

A PERSONAL  
VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY

TITUS

BY  
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**Titus 1:1 ¶ Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;**

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are known as the pastoral epistles because they are full of counsel and instruction for these young pastors. It is generally accepted that Paul wrote his letter to Titus shortly after his first letter to Timothy during the period of time between his Rome imprisonments.

Paul begins this letter by identifying himself first as a servant of God and then as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was a servant by choice because He chose to accept the calling of Jesus Christ as His apostle when He so miraculously appeared to him on the road to Damascus. From personal research through word searches, I found that "Jesus Christ" was one of Paul's favorite references to the Lord. I think that is because he failed to recognize the fact that Jesus was the Messiah (the Christ, the anointed One) before His crucifixion and then became active in trying to destroy the "church" in its earliest days. Being made aware of this truth by Jesus Himself was the turning point in his life.

As an apostle, Paul was focused on sharing his faith with others, specifically the Gentiles, and teaching them from the truth of God's word how to live to live holy and acceptable lives before God. Paul is very specific in declaring His faith to be the same faith of every person that is elect before God. Following is an excerpt from my journal on Romans regarding election:

*Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

To *foreknow* means to know beforehand. *Predestinate* is to "limit in advance, determine before." Because He is God, He knew everything that ever would happen before He ever created one thing. (That truth alone poses many questions that I can't begin to discuss.) The fact is that He knew in advance every person's response to Him—whether it would be in faith and obedience or rejection and disobedience. Those who fell into the category of faith and obedience were predestined to be likened to His Son Jesus. *Conformed* means to be "jointly formed, similar." I think this is talking about being redeemed in a glorified body and restored in fellowship as was intended from the creation. Jesus' obedience to His Father and resurrection from the dead made Him the "firstborn among many brethren." Although the scripture states that there will be few in comparison to the potential that will find salvation (Matt 7:14), this verse assures us that from the human perspective the Lord will have many brethren—people who choose salvation.

*Matthew 7:14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

[end excerpt]

Those who try to argue this truth differently I believe are limiting God's power and authority and ignoring the truth of God's word that says He is not willing that any should perish.

This verse closes with a statement of the intended effect of faith and truth in the life of a man or woman—to produce godliness, character that conforms to God’s law.

**Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;**

**Titus 1:3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;**

The first amazing truth that jumps out is that God had made a promise of eternal life to man before the world was created. Again, this is an amazing reference to God’s plan being firmly in place before creation. His plan was necessarily predicated on His foreknowledge since He gave man the privilege of choice rather than making him an automaton.

Paul uses the word “hope” in the sense of confident expectation. Those who choose to follow God in faith and obedience were promised and can confidently expect to enjoy eternity with Him. This “hope” is rooted in the character of God—Who cannot lie!

*Deuteronomy 32:4 “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”*

Verse three tells us that God chose to reveal His plan through men, and Paul counted himself privileged to be one of those men specially chosen by God for this task. “In due times” is a phrase that makes reference to God’s control over how much of His plan was made known to His people at any given time. The complete revelation of that plan was unveiled through Jesus Christ and His death, burial and resurrection. It is only in Christ that one can claim the hope of eternal life.

**Titus 1:4 To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.**

With this verse we learn to whom this letter was written—Titus. Paul identifies him as “his own son” in the faith; so we know that he was more than just a fellow-servant, he was like family to Paul. I think it is again important to note that the phrase “the common faith” is an emphasis on the truth that there is only one true faith. This is a bold statement of truth. There is only one true faith that results in saving faith; there are not many ways to get to heaven. To accept this truth of scripture is not a popular position to embrace in today’s world.

This greeting of grace, mercy and peace is unique to Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus; his usual greeting is grace and peace. Grace is a reference to “the divine influence on one’s heart and its reflection in one’s life.” God’s grace is what brings about one’s salvation. The peace of God is reference to possessing a spirit of rest and contentment in the service to which God has called one. I tend to think that he added “mercy” to these letters because it is a reference to the need for compassion that is so necessary to one in the position of pastor or

Christian leadership. Every Christian should have a heart of mercy toward his fellow man, but pastors and leaders need an extra dose of this character trait toward the body of believers. I believe that Paul is reminding Titus that just as God has blessed him, he should be willing to bless others with the same heart of compassion. Webster defines this compassion as “suffering with another; a sensation of sorrow excited by the distress or misfortunes of another; pity; commiseration.” Many times the most effective ministry is simply coming alongside another in his/her suffering.

It stands out to me that the source of these blessings is “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.” There is no equivocation regarding the authority and power of God and that He is through the Son the source of our salvation. Scripture everywhere describes them as one and the same, yet separate entities. No, I don’t understand it, but I believe it in faith.

**Titus 1:5 ¶ For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:**

With this verse we learn that Paul had been in Crete and had left Titus behind when he left with the purpose of establishing order in the churches throughout the island. This order was to be accomplished for the most part by appointing elders in every city. Usually, though not always, the elders would be older, more experienced men, but always more spiritually mature men of faith. Note that the wording indicates that these men would work as pastors of individual churches and as a leadership team within the community.

**Titus 1:6 ¶ If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.**

**Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;**

Paul now begins to identify the characteristics that Titus was to look for in the lives of the men chosen as elders.

- He is to be a man of good reputation.
- He is to be committed to one wife.
- His children should reflect good discipline. One who is not able to instill spiritual discipline in his own family cannot be expected to do so in the church.
- He is to be recognized as trustworthy and dependable in service and ministry among the body of believers.
- He should not exhibit arrogance or the propensity to place his own will over God’s will.
- He should not be easily angered.
- He should be sober minded and not susceptible to drink; he should be self-controlled.

- He should not be quarrelsome or inclined to fighting; again, he should be self-controlled.
- He should not be characterized by greed.

**Titus 1:8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;**

**Titus 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.**

Paul now continues his list by stating characteristics from a more positive perspective.

- He should be one whose home is known for extending hospitality to others.
- He should be known as one whose friends are also men of good character.
- He should be sober—the Greek emphasizes self-control. I liked this quote from Warren Wiersbe on this qualification: "This does not mean he has no sense of humor, or that he is always solemn and somber. Rather it suggests that he knows the value of things and does not cheapen the ministry or the Gospel message by foolish behavior."
- He should be just—known as one who is honest, fair and impartial in his dealings with others.
- He should be holy—one who is virtuous and pure in action.
- He should be temperate—another reference to self-control. I think this trait is emphasized in different ways because it is important for one who leads God's people to possess self-discipline and the ability to yield to God's instruction as declared in His word.
- He should be well taught in the word of God and possess a strong commitment to abiding by its truth. This is very necessary to defending sound doctrine against the attacks of false teachers or others who deny its truth. I think it is important to note that those who deny the truth of God's word are to be rebuked (from the Greek for "convince") with the intent of warning them of the consequences of their denial and bringing them to repentance.

This list actually seems like a no brainer, but human nature is often to yield to people with perceived power and influence without regard to consideration of his reputation. Other times we will choose to yield to those whose declared goals and methods fall in line with our own without regard to God's word. Other times we just fall in line behind the person with the most charisma or those that promise pie in the sky. Paul is giving Titus a very practical list of qualifications to determine those most likely to provide godly leadership to the churches.

**Titus 1:10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision:**

**Titus 1:11** Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

With these verses Paul identifies the importance of appointing trustworthy elders to provide leadership to the churches. Just as today, there were many false teachers and others causing dissension among the believers and perverting the truth of God's word. Particular to that time, many of these false teachers and troublemakers were Jewish—identified by Paul as “the circumcision.” Paul was adamant that these men should not be tolerated. Again, just as today, many of them were motivated by how they could make a profit by taking advantage of those in the churches in Crete.

I liked the way the NIV Commentary summed it up: “Three terms describe these “many” false teachers: They are (1) “rebellious,” refusing to subordinate themselves to any authority and rejecting the demands of the Gospel on them; (2) “mere talkers,” fluent and impressive in speech that accomplishes nothing constructive; and (3) “deceivers,” those whose glib tongues exercise a fascination over the minds of their dupes and lead them astray.

**Titus 1:12** One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

**Titus 1:13** This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;

**Titus 1:14** Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Paul quotes one of the recognized “prophets” in Crete. Some commentaries indicate that Paul was quoting from Epimenides, a 6th-5th century B.C. Cretan poet and religious reformer. This famous man boldly declared that the men of Crete were always liars and compared them to evil beasts. When I looked at the Greek for “slow bellies,” the reference was to laziness and greed. Paul basically says “Amen, he was telling the truth.” These false teachers needed to be rebuked sharply and those who have listened to them made aware of their folly. The only hope for these people to become “sound in the faith” is to make them aware of the truth in contrast to the false teaching. Verse 14 indicates that the Jewish agitators were teaching that obedience to the law—as corrupted by the religious leaders of the Jews and were really the traditions of men—was necessary for salvation and were denouncing the truth of salvation by grace through faith alone.

**Titus 1:15** Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

**Titus 1:16** They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

I really liked the NLT translation of these verses: “Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their minds and consciences are defiled. Such people claim they know God, but they deny him by the way they live. They are despicable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.”

The word “defile” makes reference to being morally contaminated or corrupt. Paul declared that the false prophets were corrupt and unbelieving. Though they professed to know God, their actions denied their profession. The Greek for the word “abominable” makes reference to being detestable and idolatrous. For “disobedience” the Greek included the idea of being unpersuadable and headstrong. “Reprobate” is a reference to someone who is “given up to wickedness” as defined in Webster’s.

Those who are believers are declared righteous in Christ and are morally pure and clean.

*2 Corinthians 5:21 “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

People often have a problem with the mention of works in regard to salvation. James, however, was very clear—as is Paul in these verses—that our works give evidence to our salvation.

*James 2:26 “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*

True believers will desire to be obedient to God’s word. Good works that are in line with the truth of scripture give evidence to the genuineness of one’s profession of faith. Wicked works that go against the truth of scripture give evidence regarding one who has made a false profession of faith.

I am also reminded of Jesus’ teaching from the Sermon on the Mount. He is clear in declaring that one may claim to be doing good works when he is in fact working iniquity. In other words, one’s motives are important in determining what works are “good,” and only the Lord can be the true judge of that.

*Matthew 7:21–23 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

Obviously, these people thought they would qualify for heaven through their works. They could not discern good from bad because their mind and consciences are corrupt. That corruption is a direct result of rejecting the truth of scripture and falling for the deception of the enemy as taught by false teachers. The importance of personal study of the word of God cannot be overemphasized. God promises that His word will cleanse us, accomplish His purposes, and reveal the intents of our heart.

*Psalms 119:9 “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”*

*Ephesians 5:25–27 “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

*Isaiah 55:11 “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*

*Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*