

THE BOOK OF TITUS

ORIENTING DATA FOR TITUS

- **Content:** instructions to Titus for setting in order the church (es) on Crete, including the appointment of qualified elders and the instruction of various social groups, set against the backdrop of some false teachers
- **Author:** the apostle Paul (although doubted by many)
- **Date:** ca. A.D. 62–63, apparently from Macedonia at about the same time as 1 Timothy (see 3:12; Nicopolis is on the Adriatic coast of Macedonia)
- **Recipient(s):** Titus, a Gentile and sometime traveling companion of Paul (see Gal 2:1–3; 2 Cor 7:6–16; 8:6, 16–24; 12:17–18); and the churches on Crete (Titus 3:15, “you all”)
- **Occasion:** Paul had left Titus on Crete to finish setting the churches in order, while he and Timothy (apparently) went on to Ephesus, where they met a very distressing situation (see 1 Timothy). But Paul had to go on to Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3; cf. Phil 2:19–24); perhaps the Holy Spirit reminded him while writing 1 Timothy that some similar problems had emerged in Crete, so he addressed the churches through a letter to Titus
- **Emphases:** God’s people must be and do good—this is especially true of church leaders; the gospel of grace stands over against false teachings based on the Jewish law

OVERVIEW OF TITUS

In some ways Titus appears to be a smaller version of 1 Timothy, where false teaching prompted instruction on qualifications for church leadership; at the same time Paul addresses other matters that the false teachers have triggered. Hence, both the qualifications for elders and the indictment of the false teachers have some striking similarities to what is said about them in 1 Timothy.

But there are also some significant differences. The most noteworthy is the fact that *Timothy* was left in a situation where the church had been in existence for nearly twelve years, and he had to deal with elders who were leading the church astray. *Titus* has been left in Crete to set new churches in order. Thus, in this case, Paul begins with the qualifications for church leaders (1:5–9), before taking on the false teachers (1:10–16). This is followed by general instructions on how to deal with older and younger men and women and with slaves, with emphasis on doing good (2:1–10), which looks like an expansion of 1 Timothy 5:1–2 and 6:1–2. The rest of the letter then emphasizes, in light of the grace of God, their “doing good” in the world (2:11–3:8), which is again set in contrast to the false teachers (3:9–11).

ca. *circa*, about, approximately

SPECIFIC ADVICE FOR READING TITUS

While problems with the false teachers lie behind much of what is said in Titus, they do not seem to be such a dominant factor as in 1 Timothy. They themselves are to be silenced (Titus 1:11), while people who would follow them must be rebuked (1:13). There are enough similarities with 1 Timothy to make one think that the same kind of teaching is in view: They are into Jewish myths (Titus 1:14) and genealogies (3:9), based on the law (3:9); they love controversies (1:10; 3:9); they are deceivers (1:10) and lovers of money (1:11); and they use the law (apparently) to promote ascetic practices (1:15). This final item gets more emphasis in Titus, which Paul responds to with a much greater emphasis both on grace and on doing good.

So as you read, look especially for Paul's emphasis on *doing good*. Although found also in 1 Timothy (1 Tim 2:10; 5:10), this theme permeates Titus (Titus 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14; cf. 1:8). For Paul there is no tension between grace and doing what is good. The latter is the proper issue of the former. What is at odds with grace is the "religious" use of the law, maintaining purity through observance of regulations, as a way of maintaining God's favor. But a genuine experience of grace results in a people who are eager to do good (2:14). Thus these two themes merge in two great theological passages (2:11–14; 3:4–7), the latter of which constitutes another of the five trustworthy sayings in these letters.¹

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, [*How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 383–384.