

New Testament Epistles: Titus

⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:4-7

- 1. Historical Context / Occasion:** Titus is the third of Paul's pastoral epistles, bearing strong similarity to 1 Timothy while also standing on its own as an important epistle. Titus, along with Timothy, was one of Paul's students and coworkers in the spread of the Gospel. Titus, being Greek, was particularly valuable in the ministry of the Gospel. For some time, Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas, Titus serving in Corinth for a while at Paul's request.

Later, Titus and Paul traveled to the island of Crete together. The island of Crete is south of Greece, in the Mediterranean. Once work was started there on organizing the Christian church there, Paul left Titus there to continue the work of the Gospel. Titus's work at Crete resembled the work of Timothy in Ephesus, namely, to organize and care for the church there. Like Ephesus, the church on Crete was facing several elements of false teaching. Jewish legalists, known as the circumcision party, were insisting on circumcision, as in Galatians. Early Gnostics were also spreading their false beliefs, religious speculation, and immoral living. See Titus 1:10-16. However, unlike the church in Ephesus, the church in Crete was relatively young, requiring the patience, tact, wisdom, and courage of Titus in his pastoral work. In fact, the island of Crete was so full of infamy, treachery, and greed that the Greek word for "to be a liar" was "Kretizo", from the same root word as the name of the island. Epimenedes once said that Cretans are...always liars, vicious beasts, and lazy gluttons. Nevertheless, Crete was a strategic island for spreading the Gospel given its many harbors and position on shipping routes.

According to 2 Timothy 4:10, Titus eventually made his way to Dalmatia, modern day Croatia and Montenegro, and was also later known as the bishop of Crete.

- 2. Date:** A.D. 68, towards the end of Paul's life. Though some scholars will date Titus to A.D. 63-66 A.D. earlier in his ministry.
- 3. Author:** Paul, the apostle
- 4. Primary Theme:** By the grace of God we are saved, and by the grace of God we live holy lives motivated by his love and mercy.
- 5. Purpose(s):**
 - a. to give Titus's presence and work in Crete sanction and support of Paul's apostolic authority.
 - b. To advise Titus in his task of organizing and edifying the churches in Crete.
 - c. To remind Titus of his task in Crete (1:5-9; 2:1-3:8)
 - d. To encourage him to withstand and rebuke his opponents (1:13-14; 2:15; 3:8-11)
 - e. To arrange a meeting with him in Nicopolis (3:12)

6. Theological Themes:

- a. Holy living and pure teaching are two sides of the same coin. What we believe affects what we do, and what we do grows out of what we believe. In church language we would call this doctrine and practice, and justification and sanctification.
- b. The Christian life is based entirely on God's grace.
- c. The gospel as basis for good works (3:3-8)
- d. Qualifications for a bishop as the presiding pastor of a congregation (1:5-9)
- e. Instruction in godly living (2:1, 11-14)
- f. Paul also teaches us how to live in but not of the world: the Christians/the church will live not by waging culture wars, nor by assimilating or adopting the culture, but by living in the Gospel, in our vocations.

7. Outline:

- a. Greeting: 1:1-4
- b. The task of Titus: 1:5-3:11
 - i. The appointment of bishops (1:5-9)
 - ii. The refutation of heretics (1:10-16)
 - iii. Instruction in domestic duties (2:1-15)
 - iv. Instruction in public behaviour (3:1-8a)
 - v. The need to be firm and to avoid controversy (3:8b-11)
- c. Conclusion: 3:12-15

8. Key Passages:

- a. 1:5-9
- b. 2:1-15
- c. 3:1-7

9. Luther on Titus: This is a short epistle, but a model of Christian doctrine, in which is comprehended in a masterful way all that is necessary for a Christian to know and to live.

In chapter 1 he teaches what kind of man a bishop, or pastor, ought to be, namely, one who is pious and learned in preaching the gospel and in refuting the false teachers of works and of man-made laws, those who are always warring against faith and leading consciences away from Christian liberty into the captivity of their own man-made works, [as if these works,] which are actually worthless, [should make them righteous before God.]

In chapter 2 he teaches the various estates—the older, the younger, wives, husbands, masters, and slaves—how they are to act, as those whom Christ, by his death, has won for his own.

In chapter 3 he teaches Christians to honor worldly rulers and to obey them. He cites again the grace that Christ has won for us, so that no one may think that obeying rulers is enough, since all our righteousness is nothing before God. And he forbids association with the obstinate and with heretics.¹

10. Liturgical Usage:

- a. 2:11-14 – Christmas Midnight
- b. 3:4-7 – Christmas Dawn / Day

¹ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works, vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I*. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 35, pp. 389–390). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

TITUS 2:13



“...we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us...” – Titus 2:13

In these verses, Paul’s point seems to be that the grace of God teaches us to be godly pilgrims in this life, living in the world as faithful people of God, and yet always waiting, always hoping, always looking for the appearing of our great God – Jesus Christ. I have always been struck by the beauty of Paul’s contrasts here....directly after affirming that Christ is “our great God and Savior,” he adds “who gave Himself for us.” Christ’s deity and His sacrificial death are placed side by side as a reminder of the depths of His love and the beauty of His character.....our God is the One who gave Himself for us....and the God who gave Himself for us is the One whose glory will one day dissolve earth and heaven in His appearing.....how stunning it will be for believers on that day! The One whose beauty is splintering the skies and whose majesty is terrifying the nations, that same one is the one who loves us and gave Himself for us....wonderful. In this image I wanted to show that the believer is a pilgrim and yet always lives with the “sight” (by faith) of Christ’s appearing before their eyes....He is our great hope. The wounds visible on Christ’s feet are a reminder that our Lord and God is also the One who gave Himself for us...

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Titus 2:11-14, For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ..."

We are driven to pursue holiness against the tide of the world because the hope of God's beauty in Christ has captivate our hearts...

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