

Introducing Titus

A vision for a healthy church

Paul encourages Titus to establish his new church in healthy, gospel ministry. With unhealthy influences surrounding the church, Paul's vision of a healthy church includes healthy leadership, healthy relationships and healthy living. This vision is based on teaching the gospel which then overflows into doing what is good.

Context

There's not a lot to know about the context of Titus outside of the book itself. The man, Titus, is not mentioned in the book of Acts. Neither is Paul and Titus' visit to Crete. But in some of Paul's other letters, Titus is described as Paul's partner and co-worker who shows godly concern for others as well as enthusiasm and initiative (2 Cor 8:16-23). He didn't exploit others (2 Cor 12:18). He's a Greek (Gal 2:1-3).



Within the book of Titus itself, we learn that Paul and Titus preached the gospel together in Crete. It seems that people were saved and a church was planted. Paul moved on and left Titus to continue the work (1:5).

We learn something of the pressure within the church. There is false teaching, particularly from the 'circumcision group' (1:10). They teach 'Jewish myths' and 'merely human commands' (1:14). They deny God in their teaching and by their behaviour (1:16). But there is also pressure outside the church, amidst the surrounding culture. Cretans are described as 'always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons' (1:12).

Genre

The book of Titus is an epistle (letter). It was written by the apostle Paul to his friend and fellow-worker, Titus. It is thought to be written sometime around AD 65.

Titus is known as one of three "pastoral epistles" (also 1 & 2 Timothy). They are given this title because they are addressed to people with pastoral oversight of churches.

Purpose

Paul writes to encourage Titus as the pastor of a new church. In particular, his purpose in writing is that Titus 'put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town' (1:5). He urges Titus to raise up leaders of godly character who know the truth and refute error (1:6-9).

But a larger purpose is on view. Paul urges Titus (and the church leaders) to teach healthy doctrine as the foundation of a healthy church (2:1-10). Healthy doctrine is outlined by Paul as the good news of God's grace and salvation in Jesus (2:11-15, 3:3-8). Through this teaching, the people are equipped to live 'the good life' (2:14, 3:8, 3:14).

Themes

- Healthy/sound doctrine and healthy/sound living (1:9, 13, 2:1, 2, 8)
- Godliness and godly character (1:1, 6-8, 2:2-10, 12, 3:1-2)
- The gospel/trustworthy message (1:1, 9, 14, 2:1, 5, 10, 2:11-15, 3:3-8)
- Leadership (1:5-16, 3:9-11)
- Teaching (1:3, 11, 2:1-3, 7, 10, 13, 15, 3:8)
- False teachers and false teaching (1:10-16, 2:5, 8, 3:9-11)
- Salvation and God as Saviour (1:3-4, 2:10-11, 13, 3:4-6)
- Grace and mercy (1:2-4, 2:11, 3:4-7)
- The hope of eternal life (1:2, 2:13, 3:7)
- Self-control (2:2, 5, 6, 12)
- What is good and living the good life (1:8, 16, 2:3, 7, 14, 3:1, 8, 14)

Structure

Titus 1	Healthy leadership
Titus 2	Healthy relationships
Titus 3	Healthy living

Further reading

Tim Chester, *Titus for you* (God's Word for You series) - An accessible commentary that is also designed as a devotional guide.

Tony Payne, Phillip Jensen, *The Path to godliness: Titus* (Interactive Bible Study series) - This series is for small group study. It includes a range of questions as well as short commentary. It could be done for personal benefit.

Donald Guthrie, *Titus* (New Bible Commentary) - The New Bible Commentary is a must-have for Christians. It contains accessible material on every book of the Bible. The section on Titus includes context, purpose, theology, and verse-by-verse comment on the text.

