

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## How to Silence False Teachers

By Andy Sochor

When Paul wrote to Titus about the qualifications for elders, one of the requirements for these men was that they have an ability to deal with false teachers.

*“Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain”* (Titus 1:9-11).

Paul said these false teachers *“must be silenced.”* But how would this be done? No one expects the elders of a local church to kidnap a false teacher, put duct tape over his mouth, tie him up, and then lock him in a closet to prevent him from spreading his error. Since they cannot use physical force to silence false teachers, how are they to do it?

The way to silence false teachers is by taking away their audience. The way to take away their audience is by making it so that brethren will not listen to them or be persuaded by them. When this happens, the false teacher’s efforts will be futile and he will have been, for all intents and purposes, silenced. What needs to be done in order to accomplish this?

**Make sure they are false teachers** – This should go without saying, but unfortunately it needs to be said. We must not treat someone or label someone as a false teacher if they are not teaching what is false. Too often, rumors and misinformation are spread about others in order to portray them as not being sound in the faith. Even the apostle Paul had to deal with misrepresentation. He told the Romans that it was *“slanderosly reported”* and *“some claim that we say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come’”* (Rom. 3:8). Not only does the New Testament condemn such slander (Rom. 1:30; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8), it also goes against the “golden rule” as taught by Jesus: *“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you”* (Matt. 7:12). We would not want others to misrepresent us in order to portray us as false teachers; therefore, we must not do that to others. If we are going to silence false teachers, we must first have some type of proof or documentation of the error they teach.

**Help brethren clearly understand the truth** – In order to understand the difference between *“the spirit of truth and the spirit of error”* (1 Jn. 4:6), brethren need to know what the truth is. It does not do much good for a false teacher to be identified if one does not first understand the truth. The word of Christ is the source of our faith (Rom. 10:17) and the foundation upon which our lives must be built (Matt. 7:24-25). Therefore, we must *“declare...the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27, NKJV). We must *“preach the word...in season and out of season”* (2 Timothy 4:2). Elders are to *“feed the flock”* (1 Pet. 5:2, KJV), which means they are to help them come to a proper understanding of the truth of God’s word.

**Dismantle their arguments so that no one will follow them** – By pointing out the truth, brethren can know by implication what is false. However, false teachers do not try to persuade brethren to reject the Bible in order to follow their teaching; instead, they *“distort the gospel”* (Gal. 1:7; cf. 2 Pet. 3:16) by making arguments to convince others that the Scriptures actually support their error. In standing up for the faith, Paul said we are to *“demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God”* (2 Cor. 10:5, NIV). It is not enough to simply label a particular doctrine as *“false,”* we need to be able to show from the Scriptures why it is false.

**Identify the false teachers so that brethren will not be unsuspecting** – Paul warned the brethren in Rome that false teachers *“deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting”* (Rom. 16:18). When certain individuals are known to be spreading error and have the potential of exerting some influence over the brethren, it is often helpful to identify

them so that brethren are not caught off guard. This is why in the New Testament, certain individuals were mentioned by name (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; 3 Jn. 9-10) so the brethren would be aware of their destructive influence and not let their guard down.

**Equip the brethren to refute the false teachers themselves** – It is certainly good for elders to “*be on guard...for all the flock*” because of the “*savage wolves [who] will come in...not sparing the flock*” (Acts 20:28-29). Elders are to “*refute those who contradict*” in order to protect those who could have their faith upset by their error. Those who oversee the congregation have an important role in this. However, the congregation will be much safer from the effects of false teaching if the brethren can be equipped to refute the false teachers themselves. The relationship between the elders and the congregation is like that of shepherds and sheep (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Sheep need the protection of their shepherd because they are defenseless against predators. How much easier would the shepherds’ job be and how much safer the flock would be if the sheep were also able to defend themselves against attacks. This is what happens when brethren are able to refute false teachers themselves, and it is something that we should all be striving to be able to do (Col. 2:7-8; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2).

By doing these things, elders can effectively silence false teachers because they will have taken away their audience and, therefore, their ability to influence others.

However, it is also important to note that this is not just for elders. All Christians need to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the word of God so that they can also “*exhort in sound doctrine and...refute those who contradict*” (Titus 1:9). If false teachers are elders, they must still be silenced (Acts 20:30; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). If there are no elders in a local church, false teachers are not to have free course (2 Jn. 10-11). Therefore, all of us need to learn how to silence false teachers so as to limit or eliminate the influence they could have upon those around us. – *Plain Bible Teaching*, July 17, 2019. ■

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### **“In Modest Apparel”**

By Greg Gwin

**“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety...”** (1 Tim. 2:9). In studying this verse, and considering its truth as it applies to daily living, we encourage you to look at the meaning of these key words:

**ADORN:** “to put in order, arrange, make ready...this orderliness must not extend merely to the relationship of the various articles of wearing apparel to one another, but also to the relationship of that apparel to her Christian character and testimony. In other words, the apparel must be congruous with, fitting to, and consistent with what she is, a child of God” (*Wuest*).

**MODEST:** “orderly, well arranged, decent” (*Vine*).

**SHAMEFACEDNESS:** “a sense of shame” (*Vine*). “respectful timidity...as the feeling of an unfortunate (one) in the presence of those from whom he seeks aid, (or) of a younger toward an older...a blend of modesty and humility” (*Wuest*).

**SOBRIETY:** “it is that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires, which would hinder the temptation to these from arising...” (*Trench*). With these definitions understood, we wonder how some Christians can attempt to justify swimming suits and short shorts (and these on women or men), split skirts, low cut dresses, etc. If such are right, then they are always right, regardless if one be an elder, deacon, preacher, or the wife or child of one of these. If they are right, then they are always right, whether one is in Florida or Maine, among close friends or total strangers. Consistency demands that these conclusions follow. Are any of us willing to accept such consequences? Decisions about the clothes we wear must be made in view of judgment and eternity. Think! – *Collegevue church of Christ Bulletin*, April 5, 2015. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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