

## ***Leading with Discernment***

Titus 1:10-2:1 - NCBC, February 21, 2016

Main Point: **Spiritual leaders must recognize and respond to false teachers.**

- Recognize false teachers
  - Wrong character (1:10-13, 15-16)
  - Wrong content (1:11c, 14)
- Respond rightly to false teachers (1:11, 13; 2:1)
  - Silence them
  - Rebuke them sharply
  - Teach sound doctrine

Application: **Biblically train yourself to distinguish good from evil (Heb. 5:14).**

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### **Opening Announcements:**

Thank you for your prayers recovering from sickness.

Welcome our youth back from Winter Retreat.

Women's Retreat – Friday 26<sup>th</sup> – Encourage attendance

<<Preparation Song>>



Amen. Thank you Kevin for leading us in worship. We appreciate so much your help in worshipping our great God this morning.

I now invite you to prepare for our reading of God's Word from **Titus 1:10-2:1**. If you do not have a Bible with you today, our ushers are coming now to give you a Bible. Please catch their attention as they pass by and it would be our joy to give you a Bible. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

Last week we learned about the character of Biblical leaders, observing that spiritual leaders lead with character in their families, their personal lives, and in their theology. Today we turn our focus on **Titus 1:10-2:1**. You can find this text on page **998** of the Bibles we've handed out. But in this text, we observe why the theological character of a spiritual leader is so important.

Because there are false teachers in this world. Not every person who claims to be a Christian truly speaks for Christ. And those believers who are spiritually mature are called to exercise discernment – distinguishing good from evil for the greater joy and protection of the body.

So as we stand in honor of the reading of God's Word, please listen carefully as I read God's Word from Titus 1:10 in the ESV translation:

*For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. 11 They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. 12 One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14 not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. 15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. 2:1 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.*

**This is the word of our Lord. You may be seated.**

**Let's Pray.**

I firmly believe that the church of Jesus Christ should be known more by what we are for, than what we are

against. There are far too many churches in our country today who have earned a reputation of being fighters, bigots, and overall "negative nellies." It's a great tragedy when the church of Jesus Christ becomes known as the place where you only hear "what you can't do."

For in fact, Christ's church has the greatest message of love and hope that the world has ever heard! Our gospel is one of love and peace! And our hope is not dependent on this life – but in the eternal life which is to come!

However this morning Titus 1 calls us to focus on the dangers of false teachers, and their wrong teaching. It's in the text, and it's important for us to discuss together. So then... when the Scriptures call the church to give warning, or to sound alarms, or to speak out against that which is wrong – how then should we proceed?

Here's here's 6 quick pointers for how to honor Christ when speaking out against what is wrong around you:



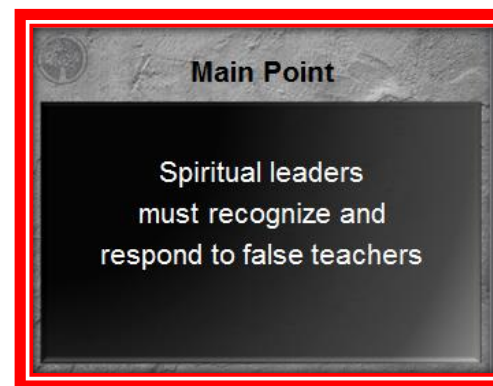
1. **Humility.** Remember, your greatest problems are always internal to you, not external. Pride and self-righteousness will do your own soul more harm than any sins of others anytime. If it wasn't for God's grace in our own lives, we would all still be deceived ourselves. So we must speak with humility.
2. **Prayer.** We don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but spiritual principalities and powers. We don't trust our own rhetoric or influence to change people – we trust in the same Spirit of God who raised our own lives from the dead and gave us hope again. So as we stand firmly against what is wrong, we dependently pray.
3. **Authority.** Our authority is God's Word – not personal preference. Not our tradition. Not our culture. God's character is the definition of righteousness – and so God alone gets to define what is right and wrong. No human has the power to define right from wrong, except as it relates to what God has revealed about Himself and His ways in His word.
4. **Love.** Love doesn't let friends go to hell on our watch. Love is the aim of our instruction, and love is the aim of all Christ-honoring warning, rebuke, and admonition. It is our love for the souls of men who are being held in the deceptive cords of Satan's sins that compel us to urge them to repent and come to the powerful freedom of God's rescuing grace.
5. **Clarity.** And so because we are humble, prayerful, loving, and living by the authority of God ... we are able to speak out against what is wrong around us

with bold clarity. We address the problem head-on. There is no love in skirting the issue, or trying to choose your battles. When you fear God more than you fear people – you're able to be crystal clear in what you are speaking out against.

6. **And finally, the Gospel.** When the church speaks out against the sins of our time, we posture our rebuke within an invitation for salvation and transformation. God's children are ambassadors and ministers of reconciliation. The church stands firmly against sin...so that we might herald hope!

So may our hearts be filled with humility, prayer and divine authority for assessing right and wrong. And may we always speak out against sin in love, clarity, and with a strong offer of hope through faith in Christ's gospel!

The main point of our message today from Titus 1:10-2:1 is: **Spiritual leaders must recognize and respond to false teachers.**



Now you might ask ... pastor is this really worth spending an entire sermon on false teaching? Wouldn't our time be better spent focusing on the true Gospel ...and then we'd be able to recognize the counterfeits if and when they ever show up?

Church - We must humbly acknowledge the sober reality of false churches and false teachers all around us. Any church that worships a false god is a false church.<sup>1</sup> And Galatians makes it clear that churches that worship the true God in false ways are also false churches.<sup>2</sup> A person's profession of faith in Christ and their good intentions to help people are not alone sufficient grounds of biblical orthodoxy.

I remember quite the bizarre conversation with a first-time guest at church one morning several years ago. I met the newcomer in the church foyer prior to the service, and warmly welcomed them, introduced myself, and asked if they had any questions about the church that I might be able to answer for them. They said, actually yes, they did have one question. Their family had told them they should NOT come to our church since they said we would be really nice to them at the beginning, but then once we had hooked them and pulled them in, we would make them eat raw chicken. So this lady looked at me dead serious, and asked..."so when will I have to eat raw chicken?"

At first I laughed...and then I realized she wasn't joking. My mind was racing... I had no category for what I was

hearing. I mean, I had been to a couple of church potlucks over the years where I wondered about the chicken... but ... what?

Thankfully I was able to inform that family – that I didn't know what kind of church she was talking about, but we weren't that kind of church. We were just born-again by God's Spirit and in love with Christ – and focused on helping people find grace to help with their sins and suffering through the finished work of Jesus Christ! No chicken involved here!

But church - You see – here's the sad reality. There are false churches like that around...a few here even in our county. And certainly...Facebook and TBN are willing to bring such heresy right into our homes anytime we open the door to them.

So this morning then...let's proceed with the right attitudes. But let's roll up our sleeves. For spiritual leaders must recognize and respond to false teachers. God has commanded it so.

First then, the Scriptures call us all to **Recognize false teachers**

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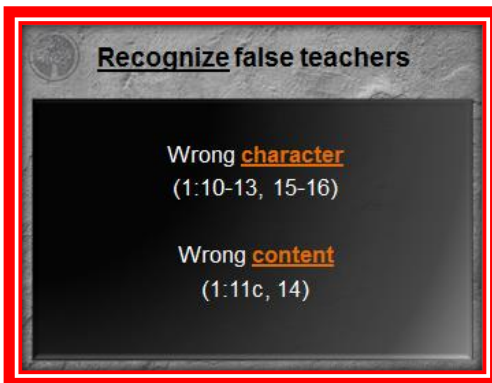
<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 10:20

<sup>2</sup> Gal 1:6-9; Rev 2:9, 3:9



In verse 9, Paul told Titus to appoint men as spiritual leaders *who hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also be able to rebuke those who contradict it.*

Now in verse 10, he goes on to explain these false teachers. Spiritual maturity is able to discern the wrong character and the wrong content of false teaching.



And in order to recognize false teachers, we likewise must consider the character of the teachers, and the content of what they are teaching.

Let's start by making some observations about the wrong character of false teachers.

As you look through verses 10-16 this morning, what do you observe about the character of these mistaken spiritual gurus?

Notice verse 10 right out of the gate –

*For there are many who are insubordinate, [that means rebellious – they are unwilling to be subject to God and His Law]*



In other words, these wolves in sheep's clothing are operating under the wrong authority. They are not submitted to God's Word...but to popular opinion. Whatever sells must be true.

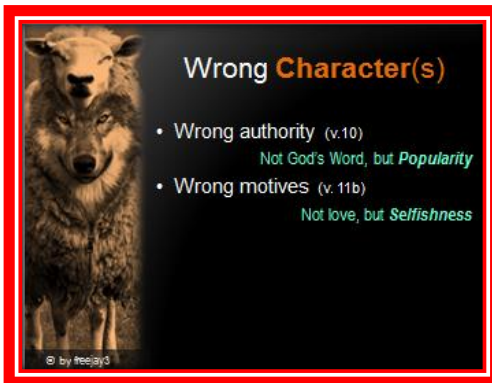
But they are ...

*empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.*

These teachers in Crete are former Jews – the circumcision party refers to the orthodox Jews who believed you had to be circumcised to be saved – but now these former Jews have claimed Christ – but what they are teaching is nothing more than “hot air.” Impressive sounding words that merely lead men’s minds astray.

In the middle of verse 11, we uncover the motive for their wrong teaching...

*Teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.*



These false teachers are motivated not by love for God or for others, but ultimately by selfishness. By greed. By what will work out for their own best interest.

In verse 12 Paul quotes a well-known Cretan prophet named Epimenides (ca. 600 b.c.) [Epi-men-a-dease] to

prove his point about the carnal and worldly character of these false teachers. Their whole system of lies was designed to serve their own lazy, and animalistic passions.

All such self-concern is ultimately an overflow of an unbelieving heart... for consider verse 15



*...to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.*

How are the false teachers described here? The perfect tense is used here to emphasize that false teachers are continuing in a state of being defiled and unbelieving.

Their minds and consciences are defiled because they have not believed in Christ, and thus they haven't received the cleansing from sin that only Christ can provide! Contrary to the teaching of false teachers – purity is not found in some religious exercise or outward ritual.

And so verse 16 gives the final word on their character –



Though *they profess to know God, ... they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.*

A sad picture for sure. These are those who claim to be Christians. These are authors whose books sell in *Christian* book stores. These are personalities found on *Christian* airwaves. But though man looks at the outward appearance, God always looks on the heart doesn't He?<sup>3</sup> And God's judgment says they are,

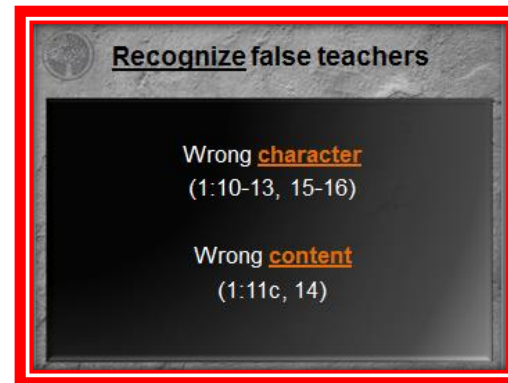
*Detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.*

In brief the sincerity of their profession of faith is irrelevant – the way they live gives ample proof that they do not know God. In fact such hypocrisy is a detestable abomination to God. Anyone who lives with the wrong authority, wrong motives, wrong heart, and wrong works

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam 16:7

is disqualified to speak on behalf of God. These wrong characters are false teachers.

So recognize false teachers – by their character – not by what they say they believe, but by how they live and minister. You can recognize false teachers by their wrong character, but also by their wrong content.



False teaching within Christ's church commonly falls into one of two primary categories, and verse 14 illustrates both of them for us. Notice what the false teachers were teaching in Crete,

*Devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.*

Let's unpack each of these errors for a moment this morning.



Myths here refers to legends that are contrary to the truth. This could refer to the “higher knowledge” or fanciful stories that only certain spiritually elite have access to.



In Paul’s similar warning to Timothy regarding the false teaching creeping into the Ephesian church, he refers there to

*Myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.*

But this kind of esoteric spirituality is nothing other than



Rejecting the certainty of God’s Biblical revelation. Church – there is an epidemic of biblical illiteracy in God’s church today. People are far to quick to abandon the certainty of God’s revealed word for some mystical experience, or supernatural story, or higher knowledge from some popular dr. so and so somewhere that starts their presentation on the radio or tv by saying, “I’m no theologian, but...” and then goes on to give advice and counsel that is actually contrary to God’s revealed Word.

Loved ones – this brand of false teaching minimizes our own sinfulness.

Wrong Content(s) (v.14)	
Myths & Speculations	Commandments of Men
i.e. 1 Tim 1:4...nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. Rejecting the Certainty of God's Biblical Revelation Minimizing my sinfulness	

Spiritual teaching that offers help and hope apart from faith in Jesus Christ alone fails to account for the fact that my own intellect is depraved by sin. I'm only pretending...

Wrong Content(s) (v.14)	
Myths & Speculations	Commandments of Men
i.e. 1 Tim 1:4...nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. Rejecting the Certainty of God's Biblical Revelation Minimizing my sinfulness Pretending	

...if I think that mystic words and experiences will have any spiritual benefit for my soul after this life.

But the other brand of false teaching is all about following the rules set up by men. Rules like we see in **1 Timothy 4:3** where,

Wrong Content(s) (v.14)	
Myths & Speculations	Commandments of Men
i.e. 1 Tim 1:4...nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. Rejecting the Certainty of God's Biblical Revelation Minimizing my sinfulness Pretending	i.e. 1 Tim 4:3...who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

The false teachers were,

*Forbidding marriage and requiring abstinence from foods that God had created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

This kind of false teaching seeks...

Wrong Content(s) (v.14)	
Myths & Speculations	Commandments of Men
i.e. 1 Tim 1:4...nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. Rejecting the Certainty of God's Biblical Revelation Minimizing my sinfulness Pretending	i.e. 1 Tim 4:3...who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. Seeking Purity through External Religion

...purity through external religion. We can be pure if we just keep the right laws. Play the Pharisee. Of course

this doctrine is fatally flawed, for it minimizes God's holiness.

Wrong Content(s) (v.14)	
Myths & Speculations	Commandments of Men
I.e. 1 Tim 1:4...nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.	I.e. 1 Tim 4:3...who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
Rejecting the Certainty of God's Biblical Revelation	Seeking Purity through External Religion
Minimizing my sinfulness	Minimizing God's holiness
Pretending	

Church – true purity is internal first, before it's ever external. That's the point of verse 15 in our passage...

*To the [internally] pure, all things are [externally] pure...*

Biblical purity is loving Jesus Christ more than you love and value anything else. So to think that someone who can become pure because of what they wear, or where they go, or what they do...fails to recognize just how holy and perfect our God is. This kind of false teaching is all about *Performing*.

Wrong Content(s) (v.14)	
Myths & Speculations	Commandments of Men
I.e. 1 Tim 1:4...nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.	I.e. 1 Tim 4:3...who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
Rejecting the Certainty of God's Biblical Revelation	Seeking Purity through External Religion
Minimizing my sinfulness	Minimizing God's holiness
Pretending	Performing

So that's the wrong content of false teaching. In fact, I don't know of any false teaching that is threatening the church today that isn't somehow an expression of one of these two categories.

Satan doesn't have new gimmicks – he's the same liar today as he was in the garden of Eden. He's trying to get believers to shift their hope from the Gospel by pretending that they are not as sinful as they truly are...or by seeking to work their way into God's graces through their own religious performance.

Now let's get practical for where we live today for a moment. What false teaching do we need to be aware of for our church this year here in central IL?

Well... it's an election year, and that means we must beware of some unique dangers for the church this year right? Because there's lots of false teaching that would seek to derail believers into pretending that our salvation can be found through **nationalistic reform**. Or that righteousness is communicated by voting for a particular

candidate. But church – praise God our Gospel message is one that is truly trustworthy – a Gospel that truly does transform brokenness and make us new forever! Jesus Christ is the only hope for our nation, and Jesus Christ is the only hope for our souls. Let's not become distracted in an election year from what truly matters most for all of our lost loved ones!

What about the false teaching of the prosperity gospel and the charismatic movement? It's surprising to me how popular this wrong teaching seems to be even locally. But loved ones – the Gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to redeem our suffering for good and perfecting purposes.

Any teaching that tries to remove suffering and the problem of evil from our lives is pretending that we are indeed better than we really are. Just because you call your proud demands to a holy God “prayers of faith” doesn't mean that you can achieve purity through your religious works. I'm very concerned about the biblical illiteracy in the church that would allow millionaires in thousand-dollar suits to fleece the poor with their urgings to “sow your seed money upon the waters.” Church – do not be deceived. God does not want you to be wealthy, healthy, and at ease. We are not home yet. Our best life is not now. Christ is enough for us in our suffering, and in our poverty. We must not be fooled into thinking that somehow we deserve a better life on this earth than Jesus Christ Himself.

We could highlight many other false doctrines this morning. Materialism. Consumerism. A church which

has become infatuated with being relevant – meaning that it lusts after the respect of the world. And then there's the entire matter of the so-called Christian Homosexual Agenda...which is nothing more than God's judgment upon the church<sup>4</sup> as the latest expression of **2 Tim 3**, where

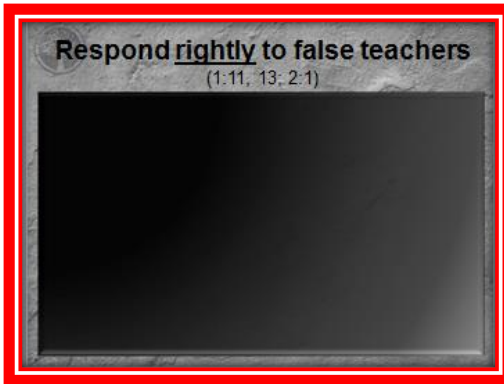
*in the last days people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.*

The winds of false doctrine are all around us, aren't they church? And if you're looking for it, it's quite easy to recognize the character and content of false teaching.

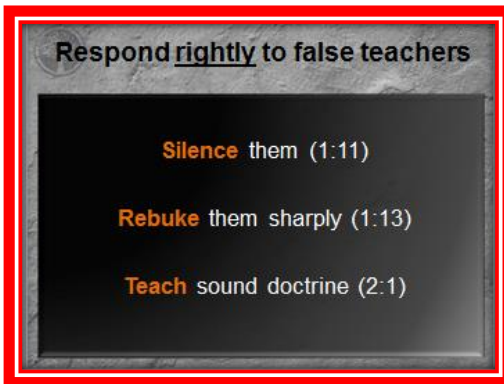
So what should we do? Well our passage this morning teaches us that we must **Respond rightly to false teachers (1:11, 13; 2:1)**

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<sup>4</sup> Rom 1:24-28ff



Spiritual leaders are to be examples of all spiritually mature believers as we together are commanded to respond to false teachers with three strong commands:



In verse 11, Paul tells Titus that the false teachers are upsetting whole families – literally the word there is whole households. And I think his point here is not so much about the nuclear family unit, as much as it is all these little house churches – these little life groups are being ruined by false teachers. The young church is very vulnerable to such attack without established spiritual

leaders in place... so these false teachers must be silenced.

Here's the point – **spiritual leaders do whatever they can to prevent false teachers from spreading their teaching in the body.** If a resource is flawed, we throw it away. If a teacher is wrong, we rebuke them strongly – as it says in verse 13. All for the purpose that they might be corrected and restored to soundness in the faith.

This of course is not popular, but it is so important for the spiritual health of a local church. You say, well would you ever tell someone they are not welcome in the church anymore because of what they are teaching?

Look over at Titus chapter 3, verses 9-11,

*But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. <sup>10</sup> As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, <sup>11</sup> knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.*

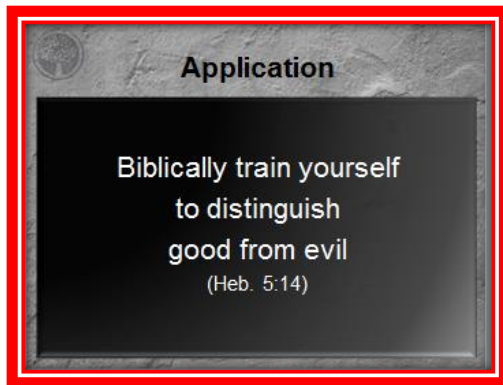
You can't manage false teaching any more than you can manage indwelling sin. It must be radically amputated from our lives, if we are to be free from its corrupting ruin.

So silence false teachers in the church. Rebuke them sharply. And make sure that everything you are teaching is in line with sound doctrine. Don't shift your hope from the gospel in license or legalism. Don't let your teaching help people pretend or perform. Teach Jesus Christ and

Him crucified, resurrected, and glorified! This is how God's church must respond rightly to false teachers.

So what are you going to walk away with this morning?  
Can I suggest a primary takeaway for you?

**Church - Biblically train yourself to distinguish good from evil (Heb. 5:14).**



Hebrews 5 says,

*for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

Are you growing in spiritual discernment? Are you mature enough spiritually to recognize false teaching when you are exposed to it? Do you have your senses trained by constant feeding in God's word so you can distinguish good from evil?

Loved ones – all that glitters is not gold, and everyone who claims to be a Christian is not born again.

I've listed some recommended resources on the back of your sermon notes page this morning...and I'd highly commend these for your prayerful study. The websites listed have a wealth of helpful studies available to strengthen your love in this area of biblical discernment.

Because here's the good news this morning! God loves us so much He doesn't leave us without wisdom and knowledge while we walk among wolves. His Spirit is ready and willing to guide us into His Word – helping us grow more and more in spiritual maturity so that our faith would be built up in the word of His grace.

And where sin has abounded...grace abounds all the more! Believe in Jesus Christ this morning – He alone is able to rescue you from indwelling sin. He alone is able to help you persevere through the sufferings of this present age. He alone is worthy of your worship and praise!



May God give our church more spiritual leaders who don't just lead with character, but who are willing to humbly lead us all with discernment for God's greater glory and joy!

Next week we move into chapter 2 where we will learn about the good works that fittingly adorn the good gospel of God.

Let's pray. **Closing prayer.**

Closing Song

### **Benediction**

*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, <sup>25</sup> to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*  
*Jude 24*