

Titus: A Chapter-by-Chapter Study

Introduction

This is a letter to Titus from the Apostle Paul. Titus is considered one of Paul's most trusted companions and helpers. He is mentioned 13 times in the New Testament. He is also believed to have carried Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians). Not much else is known about the person Titus, but it has been proposed from the wording used in 2 Corinthians that he may have been Luke's biological brother.

This letter is sent to Titus while he is residing on the island of Crete. Paul and Titus visited Crete and started a church there. Paul asked Titus to remain behind to help strengthen this church since Crete was known for its lack of morals and it was feared that corruption would soon infiltrate the new church. Apollos and Zenas carried Paul's letter to Titus to provide moral support to Titus from all three.

It is widely accepted that Paul wrote this letter while in Macedonia after his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28) and believed to have been written around 65 AD.

The letter to Titus contains what many call "classic summaries of Christian doctrine" and is often used as a guideline for Christian action and behavior.

Chapter 1

V1-4

This is an elaborate introduction offering the name of Paul and his credentials as an apostle. This is not for the sake of Titus who already is familiar with Paul's background, but for the sake of those that would hear this letter, as it would most certainly be read aloud to the congregation of the church in Crete.

What does the term "bondservant of God" mean in verse 1?

Paul uses the word "doulos" here which is the Greek word for the lowliest of slaves, but it also meant "slave by choice" and not a person who was captured against their will.

V5

Paul trusted Titus enough to leave him in an immoral community to protect this fledgling congregation. Titus had been given the authority to appoint elders in each congregation, present and future, on the island of Crete.

V6-9

Here Paul lists the attributes of a church leader that Titus should look for.

- Blameless – this word is translated as "nothing to take hold of." There should be nothing that can be used to extort this person. He is to be righteous.
- Husband of one wife – this indicates that this is a devoted man, one who can stay faithful. His marriage should reflect his relationship with Jesus. Note that this does not mean that this person is required to be married, just that he is a faithful man.
- Having faithful children – a respectable family is a good indicator of a respectable family man.
- Not self-willed – selfishness and arrogance are signs of pride. A church leader must also be a humble servant.

- Not quick-tempered – The Greek word used here is “orgilos” which translates to “a settled state of anger.” It is okay for a church leader to be angry, but anger should not dominate his actions, nor should it be easy to ignite.
- Not given to wine – there is much debate over this particular phrase, but most believe it to mean simply not to indulge in drunkenness and not that wine is forbidden. A drunk would have a hard time discerning right from wrong and doing the will of God.
- Not violent – the Greek word used here translates to “one who browbeats his fellow man.” This would not only include physical violence, but also bullying or hate-filled speech.
- Not greedy for money – greed, along with pride and wrath, can exclude a person from becoming a leader in the church for obvious reasons. If money can become an idol, then that would bump God from His throne.
- Hospitable – showing kindness and mercy to your fellow man is a reflection of the heart of God.
- A lover of what is good – A church leader should have a heart that desires to do good.
- Sober-minded – this defines a person who is able to deal with subjects appropriately. They can offer clarity on difficult topics.
- Just – These next three are often grouped together as “just” means “right towards man.”
- Holy – Being holy means being “right towards God.”
- Self-controlled – Self control means being “right towards oneself.”
- “Holding fast the faithful word...” – the entirety of verse 9 speaks of the importance of adhering to the teachings of God’s Word. This is especially important for the early churches because the Holy Bible had not been completed yet. Early Christians were to seek the council of the Apostles of Jesus and those that were taught by those apostles. The reason the Holy Bible came into existence was because the original teachings were so far removed from future converts that there needed to be a baseline of what was taught by the apostles and what was falsely taught.

V10-11

Many of the apostles and early church leaders had to fight against misinformation and corruption of the teachings of Christ. Paul mentions this directly in these verses. Not only were the newly converted gentiles susceptible to mixing religions or cultures, but the Jewish converts often enforced Old Covenant laws, including circumcision. The newly appointed elders of the church must be able to recognize truth from false teachings and deal with it appropriately.

V12-16

Paul uses a common cultural saying of the day to define the Cretans as “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” Establishing a church in Crete would be an uphill battle. The local customs would be difficult to deal with but must be dealt with directly and firmly. This is why Paul is laying out the guidelines for church leaders.

What does Paul mean when he says, “To the pure all things are pure...” in verse 15?

Here Paul is breaking down the two extremes that must be dealt with. Self-righteousness can cause those who think they are doing the will of God to look down on those around them. This was often the case with the legalistic Jewish converts. The other extreme was the “defiled” which held nothing sacred. Each of these extremes could talk like Christians, but few of them led their lives as Christians.

Chapter 2

The second chapter of Titus is often used as the bar for measuring the behavior of all Christians. If ever someone's character is in question, these verses are the comparison. Although there are many cultural differences between the modern world and the time of Paul and Titus, these can be good guidelines for all believers. This chapter tells Christians how to live.

V1-2

The phrase "speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine" in verse 1 can also accurately be translated as "speak up for the right living." The character of a true Christian should be modeled after these things that Paul tells Titus about.

Older men are to set the bar for their families and younger counterparts.

- Sober – quiet, sedate, solemn
- Reverent – deeply respectful
- Temperate – moderate, self-restrained, not excessive
- Sound in faith – believing in the Word of God
- Sound in love – following and practicing the law of Jesus ("Love one another as I have loved you")
- Sound in patience – The Greek word here means "active endurance." This does not mean simply being content with waiting on the next thing. This phrase means "to actively endure the challenges of life."

V3-5

Here, Titus is instructed on the proper behavior of women.

- Older Women
 - Reverent in behavior – the phrasing here is used in regard to how a woman dresses and presents herself
 - Not slanderers – The Greek word for slanderer is the same word for devil. Gossiping and speaking ill of someone is considered sinful.
 - Not given much to wine – in the Roman and Greek cultures, older women were susceptible to becoming drunkards. Paul is telling Titus to be mindful of these cultural traits.
 - Teachers of good things – Women often had the position of being teachers and examples to the younger generation. How they taught these children was a reflection of their own character.
 - Admonish the young women – the older women had the unique position of teaching the young adult women.
- Younger Women
 - Love their husbands – In this age, the ministry of women began in the home, first to their husbands...
 - Love their children – ...and also their children.
 - Be discreet – judicious in conduct and speech and respecting privacy
 - Be chaste – celibacy before marriage

- Be homemakers – This goes back to how a woman presents herself. Her home reflects her character.
- Be good
- Be obedient – Following the hierarchy that God set forth from Genesis shows not only obedience to their husbands, but obedience to God

V6-8

The first word in verse 6 (NKJV) is “likewise” meaning that what the young men are to be taught isn’t all that different from the previous examples of good behavior, in particular sober mindedness.

Paul addresses Titus directly here as Titus was a young man himself. This was not so much on how to instruct as much as it was on how to be an example. Titus was to live out these virtues in order to teach his fellow young men. Titus is told to be:

- A pattern of good works – teaching is one thing; living a good example is another
- Show integrity in doctrine – Studying, knowing, and applying the Word of God is the most important example
- Reverent – How a man presents himself is as important as how a woman presents herself
- Incorruptible – Having integrity even when no one is watching
- Sound in speech – this phrase means doing what you say and keeping your word. If you say one thing but do another, your character is blemished.

V9-10

This passage is often controversial as many debate whether Paul was promoting slavery with this section. Most scholars believe that Paul did not condone slavery, but as it was a part of the culture of the time it had to be addressed as a reality. Indeed, Christianity was the first religion to mix slaves and slaveowners in the same congregation. It is believed that some slaves were church elders over their own masters.

These instructions can be applied to almost any worker performing tasks for an employer.

- Obedient to their masters – Just as Jesus obeyed His Father and served His disciples and followers, a worker should serve their employer
- Well-pleasing in all things – Not only doing the task assigned, but doing it well and even joyfully
- Not answering back – No employer wants to hear a smart-mouth when assigning jobs
- Not pilfering – A slave stealing from their master was almost expected back in this era. Paul is telling Christian slaves to behave better. Sometimes workers feel as if they’re entitled to an employer’s property, even something as small as a pen or a paperclip. Stealing is still stealing no matter the size or the cost of the item.
- Show good fidelity – show loyalty and adhere to the completion of assigned tasks

V11-15

The closing of this chapter explains where all the previous virtues stem from. Jesus had all these traits and showed us how to live by example. Jesus didn’t gain so many followers by talking a good game. He lived out each of these qualities in full view of everyone all the time.

To live a Christian life according to these guidelines is to live a pure life that expects the return of Jesus at any given moment.

Chapter 3

V1-7

The beginning of this chapter continues the theme from chapter 2 but is not aimed at any one people group. Instead, these characteristics are for all to adhere to.

The Greek grammar used in verses 1 and 2 is set in an active tone, not a passive tone. Titus is to continuously remind his congregation to be good servants, to seek out work to do, not just sit idly by and wait to be instructed to do something. Even the command to “speak evil of no one” is an active instruction to constantly be aware of one’s tongue.

Why does Paul tell Titus that everyone was once foolish, disobedient, etc. in verse 3?

It is a common trap even today for Christians to feel superior to non-Christians or even new Christians. Self-righteousness is an easy trap to fall into. By reminding Titus and the new congregation at Crete that they were all just like the non-believers once, Paul hopes to add humility and mercy to these instructions. Paul moves this thought forward by using the next 3 verses to remind Titus and every reader that we are in this position by the grace of God. There is no self-righteousness allowed when we owe everything to Him.

V8-11

Just as there are guidelines aimed at the entire congregation, there are things which are not to be done. Paul makes a list of things to avoid which many churches including the new congregation at Crete had succumbed to.

It is easy for Christians to get caught up in the small things and let the divisiveness of these discussions cause strife among friends. Many a church has been torn apart by a simple dispute over a word or phrase concerning doctrine.

What does Paul mean when he advises Titus to reject a divisive man after two encounters (verses 10 and 11)?

If an individual has been rebuked by one person on multiple occasions, it becomes easy for the rebuked to ignore that person. If that person has been rebuked by multiple people concerning the same offense it becomes harder to ignore. Likewise, if the person doing the rebuking is the only one calling someone out, maybe they are overreacting and there is no need to continue. If there is truly misconduct, more than one person should call that conduct out.

V12-15

The closing of this letter mentions various other trusted friends of Paul. Artemas and Tychicus are possible replacements for Titus in Crete once Titus feels content to leave the new church in their hands. Zenas and Apollos are most likely the deliverers of this letter to Titus and quite probably a welcomed site of relief to him. The closing also addresses all of the readers as a whole to provide for not only these aforementioned friends of Paul, but all Christians, as we are all one family in Christ.

References

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