

## Overview of Titus

**Authorship:** Titus is one of three so-called “pastoral epistles” in the New Testament, along with 1 and 2 Timothy, written by Paul to two of his proteges.

**Date:** 63-65 AD.

**Genre and Audience:** Pastoral and personal letter written to Titus, Paul’s protégé as he serves this church on the island of Crete.

**Theme:** The theme of Titus is the inseparable link between faith and practice, belief and behavior. This truth is the basis for its critique of false teaching as well as its instruction in Christian living and qualifications for church leaders.

### **Purpose, Occasion, and Background:**

Paul had recently completed a journey to Crete, resulting in the establishment of new churches. In order to see that these churches were properly established (as was Paul’s typical pattern, see Acts 14:21-23), Paul left Titus in Crete. The existence of false teachers (1:10-16) amid the fledgling churches heightens the intensity of the situation.

The false teachers appear to be the particular occasion for the writing of the letter. Discussion of the false teachers frames the heart of the letter. Furthermore, the description of elders (1:5-9) as well as the descriptions of proper Christian living (2:1-10; 3:1-3) appear to be worded for intentional contrast with these opponents. The content of the false teaching is not made explicit (as in 1 Timothy). There appears to be a significant Jewish element to the teaching since the opponents arise from “the circumcision party” (1:10) and are interested in “Jewish myths” (1:14) and perhaps ritual purity (1:15). Paul’s primary concern, however, is with the practical effect of the false teaching. In spite of their concern for ritual purity, the adherents of the false teaching did not live lives of godliness flowing out of the gospel but instead lived in a way that proved they did not know God (1:16).

This false teaching, which in some way allowed for ungodliness, would have found a welcome home in Crete, which was proverbial in the ancient world for immorality. But Paul expected the gospel, even in Crete, to produce real godliness in everyday life.

In dealing with the false teaching, Paul also provides Titus a portrait of a healthy church. He describes proper leadership (1:5-9), proper handling of error (1:10-16; 3:9-11), proper Christian living (esp. important for new believers in an immoral milieu; 2:1-10; 3:1-2), and the gospel as the source of godliness (2:11-14; 3:3-7).

**Why Study Titus:** It’s a Wonderful Life is recognized by the American Film Institute as one of the 100 best American films of all time. It stars James Stewart as George Bailey, a man who in his youth dreamed of travelling the world. But along the way, he’s made sacrifices for other people that mean he never got to leave his small town. Now he’s a weary, broken man who,

through no fault of his own, is going to be declared bankrupt. So he stands on the town bridge about to commit suicide.

But then his guardian angel intervenes. The angel gives him a vision of what life would have been like if he'd never lived. He sees that his life counts, that it has made a difference. He has truly lived a good life—a wonderful life—touching the lives of many people in small but decisive ways.

In many ways, this is what Paul is doing in the letter he writes to Titus. He is giving us a vision of a life that touches people in small but decisive ways—a life that has eternal consequences. He is setting out the truly good life.

Paul knew that truth is what produces goodness, or “godliness”. What is that truth? *“The hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and which is now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior”* (1:2-3). The truth that creates a good life is the gospel. That is the truth that brings life and then changes life. And this good life overflows into others’ lives, too. A gospel-changed life *“will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive”* (2:10). The good life is a missional force.

Paul wanted Titus to lead this group of Christians on Crete to be church in a way that keep the gospel central for life, growth and mission. This letter will inspire and equip us to do the same—as individuals, as a local church—to live the godly life, the missional life...the good life.

NOTE: Background information mostly taken from *ESV Study Bible*. *Why Study Titus?* taken from *The Good Book Guide to Titus* by Tim Chester.