

## Bible Study: Titus - Building the Church

Author: Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ

Audience: Titus, a minister at Crete

Date: approximately 63 A.D.

Location: unknown (possibly Nicopolis)

Theme: Organizing and supervising the church

Genre: epistle/prose

### Outline

Salutation (1:1-4)

Qualifications of Elders (1:5-9)

Dealing with False Teachers (1:10-16)

### Observation

1:1 Paul considered himself God's slave; his task was to spread Christian faith and truth

1:2 Unlike Cretans, God cannot lie; He promised eternal life before ages of time, but...

1:3: In due time (i.e., a delay), He revealed His word and commanded Paul to proclaim it

1:4 Addressed to Titus, a fellow believer; a salutation of grace and peace

1:5 Paul left Titus in Crete to appoint elders (plural) in every city (singular)

1:6 The qualifications for an elder; the husband (male) of one wife (female)

1:7 An elder is an overseer (interchangeable terms), God's steward (manager); not greedy

1:8 Hospitable contrasts greedy; prudent implies wisdom; upright implies righteous

1:9 An elder must be doctrinally orthodox, so he can teach the truth and refute error

1:10 Because there are MANY rebels, bigmouths & deceivers (especially among the Jews)

1:11 They are teaching error for money; Paul commands Titus to silence them

1:12 Ironically, a Cretan "prophet" said that Cretans are always liars, evil and lazy

1:13 Paul agreed (!), commanded Titus to reprove them severely (truth supersedes love)

1:14 Two problem areas: Jewish myths, commandments of heretical men

1:15 Unbelievers have a defiled mind (reason) and conscience (moral compass)

1:16 They claim to know God (Jews?) but deny Him by their sinful, corrupt deeds

### Interpretation

In what sense was an elder to be "the husband of one wife" (1:6)?

The precise implications of "the husband of but one wife" have been debated through the centuries. It has been held to prohibit a second marriage, but this seems improbable (cf. 1Tim 5:14; Rom 7:2, 3; 1Cor 7:39). If Paul had meant that the elder must be married, the reading would have been "a," not "one," wife. Most natural is the view that he must be the husband of only one living woman.<sup>1</sup>

Who was the Cretan prophet Paul quoted (1:12)?

Paul quoted from Epimenides, a Cretan poet and philosopher from the sixth century B.C. who was widely believed to be a religious prophet. Though the quotation may originally have referred to a particular lie (viz., that Zeus was buried in Crete, which was especially offensive to those who believed Zeus was still alive), by Paul's day the saying had become a proverb which merely

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<sup>1</sup>*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, s.v. Titus 1:6

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emphasized the low reputations of Cretans generally. So little did others think of the Cretans that the verb *krētizō* was invented to mean “to lie.”<sup>2</sup>

What were the Jewish myths and commandments of men (1:14)?

These myths seemingly were speculative and fanciful inventions drawn from the OT records such as are found in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings of Judaism.<sup>3</sup> Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for negating God’s Law through the traditions of the elders (Mk 7:1-13, Mt 23), and Paul steadfastly opposed the circumcision party within the church.

1 Clement 44 describes late first century church government:

Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry. We are of [the] opinion, therefore, that those appointed by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ in a humble, peaceable, and disinterested spirit, and have for a long time possessed the good opinion of all, cannot be justly dismissed from the ministry. For our sin will not be small, if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and [in a holy manner] fulfilled its duties. Blessed are those presbyters who, having finished their course before now, have obtained a fruitful and perfect departure [from this world]; for they have no fear lest any one deprive them of the place now appointed them. But we see that ye have removed some men of excellent behavior from the ministry, which they fulfilled blamelessly and with honor.

### Application

A verse to memorize: Titus 1:2 God cannot lie

A command to obey: congregations should be led by a plurality of elders

A command to obey: elders must reprove, refute and silence heretics

An error to avoid: Jewish myths or commandments of men

- Using separate sets of dishes for meat and dairy items
- Leaving light bulbs off during the Sabbath (not kindling a fire)
- Not travelling beyond a Sabbath day’s journey

A condition to meet: qualifications of an elder

- Potential elders should be carefully vetted before appointment
- Current elders should be removed if they are disqualified

A sin to avoid: rebellion, doctrinal error

- Christians should respect, support the overseers of the congregation
- Everyone needs to strive for precision, accuracy in biblical doctrine

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<sup>2</sup>*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:763.

<sup>3</sup>*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, s.v. Titus 1:14

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### Outline

Salutation (1:1-4)

Qualifications of Elders (1:5-9)

Dealing with False Teachers (1:10-16)

Sound Doctrine and Conduct (2:1-10)

The Significance of God's Grace (2:11-15)

### Observation

2:1 Titus is to focus on sound doctrine, teaching. Examples follow.

2:2 Older men: temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance

2:3 Older women: avoid slander, drunkenness; be reverent, teaching younger women

2:4 Young women: should love their husbands & children...

2:5 Be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, subject to their own husbands

2:6 Young men: be sensible

2:7 Titus should be a model of good works, teach with integrity, seriousness, and...

2:8 Sound speech. In order that opponents have nothing bad to say (reputation)

2:9 Slaves: serve their masters well, not arguing or stealing...

2:10 In order to put God's teaching in a good light (reputation)

2:11 God's grace is an offer of salvation to all men (not just the Jews)

2:12 God's grace teaches us to reject evil and live righteously

2:13 Looking for the return of "our great God and Savior" Jesus Christ (deity)

2:15 Titus is to declare, exhort and reprove these things with full authority to command

2:15 Titus is not to let anyone reject or disregard him in these matters (conscientious)

### Interpretation

What do the key terms in this chapter mean?

- Sound (*hygiainō*): be healthy, be accurate
- Doctrine: (*didaskalia*) teaching, doctrine
- Temperate: (*nēphalios*) restrained, temperate in the use of alcohol
- Dignified: (*semnos*) honorable, worthy of respect (i.e. not clowns)
- Sensible: (*sōphrōn*) moderate, self-controlled, prudent, sober-minded, sensible, discreet
- Reverent: (*hieroprepēs*) pertaining to proper reverence, worthy of reverence
- Workers at home: (*oikourgos*) caring for the house, working at home, the keeper of the house, taking care of household affairs, domestic
- Reprove: (*elegchō*) rebuke, expose; refute, show one's fault, convincing of that fault
- Older men: (*presbytēs*) an elderly man (i.e., not the same term as a church elder)

Were the older women teaching as church elders (2:3)?

The Greek terms for older men and older women are not the same as that used for church elders; they simply refer to older individuals. Expositor's Bible Commentary says, "The older women must fulfill a positive role; they must 'teach what is good.' By personal word and example, they must teach what is morally good, noble, and attractive. The reference is not to public instruction, but to their teaching function in the home."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Expositor's Bible Commentary, s.v. Titus 2:3

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Did Paul actually refer to Jesus Christ as “our great God and Savior” (2:13)?

Titus 2:13 refers to Jesus as “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” The Granville Sharpe rule of Greek grammar states that when two nouns are joined by *kai* (and) and the first noun has the article and the second does not, then the two nouns refer to the same thing. Hence, “great God” and “Savior” both refer to “Christ Jesus.”<sup>5</sup>

Who was Titus?

Titus was a Gentile convert (Gal. 2:3) who had served and traveled with the Apostle Paul (Gal. 2:1–3). Titus had also functioned as a faithful emissary to the troubled church in Corinth (2 Cor. 7:6–7; 8:6, 16).

In approximately A.D. 63–64, sometime after they left Timothy behind in Ephesus, Paul and Titus traveled on to Crete. After a brief visit Paul then left Titus behind to help provide leadership for the Cretan churches (Titus 1:5). Subsequently the apostle wrote this epistle and had it delivered to Titus. The exact time and place of writing is unknown. (See the *Introduction* to 1 Timothy for a more detailed discussion of the authorship and dating of the Pastoral Epistles.)

The purpose of the epistle to Titus was to instruct him about what he should do and teach in the Cretan churches. A special theme of the letter is the role of grace in promoting good works among God’s people (Titus 2:11–3:8).

Paul hoped to join Titus again in Nicopolis for the winter (3:12), but there is no way of knowing whether that meeting ever took place. Titus was last mentioned by Paul (2 Tim. 4:10) as having gone to Dalmatia (Yugoslavia). Tradition has it that Titus later returned to Crete and there served out the rest of his life.<sup>6</sup>

### Application

A command to obey: Be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, love and patience

A sin to avoid: Gossip/slander, heavy drinking

A command to obey: Love one’s spouse and children, be pure, kind

A challenge to face: Wives should be subject to their own husbands

A challenge to face: Elders are to be living examples of Christian character

A command to obey: Elders must teach the Word accurately and boldly

A command to obey: Serve employers well, without arguing or stealing

A verse to memorize: Titus 2:13 verifies the deity of Jesus Christ

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<sup>5</sup> *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1997, c1989), 225.

<sup>6</sup> *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:761.

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The Significance of God's Grace (2:11-15)

Proper Christian Behavior (3:1-2)

The Motive for Godliness (3:3-8)

Dealing with Spiritual Error (3:9-11)

Concluding Remarks (3:12-15)

### Observation

3:1 Christians should obey authorities, be ready for good works

3:2 Christians should not be insulting, quarrelsome; rather gentle, meek to all

3:3 We used to be foolish, disobedient, hedonistic; having malice, envy & hatred

3:4 Then, God's kindness and philanthropy appeared (i.e., in Jesus)

3:5 He saved us by the washing of regeneration, renewal of Holy Spirit, not our works

3:6 He poured out the Holy Spirit (liquid analogy) through Jesus Christ

3:7 He acquitted us by His mercy that we might become His heirs

3:8 Titus should emphasize this, so Christians will devote themselves to good works

3:9 Titus should avoid stupid questions, genealogies, quarrels, disputes over the law

3:10 Titus should avoid a heretic after the second warning

3:11 A heretic is perverted, sinful and self-condemned

3:12 Paul wants Titus to join him in Nicopolis (Greece) where he is spending the winter

3:12 Paul will send Artemas or Tychicus to relieve him (he is rotating a cadre of men)

3:13 Titus is to supply Zenas (a lawyer) and Apollos on their journey (a good work)

3:14 Christians should (likewise) meet pressing needs with good works, be fruitful

3:15 Paul has other Christians with him; he greets the fellow Christians with Titus

### Interpretation

What was meant by the term "divisive" or "factious" (3:10)?

The adjective "divisive" (*hairetikon*), found only here in the NT, essentially characterizes what is a self-chosen opinion or viewpoint; because of their insistence on their opinions devoid of a true scriptural basis, the dissidents stir up divisions. Simpson characterizes such a man as an "opinionative propagandist who promotes dissension by his pertinacity" (p. 117). When persisted in, this results in the formation of heretical parties.<sup>7</sup>

Where is Nicopolis (3:12)?

Nicopolis — city of victory, where Paul intended to winter (Titus 3:12). There were several cities of this name. The one here referred to was most probably that in Epirus, which was built by Augustus Caesar to commemorate his victory at the battle of Actium (31). It is the modern Paleoprevesa, i.e., "Old Prevesa." The subscription to the epistle to Titus calls it "Nicopolis of Macedonia", i.e., of Thrace. This is, however, probably incorrect.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, s.v. Titus 3:10

<sup>8</sup>*Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1996, c1897).

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Nicopolis is a Greek city located on the Ionian (western) coast of Greece near Corfu south of Albania. Easily accessible by sea, Titus would need to leave Crete before winter storms made sailing dangerous, as Paul himself warned during his journey to Rome (Acts 27:7-10).

Who were Artemas, Tychicus, Zenas and Apollos (3:12-13)?

Nothing more is known of Artemas. Tychicus was a trusted co-worker who on several occasions appears as traveling with or for Paul (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21, 22; Col 4:7, 8; 2Tim 4:12). Zenas and Apollos are almost certainly the bearers of this letter. "Zenas the lawyer" appears only here.... Apollos is the well-known Alexandrian Jew who, having been fully instructed at Ephesus, effectively worked in the Corinthian church (Acts 18:24-28; 19:1; 1Cor 1:12; 3:4-6; 4:6; 16:12).<sup>9</sup>

### Application

A command to obey: (1) to be subject to rulers and authorities

A command to obey: (2) to be obedient

A command to obey: (3) to be ready to do whatever is good

A command to obey: (4) to slander no one

A command to obey: (5) to be peaceable

A command to obey: (6) to be considerate

A command to obey: (7) to show true humility toward all men.<sup>10</sup>

A verse to memorize: Titus 3:5 The washing of regeneration, renewal of Holy Spirit

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<sup>9</sup>*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, s.v. Titus 3:12-13

<sup>10</sup>*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:766.