

Titus 1:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

Analysis

This witness is true—Paul affirms Epimenides's assessment. The Cretan stereotype had sufficient accuracy to be pastorally useful. **Wherefore rebuke them sharply** (ἐλεγχε αὐτοὺς ἀποτόμως, elegche autous apotomōs)—ἀποτόμως means "abruptly/severely/curtly," not gently. The adverb suggests cutting decisiveness, not gradually coaxing. Particular sins require particular severity; Cretan cultural patterns of deception demanded sharp confrontation.

That they may be sound in the faith (ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει, hina hygiainōsin en tē pistei)—the goal of severe rebuke is health (ὑγιαίνω, hygiaino, to be healthy, root of "hygiene"). Paul repeatedly uses medical metaphors: ὑγιαίνω (sound/healthy) versus diseased doctrine. Sharp rebuke isn't punishment but surgery—painful but curative. The patient's health, not comfort, determines treatment.

Historical Context

Modern therapeutic culture views confrontation as harmful, preferring affirmation and non-judgmentalism. But Paul's pastoral care prioritizes spiritual health over emotional comfort. In honor-shame cultures like Crete's, direct rebuke communicated urgency and care, while indirect hints showed indifference or cowardice.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Do you practice biblical rebuke when necessary, or does fear of conflict and desire to be liked silence you?
2. How do you balance sharp rebuke with the goal of restoration versus vindictive punishment or self-righteous condemnation?
3. What sins in your life require "sharp rebuke" from mature believers you've given permission to speak truth?

Interlinear Text

ἡ μαρτυρία αὕτη ἐστὶν ἀληθής δι' ἣν αἰτίαν
G3588 witness This is true Wherefore G3739 G156
G3141 G3778 G2076 G227 G1223

ἐλεγχε αὐτοὺς ἀποτόμως ἵνα ὑγιαίνωσιν ἐν τῇ
rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in G3588
G1651 G846 G664 G2443 G5198 G1722

πίστει
the faith
G4102

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 5:20 (Parallel theme): Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

Titus 2:2 (Faith): That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

2 Corinthians 13:10 (Parallel theme): Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

Titus 2:15 (Parallel theme): These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

1 Timothy 4:6 (Faith): If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

2 Timothy 4:2 (Parallel theme): Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Psalms 119:80 (Parallel theme): Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

Psalms 141:5 (Parallel theme): Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

Proverbs 27:5 (Parallel theme): Open rebuke is better than secret love.