



Studies in Paul's letter to **TITUS**



BACKGROUND

Who was Titus?

Titus was a valued fellow worker with Paul. He is not mentioned in Acts but Paul refers to him in 2 Corinthians (where Paul sent him to Corinth); Galatians 2:1, 3; and 2 Timothy 4:10. He is probably a convert of Paul's.

What has happened?

Paul and Titus have been together evangelising on the island of Crete. Paul has travelled on and left Titus in Crete to continue establishing the church there teaching and appointing elders for the church. Paul is now writing to Titus to encourage him and instruct him about the task he is to do. Titus is then asked to join Paul in Nicopolis when a replacement comes to continue work in Crete (3:12). Later we hear of Titus ministering in Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10).

When did this happen?

There is no mention of this ministry in Acts. It appears that Paul was released from prison in Rome (after Acts 28) and travelled East including ministry in Crete and Ephesus (1 Timothy). He is later re-arrested and is awaiting trial and probable death in Rome as he writes 2 Timothy.

What is the letter about?

It gives instruction to Titus about teaching and appointing elders for the churches in each of the towns (1:5). It deals with some of the problems he must deal with: difficult people, immoral and rebellious behaviour, false teaching about circumcision and interest in Jewish myths. There is repeated emphasis on “doing what is good” (literally “doing good works”, 1:16; 2:7, 14, 3:1, 8, 14) along with “loving what is good” (1:8) and “teaching what is good” (2:3). (see underlined words in the text below) There is a lot of emphasis on morality (see the red sections in the text below). The letter also includes some classic summaries of Christian doctrine (2:11-14; 3:4-7).

TITUS (NIV)

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of **the truth that leads to godliness** – ² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour,

⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Appointing elders who love what is good

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be **blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient**. ⁷ Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be **blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain**. ⁸ Rather, he must be **hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined**. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Rebuking those who fail to do good

¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach – and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of Crete's own prophets has said it: 'Cretans are always **liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons**.' ¹³ This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe,

nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are **detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good**.

Doing good for the sake of the gospel

2 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. ² Teach the older men to be **temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance**.

³ Likewise, teach the older women to be **reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine**, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can urge the younger women to **love their husbands and children**, ⁵ **to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands**, so that no one will malign the word of God.

⁶ Similarly, encourage the young men to be **self-controlled**.⁷ In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching **show integrity, seriousness⁸ and soundness of speech** that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

⁹ Teach slaves to be **subject to their masters** in everything, to try to please them, **not to talk back to them**,¹⁰ **and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted**, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to say **‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives** in this present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

¹⁵ These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Saved in order to do good

3 Remind the people to **be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, ² to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle towards everyone.**

³ At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

⁹ But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ **Warn a divisive person once**, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. ¹¹ You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.

Final remarks

¹² As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there. ¹³ Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need. ¹⁴ Our people must learn to **devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.**

¹⁵ Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with you all.

Study 1 - Titus 1:1-16

Good leaders and bad leaders

1. Go round the group and share how long you have been a Christian and briefly how you heard the gospel. What is it like to be part of an established church in a country that has had the gospel for 228 years?
2. What do you think it would be like to be part of a brand new church on an Island where no one else is Christian, where everyone worships other gods and where the morals are very different to Christian morals? What are the main needs of the church in Crete?
3. What does Paul say about Titus in 1:4? What else do we know about Titus (see 2 Corinthians 7:6, 13; 8:6, 16-17, 23; 12:18; Galatians 2:1, 3; 2 Timothy 4:10)?
4. One of the main tasks Titus had was to appoint elders in the churches in every town (1:5). What does it mean to be “blameless” (1:6, 7)? Being “self-controlled” is mentioned 5 times in the letter (1:8; 2:2, 5, 6, 12). What is this quality? What do the other qualities mean and how important is each for a leader?

5. How are leaders in the church chosen today? How important are these qualities today? How important are they for all Christians?
6. What are the problems in Cretan society and in the Cretan church that Titus must deal with (1:10-16)? What actions must he take?
7. Many are “unfit for doing anything good” (literally “any good work” - 1:16). What does Paul say about doing “doing what is good” (2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14)?

REFLECT

What area of life do I need to work on improving most? What will I do about it?

PRAYER

- Pray that God will raise up godly leaders for the church.
- Pray for our leaders at Waitara and in the Diocese that they may live by these standards.
- Pray for those who teach God’s word that they may “encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”
- Pray for members of your group that they may live by godly lives (share if there is an area that you struggle with and would like prayer for).

Study 2 - Titus 2:1-15

Doing good for the sake of the gospel

In this section Paul instructs Titus about what he should teach. No doubt some of the emphasis here was required by the situation in Crete.

1. There is a strong emphasis on moral teaching here. Why? Should there be more emphasis on this today in our preaching or less?

2. Look at the instruction for each group. What does each of these qualities or actions mean? How important are they today?
 - a) Older men (2:2)

 - b) Older women (2:3-4)

 - c) Younger women (2:4-5)

 - d) Young men (2:6-8)

 - e) Slaves (2:9-10)

3. Are there other things that need to be emphasised in moral teaching for the church today? (Note: Paul does not give instruction here to masters, husbands, fathers or to children as he does elsewhere.)

4. Titus is to set an example of the things he teaches (2:7-8). How important are good examples? How do you feel about being an example to others?
5. It is not enough just to be told how we ought to live; we need to be told why. What is the reason for living godly lives given in 2:5 and 10?
6. 2:11-14 gives other reasons for living godly lives. What are they? Why did Christ “give himself for us” (2:14)? How do the things mentioned here influence the way you live?

REFLECT

What does your lifestyle reflect about your beliefs? What needs to change?

PRAYER

- Pray for those who teach that it may be in accord with sound doctrine and that they may be able to encourage, rebuke and teach with all the authority of God’s word.
- Pray for each other that we may live lives that attract others to Christ.
- Pray that we may have a clearer grasp of the grace of God and what Jesus has done so that we are motivated to life for him.

Study 3 - Titus 3:1-15

Saved in order to do good

1. As you look back on your life what have been the aims or motivations that have led you to make decisions: What course to study? What occupation to pursue? Where to live? What activities to be involved in?

2. How are Christians to live in society (which like Crete may not have Christian values) (3:1-2, 8)?

3. We need to see the logic of this passage. 3:3 begins with the word “because” (which the NIV unhelpfully omits!). 3:3-7 are giving the reason for the change in our behaviour. Titus is told to stress this reason, “stress these things” (3:8).
 - a) What were we like (3:3)?

 - b) Why did God save us (3:4-5a)?

 - c) How did God save us (3:5b-7a)?

 - d) What does God’s salvation give us (3:7b)?

4. Sometimes we may feel as if we cannot change, that we are stuck with our failings. What confidence does 3:6 give us?

5. We are to “be ready to do whatever is good” (3:1), to “devote” ourselves to “doing what is good” (3:8), and the same again in 3:14, (see also 1:16; 2:7, 14). What does this require of us? What emphasis does the word “devote” give?
6. What does it mean to have an “unproductive” life (3:14)?
7. What are the dangers Paul talks about in 3:9-11? How must we act?
8. What are Paul’s future plans for Titus and for the church in Crete (3:12-13)?

REFLECT

Think about the aims of your life. Where do you need further washing and renewal by the Holy Spirit? How might you better “devote yourself to doing what is good”?

PRAYER

- Thank God for our salvation and for everything that means for us.
- Pray for our ongoing washing and renewal by the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for God’s help that we may devote ourselves to doing what is good and that God will guide us in our decisions.

LEADER'S NOTES

This letter is very practical calling us to renewed lives. We must not study it academically but apply it to our lives. This will require being open and honest with each other. It will be very helpful for leaders to set an example in this. In preparation think how these teachings apply to your life then encourage your group to apply them to themselves being honest about what needs to change. Remember that God wants us to grow more like Christ not just to fill our heads with knowledge. Don't forget to commit these things to prayer.

STUDY 1

The requirements for elders certainly apply to clergy but also apply to others who exercise leadership roles. Think about how we should appoint ministry leaders, wardens, parish councillors, etc. In fact these are qualities all Christians should seek to live by.

The expression "doing good" (literally doing "good works") occurs 14 times in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and principally in Titus. (1 Timothy 2:10; 3:1; 5:10, 25; 2 Timothy 1:9, 2:21; 3:17; Titus 1:16; 2:5, 7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14). The purpose of Christ's death was to purify a people eager to do good works (Titus 2:14). We are called twice to "devote" ourselves to "doing good works" (Titus 3:8, 14). We are called to exemplary Christian behaviour for the sake of outsiders. The constant background behind the letter is those in the church and in society who do not live this way.

STUDY 2

The teaching here has practical application to life in our families and in our church. Spend time really discussing what we need to do in response to this teaching. Don't just look for "right answers".

Q.5 Most people have moral principles; they believe we ought to love each other, etc. The problem is they don't do it because they lack the motivation. They don't have a foundation for morals other than what they want. Discuss how the gospel gives us powerful motivation to be different and to live a godly life. (See also Study 3 Q.3)

STUDY 3

Think through the difference between a self-centred life and a Christ-centred life that leads us to "devoting ourselves to doing what is good".

This passage emphasises how the gospel is the foundation and motivation for a changed life (See notes for Study 2). Encourage your group to think through how this works and how it can make a difference in our lives.