

TITUS - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. Are there any important ideas about God found in the book of Titus? Where was Titus working when he received this letter? (Titus 1:5) What was Titus doing there? Was Titus a Jew or a Gentile? What else do we know about Titus? (Galatians 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8:16-20; 2 Timothy 4:10)

TITUS [TIGH tuhs] — a “partner and fellow worker” (2 Cor. 8:23) of the apostle Paul. Although Titus is not mentioned in the Book of Acts, Paul’s letters reveal that he was the man of the hour at a number of key points in Paul’s life.

Paul first mentions Titus in Galatians 2:1-3. As an uncircumcised Gentile, Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem as a living example of a great theological truth: Gentiles need not be circumcised in order to be saved.

Titus next appears in connection with Paul’s mission to Corinth. While Paul was in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, he received disturbing news from the church at Corinth. After writing two letters and paying one visit to Corinth, Paul sent Titus to Corinth with a third letter (2 Cor. 7:6-9). When Titus failed to return with news of the situation, Paul left Ephesus and, with a troubled spirit (2 Cor. 7:5), traveled north to Troas (2 Cor. 2:12-13).

Finally, in Macedonia, Titus met the anxious apostle with the good news that the church at Corinth had repented. In relief and joy, Paul wrote yet another letter to Corinth (2 Corinthians 1-9), perhaps from Philippi, sending it again through Titus (2 Cor. 7:5-16). In addition, Titus was given responsibility for completing the collection for the poor of Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:6, 16-24; 12:18).

Titus appears in another important role on the island of Crete (Titus 1:4). Beset by a rise in false teaching and declining morality, Titus was told by Paul to strengthen the churches by teaching sound doctrine and good works, and by appointing elders in every city (Titus 1:5). Paul then urged Titus to join him in Nicopolis (on the west coast of Greece) for winter (Titus 3:12). Not surprisingly, Titus was remembered in church tradition as the first bishop of Crete.

A final reference to Titus comes from 2 Timothy 4:10, where Paul remarks in passing that Titus has departed for mission work in Dalmatia (modern Yugoslavia).

Titus was a man for the tough tasks. According to Paul, he was dependable (2 Cor. 8:17), reliable (2 Cor. 7:6), and diligent (2 Cor. 8:17); and he had a great capacity for human affection (2 Cor. 7:13-15). Possessing both

strength and tact, Titus calmed a desperate situation on more than one occasion. He is a good model for Christians who are called to live out their witness in trying circumstances. (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dict.*)

Titus (ti'tus). [Gr. *Titos*, a transliteration of the Latin *Titus*. Both the Greek and the Latin forms of the name were common during the apostolic age.] An intimate friend, traveling companion, and assistant of the apostle Paul. His name occurs in the New Testament only in the epistles of Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor 2:13, etc.), the Galatians (Gal 2:1, 3), Timothy (2 Ti 4:10), and Titus (Tit 1:4). Paul considered Titus his "own son after the common faith" (Tit 1:4)—evidently because he was one of his own converts. That Titus was a Gentile is indicated by Paul's refusal to circumcise him in order to appease overzealous Jewish Christians at Jerusalem—perhaps on the occasion when he visited that city as a member of the Antioch delegation to the council held to resolve the issue of Gentile converts (Gal. 2:1-5; cf. Acts 15). Possibly he was a native of Antioch. In any case, he was apparently a member of the Gentile church in that city (Gal 2:1) and probably accepted Christianity during Paul's early ministry there. When some in the Corinthian church turned against Paul, about A.D. 57, he sent Titus to effect a reconciliation. Paul's anxiety for the success of this mission is evident from his perplexity at not meeting Titus at Troas as planned (2 Cor. 2:12,13; 7:6). A little later he met Titus, and sent him back to Corinth with the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians [2 Corinthians 1-9: really Paul's fourth letter to them] (2 Cor. 8:6,17,18), and to supervise the collection of funds for the poor at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:23-9:5). Several years later, apparently not long before his 2nd imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote the Epistle to Titus. He had left Titus on the island of Crete to organize the churches there and to instruct the believers more thoroughly (Titus 1:4,5). In his letter he summoned Titus to meet him in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). The last we hear of Titus is shortly before Paul's death, when, in a letter to Timothy, Paul says that he had sent Titus on a mission to Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10). *SDA Bible Dictionary*

Eusebius, the church historian of the 4th century, refers to Titus as the bishop of the island of Crete (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* iii. 4). (*SDA Bible Comm.* - Titus)

From the epistle it appears that there were groups of Christians in a number of places in Crete. The general church organization, however, was incomplete, and trouble was brewing because of false teachers, who may have been half-converted Jews. These false teachers were laying great emphasis on myths, genealogies, and the law. They were wasting much time and energy, both their own and that of other church members, on pointless argument. Titus was responsible for straightening matters out, and Paul sends him counsel and encouragement. In this letter Paul is especially concerned with giving Titus counsel that would help him to establish the recently converted Christians of Crete in true Christian faith and living. Accordingly, the epistle is highly practical. Paul counsels a more thorough and formal church organization, and advises Titus as to qualifications for

church elders. He reminds him of the Cretans' reputation for falsehood and laziness, and implies that the Christians there had been disturbed by Jewish legalists. Paul particularly points out that emphasis on ceremonial impurity in time tends to render the conscience itself impure. When the mind is absorbed with religious trivia, too often the really important questions of morality and integrity are ignored and religion deteriorates into a matter of form and theory.

Paul's great emphasis here is that the Cretan Christians should be sober, chaste, and thoroughly upright in all their living. Slaves—as doubtless many of them were—just like anyone else, should be obedient and honest.

At the climax of his letter Paul reminds Titus, and the Cretans through him, that God's kindness to man is not won by good deeds, but is the gift of His mercy through Jesus Christ.

An awareness of the pagan heritage of these Cretan brethren and of the mental confusion wrought by the Judaizing teachers helped Paul to deal specifically with their problems. His counsel is clear and specific. He understands his people and their basic human behavior patterns. In this letter he exhibits a precision and incisiveness that preachers today may well seek to emulate. (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 356)

Titus

Christians are quite serious in believing that when they gather together for worship and work, God is present and sovereign, really present and absolutely sovereign. God creates and guides, God saves and heals, God corrects and blesses, God calls and judges. With such comprehensive and personal leadership from God, what is the place of *human* leadership?

Quite obviously, it has to be second place. It must not elbow its way to the front, it must not bossily take over. Ego-centered, ego-prominent leadership betrays the Master. The best leadership in spiritual communities formed in the name of Jesus, the Messiah, is inconspicuous, not calling attention to itself but not sacrificing anything in the way of conviction and firmness either.

In his letters to two young associates—Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete—we see Paul encouraging and guiding the development of just such leadership. What he had learned so thoroughly himself, he was now passing on, and showing them, in turn, how to develop a similar leadership in local congregations. This is essential reading because ill-directed and badly formed spiritual leadership causes much damage in souls. Paul in both his life and his letters shows us how to do it right. (*The Message* article on Timothy-Titus)

The following is a chronological listing of the major events concerning Titus that are mentioned in Scripture:

A.D. 49 - Titus accompanied Paul to Jerusalem for the Jerusalem council. Paul refused to circumcise Titus because he was not Jewish. (Acts 15:2; Galatians 2:1-3)

A.D. 57 - Titus was working with Paul at Ephesus while Paul was having so much trouble with the church at Corinth. Paul wrote his third letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 10-13), that very strong letter, and sent it with Titus to Corinth. (2 Corinthians 12:18)

A.D. 57 - Paul became very worried about how that strong letter was going to be accepted and set out to find Titus to get the news. Paul found Titus in Macedonia, learned that the Corinthians had accepted his reproof, and wrote another letter to send ahead with Titus. (2 Corinthians 1-9)

A.D. 58 - Titus was placed in charge of the collection of the relief offering at Corinth to be taken to Jerusalem. (1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8:1-6,16,23)

A.D. 65 - After Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, he was released and worked with Titus in Crete. Paul left Titus in Crete and worked elsewhere. A little later, Paul wrote this letter back to Titus asking him to come to Nicopolis. Paul apparently sent this letter with Zenas and Apollos. (Titus 3:12-15)

A.D. 67 - Titus joined Paul at Rome during Paul's second imprisonment there and was sent to Dalmatia. (2 Timothy 4:10)

2. Why do you suppose that Titus is so much like 1 Timothy? Why preserve both books in the New Testament?

Both of these letters were written about the same time to two of Paul's young associates who were serving as pastors in two different locations. Paul probably believed there was a real concern about these issues and wanted to share that concern with both of them. Timothy and Titus had been very closely associated with Paul for a long time, and Paul thought of himself as a father to them. He wanted to share some of his real concerns about the growth of the church. He recognized that he himself might not be around for a lot longer, and he wanted to give general guidance for these young pastors for times to come.

Some parallels:

Criteria for church leaders:	1 Timothy 3:2-7	Titus 1:6-9
Treatment of church members:	1 Timothy 5:1-20	Titus 2:1-8
Slaves:	1 Timothy 6:1,2	Titus 2:9,10

3. Do you know any church leaders who are "blameless"? (Titus 1:5-9; compare 1 Timothy 3:1-7) Considering what Paul quoted about the Cretans, would it appear possible to get any church leaders from among them? Does this mean that if a minister has one bad child in his family, he cannot serve? Should he resign immediately? After a while how many would we have left? Did God "fail" with one-third of His children?

This was clearly intended by Paul as a description of an ideal church leader. This does not mean that every candidate is going to qualify in every detail. Especially in a country where people have been described in such bad terms!

This challenge that Paul gave to Titus is particularly interesting in light of the fact that many of the Jewish converts did not even think that Titus qualified as a “true Christian” because he was not circumcised. Paul, no doubt fully knowing what he was doing, placed this “uncircumcised” person in charge of all the churches in Crete. Crete seems to have been a favorite place to which Jews from Palestine emigrated. Thus, there were quite a few Jewish people on the island. Paul warned Titus to beware of “those of the circumcision” (Titus 1:10) meaning Jewish “Christians” and perhaps Jews who had not become Christians and were looking out for anyone trying to downplay their “special rights.” Thus, Paul intentionally ignored the Jewish demands and instead placed Titus over them in the Christian church. As for the basic nature of the Cretans - see below.

Paul, once again demonstrated his thorough knowledge of the local situation as he gave wise instruction to Titus.

4. Why did Paul quote an obviously uninspired writer to say something so disparaging about the people of Crete as he said in Titus 1:12 (NASB), “One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons’”? Compare the GNB translation of verse 12, 13: “It was a Cretan himself, one of their own prophets, who spoke the truth when he said, ‘Cretans are always liars, wicked beasts, and lazy gluttons.’”

Was this book only for the private encouragement of Titus? Would Titus dare to read this passage to his congregation? After having heard these words, would the audience listen to anything else that Paul said?

Titus 1:12,13 is most likely a quote from Epimenides, one of the “Seven Sages of Greece” who lived at Knossos in the 6th century B.C. (For Paul’s use of this same poem on Mars’ Hill see 7SDABC on Acts 17:28)

“We are also his offspring” comes from Phaenomena, line 5 by Aratus, (c. 270 B.C.) who was a friend of Zeno, founder of the Stoics.

This part of Epimenides’ poem was also quoted by Callimachus (3rd century B.C.) in his hymn to Zeus. Instead of asserting his own opinion, Paul wisely quotes, not from the enemies of the Cretans, but from one of their own respected spokesmen. In the ancient world the phrase, “to Cretanize,” meant to lie, or deceive, like a Cretan. This offensive Cretan trait was now apparent in the perverse religious teachers and the “unruly” members of various congregations (Titus 2:10). (7BC 362)

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Last Modified: May 4, 2012

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