

Episode: Paul's Letters Series No. 16

Narrator: Cretan elder

Primary Scriptures: Titus 1-3

Story Summary: Paul's letter to Titus, while Titus was in Crete

Location: Roman Empire; Greece; Crete

Time: AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.
AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey
AD 66 Paul writes *Titus*

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1:15-16; 2:7-8, 11-13; 3:1, 4-6, 8, 9-10

The first mention of Titus is in Galatians 2:1-3, when he accompanied Paul on the "famine visit" to Jerusalem. At the time, Titus was uncircumcised but was still accepted as a Christian. For nearly the next twenty years, Titus was a faithful assistant of Paul. There was probably little new in this letter that Titus had not heard many times before.

At the time of the writing of this letter, Titus was in Crete and Paul was spending the winter in Nicopolis, a major city on the west coast of Greece. Paul wanted Titus to get things in order with the many churches in Crete before joining him in Nicopolis. Paul is nearing the end of his life, and you can sense the urgency in his words.

One of the reasons Paul left Titus in Crete was to appoint elders in the many towns, and the qualifications Paul describes for elders are similar to those in *First Timothy*. Based on Titus 1:6-9, it was not going to be easy for Titus to find qualified elders.

One of the requirements was for elders to be capable of teaching true doctrine and refuting false doctrine. This requirement ties to Paul's insistence that Titus also refute the false teachers. Paul writes about the correlation between bad doctrine and bad behavior; he does not specify the false teaching, but it appears to have elements of myths about angels and philosophical teachings about the inherent evils of physical things.

Paul spends much of this letter writing about ways Christians are to behave. Rather than providing long lists of things to do and not to do, Paul instead gives them guidelines about doing good. He summarizes his desires in Titus 3:14, where he says Christians should concentrate on doing good so they can meet important needs and live productive lives.

Paul writes the letter to Titus, but knows it will be circulated among the churches, which is why he ends the letter by wishing grace on everyone.

As you read this letter, try to put yourself in Titus's shoes. He has been working alongside Paul for almost two decades, and knows Paul is nearing the end of his life. He surely wants to do a good job on Crete, but knows he is facing immense obstacles.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Crete's history and geography figure into Paul's thinking?
 2. When did God give the promise of eternal life?
 3. Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete? How do you know when a church is orderly?
 4. What is your favorite verse in the passage of Titus 3:3-9? What does it mean to devote yourself to doing good (something Paul says twice in Titus 3)?
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1. Crete is a large, mountainous island located south of mainland Greece. In Roman times, it had several ports, and was famous for its raucous lifestyle. Crete is the site of one of the oldest empires, the Minoans, and its people have always been independent in their thinking. Because of the mountains, there have always been numerous, scattered communities, with a few larger cities on the coasts. 2. Titus 1:2 before the beginning of time. 3. To help the churches get put in order and to appoint elders in every town.

Application Questions:

1. Paul directed Titus to appoint elders in every town. Should churches still have elders? Should elders in modern churches be required to fit the requirements Paul gave Titus? If so, how can churches train their members to fit these qualifications? If not, what requirements should they have?
2. Paul insisted that elders have the ability to encourage others through sound doctrine and refute those without sound doctrine. Is that important just for elders or is it something all Christians should be able to do? Can you do it? If not, how can you become qualified?
3. Paul insists that some teachings are true and others are false. Are you willing to hold to such a standard in a modern culture that denies singular truth and insists many ways of thinking are equally good?
4. How can you apply Titus 3:1-2 in the modern world? Do those verses apply to paying taxes? To driving? To politics?

Applications Questions for Teens:

1. Titus 1:10 indicates rebellion can be full of meaningless and deception. It is common for young people to want to rebel against authority and social norms. Why are teens so often drawn to rebellion? Are there ways to be rebellious that are not harmful?
2. Titus 1:16 talks of people who claim to know God but deny Him by their actions. Do you see other people do that? Do you ever do it yourself? Would your friends tell you if you were doing that?
3. Do you think Titus 2:4-5 is applicable in the modern world? Why or why not?
4. Titus 2:6 encourages young men to be self-controlled. What does that mean? Does James 3:2 also come to mind when you think about self-control?