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TITUS

*God's grace leads to right living*

WRITTEN

63 AD

KEY VERSE

*"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age"*

2:11-12

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PURPOSE

To instruct in the appointment of elders and help the Cretans to live righteously.

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## Introduction

Titus was an associate of Paul who appears in some of the letters. In Gal 2:1-3, we learnt that he was Greek, and in 2 Cor. we read that he was sent to Corinth to sort out the problems there (8:17). He did a good job in Corinth because here in Titus we see that Paul has left him in Crete to *"put in order what was left unfinished"*. In addition, he was to appoint elders in every city there (1:5).

The guidelines for the selection of elders can be found in 1:6-9. What was left *"unfinished"* could have been many things. The Cretans lived up to their bad reputation (1:12-13) and therefore had to be rebuked. Some led others astray and taught false doctrine to profit from it (1:10-11). They also engaged in *"foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law"* (3:9) and adhered to *"Jewish myths or to the merely human commands"* (1:14).

Paul may have written the letter to Titus about the same time as he wrote 1 Timothy. This would then be around the year 63 AD.

### Themes

* Discipleship
* Leadership
* Christian lifestyle
* Gender roles
* Bible interpretation

On carrying out the Great Commission when someone is difficult to disciple.

### How should we read the letters?

**Look:** Read them cover to cover as you would with any other letter.

**Think:** Interpret them in their historical context:

* Who were the recipients?
* What was the situation in the congregation?
* What issues are addressed?
* How would the original readers have interpreted what is written?

**Live:** Apply timeless truths to our situation.

### What does the Bible tell us about Titus?

2 Cor 7:13-15: Titus is happy and has a great love for the Corinthians.

2 Cor 8:17: Sent to Corinth to set things right. Eager.

2 Cor 8:23: Paul's helper and co-worker in Corinth.

Gal 2:3: Greek.

### When was Paul in Crete?

* Philemon 22, Phil 1:24-26, 2:24 - he expects to be released from prison (Rome 60-62?)
* 1 Clement 5:6 (AD 96): *“having taught righteousness in all the world and having come to the farthest border of the West… ”*
* The Muratorian Fragment (c. 170 AD), Acts of Peter (150-200): Paul came to Spain.
* Acts of Paul (approx. 170-190): Paul went to Rome (again) via a different route than that described in Acts.
* Went on a "4th mission trip" after year 62?
* In that case, the Epistle to Titus was written in 63-64 AD.

### Historical background from the letter

1:5: Titus is in Crete to *"put in order what was left unfinished"* and *"appoint elders in every town"*.

1:10-11: There are *"many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception"*, especially Jews, who confuse others (led astray). They upset entire families by *"teaching things they ought not to teach"* for the sake of money.

1:12-13: The Cretans lived up to their reputation of being *"liars, evil brutes"* and *"lazy gluttons",* and therefore had to be rebuked.

1:14: *"Jewish myths"* and *"merely human commands"* given by men who have rejected the truth.

3:9: *“foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law”* seem to have been part of the problem.

### Historical background from other sources

**"Liars"**

* believed that most of the gods (especially Zeus) were originally Cretans who had become gods and that Zeus was buried in Crete.
* Zeus pushed his way through life, and it was natural to take after the gods.
* *"kretizo"*: to lie
* Honor over truth

**“evil brutes”:**

* Some Greeks ranked the Cretans among the three most savage/violent peoples on earth.
* Even Epimenides joked that the lack of wild animals on Crete had been replaced by humans.
* There was internal warfare between the cities.
* Piracy

They were also known to be greedy and self-centered. Because of this, they were easy to recruit as mercenaries. Sexual immorality was another problem.

### Structure

* Sender (1:1) (+ opening 1:1-3)
* Receiver (1:4)
* Greetings (1:4)
* Thanksgiving (not in Titus)
* Main part (1:5 - 3:11)
  + Exhortations (1:5 - 2:10): Arrange and insert
  + Theology (2:11-14): Grace teaches us
  + Exhortations (2:15 - 3:2): Do all that is good
  + Theology (3:3-7): He saved us
  + Exhortations (3:8-11): Do good works
* Conclusion (3:12-15)

### **Lists**

* elders/overseers (1:6-9)
* false teachers (1:10-16)
* older men (2:1-2)
* older women (2:3-4)
* young women (2:4-5)
* young men (2:6-7a)
* Titus himself (2:7b-8)
* slaves (2:9-10)

### Pay attention to the conjunctions

They must behave, for God's grace teaches us! (2:9-12)

*"These, then, are the things you should teach."* (2:15)

They shall do all that is good, for we lived in sin, but God saved us! (3:1-5)

*"stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good."* 3:8

## Elders/ overseers (1:6-9)

* blameless
* faithful to his wife
* a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.
* not overbearing
* not quick-tempered
* not given to drunkenness
* not violent
* not pursuing dishonest gain
* hospitable
* loves what is good
* self-controlled
* upright
* holy
* disciplined
* must hold firmly to the trustworthy message

## "the husband of one wife" (1:6 ESV)

**1. Not polygamist?**

Legal in Judaism, but monogamy was common, especially outside of Israel. Forbidden by Roman law. Why then would Paul need to mention it (even though he was against it anyway)?

**2. Not remarried?**

*"The wife of one husband"* is used about widows over 60 in 1 Tim 5:9. Paul encourages younger widows to remarry (1 Tim 5:14). *"Wife of one man"* probably did not mean "married to only one man during life" in the case of widows. *"The wife of one husband"* probably didn't have that meaning either. But did it apply regardless of whether you were widowed or divorced?

**3. Faithful?**

The inscription *"The wife of one husband"* occurs mostly on tombstones of women who are honored by their widowed husbands. Being married only once in a lifetime was not a requirement for leaders in ancient times, but marital faithfulness was often required. Does Paul emphasize that they should be faithful spouses?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elders (1:6-9)** | **The false teachers (1:10-16)** |
| Believing children without a bad reputation (1:6) | Disrupting whole households (1:11) |
| Not quick-tempered or violent (1:7) | Evil brutes (1:12) |
| Not given to drunkenness (1:7), self-control (1:8) | Lazy gluttons (1:12) |
| Not pursuing dishonest gain (1:7) | Pursuing dishonest gain (1:11) |
| Loves what is good (1:8) | Evil (1:12), unfit for doing anything good (1:16) |
| Holy (1:8) | Their actions deny God (1:16) |
| Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that they can encourage others with sound doctrine (1:9) | Teaching things they ought not to teach (1:11), preoccupied with Jewish myths or the merely human commands of those who reject the truth (1:14) |
| Can encourage others with sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (1:9) | Needs to be silenced and rebuked sharply (1:11, 13) |

## Big questions (without answers)

If the historical background influenced what Paul wrote, what does this mean for our application?

Paul probably did not envision female elders because of the culture he lived in. Are we then forever bound by his culture, or is there a theological reason why elders should be men? What would he had written today?

How do we use the Bible? If something is mentioned, does it have to be followed in detail? What about what is not mentioned? Do we have to do things as Paul did?

How can we avoid making the Bible irrelevant with such questions?

## 1:12-13

v. 12: *"One of Crete’s own prophets has said it: 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.'"* This was often said about the Cretans in Paul's time.

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

## The Christian ideal (2:1-10)

The conjunctions show the result - and the purpose:

*"so that no one will malign the word of God. "* (v. 5)

* *"the word of God"* = the OT or the gospel?

*"so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us."* (v. 8)

*"so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."* (v. 10)

Application: If Christian women today do not take responsibility for the home and do not submit to their husbands, will that impact the reputation of the gospel?

## Grace teaches us (2:11-14)

Conjunction: ***For*** (v. 11)

God's grace makes it possible to live according to vv. 2-10.

Grace is what drives the Christian life, a template for how we should live.

*"live self-controlled, upright and godly lives"* = *"eager to do what is good"*

The 1st coming of Jesus → taught by grace → the 2nd coming of Jesus

## Pay attention to words that are repeated

2:13: *"our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ"*

**Savior** (1:3, 1:4, 2:10, 2:13, 3:4, 3:6)

* *"God our Savior"* (1:3, 2:10, 3:4)
* *"Jesus", "Christ"* and *"Savior"* (1:4, 2:13, 3:6)

Zeus vs. Jesus: The Man Who Became a god vs. God who became man?

Emphasizes salvation so that they understand what God has done and thus live godly lives in gratitude.

## He saved us (3:3-7)

One time, we:

* were foolish and disobedient
* deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures
* lived in malice and envy
* were hated and hated each other

But:

* because God is kind
* because God loves
* not because of righteous things we had done
* because of his mercy
* He saved us

## the washing of rebirth and renewal (3:5-6)

Three possible interpretations are:

**1. God saved us through baptism**

* Either *"renewal"* and *"rebirth"* are synonyms, or else *"renewal" explains* *"rebirth"*.
* *"whom he poured out on us generously"*? The washing or the Spirit?

**2. The washing of rebirth and renewal is a metaphor for spiritual cleansing.**

* *"Rebirth"* and *"renewal"* are metaphors for the same thing: what the Holy Spirit does in us.
* Ezekiel 36:25-27: Parallels between water and the Spirit:

*"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."* Ezekiel 36:25-27

* Joel 3:1, Ezek 47:1-5→ John 7:37-39

*"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."* Joel 3:1

*"The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side. As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross."* Ezek 47:1-5

*"On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.' By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."* John 7:37-39

* 1 Corinthians 6:11 *"And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."*
* 1 Cor 12:13 *"For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."*

**3. Combination of baptism and metaphor for spiritual cleansing due to what baptism represents?**

* Baptism symbolizes coming to faith. Baptism is a sign of rebirth, but baptism is not required in order to be born again.

## The gospel → doing what is good (3:8)

Imprinting the gospel (as explained in vv. 3-7) causes those who believe in God to devote themselves to doing what is good!

Same points as in 2:12 and 2:14.

*"11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 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, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 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."* 2:11-14

## Repeated word: good works/do

1:16 - The impure/unbelievers deny God by what they do.

1:16 - The unclean/unbelievers are unfit for doing anything good.

2:7-9 - Titus is to be an example of good works (so that those who oppose him may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about him.)

2:14 – Jesus redeems us from all wickedness and purifies for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

3:5 - God did not save us because of the righteous things we had done.

3:8 - The gospel makes those who believe carefully devote themselves to doing what is good (— which is excellent and profitable for everyone).

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.

## Good works/Christian lifestyle

Jesus redeemed us to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (2:14, 3:8).

We are not saved because of the righteous things we do (3:5), but they are expected as a sign of salvation (3:8).

God's grace teaches us to live righteously (2:12).

The works are evangelism:

* *"so that no one will malign the word of God"* (2:5)
* *"so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us."* (2:8)
* so that in every way we will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive (2:10)

## Applications and questions for reflection

* If the Cretans can be changed, then there is hope for us too.
* Do we focus as much on Jesus and the gospel in discipleship as Paul does? Are we at the same time as clear in our admonitions as he is?
* If we struggle to live right, perhaps what we need is a deeper understanding of the gospel and what Jesus has saved us from - rather than commandments and rules.
* What is the reputation of Christians in our culture? What kind of good works can we do so that the gospel becomes more attractive?