



The Letter of Paul to Titus

The Letter of Paul to Titus was written by the Apostle Paul somewhere around 62 - 64 AD which was within the time frame of the last five years of Paul's life before his execution in the timeframe of 64 - 67 AD. Interestingly enough, the Letter to Titus as well as the 1 and 2 letters to Timothy have been challenged by literary scholars who debate the authenticity over certain points; however, there has been a systematic failure is seeking to disprove its credibility.

The traditional view of this letter is that it was written sometime between Paul's first term of imprisonment noted in Acts 28 and his subsequent secondary term of imprisonment which led to this death. It is also noted that this letter was written around the same time as 1 Timothy was written.

In the *ESV* study bible, it is recorded that the overarching theme of this letter is defining the inseparable link between faith and practice, belief and behavior. It goes on to record, "this truth is the basis for its critique of false teaching as well as instruction in Christian living and qualifications for church leaders."

For some context to the historical framework and situation of which led to this letter be written; so here is where we are in the Church History timeline of the first century. Paul had recently completed a journey to Crete, resulting in the establishment of new churches.

In order to see that these churches were properly established (as was Paul's typical pattern, noted in Acts 14) Paul left Titus in Crete to implement and structure the Churches to be healthy and set in order. The existence of false teachers (noted in Titus 1) amid the fledgling churches heightens the intensity of the situation and thus lends to the necessity of Paul speaking into these matters to protect the Church itself and the faith community.

Furthermore, it would seem that the purpose of this letter was to shore up a few details but primarily to address false teachers. Though it is not readily defined regarding the false teachings themselves, there is much we can glean from Paul's words to Titus.

Letter to Titus Outline:

- 1) Opening (1:1-4)
- 2) The Occasion: The Need for Proper Leadership (1:5-9)
- 3) The Problem: False Teachers (1:10-16)
- 4) Christian Living in Contrast to the False Teachers (2:1 - 3:8)
 - i) Proper Living by age and gender groups (2:1-10)
 - ii) Gospel Basis (2:11-14)
 - iii) Summary command (2:15)
 - iv) Proper living, particularly with respect to outsiders (3:1-2)
 - v) Gospel Basis (3:3-7)
 - vi) Summary Command (3:8)
- 5) The Problem Restated: False Teachers (3:9-11)
- 6) Closing Exhortation (3:12-15)

Titus Chapter 1

1) Greeting

a) “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; ⁴To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.”

- i) Paul opens his letter as he does most of them speaking to his apostleship and the purpose of the letter itself including whom it was sent to. As in this case, it was Titus.
- ii) I find it very interesting that Paul's relationship with Titus is very similar to his relationship with Timothy as far as closeness relationally as well as his care and love for them both. Paul notates Titus as being a true child in the common faith which is huge praise from an Apostle to one of his pupils.

iii) His letter in verses 2 and 3 provide some very useful insight regarding Paul's theology and view of salvation, God's plan and divine strategy of the Lord in regards to Christ and His Gospel!

2) Qualifications for Elders

a) ⁵“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.”

i) Church Order and Structure is key to long term stability and vitality. Disorder can never be blessed because disorder produces disfunction. Paul understands this truth well thus his statement to Titus that he left him in Crete to bring the church into order and to establish a leadership infrastructure. Church order produces fruitfulness; church disorder produces chaos.

- ii) In regards to the appointment of Elders, Paul provides a few directives for selecting them: a man who is above reproach with one wife and his children are believers (his household matters to the faith community) and has lived in such a way that no allegation can be brought against him for debauchery or insubordination.
- iii) The word debaucher noted in verse 6 is a compound Greek phrase, “Kategoria-Asotias” which interprets to mean accusation of indiscretion. (Strong’s Greek 2724 and 810)
- iv) The word insubordination noted in verse 6 is the Greek word, “anyptakta” which interprets to mean, “not subject to rule, unruly. Unsubdued.” (Strong’s Greek 506)
- v) These points are absolutely pivotal because the Church can’t be expected to respect a man who holds eldership if his life violates these requirements/expectations.

b) “⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”

- i) An overseer, as noted here, some would define as the Pastor or the headship of the faith community that is established.
- ii) This can be easily ascertained in light of the significant increase of perimeters that must be met before consideration or establishment of such person in said role. The requirements of the elders are clear but the Overseer or Pastor is far more in regards to standards of expectation.
- iii) The Greek word used here for Overseer by Paul is a compound word, “epi-skopon” (Strong’s Greek 1985) “Epi” and “Skopos” mean “superintendent”. Or more specifically, a Christian officer in genitive case charge of a church.
- iv) Hence my suggestion that this the Pastor or Chief Elder of the Church. Now why are all of these qualifications necessary? For the protection of the church and for its establishment to be respected.

c) ¹⁰“For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.”¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.”

i) Paul seems to drop the proverbial hammer by exposing the corruptness of the culture as well as its impact upon the church itself. Along with being led astray or being deceived into error.

ii) Note verses 13-14, ¹³“This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.”

- iii) Not devoting themselves to religious myths and from the deception of those who turned away from the truth. It would seem that in most of the Epistles that Paul wrote, he is having to protect the church from false doctrine and evil men who were seeking to use religion as a means of controlling and manipulating people. In our studies of Philippians and Colossians, we have seen this same dynamic playing out.
- iv) But sadly it would seem that not everyone is listening because of Paul's words in verse 16, "¹⁶They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."
- v) It would seem very obvious that Paul is drawing some hard lines and is separating the "sheep from the goats" as it were with much of what he says in chapter 1 of his letter to Titus. But what we can all learn from this is that we should all see the collective value of keeping ourselves squared away and stay in the Word of Truth to guard ourselves and others. Sound Doctrine is the difference between Heaven and Hell.