

Titus

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Author: Paul the Apostle · Written: c. AD 63-65 · Category: Pauline Epistles (Pastoral)

Introduction

The Epistle to Titus is **Paul's field manual for planting healthy churches in a hostile culture**. Written between AD 63-65, shortly after Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28), the letter addresses Titus, a trusted Gentile coworker whom Paul left behind on the island of **Crete** to complete the organization of newly planted churches. Crete was infamous throughout the ancient world as a moral cesspool. Even one of their own poets, Epimenides (whom Paul quotes in 1:12), declared, 'The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies'—a damning indictment of habitual deception, violence, and gluttony that characterized the culture. Into this unpromising soil the gospel had been sown, and Titus faced the daunting task of **establishing order, appointing godly leaders, refuting false teachers, and cultivating communities that reflect the transforming grace of God**.

Titus is the shortest and most compact of the **Pastoral Epistles** (along with 1 and 2 Timothy), yet it contains some of the New Testament's **most majestic theological summaries** alongside its practical instructions. Paul does not separate doctrine from duty; instead, he demonstrates that **sound teaching produces sound living**. The letter alternates between concrete directives for various groups (older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and slaves) and breathtaking declarations of grace—particularly the twin 'epiphany' passages that frame the heart of the letter (2:11-14 and 3:4-7). These passages anchor Christian ethics not in legalism or mere moral striving but in **the appearing of God's grace** in Christ's first coming and the **blessed hope** of His glorious second appearing. Grace is not portrayed as leniency toward sin; rather, it is **training grace** that disciplines believers to 'deny ungodliness and worldly lusts' and to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world' (2:12). The justified are called to be 'zealous of good works' (2:14), a phrase that echoes throughout the letter like a refrain (1:16; 2:7,14; 3:1,8,14).

The letter's structure is straightforward yet profound. Chapter 1 addresses **church leadership**—Titus must appoint qualified elders in every city who can both teach sound doctrine and refute those who contradict it. The qualifications emphasize moral character, hospitality, self-control, and doctrinal fidelity. Paul then turns his sharpest rhetoric against the **Cretan false teachers**, particularly those from 'the circumcision' who peddle Jewish myths and legalistic commandments for dishonest gain. These deceivers profess to know God but deny Him by their deeds; they must be silenced to prevent entire households from being overturned (1:10-16). Chapter 2 shifts to **discipleship for every demographic**, showing how the gospel shapes the life of the church from the inside out—older men must be sober and sound, older women must train younger women in domestic godliness, younger men must exercise self-control, and even slaves must adorn the doctrine of God by faithful service. Chapter 3

addresses **gospel-shaped citizenship**, calling believers to submit to authorities, avoid quarrels, maintain good works, reject divisive people after proper warning, and remember the mercy that saved them when they too were foolish and disobedient.

What makes Titus so powerful is its insistence that **the gospel creates a counterculture**. Believers are not to withdraw from a corrupt society but to live within it as 'a peculiar people'—a treasured possession purified for God and eager to do good (2:14). The letter demonstrates that when grace truly transforms hearts, the evidence will appear in observable godliness, generous service, peaceable conduct, and unshakable hope. Sound doctrine is not an end in itself but the means by which God shapes communities that reflect His character and adorn His gospel. In just three chapters, Titus equips pastors to build churches marked by **theological clarity, moral beauty, and missional witness** even in the most challenging cultural contexts.

Book Outline

- **Opening Greeting and Mission Statement (1:1-4)** (1:1-4) — Paul, God's servant and apostle, greets Titus and frames his task in terms of God's truth that accords with godliness.
- **Establishing Order and Silencing False Teachers (1:5-16)** (1:5-16) — Qualifications for elders, their teaching responsibilities, and sharp rebuke of Cretan deceivers obsessed with myths and commandments of men.
- **Discipleship for Every Group and the Appearing Grace (2:1-15)** (2) — Instructions for men, women, and slaves flow into the majestic summary of grace that trains believers while they await the blessed hope.
- **Gospel-Shaped Citizenship and Final Instructions (3:1-15)** (3) — Believers must submit to rulers, avoid quarrels, remember God's mercy, devote themselves to good works, reject divisive people, and assist fellow workers.

Key Themes

- **Order and Leadership in the Church:** Titus must 'set in order' what remains and appoint elders in every city. Character, hospitality, self-control, and adherence to sound doctrine mark qualified overseers who can both encourage and refute (1:5-9).
- **Sound Doctrine Producing Sound Living:** True teaching must shape behavior. Older men and women, younger believers, and bondservants all receive discipleship tailored to their station so that God's word is not blasphemed (2:1-10).
- **Grace as Transforming Power:** The grace that brings salvation has appeared in Christ and actively trains believers to live self-controlled, righteous, hope-filled lives in this present age (2:11-14).
- **Good Works as Evidence of Faith:** Titus repeatedly stresses the necessity of good deeds—not for earning salvation but as proof of a people redeemed, purified, and zealous for service (2:14; 3:1,8,14).
- **Refuting False Teachers:** Cretan churches faced rebellious talkers devoted to myths and legalistic speculation. Titus must silence them sharply so that households are not overturned and the faith remains healthy (1:10-16; 3:9-11).
- **Hope of Christ's Appearing:** Believers live between the epiphanies of grace already revealed and glory yet to appear. Expectation of the blessed hope motivates holy lives and persevering service.

Key Verses

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

— Titus 1:5 (The programmatic statement for the letter—Titus must finish organizing the churches by appointing qualified leadership across the island.)

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

— Titus 2:11-14 (This densely packed paragraph links Christ's redeeming work, present sanctification, and future hope. Grace is both saving and tutoring grace.)

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

— Titus 3:4-7 (The Trinitarian summary of salvation: the Father's kindness, the Spirit's regenerating work, and the Son's mediation secure justification and heirship.)

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

— Titus 3:8 (Sound doctrine must be insisted upon so that believers devote themselves to good works that benefit their neighbors.)

Historical Context

Crete was notorious even among pagan writers for deceit, piracy, and indulgence. Paul quotes a Cretan poet calling his countrymen 'liars, evil beasts, slow bellies' (1:12). After Paul's first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28), he and Titus evangelized there briefly. The fledgling congregations faced Judaizing teachers and needed stable leadership. Titus, a Gentile convert who had proven steadfast during the Jerusalem Council debate (Galatians 2), was the right man to implement reforms.

Literary Style

The letter is concise yet rich. It alternates between household codes, ecclesial qualifications, and theological doxology. Paul's rhetoric is sharp when confronting error yet pastoral when urging Titus to teach with gravity and integrity. Two 'faithful sayings' (3:8, likely also 3:4-7) echo early confessional material. The vocabulary emphasizes moderation, self-control, and what is 'good' or 'healthy.'

Theological Significance

Titus ties together justification, regeneration, sanctification, and good works. It presents one of the clearest Trinitarian statements of salvation and clarifies that good works are the fruit, not the root, of redemption. The letter demonstrates how church order, leadership, and doctrine work together so the church can be a counterculture of grace in a corrupt society.

Christ in Titus

Jesus Christ is the great God and Savior whose glory believers await. He gave Himself to redeem from every lawless deed and to purify a treasured people. Through Him the Spirit is poured out richly, and through Him believers become heirs. Christ's authority also undergirds Titus' teaching mandate—he speaks with apostolic backing.

Relationship to the New Testament

Titus parallels First Timothy in its concern for elders, doctrine, and false teachers. Acts mentions Paul's voyage through Crete, and Galatians highlights Titus as an uncircumcised Gentile whom Paul defended in Jerusalem. The emphasis on good works anticipates James, while the description of grace training believers harmonizes with Romans 6 and Ephesians 2, where salvation by grace leads to works prepared beforehand. The letter also feeds into later catholic teaching on church order and creedal summaries of salvation.

Practical Application

Christians today still minister in cultures marked by deception and indulgence. Titus reminds us that theology must produce observable godliness. Churches need qualified, hospitable leaders and teaching tailored to every life stage. Believers should be exemplary citizens, ready for every good work, and eager to meet urgent needs. Grace trains us to say 'no' to sin and 'yes' to serving others while our eyes stay fixed on Christ's appearing.

Chapter 1

Greeting

- 1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;
- 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;
- 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;
- 4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Qualifications for Elders

- 5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:
- 6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.
- 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;
- 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;
- 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Rebuke False Teachers

- 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:
- 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.
- 12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.
- 13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;
- 14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

- 15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.
- 16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

Chapter 2

Teach Sound Doctrine

- 1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:
- 2 That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.
- 3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;
- 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,
- 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.
- 6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.
- 7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,
- 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.
- 9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again;
- 10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The Grace of God Brings Salvation

- 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,
- 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
- 13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
- 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
- 15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Chapter 3

Do Good Works

- 1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,
- 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

Saved by God's Mercy

- 3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.
- 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,
- 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
- 6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
- 7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
- 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.

Avoid Foolish Controversies

- 9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.
- 10 A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;
- 11 Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

Final Instructions and Greetings

- 12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.
- 13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

- 14 And let our's also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.
- 15 All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

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