

Titus

- Background
 - Author: Paul (1:1)
 - Titus on Crete at the time of writing (1:5)
 - Paul was on Crete (Acts 27:7 – 13) on his way to Rome, but the wording of 3:12, “I have decided to spend the winter there [in Nicopolis],” implies that Paul was free at the time of writing.
 - Most place the date of writing after Acts 28.
 - (1:6) Faithful children: implies some time has passed, but may just refer to men who led their whole families to Christ at the beginning (e.g., Acts 16:33, “...he and all his family were baptized”)
 - (1:10) “Idle talkers and deceivers” would not arise until after the original gospel had been delivered. This could have happened soon (per Galatia), but not while the original evangelists were present.
 - (1:11) “Dishonest gain” would only be available in a time of no persecution.
 - (3:12) Nicopolis 150 miles NW of Corinth, probably referring to the same winter as 2 Timothy 4:21. No mention is made of travels this far west prior to Paul’s imprisonment in Acts.
 - Other mentions of Titus
 - Titus went to Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas (Galatians 2:1 – 10), which corresponds to Acts 15.
 - Titus carried two letters to Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:12 – 13, 7:5 – 7, 7:13 – 14, 8:5 – 7, 8:16 – 24, 12:18) so Titus was in Ephesus in Acts 18
 - At the end of Paul’s life, Titus spent time in Dalmatia which, today, is the southern coast of Croatia (2 Timothy 4:10).
 - Basic outline:
 - Purpose of the letter
 - The general point
 - Specific applications
- Purpose of the letter (chapter 1)
 - (1:1) Why is the introduction so elaborate, since it is written to a close personal friend? Compare to Philemon and 2 Timothy versus 1 Timothy. This suggests that this letter was intended for publication, to be used by Titus to establish his standing among the known authority figures, as opposed to those described in 1:10 – 11.
 - (1:1 – 4) Fundamental points of the gospel to set the stage for chapter 2
 - (1:1) Teachers of strange things generally present themselves as authority figures.
 - Bondservant
 - Apostle (one sent) – local teachers were not “sent.”
 - According to the trust in God of the faithful – not by insight or knowledge
 - Godliness – a point that seems to have been overlooked
 - (1:2) Promised before time began – not something new, but the original.
 - (1:3) Spread by the preaching of designated representatives, not personal revelation.
 - (1:4) Common faith (see Jude 3, 2 Peter 1:1), not special.
 - (1:4) The objectives are a gracious nature, the desire to fix what ails others, and peace in a broken world, not ritual, theory, and self-centeredness.

Titus

- (1:5 – 9) Leadership necessary to jump-start the church.
 - See Ephesians 4:7 – 16, until the church is able to edify itself).
 - The appointment of elders was always through a miraculous person (Acts 14:23, 16:4, 1 Timothy 3:1 – 7, 5:22, 1 Peter 5:1 – 4 although Peter did not mention appointing)
 - The selection of start-up leadership was not left to local choice.
 - Assuming that this letter was intended for publication (to establish Titus' authority among the congregations of Crete), these qualifications were recorded by Paul to explain the selection criteria to the locals. Titus had seen it before.
 - The qualifications reveal some of the common problems in the church at that time. These characteristics were needed to be able to “by sound doctrine both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” The quality of their lives validated their teaching.
- (1:10 – 16) Bad teaching must be opposed, not endured.
 - (10) Insubordinate: disregarding established truth. Of course, everyone thinks that those who think differently than themselves are disregarding the truth. Paul's proof is in their results (liars, lazy, fables, bad behavior, a lack of good works).
 - (10) Idle talkers: empty, all fluff.
 - (10) Those of the circumcision: Compare to Galatians. In Galatia, “the circumcision” taught legalism, presumably because they were Palestinian Jews (“from James, 2:12), so the focus was on ritual and tradition. On crete, “the circumcision” brought culture, which is to be expected from Hellenistic Jews who had been rationalizing the Law for generations.
 - (11) Dishonest gain: making a claim to compensation for teaching is a mark of a false teacher.
 - (12) A message that fits the present culture. The culture of Crete was known for its lack of honesty, evil, laziness, and over-eating. Subversive teachers are those who explain how the present culture is acceptable.
 - (13) Rebuke sharply: Sharpness does not contradict gentleness and patience, but rather clarifies the picture. Jesus was humble and gentle and patient, yet had sharp words for some. This is a reminder both to Titus and his audience that pointed teaching is not contrary to the character of Jesus.
 - (14) Fables: doctrines based on oft-repeated but unprovable stories, like praying to saints, stories of miracles without evidence, and such like.
 - (14) Commandments of men: this phrase is often used to disqualify anyone who disagrees with my view. Rather, this describes “filling in the details” of things the Scriptures leave as generalizations.
 - (15) If you can't see goodness in this world, the problem may be you.
 - (16) Works and doctrines must be in harmony. If you do culturally acceptable bad stuff, the good you do is disqualified. See James 2:14 – 26.
- Point of the letter (chapter 2)
 - (1 – 10) In contrast to questions of authority, ritual, fables, and works, the point is to display good character.

Titus

- These character traits seem obvious to us. Apparently, culture had overshadowed them.
- The traits mentioned were areas that needed work among the Christians on Crete, so they reveal common cultural difficulties.
- Older men:
 - Lazy cultures foster a flippant attitude about important things, so treating the gospel seriously, not resorting to irreverent humor, is difficult.
 - Soundness (solid, predictable behavior) with regard to the promises of God, looking out for the best for others, and patience run counter to idle talk (fluff), deceit, and religion-for-profit.
- Older women:
 - The same problems as the men
 - Teaching good things in a first-generation Christian society means teaching the opposite of one's own past behavior.
- Younger women:
 - Apparently, their culture lacked wives and mothers who were committed to their families.
 - The behavior of women in Greek culture was "flamboyant."
 - "Obedient to their own husbands" would be a difficult concept in the Greek culture in which women were entirely equal to men.
 - Outsiders would not see a flamboyant lifestyle as something to be condemned, rather to be celebrated. What was hindered by this behavior was the Word of God, the concepts that lead to God's objective (a big family that lasts).
- Younger men:
 - Some problem areas reach across several groups.
 - A pattern of good works, not a fall-back position.
 - Teaching with integrity and depth in a superficial, opportunistic society.
 - Personal attack have been used in every society to de-rail a good but uncomfortable idea.
- Servants (slaves):
 - Disrespect for the boss was popular in their time, too.
 - Again, the point is that this uncommon behavior is necessary to become ambassadors who will be believed.
- (11 – 14) The theory behind this counter-cultural behavior
 - The gracious nature of God has been revealed in Jesus and in His means of reconciliation. The common person of that day would not have such a picture of God. So, it was (is) important to model this behavior and to illustrate the work of the Spirit.
 - Our behavior demonstrates a lifestyle that works. The contrast is between short-term gratification and long-term success. God's grace teaches (not commands) us that successful existence is based on this type of character.
 - In addition to godly character, we have hope. Most people in this world have little or none.
 - Redemption implies that God has given us the room to change. Our pasts cannot hold us back.

Titus

- God purifies us; we do not purify ourselves. His purpose is not to create a group of well-behaved people, but a group of believable ambassadors.
- (15) This admonition to Titus perhaps had more impact on the other readers, impressing on them that Titus has acting as Paul's representative.
- Specific Applications (Chapter 3)
 - (1 – 2) Counter-cultural behavior based on the gracious nature of God (2:11 – 14) is often difficult to sort out. Controlling our own behavior is difficult enough. Extending that behavior toward outsiders is even more troublesome.
 - The government in Paul's day was unjust, ruthless, and dictatorial. Voluntary obedience was uncommon. Many have drawn a line here, that a Christian may ignore this reminder if, in the mind of the believer, the government is acting contrary to the desires of God. Obviously, every worldly government acts contrary to the desires of God, so the teaching gives license to be disobedient, side-stepping the Scriptures with clever man-made arguments. Wisdom is required to determine how to be obedient to the government and faithful to God at the same time.
 - "Ready for every good work." We can focus on the inequities of the world, or we can be prepared to do good.
 - The world (in particular, the government) is always full of those could have evil spoken of them in truthfulness. Those in whom a gracious and merciful nature is being built by the Spirit look instead to how to fix them, rather than recounting the manifold evil they have done and probably will continue to do.
 - Remaining peaceable, gentle, and humble is difficult in the face of ignorance, evil, and dominating personalities. Godly character rarely induces a change in those bad people, but finds appeal among those being similarly mistreated (the majority). They are shown how to handle a broken world and find peace and joy in this life.
 - (3 – 7) Remember what worked for you.
 - (3) The longer one is faithful, the more difficult it becomes to remember how we chose bad behavior in the past. Remembering where we started is useful for developing patience, gentleness, and humility.
 - (4) Kindness and love was the appeal, not power and prosperity. Those in our time who are drawn by the self-serving gospel are the same as those who frequented the temples of idols. Those who can be developed (by the Spirit) are drawn by the promise of family.
 - (5 – 7) Paganism, the main competition in Paul's day, promised benefits to those who met certain criteria (generally ritual and donations). Paul reminds his readers that the basis of our acceptance into the family was because of God's overwhelming desire to fix what ails us (His mercy). He regenerates and renews through the Spirit, and declares us to be acceptable (justified) because of His gracious nature which prompted His coming to earth to satisfy justice. Remembering these things (and the transformation accomplished by the Spirit) allows us to show that same godly character to ignorant, evil, domineering outsiders.
 - (8 – 11) If good works do not result, you are stuck in man-made religion, not part of the family.

Titus

- Many groups talk a good game, but only a miniscule part of their operating budget goes for good works. The individual members, feeling satisfied that donations accomplish their share of good works, do not venture beyond conventional church wisdom.
- If the discussion does not end in a good work, it is foolish. Yet, many feel satisfied because of the explanations of the theoretical that they have heard.
- If the teaching justifies division, give them what they want. Say, “Good riddance,” to the divisive.
- (12 – 15) An example of good works: financial support of those who spread the gospel.
 - Apostles had the right to be supported (1 Corinthians 9:4 – 18, 2 Thessalonians 3:9), although they rarely used that right. (No instance was recorded in which that right was exercised.)
 - The people named in these verses went many places and taught. They had no authority to demand financial support, not being apostles; they depended on the good will of Christians who stayed in one place and worked. Their most important shared characteristic was that they determined that they would spread the gospel; financial support just made it faster and easier.
 - People always have difficulty meeting urgent needs because they have already committed future assets. The faithful need to learn that urgent needs will continue until Judgment, so they should not be surprised, but rather prepared for the inevitable but as-yet-unknown needs.