

Paul's Letter to Titus

Paul had previously left Titus in Fair Havens on the island of Crete. His letter to Titus can be seen as a short and direct "to do" list in which he gives Titus instructions for establishing strong and reliable leadership for the multiple churches in Crete. This assignment is no small task as Titus must travel to each village to choose the overseers from the elders in each location.

This letter includes many points on which a teacher could spend a great deal of time trying to discover the underlying meaning of each word and thought. In this commentary, we are choosing to take Paul's words as fact, pausing only briefly to explain in detail thoughts and ideas that have become difficult to understand in the last 2000 years because of changes in the language and vocabulary. Also, we hope to grasp the full picture of this letter to Titus as he would have read it and understood it. It is a truly simple, direct letter that needs little explanation and embellishment. With that said, let us look at the personal letter written from a mentor to his student who can be trusted to complete the job that Paul has given him. Let us accept it as a letter not to be dissected for the purpose of proving a point in today's context that does not fit the original intent of Paul's heart as directed by the Holy Spirit.

Titus 1:1-3:15

Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, ²in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, ³but at the proper time manifested, *even* His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior; ⁴to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

It is quite common for Paul to write sentences that seem to go on forever, and the opening verses of this letter are no different. In these four verses, which comprise one sentence, Paul covers a vast scene of theological thoughts.

Who Paul Serves Paul is a **"bond servant of God,"** totally responsible to and dependant upon God.

Paul states that he was also **"an apostle of Jesus Christ,"** a person sent by another; a messenger or envoy. This word is generally used to designate the body of disciples to whom Jesus entrusted the organization of His church and the dissemination of His gospel, "the twelve," as they are called in the Gospels. Paul was also sent by the Lord who entrusted to him the mechanics of the organization of the church, and through him, those organizational thoughts of the Lord have been passed down to the inheritors of the church.

The Reason for Paul's Service We see the reason for Paul's service in his statement **"for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness."** He was sent to proclaim the truths of God for the **"Faith of the chosen of God."** The King James Version translates "chosen" as the "elect," a reference to the Jewish believers who were chosen or elected by God to be the family through which the Savior would come. Many promises were made to Israel that were not made to the Gentile world. Paul

directs this letter to Titus so that he might deal with the Jews who have put their trust in Jesus as Savior. Paul is used by the Lord to instruct them in the proper theology of God, and it will be accomplished through Titus. Paul's job is to proclaim the knowledge of the truth to these Jewish believers who are living among the Cretans so that the true godliness of the Lord might be lived and practiced.

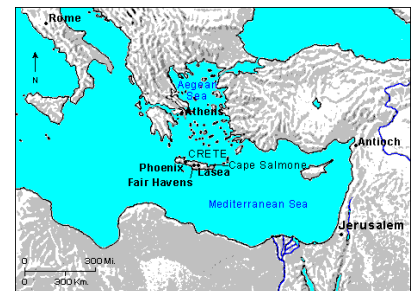
The Purpose of Paul's Service Paul's purpose in teaching was to bring eternal life to everyone who would believe in the Lord Jesus. Paul states that God cannot lie; therefore, there is a **"hope of eternal life."** How did this "hope" come to mankind? It happened at **"the proper time"** when Jesus was manifested here on earth in human form to proclaim the message that was entrusted to Paul **"according to the commandment of God our Savior."**

The Recipient of Paul's Letter Titus, the recipient of the letter, was a Gentile who came to believe in the Lord Jesus through the personal ministry of Paul. Paul calls Titus **"my true child in a common faith."** Paul trusted Titus because he had trained him; he had accompanied Paul on most of his missionary journeys. Titus had won the favor of Paul, and Paul had given him a task.

The Salutation Without fail, Paul begins with his normal salutation, **"Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior."** As Matthew Henry states:

This is peace with God through Christ who is our Peace, and with the creatures and ourselves. Grace is the fountain of all blessings. Mercy, and peace, and all good, spring out of this.

⁵For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, ⁶namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. ⁷For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.



The Appointment of Pastors in Crete Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete when he stopped there after his first imprisonment. Mission work had been started there, and Paul wanted Titus to complete the work by selecting an "overseer" for the church in each city or village. The term "overseer" has several meanings in different English translations. Its most common translation is "bishop," but it has also been translated "watchman" and "inspector." Today, the term is translated "pastor" or "minister."

Pastors for each city were to be selected from the "elders" in each city. In Titus' day, an elder was not one who had been set aside and ordained. He was an older person who was looked upon by the people as their spokesman or natural leader;

therefore, he already had a following. In the Old Testament, Jethro made the same point to Moses when he suggested that Moses select judges from the "elders of each tribe." Titus was to select one of these elders to be ordained, set aside, as the pastor of each church. Paul provided the criteria that each man had to have met to be selected as a pastor. This list must be taken seriously and should be the criteria by which all pastors or ministers are selected, even today. He must:

- Be above reproach
- Be the husband of one wife
- Have children who believe
- Not be accused of dissipation or rebellion
- Be above reproach as God's steward
- Not be self-willed
- Not be quick-tempered
- Not be addicted to wine
- Not be pugnacious
- Not be fond of sordid gain
- Be hospitable
- Love what is good
- Be sensible
- Be just
- Be devout
- Be self-controlled
- Hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching
- Be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict

Be it as it may, fair or not fair in the eyes of man, failure in any area listed above disqualifies him to hold the office of pastor or minister.

¹⁰For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach*, for the sake of sordid gain.

The Reason for Sound, Strong Pastoral Leadership Here Paul identifies his reason for instructing Titus to appoint qualified pastors in each city. Most of the rebellious men are Jewish as seen in the fact that they have been circumcised. Across the Roman Empire, segregated communal baths were used by all people of all economic status. Circumcision was a custom of Jews only; therefore, it was difficult for men to hide their Jewish heritage in a Roman culture. These rebellious Jews were preaching false doctrine for personal gain, and they had to be silenced. These men had found a way to acquire wealth and riches by dishonestly directing families to give them riches from their personal livelihoods. The Lord never took advantage of His followers and did not leave instruction for His followers to do so. Yes, the needs of the followers were met through gifts, but never in excess or through dishonesty.

¹²One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.

The Cretan Testimony Paul agrees with what one of the Cretan Jews said about his own people. It is the reason that the Cretans had to be reproved and directed back to sound doctrine. Paul is directing this statement at the Jews who are holding on to Jewish myths and commandments, all of which are false. These Jews were leading other Cretans away from the truth and they must be stopped.

15To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. **16**They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed.

The Cretan / Jewish Problem that Needs Correcting In making his case against these Cretan Jews, Paul uses the standard Hebrew method of presenting both a positive and negative side in his argument. On the positive side, people who have a pure heart will act with pure motives and to the best of their ability, do the right thing. On the negative side, those who have a defiled heart will act with defiled motives. The deeds of many of the Cretan Jews have proven to Paul that they are defiled and that they have turned from the Lord in their faith and practice through their speech and actions have proven the state of their minds and conscience.

2:1But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

Paul's Platform for Titus After stating the need and reason for Paul's instruction to Titus he then tells Titus what to teach these pastors so they can, in turn, teach the people who can then teach their children, and children's children. Paul presents a "to do" list that is simple, yet profound!

2Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. **3**Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, **4**that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, **5**to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored. **6**Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; **7**in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, **8**sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. **9**Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, **10**not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. **11**For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, **12**instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, **13**looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; **14**who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Paul's "To DO" Lists

Older men must:

- Be temperate
- Be dignified
- Be sensible
- Be sound in faith
- Be sound in love
- Be sound in perseverance

Older women must:

- Be reverent in their behavior
- Not be malicious gossips
- Nor be enslaved to much wine
- Teach what is good, that they may encourage the young women

Young women must:

- Love their husbands
- Love their children
- *Be* sensible
- *Be* pure
- *Be* workers at home
- *Be* kind
- *Be* subject to their husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored

Younger men must:

- Be sensible
- Be an example of good deeds
- Be an example *with* purity in doctrine
- Be an example with dignified
- Be sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us

Bond slaves (a slave or employee – either voluntary or involuntary) must:

- Be subject to their own masters in everything
- Be well-pleasing
- Not be argumentative
- Not pilfer
- Show all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect

Above we find the foundational standards of God for the lives of those who believe in His Son as their Savior. Jesus appeared on this earth to bring salvation and, while here on earth, He regularly taught these same basic principles. Paul repeats them to Titus.

Jesus taught us to:

- Deny ungodliness
- Deny worldly desires
- Live sensibly
- Live righteously
- Live godly in the present age

- Look for the blessed hope
- Look for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus

Reasons for following the above teachings:

Jesus gave Himself for us to:

- Redeem us from every lawless deed
- Purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds

15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Personal instructions for Titus Paul instructs Titus to use these “things,” to speak, exhort, and reprove. Let us make sure we understand the definitions of these words from the time of Paul.

- **To speak** meant to “utter words,” but in this case it implies the idea of preaching
- **To exhort** meant to “invite or bring great comfort”
- **To reprove** meant to “tell a fault”

Paul also instructs Titus not to allow anyone to “disregard” him. The word “despised” better illustrates what Paul meant here. Paul is instructing Titus not to be bothered or concerned by the men who despised him. He was to keep the course and stay faithful to the instruction.

3:1 Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, **2** to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.

Instruction to the Pastors that are Selected After instructing Titus to use the previous criteria to select a pastor for each town on the island of Crete, he gives the pastors a short list of subjects to teach to the congregation. They are:

- To be subject to rulers
- To be subject to authorities
- To be obedient
- To be ready for every good deed
- To malign no one
- To be uncontentious
- To be gentle
- To show every consideration for all men

Paul wants Titus to guide the new pastors through the beginning of their ministries. The instructions listed above are not always easy to follow, but every pastor must adhere to them. The next verses tell us why!

3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

Life Before Christ’s Redemption Before we come to Christ, the following words represent our true nature: foolishness, disobedience, deception, enslavement to

lusts and pleasures, malice, envy, hatefulness and hatred were within all of us. Even after coming to the Lord, these traits creep back into our lives and we must make a conscience effort to rid ourselves of them. The most effective way to do so is found in the instruction of Titus 3:1-2 above.

⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

The Gospel in a Sentence In another long sentence, Paul tells us that Jesus Christ saves us based only on His mercy. His mercy provides the “**washing of regeneration**,” a picture or symbol of the new birth. The regeneration is followed by the “**renewing of the Holy Spirit**.” The Holy Spirit makes us a “new creature,” with a “new nature.” The Holy Spirit also gives us a “new start” in this life to live as heirs in our hope of eternal life. Here, Paul has come full circle to the reason for all that Jesus Christ did for us. As in Titus 1:2, it was all done for the “hope of eternal life.” In this case the word “hope” is not just some wishful thinking; it is an expression of assurance.

⁸This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

This Letter is Trustworthy Paul assures Titus that he can find confidence in the instruction that he has been given. It is a trustworthy statement, and Titus is to share the thoughts in this letter with brave confidence. Why? Because Paul wants Titus to know that those who belong to the Lord “do good things with all people.” He also wants Titus to know that the pastors that he selects to lead the churches in Crete are to set the example at all times, without faltering. All the instructions given by Paul are good and profitable for Titus, for the pastors, for all of us!

⁹But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Stay Away from Jewish Philosophizing Paul is warning against having petty quarrels rather than honest discussions that lead to wisdom. As foolish arguments develop, it is best to turn the discussion back to a helpful direction or politely excuse ourselves. After all, Titus is dealing with the Jews and their myths. For years, the Jews watched their religious leaders pontificate in foolish controversies and endless genealogies, all for the purpose of strife and disputes about the Law. Here lies another clue to indicate the nature of the people with whom Titus is dealing. Gentiles did not care about the Law. It was important only to the Jews. Titus’ job was to lead the Jews past their unprofitable and worthless old natures.

¹⁰Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, ¹¹knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

What to do with The Heretic As Titus deals with the Jewish leadership, Paul instructs Titus to reject, after two tries, a heretic, or one who believes and teaches theology that is different from the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, about whom Paul spoke in Titus 1:10 & 11. They are the “rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach*, for the sake of sordid gain.” If a man, especially a Jew, does not change after two admonishments, he is to be rejected because he has already made his decision not to change. It is a solemn and sober instruction to Titus as he selects and trains the pastors, rejecting those who have decided to believe in false doctrines. With this final statement, Paul leaves his instruction for Titus’ work and concludes the letter with personal instructions.

12 When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.



The Closing Besides this entry, nothing else is known about Artemas. Tychicus however is well known. He was an Asiatic Christian, who, with Trophimus, accompanied Paul on a part of his journey from Macedonia to Jerusalem. He was with Paul at Rome, and then went to Ephesus, probably to build up and encourage the church there. These two men will be sent to meet Titus on the island of Crete.

13 Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them.

Zenas was a converted Jewish lawyer; Apollos was a dear friend of Paul. When they arrived on Crete, Titus was to care for them.

14 And let our *people* also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Everyone has pressing needs from time to time. Paul indicates that true Christians must engage in good deeds to meet the pressing needs of those whom Paul has sent. These men will need shelter, food, and worship. All other perceived needs pale in comparison.

15 All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in *the* faith. Grace be with you all.

The Stamp of Authenticity

Paul ends the letter with his signature logo “Grace be with you all.” If this logo is not there, the letter is not Paul’s. Paul’s sense of God’s grace was so important in Paul’s life that he always stated it in the opening and closing of his letters.