

# EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TITUS

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**Approximate date:** 63-65 C.E.

**Time period:** growing pains of new Messiah followers in the Mediterranean basin

**Author:** the Apostle Paul with Luke (secretary)

**Location of author:** Macedonia or Nicopolis

**Target audience and their location:** Titus in Crete

The author of the Epistle to **Titus** is identified in the text as being the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:1). Genuine Pauline authorship is not challenged by conservatives, neither was it doubted by the Second Century Church. Pauline authorship is doubted by liberals, who often believe that Titus was composed by second or third generation Christians (authorship issues of the **Pastoral Epistles** are summarized at the beginning of the entry for **1 Timothy**). This letter is addressed to Titus (Titus 1:4), who was one of the first non-Jews successfully evangelized by Paul. Titus was very important to him, as Paul took him to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-3). While there, Titus was not compelled to be circumcised as a proselyte to Judaism (Galatians 2:3-5), as he was accepted by the Jewish Believers as a part of the Body of Messiah even though he was a Greek. We may safely assume that when Titus accompanied Paul to Jerusalem he was a rather young Believer, and Paul wanted to show him the holy city. By the time Paul composes this letter, Titus undoubtedly matured in his spirituality, being able to serve as Paul's authorized representative for the growing community of Messiah followers on Crete.

While "We hear nothing further of Titus till the time of Paul's ministry at Ephesus on the third missionary journey" (*EXP*),<sup>1</sup> Titus probably worked with Paul during his time in Ephesus for a while, emerging as one of the Apostle's most trusted ministry associates. Titus was given the responsibility by Paul to deliver the letter of 2 Corinthians to Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:3). Later, we see that Paul and Titus worked together on the island of Crete helping to see congregations established (Titus 1:5), and Titus remained there to continue the work when Paul left (Titus 1:5; 2:15; 3:12-13). The last we see about Titus is that he went on a mission to Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10).

The letter to Titus was almost assuredly written before 2 Timothy, in approximately 63-65 C.E. The text of Titus indicates that Paul asked him to meet him in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12-14), a town on the west coast of Greece—and Titus presumably met Paul at his request, then being able to move northward to Dalmatia. Titus was on Crete when the letter was sent to him, and by extension Paul's instruction was not only to Titus, but to the Cretan Believers. Crete, being an island in the Southern Aegean Sea, was at a deplorable moral level in the First Century, even worse than other bad places. Paul actually quotes the Cretan poet Epimenides, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12, NASU),<sup>2</sup> in pointing out that Titus had his work cut out for him. Titus was given Paul's authorization to see that the congregations of Crete were well cared for, and to expect the arrival of Apollos and Zenas (Titus 3:13).

As with the other Pastoral Epistles of 1&2 Timothy, no one in the scholastic world has ever proposed a Hebrew or Aramaic origin for Titus (*Titos*, Τίτος). Contrary to what a few in the Messianic movement might want to believe, a Greek composition for Titus is absolutely certain. Titus "was a Greek" (Galatians 2:3), and would have spoken Greek as his native language. Titus was operating on Crete when Paul wrote him from Nicopolis, all areas where Greek was spoken as the primary language, including in the local Jewish community.

The Epistle to Titus includes a strong emphasis by Paul on loving and performing good works (Titus 1:8, 16; 2:3, 7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14), as true sanctification was needed on Crete. One explanation is that the letter was written by Paul because "Titus was directed to appoint morally and doctrinally qualified elders in the various" assemblies (*EXP*),<sup>3</sup> persons whose character was decidedly different than the troublemakers who are mentioned. There appear to have been some degree of proto- or incipient-Gnostic and/or mysterious influences circulating around Crete as well, which had affected some of the Jews.<sup>4</sup> Ellis contends that the troublemakers Paul

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Callimachus *Hymn to Zeus* 1.8.

<sup>3</sup> Hiebert, in *EXP*, 11:423.

<sup>4</sup> Beker, "Pastoral letters," in *IDB*, 3:673.

<sup>1</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, "Titus," in *EXP*, 11:422.

refers to would have been “gnosticizing judaizers,”<sup>5</sup> as they would not necessarily represent mainline Synagogue Judaism.

That there was some kind of false teaching circulating on the island of Crete, which Titus had to beware of, is easily detected from the letter. Paul tells him, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you...For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain” (Titus 1:5, 10-11, NASU). The various elders whom Titus will appoint will help to steer the Cretan Believers back on a proper course of faith, as various families and/or home fellowships were disrupted. The troublemakers were likely advocates of the non-Jewish Cretans becoming Jewish proselytes, and they pushed both “Jewish myths” and various “human commands” (Titus 1:14, TNIV). Involved with their false teaching was a significance on “controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law” (Titus 3:9, NASU), but things that were ultimately of little use. They also advocated some kind of ascetic purity (Titus 1:15).

Because of the unorganized and undisciplined nature of the ideas advocated by the Cretan troublemakers—other than them being described as foolish myths that stirred up controversy—one is left concluding that while being Jewish, they were ultimately opportunistic and fell prey to the stereotyped Cretan in ancient classical society. “There were...disputes about the law although it is not clear what form these took. The absorbing interest in genealogies gives some indication in view of contemporary Jewish speculations centred mainly around the Pentateuchal genealogies” (Guthrie).<sup>6</sup> While in Timothy’s situation (1 Timothy 1:4) the various “genealogies” focused around speculations associated with obscure Tanach figures, in Titus’ situation the troublemakers being labeled as “the circumcision” may have involved genealogies related to their Jewish pedigree. “According to Tit. 1:14 the myths were Jewish, which suggests that the false teachers were probably Judaizers...Paul’s exhortation that Titus himself avoid arguments about the law (3:9) may indicate the practice of the false teachers” (Guthrie, *ISBE*).<sup>7</sup> Paul notably informs Titus that “Zenas the lawyer and Apollos [are] on their way” (Titus 3:13, NASU), and with the former being a *nomikos* (νομικός),<sup>8</sup> he was likely a Diaspora Jew with

extensive knowledge in the Torah, being able to correct any of the errors that the troublemakers had circulated on Crete—because there was a proper usage of God’s Torah (cf. 1 Timothy 1:8).

Simply because there were various disputes that had erupted on Crete, as the troublemakers had been promoting false ideas associated with the Torah, the Cretan Believers were to have their attention focused on being obedient to God. Paul takes key concepts of Ancient Israel’s original calling, applying it to Messiah followers, by informing Titus,

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:11-14, NASU; cf. Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; Ezekiel 37:23).<sup>9</sup>

The reality that the Lord has called redeemed people out to be His own, comes with it the imperative of being a conduit of good deeds, reflective of His goodness and grace toward others who likewise need salvation. The Epistle to Titus definitely has a missional thrust to it, as forgiveness from sins is available to all people. “The letter is clear evidence that the [*ekklēsia*]...is not intended to function only in cozy, respectable, middle-class environments. The gospel is for the most unpromising of people....[T]eachers are to press on with their task of evangelism and of leading converts into a lifestyle that brings glory to God” (Carson and Moo).<sup>10</sup> Titus 2:13 also represents a very high Christology, where Yeshua the Messiah is referred to as “our great God and Savior.”<sup>11</sup>

One of the important points of contrast, between the letters of 1 Timothy and Titus, is that while Timothy was to appoint both elders and deacons in Ephesus (1 Timothy 3:1-13), Titus was to only appoint elders (Titus 1:5-9). This is probably only reflective of how the Ephesian congregation(s) was much larger and more established, and that the much smaller grouping of Believers on Crete did not yet require deacons. Ultimately in one’s reading of the Pastorals, what we see is that while its qualifications for congregational leaders must surely be heeded by us today, they need to be read within the context to which they were originally delivered.

<sup>5</sup> Ellis, “Pastoral Letters,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 663.

<sup>6</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 628.

<sup>7</sup> Guthrie, “Pastoral Epistles,” in *ISBE*, 3:682.

<sup>8</sup> *BDAG*, pp 675, 676 defines *nomikos* with, “**pert. to being well informed about law, learned in the law**,” noting how “Tit 3:13 mentions a certain Zenas the v., but it is not clear whether he was expert in Mosaic or non-Mosaic (in the latter case most prob. Roman)

law.—Elsewh. in the NT only once in Mt and several times in Lk, always of those expert in Mosaic law.”

While interpreters are not agreed if Zenas was a lawyer in the Mosaic Torah or Roman law, the CJB calls Zenas “the Torah expert”

<sup>9</sup> Aland, *GNT*, 735.

<sup>10</sup> Carson and Moo, pp 584-585.

<sup>11</sup> Grk. *του μεγάλου θεού και σωτήρος ημών Ιησού Χριστού*. (του μεγάλου θεού και σωτήρος ημών 'Ιησού Χριστού).

They are to serve as important guidelines, but not rigidly so.

It is easily observed that among the three Pastoral Epistles, the letter to Titus is the least examined and considered by today's Messianic Believers. There is often a struggle with statements that are sometimes perceived as being either anti-Torah (Titus 3:9) or anti-Jewish (Titus 1:14). Yet, when it is recognized that the Jewish troublemakers on Crete were likely not your average, synagogue-attending Jews—but rather opportunists who abused Moses' Teaching and used it as a means to *confuse* the Believers via some kind of esoteric or just made up ideas—Titus becomes much easier to understand. This would mean that Titus was overseeing the spiritual maturity of many new Believers, who needed to be rooted in a lifestyle of holiness and demonstrating good works, contrary to the behavior modeled by the opponents. Apollos, who was strong in the Tanach (Acts 18:24), and Zenas who was trained in the Law (Titus 3:13), would be able to further assist. The Epistle to Titus presents no major challenges for the Messianic community today when placed in its historical context, although we are surely admonished to beware of any Cretan-type troublemakers we may encounter.

Consult commentary *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee for a more detailed examination of Titus.

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# 1

## **Salutation**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Messiah Yeshua, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

<sup>2</sup> in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal;

<sup>3</sup> but in His own season manifested His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior;

<sup>4</sup> to Titus, my true child according to a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Messiah Yeshua our Savior.

## **Titus' Work in Crete**

<sup>5</sup> For this reason I left you on Crete, that you would set in order the things lacking, and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you;

<sup>6</sup> if anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

<sup>7</sup> For the overseer must be blameless, as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain,

<sup>8</sup> but hospitable, a lover of good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,

<sup>9</sup> holding firmly to the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine and refute those who contradict.

<sup>10</sup> For there are many rebellious ones, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,

<sup>11</sup> whose mouths must be stopped, who overturn whole households, teaching things which they ought not *to teach*, for the sake of dishonest gain.

<sup>12</sup> One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith,

<sup>14</sup> not giving heed to Jewish myths and commandments of people who turn away from the truth.

<sup>15</sup> To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

<sup>16</sup> They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and unfit for any good work.

# 2

## **The Teaching of Sound Doctrine**

<sup>1</sup> But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

<sup>2</sup> Older men are to be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.

<sup>3</sup> Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good,

<sup>4</sup> that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

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<sup>a</sup> The statement made about Cretans is often attributed to Epimenides, who was a Sixth Century B.C.E. poet, and what is said would have been a well-known sentiment expressed about Crete in the ancient world (cf. Marshall & Towner, pp 199-201). One of the oldest records of what Paul says is found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus* 1.8, "Cretans are always liars" (Stanley Lombardo and Diane Raynor, eds., *Callimachus: Hymns, Epigrams, Select Fragments* [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988], 3) dating to the Third Century B.C.E.

<sup>5</sup> to be sensible, chaste, workers at home, kind, being submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

<sup>6</sup> Likewise urge the younger men to be sensible;

<sup>7</sup> in all things showing yourself as an example of good works, in your doctrine *showing* integrity, gravity,

<sup>8</sup> and sound speech beyond reproach, so that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

<sup>9</sup> Urge slaves to be submissive to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not talking back,

<sup>10</sup> not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people,

<sup>12</sup> instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly and righteously and godly in the present age,

<sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Yeshua the Messiah,<sup>a</sup>

<sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Grk. *epiphaneian tēs doxēs tou megalou Theou kai sōtēros hēmōn Iēsou Christou* (ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτήρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

One will note some variance among Messianic versions, witnessing: “the appearing of the *Sh’khinah* of our great God and the appearing of our Deliverer, Yeshua the Messiah” (CJB) or “appearing of the glory of the Great God and of our Savior, Yeshua the Messiah” (The Messianic Writings), and also “appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah *Yeshua*” (TLV).

Those who argue that “our great God and Savior” speaks of Yeshua, and that a single entity is being referred to in 2:13, consider the definite article *tou* (τοῦ) to apply to *both* the titles “God and Savior.” A major feature of Greek grammar, which all students of Biblical Greek will learn about at one point or another, is known as the Granville Sharp rule, named after Granville Sharp (1735-1813) who was an English linguist and son/grandson of clergy. Wallace describes this rule in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*:

“In Greek, when two nouns are connected by [the conjunction] καί [kai, ‘and’] and the article precedes only the first noun, there is a close connection between the two. That connection always indicates at least some sort of *unity*. At a higher level it may connote *equality*. At the highest level it may indicate *identity*. When the construction meets three specific demands, then the two nouns *always* refer to the same person” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 270).

The significance of this grammatical issue is heightened, as Wallace informs, “according to Sharp, the rule applied absolutely *only* with personal, singular, and non-proper nouns” (Ibid., 272; a further summary of the Granville Sharp rule with Greek examples to be considered, is offered in Ibid., pp 270-290).

Grammatically speaking, there is no second reference in the Greek to “*the Savior Jesus Christ*,” which is what one would expect in the syntax, separating out “the great God,” meaning the Father from the Son. Elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles the definite article is used to separate out the title Savior (1 Timothy 2:3; 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:3, 4; 2:10; 3:4, 6). William D. Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles*, Vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 427 who is also a Greek grammarian, indicates how “If Paul was speaking of two persons, it would have been easy to say so unambiguously,” giving two possible options:

1. ***tou megalou Theou kai Iēsou Christou tou Sōtēros hēmōn*** (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτήρος ἡμῶν), “the great God and Jesus Christ our savior.”
2. ***tou megalou Theou hēmōn kai tou Sōtēros Iēsou Christou*** (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), “our great God and the savior Jesus Christ” (Ibid.)

The main point, as Mounce states, is that “If σωτήρος [Sōtēros] referred to a second person, it would have been preceded by the article” (Ibid.), and this way *the God* and *the Savior* could then be referring to two different entities (cf. 1 Timothy 1:2). But this is not what appears in 2:13, and as Mounce concludes, “if Paul did not believe that Jesus was God, it seems highly unlikely that he would have been so sloppy in making such a significant theological statement. If Paul did believe that Jesus was God, it is not a surprise to read this” (Ibid.).

<sup>b</sup> It is to be noted that there is some significant Tanach intertextuality present within the contents of 2:14: Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; Ezekiel 37:23 (cf. Aland, *GNT*, 735):

“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine” (Exodus 19:5, NASU).

“But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today” (Deuteronomy 4:20, NASU).

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 14:2, NASU).

<sup>15</sup> These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

### 3

#### **Maintain Good Deeds**

<sup>1</sup> Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

<sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every courtesy toward all people.

<sup>3</sup> For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, passing our lives in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

<sup>4</sup> But when the kindness of God our Savior, and His philanthropy appeared,

<sup>5</sup> not by works *done* in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy, He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>6</sup> whom He poured out upon us richly, through Yeshua the Messiah our Savior;

<sup>7</sup> that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

<sup>8</sup> Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I want you to strongly affirm *them*, so that those who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable for people.

<sup>9</sup> But shun foolish questionings and genealogies and strife and disputes about *the* Torah, for they are unprofitable and vain.

<sup>10</sup> Reject a factious person after a first and second warning,

<sup>11</sup> knowing that such a one is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

#### **Personal Instructions and Greetings**

<sup>12</sup> When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me in Nicopolis, for I have decided to winter there.

<sup>13</sup> Eagerly help Zenas the lawyer<sup>a</sup> and Apollos on their way, so that nothing is lacking for them.

<sup>14</sup> And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, so that they may not be unfruitful.

<sup>15</sup> All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in faith. Grace be with you all.

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<sup>a</sup>They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 37:23, NASU).

<sup>a</sup> Grk. *Zēnan ton nomikon* (Ζηνᾶν τὸν νομικόν); "Zenas the Torah expert" (CJB).