

Introduction to the Book of Titus

Titus, along with 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, is one of the epistles written by the Apostle Paul which are often referred to as the “Pastoral Letters.” Rather than written to a church, Paul wrote these three letters to two young men whom he had sent to care for two specific churches. Titus and Timothy were Paul’s delegates, sent with his apostolic authority to combat false teaching and establish solid, stable leadership.

Titus was an uncircumcised Greek believer (Galatians 2:3) and a co-worker of Paul's. Paul considered the young Titus his spiritual son (Titus 1:4). He served with Paul in ministry as his representative in Corinth and he journeyed with Paul once to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-5). Paul left him on the island of Crete to minister to the churches in multiple cities there.

Titus was written between Paul’s first and second Roman imprisonments, probably around 64 AD. Scholars aren’t sure where Paul was when he wrote Titus.

Paul and Titus had brought the Gospel to Crete and established several churches on the island. The believers were still spiritually immature and the churches needed solid leadership to take them into the future. Paul wrote to help Titus correct doctrine in the church and to establish leadership in the church on Crete (Titus 1:5).

Let's dig in!

DEAR TITUS...

Read Titus 1:1-4.

Paul’s letter to Titus begins with a typical, but expanded, ancient greeting. He identified himself and to whom he was writing. Paul also included a prayer that Titus would experience the grace and peace of God.

According to verse 1, why did God make Paul His servant and call him as an apostle and minister of the Gospel?

What do you learn about eternal life in verses 2-3?

According to verse 4, what type of relationship did Paul have with Titus. What might this imply about how Titus came to know Jesus?

God's promise of eternal life is sure and certain because it is based on His character. He doesn't lie. He is faithful! We can trust God to keep His promises.

Personal Reflection: Do you feel secure in your salvation? Why or why not?

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS

Read TITUS 1:5-9.

Leading God's people is a great responsibility. God is protective of His "sheep" and looks for "shepherds" who will care for His people and be godly examples. Paul writes to help Titus be a leader of leaders. It seems the churches on Crete did not yet have any formal leadership and so Paul gave this task to Titus. Note: "Elders" and "overseers" seem to be used interchangeably here for the same leadership body.

What two reasons does Paul give for leaving Titus on Crete? (See verse 5)

What qualifications did Paul give for elders (aka Overseers)?

Why did the elders need to have a firm foundation in God's truth?

FALSE TEACHING

Read TITUS 1:10-16.

Apparently, false teachers had infiltrated the churches of Crete. Especially "those of the circumcision party," according to Paul in verse 10. These would have been Jews who claimed to be Christians but were teaching that Gentiles had to follow some of the Jewish law in order to be saved. (We see in this passage they were particularly claiming that they had to be circumcised and follow specific dietary laws.)

What were some of the consequences of this false teaching?

The elders would need to be able to rebuke these false teachers and protect God's true doctrine in the church. Paul also directed Titus to take on this responsibility as well. (See verse 13.)

How did Paul describe the character of these false teachers?

Verse 15 probably refers to the false teachers pushing dietary laws that God specifically reversed in the Gospels (Jesus and Peter). According to this verse, what is the underlying basis for the false teachers pushing these laws?

Although we can't truly know anyone's heart in regard to their salvation, there are signs to watch for. According to verse 16, what is one way we can validate someone's claim that they know Jesus?

Personal Reflection: We don't have to be a preacher or elder to also be responsible for protecting the truth of God's Word. What are some ways you can hold firm to His truth and to help others do the same?

PRACTICAL DOCTRINE

Read TITUS 2:1-10.

"Doctrine" isn't just for theory or knowledge. Our doctrine must inform the way we live. What we believe will shape our daily lives, behavior, and relationships. That's why it's vital we believe the right things about God and a life of faith. This chapter is packed tight with practical application for believers' lives today! Rather than honing in on each word, we will try to take a wider view and dig out the overarching principles.

What command did Paul give Titus in verse 1?

Paul didn't tell Titus to simply "teach sound doctrine." The knowledge of God's will and ways isn't the end goal for believers. What are we to do with the knowledge?

What vitally important aspect of the community of faith do we see in verses 2-8?

The characteristic of "self-control" is repeated throughout today's text. Even though the word isn't used in the directives for "older women," the concept is there in "not slaves to much wine." Why do all Christians need to practice self-control? What areas of our lives does it apply to? What are the consequences when we don't practice self-control?

The world watches the way believers live. What important principle do we see in both 5b and 8b?

Why must church leaders, teachers, mentors - anyone who has influence over others - be careful to live godly lives?

Christ willingly gave His life on the cross not merely to redeem us from the consequences of sin, but also to break the hold of sin on our lives today. This glorious truth should motivate believers to live holy lives and be "zealous for good works." (See verses 11-14.) Our ministers and church leaders must teach and encourage us to holiness (vs 15). The life of a Christian – our speech, behavior, works, and attitudes – will either give the world reason to revile God and His Word or will draw others to Jesus.

Personal Reflection: Does your life give the world reason to revile God or point them to Jesus? How much do you purposefully pursue holiness in your own life? Ask God to show you any area of your life, actions, attitudes that need to be purified.

BECAUSE HE SAVED US

Read TITUS 3:1-11.

Christians are not just saved *from* spiritual death and separation from God. We are also saved *to* a life of living for God and bringing Him glory. I love Paul's focus in this letter on the practical application of God's Word to our lives. God's Word is not for mere head knowledge, but it should permeate our thinking, inform our attitudes, shape our behavior, and impact every relationship.

What principles for relationships do we see in verses 1-2?

What categories of relationships do we see?

According to verse 3, why should we also be gracious, gentle, and courteous to unbelievers?

Verses 4-7 describe God's "process" of salvation in our lives. When we were still disobedient, slaves to sin, He came to us and extended goodness and love. He saved us because He is merciful, not because we have done anything to deserve it. Our salvation was made possible by Jesus' sacrifice and applied to our lives by the washing, regeneration, and spiritual renewal of the Holy Spirit. Verses 5-7 beautifully describes how God give us new spiritual life through His Spirit. We are born again in Christ!

How should reflecting on the nature of our salvation impact the way we interact with those in the world who don't know Jesus?

Good works do not save us. But role do they have in our lives as believers?

According to verses 9-10 what are some of the consequences of the false teaching that has been plaguing the churches on Crete?

What does Paul instruct Titus to do about the individuals who are causing the trouble?

Personal Reflection: In light of Paul's directive to treat non-Christians with gentleness, grace, and courtesy, is there anything in your own life that needs adjustment? Whether in personal interactions with people or on social media?

FINAL WORDS

I love hearing the practical details of life and ministry from Paul recorded in verses 12-14. Reading them highlights the "real man" and "real life" behind the writings. We don't know anything about Artemas, but we know Tychicus was a regular fellow worker and traveler with Paul. (See Acts 20:4, Ephesians 6:21-22, Colossians 4:7-8 and 2 Timothy 4:2.) Paul intended to send either Artemas or Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus so that Titus could join Paul in Nicopolis (in Greece). Zenas and Apollos may have been the ones who brought Paul's letter to Titus on Crete. Now Paul asks Titus to provide for their return journey.

Personal Reflection: What "aha" moments have you had from the book of Titus? Do you have any doctrine that needs to be adjusted? In what areas do you need to live out what you believe?