

May 2026

What's the Point....of Titus?

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The apostle Paul's letter to Titus has some basic similarities with the epistles to Timothy. Yet there were also some different challenges facing Titus, and as a result this epistle has its own emphasis, so Titus is thus fully worthy of study in its own right. At the time, Titus is serving God in Crete, an island that was home to one of the oldest civilizations in the Mediterranean region. Yet in Crete Titus faces numerous problems of many kinds.

Themes In Titus

The letter to Titus helps us see the role that God's grace plays in transforming our lives and our relationship with God. Many of the teachings of the epistle are summarized in Paul's statement that, "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age . . ." (Titus 2:11-12). This is a paradox to worldly minds, so it is well worth pondering.

Cretan society was quite hostile to the teachings of the gospel, yet this also pointed up the great need that Crete's inhabitants had for God. Paul even quotes the Cretan philosopher Epimenides's comments on his own society. So the epistle discusses the need to purify ourselves from the inside, through understanding God's grace and what Jesus' ministry should mean to us, and to help others to do the same.

The Grace Of God That Brings Salvation - Overview Of Titus

In Crete, Titus will face a wide assortment of problems, even in the church. Paul first reminds Titus to make sure that the elders in the island's towns are faithful to God and to their families, and do not participate in the rampant sins in Crete (Titus 1:5-9). Then the apostle reminds Titus of the many kinds of persistent sinful behavior and thinking he may encounter (Titus 1:10-16).

In contrast, Paul now teaches Titus to instill in other believers an appreciation for both sound teaching and self-controlled living (Titus 2:1-10). The link comes out as the apostle continues. Qualities such as genuine honesty, love, and endurance can be nurtured by sound teachings. Teaching God's truths humbly can affect us by making it easier for God to purify us, to help us draw closer to Jesus, and to help us avoid this world's snares.

Paul now explains that God's grace, when we understand it, is the best motivation for saying 'No' to this world's ungodliness and its fleshly desires (Titus 2:11-15). To worldly minds, grace seems like a license to sin, yet when we do understand and appreciate God's grace, then it will instead turn our minds and hearts away from this world's misguided teachings and its empty ways.

God desires for us not merely to conform to outward standards, and it is also important that we do not distort God's words to use them as an excuse to live as the flesh pleases. If we have truly understood God's grace and what Jesus did to make it freely available, then we will tell the Spirit 'Yes', and we will tell the flesh 'No' (Titus 3). This leads us to do things naturally that please God, and it makes it easier to endure this world's chaos, noise, and emptiness. It can also make it easier for us to speak Jesus' truths calmly and graciously, even to those who don't appreciate them.

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What's the Point....of Titus? Caleb Dillinger

Titus is the third of what are called "The Pastoral Epistles", with the first two going to Timothy. Paul, the author, writes to Titus about the work in the church at Crete, where Titus has been appointed by Paul to lead with authority, teaching truth and training other leaders. This three chapter letter is important for understanding leadership in the church, the importance of our Christian character in the church and as witnesses to the lost, and the value of spiritual relationships.

Paul begins his letter by telling Titus that he left him in Crete to "put what remained in order" (1:5). This is the primary task for Titus. He was not necessarily the located preacher, but his task was putting things in order. This included appointing elders for the church, which Paul gives several descriptions for the kind of people he sees as right for leading the church. He contrasts godly leaders with "many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers" (1:10). There is a certain type of person who has the qualities of spiritual leadership, and their works (how they live their life) will show if they would be good or not.

Paul is not concerned solely with who leads and teaches but **what** is actually taught. So he tells Titus to "teach what accords to sound doctrine" (2:10). He gives insight into teaching older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and even servants. At the heart of each of these is self control, a vital fruit of the Spirit. All Christians should look different than the worldly pattern of giving in to desires and lusts and anger. Self control is part of that key difference. Specifically he exhorts Titus to teach these things with authority, reminding Christians today that spiritual authority is not bad, but even Christian leaders need to practice self control with authority so that they do not become domineering.

The final chapter continues reminding Titus what he should be teaching, and unsurprisingly it is similar to chapter 1 and 2: respect, obedience, gentleness, courtesy, salvation by God not work, yet a devotion to good works. The issues of hate and division are strongly condemned. So much so that Paul says if the person stirs up division twice, that they are sinful and ought not be dealt with.

Titus is worth reading in the twenty first century as we navigate the role of spiritual leadership and the practical ethical behavior of Christians no matter who they are. That's the point of reading Titus today.