

Key Verse:

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13)

Key Truth:

Godly leaders should set in order what is lacking in the Church by teaching sound doctrine and modeling self-discipline. *“But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine...This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” (Titus 2:1; 3:8)*

Background

Titus was a Greek and one of Paul’s own converts, whom Paul affectionately calls his “true son in our common faith” (Titus 1:4). He accompanied Paul to Jerusalem, and during that visit Paul firmly refused to allow Titus to be circumcised, standing his ground for the truth of the gospel and the freedom believers have in Christ (Galatians 2:3–5).

Several years later, Titus appears again alongside Paul in Ephesus. From there, Paul sent him to Corinth to address serious problems within the church and to begin organizing a financial offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:6, 10). After completing that mission, Titus met Paul in Macedonia and reported back on the situation in Corinth. Encouraged by Titus’s report, Paul sent him once more to Corinth—this time carrying what we know as Second Corinthians—to prepare the church for Paul’s arrival and to see the offering brought to completion (2 Corinthians 2:3, 12–13; 7:5–6, 13–14; 8:16–18, 23; 12:14, 18).

That Paul entrusted Titus with such sensitive and demanding assignments reveals the high regard in which he held him. Titus was clearly a capable, wise, and tactful leader—someone Paul trusted to handle difficult people and complex situations with spiritual maturity.

We hear of Titus again seven or eight years later in the epistle written to him around A.D. 65. At that time, Titus was ministering on the island of Crete. Paul’s statement, “I left you in Crete” (Titus 1:5), indicates that they had been there together. Although Paul’s ship passed by Crete during his voyage to Rome (Acts 27), it is unlikely that this was when Titus was left behind. The more widely held view is that after Paul’s release from his first Roman imprisonment around A.D. 63, he traveled east and included Crete in his missionary itinerary.

Paul left Titus in Crete to set the churches in order and appoint qualified leaders. Once that work was complete, Titus was to be relieved by Artemas or Tychicus and then rejoin Paul in Nicopolis, in western Greece (Titus 3:12). The final reference to Titus appears in 2 Timothy 4:10, where Paul notes that Titus had gone from Rome to Dalmatia. This suggests that Titus had rejoined Paul and was with him when he was arrested again and taken to Rome. Why Titus later left is not stated. It may have been a mission assignment from Paul to continue evangelizing the region northwest of Greece. Scripture does not say for certain.

What is clear is that Titus was a faithful and proven servant of Christ. Early church tradition holds that he became the bishop—pastor and overseer—of the churches in Crete and that he died peacefully at an advanced age.

Because of the close similarity between First Timothy and Titus, these letters are generally dated to the same period, around A.D. 65. Both address the same central concern: the establishment of godly leadership within the church—Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete. In both places, the challenges were remarkably similar, and Paul's instructions reveal his deep concern for the health, order, and faithfulness of the churches under their care.