

## INTRODUCTION

Paul, in this short letter, does not waste words. He is very precise, clear, and succinct. He has given Titus everything needed to finish the work on Crete: Apostolic authority to set things in order, clear qualifications for elders who will hold fast to the faithful word, a direct charge to silence the rebellious empty talkers and mind-deceivers (especially those of the circumcision), and practical instructions so that every group in the assembly lives in a way that adorns the doctrine of God our Savior. The theological motivation has been made plain, the saving grace has appeared to all men and is actively training believers to deny ungodliness and live sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope. Now, in the closing section, Paul brings the letter to its practical conclusion: keep the focus on what is trustworthy, devote yourselves to good works that flow from the identity you already possess in Christ, avoid the distractions that produce quarrels and division, deal firmly with those who persist in causing splits, and handle the practical needs of ministry with diligence. Then he gives Titus personal instructions and closes with, of course, grace.

## REVIEW OF TITUS SO FAR

Chapter 1 lays the foundation. Paul identifies himself as the bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. His purpose is tied to the faith (the body of truth to be believed) of God's chosen ones and the full knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness. Everything rests on the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began and manifested in its proper time through the proclamation entrusted to Paul. Titus is Paul's true, faithful, child in the common faith. The letter's occasion is clear: Paul and Titus had planted assemblies on Crete; Paul moved on and left Titus to finish setting things in order and appoint elders in every city. False teachers, especially those of the circumcision, were already upsetting households for sordid gain, pushing Jewish myths and commandments of men that turn people away from the truth. The letter equips Titus to counter this with sound doctrine and lives that visibly display the grace believers already possess.

Paul gives Titus the charge to set in order what remains and appoint elders/overseers (the same office described by maturity and function). The overarching requirement is that an overseer be above reproach, that is, unable to be accused. He must be a one-woman man, have believing children who are not open to the charge of dissipation or insubordination, and meet a list of observable character traits. Negatives that disqualify include being self-willed, quick-tempered, addicted to wine, pugnacious, or fond of sordid gain. Positives include being hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, and self-controlled. The culminating quality is holding fast to the faithful word so he can both encourage with

sound teaching and refute those who contradict. These are the visible evidence that a man is living in alignment with the identity he possesses in Christ and thus qualified to lead.

Paul then explains why the charge to appoint qualified elders is urgent: there are many rebellious/insubordinate men, empty talkers/speakers of worthless things, and mind-deceivers, especially those of the circumcision (these are Jews who are trying to control these local assemblies who claim superiority due to their nationality). These men must be silenced because they are overturning whole households by teaching what ought not to be taught for the sake of disgraceful gain. The false teachers were using a cultural stereotype to claim Cretan believers were unfit for leadership. Titus is to reprove them sharply so they may be sound in the faith and stop paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men that turn people away from the truth. They profess to know God but deny Him by their detestable, unbelieving, and unproven deeds. Sound doctrine is the antidote.

In Titus 2, Paul pivots with “But as for you...” Titus is to speak the things that are fitting for sound/healthy doctrine. Paul then gives concrete instructions for every group, so their lives visibly adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, and sound in the faith (the body of truth believed), in love, and in perseverance. Older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not enslaved to much wine, and teachers of what is good, so they may train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, and subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be blasphemed. Young men are to be self-controlled in everything, with Titus himself setting the example in good works, in purity of teaching, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so opponents will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say. Servants are to be subject to their own masters in everything, well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith—so they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

The theological heart follows in 2:11–14. The saving grace of God has appeared to all men. This grace is actively instructing/training us so that, after denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we may live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age, while looking for the blessed hope. This training is our motivation, our why. Since we have every spiritual blessing and Jesus has taken all of our curse, we should live out of gratitude and from our identity. Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works. These are not works done to obtain favor; they are the realistic expectation from children of God.

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In Chapter 3:1–7, Titus is to speak, exhort, and reprove these things with all authority; he is not to let anyone disregard him. The content of the reminder is that believers are to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be persuaded by God that they are rightful authority, ready for every good work, to malign no one, to be peaceable (not contentious), gentle (forbearing, reasonable), and to show every consideration (meekness/strength under control) toward all men. The reason is that we also once were foolish, unpersuaded/unbelieving regarding the truth, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness and love for mankind of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy. He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified (declared righteous in a forensic sense) by that grace we might be made heirs according to the confident expectation of eternity. The reminder of what we once were and what God has done in mercy produces humility, gentleness, and readiness for good works. We do not treat anyone with contempt; we were once in the same condition. Good works and proper conduct should be done in respect of our identity and the grace of God.

Throughout the letter the pattern is consistent: grace trains and motivates because believers already stand in right standing through Christ; good works are how we honor God; we remember what we were so we remain humble and kind; qualified leaders guard the truth and refute error; false teaching that adds to or distorts the gospel must be answered directly.

## EXPOSITION OF TITUS 3:8–15

This final section of the main body ties everything together. After the authoritative charge in 2:15 and the gospel reminder in 3:3–7, Paul gives Titus concrete instructions for maintaining focus in the assemblies: affirm the trustworthy truth so believers devote themselves to good works, avoid the empty controversies that the false teachers used to create division, and deal firmly with those who persist in causing splits. He then gives Titus personal instructions for ongoing ministry support and closes with greetings and grace.

Titus 3:8 begins with a familiar phrase: “This is a *trustworthy* statement” — πιστὸς ὁ λόγος (pistos ho logos) – faithful/trustworthy is the word. This same expression appears in the Pastoral Epistles to introduce key doctrinal truths that can be relied upon without qualification (1 Timothy 1:15, 3:1, 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11). Here, it most naturally refers to the gospel summary just given in 3:4-7, the kindness and love of God our Savior appearing, salvation by mercy rather than works in righteousness,

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regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, justification by grace, and heirship according to the hope of eternity.

Paul tells Titus, “concerning these things I want you to speak *confidently*.” The verb διαβεβαιόω (diabebaiō) carries the sense of asserting with strong confidence, insisting upon, or strong affirmation.

Titus is not to teach the Word of God as one opinion among many; he is to declare it with the full weight of confidence in the apostolic doctrines that he has been trained in for many years. The goal is so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds.

The two verbs here are significant:

φροντίζω (phrontizō) – to give careful thought to, be intent on, devote oneself to

προϊσθῆμι (proistēmi) – to stand before, take the lead in, be devoted to/manage.

Believers are to give sustained attention to and take the lead in καλός ἔργον (kalos ergon) – good, beneficial, advantageous works.

The text of Titus presents good works as the expected and profitable outworking for those who have believed in Jesus and understand the grace of God. In 2:14, Christ’s self-giving has the purpose of producing a people zealous for good deeds. In 3:8, the reason for affirming the trustworthy statement about grace and mercy is so that believers will be careful to engage in good deeds, which the text calls good and profitable. In 3:14, believers are instructed to learn to meet pressing needs with good deeds so they will not be unprofitable. The letter consistently shows good works as the fitting response of those already saved by grace, not as the means of obtaining that salvation.

Titus 3:9 turns to what must be avoided: “But *avoid* foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.” The verb περίσθῆμι (periistēmi) means to stand around something in order to avoid it, to shun, or to turn away from. The items listed are foolish questionings or speculations, genealogies, quarrels or strife, and fights or disputes about law. These are the very things the false teachers were promoting. Jewish myths, endless genealogies, and man-made commandments that turn people away from the truth (Titus 1:14; 1 Timothy 1:4). Paul says they are unprofitable, bringing no benefit, and vain, empty, without substance or result.

1 Timothy 6:20 commands Timothy to avoid worldly and empty chatter and opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge.

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2 Timothy 2:16 warns that worldly and empty chatter leads to further ungodliness, and 2:23 instructs to refuse foolish and ignorant speculations because they produce quarrels.

These pursuits do not build up; they distract from sound doctrine, consume time and energy, and create the very division the false teachers were exploiting. Titus is to turn the assemblies away from them, so the focus remains on the trustworthy word and its fruit of good works.

Titus 3:10-11 addresses the divisive person directly: “Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.”

The verb παραιτέομαι (paraiteomai) means to ask to be excused from, to decline, or to reject. The action is to excuse from the group or assembly.

The adjective αἰρετικός (hairetikos) describes one who causes divisions or factions; one who holds to doctrines or “foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about law” that cause splits in the assembly (the later ecclesiastical sense of “heretic” developed from this).

After a first and second νουθεσία (nouthesia) – admonition or warning. Titus is to reject such a person, but the goal is for people to come into conformity with the Apostolic doctrine.

The reason they are to be excused is given in verse 11: such a one is perverted (literally: has turned aside {*from the truth*}, corrupted in thinking) and is sinning, being self-condemned. His own persistence in division after clear warning stands as his condemnation; no further evaluation is needed.

Titus 3:12–14 turns to personal instructions. Titus is to join him there once reinforcements arrive. While waiting, Titus is to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them.”

This is the only mention of Artemas.

Tychicus is well known. He was from Asia (Modern Western Turkey) and joined Paul during his third missionary journey (Acts 20). He is mentioned in Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy. He is known as a faithful helper to Paul and was often a letter carrier for Paul.

We do not have any knowledge of Zenas other than he is a lawyer.

Apollos is the well-known Alexandrian believer and powerful speaker from Acts 18 and 1 Corinthians. These men were serving and needed practical support so their ministry would not be hindered.

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“Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.” This seems redundant, but in context, Titus was to encourage the local churches to help the men who work hard for their spiritual well-being. As a body, we are to meet pressing needs.

Titus 3:15 closes with greetings and benediction. “All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.” This is the standard Pauline closing, reminding every reader that the grace of God is already theirs in Christ and remains the atmosphere in which we live our lives.

#### REVIEW OF THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

The three letters to Timothy and Titus form a unified body of instruction for ordering and protecting local assemblies in the generation after the apostles.

#### **First Timothy**

First Timothy was written to Timothy in Ephesus. The church there needed order in worship, leadership, and daily conduct. Paul tells Timothy to stay in Ephesus and charge certain men not to teach strange doctrines or give attention to myths and endless genealogies. He lays out qualifications for overseers and deacons that center on observable character. The letter also covers proper conduct in the churches function, care for widows, instructions for elders, and warnings against false teachers who forbid marriage and push abstinence from foods. It closes with a charge to those who have abundance and a call to guard what has been entrusted. Sound doctrine and godly living stay linked throughout; truth that does not shape life discredits the message.

#### **Second Timothy**

Second Timothy is Paul’s final letter, written while he sat in prison. Endurance runs through the whole letter. Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed of the Lord’s testimony or of Paul’s chains, but to suffer for the gospel by God’s power. He points back to the sincere faith that lived first in Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, and he tells Timothy to stir up the gift God gave him. The deposit of sound doctrine must be guarded and passed on to faithful men who can teach others. Paul warns against false teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus, whose teaching spreads like gangrene because they deny the resurrection. He charges Timothy to preach the word in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with great patience, because many will stop listening to sound doctrine and gather teachers who tell them what they want to hear. Paul speaks of his own suffering and the Lord’s deliverance, and he looks ahead to the crown of righteousness that waits for everyone who has loved Christ’s appearing. He asks Timothy to come quickly and bring his cloak

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and books. He notes that only Luke remains with him, that Mark is still useful for service, and that others have gone to different places. The letter ends with greetings and grace.

**Titus**

Titus addresses a newer work on Crete. Paul and Titus had planted assemblies there, but the work was not finished. Paul left Titus behind to set things in order and appoint elders in every city. The qualifications for elders overlap with those in First Timothy, yet they come in the direct context of silencing false teachers. Paul exposes rebellious empty talkers and mind-deceivers, especially those of the circumcision. These men upset whole households for sordid gain and used cultural stereotypes to claim Cretan believers were unfit to lead. Titus must reprove them sharply so they may become sound in the faith. The letter then gives instructions for every group in the assembly: older men, older women who train the young, young men, and bond-servants, so their lives adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. Chapters 2 and 3 shows saving grace as having appeared to all men. This grace trains believers to deny ungodliness and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly while they look for the blessed hope. Titus 3:1-7 reminds believers of what they once were and what God has done in mercy: salvation through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, justification by grace, and heirship according to the hope of eternal life. The purpose is that they will live with humility and readiness for good works toward all people. The letter closes by urging Titus to affirm the Apostolic doctrine, to lead believers to devote themselves to good works, to avoid foolish controversies that only produce quarrels, to reject a divisive man after proper warning, and to handle practical ministry support with diligence.

Paul is very consistent in message through all three letters. Sound doctrine forms the foundation. Qualified leaders hold fast to the faithful word so they can encourage with healthy teaching and refute those who contradict. False teaching that adds to the gospel or turns people from the truth must be answered directly. Godly conduct in every sphere visibly adorns the doctrine of God our Savior. The motivation is grace, not fear. Good works flow from identity in Christ Jesus. Good works are defined by God, profitable for men, and the evidence of a life lived in alignment with this reality.

These letters equip leaders and assemblies to plant, organize, protect, and mature churches in the grace of God. They show how sound doctrine joined with lives that adorn it silences error, how grace trains us to live according to our identity, and how the next generation of faithful men and women can carry the truth forward.