

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Titus

Scripture: Titus

Code: MSB56

Title

This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name 13 times in the NT (1:4; Gal. 2:1,3; 2 Tim 4:10; for the 9 times in 2 Cor., see Background and Setting). The title in the Greek NT literally reads “To Titus.” Along with 1, 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are traditionally called “The Pastoral Epistles.”

Author and Date

Authorship by the Apostle Paul (1:1) is essentially uncontested (see Introduction to 1 Timothy). Titus was written between A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments, from either Corinth or Nicopolis (cf. 3:12). Most likely, Titus served with Paul on both the second and third missionary journeys. Titus, like Timothy (2 Tim. 1:2), had become a beloved disciple (1:4) and fellow worker in the gospel (2 Cor. 8:23). Paul’s last mention of Titus (2 Tim. 4:10) reports that he had gone for ministry in Dalmatia—modern Yugoslavia. The letter probably was delivered by Zenas and Apollos (3:13).

Background and Setting

Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile (Gal. 2:3), met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul (1:4) before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey. Later, Titus ministered for a period of time with Paul on the Island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work (1:5). After Artemas or Tychicus (3:12) arrived to direct the ministry there, Paul wanted Titus to join him in the city of Nicopolis, in the province of Achaia in Greece, and stay through the winter (3:12).

Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians (2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18), where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (8:23). The young elder was already familiar with Judaizers, false teachers in the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic law. Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject (Acts 15; Gal. 2:1–5).

Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:7–9,12,13,21). He returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue the work, much as he left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), while he went on to Macedonia. He most likely wrote to Titus in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.

Historical and Theological Themes

Like Paul's two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches where he ministered. Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches (1:5).

In contrast to several of Paul's other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the book of Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus' theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers. Doctrines that this epistle affirms include: 1) God's sovereign election of believers (1:1,2); 2) His saving grace (2:11; 3:5); 3) Christ's deity and second coming (2:13); 4) Christ's substitutionary atonement (2:14); and 5) the regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (3:5).

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior (1:3,4; 2:10,13; 3:4,6) and the saving plan is so emphasized in 2:11–14 that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care (1:5–9), but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons (1:12). In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers' primary preparation for evangelization was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives (2:2–14) in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers (1:10–16). How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony (3:1–8).

Several major themes repeat themselves throughout Titus. They include: work(s) (1:16; 2:7,14; 3:1,5,8,14); soundness in faith and doctrine (1:4,9,13; 2:1,2,7,8,10; 3:15); and salvation (1:3,4; 2:10,13; 3:4,6).

Interpretive Challenges

The letter to Titus presents itself in a straightforward manner which should be taken at face value. The few interpretive challenges include: 1) Are the children of 1:6 merely “faithful” or are they “believing”? and 2) What is the “blessed hope” of 2:13?

Outline

I. Salutation (1:1–4)

II. Essentials for Effective Evangelism (1:5–3:11)

A. Among Leaders (1:5–16)

1. Recognition of elders (1:5–9)
2. Rebuke of false teachers (1:10–16)

B. In the Church (2:1–15)

1. Holy living (2:1–10)
2. Sound doctrine (2:11–15)

C. In the World (3:1–11)

1. Holy living (3:1–4)
2. Sound doctrine (3:5–11)

III. Conclusion (3:12–14)

IV. Benediction (3:15)

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