

# **Titus**

## **Chapter 1**

**Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—<sup>2</sup> a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,<sup>3</sup> and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,<sup>4</sup> To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.**

**1:1** *servant of God.* Only here does Paul call himself a servant of God; elsewhere he says "servant of Christ" (Ro 1:1; Gal 1:10; Php 1:1). James uses both terms of himself (Jas 1:1). (CSB)

*servant.* See note on Ro 1:1. (CSB)

God owned Paul's life and directed his efforts. (TLSB)

*apostle.* One specially commissioned by Christ (see notes on Mk 6:30; 1Co 1:1; Heb 3:1). (CSB)

Jesus handpicked and commissioned Paul as His spokesman (Ac 9:15) and as a gift to His Church (Eph 4:11–12). (TLSB)

*for the faith ... and the knowledge.* Paul's appointed mission as God's servant and Christ's apostle—further explained in v. 2 (see Ac 9:15; 22:15; 26:16–18). (CSB)

Establishing and strengthening the faith of God's people were key elements of Paul's ministry. (TLSB)

*accords with godliness.* Faith in Christ and knowledge of God's truth will bear fruit in godly living. (TLSB)

**1:2** *hope.* See note on Col 1:5. (CSB)

*does not lie.* In contrast to the Cretans (v. 12)—and the devil (Jn 8:44). (CSB)

A favorite verse for Luther. God is the author and final arbiter of truth. He is fully trustworthy. "God's Word cannot err" (LC IV 57). (TLSB)

*promised before the ages began.* God's plan for our salvation predates the beginning of history. (TLSB)

**1:3** *appointed season.* Crucial events in God’s program occur at his designated times in history (1Ti 2:6; 6:15; Gal 4:4). (CSB)

God is Lord over all time and history, so He revealed Himself and His promised plan of salvation in Jesus Christ at just the right time (Mk 1:15; Gal 4:4). On a personal level, He also introduces Himself and His promise to each of us at just the right time to meet our need for salvation. (TLSB)

*his word.* The authoritative message that centers in Christ. (CSB)

*God our Savior.* Three times in the letter God the Father is called Savior (here; 2:10; 3:4; see also 1Ti 1:1; 2:3; 4:10), and three times Jesus is called Savior (v. 4; 2:13; 3:6; see also 2Ti 1:10). (CSB)

Paul did not preach to pass the time as he toured the Roman Empire; he preached in obedience to God’s direction. See note, 1Co 1:17. Paul’s work as God’s servant received all of his skill, energy, time, and devotion. (TLSB)

**1:4** *Titus.* Not mentioned by name in Ac, but Titus was one of Paul’s companions and collaborators in the ministry. Paul apparently trusted Titus with important assignments. (TLSB)

*my true son.* Titus, like Timothy (1Ti 1:2), was a spiritual son, having been converted through Paul’s ministry. Onesimus was also called a son by Paul (Phm 10). (CSB)

Paul may have led Titus, a Gentile, to faith in Christ, in effect becoming his spiritual father. (TLSB)

*true.* Genuine. *our common faith.* The faith shared by all true believers. (CSB)

Paul and Titus each held the true Christian faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. (TLSB)

*Savior.* In all of Paul’s other salutations Jesus is called “Lord.” Paul uses “Savior” 12 times in all his letters, half of the references being in Titus.

The interchange with “God our Savior” (v 3) affirms the deity of Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

**1:1–4** Paul opens his Letter to Titus and the churches on Crete with a greeting that asserts his authority, recaps God’s plan for salvation, and notes his personal bond with Titus. Most of his greeting revolves around the Gospel, because this is so central to Paul’s life that he can hardly speak (or write) without mentioning it. God saves us from sin and condemnation and makes us fit for His kingdom. The only logical response to such love, grace, and generosity is, like Paul, to overflow with His praises and share this joyous news with others. Through Jesus Christ, the Father rescues us from our shortcomings yesterday, today, and tomorrow. • I praise You, O God, for giving me grace and peace in Christ Jesus, my Savior! Make me a sincere and faithful child in the communion of saints. Amen. (TLSB)

## *Titus' Task on Crete*

<sup>5</sup> The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. <sup>6</sup> An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>8</sup> Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. <sup>11</sup> They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. <sup>12</sup> Even one of their own prophets has said, “Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.” <sup>13</sup> This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith <sup>14</sup> and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

**1:5** *left you in Crete.* Implies that Paul and Titus had been together in Crete, a ministry not mentioned in Acts. On his voyage to Rome, Paul visited Crete briefly as a prisoner (Ac 27:7–8), but now that he had been released from his first Roman imprisonment he was free to travel wherever he wished (see 3:12). (CSB)

Paul and Titus likely visited Crete as missionaries. No fourth missionary journey or church planting on Crete is mentioned in Ac, but Rm 15:24, 28 indicates that Paul had additional mission work in mind. He could have visited Crete after his release from house arrest at the end of Ac. (TLSB)

*appoint elders.* Though Paul and Titus perhaps had already preached in Crete, they had not had time to organize churches. The appointing of elders is consistent with Paul's usual practice (Ac 14:23). (CSB)

Paul uses “elder” (v 5) and “overseer” (v 7) for the same office of church leadership; “elder” suggests qualifications, while “overseer” suggests responsibilities. They served as stewards of their congregation; today we know them as pastors and elders. Titus was to appoint church leaders based on their qualifications rather than popularity. “The Gospel assigns those who preside over Churches the command to teach the Gospel [Matthew 28:19], to forgive sins [John 20:23], to administer the Sacraments, and also to exercise jurisdiction (i.e., the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known and to absolve those who repent). Everyone confesses, even our adversaries, that this power is common to all who preside over churches by divine right, whether they are called pastors, elders, or bishops” (Tr 60–61). (TLSB)

*every town.* Churches planted in each town would need leaders after Paul and then Titus left Crete (cf 3:12). (TLSB)

**1:6–9** 1Ti 3:1–7 gives a parallel list of qualifications for elders, but the two lists reflect the different situations in which Timothy and Titus ministered. Note in particular that the requirement of not being a recent convert is absent, since Titus was serving a recently established church (1Ti 3:6). See chart on “Qualifications for Elders/Overseers and Deacons”. (CSB)

The lists of qualification in 1Tm and Ti are not identical, but they cover the same central themes. The differences suggest some degree of flexibility to meet the needs of the local church. E.g., 1Tm 3:6 requires that elders not be recent converts, but Ti does not mention this constraint, perhaps because all Cretan Christians were relatively recent converts. These standards in the list reflect God’s expectations for those who serve as leaders in His Church. (TLSB)

**1:6** *above reproach.* Church leadership is not open to everyone. Candidates for elder must be Christ’s authentic disciples, which Paul apparently takes as obvious and does not state. Starting from this foundation, candidates for elder must live an irreproachable, blameless life. (TLSB)

*husband of but one wife.* Since elders, by definition, were chosen from among the older men of the congregation, Paul assumed they already would be married and have children. A qualified unmarried man was not necessarily barred. It is also improbable that the standard forbids an elder to remarry if his wife dies (cf. Ro 7:2–3; 1Co 7:39; 1Ti 5:14)—but these passages may refer to the lay members, not to overseers/elders. The meaning may be that a faithful monogamous married life must be maintained. But see notes on 1Ti 3:2; 5:9 (with NIV text note) for the possibility that a different regulation covered overseers/elders. (CSB)

NT churches included businesswomen who helped host start-up churches (Ac 16:14–15) and women who taught as part of a husband-wife team (Ac 18:24–26). There are myriad opportunities for men and women to serve or work as part of God’s Church, but Scripture consistently requires elders and overseers to be men, husbands from monogamous, Christian marriages (cf 1Tm 3:2). Note that these are marriages as defined by God and not as defined or practiced by secular culture. Experience in a Christian marriage would prove the ability to maintain successful personal relationships during good times as well as trying times, and it would help the elder begin to understand something of the relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church. Paul himself was not married. (TLSB)

*children are believers.* A Christian father must be spiritual leader of his household before he is fit to lead the church; his witness within his own family is a top priority. (TLSB)

*debauchery.* Decadent children might reflect a lack of discipline or spiritual teaching by their father. (TLSB)

*insubordination.* Persistent disobedience indicates that children misunderstand or reject their father’s authority and, by implication reject the lordship of Christ. Congregations should

anticipate that a pastor's children will fall into sin, just like anyone else's children. They may also expect the pastor to apply Law and Gospel to his children, to restore them in God's love and mercy. (TLSB)

**1:7** *an overseer*. The use of "elder" in v. 5 and "overseer" (or "bishop") in v. 7 indicates that the terms were used interchangeably (cf. Ac 20:17, 28; 1Pe 5:1–2). "Elder" indicates qualification (maturity and experience), while "overseer" indicates responsibility (watching over God's flock). (CSB)

*God's steward*. Leaders must serve, manage, and care for the laypeople who make up the local church, as well as for its ministries. In most churches, a pastor serves this role with support from elders whom God raises up from among the laity. (TLSB)

**1:8** *self-controlled*. A virtue much needed in Crete (see vv. 10–14); Paul refers to it five times in two chapters (here; 2:2, 5–6, 12). (CSB)

This fruit of the Holy Spirit in Christian life (Gal 5:22–23) comes up several times in Paul's Letter as he urges Titus and his Cretan audience to grow in godly living. (TLSB)

*disciplined*. Possessing the inner strength to control one's desires and actions. (CSB)

**1:9** *as taught*. Consistent sound doctrine at Crete would provide a starting point for their growth in discipleship. See note, 2Th 2:15. "Faith must have something that it believes, that is, of which it takes hold" (LC IV 29). (TLSB)

*sound doctrine*. Correct teaching, in keeping with that of the apostles (see 1Ti 1:10; 6:3; 2Ti 1:13; 4:3). The teaching is called "sound" not only because it builds up in the faith, but because it protects against the corrupting influence of false teachers. Soundness of doctrine, faith and speech is a basic concern in all the Pastoral Letters (1,2 Timothy; Titus). In them the word "sound" occurs eight times but is found nowhere else in Paul's writings. (CSB)

*rebuke those who contradict it*. As stewards or guardians of the Church, leaders must identify, stop, and correct false teaching. (TLSB)

**1:10** *rebellious*. Against the word of God and against Paul and Titus as the Lord's authoritative ministers. *people*. These troublemakers had three main characteristics: 1. They belonged to the "circumcision group," like the people of Gal 2:12, believing that, for salvation or sanctification or both, it was necessary to be circumcised and to keep the Jewish ceremonial law (see Introduction to Galatians: Occasion and Purpose). 2. They held to unscriptural Jewish myths (v. 14) and genealogies (3:9; see 1Ti 1:4 and note there). 3. They were ascetics (vv. 14–15), having scruples against things that God declared to be good. (CSB)

*mere talkers.* Paul used similar language in writing to Timothy about this kind of person (1Ti 1:6). (CSB)

. Those who talk a convincing story, but without any God-given authority or useful message. (TLSB)

*circumcision party.* People who taught that Christians must be circumcised and obey all of the Jewish ceremonial rules to receive salvation. They added these requirements to the Gospel of God's grace, effectively defining a salvation based partly on an individual's works and placing man-made rules above God's Word, so their teaching was dangerous and wrong. Even today, many religions and cults add man-made requirements to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

**1:11 silenced.** Titus and the elders he appoints must block and correct the faulty teaching. (TLSB)

*whole families.* If one person in a family fell prey to false teaching, it was likely to influence their entire household. (TLSB)

*shameful gain.* Church leaders are entitled to support (1Tm 5:18), but this suggests that the false teachers were in the ministry for the sake of money. (TLSB)

**1:12** The quotation is from the poet Epimenides (a sixth-century B.C. native of Knossos, Crete), who was held in high esteem by the Cretans. Several fulfilled predictions were ascribed to him. For other uses of pagan sayings by Paul see Ac 17:28; 1Co 15:33 and notes. In Greek literature "to Cretanize" meant to lie. (CSB)

*Cretans, a prophet.* Epimenides, a Cretan philosopher (c 600 BC) whom many pagans viewed as a prophet. (TLSB)

*Cretans are ... gluttons.* The original treatise from Epimenides was concerning prophetic oracles and those who spoke them (*de oraculis*). So Paul likely cites the passage as a rebuke to the Cretan false teachers and not to Cretans generally. He challenges the Cretan churches to reject the false teachers among them, who apparently claimed prophetic authority. This teaching strategy suggests that Paul wanted Titus to share the Letter publicly with the churches on Crete. (TLSB)

**1:13 testimony is true.** With respect to the false prophets. Apparently the circumcision party here was made up of native Cretans, not Jews from Judea as in other cases. (TLSB)

*rebuke ... sharply.* False teaching is dangerous, requiring a clear, direct response. (TLSB)

*them.* The Cretan false teachers. The rebuke is both a judgment on the troublemakers and an opportunity for them to repent and experience God's grace. Titus must meet the false teachers with Law and Gospel. (TLSB)

*sound.* Faith must be pure and not compromised by false teaching or attempts to invent our own spiritual success. Only Jesus Christ can reconcile us with God. (TLSB)

**1:14** *Jewish myths.* See note on v. 10. (CSB)

Writings excluded from the OT, or a speculative aspect of the false teaching. (TLSB)

*commands of people.* Rules and interpretations of God's Law that undercut God's grace or distort His plan of salvation (e.g., Mt 23:23). (TLSB)

**1:15** *To the pure, all things are pure.* To Christians, who have been purified by the atoning death of Christ, "everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1Ti 4:4). (CSB)

Put another way, God redeems everything for the redeemed (1Tm 4:4), and those who are not redeemed by Christ live in condemnation. "[Everything is pure] to those who believe in Christ and are righteous by faith" (Ap XXIII 34). (TLSB)

*to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure.* Unbelievers, especially ascetics with unbiblical scruples against certain foods, marriage and the like (cf. 1Ti 4:3; Col 2:21), do not enjoy the freedom of true Christians, who receive all God's creation with thanksgiving. Instead, they set up arbitrary, man-made prohibitions against what they consider to be impure (see Mt 15:10–11, 16–20; Mk 7:14–19; Ac 10:9–16; Ro 14:20). The principle of this verse does not conflict with the many NT teachings against practices that are morally and spiritually wrong. (CSB)

Unredeemed reasoning and thoughts, and their sense of right and wrong, are fatally flawed. The circumcision party sought to bind consciences with legalistic observances. (TLSB)

*consciences.* See 1Ti 4:2–3. (CSB)

**1:16** *by their actions they deny him.* The false teachers stood condemned by the test of personal conduct. (CSB)

The false teachers claim to know God, but their actions or works prove that they are not His people (cf Mt 7:15–20). Doctrine and practice must go hand in hand. (TLSB)

*unfit.* Faith in Christ bears fruit in the good works He provides, but those without Christ's salvation are unable to bear this fruit (Mt 7:17). John Hus: "He is lacking in faith ... unbelieved things are as holes, and thus he has a shield of faith which is full of holes.... He is lacking in faith who lacks in use of this shield" (*The Church*, p 70). (TLSB)

*good.* See Introduction: Distinctive Characteristics. Right knowledge is extremely important because it leads to godliness (v. 1). Paul maintained a remarkable balance between doctrine and practice. (CSB)

**1:5–16** Step by step, Paul outlines the requirements for those who wish to lead as stewards of God's Church. Then he turns his focus to the false teachers, who do not measure up in

understanding or teaching the truth, in their corrosive behavior, or in their motives. As living, active members of God's Church, potential leaders should aspire to know and understand His truth and to serve in the roles He provides. They and their families need to live a godly life that avoids empty talk, deceit, and any teaching that turns away from God's truth. Purity is a tall order, though, and we cannot make ourselves pure. Yet God steps into our lives and purifies us by His Gospel. Thank God that through Jesus Christ, He makes us pure and leads us through His trustworthy Word! • Jesus, purify me with Your righteousness so that I may lead in my family and serve faithfully among Your people. Amen. (TLSB)