

Introduction

- He's writing to Titus to help Titus put leaders in place:
 - leaders who will work towards growing, encouraging, nurturing the faith of the Christians in Crete...
 - these leaders will be people of character, who themselves know Christ, and who will in their living be avoiding that which is contrary to the character of Christ within them (**temptations of money, sex and power**) and embracing that which is in keeping with his character (**hospitality, "the good", self-control, discipline, and the truth of Scripture...**)

Exposition

- Having explored what good leaders should look like, Paul turns to the opposition Titus and the church in Crete are facing:
 - the appointed leaders will need to not just be different from these people, opponents of the gospel, but able to stand against them, to **"be upright"** when pushed by pressure from these opponents...

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

- Notice that he's talking to a church situation, people within the body of believers
 - most churches that flounder, fail or close do so due to internal, not external pressures
- A number of strands to the problem:
 - **rebellious** - which could be against leaders in local church, could be against right teaching
 - **mere talkers** - hypocrisy, eg talking hospitality but rarely getting round to inviting folk, or talking the needs of the community to hear the gospel but rarely sharing that good news or getting involved in some thing that would make it known!
 - **deceivers** - I think this is to do with false teaching, especially the connection the circumcision group...
- Its that whole package that is the problem - and there seem to have been many folk with that attitude clustering round a particular theological position (**circumcision group**)
- A couple of possible scenarios:
 - **folk within a local fellowship or congregation**
 - **folk outside the local fellowship, but within the wider church**
- Pray God for protection from such scenarios:
 - **we are currently in the midst of one... and only by God's grace are we ever far from the other!**

(11) They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach - and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

- Wrong teaching ruins people:
 - how can it **ruin** people?
 - ultimately turning them away from salvation...
 - eg false teaching amongst some members of the YF in Motherwell?
- But how can you silence such teaching?
 - debate, respond, argue (**David Robertson**)
 - censor, protect the pulpit and leadership
- Dishonest gain?
 - what was that about? **cf Amanda/Nepali priests...**
 - perhaps in our day the temptation to popularity, not just the **gain** of financial reward but also the gain of fame in a celebrity obsessed world...

(12) Even one of their own prophets has said, "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."

- Paul appears to be suggesting that in the church in Crete a number of people are falling back into a societal flaw, a culturally acceptable way of behaving that is nevertheless out of step with the gospel:
 - consumerism might be a typical example for us today...
 - individualism another...
 - lack of concern for the truth...
 - lax sexual standards and attitudes...
 - perhaps attitudes to power and influence and the way of achieving things?
- Are there things that could be said that are out of step with the gospel:
 - Dundonians are...
 - Scots are...
 - even folk from Fintry are...

(13) This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith (14) and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth.

- Concurring with this assessment, and in particular how it seems to have infected the church, Paul goes on to encourage Titus to take a lead in responding to the problem:
 - rebuke:
 - sharply:
 - aiming for soundness in faith:
 - rebuke was to include a call not to pay attention to false myths or commands
- (*I'm challenged by these words - rebuke and sharply in the context of our current struggle for biblical orthodoxy round homosexual practise...*)

(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. (16) They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

- Purity comes from within, and shows itself as it comes out:
 - *Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"* (Mark 7:14-15)
 - what these folk are revealing about themselves is a more fundamental impurity - their words claim to know God but their actions deny it
- Paul's vehemence is testimony to how dangerous this stuff is:
 - I was reading the Fellowship of Confessing Churches stuff in the St Rollox newsletter... a clause in the covenant was about rejecting the authority of those who are non-biblical... maybe we do need to recapture some of that vehemence?

Conclusion

- Does the church matter?
 - for all her imperfections and flaws!
 - yes and yes again!!
 - Bill Hybels, "The local church is the hope of the world, and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders."
 - Bill Hybels again, "Church isn't where you meet. Church isn't a building. Church is what you do. Church is who you are. Church is the human outworking of the person of Jesus Christ. Let's not go to Church, let's be the Church."