

# Titus

## Authorship

Paul is named as the author of this short letter to another son in the faith (Timothy being addressed in the same manner—1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2). The same objections leveled against Pauline authorship of 1 & 2 Timothy apply to Titus.<sup>1</sup>

## Date

Assuming the second imprisonment scenario and Paul's death as occurring in A.D. 67,<sup>2</sup> Titus (and 1 Timothy) could have been penned any time between A.D. 64 and 67.<sup>3</sup>

## Historical Setting

The writing of the Pastoral epistles must either be related to the framework of Acts or else viewed within the context of a second imprisonment (the one supposed in 2 Timothy). Arguments have been set forth for both positions. Even when taking the second imprisonment hypothesis as the best scenario, there is still little definite help in determining Paul's movements up to this time or his location at the time of writing.

## Original Readers

While there are instructions concerning the behavior of various members of the assembly, as in 1 Timothy, the letter is a personal word to Titus, as is the case with 2 Timothy. Titus (and the Holy Spirit) obviously felt that it should have a wider reading, and thus it became part of the canon of Scripture.

## Occasion

Paul communicates his desire to have Titus join him later on (3:12). However, he is, undoubtedly, also moved by the incomplete state in which he had left the church of Crete. Paul is taking this opportunity to finish what he had started, having left Titus in Crete for just such a purpose (cf. 1:5).

## Special Issues

Paul's comment about Cretans being "liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons" is

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<sup>1</sup> For a fairly complete handling of the arguments for and against Pauline authorship see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. revised (Downers Grove: IL, 1990), 607-49.

<sup>2</sup> See Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 387.

<sup>3</sup> See Guthrie, *Introduction*, 651.

always of special interest to readers of Titus. Paul is never averse to truthfully characterizing the objects of the gospel (cf. 1 Thess. 4:5; Eph. 2:2). If such characterization is true, and therefore a potential hazard to those seeking to mature in their faith, then it is proper to expose it as such and commend, instead, such qualities as might adorn the doctrine of Christ.

### Message

Sound doctrine, applied and promoted by spiritual leadership, produces good works unto the adorning of the gospel of Christ.

### Outline

- I. Extended Salutation: Paul writes as servant and apostle to Titus, his son in the faith. 1:1-4
  - A. Paul's foundation is comprehensive and complete. 1:1-3
    1. He writes on the basis of a faith acknowledged as God's truth. 1:1
    2. He writes in expectation of eternal life. 1:2
    3. He writes from the perspective of his ministry of the word. 1:3
  - B. Paul's purpose is true and wholesome. 1:4-5
    1. Titus is a true son in common faith. 1:4a
    2. The Father and Son are the true source of grace. 1:4b
- II. Practical Exhortation: Paul instructs Titus on the promotion of good works as the adorning complement to salvation by grace. 1:5-3:11
  - A. Titus is to provide for the protection of sound doctrine from the enemies of good works. 1:5-16
    1. Elders are to be appointed who are consistent in their application of the word. 1:5-9a
      - a. They must serve as a plurality in every place. 1:5
      - b. They must meet spiritual qualifications. 1:6-8
        - 1) They must be blameless as leaders of the home. 1:6
        - 2) They must be blameless as stewards of God's trust. 1:7-8
      - c. They must be stable in the word. 1:9a
    2. Elders are to be aggressive in contending with those who contradict the word. 1:9b-16
      - a. They must be able to exhort and convict by the word. 1:9b
      - b. They must silence those who would subvert good works. 1:10-16
        - 1) Because they subvert households for dishonest gain. 1:10-11
        - 2) Because their behavior makes them unsound in the faith. 1:12-14
        - 3) Because their mind and conscience are defiled. 1:15
        - 4) Because they deny God in their works. 1:16
  - B. Titus is to propound the practice of sound doctrine unto the production of good works. 2:1-3:11
    1. Instruction is given for members of the assembly. 2:1-10
      - a. Titus is to instruct older men. 2:1-2
      - b. Titus is to instruct older women. 2:3-4a
      - c. Older women are to instruct young women. 2:4b-5

d.	Titus is to instruct young men.	2:6
e.	Titus is to set the example of good works.	2:7-8
f.	Titus is to instruct servants.	2:9-10
2.	Instruction is given for personal piety.	2:11-15
a.	Grace teaches the believer to live a godly life.	2:11-12
b.	Grace motivates the believer to anticipate Christ's return.	2:13
c.	Grace purifies the believer to be zealous for good works.	2:14
d.	Titus is commanded to exhort and rebuke with authority.	2:15
3.	Instruction is given for behavior in society.	3:1-8
a.	The command: submission, respect and humility are to be shown within the relationships in society.	3:1-2
b.	The rationale: believers have been delivered from society's sins by the kindness of the Savior.	3:3-7
c.	The result: believers should be careful to maintain good works.	3:8
4.	Instruction is given for situations of contention.	3:9-11
a.	Foolish disputes are to be avoided as unprofitable.	3:9
b.	Divisive men are to be rejected after warning.	3:10-11
III.	Concluding greeting and admonition.	3:12-15
A.	Paul appends personal instructions.	3:12-13
B.	Paul urges the maintenance of good works.	3:14
C.	Paul gives a final greeting.	3:15

### Message

Sound doctrine, applied and promoted by spiritual leadership, produces good works unto the adorning of the gospel of Christ.

### Argument

In a personal letter that is mostly devoid of criticism, Paul instructs Titus, one of his associates, in the importance of a life of good works as it furthers the gospel. The key to fostering such a life-style lies in the modeling and teaching of sound doctrine by the leadership of the church.

#### I. Extended Salutation: Paul writes as servant and apostle to Titus, his son in the faith (1:1-4).

Paul's greeting adds "servant" to the usual "apostle" thus making the focal point of his service the preaching of the Word. Sound doctrine will be the basis for Titus' instruction, which has a view to a life of good works (cf. 1:9; 2:1, 10).

#### II. Practical Exhortation: Paul instructs Titus on the promotion of good works as the adorning complement to salvation by grace (1:5-3:11).

The theme of good works ties this letter together (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14). When the assembly is properly ordered (1:5) and dutifully instructed (1:9) then good works will be promoted and Jesus Christ will be glorified.

A. Titus is to provide for the protection of sound doctrine from the enemies of good works (1:5-16).

Good works can never be divorced from sound doctrine, and sound doctrine must be held and promulgated by sound leadership. Hence, Paul's first line of instruction has to do with the appointment of the kind of overseers who will demonstrate the truth in their own lives and families (1:5-8) and will wield the Word in opposition to those who contradict it (1:9-16). Such self-seeking deceivers are actually enemies of a life of good works (1:16).

B. Titus is to propound the practice of sound doctrine unto the production of good works (2:1-3:11).

Titus himself is to be engaged in the promotion of good works through instructing various sub-groups within the assembly as to specific Christian responsibilities (2:1-10), all the while setting a good example in his own conduct (2:7-8). The purpose attached to the instructions to servants—that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things—may reasonably be applied to every instruction up to this point. Good works reflect well upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not just the interpersonal life that is to be regulated. The inner life must also be cultivated, specifically with respect to ungodliness, worldly desires, and seriousness of purpose (2:11-12). This is both appropriate and possible on the basis of the believer's accomplished salvation and future expectation, namely, the appearing of Christ (2:11, 13). From this perspective the purpose of redemption is the creation of a people zealous for good works (2:14).

This zeal for right behavior will extend to relationships in society (3:1-2). Once again the motivation is the believer's liberation from the old way of life by means of the salvation provided by Christ with all of its attendant benefits (3:3-7). Good works are, therefore, rightfully commanded, but they are also profitable (3:8). What is not profitable is contention (3:9). Diligence must be given to keep this out of the assembly (3:10-11).

III. Concluding greeting and admonition (3:12-15).

Paul's instruction about the place of good works in the life of the assembly is so important that he cannot drop it even in the context of final greetings and personal

instructions (3:12-14). One of the urgent needs (cf. 3:14) presented to Titus concerns Paul's request to join him at Nicopolis (3:12). Once Titus dispenses his apostolically directed task in Crete, then he will have done his part in adorning the doctrine of the Savior and will be free to move on to other ministry.

The book of Titus gives advice to a young church about the importance of sound leadership in the creation of a people zealous for good works and about the importance of those good works in carrying forth a positive testimony of Christ's marvelous salvation, so eloquently described through out the letter (1:1-3; 2:11-14; 3:4-7).

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