you have got all excited about this new thing coming out of Jerusalem ( you'll = get over it ) don't forget you still need to pay the tithe, and yes go ahead and circumcise your children, did I see you eye up the bacon in the market place – And I'll see you on Saturday – your not going to give up on the Sabbath are you now?! Ugh, this is hard.

They are not alone in this problem, the church across the water in Galatia were up against this as well, they too had fallen for it and Paul calls them

fools, and explains: **Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised.** Ga 6:12 *They are grace destroyers*

This falling back to the old ways is the ruin of whole households so Paul says to Titus v11 **They must be silenced, their mouths must be stopped;** not by outward force, but by confutation and conviction, showing them their error.

Notice this passage is bracketed with the phrase **by sound doctrine v9** and at the beginning of chapter. 2 **"You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine."** So the truth, x2 is the means to **refute those who oppose it."**

Jesus strongly confronted the Pharisees. "You who follow externals rather than cherish a loving heart are turning the things of God on their head **"have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."**

What are you up against today?

Is it the issue of circumcision? No. What *is* influencing you? What is your background? Were you religious? RC, brought up an Anglican? Islamic or Hindu background? Or maybe secular, naturalist, materialist, a Hedonist (pleasure seeker), with yourself at the centre of everything!

The non-believer will not want to give up their ways, they are sticking with it. But this passage is talking about believers who are pulled back to their old ways. Believers won't do certain things to make sure the way back is closed off, for me it is certain music, I know my weak points, others still won't eat pork, etc. That is not the problem here.

Here it is believers lead to foolishly think certain things are real and true. For example, converted Hindus are often still superstitious.

The church today is not under attack from the Judaisers, but liberals, faith teachers, those who come to preach a different gospel, the Benny Hinns of this world who speak of faith as if it is a substance, the 'God wants you healthy' nor the sentimental and confused teaching of Joyce Meyer, or the dangerous teaching of Steve Chalk. Those who turn away from the simple gospel of the Bible to a 'newer understanding', please do not watch the God channel, TBN, one that puts me in the centre, and or turns God into a 'give to get' machine. *They are grace destroyers*

✚ **As MLJ said if it is new – then it is not the original!**

Many have already fallen to thinking "Tongue speaking is necessary to salvation". You must honour the Sabbath or have certain Bible translations.

Where you once a RC and still want to elevate Mary and look to a priest?

Those who are led to believe “I’ll be sure I am saved once I’ve been baptised, they think baptism is key to salvation. There’s been a flurry of interest prompted by a church or pastor and yet they remain without any inner renewal, and are not part of the local body of Christ.

It is the thinking of the unbeliever who says “I feel sure I am saved if I keep coming to church - if I take communion, no it is in Christ alone x2

Whatever it is, if you adhere to this or that – whatever it is - you will quickly put your trust in your obedience to this or that - instead of Christ’s perfect obedience to God’s law. And if you are trusting your obedience to this law or that thing, **then Christ will be of no value to you at all.** The whole point of Christ on the cross has gone for you. You are still lost and no better than a follower of any other debased religion in the world.

Christian beware the devil will always try to wean you off Christ and on to something else, stand firm, [keep your mask on, social distance, use the gel](#)

■ [For the covid there are a host of precautions to adhere to,](#)

For a spiritual attack there are also, so as a believer stand on God’s word.

### *Solution*

The solution to the church is clear teaching - 15 **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.**

This verse hits the problem head on. As Jesus said there is nothing that goes in that makes you unclean it is what comes out from within.

It is not what you do that makes you right with God but what Christ gives you. You have to be made new, it’s the work of God, through His Spirit bg who brings the work of the cross those 2000 years ago into your life now.

These Cretans were falling like flies because of their fickle character, they had allowed themselves to become easy prey, hurting themselves - and even more importantly, hurting the cause of Christ.

No, - for them strong medicine is called for. **“Therefore” x2 rebuke them sharply, x2– Ministers are to try to be popular - but to do whatever it takes to get through - so that they will be sound in the faith 14 and will pay no attention x2 to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.”**

Having been bought by the blood of Christ they were now walking away from the cross - and from grace - **May none of us here end up doing that!**

**“Are you so foolish? says Paul: After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”** (Ga 3:3 NIV)

It’s a broadside - Some need to be bounced out of this dangerous thinking, like a bad dream, or drifting off at the wheel someone needs to grab the wheel / jolt you out of it.

✚ **What is it in your background that is still holding you by the collar?**

As a sinner I am saved by Christ alone – by grace alone. As a Christian I live and grow and am kept by Christ alone and by grace alone.

I don’t need hats, special clothes, buildings, music or worship styles, baptism, taking the bread and the wine or other externals, No but it is faith in Christ. — **how is it says Paul that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?** Ga 4:9

To believe that, Paul says, is to put on a yoke of slavery. It is so foolish, who in their right mind breaks into prison? Why handcuff yourself? Why chose to be a slave when you could be free.

■ [Christians are like the servant girl in the house who marries the master’s son - so Christ brings a new relationship of love and freedom.](#)

Look to Christ alone, He is there, the work is done, it is ready and it is available to you.

[It is said that some years ago a vessel sailing on the northern coast of the South American continent, was observed to make signals of distress. When hailed by another vessel, they reported themselves as "Dying for water!" "Dip it up then," was the response, "you are in the mouth of the Amazon river." There was fresh water all around them, they had nothing to do but to dip it up, and yet they were dying of thirst, because they thought themselves to be surrounded by the salt sea.](#)

How often are men ignorant of their mercies? How sad that they should perish for lack of knowledge! Jesus is near the seeker even when he is tossed upon oceans of doubt.

The sinner has but to stoop down and drink and live. Like the water grace is there in abundance, Here I stand in the grace of God – may no-one steal it from us, let us stand firm in it. Amen *END*