

Titus

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Author The Apostle Paul.

Written to Titus, one of Paul's trusted "partners and coworkers" (2 Corinthians 8:23) and his *true son in our common faith* (Titus 1:4). Paul took Titus with him to Jerusalem as a 'test case' when he defended his 'gospel to the Gentiles' before the Church leaders. The upshot of this was that Titus did not need to be circumcised and take on the cultural practices of Judaism – an important issue for the early church. Paul also sent Titus on a number of difficult missions to help churches when they were having relationship troubles. (2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:5-16; 8:1-24; 2 Timothy 4:9-18). Paul obviously had a very high regard for Titus and his leadership skills because he left Titus in Crete to lead the new churches that were springing up on the island. (Titus 1:5).

Date Possibly written somewhere in Macedonia after Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28). He had not yet reached Nicopolis on the west coast of Greece. (Titus 3:12). This dates the letter at around AD 64, just before Paul wrote 2 Timothy.

Type Personal letter from Paul to Titus.

Themes Strong Christian leadership. Sound doctrine. Doing good to all.

Purpose Paul had visited Crete with Titus and had left him there to lead the small church. (Titus 1:5). Crete may have been a training centre for Roman soldiers so there were strong pagan influences on the island, and a number of false teachings were starting to affect the believers. These included asceticism, speculative philosophies, early ideas of Gnosticism and the influence of Judaizers.

The church in Crete needed strong Christian leadership, *sound doctrine* and healthy teaching. Titus was told to appoint elders who could refute the wrong teaching and who would provide a good example to the believers of *what is good* and honouring to the Lord. This would include recognizing God's saving grace in Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the future coming of the Lord Jesus (2:11-13; 3:4-7). Everyone in the church community - older men and women, young women, young men, and slaves – are to say "No" to *ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

Key verses

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.... In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned. 2:1,7.

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good. 2:11-14.



Outline

Greetings (1:1-4)

Paul greets Titus, his *true son in our common faith* and wishes him *grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour*. Paul is a *servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ*. The purpose of his apostleship (and of the letter to Titus) is that God's people might have *faith* and a *knowledge of the truth*. This is based on the *hope of eternal life promised before the beginning of time* by God who *brought his word to light*. Paul has been entrusted to preach this word by the command of God Himself.

Titus's ministry in Crete (1:5-9)

Paul had a mobile ministry and could not stay in one place for long. Elders were needed to lead the churches after he had left. (Acts 14:23). Titus was left behind in Crete to continue Paul's work and to *appoint elders in every town*. The Greek word for elder is *presbuteros*, meaning "an elderly mature man, capable of exercising sound judgment".

Elders had to demonstrate the following qualities (equivalent to the qualities listed in 1 Timothy 3:2-7):

Qualities of elders	
Titus 1:6-9	1 Timothy 3:2-7
Blameless	Above reproach
The husband of one wife	The husband of one wife
Children are believers and are not wild and disobedient	Manage his own family well, children obey him with proper respect
Not over-bearing, quick-tempered, given to drunkenness, violent, or pursuing dishonest gain	Not given to drunkenness, violent, quarrelsome, a lover of money
Hospitable, loves good, self-controlled, upright, holy disciplined	Temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, gentle
Hold firmly to the trustworthy message of the gospel	Not be a recent convert, have a good reputation with outsiders
Encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it	Able to teach

Dealing with false teaching (1:10-16)

The elders provided oversight of the churches and were responsible for teaching sound doctrine, helping the believers mature in their relationship with the Lord and equipping them to live for Jesus in a culture dominated by false teachings and opposition to the gospel.

There were many *rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers*, especially Judaizers (the *circumcision group* who taught that the Gentiles had to obey all the Jewish laws before they could become Christians). They needed to be *silenced* because they were *ruining whole households* by teaching falsehood for *dishonest gain*. As an example Paul quotes Epimenides, a poet who lived in Crete 600 years earlier who had said "*Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons*". They needed to be rebuked so that the Christians would be *sound in their faith, pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth*. Corrupt and unbelieving people find evil in anything, and to them *nothing is pure. Their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God but by their actions they deny Him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything but good*.

Strong words! Paul's passion for the believers is very evident. How necessary that they have leaders who will teach them what is right and who will be a Christ-like example to them.

We are in a similar situation today. We live in a culture where false teachings abound and where opposition to Christianity is very evident. We, too, need Christian leaders who can teach us the truth of God's word, and who model Christ-like behavior before us. We can then be light and salt in our world so people can see that God's way is the best way, and that Jesus Christ is their only way of salvation.

Sound doctrine (2:1-10)

Titus was to teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. This was for all types of people:

- Older men are to *be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and endurance.*
- Older women to *be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.* In turn, these women can train the younger women.
- Younger women are to *love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no-one will malign the word of God.*
- Younger men are to *be self-controlled.*
- Slaves are to *be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not talk back to them, but to show that they can be fully trusted.* In this way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

Titus himself was to be an example in word and life so that opponents would have nothing bad to say about the Christians.

These requirements must have been based on Paul's observations of how individual Christians from each group were behaving. They were very relevant for each group of people in their situation at that time. As such they were very culturally focused and may not be fully relevant for Christians today who live in a different culture. The underlying principles of respect, self-control, faithfulness, love, endurance, trustworthiness, goodness and submissiveness are Christian qualities that are relevant in any cultural situation.

God's grace (2:11-15)

Paul now explains why we must live in accordance with sound doctrine. It is because *the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.* It teaches us to live in a godly way as we *wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.* He *gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people who are His very own, who are eager to do what is good.*

This is the message that Titus was to teach. He was *to encourage and rebuke with all authority,* and not let anyone despise him.

God's chosen people

Titus 2:14 links with 1 Peter 2:9, 10 in describing God's people:

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:9,10.

Israel was chosen by God to be His special people with the purpose of bringing blessing to all nations.

Genesis 12:2,3. This was fulfilled when Jesus came as a Jew bringing the opportunity for all to be saved: all who call on the Lord, repent of their sins and accept Jesus as Saviour. Now God's *chosen people* consists of all those who have been saved and are in Christ Jesus. It doesn't matter whether someone is a *Jew or a Gentile, male or female, slave or free.* *We are all one in Christ Jesus.* Galatians 3:28. God's people are now called the Church - the great body of all redeemed people. What a privilege to be God's chosen people.

Doing what is good (3:1-8)

In this section, Paul tells Titus to remind Christians that it is our duty to *do whatever is good.* Doing good includes:

- Being subject to rulers and authorities. Also see Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17.
- Being obedient and always ready to do good.
- Not slandering anyone; being peaceable and considerate, and showing true humility to all.

Those who have trusted in God weren't always like this. Previously we were *foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures*. But God *in His kindness and love* saved us, not because of the righteous things we have done, but because of His mercy.

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

These verses in Titus 3:5-7 concisely and clearly define what God has done in saving us. They are a wonderful definition of what it means to be a Christian.

Those who have trusted in God should be careful to *devote themselves to doing what is good*. *These things are excellent and profitable for everyone*.

Conclusion (3:9-15)

We should avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law. These are unprofitable and useless and it is not worth wasting time with divisive people who promote them because they are *warped, sinful and self-condemned*.

Paul finishes the letter by sending greetings and telling Titus that he will send Artemas or Tychicus to him. He asks Titus to come to Nicopolis and encourages Titus to take care of Apollos and Zenas as they pass through Crete. He then re-emphasizes the main point of the letter: *Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives*.

Grace be with you all.

Discussion questions

1. Why did Paul write the letter to Titus? How does this reflect the kind of relationship that Paul might have had with Titus? What do you learn from this about older Christians mentoring younger Christians?
2. What is sound doctrine? Who defines what sound doctrine is or isn't? How can we judge whether what we believe is sound doctrine?
3. What are the qualities required by effective Church leaders? Are the lists of qualities in Titus and 1 Timothy relevant for Church leaders today? How could the qualities listed in these passages be influenced by the culture of the day? What special qualities do Church leaders today need to be effective in our anti-Christian culture? What should happen if Church leaders don't have these qualities, or if there are no-one available that has these qualities?
4. A key theme of Titus is "doing what is good". How do we identify whether something is "good", especially in these days where moral absolutes are routinely challenged. Make a list of things that would come under the category of "good" and justify why they are "good". Do you do these things all of the time? If not, why not?
5. Titus 3:5-7 gives a clear definition of what God has done in saving us. Explain each of the actions that God has done as listed in these verses, and explain how it works out in our Christian lives.
6. What have you learned from your study of the letter to Titus? How will you apply this in your life in the future?