



Titus

Like 1 and 2 Timothy, this is a letter addressed to an individual not a community; unlike 1 and 2 Timothy it is addressed to Titus. We learn from 1.5 that Titus was overseeing the church in Crete. The theme of the letter is how to order the church and how to live well as a Christian.



How long will it take?

Reading time: 7 mins
Short of time? Just read 1.1-9; 2.11-3.11



Genre

Letter



Anything tricky?

Like a number of letters, Titus contains advice to men and women and to slaves and masters, which can feel uncomfortable today.



Inspiring quotes

It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said, "Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons."

(Titus 1.12)

[OK I know it's not inspiring but I love it nevertheless – if a Cretan says all Cretans are liars – are they lying?]

4 But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Saviour appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

(Titus 3.4-5)

But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

(Titus 3.9)



About the Author

Titus gives its author as the apostle Paul. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are widely viewed by scholars not to be by Paul despite their introductions. The reason for this is a different style of writing (i.e. different words used and sentence structures) and a different focus.

Like 1 Timothy, Titus is particularly focussed on church order and leadership which suggests that it is written to later church communities, whose concerns have passed beyond the immediate questions of who Jesus was and what he had done for them onto questions of how churches relate to each other.

You might like to think about authorship as you read and ask whether the 'voice' of the author sounds similar to what you know of Paul from elsewhere.

What do we know about him?

Paul is probably the best known of all the early Christians. Before encountering Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, he was a zealous Pharisee who sought to maintain the purity of Judaism. After

his experience on the Damascus road, he turned his zeal to proclaiming Jesus Christ among the Gentiles. This brought him into conflict with some other early Christians, not least Peter, who thought that followers of Jesus Christ should convert to Judaism. He travelled around the Roman Empire (though primarily in Asia Minor – modern-day Turkey – and Greece) proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and founding communities of Christians as he went. He also wrote a large number of letters, 13 of which are preserved in the New Testament. Titus has traditionally been thought to be one of these.

Titus here not the author, but the recipient of the letter. According to Christian tradition, Titus was a Gentile who converted to Christianity and became the first Bishop of Crete. He is said to have come from Antioch and to have studied both Greek philosophy and poetry as a young man. He was a close companion of Paul – in Galatians Paul said he took Titus to Jerusalem for the Jerusalem council and in 2 Corinthians 2.13 Paul stated that he could not proclaim the gospel in Troas because he couldn't find Titus there – and clearly trusted by him.



About the times

If the author was Paul then the date, like that of 1 and 2 Timothy, would be around ad 61-64; if not by Paul then it could come from a much later period in the first century ad.

What were people feeling?

The letter suggests that Titus and his community were anxious about order and leadership.



How is it structured?

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|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 1.1-4 | Opening greeting |
| 1.5-16 | The importance of good leadership |
| 2.1-10 | How to live well as a Christian |
| 2.11-3.11 | The importance of good works |
| 3.12-15 | Farewells |



What kind of Book is it?

This is a letter. There are various features that mark it out as a little different from other the Pauline letters, one of these is that it is addressed to one person (i.e. Titus) not a whole community (like Galatians or Thessalonians). You don't have to read for long before it becomes clear, however, that this letter is not just written to Titus but is to be applied to the whole community.



Look out for...

Intriguingly Paul in his letter to Titus gives advice angled at people of different gender and different ages. Look out for it and see if you think it applies generally to, for example, older women or younger men or whether it applied only to the older women in Crete.

Paul is also concerned about sound doctrine, look out for the occasions when he mentions this, either explicitly or implicitly and reflect on what you think sound doctrine means to him.

You could summarize Titus as things to make sure you do and things to avoid – look out for them as you read and make a mental list. Do you agree with them?



What could this mean for me?

There is lots of advice in this letter about what counts as 'living well' as a Christian and what counts as the opposite of that – look out for this as you read. Is any of it relevant for today?



Discussion group questions

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- What did you think about the advice to older men; older women; younger men and younger women? Did it fit today or not? If you were to give this advice to your congregation or group, what would you include?
- Look at Titus 3.1-2 and 3.9-10, what do you think of the advice here? What do you agree with and what do you disagree with?
- Talk about 'sound doctrine', what is it do you think? Who gets to say what it is and what it isn't?
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?



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