

Titus Chapter 1

Paul's Opening Statement - Verses 1-4

¹Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— ²in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior, ⁴To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

1:1 Paul wrote this letter between his first and second imprisonments in Rome (before he wrote 2 Timothy) to guide Titus in working with the churches on the island of Crete. Paul had visited Crete with Titus and had left him there to minister (1:5). Crete had a strong pagan influence because this small island may have been a training center for Roman soldiers. Therefore, the church in Crete needed strong Christian leadership.

Paul calls himself "a servant of God"—that is, one who was committed to obeying God. This obedience led Paul to spend his life telling others about Christ. He also calls himself "an apostle." Even though Paul was not one of the original 12, he was specially called by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (see Acts 9:1-16 for an account of his call). The word "apostle" means "messenger" or "missionary." "God's elect" refers to God's choice of his people, the church. For more information on Paul, see his profile.

1:1 In one short phrase, Paul gives insight into his reason for living. The process begins with the proclamation of faith, continues with knowledge of the truth, which is then shown by people living in godliness. Paul wanted men and women to be mature in Jesus Christ. This was his ultimate objective by which he evaluated all he did. How would your church evaluate its ultimate objectives? What specific goals, ministries, and service opportunities bring believers to faith, spiritual maturity, and godliness? Do established members reflect good Christian conduct and desire for Christian service? How would you describe your purpose in life? To what are you devoted? Are you willing to share your faith, teach the truth, and live a godly life for all to see?

1:2 Apparently lying was commonplace in Crete (1:12). Paul made it clear at the start that God does not lie. The foundation of our faith is trust in God's character. Because God is truth, he is the source of all truth, and he cannot lie. Believing in him leads to godliness, living a God-honoring lifestyle (1:1). The eternal life that God has promised will be ours because he keeps his promises. Build your faith on the foundation of a trustworthy God who never lies.

1:3 God is called "our Savior," as is Christ Jesus (1:4). "God" here refers to the Father. Jesus did the work of salvation by dying for our sins and, therefore, he is our Savior. God planned the work of salvation, and he forgives our sins. Both the Father and the Son acted to save us from our sins.

1:4 Titus, a Greek, was one of Paul's most trusted and dependable coworkers. Paul had sent Titus to Corinth on several special missions to help the church in its troubles (2 Corinthians 7-8). Paul and Titus also had traveled together to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:3) and Crete (1:5). Paul left Titus in Crete to lead the new churches that were springing up on the island. Titus is last mentioned by Paul in 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul's final recorded letter. Titus had leadership ability, so Paul gave him leadership responsibility, urging him to use his abilities well.

Appointing Elders Who Love What Is Good - Verses 5-9

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint^f elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1:5 Crete, a small island in the Mediterranean Sea, had a large population of Jews. The churches there were probably founded by Cretan Jews who had been in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:11) more than 30 years before Paul wrote this letter. The unfinished work refers to establishing correct teaching and appointing elders in every town. Paul had appointed elders in various churches during his journeys (Acts 14:23). He could not stay in each church, but he knew that these new churches needed strong spiritual leadership. The men chosen were to lead the churches by teaching sound doctrine, helping believers mature spiritually, and equipping them to live for Jesus Christ despite opposition.

1:5-8 Paul briefly describes some qualifications that the elders should have. Paul had given Timothy a similar set of instructions for the church in Ephesus (see 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:22). Notice that most of the qualifications involve character, not knowledge or skill. A person's lifestyle and relationships provide a window into his or her character. Consider these qualifications as you evaluate a person for a position of leadership in your church. It is important to have leaders who can effectively preach God's Word; it is even more important to have those who can live out God's Word and be examples for others to follow.

1:8 One qualification for an elder was that he must "be hospitable." Christian leaders must be known for their hospitality. In the early days of Christianity, traveling evangelists and teachers were helped by Christians who housed and fed them. We would benefit from inviting people to eat with us—visitors, fellow church members, young people, those in need. Giving hospitality is very important today because so many people struggle with loneliness. In our self-centered society, we can show that we care by being hospitable. Christians were not to entertain false teachers (2 John 1:10), but this prohibition did not apply to non-Christians in general. God wants us to be generous, courteous, and hospitable with non-Christians; through our friendship, some may be won to Christ.

Rebuking Those Who Fail to Do Good - Verses 10-16

¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in

the faith ¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

1:10 "Those of the circumcision group" were the Judaizers, Jews who taught that the Gentiles had to obey all the Jewish laws before they could become Christians. This regulation confused new Christians and caused problems in many churches where Paul had preached the Good News. Paul wrote letters to several churches to help them understand that Gentile believers did not have to become Jews first in order to be Christians; God accepts anyone who comes to him in faith (see Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:2-7). Although the Jerusalem council had dealt with this issue (see Acts 15), devout Jews who refused to believe in Jesus still tried to cause problems in the Christian churches. Church leaders must be alert and take action on anything that divides Christians.

1:10-14 Paul warns Titus to be on the lookout for people who teach wrong doctrines and lead others into error. Some false teachers are simply confused: They speak their misguided opinions without checking them against the Bible. Others have evil motives: They pretend to be Christians only because they can get more money ("dishonest gain"), additional business, or a feeling of power from being a leader in the church. Jesus and the apostles repeatedly warned against false teachers (see Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 2 Peter 3:3-7) because their teachings attack the foundations of truth and integrity upon which the Christian faith is built. You can recognize false teachers because they will (1) focus more attention on themselves than on Christ, (2) ask you to do something that will compromise or dilute your faith, (3) de-emphasize the divine nature of Christ or the inspiration of the Bible, or (4) urge believers to make decisions based more on human judgment than on prayer and biblical guidelines.

1:12 Paul is quoting a line from a poem by Epimenides, a poet and philosopher who had lived in Crete 600 years earlier. Some Cretans had a bad reputation and were known for lying. Paul used this familiar phrase to make the point that Titus's ministry and leadership were very much needed.

1:15 Some people see good all around them, while others see nothing but evil. What is the difference? Our souls become filters through which we perceive goodness or evil. The pure (those who have Christ in control of their lives) learn to

see goodness and purity even in this evil world. But corrupt and unbelieving people find evil in everything because their evil minds and hearts color even the good they see and hear. Whatever you choose to fill your mind with will affect the way you think and act. Turn your thoughts to God and his Word, and you will discover more and more goodness, even in this evil world. A mind filled with good has little room for what is evil (see Philipians 4:8).

1:16 Many people claim to know God. How can we know if they really do? We will not know for certain in this life, but a glance at their lifestyles will quickly tell us what they value and whether they have ordered their lives around kingdom priorities. Our conduct speaks volumes about what we believe (see 1 John 2:4-6). What do people know about God and about your faith by watching your life?