

Who wrote the book?

TITUS overview

Paul identified himself as the author of the letter to Titus, calling himself a “bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Titus 1:1). The origin of Paul’s relationship with Titus is shrouded in mystery, though we can gather that he may have been converted under the ministry of Paul, who called Titus “my true child in a common faith” (Titus 1:4). Titus accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey, during which the apostle sent him to Corinth at least once (2 Corinthians 2:12–13; 7:5–7, 13–15; 8:6, 16–24). Paul clearly held Titus in a position of great respect as a friend and fellow worker for the gospel, praising Titus for his affection, his earnestness, and his bringing comfort to others.

Where are we?

Paul wrote his letter to Titus from Nicopolis in AD 63, after the apostle’s release from his first Roman imprisonment.

Why is Titus so important?

Three summaries of the incarnation dot the pages of Titus, providing a framework within which the Christian can view the work of God in the world and in individual lives (Titus 1:1–4; 2:11–14; 3:4–7). All three passages involve the manifestation, or appearance, of God in Christ, rooting the Christian faith in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Only when God the Son took on human flesh in the person of Jesus was the believer’s faith in God made sure. In other words, since God poured out His grace on all humanity, He cleanses His people from their sin and purifies believers for Himself. This grace of God instructs us to live upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:11–3:8).

A basic idea of this letter!

The doctrine of the incarnation in the letter to Titus grounds its message of producing right living through the careful attention to theological truth. The churches on Crete were just as susceptible to false teachers as any other church, so Paul directed Titus to establish a group of faithful elders to oversee the doctrinal purity and good conduct of the believers on Crete. Paul exhorted Titus to “speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1), a clear direction that this should be the young pastor’s primary role.

However, Paul also understood that when a body of believers embraces sound doctrine, the result is changed and purified lives that produce “good deeds” (mentioned in Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14). God’s grace is the motivation for all good deeds. Paul gave instructions to Titus about the roles of specific groups of people—older men, older women, young women, young men, and slaves—as well as general instructions to all believers about their conduct. Right living was essential because Christ “gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed,” saving us “by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 2:14; 3:5).

How do I apply this?

How seriously do you consider your beliefs about God in the overall scheme of your life? The book of Titus reminds us that our beliefs about God impact every decision we make. Sometimes it is difficult for believers today to see the point of getting all worked up about the person and nature of Christ or the doctrine of the Trinity. However, Paul made clear that a church that teaches and preaches sound doctrine will see results in the lives of its people. Not only will people be saved from their sins, but God’s grace will also motivate them to live out that saving faith with renewed and purified lives.

Many churches today focus more on the form of their worship—music styles, lighting, and building designs—than they do on the content of the faith they mean to proclaim. And while the form of a church’s worship is vital to reaching its community for Christ, without a firm base of sound doctrine, the church will lay its foundation in shifting and sinking sand. Make doctrine a priority in your own life, as well as encouraging it in your churches. Nothing is more significant than a solid foundation in Christ. Nothing is more motivational than grace to live a life of good deeds.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE

Titus

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1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—

1:2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,

1:3 and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour,

1:4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

1:6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

1:7 Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

1:8 Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

1:9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1:10 For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group.

1:11 They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

1:12 One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."

1:13 This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith

1:14 and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth.

1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

1:16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Titus

Chapter 2

2:1 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.

2:2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

2:3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

2:4 Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children,

2:5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

2:6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.

2:7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness

Titus

2:8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

2:9 Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them,

2:10 and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.

2:11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

2:12 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ,

2:14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Titus

Chapter 3

3:1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,

3:2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

3:4 But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared,

3:5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

3:6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour,

3:7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

3:8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

3:9 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.

3:10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.

3:11 You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

3:12 As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there.

3:13 Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need.

3:14 Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

3:15 Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.