

Titus

Paul's letter to Titus is similar to Paul's first letter to Timothy. Both letters focus on qualifications for church leaders and standing against false teaching and wrongdoers. One main difference is that Paul left Timothy in Ephesus, where the church was well established and older, but he left Titus in Crete, where the church was much younger and not as well established.

Writer: The Apostle Paul

Date of writing: Between 62-66 AD

Original Audience: Titus, a gentile (not Jewish) man and Paul's co-worker.

The Reason for the Letter: Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete while he and Timothy went to Ephesus. Paul left Titus there to put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town (1:5). We don't know much about Paul and Titus' work in Crete before Paul wrote this letter, but it seems like a young church. Paul is writing to give Titus further instructions about appointing leaders, standing against false teachers and wrongdoers, and other teachings for the church.



The Main Message of the Letter: The letter opens with an unusually long greeting (1:1–4). Paul reminds Titus to appoint elders in the towns of Crete and lists qualifications for elders (1:5–9). Then Paul tells Titus that he and the new elders should watch out for corrupt persons that they will need to refute (1:10–16). Next, Paul instructs Titus how to teach older men, older women, younger men, and enslaved people (2:1–10). The letter then provides a stirring summary of the gospel and its consequences for human behavior (2:11–14). Titus is encouraged to maintain good character and proclaim this message with authority (2:15–3:2). Once more, Paul gives a summary of the gospel message (3:3–7). Finally, Paul tells Titus to insist on this message and avoid “stupid controversies” and things that cause divisions (3:8–11). The letter concludes with Paul's future plans and final greetings (3:12–15).

Outline of Titus:

1. Titus's role in appointing leaders and standing against wrongdoers (1:1–16)
 2. Teaching for the church community (2:1–15)
 3. Doing good in society (3:1–15)
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Who Was Titus?

Titus was a gentile follower of Jesus who might be from the city of Antioch. He was brought to Jerusalem by Paul and Barnabas (Galatians 2:1–3). We don't know how much Titus traveled and worked with Paul, but Paul did come to regard him as a "partner and co-worker" (2 Corinthians 8:23). Paul sent him from Ephesus to Corinth, carrying a painful letter that Paul had written to that church.

Titus successfully resolved the conflict between Paul and the church in Corinth, and he brought Paul news of this (see 2 Corinthians 2:4, 13; 7:6–8, 13–15). Later, Titus would return to the Corinthian church as one of the people responsible for collecting the offering for Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:6, 16–18, 23; 9:5; cf. 12:18). The only other information we know about Titus is that Paul sent him to do God's ministry in Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10) and in Crete (Titus 1:5).

Followers of Jesus in Society

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus teach about how followers of Jesus must behave in society. In general, followers of Jesus are to be productive, obedient, and good citizens whose lives are free from anything offensive or scandalous. Living this way is a testimony to the work the Holy Spirit has done in our lives. Paul tells Titus, "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone." (3:1–2). Similarly, Paul tells Timothy, "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1–4). The way a follower of Jesus lives in society helps bring other people to follow Christ Jesus. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul says, "Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:25).

Like all letters, it is best to read or listen to the whole letter from beginning to end. While reading, try to imagine yourself as Titus receiving this letter from Paul. Then go back and reread each section from the outline above and discuss these questions:

1. What do you learn about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?
2. What do you learn about people?
3. What do we need to do to obey this Scripture?
4. Who can I share this letter with?