

TITUS

Overview

The Epistle to Titus was written by the Apostle Paul to Titus in approximately 66 A.D (around the same time as the first letter to Timothy). Paul was an aging man at this point shortly before his final imprisonment. Titus was on Crete and was sent there by Paul to establish leadership within the churches. This letter, unlike the letters to Timothy, was all business.

The letter was written in a pattern of command, rationale, and charge. The first section on leadership is based on the false leaders deception. The next two sections, on right conduct, are based on the rationale of God's grace, mercy and its provisions.

Titus was a Greek non-Jewish convert to Christianity. Most likely, Titus, like Timothy, came to faith under Paul's teaching. Titus had traveled with Paul and Paul trusted Titus. Perhaps Paul chose Titus to be the one to reach Crete because he was once a Greek gentile and would better understand what was going on in the culture of the day.

Titus is mentioned thirteen times in the New Testament (2 Cor 2:13, 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18 (two times); Gal 2:1, 3; 2 Tim 4:10).

Titus was to preach the same gospel message Paul was preaching. He wasn't to change it or add to it; perhaps the methodology would be different in the deliverance, but the gospel was never to change. Paul was adamant in his letter to Titus that Titus must never waiver or compromise on sound doctrine. Nor should we.

The book of Titus is only three chapters long with forty-six verses in total.

Setting

A group from Crete had been in Jerusalem during the Passover at the birth of the Christian church (Pentecost). Acts 2:11 says, “(both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” Some may have taken their faith back to the island of Crete, but Paul mentions in Titus 1:5 that Paul was leaving Titus on the island to complete the work they had started there. The only other time Crete is mentioned in the New Testament is in Acts 27 when Paul was being transported to Rome via ship to face trial.

Scholars believe that Paul’s work in Crete began after the events in Acts 28 (his trial and subsequent two year’s worth of preaching in Rome) and before his final imprisonment.

Paul began the church in Crete without appointing leaders. This was generally what happened as he planted churches. In Crete, Paul gave Titus the responsibility to appoint the leaders and Paul outlined what the leadership needed to look like.

The culture in Crete was negatively influencing the young church. False teachers were present. Titus needed to get the church in order before the arrival of Artemas and Tychius. Titus needed to assign elders in each city. When this had been completed, Titus would meet up with Paul and move on.

Situation at Crete

According to Cretan mythology, the god Zeus was once a human who lived and died on the island of Crete but who had achieved godhood through the benefits he gave to humans. The power struggle between

Zeus, as a god, and the Good News was impacting the believers in Crete. Paul was sure to emphasize that God alone is God.

Based on the letters to Timothy and this letter to Titus, similar things were being faced within the church because of the culture in which it was residing. Both Ephesus and Crete faced similar problems with false teachers. However, the church in Ephesus was older while the church in Crete was new. Crete was socially less civilized than Ephesus.

There may not have been as wide of a pool to get long-term believers in place as elders. Additionally, many of the issues presented in the letters to Timothy are not present in the letter to Titus because the church was struggling to get off the ground. They were at a start-up level whereas the church in Ephesus was not. Paul needed Titus to address the immediate needs of establishing elders. Perhaps then after that was done, the additional issues could be addressed or would work themselves out as the others came in to build the church.

In the churches in Ephesus and Crete, the elders may have carried more of a teaching role because the false teachers had to be counteracted. This letter to Titus, as well as the letters to Timothy, were more concerned with ensuring that the Good News was faithfully transmitted rather than simply establishing a form of church government.

Titus 1:1

“This letter is from Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. I have been sent to proclaim faith to those God has chosen and to teach them to know the truth that shows them how to live godly lives.”

From the beginning of this letter, Paul establishes his authority so that no one could question whether this letter was actually written (or spoken to a scribe) by Paul.

Paul mentions he is a slave to God which means he was bound to God. “Paul” means small, little, humble was his Greek/Roman name. Being a slave to God refers to his humility...and wasn’t about him; it was all about and for Jesus.

Paul also mentions he is an apostle. “Apostle” is both a technical and general term in Scripture. **Technically**, it refers to the disciples who were witnesses to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Paul was not an apostle like these but became an apostle later in a different way. The **general** term “apostle” applies to all of us because we are “sent ones” as those who go on behalf of Jesus Christ. This speaks to our calling as and authority as missionaries of Jesus.

Paul then goes on to say that he has been sent to share the Good News with those whom God has chosen. Paul reiterates that his job is not to do the work of changing hearts; that was God’s job. His sole job was to be responsible for carrying the message. Not only was he to share the Good News, he was called to teach them the things that would help them live godly lives. The same applies to us today. God doesn’t just leave us with salvation and no plans for right living. God has established the Church for this purpose throughout the world. The establishment of these churches were critical for the future of all churches. Paul sensed the urgency.

Saving faith moves one to a full knowledge of the truth that results in a new life of godliness. What I believe will affect how I live, and how I live will demonstrate what I believe. These things are important to the believer to realize. Without knowing truth (God’s Word), we miss out on the instructions for right living. Pastors and teachers should be sure to speak and teach only truth, but individuals as well must know this truth.

Titus 1:2–3

“This truth gives them confidence that they have eternal life, which God—who does not lie—promised them before the world began. And now at just the right time he has revealed this message, which we announce to everyone. It is by the command of God our Savior that I have been entrusted with this work for him.”

Paul reminds Titus that as servants of the Lord, the truth not only guides our living but it gives us a confidence in knowing we are secure in the Lord. We know this confidence by two ways— God’s witness and God’s Word.

God’s witness to us proves that he does not lie. **“And he who is the Glory of Israel will not lie, nor will he change his mind, for he is not human that he should change his mind!” (1 Samuel 15:29)** and **“So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us” (Hebrews 6:18).**

On the contrary, Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44). The audience in Crete would have understood the context of liars because they were described as being “always liars” by Alexandria in the 200s BC (mentioned in Titus 1:12). Paul was reminding Titus that even though the culture was not trustworthy, God was trustworthy.

God’s plan of salvation is unchanging. It is the foundation of the gospel and the church. We have hope in eternal life because of God’s grace and integrity.

God’s Word had been known by preaching. This message had been entrusted to Paul through the commandment of God. God places his plan of salvation in human hands to disseminate. It is a high calling. We do not preach our word; we preach His word. Paul reminded himself this in

this letter, solidified his position, and reminded Titus to do the same and teach others to do the same.

Titus 1:4

“I am writing to Titus, my true son in the faith that we share. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior give you grace and peace.”

This verse introduces us to the person to whom Paul wrote the letter. The word “true” here authorizes Titus as Paul’s delegate. Paul referred to Titus in the same way he did Timothy—as a spiritual son. Paul continues to set the example for all to make disciples (to become spiritual fathers to those whom they are leading). It shows more than a brotherly love. It shows fatherly care.

Titus 1:5–9

In these verses, Paul discusses the leadership in Crete with Titus.

God believes leadership in the local church is so important that it is mentioned in detail four times in the New Testament (Acts 20:28–38, 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:5–9, and 1 Peter 5:1–4).

Paul outlines the requirements for an elder:

1. He must live a blameless life
2. He must be faithful to his wife
3. His children must be believers and not have a reputation for being wild or rebellious (goes back to what was said in 1 Timothy 3:5 that if a man can’t manage his own household, how can he manage God’s household).
4. Must not be arrogant or quick-tempered

5. Must not be a heavy drinker, violent or dishonest with money (in a culture wracked with ungodly living, these things would have set people apart as different)
6. Must be willing to be hospitable “lover of strangers” (hospitality during that time was an expression of love; not a source of entertainment)
7. Must love what is good
8. Live wisely and be just
9. Live a devout and disciplined life

Beyond the personal qualifications, Paul moves onto the ministerial and doctrinal qualifications. False teaching will lead to false living, and wrong belief will lead to a wrong life. There is no room for compromising the gospel.

The elders must strongly believe in the gospel because they were the ones initially responsible for teaching the community. Without their assurance and belief in what they were representing, they could not encourage or teach others nor could they refute the false teachers with any sense of credibility. “Wholesome teaching” or “sound teaching” occurs four times in the New Testament, two of which appear in the letter to Titus. It means “healthy teaching.” If there is healthy teaching, there can also be unhealthy teaching. Paul is clear to say that both exist but a godly elder cannot give in to unhealthy teaching and that starts in their core with what they believe.

The faithful elder is both a teacher and a defender, a preacher and a physician.

Titus 1:10–16

The Ministry of Confrontation

The Bible is filled with false teaching, lethargy, sickness, misdirection, and its danger on the people of God. Titus 1:10–16 is connected with verses 5–9 by the word “For.”

There were many not a few false teachers at Crete who had risen to some degree of prominence within the church at Crete. They were people who had personality, persuasiveness, and who had the ability to lure the immature believers away. Verse 10 says they were rebellious people, full of empty talk, and deception.” Rebellious speaks of their attitude. Empty talk addresses their actions. They did not want to be held accountable to anyone—a tell-tale sign of a false teacher. They were flashy but had no substance.

One of the most dangerous characteristic of a false teacher is that they are a deceiver of themselves and especially of others. Their personal ambition and theological agenda is shrouded in the cover of religious piety and prosperity.

These false teachers were leading whole families away by teaching a Jesus plus theology. They were doing it for money. They switched the gospel for their gain not caring whom it hurt and Paul was relentless in instructing Titus to call these false teachers out. The only way to do that was to confront them with the truth of the gospel. If the people could hear the true gospel, they would see that the gospel the false teachers were preaching was false. Many of these new believers in Crete may have only heard this false teaching and not the true gospel.

Once Paul was finished saying that the false teachers must be called out, he then went on to instruct Titus that the people who heard the false teaching must also be confronted. Only the pure in heart could hear the true gospel; everyone else had heard what was taught through impure hearts. They must stop listening to the false teachers and really believe what the gospel said.

The way Paul said to determine the pure from the impure was by the way they live. Paul said that the impure would deny Christ by the way they lived. They were people who were detestable, disobedient, worthless, and not doing anything good. Strong words but true. James said,

“What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don’t have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds. You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless?” (James 2:14–20).

The elders for certain should be people who were living godly lives and leading and encouraging well. Paul needed Titus to find these kind of men to flush out the false teachers that had popped up throughout Crete and establish a solid foundation for the church. Individuals were also responsible for discerning teaching. Once the true gospel was preached, they needed to make a decision on what was true. This could only be done through good and pure teaching and good and right living by the elders Titus appointed. A very weighty and trustworthy position given by Paul and commanded by God.