

June 11 Titus (80% disputed)

Intro

Titus was a Greek who traveled with Paul and was one of his ministers whom he sent out to visit and bring greetings to fledgling churches. Though Paul is its attributed author, a strong argument exists for why Paul would not have been the author. Pseudopigraphy (naming a famous author of a work who wasn't actually the author) was a common practice in the ancient world to lend authority to the writing or as a practice of honoring the famous person with the writing in their name. It was not done as a means of underhandedness or trickery. Those who believe Paul wrote this letter (about 20% of scholars) believe it would have been written in the 60s CE during a time outside of the narrative of Acts. However, it is difficult to find a time during Paul's life (according to what's been written down) when he would have passed through Crete before his Roman imprisonment, and in his writings Paul does not expect to return East (Crete) after his visit to Rome (after his imprisonment). Furthermore, the picture presented of Paul and his teachings does not match with the Paul we know from his undisputed writings. In his undisputed writings Paul supported women in their leadership roles and deferred to the authority of the Holy Spirit, in the pastoral letters (disputed writings that include 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus and cover the ordering of the church) Paul seems to put women under the hierarchical authority of men, as well as presenting himself (not God) as the final authority on these matters.

Whoever wrote it cared deeply about the stability of the fledgling churches on Crete and was writing to Titus to ensure that appropriate elders would be appointed and that false teaching (which could harm the spiritual health of the young church) would be squashed. False teachers were very common, and were (as they still are today) motivated solely by greed as they exploited the masses with their heresy for financial gain.

Chapter 1

"Paul" offers a lengthy and wordier than usual introduction of himself. In this letter he notes that he is a servant/slave of God, while in the undisputed letters he always speaks of himself as a servant/slave of Christ. His goal in writing is for the sake of preserving the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth. His authority comes from God, who entrusted proclamation of the Word to him.

"Paul" left Titus behind in Crete to finish his work of establishing the church, particularly with regard to establishing lay leadership within the church. There should be elders appointed in every town, and those lay leaders should have the following attributes: blameless, married to only 1 wife (as opposed to multiple wives, not only 1 time as in never divorced), their children are believers (as opposed to living lives of debauchery and rebellion). Elders and bishops seem to be the same office of ministry. Sound doctrine is determined by a community, not by individuals. A bishop (overseer) is to be viewed as God's steward, and must be: blameless, not arrogant, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent or greedy, hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. A bishop must have a solid understanding of scripture, based on accepted teaching, so that the bishop can be a

good preacher and can use scripture to refute false teachings. The writer states that there are many working to promote false teachings (such as the ongoing issue of circumcision), and that they are upsetting whole families with these teachings.

Chapter 2

“Paul” next lays out a model for what an ideal community at this time looks like, according to the sound doctrine that was established by the community (though not necessarily by God).

Older men are to: be temperate, serious, prudent, sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.

Older women are to: be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers, not slaves to drink, teachers of good, encouragers of young women.

Young women are to: love their husbands, love their children, be self-controlled, be chaste, be good managers of their households, be kind, be submissive to their husbands.

Young men are to: be self-controlled.

Wow! Talk about a difference in expectations! In vs. 7 “Paul” shifts back to speaking to Titus directly, saying that he should be a good role model, a person of integrity, and sound teachings so that there is no reason for anyone to censor or speak evil of the community of faith.

Vs. 9-10 are particularly problematic and have been used for many generations to justify the institution of slavery. The writer obviously believed that the system of slavery in his time and place was an established and unchanging fact, but this does not mean that slavery is justified for all time. The idea behind these sayings is similar to Luther’s understanding of vocation: be the best you can be in whatever role you find yourself in. However, no Christian today should take this 1st century understanding of slavery and apply it today.

The grace of God trains us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and to live lives that are self-controlled. We are awaiting the manifestation of Christ (the second coming), and Christ is the one who is purifying us as his people.

Chapter 3

Now that “Paul” has covered the code of behavior for people in various roles in the family, he moves to cover expected public behavior of all Christians: be obedient to governing authorities, ready for good works, speak evil of no one, avoid quarrelling, be gentle, show courtesy to everyone. Why? Because before we came to faith and grew in faith, we behaved the opposite. Christ saved us, not because of our good works (we had none), but solely according to his loving kindness and mercy. The change that occurred to us happened as evidence of the Holy Spirit poured out on us at Baptism. Our salvation is purely a work of God’s grace, BUT good works are a necessary part of a Christian life –not for salvation, but as a sign to outsiders of the grace of God at work within us. Avoid stupid controversies, and avoid divisive people.