

Notes on Titus

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Introduction

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Paul may have visited Crete more than once. It seems unlikely that he would have had time to plant a church in Crete on his way to Rome as a prisoner (Acts 27:7-13, 21). One may have already been in existence then (cf. Acts 2:11). Perhaps Paul returned to Crete following his release from his first Roman imprisonment. In any case, he had been there, and had instructed Titus to remain there when he departed (Titus 1:5).



Evidently Paul wrote the Epistle to Titus *after* he wrote 1 Timothy, and *before* he wrote 2 Timothy. Titus 3:12 seems to indicate that his plans were more settled at this point than when he wrote 1 Timothy 3:14.¹

¹Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, p. 19.

Another view is that Paul wrote the Epistle to Titus before either 1 Timothy or 2 Timothy.¹

Titus was a Greek Gentile (Gal. 2:3). He had probably become a Christian under the influence of Paul, and subsequently became one of the apostle's protégés (Titus 1:4). Titus had been with Paul since the apostle's early ministry. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their mission of mercy to the Jerusalem church, when Paul was laboring in Antioch of Syria, Titus' home. That happened before Paul's first missionary journey (Gal. 2:1; Acts 11:27-30).

Titus also served as Paul's special representative to the Corinthian church during Paul's third missionary journey. He carried the "severe letter" from Ephesus (2 Cor. 12:18; cf. 2 Cor. 2:3-4; 7:8-12) and, returning to Ephesus through Macedonia, met Paul in Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:6-16). He was, in addition, the leader of the group of men whom Paul sent to the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, to pick up the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:6, 16, 23).

"Tradition has it that Titus, having become first bishop of Crete, died there in advanced years. His successor, Andreas Cretensis, eulogized him in the following terms: 'The first foundation-stone of the Cretan church; the pillar of the truth; the stay of the faith; the never silent trumpet of the evangelical message; the exalted echo of Paul's own voice'."²

Paul left Titus in Crete to "set" the church there "in order" (Titus 1:5). However, he planned to send Artemas or Tychicus to relieve Titus, so Titus could join Paul in Nicapolis for the winter (3:12). There were several towns with the name "Nicapolis" in Paul's arena of ministry. This one was probably the one in Illyricum (parts of modern Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and northern Albania), that lay east of northern Italy across the Adriatic Sea. When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, Titus was with him (2 Tim. 4:10, "Dalmatia" being another name for "Illyricum"). Perhaps Paul also wrote this letter from Nicapolis, or maybe from Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3) or some other place. A date between A.D. 62 and 66 seems a safe estimate for the time of its

¹Walter Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 122.

²Philip E. Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 76. See also Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, 3.4.

composition.¹ Zenas and Apollos may have delivered this letter to Titus on Crete (Titus 3:13).

The churches on the island of Crete were unorganized, though there appear to have been Christians in many of its cities (1:5). Titus' task of setting the churches in order included dealing with false teachers (1:10-11). The Cretans had a reputation for being idle, dishonest, and somewhat corrupt (1:12). These traits apparently characterized even some of the Christians, in addition to the false teachers (3:14). Part of Titus' task consisted of motivating them to change.

"Nowhere else does Paul more forcefully urge the essential connection between evangelical truth and the purest morality than in this brief letter."²

"The dominant theme in Titus, therefore, is *good works* (1:8, 16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14), that is, exemplary Christian behavior and that *for the sake of outsiders* (2:5, 7, 8, 10, 11; 3:1, 8)."³

OUTLINE

- I. Salutation 1:1-4
- II. Instructions for setting the church in order 1:5—3:11
 - A. The appointment of elders 1:5-9
 - B. The correction of false teachers 1:10-16
 - C. The conduct of the saints 2:1—3:11
 - 1. The behavior of various groups in the church 2:1-15
 - 2. The behavior of all in the church 3:1-11
- III. Conclusion 3:12-15

¹See Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 583.

²D. Edmond Hiebert, "Titus," in *Ephesians-Philemon*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 424.

³Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 12.

MESSAGE

In 1 Timothy, Paul wrote that the purpose of the local church is to be the supporting pedestal ("pillar and foundation") of God's truth. To fulfill this function, each church needs proper organization. In Titus, Paul emphasized the importance of church organization. In 2 Timothy, he emphasized the importance of church leadership.

It is significant that Paul's epistle to Titus deals with a church in a very difficult place: "Crete" (1:12-13a). Paul revealed that Christians in this difficult place could "adorn the doctrine of God" (2:9-10). Even those Christians who were in the most trying of circumstances (i.e., slaves), in that difficult place, could adorn the doctrine of God. To show the true spiritual power of the church, God selected the most difficult soil. In this way, the Holy Spirit teaches us that the church can fulfill its purpose in the most dark, desolate, and difficult places on earth. God can do so even through people whose situations in life are the most trying.

The subject of revelation in this epistle is *the true church of Jesus Christ*. What Paul said about the church is that it must be orderly. We could write, "Let everything be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) over this book.

First, Paul revealed the *motive* of church order: *why* the church must be orderly. It must be orderly because people must come to the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness (1:1; 1 Tim. 3:16). *Godliness* is the intended end product of the gospel. The "mystery of godliness" (i.e., the message about Jesus Christ) is what the church supports and displays to the world. The business of the church is to correct and convict those who speak against godliness (1:9). It does this by revealing God's truth. Its business is to counteract the influence of evil people (2:12).

The Cretans were "liars" (1:12). Christians are to live sensibly (2:12). Cretans were "evil beasts." Christians are to live righteously. Cretans were "lazy gluttons." Christians are to be godly. Negatively, Christians do this by "denying (to deny) ungodliness and worldly lusts" (2:12). By the way, "Cretans" should not be confused with "cretins." Cretins are people who suffer from *cretinism*, a congenital deficiency of thyroid secretion with resulting deformity and idiocy.

Second, Paul revealed the *method* of church order: *how* the church can be orderly. It is by the oversight of competent overseers (1:7). An overseer (elder) is, by definition, one who sees clearly what is going on. An overseer in the church needs to see three things clearly.

He must see God's truth clearly (1:9). He must know the Word of God. He must also see the conditions in which the people under his care live. An elder who does not know what is going on in the lives of the Christians in his church cannot exercise oversight effectively (1:9). He must also see clearly the method of oversight that God has prescribed. His duties include enunciating the truth (teaching), applying the truth (exhorting), and urging obedience to the truth (reproving; 2:15).

Third, Paul revealed the *might* of church order: *what* the church has that enables it to be orderly (2:11-14). The power of an orderly church lies in two "appearings." The first is the appearing of grace at the first advent of Jesus Christ. The second is the appearing of glory at His second advent. The revelation of the grace of God in the Cross of Christ should motivate the church. The revelation of the glory of God, when Christ returns for us at the Rapture, should also motivate the church. We gain motivation as we look backward and forward at our Lord's two "appearings." Christians do this whenever they celebrate the Lord's Supper. We look back on the Cross, but we also remember that we will only celebrate this memorial until He comes.

The appeal of Paul in this epistle is that the church must be true (loyal) to Jesus Christ. The church as a whole, individual Christians, and the church overseers, all have a responsibility to this end.

First, the responsibility of the church *as a whole* (all Christians in a local church) is to "adorn the doctrine" (2:10). Paul commanded this of slaves. If they could do it, all others can. "Adorn" is a translation of the Greek word *kosmeo*. The noun form of this word, *kosmos*, means "order" and "beauty." The verb also occurs in Matthew 25:7, where translators have rendered it "trimmed." When we remove the burned-off part of a wick, the flame burns brighter. Just so, when we trim a life, or a church, of sin and encumbrances, it bears a brighter witness to Christ. This process of trimming is what it means to adorn the doctrine. "To adorn" means to set forth attractively—as a musician does, who plays a piece of music beautifully. This is a corporate, as well as an individual, responsibility.

Second, the responsibility of the *individual* Christian is to "maintain good works" (3:8). This does not refer just to practicing charity or philanthropy. It refers to doing truly noble and beautiful works from the best of motives (cf. Eph. 2:10).

Third, the duty of the *overseer* is to "affirm the essentials of the faith (these things) confidently" (3:8). Church leaders should preach their convictions, not their questions.

"We do not help men and women to adorn the doctrine when we debate our doubts in their presence."¹

Here are a few applications of the central revelations of this epistle:

First, the church will be powerful in the world to the extent that it reveals God's truth. Its influence does not lie primarily in its ability to lobby for political change. Its influence lies mainly in its ability to proclaim and demonstrate God's truth to the world. This is much needed in the world today.

Second, Titus teaches that church leaders must be people who live under the authority of God's truth. We should not select them primarily because of their business experience, social influence, or wealth. It is the spiritual life of a person, mastered by the truth of God, that qualifies him or her for church leadership.

Third, this epistle teaches that the power of an overseer is that of God's truth, not that of his office. No real power comes because a person fills an office. Real power comes as a result of a person's works and words. A church's elders should be its most spiritually influential men.

Fourth, Titus teaches that the measure of the success of a church's overseers is the extent to which the church members fulfill their function in the world. Its measure of success is not the number of people attending services. It is the number and effectiveness of people proclaiming God's truth in the world by their godly lives and verbal witness. How much ministry are the saints carrying on during the week (personal evangelism, Bible studies, etc.)?

¹G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, 2:2:86.

The church, then, must be orderly so that it can fulfill its function, namely: to proclaim God's truth in the world (cf. 1 Cor. 14:40). This is a summary statement of the message of the book, what it is all about.¹

¹Adapted from *ibid.*, 2:2:77-88.

Exposition

I. SALUTATION 1:1-4

As usual, Paul began this letter with comments that not only introduced himself and greeted his reader, but also set the tone for his emphasis in what followed. The emphasis in this section is on Paul's duty and the nature of his message, rather than on his authority. This salutation is remarkably long and heavy for such a short epistle. Only Paul's salutation in Romans is longer. This fact reflects the seriousness of the matters that Paul addressed in this letter.

"Ultimately what Paul has done in this introduction is to place his own apostolate at the center of God's story; his authority and message are essential to it and derive their meaning from it. Thus, Paul is authenticating the ministry of his coworker Titus by establishing his own authority to instruct Titus."¹

1:1 Paul introduced himself as a "bond-servant (Greek *doulos*, lit. 'slave') of God," and "an apostle of Jesus Christ." Then he explained the ministries each of these titles represented. Paul usually commented on the source of his apostleship, but here he wrote of its purpose.

"Undoubtedly the background for the concept of being the Lord's slave or servant is to be found in the Old Testament scriptures. For a Jew this concept did not connote drudgery, but honor and privilege. It was used of national Israel at times (Isa 43:10), but was especially associated with famous OT personalities, including such great men as Moses (Joshua 14:7), David (Ps 89:3; cf. 2 Sam 7:5, 8) and Elijah (2 Kings 10:10); all these men were 'servants (or slaves) of the Lord'"²

"'Servant' ['bond-servant'] is *doulos*, the most abject, servile term in use among the Greeks for a

¹Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 665.

²The NET Bible note on 1:1.

slave. This abject, servile attitude on the part of a pagan slave finds its expression in true Christian humility on the part of the Christian who regards himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. ... The word refers to one whose will is swallowed up in the will of another."¹

God's bond-servant brings God's elect to saving "faith" in Christ. Christ's apostle brings the saints into the "knowledge of God's (the) truth" that He has designed to produce godly living.

"The doctrine of divine election firmly establishes the believer's eternal security. God has not left the believer's assurance of salvation captive to changing feelings or faltering faith. Rather, the faithfulness of God demonstrated in his divine election secures the believer's salvation in the will and purposes of God himself."²

"Although surrounded with mystery, the biblical teaching on election is for believers and is intended as a practical truth. It assures faithful, struggling believers that their salvation is all of God from beginning to end."³

1:2 God intended both prongs of Paul's ministry, evangelism and edification, to bring individuals into the fullness of eternal life.

"'Resting on' [NIV] is from the single Greek word *epi*. But it is better to understand this word as 'with a view to,' as in Ephesians 2:10. Thus Paul's thought is that all of his ministry is 'with a view to' eternal life."⁴

¹Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 2:3:181.

²Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, p. 265. Griffin wrote the commentary on Titus in this volume.

³Hiebert, p. 427.

⁴A. Duane Litfin, "Titus," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, pp. 761-72.

This "hope" was something God had "promised" from eternity past.¹ God had long since proved Himself to be consistently faithful to His promises. The unusual epithet "who cannot lie" (*apseudes*, free from falsehood) brings out the absolute trustworthiness of the hope just mentioned. It also contrasts God, who is to be the Christian's model, with the characteristic deceitfulness of the Cretans, which undoubtedly characterized some of the believers (cf. vv. 10, 12-13).

There is ancient evidence that Cretans considered lying culturally acceptable.²

"But a more specific pagan theology may be at the root. Paul's reference to 'the God who does not lie' could well lampoon the character of the Zeus of Cretan tales, who in fact did lie to have sexual relations with a human woman (taking the human form of her husband). This same Zeus was also held to be the epitome of virtue (defined by his possession of the cardinal virtues), a dimension of his character that will come more into focus later in the letter."³

1:3 In recent times, however, God had revealed new information ("His [W]ord," Gr. *logos*; cf. John 1:1) to His apostles, concerning the hope of eternal life that God had promised long ago. Paul was referring to the gospel.⁴ God had commanded him to pass it on to others (Acts 26:16-18; cf. 1 Cor. 9:16), and He has commanded us to do the same (Matt. 28:19-20).

Paul's reference to God as "our Savior" introduces the thought of salvation, which is a key theme in this epistle (cf. v. 4; 2:10-11, 13; 3:4-6).⁵ Salvation is a present reality in the life of the church.

¹George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 284.

²See Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities*, pp. 149-50.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 670.

⁴Knight, p. 285; Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 672.

⁵See the note on the Imperial Cult in A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 186-88.

1:4 There is not enough information in the New Testament to clarify the sense in which Titus, like Timothy, was Paul's "true child" (Gr. *gnesio tekno*) in the faith. Perhaps Paul had led him to Christ.¹ But the apostle had definitely taken him under his wing as a protégé. Paul made it clear to all readers that he regarded Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile, and himself, a Jew, as sharing "the same (a common) faith."

Note the testimony to the deity of Christ, that Paul gave, by referring to both "Christ Jesus" *and* "God the Father," as "our Savior" (vv. 3-4).

"Here alone he [Paul] calls Christ *soter*, 'Savior,' rather than *kurios*, 'Lord.' It is as if he anticipates the two crucial theological arguments that undergird his ethical exhortations in chapters 2 and 3, in both of which Christ as Savior is at the center (2:13; 3:6) as the one through whom God's grace has come to save us and to instruct and enable us in living godly (2:11 ff.) and peaceful (3:1 ff.) lives."²

"But both colliding and resonating with this story line was the religious-political discourse of Imperial Rome. At this point in time, the emperor freely took the title 'savior' to himself. A Savior Christology, such as Paul constructs powerfully in this letter, would surely also level a subversive blow at this claim (cf. on 1 Tim 6:14)."³

"This theologically rich introduction to the Epistle to Titus moves in scope from Paul's reflections on the sovereignty of God in human salvation to Paul's role in achieving God's purposes."⁴

"Although this theology is common in salutations, ... it addresses specific issues in Crete, where Titus was dealing with

¹William Barclay, *The Letters of Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, p. 265.

²Knight, p. 286.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 676.

⁴Griffin, p. 274.

a Jewish influence that most likely downplayed Christ (cf. 1:10)."¹

II. INSTRUCTIONS FOR SETTING THE CHURCH IN ORDER 1:5—3:11

As in 1 Timothy, Paul plunged into the business of his letter immediately since he was writing a trusted colleague. This partially explains the absence of a thanksgiving section in these two epistles. The serious threat of false teaching may be another reason. By contrast, 2 Timothy is more personal, and it contains a thanksgiving.

A. THE APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS 1:5-9

Paul began his instructions with these directions, to emphasize the priority of setting qualified leaders over the affairs of the local churches (cf. Acts 6:3).

1:5 Titus, like Timothy, served as the agent of an apostle with apostolic authority. He was in a position of authority over the other local Christians.

"Timothy was not the pastor of the church at Ephesus in the modern sense of that term; nor was Titus the bishop of the Cretan churches, as is sometimes thought. Both men are addressed as the personal representatives of the apostle Paul and had been left at their stations to carry out the work assigned to them by the apostle."²

"Titus may have been older, more mature and therefore less prone to depression and the need for encouragement than was Timothy. The Cretan situation was also less serious, and Titus was in less danger."³

¹William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 383.

²D. Edmond Hiebert, *Titus and Philemon*, p. 7.

³Mounce, p. 385.

The public reading of this epistle would have helped the Christians recognize Titus' authority and submit to Paul's instructions.

The churches in Crete needed organization. The ones in Ephesus, where Timothy was when Paul wrote 1 Timothy, had been in existence longer, and seem to have been better organized. An evidence of this may be that in 1 Timothy, Paul wrote about removing bad elders (1 Tim. 5:19-25). In Titus, we see no need for this. Paul prescribed an organizational structure but left it flexible. He did not dictate the details, but left these open for the local leaders to determine. Consequently the quality of the church's leaders was very important.

"It is ... impossible to determine how many elders would have been selected *in every town* (meaning 'in the house church of each town'); but the general rule would probably have been a plurality of leaders."¹

We do not know how many churches there were on Crete, but Homer, who lived in the ninth century B.C., referred to the island as "Crete of the hundred cities."² It was heavily populated. Neither do we know exactly when the gospel first took root in Crete, though at least one church existed there before Paul and Titus' visit.³

1:6-9 Paul listed 17 qualifications for an elder here. First Timothy 3 contains 15, but they are very similar and in some cases identical, though some here are new.

"Since the office of bishop is one of authority and power, the vices named are those to which persons in such positions are tempted."⁴

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 224. Cf. Phil. 1:1.

²Cited by Barclay, p. 268.

³See W. J. Conybeare, in *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 758.

⁴F. D. Gealy, *The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus*, in *The Interpreter's Bible*, 11:528.

Social and domestic qualifications

1. "Above reproach" (v. 6), or "blameless," is the translation of the Greek word used in 1 Timothy 3:10 (*anegkletos*) to describe deacons, there translated "beyond reproach." Paul used a synonym as the first qualification of elders in 1 Timothy 3:2 (*anepilempton*) translated there "above reproach." The words are virtually the same and mean that the elder must have no obvious flaw in his character or conduct that would bring justifiable criticism on him or the church. Paul gave the reason for this qualification in verse 7a.

"... the purpose of this code is identical to that of 1 Timothy 3 in that it is meant to test the candidate's 'blamelessness.' The broad standard appears twice at the head of the list (vv. 6, 7; compare 1 Tim 3:2). Then the remainder of the verses place 'blamelessness' into a concrete framework, treating the domestic, personal and ecclesiastical aspects of the candidate's life."¹

2. "Husband of one wife" (Gr. *mias gunaikos aner*, v. 6; 1 Tim. 3:2) means he must presently be a moral husband at least.²
3. "Having children who believe" (Gr. *tekna echon pista*, v. 6; 1 Tim. 3:4) adds a factor not present in 1 Timothy. While the churches in Crete appear to have been young, the fathers in them were old enough to have believing children. The elder must have his children under control.³ The context seems to limit the children to those who are

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 224.

²See my discussion of this qualification in the 1 Timothy notes. See also Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Appendix B.

³Knight, p. 290.

still living at home, and are not yet adults, assuming the elder had children.¹

"One view understands Paul to be limiting membership in the office to those whose family members all believe; *pista* can certainly bear this meaning.² Another view is that the term means, more generally, 'faithful' or 'trustworthy' (1:9; 3:8; 1 Tim. 3:11; compare 1 Tim 1:15; 3:1), which quality is then delineated in the phrase that follows. While the first view is possible, it seems to place more stringent requirements on the elder than does 1 Timothy 3:4. Moreover, in view of this parallel, Paul probably means that the elder's children are to be faithful in obeying the head of the house. In fact, the rest of the verse contrasts 'faithful' with *the charge of being wild and disobedient*, which suggests a more general kind of faithfulness."³

This second view also seems correct, since the decision to believe in Christ is the child's, and even the best Christian parent cannot guarantee it.

"Too often, new Christians feel a call to the ministry and want to be ordained before they have had a chance to establish their families in the faith. If the children are small, the problem is not too great; but mature children go through a tremendous shock when all of a sudden their household becomes 'religious'! A wise father first wins his own family to Christ and gives them a

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 255.

²Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:261; and J. Vernon McGee, *Through the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 5:486, held this view.

³Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 255.

chance to grow before he pulls up stakes and moves to Bible school. We would have fewer casualties in the ministry if this policy were followed more often."¹

Personal qualifications

Paul next listed five vices (v. 7), and then (strong "but," Gr. *alla*) seven virtues (vv. 8-9).

4. "Not self-willed" (*me authade*; v. 7), or "not self-serving," means he is not arrogant or overbearing. He is not "... obstinate in his own opinion, arrogant, refusing to listen to others ..."² He does not insist on having his own way. Such a person will usually consider other people's criticisms and suggestions. Much damage has been done in churches by elders who force their own wills on the other elders.

"God's household manager must be a servant, not stubbornly self-willed, since it is God's household, not his own (cf. Mark 10:41-45; 1 Cor. 3:5-9; 4:1-2)."³

5. "Not quick-tempered" (Gr. *me orgilon*; v. 7), or "not soon angry," is also a negative trait described elsewhere as being "uncontentious" (1 Tim. 3:3).
6. "Not addicted to wine" (Gr. *me paroinon*; v. 7) also appears in 1 Timothy 3:3.
7. "Not pugnacious" (Gr. *me plekten*; v. 7) or violent, or a striker, is also in 1 Timothy 3:3.
8. "Not fond of sordid gain" (Gr. *me aischrokerde*; v. 7) restates "free from the love of money" (1 Tim. 3:3),

¹Wiersbe, 2:261. On the subject of a special "call" to "the ministry," see Edward L. Hayes, "The Call to Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157:625 (January-March 2000):88-98.

²Lock, p. 130.

³Fee, p. 174.

with emphasis on "making [spiritual] profit out of Christian service, rather than dishonest gain ..."¹

"Complete honesty in financial matters and an attitude of detachment toward wealth (compare 1 Tim 6:7-8, 17-19) that leads to generosity are the signs of a leader who will be able to model faithfulness in these things before the congregation."²

9. "Hospitable" (Gr. *philoxenor*, v. 8) also occurs in 1 Timothy 3:2.
10. "Loving what is good" (Gr. *philagathor*, v. 8) is obvious in meaning. Paul did not mention it in 1 Timothy.
11. "Sensible" (Gr. *sophrona*, v. 8) means sober, sober-minded, self-controlled. The NASB translators rendered the same Greek word "prudent" in 1 Timothy 3:2.
12. "Just" (Gr. *dikaion*, v. 8) means upright, fair, equitable.
13. "Devout" (Gr. *hosion*, v. 8) means holy, set apart to God.
14. "Self-controlled" (Gr. *egkrate*, v. 8) means disciplined and temperate.

Doctrinal qualifications

15. "Holding fast the faithful word" (v. 9; 1 Tim. 3:2) means he remains committed to God's truth and does not depart from it. He conserves it and preserves it from dilution, deletion, and distortion.

"... there is more stress laid here than in I Ti[mothy] on the teaching test."³

¹C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 129. See René A. López, "A Study of Pauline Passages with Vice Lists," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:671 (July-September 2011):301-16.

²Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, pp. 226-27.

³Lock, p. 131.

16. "Able ... to exhort in sound doctrine" (v. 9; 1 Tim. 3:2) means he can encourage others with the Scriptures.
17. "Able ... to refute those who contradict" (v. 9; 1 Tim. 3:2) means he can point out the error of false teaching and explain why it is wrong.

"Collectively, then, the force of this ideal profile of leadership, constructed of stereotypical faults to be avoided and positive virtues to be cultivated, is to project an image of public respectability and good reputation for which Paul co-opts the model of the Hellenistic ideals."¹

"In admitting a man to the ministry [of an elder] the primary consideration must ever be the integrity of his character rather than his spectacular gifts."²

Modern elder boards would do well to study these qualifications, and those for deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13), in order to construct a list on which all members of the board agree. I suggest that they should also agree on an "official" interpretation of the qualifications. This will prevent others in the church from causing division, and avoid pitting one elder's personal interpretation against that of another elder.

In contrast to 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 contains no mention of deacons. This may reflect a less advanced stage of church organization in Crete than what existed in Ephesus, since deacons were the assistants of the elders.³ Another possibility is that the churches in Crete were smaller and so did not need formally recognized deacons.

B. THE CORRECTION OF FALSE TEACHERS 1:10-16

Paul emphasized the need to guard the church against false teaching, in order to inform Titus how to deal with the problems false teachers create. The instructions in this pericope naturally grew out of Paul's emphasis on the elder's responsibility to handle the Scriptures accurately, and to correct those who misrepresent them (v. 9).

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 690.

²Hiebert, *Titus and ...*, p. 37.

³J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, p. 230. Cf. 1:5.

1:10-11 Paul characterized the false teachers as "rebellious" (against God's truth) and "empty talkers"; their words were only human opinion rather than God's Word. He also said they were "deceivers."¹ Their listeners expected that what they were teaching was the truth, but it was not. Such men existed especially among the Jews ("those of the circumcision"), perhaps orthodox Jews, but mainly among Jewish Christians.

"Paul uses 'the circumcision' simply to mean Jewish Christians without any particular emphasis on the fact of their being circumcised; see Rom. 15:8 (where it just means 'the Jewish people'); Gal. 2:7-9, 12."²

Many Jews lived on the island of Crete.³ Titus had to shut their mouths ("they must be silenced"), because they were causing great upheaval in the church ("upsetting whole families"). Their motive, Paul revealed, was money obtained illegitimately ("sordid gain"), probably by teaching falsehood under the guise of truth. According to Polybius, the Cretans had a reputation for loving money.⁴

"When a teacher or a preacher looks on his teaching or preaching as a career designed for personal advancement and personal profit and gain, he is in a perilous condition."⁵

"The term 'households' may refer specifically to actual family units; however, the term probably refers to house-churches where most Christian instruction was conducted."⁶

I prefer the normal meaning of the word, which is family units.

¹See López.

²Hanson, p. 175.

³Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 17:12:1.

⁴Quoted by Mounce, p. 397. See also Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 699, footnote 90.

⁵Barclay, p. 276. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:15.

⁶Griffin, p. 289.

"The whole family would be upset by the perversion of one member of it."¹

1:12-13a The Cretan poet that Paul quoted was Epimenides, who lived in the sixth century B.C., and was regarded by his contemporaries as a prophet, a great religious reformer, and a predictor, as well as a poet.² Another Cretan poet, Callimachus (305-240 B.C.), also called the Cretans "liars."³ Other Pauline citations of pagan writers appear in Acts 17:28 (Aratus) and 1 Corinthians 15:33 (Menander). This line, "Cretans are always liars, evil beast, lazy gluttons," from one of Epimenides' writings, had received wide acceptance in the Greek world as being true.

Paul agreed with Epimenides by writing verse 13a: "This saying is true." The Cretans generally tended to be liars (cf. v. 2), beastly, lazy, and gluttonous. Their reputation as "liars" may have been due to a Cretan legend that Zeus was buried on Crete.⁴

"So notorious were the Cretans that the Greeks actually formed a verb *kretizein*, to *Cretize*, which meant *to lie and to cheat* ..."⁵

"When Paul wrote to Timothy he bade him instruct with meekness; but now, when he writes to Titus, he bids him rebuke them sharply. Timothy had a more polite people to deal with, and therefore he must rebuke them with meekness; and Titus had to do with those who were more rough and uncultivated."⁶

¹Newport J. D. White, "The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 4:189.

²Lock, p. 134. See also Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, p. 1386.

³See Hanson, p. 176.

⁴Lock, p. 134.

⁵Barclay, p. 277.

⁶Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 1901.

1:13b-14 Paul evidently felt these qualities marked the false teachers especially. Therefore he charged Titus to rebuke them sharply ("reprove them severely").

"Failure to confront problems within the church, whether theologically or practically based, may be indicative of a basic indifference with regard to God's truth or the nurturing of truly Christian relationships. The fear of giving offense and a highly individualized view of personal faith may discourage church leaders from following the biblical mandate to rebuke. The restoration that is possible both in fellowship and in sound doctrine is compromised by this reluctance to confront. Loving, sensitive, yet firm confrontation can result in stronger relationships and restored unity or perhaps a needed purging of those who deny the truth."¹

Apparently "Jewish myths," and laws ("commandments of men") laid down by those who rejected God's truth, fascinated these false teachers (cf. Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7; 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:3-7; 6:3-4; 2 Tim. 4:4; Col. 2:21-22).

The context does not clarify whether those who turn away from the truth were believers or unbelievers (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3). They could have been Christians (cf. Luke 8:13; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12),² or non-Christians (cf. Luke 13:27; 2 Thess. 2:11), or both.

1:15 These "commandments of men" (v. 14) involved abstaining from certain foods (asceticism; cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-4; Col. 2:20-22). Paul reminded his readers that "to the pure" in heart "all things," including foods, "are pure" (ceremonially pure, clean as opposed to unclean; cf. Matt. 15:11; Mark 7:15, 19-20; Luke 11:39-41).

¹Griffin, p. 290.

²Knight, p. 295.

"Fire can kindle only on combustible material, and to the truly chaste soul impure suggestions convey no taint of allurements."¹

Wuest took this statement to refer to ceremonial rather than moral defilement:

"That is, the person who does not subscribe to the Pharasaical regulations is not impure or defiled, nor is the food he eats affected in that way. We must be careful in explaining our Titus passage to make clear that the purity here spoken of is not moral, but ceremonial purity, lest we by our interpretation open the flood gates to license."²

However, the impure in heart ("the defiled and unbelieving") spread impurity wherever they go, through their words and deeds (cf. Hag. 2:13-14). I take it that Paul meant "pure" and "impure" in their broadest sense, both moral and ceremonial.

1:16 Verse 15 looks at the *attitudes* of the false teachers, whereas verse 16 views their *actions*. The divisive and destructive influence ("deeds") of the false teachers betrayed their inner attitude of impurity regarding God's truth. They were really "abominable (detestable) and disobedient" to God, as well as disapproved ("rejected as worthless *when tested*"³) by Him. They could do no deeds He would approve ("worthless for any good deed").

"Of all bad men religious bad men are the worse."⁴

"Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will

¹E. K. Simpson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 101.

²Wuest, 2:3:188.

³Jamieson, et al., p. 1386.

⁴C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, p. 32.

begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God."¹

Whenever a person's talk and walk conflict, it is usually his *walk*, rather than his talk, that reveals what he really is (1 John 1:6).

"... v 16 is the hinge verse of the epistle. Paul has addressed the initial issues of the necessity of godly leadership and has called attention to the seriousness of the Cretan problem. In this verse he identifies a key issue: the opponents are teaching that what a person believes and how a person behaves are not related, and that godly living is not a necessary corollary to God's salvific plan and work. Then in the next two chapters, after giving instructions for different groups within the church, Paul will give Titus two creedal statements that show that obedience comes out of salvation and must come out of salvation, for it is a purpose for which salvation was provided."²

"These verses [10-16] are the only real discussion of Paul's Cretan opponents (cf. 3:10-11). The situation in Crete appears to be similar to that in Ephesus, with a few important differences. The problem was real since their teaching was already upsetting whole households, and yet the Cretan opponents receive less attention, suggesting that the problem was not as developed as in Ephesus. The opponents were unqualified, rebellious, and inappropriate for positions of leadership in the church. In fact, vv 10-16 have the purpose of explaining why Titus must appoint only qualified people to church leadership (vv 5-9). The opponents were teaching senseless babble, words without meaning, myths. This passage clearly shows that the teaching was primarily Jewish and taught asceticism and guidelines for ritual purity and

¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:6:1.

²Mounce, p. 402.

defilement. The opponents were part of the church but had left the truth of the gospel, and therefore they must be rebuked so that they and the church may become healthy in their faith."¹

C. THE CONDUCT OF THE SAINTS 2:1—3:11

Having specified the type of men qualified to lead the church, and having pointed out the deficiencies of certain unqualified leaders, Paul turned to discuss the conduct of individual Christians in the churches. He dealt with these instructions by dividing them up among various groups in the church, and then reemphasizing what proper behavior for all saints looks like.

1. The behavior of various groups in the church 2:1-15

To establish order in the church, Paul gave Titus instruction concerning the behavior of various groups of Christians that was appropriate for them (cf. 1 Tim. 5:1-2). This involves pastoral oversight.

"Paul here stresses the importance of building up the inner life of believers as the best antidote against error."²

"No condition and no period of life is to remain unaffected by the sanctifying influence of the gospel."³

"Notice the strong sense of divine and human purpose throughout the section (*hina* ["that"] six times)."⁴

Introductory charge 2:1

This verse introduces the instructions that follow concerning individual conduct. In contrast to the false teachers, Titus was to teach the believers conduct that was in harmony with "sound (i.e., 'healthy') doctrine" (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13, 2:2). Paul wanted Christians to behave consistently with what they profess to believe. The primary

¹Ibid., p. 395.

²Hiebert, "Titus," p. 435.

³J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Epistle of Paul to Titus," in Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 11:15.

⁴Lock, p. 138.

motivation Paul used, in the following advice, is that these exhortations come from and agree with sound doctrine. A secondary motive that he also stressed, is that the behavior he advocated would make a positive impact on unbelievers who would observe his readers.

Older men 2:2

Titus was to remind "older men" to be "temperate" (Gr. *nephalious*; sober, vigilant, clear-headed; 1 Tim. 3:2), "dignified" (Gr. *semnous*; worthy of respect, serious-minded rather than clowns), and "sensible" (Gr. *sophronas*; self-controlled; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; 2:5). These characteristics are all marks of *maturity* (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3).

"Maturity is not determined simply by age or even by how much a person knows; it is determined by how skilled a person is in applying the truth to life and in distinguishing good from evil (see Heb. 5:13, 14)."¹

"We might imagine that the exhortation to be **be** [*sic*] **temperate** was otiose [having no practical purpose], but we must remember that contemporary pagan society often admired heavy drinkers ..."²

The older men should also be *godly*. That means being "sound in faith" (Gr. *hygiainontas te pistei*; trust in God rather than correct in doctrine here), "love" (Gr. *agape*; concern for other people), and "perseverance" (Gr. *hypomone*; patiently enduring in view of their hope as believers).

"A seriousness of purpose particularly suits the dignity of seniors, yet gravity must never be confused with gloominess."³

"... the years ought to bring, not an increasing intolerance, but an increasing tolerance and sympathy for the views and with the mistakes of others."⁴

¹ *The Nelson Study Bible*, p. 2067.

² Hanson, p. 179.

³ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 191.

⁴ Barclay, p. 283.

Older women 2:3

The "older women" were also to give evidence of their *reverence for God* "in their behavior." Negatively, they should avoid "malicious gossip" (Gr. *me diabolous*, slandering others; 1 Tim. 3:11; 5:13-14) and addiction to enslaving substances such as wine (Gr. *mede oino pollo dedoulomenas*; 1 Tim. 3:8). Positively, they should teach "what is good" (Gr. *kalodidaskalous*), by deed as well as by word, and "encourage the young[er] women" to fulfill their responsibilities (v. 4a).

"We have bought into the notion that older people have had their day of usefulness and ought to make way for the young. But the principle here is quite the opposite. With age and experience come wisdom, and many older women have discovered secrets of godly living in relation to their husbands, children and neighbors and in the workplace that could save younger women a lot of unnecessary grief. And when the unavoidable trials come to the young woman, who better to guide her through than an older sister who has been through it before? Somehow the church must see that younger women have contact with older women."¹

Young women 2:4-5

Paul listed seven responsibilities of the "young women." They are: (1) to "love their husbands" (to put their husband's welfare before their own self-interests), (2) to "love their children," and (3) to be "sensible" (Gr. *sophronas*, "self-controlled"). They were also: (4) to be "pure" (Gr. *hagnas*) and (5) to be "workers at home" (Gr. *oikourgous*, producers of orderliness in the home, 1 Tim. 5:14; not necessarily occupied exclusively with household chores). Finally, they were: (6) to be "kind" (Gr. *agthas*) and (7) to be "subject to their own husbands" (Gr. *hypotassomenas tois idiois andrasin*) as to *God's ordained authority* in their family (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1). Such behavior would guard the "[W]ord of God" from *dishonor*, by those who would otherwise observe the inconsistency between the teaching of Scripture and the conduct of these women.

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 237. See Vickie Kraft, *Women Mentoring Women: Ways to Start, Maintain, and Expand a Biblical Women's Ministry*, for an excellent resource in this regard.

"The world usually judges religion, not by its doctrines, but by its effects on its adherents."¹

"Here we have the first of several clear articulations of the need for good works for the sake of nonbelievers ... [cf. 2:1, 10, 11, 14; 3:2, 8, 14]."²

"The training of the younger women is the duty, not of Titus, but the older women, qualified to do so by position and character. 'Train' means to school in the lessons of sobriety and self-control (cf. vv. 2, 5). 'Younger' is a positive adjective literally meaning 'new' or 'fresh' and probably suggests a reference to the newly married."³

The word "subject" (Gr. *hypotasso*, v. 5) in the phrase "subject to their own husbands" is not the exact equivalent of "obedient."

"The *hypotassisthai* [subjection] which Paul here [in Rom. 13:1] and elsewhere [e.g., Titus 2:5] enjoins is to be understood in terms of God's *taxis* or 'order.' It is the responsible acceptance of a relationship in which God has placed one and the resulting honest attempt to fulfill the duties which it imposes on one [cf. Eph. 5:24]."⁴

Paul was addressing himself to the typical young married woman who has children. Other young women would need to make adjustments to their situations in harmony with the principles underlying these directions.

Loving in this way involves unconditional acceptance. Wives need to accept their husbands as they are, namely, as imperfect sinners like themselves. This acceptance should not depend on the husband's performance but on his worth as a good gift God has given to the wife. The wife needs to accept her husband's thoughts, feelings, decisions, and failures. Love is active, not passive. It is something people *do*. Love involves listening because listening says, "I love you and I care about you." Loving a husband means the wife must adjust her own life's activities to fit into her husband's schedule. It involves protecting him from criticism in public, as his ally, rather than

¹Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 230.

²Fee, p. 188.

³Hiebert, "Titus," p. 436.

⁴C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2:662.

criticizing him before others. Love involves committing to a mutually fulfilling sexual relationship, and sometimes taking the initiative for his pleasure. The best thing a couple can do for their children is to love each other unconditionally.

"The values of the 'new woman' [style of conduct in Crete] had little to do with traditional commitments to the household; the new morality they emphasized endorsed the freedom to pursue extramarital sexual liaisons and liberties normally open only to men, which would place marital fidelity and household management at risk. Thus the household was the chief theater of Paul's campaign."¹

God wants wives to make homemaking a priority. A woman's home is the primary arena of her ministry. It also makes a statement about her values. Normally homemaking includes nurturing children (cf. Prov. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:7). Supplementing the family income may be a possible option (cf. Prov. 31:16, 24). However, a mother should take a job *only* if both her husband and she agree that this would be best for the family.

"A wife's first responsibility is in her home."²

"The wise husband allows his wife to manage the affairs of the household, for this is her ministry."³

I assume Wiersbe meant that the home is her *primary* ministry, not necessarily her *sole* ministry.

"But the 'worker at home' is under a temptation to be as unsparing of her household as of herself; and so St. Paul adds *agathas, benignas, kind* (R.V.), rather than *good* (A.V.)."⁴

The World's View	God's View
Home is a boring drudgery.	Home is a haven to come to from the world.

¹Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 726.

²McGee, 5:489. See also Barclay, pp. 286-87; and Guthrie, p. 194.

³Wiersbe, 2:265.

⁴White, 4:192.

Homemaking and children are a burden.	They are God's good gifts.
Value material success and self-gratification <i>now</i> .	Value character and godliness, and invest in the future.
Place children in childcare rather than caring for them yourself.	Parents should teach and fulfill their responsibilities to train their children.
Children, homemaking, and often marriage get in the way of self-achievement.	Raising godly children is one of the ways to fulfill God's purposes and is one of the highest callings in life.
Demand your rights to fulfillment.	Give up your rights and become a servant to attain true happiness. ¹

"Any marriage relationship that is conceived and maintained only on the basis of each member adhering to certain prescribed legal requirements is probably doomed from the beginning. In considering the New Testament teaching on marriage, especially in Paul's letters, the emphasis appears to be on the maintenance of a mutual or reciprocal commitment of the husband and the wife to an exclusive, intimate, loving, and caring partnership. When these prescribed biblical attitudes between husband and wife prevail, there will be little (if any) need for resorting to God's intended order for establishing authority within the home."²

Young men 2:6-8

The same principles apply to the behavior of "young men." The age range for the older men and women would have been about 40 and up in that culture, and that of the younger people would have been between about 20 and 40.³ Since Titus was one of the "young men," Paul addressed him personally. They should also be "sensible" (Gr. *sophronein*; "self-

¹Adapted from *Family Life Conference*, p. 108.

²Griffin, p. 302.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 730.

controlled," vv. 2, 5, 6) and a good "example (pattern) of good deeds" (1 Tim. 4:15-16).

"Since young men are inclined to be somewhat impetuous and unrestrained in conduct, their basic need is to be 'self-controlled,' cultivating balance and self-restraint in daily practice."¹

"Young men demand heroes to follow. The minister should be a worthy object for their imitation (see I Cor. 4:16; 11:1)."²

They do this by maintaining "purity" in the teaching of God's truth ("doctrine"), as teachers or simply practitioners, by being "dignified" ("serious," v. 2), and by "sound speech" that others cannot legitimately criticize. Obedience to these particulars would rob the enemies of the church of any reasonable grounds for criticism (cf. 1:16). They would be "put to shame" because they would have no factual basis for their opposition.

Bond-slaves 2:9-10

Slaves were known for their readiness to embrace new religions.³ For this reason, Paul may have given instructions to those of them that had become Christians. Paul's words to slaves begin with a general request, followed by four principles arranged chiastically (positive, negative, negative, positive), the first two of which address attitude, and the last two fidelity.⁴

Believing slaves were: (1) to be "submissive (subject) to their own masters in everything" and (2) to try to please (be "well-pleasing") to their masters. They were: (3) to refrain from talking back ("not argumentative") when given instructions, (4) not to steal from them ("not pilfering"), and (5) to prove completely trustworthy ("showing all good faith").

"Cicero complains that the Cretans do not consider it immoral to steal."⁵

¹Hiebert, "Titus," p. 437.

²Kent, p. 231.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, p. 735.

⁴Knight, p. 315.

⁵Hanson, p. 176.

Again, the reason for this kind of behavior follows: It is that such behavior is in harmony with, and therefore *adorns* (contributes to the enhancement of by providing a complementary setting for) the teaching concerning "God our Savior."

"Since slaves were part of the Hellenistic household, it is quite possible that the false teachers' disruption of Cretan households (1:11) accounts for the kind of disrespectful behavior among slaves implied by this set of instructions. Something similar had occurred in Ephesus (see 1 Tim 6:1-2)."¹

"It was natural for the slave who had become a Christian, to forget his place and put himself on a *social* level with his master. Hence the charge for each to abide in the sphere in which he was when converted (1 Cor. 7:20-24)."²

"Where all around there is disrespect or indifference to those in authority, a Christian's respectful attitude and speech, backed up by good performance, will demonstrate that God's message of salvation produces positive, visible results. This is an opportunity for witness that we must not miss."³

"There are no slaves in our [United States] society today, but there are employees. Christian workers must obey orders and not talk back. They must not steal from their employers. Millions of dollars are lost each year by employers whose workers steal from them, everything from paper clips and pencils to office machines and vehicles. 'They owe it to me!' is no excuse. Neither is, 'Well, I've earned it!'"⁴

Rationale for such behavior 2:11-14

"The previous paragraph [2:1-10] has been a challenge to the several groups in the Cretan churches to accept the specifically Christian pattern of behavior. Its presuppositions may at first sight seem prosaically humdrum and conventional,

¹Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 241.

²Jamieson, et al., p. 1387.

³Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 243.

⁴Wiersbe, 2:266.

but Paul now eloquently reminds Titus that they have their basis in the gospel itself. It was precisely in order to raise men to a higher quality of life that God intervened in history in the incarnation."¹

"There are few passages in the New Testament which so vividly set out the moral power of the Incarnation as this passage does."²

This is another of the "liturgical passages" in the Pastorals that summarize essential features of salvation (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15; 2:5-6; 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; 2:8-13; Titus 3:3-7).³

2:11 "For" introduces Paul's full theological reason for requiring the conduct above, why such conduct harmonizes with sound doctrine (v. 1). In short, it is the proper response to God's grace. "God" has manifested His "grace" (unmerited favor) in Christ and the gospel. This has resulted in two things: the *possibility* of "salvation" for "all" people, and the *actual* "salvation" of "all" who believe in Christ (1 Tim. 2:4, 6; 4:10).

"In the Greek, 'has appeared' stand emphatically at the beginning, stressing the manifestation of grace as a historical reality. The reference is to Christ's entire earthly life—his birth, life, death, and resurrection. The verb *epephane*, from which we derive our word 'epiphany,' means 'to become visible, make an appearance,' and conveys the image of grace suddenly breaking in on our moral darkness, like the rising sun. (It is used of the sun in Acts 27:20.) Men could never have formed an adequate conception of that grace apart from its

¹Kelly, p. 244.

²Barclay, p. 293.

³For a brief discussion of these passages, see Mark L. Bailey, "A Biblical Theology of Paul's Pastoral Epistles," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 349-54; or for a more detailed explanation, see Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction*, pp. 75-119.

personal manifestation in Christ, in his incarnation and atonement."¹

2:12 When the Christian appreciates *this grace*, it teaches him or her. It instructs us *negatively* "to deny ungodliness," the root problem, and "worldly passions (desires)," the manifestation of the root problem. These passions are the desires that unbelievers find so appealing, but which are not in harmony with God's character and will, though they are typical of the world system. It instructs us *positively* to live "sensibly" (Gr. *sophronos*; self-controlled inwardly, cf. vv. 2, 5, 6), "righteously" (Gr. *dikaios*; morally upright outwardly), and "godly" (Gr. *eusebos*; reverently upwardly) in this present age." These qualities are the opposites of those that generally marked Cretan culture.

2:13 The "blessed hope" of "our great God and Savior" Jesus Christ's appearing in "glory," at the Rapture, also motivates the sensitive Christian to honor God by his or her behavior now.² The Greek verb *prosdechomenoi* ("looking for") is in the present tense, indicating that this waiting should be our characteristic attitude, always ready to welcome the returning Lord. We do not want to be ashamed when we meet Him face to face (1 John 2:28; 3:3). In the Greek text, a single article, "the," introduces both "blessed hope" and "glorious appearing," suggesting that Paul was viewing one event as having two aspects.³ The blessed hope is the glorious appearing of our Savior.

"In the New Testament *hope* does not indicate merely what is wished for but what is assured."⁴

"In light of the concept of the imminent coming of Christ and the fact that the New Testament does

¹Hiebert, "Titus," p. 439. For helpful discussion of how Paul's theology in this section contradicted prevalent Cretan pagan mythical theology, see Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 740-66.

²See Gary L. Nebeker, "The Theme of Hope in Dispensationalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:629 (January-March 2001):30-20.

³See Wuest, 2:3:195.

⁴Guthrie, p. 199.

teach His imminent coming, we can conclude that the Pretribulation Rapture view is the only view of the Rapture of the church that comfortably fits the New Testament teaching of the imminent coming of Christ. It is the only view that can honestly say that Christ could return at any moment, because it alone teaches that Christ will come to rapture the church before the 70th week of Daniel 9 or the Tribulation period begins and that nothing else must happen before His return."¹

"Paul ... does not ask us to look for the Tribulation, or the Antichrist, or for persecution and martyrdom, or for death, but for the return of Christ. If any of these events must precede the Rapture, then how can we help looking for them rather than the Lord's coming? Such a view of the coming of the Lord can at best only induce a very general interest in the 'blessed hope.'"²

"The unusual phrase 'the great God,' found only here in the New Testament, is best accounted for as a Christological application of an Old Testament description of God."³

In other words, Paul described the appearing and glory of *one Person*: "our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."⁴ This is another of the passages that clearly states that Jesus Christ is God (cf. John 1:1, 18 [according to some manuscripts];

¹Renald E. Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come! A Definitive Study of the Rapture of the Church*, p. 149. See also Gerald B. Stanton, *Kept from the Hour*, ch. 6: "The Imminency of the Coming of Christ for the Church," pp. 108-37; and Wayne A. Brindle, "Biblical Evidence for the Imminence of the Rapture," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158:630 (April-June 2001):148-49.

²Henry C. Thiessen, "Will the Church Pass through the Tribulation?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 92 (July-September 1935):307.

³Griffin, p. 313.

⁴See William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 373-75.

20:28; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8-13; 2 Pet. 1:1; and possibly 1 John 5:20).¹

"This is one of the strongest statements of the deity of Christ in the New Testament."²

2:14 Christ's intent in providing salvation for us was to buy our freedom ("redeem us") from slavery to sin and wickedness.

"... the main thought is rescue from the power, *not* from the guilt of sin."³

"First, the verb *gave* (and indeed the entire saying—*who gave himself for us*) portrays Christ's death as a ritual offering made specifically to atone for sins (Rom 4:25; 8:32; compare Gal 1:4).
...

"Second, the note of willingness is emphasized, for it is said that he *gave himself*. ...

"Third, the phrase *for us* reveals that this offering was both representative and substitutionary."⁴

Christ's purpose was also to "purify" *a people* "for Himself" as "His own possession," who are eager to do what is right and good ("zealous for good works"; cf. Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:13).

"When a royal visit is expected, everything is cleansed and decorated, and made fit for the royal eye to see."⁵

"The highest and purest motivation for Christian behavior is not based on what we can do for God

¹See Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 3:2:419-21; Robert M. Bowman Jr., "Jesus Christ, God Manifest: Titus 2:13 Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51:4 (December 2008):733-52.

²*The Nelson ...*, p. 2068.

³Lock, p. 146.

⁴Towner, *1-2 Timothy ...*, p. 248. See Simpson, pp. 110-12, for discussion of the Greek preposition *hyper* ("who gave Himself *for us*") and its meaning: "for the sake of."

⁵Barclay, p. 294.

but rather upon what God has done for us and yet will do."¹

To summarize this section (vv. 11-14), "the grace of God" should result in the Christian's present commitment to *deny* what He detests, and to *pursue* what He values. We see God's grace both in His past provision of salvation in Christ, and in the prospect of Christ's future return to take us to be with Himself forever. The fact that so few Christians make this commitment is disappointing, but it is true to life, and Jesus Christ anticipated it (Luke 17:11-19).

"Verses 11-14 are notable for their perfect balance of doctrine with living. Beginning with the incarnation ('the grace of God hath appeared,' v. 11), they relate this doctrine to a life that denies evil and practices good here and now (v. 12); that sees in the return of Christ the incentive for godly conduct ('looking for that blessed hope ...' v. 13); and that realizes, in personal holiness and good works, the purpose of the atonement (v. 14). The passage is one of the most concise summations in the entire N.T. of the relation of Gospel truth to life."²

Concluding charge 2:15

This last verse concludes the section of instructions to various groups in the church (ch. 2). Paul urged Titus to teach ("speak"), "exhort," and "reprove," in accord with what the apostle had just revealed, "with full (all) authority"—since it was divine revelation. He should "let no one" intimidate ("disregard") him, because the truth was at stake (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12).

"... Be consistent. See I Tim. iv. 12."³

"The minister's authority rests in the nature of his message; he is not raised above the truth but the truth above him."⁴

¹Griffin, p. 316.

²*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 1307.

³White, 4:197.

⁴Hiebert, "Titus," p. 442.

"Ministers must not be cold and lifeless in delivering heavenly doctrine and precepts, as if they were indifferent things; but they must urge them with earnestness."¹

2. The behavior of all in the church 3:1-11

Paul broadened the focus of his instructions to clarify the responsibilities of all Christians in view of God's grace.

"The keystone of the chapter is usefulness."²

Individual responsibility 3:1-8

"After a brief exhortation to Titus (2:15) to 'teach these things' (at least 2:1-14), Paul returns in this section to the major concern of the letter—'good works' (i.e., genuinely Christian behavior) for the sake of the outsider (3:1-8) and in contrast to the false teachers (3:9-11)."³

Instructions 3:1-2

Several duties of all Christians follow. We should (1) "be subject to" governmental "rulers" and other "authorities" by being "obedient" to them, and (2) "be ready" to do whatever is "good." We should (3) "slander (malign) no one," and (4) "be peaceable" (Gr. *amachous*, lit. "non-fighting"), "gentle," "showing ... consideration" toward everyone (cf. 1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:23).

"The Christian must not adopt the arts of the agitator."⁴

"So far Paul has been concerned with the internal arrangements of the Cretan churches and the duties of their members to one another. Now he comments briefly on their relationship to the civil power and their pagan environment generally. The point he makes is that they should be models of good citizenship precisely because the new, supernatural life

¹Henry, p. 1904.

²Lock, p. 150.

³Fee, p. 200.

⁴Hiebert, "Titus," p. 443.

of the Spirit bestowed by [Spirit] baptism finds expression in such an attitude."¹

"People who are ever fighting are wretched citizens and neighbors; people who are willing to yield in gentleness are admirable, especially when they follow the gentle spirit of Jesus."²

Rationale 3:3-8

- 3:3 To motivate his readers to obey these commands Paul encouraged them by reminding them of the way they used to be. They had already come a long way. Each characteristic he mentioned in this verse contrasts with one he had urged his readers to adopt earlier in this epistle. They—Paul included himself—had been: "foolish," not *sensible*; "disobedient," not *submissive*; "deceived," not *enlightened*; and "enslaved," not *free and self-disciplined*. Moreover, they had been "malicious," not *peaceable*; "envious," not *considerate*; and "hateful," not *loving*.³ Again, Christian behavior is to be the opposite of Cretan behavior.
- 3:4-5 The *appearance* Paul referred to, here, was the sending of Jesus Christ to die for us: the Incarnation. That was the greatest revelation of God's "kindness" and "love for [human]kind." God took the initiative. God does not "save" people because they behave righteously ("on the basis of deeds"), but because He is *merciful* (cf. Rom. 3:27-28; 4:4-5; Gal. 2:16-17; Eph. 2:5, 8; 2 Tim. 1:9). The salvation He provides consists of rebirth ("regeneration"), that Paul connects here to the "washing" off of sin's filth (John 3:3-8; Rom. 6:4; Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23), and the renewal ("renewing") by God's "Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 5:17). He did not mention human faith because his emphasis here was on God's grace in providing salvation.

¹Kelly, p. 249.

²Richard C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon*, p. 928.

³See López.

"He came to tell men, not of the justice which would pursue them for ever until it caught up with them, but of the love which would never let them go."¹

In verse 5, "washing" could refer to conversion, and "renewing" to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the new believer. Another view is that "washing" could refer to *water baptism*, with "regeneration" and "renewing" describing what the Spirit does (saving, Spirit-baptism, filling, and sealing) in salvation.² Still others see "washing" as symbolic of the Word of God (cf. Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:23).³ Probably "washing" is a metaphor for spiritual cleansing and or Spirit-baptism, rather than for water baptism, with the emphasis in the entire phrase being on the Spirit's cleansing, regenerating work.⁴ Note the reference to the work that all three members of the Trinity accomplished in our salvation in these verses.

3:6-7 God "poured out" His Holy Spirit on believers "richly." He did this first at Pentecost (Acts 2), but He has continued to do it, since then, whenever individuals experience conversion (cf. Rom. 5:5). His "grace" always exceeds our need. God has not only graciously declared us righteous ("justified us"), but He has also graciously made us the "heirs" of "eternal life."⁵ Paul's whole emphasis was on "the grace of God." We owe everything to God's grace (cf. Rom. 3:24; 4:16; 5:1).

In verses 5-7, Paul explained *what* God did (saved, washing, regeneration, renewing, justified), its *basis* (God's mercy), its *means* (the Holy Spirit), and its *goal* (hope of eternal life).

3:8 The "trustworthy statement" (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11) Paul referred to is probably what he had just written in verses 4-7. The first "these things" in this verse are the things that he had just described in those verses. Titus was to

¹Barclay, p. 299.

²A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 4:607. Cf. Alford, 3:2:424.

³E.g., Kent, p. 242.

⁴Fee, pp. 204-5.

⁵See René A. López, "A Study of Pauline Passages on Inheriting the Kingdom," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168:672 (October-December 2011):452-53.

"speak" (teach) about these great truths "confidently" (cf. 2:15).

"The inculcation of Gospel truth requires patient repetition."¹

The expected result was that those who had trusted God for salvation would practice *good works* ("good deeds"; cf. Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:14-26). The second "these things" in the verse refers to these good works. This verse summarizes the point Paul made throughout this epistle. Good works, he added, are essentially excellent ("good") as well as "profitable" (beneficial) for everyone ("men") on the practical level.

"The best way a local church has to witness to the lost is through the sacrificial service of its members."²

Some successors of the Protestant Reformers (e.g., Theodore Beza in Geneva, and Williams Perkins in England) argued that a true believer in Jesus Christ will inevitably persevere in faith and in good works. This appears to have been an overreaction to the Roman Catholic accusation that justification by faith alone leads to antinomianism. If the professing Christian does not continue to persevere in faith and good works, these reformers contended, such a person was never really saved in the first place.³ Paul's strong exhortation for believers to maintain good works indicates that he believed it was possible for genuine Christians not to maintain good works.

"The purpose of the epistle to Titus was to instruct him about what he should do and teach in the Cretan churches. A special theme of the letter is the role of grace in promoting good works among God's people (Titus 2:11—3:8)."⁴

¹Wilber B. Wallis, "The Epistle to Titus," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1396.

²Wiersbe, 2:268.

³See R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*; idem., *Once Saved ...*, pp. 207-17; and M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance*.

⁴Litfin, p. 761. Cf. Mounce, p. 452.

Titus' responsibility 3:9-11

3:9 On the other hand, Titus should shun what was "worthless" and "unprofitable." In view of the context, Paul especially meant the very things the false teachers were promoting (1:10, 14; 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:23). Examples of these kinds of controversies—that the Jewish commentaries have preserved—are the following: "Should a Jew eat an egg laid on a festival day?" "What sort of wick and oil should a Jew use for candles he burns on the Sabbath?" The "genealogies" in view were speculations about the origins and descendants of persons, which some thought had spiritual significance (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4).¹

"I have learned that professed Christians who like to argue about the Bible are usually covering up some sin in their lives, are very insecure, and are usually unhappy at work or at home."²

3:10-11 If a false teacher, who engendered faction rather than unity by his teaching ("a factious man"), refused to change his ways after one or two warnings, Titus should "reject" him, having nothing more to do with him (cf. Matt. 18:15-17).³ The reasons for this rejection are that the factious false teacher is: not straight in his thinking ("perverted"), "sinning," and "self-condemned." If such a person refuses to judge himself, God will judge him (1 Cor. 11:31-32). I believe all the leaders of God's people should follow this instruction; Paul evidently did not intend it only for Titus. Church leaders should give ministry by such a false teacher no platform in the church. The Greek word *hairesis* ("factious") is the word from which we get the English word "heretic."

"The significance of refuting false teaching in this letter is indicated by Paul's direct attack on factious men at the beginning of the letter (1:10ff.) and now at its conclusion (3:9-11). His outstanding theological statements (1:1-4;

¹Knight, p. 353.

²Wiersbe, 2:268.

³See Ted G. Kitchens, "Perimeters of Corrective Church Discipline," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148:590 (April-June 1991):201-13.

2:11-15; 3:3-7) provide the 'sound doctrine' that motivates believers to 'good works' and makes the gospel 'attractive' to a lost world. In contrast, the false teachers with their erroneous teaching motivate their followers to works that in essence 'deny' a true knowledge of God (1:16) and destroy the doctrinal unity of the church."¹

III. CONCLUSION 3:12-15

Paul closed this epistle by sending Titus instructions concerning fellow workers, next a final charge, and finally greetings. He did so to enable him to complete his task of setting the church in order.

- 3:12 Paul evidently intended to send either "Artemas" or "Tychicus" (2 Tim. 4:12) to take Titus' place in Crete. Paul wanted Titus to join him for the coming "winter" in Nicapolis ("Victory City"), probably the one in Illyricum, that lay on the Adriatic coast of western Greece, opposite northern Italy.
- 3:13 "Zenas" and "Apollos" (cf. Acts 18:24—19:1) were apparently in Crete with Titus, and planned to leave Crete for other places of ministry. They may have previously carried this letter from Paul to Titus. Zenas ("Gift of Zeus") was evidently a converted Jewish lawyer who was an expert in the Mosaic Law, as the word "lawyer" (Gr. *nomikon*) means in the Gospels.² Or he could have been an expert in Greek or Roman law, in view of his Greek name.³ Paul urged Titus and the Cretan Christians to "help" these two brethren "on their way" by ministering to their needs. The apostle gave them a clear opportunity to put good deeds into practice.
- 3:14 Paul gave a final encouragement to the Cretans, through Titus, to be faithful in providing for their own regular financial responsibilities ("pressing needs"; cf. 1 Thess. 4:9-12; 2 Thess. 3:7-12). "Engage in good deeds [occupations]" probably refers to normal wage-earning activities, rather than

¹Griffin, p. 328.

²Mounce, p. 458; Robertson, 4:608.

³Towner, *The Letters ...*, pp. 801-2.

special fund-raising projects (cf. v. 8). The NIV rendering, "provide for daily necessities," translates this thought more clearly than the NASB. The general stereotype of Cretans (1:12) evidently applied to some in the church. Industriousness ("good deeds") would provide the Christians with what they needed; they would "not be unfruitful" (cf. v. 9; Luke 8:14; John 15:2).

3:15 We do not know who was with Paul ("all who are with me"), when he wrote this epistle, or where he was when he wrote it, but obviously he was in the company of other Christians. Paul sent greetings to the faithful in Crete ("those who love us in the faith"), and closed with a benediction for them: "Grace be with you." The second "you" is plural in the Greek text.

"As in 1 Tim. vi. 21 and 2 Tim. iv. 22, the plural betrays that the letter was expected to be read out publicly."¹

Paul opened and closed this epistle with references to "faith" and "grace" (1:4). "Grace" appears in the first and last chapters of every inspired letter from Paul, plus 1 and 2 Peter and Revelation.

¹Kelly, p. 259.

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