

Introduction to Titus

Author: Paul's authorship of this letter to Titus has never been seriously questioned or doubted by biblical scholars. If for no other reason, at the time of its writing, both men were well known by the church throughout the world, having traveled extensively together to many of the newly established churches. Paul identified himself as the author of the letter, proclaiming himself a bondservant and apostle of the Lord. This was done primarily to greet not only Titus, but also the church in Crete, to which Titus ministered. It served as a kind gesture to those acquainted with Paul, and an introduction for those who had yet to meet him.

Date Written: It is widely accepted that Paul's letter to Titus was the second to last letter Paul wrote. The second letter to Timothy would be the last known writing of Paul before he was executed for his faith by Nero in Rome. It is believed to have been written around 64-66 AD.

The date for the letter hinges upon a critical question regarding the life of Paul – did he actually suffer two separate imprisonments at Rome. The book of Acts deals extensively with the life and ministry of Paul in the latter half, and yet it only mentions one imprisonment. In fact, Acts concludes with Paul in prison at Rome, but speaks nothing of his death there. We do know through his own testimony that the prison epistles, (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon,) were written while Paul was imprisoned. However, when one studies the life and ministry of Paul, it seems apparent that he must have been released from prison, and enjoyed a few years of freedom to travel and minister prior to his death. Likely Paul was released, and re-arrested, being imprisoned the second time and executed around 65-68 AD. Most agree that 1 Timothy and Titus would have been written during Paul's short time of freedom between being imprisoned at Rome.

Recipient of the Letter: [Titus 1:4a – To Titus, *mine own son after the common faith*](#). Clearly Paul is writing to his son in the faith, the young pastor, Titus. For many, Titus is not as well-known as Timothy, but he also was used mightily by the Lord within the early church. Consider some of what we know about Titus:

- Titus was a Gentile, a Greek by nationality. [Gal.2:3 – But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.](#)
- Titus was led to faith in Christ by Paul. [Titus 1:4a – To Titus, *mine own son after the common faith*.](#)

- His personal testimony greatly influenced the council in Jerusalem regarding God's work among the Gentiles. Titus was with Paul, showing faith in Christ as a Gentile believer, as Paul confronted Peter for his hypocritical treatment of Gentile believers when they were in the presence of staunch, legalistic Jewish believers. [Gal.2:1 – Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.](#)
- Titus was a partner in missionary efforts with Paul, during the last fifteen years of Paul's ministry. Paul mentioned Titus extensively in 2 Corinthians, and also in 2 Timothy.
- It seems apparent that Titus served alongside Paul in Ephesus, and was sent from there to Corinth. In fact, Titus delivered the second letter to the Corinthians, with specific instruction to help them deal with the struggles and issues they faced. [2 Cor.8:6 – Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.](#)
- Titus served the churches in Crete, being responsible for each of the local assemblies, leading them in truth and sound doctrine. [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.](#) Crete was one of the most difficult mission fields in the ancient world. Its people had one of the worst reputations imaginable—so much so that the very name *Cretian* was used as a byword, "to cretize." "To cretize" meant that a person was a cheat and a liar. The Cretians were "famed as a drunken, insolent, untrustworthy, lying, gluttonous people" (William Barclay. *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.277).ⁱ
- Titus was with Paul for a while during his imprisonment in Rome. [2 Tim.4:10 – For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.](#)
- The last word we have regarding Titus was that he had departed to Dalmatia, believed to be the region that until recently was known as Yugoslavia.

Purpose: The purpose of Paul's letter to Titus was actually three-fold.

- To warn against false teachers, seeking to prepare Titus and the church to recognize this danger and properly deal with the false doctrine they sought to promote.
- To establish organization within the churches, and set expectations for the life and behavior of those within the church.
- To encourage and equip Titus to proclaim true, sound doctrine among the church.

Special Features within Titus:

- Titus is "A Pastoral Epistle." There are two other Pastoral Epistles: First and Second Timothy. They are called Pastoral Epistles because they deal primarily with the pastoral care, oversight, and organization of the church. They tell believers how they ought to behave in the house of God ([1 Tim. 3:15](#)). Interestingly, the term *pastoral* has a long history. It was first used by Thomas Aquinas in A.D. 1274. He called First Timothy "an epistle of pastoral rule" and 2 Timothy "an epistle of pastoral care." The term "Pastoral Epistles," however, began to be widely used only after D.N. Berdot (A.D. 1703) and Paul Anton (A.D. 1726) so described them (Donald Guthrie. *The Pastoral Epistles*, p.11).
- Titus is "A Personal Epistle." It was written to a young disciple who was loved as a son. The epistle is filled with feelings of warmth and affection and filled with instructions that were to govern Titus' personal behavior.
- Titus is "An Ecclesiastical Epistle." It was written to answer questions about church organization, doctrinal purity, and personal behavior. Two things were happening. First, the number and sizes of churches were growing rapidly, and second, the apostles were aging. In both cases the apostles were just unable to personally reach and instruct all the churches; therefore, they had to write if the churches were to be properly instructed.
- Titus is "An Apologetic Epistle." It is a defense of the faith. The first rumblings and early development of false teaching had just begun to appear. Therefore, Paul warns the believers and defends the truth against heretical and false teaching. ⁱⁱ

Geographic Location and Culture:

Crete was located in the Mediterranean Sea, southeast of Greece, southwest of Asia Minor, and north of Africa. The island is some 160 miles long and varies in width from 7 to 35 miles. Because of its strategic location, Crete had long been exposed to Greek and Roman civilization, despite its citizens' reputation for being "liars, evil beasts, [and] lazy gluttons" ([Titus 1:12](#)). Some of the Jews in Jerusalem at Pentecost were from Crete and heard the gospel preached in their own tongue ([Acts 2:11](#)). It seems safe to assume that at least some of those who heard were converted, carried the gospel back to Crete, and established fledgling churches in their hometowns. If that is true, there may have been a significant number of Christians on Crete by the time Paul first arrived there.

The churches on Crete were new, immature in the faith, and doubtless small, although their total membership may have been sizable. In order to supervise so many congregations spread across

such a large area, Titus obviously would need help, and Paul's first instruction to this chief elder was to appoint and ordain other elders in each church ([1:5](#)). The letter not only was a guide for Titus himself but was a written document that attested his delegated apostolic authority. When Titus faithfully implemented the admonitions of the letter, he did so with apostolic, and therefore divine, authority. His written commission from Paul made clear that any leader or member of the churches who opposed Titus would be opposing Paul and therefore opposing the Lord who commissioned the apostle.

The Cretan churches had attracted "many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision" ([1:10](#)), false teachers who not only taught ungodly doctrines but lived ungodly lives. Some of those men may have been among the Jews from Crete who heard the gospel at Pentecost but did *not* believe. And because this was still a formative time for many, if not most, of the churches on Crete, believers there were especially vulnerable. Even after having the immense privilege of Paul's personal teaching and example, they continued to need faithful, competent leaders to ground them further in God's truth and to be models of godly living. ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Titus.