

Background:

Title:

The letter to Titus, *Pros Titon*, is one of the last three letters of Paul. (See *Timothy* handout for a discussion of the “Pastoral Epistles.”)

Author:

Titus was written by Paul (1:1). All critical doubts concerning Pauline authorship are based on speculation about the internal content. But conservative scholarship recognizes the harmony of this letter with the others of Paul. There is a consistency of doctrine, view of the church, and language. Early external evidence is strongly in support of Paul as the author. (See the lesson on Timothy.)

Date:

Titus was written shortly after First Timothy, possibly in the same year (A. D. 63-64).

To Whom Written:

Titus was one of Paul’s converts and intimate friends, a close fellow-worker, and a companion on Paul’s missionary journeys. His name appears 13 times in the New Testament (Gal 2:1, 3; 2Ti 4:10; Tit 1:4; 2Co 2:13; 7:6, 13-14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18). He was a Greek whom Paul would not allow to be circumcised (Ac 15:1-2, 5-19; Gal 2:1-10).

Nothing further was written about Titus until Paul’s third journey. He was with Paul at Ephesus (Ac 19), and from there was sent with an unnamed brother to deal with the problems in Corinth (2Co 12:18; 7:13-15). In Corinth, he was active in arranging the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (1Co 16:1-2; 2Co 8-9). When Paul left Ephesus, he was concerned when he did not meet Titus at Troas as previously arranged (2Co 2:12-13). Paul traveled to Macedonia and was joined by Titus (Ac 20:1-6; 7:5-6). Titus was then sent back to Corinth to complete the collection (2Co 8:16-24).

The Bible is silent about Titus for the next six or seven years and we do not know whether Titus was with Paul during the first Roman imprisonment. However, he apparently travelled with Paul after Paul’s release. Paul visited Crete and left Titus there to set things in order (1:5). Later Titus left Crete, after the arrival of Artemas or Tychicus, to rejoin Paul at Nicopolis (3:12) in Western Greece. Titus was probably with Paul when the apostle was rearrested by the Romans and traveled with Paul to Rome. Titus apparently still had his freedom, for in the second letter to Timothy, Paul remarks that Titus had left Rome for Dalmatia (2Ti 4:10).

The people on the island of Crete, southeast of Greece in the Mediterranean, were descendants of the Philistines. They were daring sailors and bowmen, with a bad reputation. The Cretans were known as “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (1:12), as depicted by one of their own poets, Epimenides. The term “kretizein,” meaning “to act as a Cretan,” became synonymous with “to lie.” This was the environment in which the church in Crete existed. It would seem that Titus was a capable and trusted evangelist with a spiritual depth and concern that enabled him to accomplish difficult tasks. Thus, he was left in Crete to set in order what remained in organizing the body of believers.

TITUS

Sharp Focus

Key Text: *Tit 2: 11-14*

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Theme:

Instructions to Titus to set in order the things that were wanting, to appoint elders in every city, to reprove false teachers, to teach sound doctrines, and to encourage good works.



Book
Look
at the

Sermon Outline

It's Not Over 'til it's Over

Introduction:

There is a popular poster available in most book stores which shows a wide-eyed cat holding on for dear life to a clothesline. The caption reads, "Hang in there, Baby." I don't particularly like cats, but I like that poster. It communicates a message that all of us need to hear from time to time in our lives - that often it is not brilliance or brawn or bravado which is needed in day to day living so much as the simple capacity to stick things out.

We use a number of folksy sayings to make the same point:

Keep on keeping on
Never say die
Tie a knot and hold on
It's not over till it's over

The ability to hang on, to persist, to persevere is one of the most praiseworthy characteristics we humans possess. We don't like quitters, we hate ourselves for giving up, and the very word "surrender" leaves a bad taste in our mouths. Even when things seem bleakest, there is something about the human spirit that refuses to say "uncle" and insists on holding out.

Christians need few things as much as the ability to hang on. We've all known people who, in the excitement of conversion, make some initial changes and commitments only to lose in time both their excitement and their faith. Very few of us start out luke-warm, but the New Testament constantly warns that many will end up that way. What begins with a bang often ends in a whimper.

We get tired. We grow apathetic. We lose interest. We become comfortable. And all of that persuades us to slow down, back off, drop out, and give up. We try to tie a knot, but we can't seem to hold on. Unfortunately, it's over for many of us long before it's really over.

What Christians need to encourage them to persevere is not catchy sayings or powerful speeches. They need mostly the example of those who have gone before. One powerful example of perseverance goes further than a powerful speech ever could.

Outline:

I. Rewriting the Ending of Paul's Life

- A. When did Paul Die?
 1. The witness of the Bible:
 - a. Silence of Acts.
 - b. Testimony of the Pastorals
 - c. A hint in Romans 15:23-28
 2. The witness of early church traditions:
 - a. Clement - 1st Letter to Corinth (circa A.D. 100)
 - b. Eusebius - History of the Church (circa A.D. 325)
- B. A Second Possibility
 1. A Fourth Missionary Journey?
 - a. Was Paul released after his trial in A.D. 62?
 - b. He may well have preached in Spain, and then revisited some of the churches he had established.
 - i. Titus was left in Crete (Tit 1:5) to finish the work and appoint elders.
 - ii. Timothy was left in Ephesus (1Ti 1:3).
 - iii. Paul wrote back to both from Greece.
 2. A Second Roman Imprisonment?
 - a. In Rome, the Neronian persecutions.
 - b. During this imprisonment, Paul wrote 2 Timothy.
 3. Death Under Nero in A.D. 67/68.

II. 2 Timothy and a Lesson in Perseverance

- A. Paul's Suffering in 2 Timothy
 1. Paul's language:
 - a. "Suffering" - uses the word 7 times in this book.
 - b. "Persecutions" - 3 references
 - c. "Chains" - 3 references
 2. Paul is lonely.
 3. Paul is in a "state of want."
 4. He knows that the end is near (Read 2Ti 4:6).
- B. Paul's Perseverance in 2 Timothy
 1. Endurance in suffering:
 - a. Read 2 Timothy 1:11-12
 - b. Read 2 Timothy 2:8-10
 - c. Read 2 Timothy 4:16-18
 2. "I have fought the good fight ..." (Read 2Ti 4:6-8)
- C. Paul's Encouragement in 2 Timothy
 1. Paul's charges to Timothy:
 - a. Read 2 Timothy 1:8
 - b. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-3
 - c. Read 2 Timothy 3:14-15
 - d. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-2, 5
 2. "Here is a trustworthy saying"

Conclusion:

An encouragement to "Hang in there, Baby" based on the life and words of Paul.

Christ in Titus

The teaching of Paul in Titus about Jesus is rather complex. It must be understood that Paul's understanding of Jesus has grown over the course of time. He once considered Jesus an imposter. At Damascus, he was convinced he was the Messiah. Now, near the end of his life, Paul is more than ever convinced of the deity of Christ. In Paul's mind, the work of Jesus and of God cannot be thought of in separate terms - they share one essence, one aim, one work. Notice how this comes out in the book of Titus.

1. God is referred to as "Savior" (1:3; 2:10; 3:4 see also similar passages in 1 Timothy - 1:1; 2:3; 4:10). Usually this is a designation we would reserve for Jesus (as Paul does in his earlier letters - Eph 5:23; Php 3:20). Paul also calls Jesus "Savior" three times in Titus (1:4; 2:13; 3:6). Salvation is the work of both the Father and the Son. Each, in Paul's mind, is "Savior" and worthy of our gratitude and love.
2. In Titus 2:13, it is likely that Jesus is actually called "God." The Greek is ambiguous at this verse. Does Paul say that we await the appearing of our great God *and* our savior Jesus (as the KJV translates, implying both God and Jesus will appear), or does Paul mean to say that we await the appearing of our great God and savior, *who is* Jesus (as the RSV and NIV translate)? The Greek tends to support the latter interpretation, and the next verse would flow more naturally if that were the case. If so, Paul's point here is that Jesus is God and Savior, that he is coming again, and that we are sustained by that hope. This idea is not foreign to Paul's writing (e.g., Ro 9:5; Col 2:9), but is stated in a rather striking way here in Titus.
3. In Titus 3:4-7, there is a beautiful description of the ministry of Christ. Paul speaks of a time when God's kindness and love "appeared," saving us through mercy. Paul looks back to the work of Jesus and sees it as the time in history when God's love became visible.

Major Lessons

1. **Qualifications of Elders** - Most congregations in the early church were guided by groups of older and wiser men called "Elders." They were not preachers in the modern sense, but good and faithful members of the congregation who were responsible for shepherding the people in their churches. Paul teaches Titus that such men must:
 - a. be blameless (1:6, 7 - see 1Ti 3:2)
 - b. be the husband of one wife (1:6 - see 1Ti 3:2)
 - c. have well-behaved children (1:6 - see 1Ti 3:4-5)
 - d. not be overbearing, quick tempered or in pursuit of dishonest gain (1:7)
 - e. not be drunken or violent (1:7 - see 1Ti 3:3)
 - f. be hospitable and self-controlled (1:8 - see 1Ti 3:2)
 - g. be good, upright, holy and disciplined (1:8)
 - h. encourage and defend sound doctrine (1:9)
2. **Responsibilities of an Evangelist** - The evangelist was a traveling preacher who had primary responsibility for teaching, correcting, and growing the churches with which he worked. Often evangelists would stay extended periods of time with a congregation (Paul was in Ephesus for 3 years and Corinth for 18 months), but then move on to minister to other churches in need. Evangelists should:
 - a. teach sound doctrine (2:1, 15; 3:8) - For Paul, sound doctrine was more than just knowing the right answers to the right questions. It involved also the commitment to right living. Chapter 2 defines what Paul meant by "sound doctrine" in relation to different groups of people. In the end, such doctrine teaches us to "say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled and godly lives" (2:11-14).
 - b. remind Christians to devote themselves to doing what is good (3:1, 8, 14; see also 2:7, 14).
 - c. avoid foolish controversies and arguments (3:9-11).
3. **Characteristics of False Teachers** - Most congregations in the early church were also faced with a group of people who tried to lead them away from "sound teaching." Such people needed to be identified also. Paul describes them as:
 - a. rebellious, mere talkers, deceivers (1:10)
 - b. teaching things they ought not to teach (1:11)
 - c. having corrupt minds and consciences (1:15)
 - d. claiming to know God but denying him by actions (1:16)
 - e. detestable, disobedient, unfit for the good (1:16)

Outline

Small Group Study

Salutation (1:1-4)

I. Sound Elders To Refute Unsound Teachers (1:5-16)

- A. The Appointment of Sound Elders (1:5-9)
 - 1. The duty of Titus to appoint elders (1:5)
 - 2. The qualifications of sound Elders (1:6-9)
- B. The Exhortation To Refute Unsound Teachers (1:10-16)
 - 1. The description of unsound men (1:10-13)
 - 2. The reproof of unsound men (1:13-14)
 - 3. The fruit of unsound men (1:15-16)

II. Sound Instruction To The Congregation (2:1-15)

- A. The Instruction For Sound Living (2:1-10)
 - 1. To Titus (2:1)
 - 2. To older men (2:2)
 - 3. To older women (2:3)
 - 4. To younger women (2:4-5)
 - 5. To younger men (2:6-8)
 - 6. To slaves (2:9-10)
- B. The Motive For Sound Living: God's Grace (2:11-14)
 - 1. The appearance of God's grace (2:11)
 - 2. The instruction of God's grace (2:12)
 - 3. The expectation of God's grace (2:13)
 - 4. The purpose of God's grace (2:14)
- C. The Authority For Sound Living (2:15)

III. Sound Living In Society (3:1-11)

- A. Sound Christians Are Model Citizens (3:1-2)
- B. Sound Christians Are Motivated (3:3-8)
 - 1. By their past (3:3)
 - 2. By their salvation (3:4-7)
 - a. The source of salvation (3:4)
 - b. The basis of salvation (3:5a)
 - c. The means of salvation (3:5b-6)
 - d. The results of salvation (3:7)
 - 3. By Their Actions (3:8)
- C. Sound Christians Reject Unsound Teaching (3:9-11)
 - 1. Reject foolish controversies (3:9)
 - 2. Reject factious men (3:10-11)

IV. Conclusion (3:12-15)

- A. Personal Instruction (3:12-14)
- B. Salutation (3:15)

Warm-up:

Share a time when you trusted and admired someone, only to be greatly disappointed by them in the end. In particular, think of someone who "preached" a good line, but did not live up to his own words. What did you feel when you finally saw this person for what he/she truly was?

Look at the Book

Titus 1:10-16

1. There are two groups of people referred to in these verses: 1) those who are teaching false ideas, and 2) those who are apt to listen to such teaching and believe it. Which of the following verses apply to these two groups? Defend your answer.
 - a. Verses 10-11 (false teachers or listeners?)
 - b. Verses 12-14 (false teachers or listeners?)
 - c. Verses 15-16 (false teachers or listeners?)
2. What does Paul tell Titus to do for those who are likely to believe "myths and the commands of men?" How should an evangelist handle such people?
3. What does Paul tell Titus to do about those who are teaching false doctrine?
4. How does Paul describe false teachers in this passage? Does he sound very hopeful about such people being turned around and brought back to the faith?

Looking Closer:

1. Do you think there are any "false teachers" in the church today?
2. If so, do you think we take them too lightly? For instance, would you describe such people in terms as strong as those Paul used, or would you be more likely to say they are merely "misguided, mistaken, or confused?"
3. Are there still people in the church who are likely to believe false teachers? What distinguishes those who are susceptible to such teaching from those who are not?

Looking Around:

Have each group member state his/her commitment to be "sound in the faith" (Tit 1:13) and encourage the other members to neither teach nor listen to anything that is not "pure."