

Titus



How to Build a Church

Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church
ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au

Introducing Titus

Titus was no stranger to conflict. He was a long-term companion of Paul who was a valuable aid in two of Paul's greatest crises.

Titus first appears in the New Testament in Galatians 2:1, where Paul says he took Titus along on his trip to Jerusalem with Barnabas. Titus was a Gentile, and the issue at hand was whether Gentiles should have to comply with Jewish ceremonial rites (circumcision, diet restrictions and so on) in order to be full members of the Christian community. With the young Paul at one side and Barnabas at the other, he was essentially "tried" (and acquitted) by the leaders in Jerusalem.

Titus appears again in the middle of Paul's struggle with the church at Corinth. In that deeply divided church, he represented Paul. He had the unwelcome job of delivering what we call the "severe letter" which Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 2:1-4 and 7:5-13 and then staying there for about a year. Then he delivered the letter we now call 2 Corinthians in which Paul takes on his critics and calls the church to honor an unfulfilled financial pledge.

Titus was in Crete at the time Paul wrote him. Crete was a seaport, a sleazy port of call for cargo ships traversing the Mediterranean. It had been socially backward for 1400 years when the Minoan civilization was destroyed by a devastating earthquake. We do not know exactly when Titus went with Paul to Crete, but one possible scenario places it after Paul's release from his first imprisonment in Rome.

Paul had preached in Crete and was giving Titus the job of following through with developing a healthy church. This letter was sent while he was in the midst of his task and reviews his assignment. It shows Titus as a forceful personality and skilled administrator. It seems he was made of tougher stuff than Timothy, but his assignments were shorter. By the time Paul had written 2 Timothy, the job in Crete was done, and Titus had been sent on to Dalmatia (part of modern Yugoslavia).

This letter gives us two very valuable things:

- (1) A showcase of Paul's strategy for leadership in the midst of chaos—Timothy was given a long-term assignment in an established church; Titus was sent to follow up an evangelistic movement and give the Christian body some coherence;
- (2) a model of hope in the face of a very messy situation; Paul's confidence in the power of the gospel shines throughout the letter.

Titus 1: True/ False

1. Read Titus 1. How does Paul describe his relationship to God?

To Titus?

2. What is the goal of Paul's ministry?
3. What is the connection between faith, knowledge of the truth, hope and godliness?

What part does Paul's preaching play in this? (1-3)

4. For what purpose was Titus left in Crete? (5)
5. What qualifications are given for elders? (6-9)

Is the emphasis on "being" or "doing" (character or abilities)?

Why?

6. What should disqualify someone from eldership?
7. Out of the qualities in v8-9, which do you most desire to develop in yourself?

How can your group help to develop them?

8. For what reason are the elders to hold firmly to the trustworthy message (see the start of v10)?
9. How does Paul describe the Cretans? (10-16)
10. What is meant by the phrase "To the pure all things are pure"? How does this work out practically?

PRAYER POINTS

Titus 2:1-3:2: A Counter Cultural Curriculum

1. Read Titus 2. Timothy is to teach *what is in accord with* sound doctrine. How is behaviour connected to doctrine?
2. Are there common themes in the various ethical teachings? Why?
3. What is the connection between Timothy's words and deeds (7-8)?
4. What, practically, can you do this week to make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive?
5. Some people think that grace means we have a license to immorality – "I can just ask for forgiveness after I sin." But what is the connection between grace and our behaviour? (11-12)

How does this work practically?

6. What conflicts does v12 imply the Christian will face in this present age?

In what areas are you feeling the pressure to conform to the world?

7. How is Jesus described in v14?

How is the appearing in the future of one like this an incentive to holiness now?

8. What does it mean to "encourage and rebuke with all authority"?

What does this look like in practice?

9. How does one obey "Let no one despise you"?

PRAYER POINTS:

Titus 3: Looking Back while Looking Forward

1. How easily do you submit to rulers and authorities?
2. From the context, why does Paul again stress doing what is good (1, 8, 14)?
3. What correction does Paul offer to the Christian tempted to think his good behaviour makes him better than those around him (3-7)?
4. What were you like before God showed you his mercy?

In what ways are you working at being different from that?

5. What can we learn from v4-7 about God's character?

His work in us?

His purposes for us?

6. What is the problem with those mentioned in v9-11?

How does this relate to Paul's other teaching on this matter (2 Tim 2:25-26; 3:5)?

7. Can you reject a person and still love them (10)?
8. In doing what is good, what motivates you most?
 - a. Duty
 - b. Fear of judgment
 - c. Hope of Christ's return
 - d. Gratitude for grace
 - e. Desire to work for peace in your relationships
 - f. The needs of others

9. What good are you doing
 - a. Around your home

 - b. In your church

 - c. In your city or state

10. How "productive" a life are you living (14)?

What might you need to change to make it more productive?

How can your group help you?

PRAYER POINTS