

Book of Titus

Titus was one of the circle of young men who were the “many witnesses” to whom the apostle Paul committed the things given to him, so they could pass them on to others who in turn would “teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

He, together with Timothy, traveled with the apostle Paul.

While Timothy was half Jewish and half Gentile, Titus was of purely Gentile extraction (Galatians 2: 1-3).

Title:

This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name 13 times alone in the New Testament.

The title in the Greek New Testament literally reads “To Titus”.

Along with 1 and 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are traditionally called “The Pastoral Epistles.”

Authorship:

The epistle claims to have come from the pen of Paul.

Its contents bear this out.

Paul’s purposes in writing were to assist Titus in his task of bringing organization to the disorganized work on the island of Crete, to instruct and encourage Titus in his work, to instruct Titus to assist Zenas and Apollos in their ministry, and to help them get to their next place of ministry (3:13).

Historical Setting:

Timothy served as Paul’s special apostolic delegate to Ephesus.

In like manner, Titus served as Paul’s special apostolic delegate to Corinth (see 2 Corinthians 7:6-7; 8:6, 16).

About A.D. 63-64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments, Paul traveled with Timothy and Titus.

He left Timothy in Ephesus and traveled on to Crete with Titus.

Paul left Titus in Crete to provide leadership for the church there (1:5).

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 wide, 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.

Somewhere during the period of A.D. 64-66, Paul wrote letters to Timothy (1 Tim.), and Titus.

Titus was apparently less reserved than Timothy.

The precise date of the letter and who bore it to Titus are not known.

The immediate occasion of the letter was to tell Titus that Paul had meant to send Artemas and Tychicus to replace him at Crete, and to instruct Titus to come to him at Nicopolis (3:12).

The last mention of Titus is (in 2 Timothy 4:10).

He had apparently visited Paul in prison in Rome and had departed for Dalmatia, perhaps to start a new work there.

In his short epistle to Titus, Paul wrote directions similar to those he had written in his first letter to Timothy.

The difference between the two epistles is one of emphasis.

In 1 Timothy, Paul's emphasis is on the leaders of the local church; in Titus, the emphasis is on the organization of the local church.

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 (see 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 (see 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).

Themes:

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).