

THE LETTER TO TITUS

Pastoral Epistles

The two letters addressed to Timothy and the one to Titus are called the "Pastoral Letters, not only because they are addressed to certain early Christian "pastors" or leaders, but also because they give instructions about the qualifications and responsibilities of people who are to serve as "shepherds" or bishops of local congregations.

Background to the Letter

The Letter to Titus is addressed to a different co-worker of Paul than are First and Second Timothy. The situation is different, too, for Titus is addressed as the person in charge of developing the church on the large Mediterranean island of Crete (Titus 1:5), a place Paul had never visited.

Titus was a Gentile Christian. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas during Paul's first missionary journey starting at Antioch and concluding with a visit to Jerusalem (Gal 2:1; cf Acts 15:2).

According to Second Corinthians (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6, 13-14), he was with Paul on his third missionary journey.

Besides being the bearer of Paul's letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 7:6-8), he had the responsibility of taking up the collection in Corinth for the Christian community of Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:6, 16-19, 23). In the letter to Titus (Titus 1:5), he is mentioned as the administrator of the Christian community in Crete, charged with the task of organising it through the appointment of presbyters and bishops (Titus 1:5-9).

Author and Date of the Letter

The three Pastoral Letters are attributed to the apostle Paul, but were almost certainly not written by Paul himself. Rather, they are probably written in Paul's name by one or more of his followers after his death. One should not assume however that all three of the Pastoral Letters were written by the same author at about the same time.

Those who assume authorship by Paul himself usually place Titus after First Timothy and before Second Timothy. Others see it as closely related to First Timothy, in a growing emphasis on church structure and opposition to heresy, and therefore later than Second Timothy.

The principal divisions of the Letter

- 1. Address (1:1-4)**
- 2. Pastoral Charge (1:5-16)**
- 3. Teaching the Christian Life (2:1-3:15)**

Content of the Letter

Three topics of church life and structure are discussed: presbyter-bishops (1:5-9); groups with which one must work in the church (2:1-10); and admonitions for conduct based on the grace and love of God that appeared in Jesus Christ (2:11-3:10). There is an emphasis on church office and on living in the society of the day, in which deceivers and heretics abound (1:10-16; 3:9-10).

Titus' Task

The first topic of the letter is a series of orders instructing Titus about the kind of people to appoint as church leaders in view of the pastoral difficulties peculiar to Crete (1:5-16). They are called 'elders' and 'overseers'. They may be that elders are senior men, the presbyters, who form an advisory council, while overseers do the work of leading and teaching. As the life and organisation of the church develop, the 'overseers' will be better known as bishops.

Christian Code

The Letter suggests the special individual and social virtues that the various ministers in the Christian community should be encouraged to acquire (2:1-10).

An elder must have a good reputation in and outside the Church. Then this section has another set of orders giving to Titus a domestic code to instruct the various groups in the Jewish-Christian community.

They should have married only once, even if he is divorced and the wife has died. Their children must share their faith and not be rebellious.

The elder's character and behaviour must be an expression of God's love – gentle, patient and self-controlled. He must not be ruled by drink or bad temper. He must be holy and hospitable in his house, so that he is a good example of his teaching.

Faith and Moral Living

The motivation for transformation of their lives comes from Christ, especially the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and His future coming, as applied through baptism and justification (3:4-8). The community is called to be a leaven for Christianizing the social world about it (3:1-3). Good works are to be the evidence of their faith in God (3:8).

In the past we were led by our feelings and found ourselves hating each other. Now everything is different in the light of Christ. We can be different because we have experienced the mercy and goodness of God. He has saved us from sin, washed them away and has given us the gift of His Spirit living in us.

Final Directives

Some more practical directives are given for a healthy community life.

- To avoid vain discussions of those who engage in religious controversy and endless arguments and quarrels about the law.
- False teachers are a throwback to the darkness and discord of the past. To give them two suitable warnings and after that they have to be ignored (3:9-11).

Final Instructions

Titus receives some personal instructions on how he should deal with others. The letter suggests that they are to be given two suitable warnings and after that to be ignored (3:9-11).

Paul in his own words

But when the kindness and generous love of God our saviour appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of His mercy, He saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom He richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our saviour.

Titus 3:4-6

Link

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http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20090302_2.htm