

INTRODUCTION AND TITUS

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Contents

Introduction	1
I. Authorship	1
II. Titus and his relationship with Paul.....	2
III. Background on Crete	4
IV. Purpose	5
V. The False Teaching and Teachers	5
The Text	6
I. Opening (1:1-4).....	6
II. Need for Qualified Elders (1:5-9).....	7
III. The Cretan Opposition (1:10-16).....	10
IV. Command to Instruct Various Groups of Believers (2:1-10)	14
V. The Basis of the Ethical Exhortations (2:11-14).....	19
VI. Command to Instruct Renewed (2:15)	21
VII. Charge to Remind Them of Further Aspects of Christian Living (3:1-8).....	22
VIII. Instruction for Dealing with the False Teachers (3:9-11).....	24
IX. Final Instructions (3:12-14)	25
X. Closing (3:15).....	25

Introduction

I. Authorship

A. As with the other Pastoral Epistles, Paul is expressly identified in the opening verse as the author of the letter. His authorship of these letters went unchallenged until the 19th century,¹ but today it is common to hear scholars claim they were written years after Paul's death by someone using Paul's name. They do so because of certain differences between these letters and those that are undisputedly by Paul.

¹ Andreas Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 638.

B. But whatever differences there may be between the Pastorals and the accepted Pauline letters, other solutions are more likely than the claim a letter written in Paul's name after his death, complete with personal references and reminiscences, would have been accepted into the Christian canon, accepted as authoritative by the early church. As Andreas Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles Quarles comment state, "Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is by far the best conclusion based on all the available evidence and on several major problems attached to any pseudonymity [fictitious name] or allonymity [using someone else's name] position."² Donald Guthrie likewise concludes after a careful analysis of the competing claims:

In spite of the acknowledged differences between the pastorals and Paul's other epistles, the traditional view that they are authentic writings of the apostle cannot be said to be impossible, and since there are greater problems attached to the alternative theories it is most reasonable to suppose that the early church was right in accepting them as such.³

II. Titus and his relationship with Paul

A. If, as seems likely, Galatians dates from A.D. 48/49, it is the oldest known writing of the Apostle Paul. He wrote Galatians, probably from Antioch, shortly before the Jerusalem Council that is reported in Acts 15. In Gal. 2:1 Paul refers to the visit he made to Jerusalem with Barnabas in accordance with an unidentified revelation. This visit best corresponds to Acts 11:27-30, where the church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem in response to Agabus's prophecy of a famine. This was in A.D. 46/47. Paul notes that they also took Titus along.⁴ So by the time of the letter of Titus, he and Paul have had a lengthy history.

B. Paul adds in Gal. 2:3, "Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, though being a Greek." The Judaizers in Jerusalem insisted that Titus be circumcised because they believed submission to the Mosaic law was essential for salvation (Acts 15:1, 5). That distinguishes his case from that of Timothy in Acts 16:1-3. Paul circumcised Timothy as a matter of evangelistic expediency, but he refused to comply with the *demand* that Titus be circumcised because that would lend credence to the damning lie that Christians must live under the Mosaic law.

C. Nine of the thirteen mentions of Titus in Scripture occur in 2 Corinthians, which Paul wrote from Macedonia in the mid-50s during his third missionary journey. After writing 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, Paul made an emergency visit to Corinth, which turned out to be painful. After returning to Ephesus and being informed of a personal attack that had been made against him, Paul sent Titus to Corinth with the so-called "severe letter" (or "tearful letter") referred to in 2 Cor. 2:3-4 and 7:8-12, a letter Paul wrote out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears. That letter was not preserved.

² Köstenberger et al., 639.

³ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 646.

⁴ The fact Luke in Acts 11:27-30 does not mention Titus being present need not mean he was not in the group. It is possible Luke mentioned only Barnabas and Paul because they were charged with the responsibility of delivering the gift.

D. Shortly after the riot recorded in Acts 19:23–20:1, Paul left Ephesus for Troas (2 Cor. 2:12-13), where he hoped not only to preach the gospel but to meet Titus returning with news of Corinth. When Titus did not show, Paul headed for Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:13), apparently in keeping with a contingency plan he had with Titus.

E. When Paul got to Macedonia, Titus had not shown up, so Paul still had no idea how his severe letter had been received in Corinth (2 Cor. 7:5). Titus soon arrived, and Paul's distress turned to joy because the church at large had responded positively to Paul's strong words (2 Cor. 7:6-13). The majority had repented of their rebellion against Paul's apostleship. There was a segment, however, that continued to resist his authority and gospel.

F. 2 Corinthians, which Paul probably started writing soon after receiving Titus's encouraging report, was shaped by the presence of both groups in Corinth. Paul sent Titus (and some unidentified brothers) back to Corinth with 2 Corinthians and with instructions for him to complete the collection at Corinth, something he apparently had begun when they responded so positively to Paul's "severe letter" (2 Cor. 8:6-8).

G. Acts ends with Paul in prison, but in keeping with Paul's expectation expressed in Phil. 1:25-26 and 2:23-24, it seems he was released from prison around A.D. 62. There is a strong church tradition regarding this release. It is reflected in 1 Clement (late 1st century), the Muratorian Canon (around A.D. 180), and in Eusebius (early 4th century).

H. At some point, perhaps before his release, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus. Upon his release, Paul may have gone west to Spain, as he intended to do when he wrote Romans (Rom. 15:23-28) and as church tradition indicates that he did. If so, he probably stayed in Spain only a short time and then made a missionary journey to Crete with Titus (Tit. 1:5). Whether before or after going to Crete, Paul went to Macedonia, and Timothy left Ephesus to meet him on his way there.

I. During that visit, Paul told Timothy to stay in Ephesus to combat the false teaching that was threatening the church there (1 Tim. 1:3). Sometime afterward, he wrote 1 Timothy, around A.D. 64. He probably wrote Titus around that same time, it being unknown which was written first.

J. Titus is mentioned in Paul's final letter of 2 Timothy, which he wrote during his second and final imprisonment in Rome. He notes in 2 Tim. 4:10 that Titus is working in Dalmatia (2 Tim 4:10), a region on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea that was part of the Roman province of Illyricum, presumably having been sent there by Paul. Paul's mission work had previously reached to Illyricum (Rom. 15:19).

K. Paul refers to Titus in 2 Cor. 8:23 as his partner and coworker. In Tit. 1:4 he calls him his "true child in a common faith." Paul's bond with him may not have been as deep as with Timothy, but he is a faithful brother in whom Paul has great confidence.

III. Background on Crete

A. Crete is a large, mountainous island (156 miles from east to west and 35 miles north to south) that separates the Aegean Sea from the Mediterranean Sea. There was a significant Jewish presence on the island from the second century B.C. In 67 B.C. Crete and Cyrene (Libya) became a joint Roman province.⁵ Philip Towner states:

The religious landscape was as diverse as that of any Roman province; but it is notable for its unique retelling of the story of Zeus, whom Cretans claimed was born and died (!) on Crete. This became a part of the source of the widespread sentiment that Cretans are liars (Titus 1:12-13). Equally noteworthy for reading the letter to Titus is Crete's reputation (including its religious deceitfulness), going back centuries, as a self-indulgent, belligerent, wild, immoral society. Sexual promiscuity, gluttony at feasts (where immoral activities frequently took place), and lying ("cretanizing" meant "lying") characterized what was widely held to be the way of life on Crete: to speak of a "Cretan point of view" was to speak of deception.⁶

B. It is not clear when the gospel was brought to Crete.

1. We do know from Acts 2:11 that some Jews or converts to Judaism from Crete were present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out and Peter preached the gospel. It is conceivable that one or more of them brought the message of salvation back to their home. But that would have been in the early 30s.

2. We also know from Acts 27:8 that the ship on which Paul was being transported to Rome after he had appealed his case to Caesar stopped at Crete at place called Fair Havens near the city of Lasea. This was in A.D. 59/60. Even though Paul was a prisoner, it is possible he was able in his short time on Crete to convert one or more residents,⁷ but Luke probably would have reported that if it had occurred.

3. Robert Yarbrough's assessment of the situation seems reasonable:

The fact is that we lack secure knowledge of the founding of churches on Crete. If Paul is writing to Titus in the 60s for the purpose of establishing pastors, it may seem unlikely that the church would have already been in existence for a decade or more; training and appointing elders is a first order of business when churches are planted (see Acts 14:23). So a founding by unknown means within not many years of Paul's writing is plausible.

⁵ Jerry A. Pattengale, "Crete" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1206. Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 39-40, says Crete was made a Roman province in 71 B.C.

⁶ Towner, 40.

⁷ S. M. Baugh, "Titus" in Clinton Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 3:499.

An alternative is that the church was in reality much older, but that it had stagnated at some point after its implantation. In this scenario, it had a respectable beginning but then degenerated so seriously that Paul found it necessary to enlist Titus to stir up a fresh start or at least renewal of zeal for the fundamentals. Perhaps the church was already in its second generation by the 60s, and dead nominalism with its telltale ethical symptoms had become a problem. This scenario would account for the ground-level activity of training pastors urged by Paul in Titus, but at the same time the presence of rebellion and deception in the church understood as having a fairly lengthy history.⁸

4. Included among the possible "unknown means" by which the church was founded would be whatever time Paul and Titus spent on Crete together before Paul left him there (Tit. 1:5). They could have established pockets of believers in several cities on the island and then Paul entrusted Titus to go back and appoint elders in those cities. This would be similar to how he and Barnabas had appointed elders in the churches of the first missionary journey not long after those congregations had been established (Acts 14:23).

IV. Purpose

A. S. M. Baugh summarizes Paul's purpose in writing Titus as: "To give Titus specific and general instructions for his ministry in Crete. To remind Titus of Christian doctrines and ethical teachings. To warn against false teachers and apostate brothers."⁹

B. Paul also wanted to inform Titus of his desire that Titus join him in Nicopolis once he sent Artemas or Tychichus to replace him on Crete. The Nicopolis to which he is referring (there were several cities by that name) probably "is the one on the western coast of Greece in the province of Epirus (about 200 miles west and slightly north of Athens), founded by Augustus in 31-29 B.C. to celebrate his victory over Mark Antony."¹⁰

V. The False Teaching and Teachers

A. The false teaching that Timothy faced in Ephesus and Titus faced in Crete had definite similarities, but it may not have been identical. The nature of the teaching can only be pieced together from Paul's words, so the precise details remain uncertain.

B. For whatever reason, the problem of false teaching in Crete appears less urgent than in 1 Timothy. As Fee observes, "False teachers are indeed in evidence [in Titus] (1:10-16; 3:9-11), but the letter as a whole is not dominated by their presence. Titus himself is to rebuke such opponents (1:13), but the appointed elders are ultimately to be responsible to stand against them (1:9). Otherwise, there is little of the urgency of 1 Timothy."¹¹

⁸ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 50.

⁹ Baugh, 499.

¹⁰ Baugh, 500.

¹¹ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 11.

C. As in Ephesus, the Mosaic law (1 Tim. 1:7; **Tit. 1:10**, 14, 3:9) was being misused as a source for wild myths or legends (1 Tim. 1:4, 4:7; **Tit. 1:14**; 2 Tim. 4:4) that included appeal to genealogies (1 Tim. 1:4; **Tit. 3:9**). The preoccupation with this speculation produced useless quarrels and controversy (1 Tim. 1:4, 6, 6:4, 20; **Tit. 1:10, 3:9**; 2 Tim. 2:14, 16, 23).

D. The law also was being misused as a basis for imposing ascetic practices such as the prohibition of eating certain foods (1 Tim. 4:1-7; **Tit. 1:13-15**). This is indicated by the fact Tit. 1:14 refers to their devotion to "Jewish myths," which myths 1 Tim. 1:4-7 makes clear are distortions of the Mosaic law, and then the next verse (Tit. 1:15a) rejects the demand for asceticism with the assertion "To the pure all things are pure." They may have been motivated to distort the Mosaic law to claim scriptural support for conclusions that were driven by other ideas and perspectives, such as an incipient Gnosticism or overrealized eschatology (viewing the "now" too much in terms of the "not yet").

E. The false teachers were deceptive (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:6-9, 13; **Tit. 1:10-13**), immoral (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:16, 19, 3:1-5; **Tit. 1:15-16**), and desired to get material gain by means of their teaching (1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:2; **Tit. 1:11**). The reference in Tit. 1:10 to those of the "circumcision" as empty talkers and deceivers and in 1:14 to "Jewish myths" suggests the false teachers in Crete were Hellenistic Jews.

The Text

I. Opening (1:1-4)

¹Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, ²for the hope of eternal life, which the truthful God promised before eternal times, ³but in his own time he revealed his word through the preaching with which I was entrusted by the command of God our Savior, ⁴to Titus, [my] genuine child in a common faith: grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

A. Paul identifies himself as a "slave of God" and "an apostle of Christ Jesus." It is in his apostleship of Christ, his being a faithful messenger of Christ in his proclamation of the gospel, that his slavery to God is lived out. His role as an apostle is according to the will of God.

B. He was given this apostleship that through his preaching he might bring to faith "God's elect," those God foreknows will freely believe the message of Christ's saving work, and might further their knowledge of the truth that yields godliness in their lives. The truth of God's work in Christ has tremendous ethical consequences. Faith in Christ cannot be divorced from one's life. Any who teach or practice the contrary are in error.

C. He also was given this apostleship to extend the hope of eternal life that is part of the blessing of accepting the gospel message. By "eternal life" he means the resurrection life of eternal glory, joy, and fulfillment that Christians will experience in the new heaven and new earth. It is a hope like none other, and it is a hope which the absolutely truthful God promised

"before eternal times," meaning from eternity, before time or the ages began (e.g., NRS, NIV, ESV, NET, HCSB). This was a forever commitment in the mind of God. As Rev. 13:8 indicates, there is a book of life of the Lamb who was slain that contains names that were written before the foundation of the world (see also, 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4).

D. This forever commitment of God to bestow eternal life through Christ was revealed by him in his own time through the preaching he entrusted to Paul and the other apostles. As Paul says in 1 Tim. 1:1, he is an apostle of Christ Jesus *by the command of God our Savior* and of Christ Jesus our hope. He is God's messenger not a merely human voice, and as such, one rejects his words at one's peril.

E. The letter is addressed to Titus, whom Paul describes as his genuine or true child in a common faith. They are a spiritual family in their common faith, and in that family Titus is a genuine child of Paul. It is possible that Paul had converted Titus, but the weight of referring to him here as his genuine or true child is that he serves in Paul's ministry as a faithful son serves his father. Paul expects and wants the church to overhear that Titus is his agent and representative in Crete and that the actions he calls him to take are done with the authority of that relationship.

F. In a standard greeting, Paul expresses his desire that God the Father and Christ Jesus their Savior will grant him grace and peace, which refer to loving favor and total wellbeing. Paul wants God's blessing to overflow in Titus's life.

II. Need for Qualified Elders (1:5-9)

⁵[For] this reason I left you in Crete, that you might put in order the unfinished things and appoint elders in every town as I directed you: ⁶if anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, [and] has faithful children not under an accusation of debauchery or rebellious actions. ⁷For it is necessary [for] the overseer, as God's steward, to be blameless; not arrogant, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not greedy for gain; ⁸but hospitable, a lover of goodness, sensible, righteous, devout, self-controlled, ⁹holding firmly to the faithful word that accords with the teaching, so that he may be able both to exhort with the sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it.

A. Paul left Titus in Crete to handle some unfinished business, which clearly includes, most pressingly, appointing elders in every town, referring no doubt to the towns where the church had been planted. That unfinished business also may include some of the additional matters about which he gives instructions in the letter.

B. The qualifications of elders parallels those given in 1 Tim. 3:2-7, but there are some differences. A man is to be appointed to that office if he is:

1. blameless (*anenklētos*, repeated in v. 7) – This corresponds to "above reproach" (*anepilēmptos*) in 1 Tim. 3:2. That, of course, does not mean sinless, or else there could be no elders. It means their lives are characterized by the virtues or qualities he lists. He explains in v.

7a that it is necessary for the overseer, *as God's steward*, to be blameless. The church is the household of God (1 Tim. 3:15), and qualified elders are those who have been entrusted by God with management or administration of that household. So, of course, they are to be exemplary in character and conduct. Note the interchangeability in v. 7 of "elder" and "overseer."

2. the husband of one wife – This is the same requirement in 1 Tim. 3:2. It is probably the most controversial of the qualifications. The phrase literally is "a husband [or man] of one wife [or woman]" (*mias gunaikos andra*), but those words are open to various interpretations. With the majority of scholars, I think the requirement is that the man be faithful to his wife, that he not have broken faith with her, which understanding is reflected in NEB and NIV ("faithful to his wife").¹² Yarbrough writes: "Paul is insisting, then, on a candidate whose relationship with God is such that his commitment to his wife reflects the love and fidelity that the law requires and that grace enables. If a candidate shows signs of loving his wife like Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25), this is probably what Paul wants Titus to look for."¹³

3. has faithful (*pistos*) children not under an accusation of debauchery or rebellious actions

a. This is traditionally understood to mean that he must have "believing" children (so most English translations), meaning Christian children. If that is the case, there is no parallel in the qualifications given in 1 Timothy, unless it is implicit in the requirement in 1 Tim. 3:4 that the elder have his children in submission with all respectfulness. Their being in submission with all respectfulness conceivably could extend to their following him in the faith. If "believing" is the correct understanding of *pistos* here, then to serve as an elder one presumably must have at least one child who has been baptized into Christ. (I say *presumably* because it is possible that Paul simply *assumes* from that culture that the men will be married and have children, takes that as a given, and does not address when that is not the case.)

b. It is possible, on the other hand, that "faithful" in this context means the children are submissive or obedient to their father without regard to converting to Christ, as a servant or steward is regarded as "faithful" (*pistos*) when he carries out the requests of his master. They are "faithful" to their father in the sense they are not under an accusation of debauchery or rebellious actions. In that case, the requirement is substantially identical to the requirement in 1 Tim. 3:4 that the elder candidate must be managing his own household well in the specific sense of having his children in submission with all respectfulness. Köstenberger, for example, states:

"Faithful" (*πιστά*) probably means "obedient and submissive to their father's orders" (cf. 1 Tim 3:11; 2 Tim 2:2, 13; note the possible inclusion with v. 9: "faithful message"). While *πιστός* can also mean "believing" (and does so most frequently in the [Letters to Timothy and Titus]), this meaning is less likely here in view of the context and the parallel 1 Tim. 3:4 . . ."¹⁴

¹² See the fuller discussion in "[Introduction and 1 Timothy](#)."

¹³ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 481.

¹⁴ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 314; see also, George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 289-290; Walter L.

4. not arrogant – The word *authadēs* is variously rendered self-willed, overbearing, and arrogant. The only other time it is used in the NT is 2 Pet. 2:10, where it is commonly rendered "despise authority." It is not mentioned in the qualifications in 1 Timothy, perhaps because it was less of an issue in the older church in Ephesus than in the new churches in Crete. Benjamin Merkle states:

An arrogant person is a self-willed person, one who is constantly insisting that things be done his way. It is the opposite of being gentle or forbearing (1 Tim. 3:3). He is inconsiderate of other people's opinions and feelings and attempts to get what he wants regardless of the cost to others. Such a person does not make a good elder because the elders must work together as a team, seeking the best for others and not for themselves. A shepherd must be gentle with the sheep and not seek to overpower them by his strong will.¹⁵

5. not quick-tempered (*orgilos*) – This parallels the requirement in 1 Tim. 3:3 that an elder not be contentious or combative (*plēktēs*). An elder cannot be someone always spoiling for a fight, eager for argument or conflict. That destroys unity and harmony.

6. not given to drunkenness (*paroinos*) – This is the same requirement in 1 Tim. 3:3. That does not mean, of course, that Christians who are not elders are free to get drunk. Drunkenness is sinful (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:3) and has ruined countless relationships, families, and lives. It means that this cannot be an elder's area of weakness, something with which he struggles; that disqualifies him. Of course, the same applies by analogy to a weakness for any other mind-altering drugs.

7. not violent – This is the same requirement in 1 Tim. 3:3 (without the addition "but gentle"). An elder is not one who resorts to physical force or threats of physical force to get his way. He is not a bully; people are not afraid of him. On the contrary, he is gentle in his dealing with others.

8. not greedy for gain (*aischrokerdēs*) – This parallels the requirement in 1 Tim. 3:3 that he not be a lover of money (*philarguros*). If money is too important to a Christian, he will wind up serving it rather than Christ (see Mat. 6:24). All Christians are to keep their lives free of the love of money and be content with what they have (1 Tim. 6:7-10; Heb. 13:5), but this is essential for one who would serve as an elder.

9. hospitable – This is the same requirement in 1 Tim. 3:2. Hospitality is required of all believers (e.g., Rom. 12:13, 16:23; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9), but it is an essential characteristic for elders. They must be men who are willing to open their homes in service of Christ.

Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy/Titus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 312-313; Benjamin L. Merkle, *40 Questions About Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 131-134.

¹⁵ Merkle, 121.

10. a lover of goodness – This is a very general description of a virtuous character, one who loves what is good. Though it is not mentioned specifically in the qualifications in 1 Timothy, it possibly "corresponds to κόσμιος in 1 Tim. 3:2 [respectable], especially if the latter means 'well-behaved' or 'virtuous' there."¹⁶

11. sensible – This is the same requirement in 1 Tim. 3:2. An elder must be sensible, meaning reasonable, prudent, and thoughtful. We might say he must have his head on straight. This is related to self-control. The sensible person is someone who carefully considers things for the purpose of taking responsible action.

12. righteous – The word *dikaios* is variously rendered righteous, upright, and just. Here it refers to righteous living, living in obedience to God. It is not included in the qualifications in 1 Timothy but is implicit in the requirement in 1 Tim. 3:2 that an elder be respectable and the requirement in 1 Tim. 3:7 that he have a good reputation with those outside. An unrighteous person would be neither respectable nor have a good reputation. Presumably there was some difference in the church or cultural situation in Crete that moved Paul to use that specific term. Marshall comments, "It is also possible that the emphasis on the elementary qualities, just as the prohibition of certain behavior patterns that would have seemed too obvious to mention, spoke to an immature church struggling to break free from depraved patterns of behavior, such as were widely associated with Crete."¹⁷

13. devout – The word *hosios* is rendered devout or holy. It refers to a genuine inner devotion that yields outward results.¹⁸ It is not included in the qualifications in 1 Timothy but certainly would be understood. Again, the precise wording probably reflects something about the local situation.

14. self-controlled (*enkratēs*) – This parallels the requirement in 1 Tim. 3:2 (*nēphalios*). An elder must be a man who is self-controlled, disciplined. He is not someone who is hostage to his emotions and impulses.

15. holding firmly to the faithful word that accords with the teaching – The reason for the requirement is specified in the next clause: so that he may be able both to exhort with the sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it. It thus corresponds to "skillful in teaching" in 1 Tim. 3:2. We might say today that an elder must be "a man of the Book." He must have a sound grasp of Christian theology so he can direct people in God's ways and refute those who contradict apostolic doctrine.

III. The Cretan Opposition (1:10-16)

¹⁰For there are many rebellious people, empty talkers and deceivers, that is, those of the circumcision, ¹¹whom it is necessary to silence inasmuch as they are overthrowing entire households by teaching what is not right for the sake of shameful gain. ¹²One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always

¹⁶ Knight, 292.

¹⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 165.

¹⁸ Towner, 690.

liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not paying attention to Jewish myths and the commandments of men who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵All things are pure to the pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure. Indeed, both their minds and consciences have been defiled. ¹⁶They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him, being detestable and disobedient and unfit for any good work.

A. "The reason for selecting leaders who are properly qualified to teach is given in vv. 10f."¹⁹ There were in the churches many rebellious people, those defying apostolic authority by rejecting apostolic doctrine. They ran their mouths but said nothing of substance or value. Rather, they deceived people with their false teaching, pulling them from the truth.

B. If *malista* here means "especially," then those of the circumcision are the foremost offenders; if it means "specifically" or "namely," then they are specifically the group in mind.²⁰ Christopher Hutson remarks, "Whether the adverb *malista* means 'specifically' (Skeat 1979) or 'especially' (Poythress 2002; Kim 2004) is of little consequence here (but cf. 1 Tim. 4:10; 5:17). Whether 'those of the circumcision' are the only group Pastoral Paul opposes or one of several, they are his primary targets, and he does not identify others."²¹

C. "Those of the circumcision" refers to Jewish Christians, as in Acts 10:45, 11:2, Gal. 2:12, and Col. 4:11. But there is no indication they were "classic Judaizers," like those in Gal. 2:3-4, 6:12, Phil. 3:2-3, and Acts 15:1, 5, who insisted on submission to all the Mosaic law, as marked by submission to circumcision. Rather, they were misusing the Mosaic law as a source for wild myths or legends that included appeal to genealogies, and their preoccupation with this speculation produced useless quarrels and controversy (Tit. 1:10, 14, 3:9). They also were misusing the law as scriptural support for ascetic practices such as the prohibition of eating certain foods (Tit. 1:15).

D. It was necessary to silence the false teachers inasmuch as they²² were overthrowing entire households by teaching what is not right for the sake of shameful gain.

1. The word meaning "to silence" (*epistomizō*) is used only here in the NT and never in the LXX. Köstenberger remarks: "Paul's recommended course of action here is not patient dialogue or peaceful arbitration for the sake of maintaining unity in the church; these opponents must be 'silenced' (ἐπιστομίζειν), that is, their public teaching activity must be stopped, presumably in [the] form of church discipline or public rebuke."²³

¹⁹ Marshall, 194.

²⁰ Those favoring the latter meaning here include Fee, 178; Liefeld, 315; Marshall, 195); and Towner, 695 (fn. 75). Knight, 297 considers it a serious possibility but does not come down on the question.

²¹ Christopher R. Hutson, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 220.

²² Knight, 297 notes that the relative pronoun *hoitines* is here "well expressed by Ellicott's 'inasmuch as they.'" See also, Marshall, 196 (fn. 117) and Towner, 696 (fn. 81).

²³ Köstenberger, 319.

2. This strong action was necessary because the false teachers were making inroads among the believers. Marshall says, "The 'upset' in mind is almost certainly the defection of entire families to the false teachers, or the destruction of the faith once professed by members of a household by the false teaching such as 2 Tim 2.18 and 1 Tim 1.20 envisage."²⁴ William Mounce states, "Although the situation in Crete was not as urgent as that in Ephesus, it was nonetheless real and required immediate attention. . . . Paul is thinking of the effect on a family that is listening to the opponents' teaching, or of the internal struggle that occurs when some members of a family convert to the heresy."²⁵

3. As in 1 Tim. 6:5, the motivation of these false teachers was shameful gain, meaning they induced people to support them financially by peddling lies. They were religious hucksters masquerading as noble and knowledgeable teachers.

E. Paul reinforces his charge against these Jewish false teachers from Crete by quoting a famous Cretan who acknowledged the defective character of his own people.

1. This person was probably Epimenides, a sixth-century B.C. teacher, philosopher, and poet, who was called a prophet by Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient writers.²⁶ Paul is not claiming he was a prophet of God, a divinely inspired spokesman, but simply using that cultural title.

2. This famous Cretan declared, in keeping with the widespread reputation of Cretans in antiquity, that "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons." In suggesting that acknowledgement fits the false teachers, Paul is slamming them as liars who are characterized by wild behavior and uncontrolled appetites. Towner states, "Religious lies have been told as truth, which, along with impious and reckless conduct, places these teachers squarely into the category of 'classical' Cretans who are famously corrupt. Such a statement would not have put off the Cretan Christians, for it would be understood that they should regard themselves as rescued from this perverse lifestyle."²⁷

3. Granting some hyperbole in the quote about the Cretans, Paul's assertion that the testimony is true is a way of saying the false teachers are living proof of it. It also reveals that cultures can and do vary in their grasp of and commitment to morality. Though voices in our culture assert, when it benefits some purpose, that all cultures and societies are equal in their understanding of and commitment to righteousness, that is simply false. There is no reason to insist that the degeneration that followed humanity's rejection of God, which Paul sketches in Rom. 1:18-32, is uniform.

F. Given the twisted nature of Cretan culture, Paul commands that they, the false teachers and those under their influence, be rebuked sharply. It is a case where strong medicine is needed

²⁴ Marshall, 197.

²⁵ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 397.

²⁶ Towner, 700.

²⁷ Towner, 702-703.

for the job. The hope is that the rebuke will restore the false teachers and those who have followed them to an orthodox understanding of doctrine.²⁸

G. This restoration to sound doctrine will involve rejection of, not paying attention to, Jewish myths and the commandments of men who turn away from the truth.

1. "Myths" were false and far-fetched stories, often about the gods, that were used to deceive people into accepting practices by linking the practices to those stories.²⁹ It seems these particular myths were somehow tied to OT genealogies (Tit. 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4), the ancestor-descendant lists, probably in the early parts of Genesis. Towner states, "If 3:9 does lead us to OT stories (see on 1 Tim. 1:4), then it is probable that the Jewish-Christian opponents were creating speculative doctrines based on stories of ancient OT heroes and using them to lend the weight antiquity to certain questionable practices that Paul regarded as ungodly."³⁰

2. The commandments *of men* refers to ethical demands the false teachers made without any divine authorization, such as the prohibition of eating certain food. Their commandments are implicitly contrasted to the commandments *of God*, which is what Paul and the apostles present. And not only were their ethical demands the commandments of mere men, but they were commandments of men who had apostatized, turned away from the truth. There is no reason to heed them.

H. In v. 15 Paul alludes to the false teachers' ascetic rules, which include a prohibition of eating certain food (1 Tim. 4:3). They claimed some food was off limits for religious reasons, was impure or defiling, and presumably enlisted elements of the OT in support of that claim. Paul declares that "to the pure," referring to Christians who have been cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ, all things are pure in the sense they do not become ritually contaminated by contacting any external, physical thing. External things do not defile them, do not adversely affect their fellowship with God. As Jesus made clear in Mk. 7:18-19, there are no food taboos, and by extension, no external defilements of any kind.

I. In contrast, nothing is pure to the defiled and unbelieving. Unbelievers have not been cleansed by the blood of Christ and thus remain defiled by their sin. With Fee and others, I think "Paul is picking up the common Jewish motif that whatever a defiled person touches is by that fact itself defiled (cf. Hag. 2:10-14; Philo, *On the Special Laws* 3.208-9)."³¹ Nothing for him is pure or undefiled because it becomes defiled as soon as he touches it. Paul equates the opponents with unbelievers and "turns the tables on [them] by stating that their inward moral defilement pollutes everything they touch or do. In this condition, no amount of thanksgiving or attention to rites of purification will render food clean for them, and nothing they can do will please God."³²

J. He adds that both their minds and consciences have been defiled; they have been corrupted so that they do not function correctly. Instead of perceiving and approving the truth of

²⁸ Marshall, 205.

²⁹ Towner, 109-110.

³⁰ Towner, 705.

³¹ Fee, 181; see also, Knight, 303 and Marshall, 210.

³² Towner, 708.

God's revelation with their minds, they reject or resist it (1:14; 1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:8). And instead of being chastened by a proper conscience for disobeying God, they disobey without compunction. Towner states:

Rejection of "the truth," by perverting or jettisoning the traditional gospel, interferes with the process leading to godly behavior. In its place is a process in which the mind, deluded in unbelief, approves false doctrines that the equally dysfunctional conscience shapes into inferior ethics. In Paul's framework, unbelief (or incomplete separation from pagan ways) or rejection of the gospel seems to be the fundamental error.³³

K. These people claim to know God. Indeed, they claim to have superior insight into what a relationship with him entails, but their behavior disproves that claim. Not only does their insistence that certain food is taboo misrepresent God and deny him the gratitude that his gracious provision of *all food* deserves (1 Tim. 4:3-5), but the final clause indicates they have divorced faith and life, have chosen rebellion to God while claiming a relationship with him. One is reminded of 1 Jn. 2:3-4: *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.* ⁴*The one who says, "I have come to know him" and does not keep his commandments is a liar, and in this one the truth is not.*

IV. Command to Instruct Various Groups of Believers (2:1-10)

But you must speak the things that are fitting for sound teaching. ²*Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance.* ³*Likewise, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers nor slaves to wine, teachers of what is good,* ⁴*that they may encourage the young women to be lovers of their husbands, lovers of their children,* ⁵*sensible, pure, busy at home, good, and submissive to their own husbands, so that the word of God not be slandered.* ⁶*Likewise, exhort the young men to be sensible* ⁷*regarding all things, showing yourself to be a model of good works; in the teaching [showing] integrity, seriousness,* ⁸*[and] a sound message that cannot be condemned, so that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.* ⁹*Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in all respects, to be pleasing, not talking back,* ¹⁰*not pilfering, but displaying all good faithfulness, so that in all ways they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior.*

A. In contrast to the rebellious false teachers, Titus is commanded to speak what accords with sound teaching, to present the truth of God. More specifically, he is to urge various groups of believers to be and live as God would have them be and live. Paul tells him the kinds of things he is to teach to older and younger men and women and to slaves.

B. The older men are not to be driven by impulses and passions, are to live in a way that deserves respect, and are to be reasonable, prudent, and thoughtful. They also are to be exemplary in faith toward God, in love toward all, and in endurance of pressures and hardships

³³ Towner, 709.

faced as part of the Christian life. These qualities are applicable to Christians generally but are specified here for the older men because their spiritual example regarding them was especially important in that context.

C. Similarly, the older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, and not slaves to wine. Again, these qualities are applicable to Christians generally but are specified here for the older women because their spiritual example regarding them was judged to be especially important.

D. The older Christian women also are to be teachers or transmitters of what is good, thereby encouraging the young Christian women to develop certain virtues the absence of which would cause the word of God, the gospel of Christ, to be slandered in that people would accuse the Christian faith of promoting wrong attitudes and conduct. Specifically, the good teaching the older women are to communicate is to encourage the young women to be:

1. Lovers of their husbands and children – They are to be devoted to the blessing and welfare of their family and desire only what is good for them. There is no room for hostile or evil action that is designed to hurt, harm, or destroy them.

2. Sensible – This is the same quality noted for the older men, which confirms the general applicability of those requirements. She is to have her head on straight, one who considers things thoughtfully for the purpose of taking right and responsible action. Such character is a credit to the Christian faith.

3. Pure – The word can mean pure in the sense of sincere, but here the emphasis almost certainly is on her sexual fidelity to her husband.³⁴ That is fundamental to a marriage.

4. Busy at home – A wife is to be a diligent homemaker. That does not mean she can have no activities or interests outside the home (see, e.g., the excellent wife of Prov. 31:10-31), but those things cannot cause her to neglect her duties in the home. As is implied in 1 Tim. 5:14, wives have a managerial duty regarding their homes, and however thinly they may be spread, they need to handle their business on that front.³⁵

5. Good – This is a general virtue that can have many manifestations. Here the emphasis probably is on being kind and benevolent in her dealing with others.

6. Submissive to their own husbands

a. There are, of course, other NT texts that speak of the submission of wives. It is addressed in Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18, and 1 Pet. 3:1, 5-6.

b. In discussing the submission of wives to husbands, it is important to recognize that men and women are created equally in the image of God and together comprise mankind (Gen. 1:26-27, 5:1-2). In 1 Cor. 11:11-12 Paul points out that men and women are

³⁴ Marshall, 248; Towner, 727.

³⁵ See, Susan T. Foh, *Women & the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 190-191.

dependent on each other. In 1 Cor. 12:12-27, he makes clear that all who are in Christ are part of Christ's body and are equally precious; there are no second-class citizens in the kingdom. Peter describes husbands and wives as "co-heirs of the gracious gift of life" (1 Pet. 3:7). In terms of one's standing before God, Paul says in Gal. 3:28 that there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus.

c. In the marriage partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, a man and a woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction. He is head of the wife as Christ also [is] head of the church (Eph. 5:23). God in his sovereignty has bestowed on the husband the responsibility of headship or leadership.

(1) In doing so, and in calling the wife to accept her husband's leadership, God is not saying that the wife is inferior to, less worthy, or less capable than her husband. Husbands and wives simply have different roles or functions.

(2) We ask, "Why did God place the leadership responsibility exclusively on the husband (and the men in the spiritual family) rather than letting the wife lead where she is the more (or equally) capable partner?" Why didn't he assign the roles on the basis of individual capability? Ultimately the answer is that God is sovereign (Ps. 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15) and that he chose to do it that way.

(a) As I often say, one could just as well ask why God gave the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle (Num. 1:50-51; 1 Chron. 6:47, 23:26), or why he gave the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests (Ex. 28:1, 29:4-9). Why limit those roles to people who happen to be born in a certain lineage rather than allowing everyone equal access to the roles based on their ability?

(b) And that is precisely what led to Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. Korah, a Levite, and 250 community leaders opposed Moses and Aaron on the basis that they should have equal access to God. All Israel was holy, so no one family line should be exalted to the priestly function. It was a challenge to God's right to choose select groups for specific roles. And, as you know, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed by the earth, and the 250 community leaders were incinerated by God. The spirit of Korah is alive and well in any who would challenge God's right to choose men as leaders of the family and the church.

d. Understand that a submissive or nonleading role does not mean an inferior status.

(1) Jesus is God; he is one in nature, being, and essence with God the Father. So the Son is not inferior to or less worthy than the Father, yet he is functionally subordinate to the Father; he willingly submits to the Father's authority. This is made explicit in 1 Cor. 11:3 and is demonstrated by the fact he was sent by the Father (Mat. 10:40, 15:24, 21:37; Mk. 9: 37, 12:6; Lk. 4: 43, 9:48, 10:16, 20:13; Jn. 3:34, 4:34, 5:23, 5:30, 5:36-38, 6:29, 6:38-39, 6:44, 6:57, 7:16, 7:28-29, 7:33, 8:16, 8:18, 8:26, 8:29, 8:42, 9:41, 10:36, 11:42, 12:44-45, 12:49, 13:20, 14:24, 15:21, 16:5, 17:3, 17:8, 17:18, 17:21, 17:23, 17:25, 20:21; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:9-10, 4:14); spoke the words of the Father (Jn. 7:16, 8:26-28, 8:38-40, 12:49-50, 14:24, 15:15); came to do the Father's

will (Jn. 4:34, 5:19, 6:38, 14:30; Heb. 10:5-9); revealed the Father (Jn. 1:18, 12:45, 14:7-9, 17:6, 17:26; Heb. 1:1-4); seeks to please, glorify, and honor the Father (Jn. 5:30, 8:29, 14:13, 17:1-5); and judges only as he hears from the Father (Jn. 5:30).

(2) If Jesus, being in very nature God, can submit to the Father's authority, then women can submit to the leadership of their husbands without denying their equal dignity or value. They are acting like Christ! That parallel is specifically drawn in 1 Cor. 11:3. Schreiner states:

A difference in role or function in no way implies that women are inferior to men. Even the Son submits to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28), and yet he is equal to the Father in essence, dignity, and personhood. It is a modern, democratic, Western notion that diverse functions suggest distinctions in worth between men and women. Paul believed that men and women were equal in personhood, dignity, and value but also taught that women had distinct roles from men.³⁶

e. Submission to husbands is expressed in supporting their non-sinful decisions, not because of husbands' inherent qualities (who they are) but because God has given the responsibility of leadership in the family to the husband. When the husband has finally chosen a course of action, the wife is to willingly support and follow that choice. She is not to resent it or seek to sabotage or undermine it.

f. Of course, if a husband chooses a sinful course of action, the wife cannot support it. The husband's authority is from the Lord, and he has no authority to push one of Christ's disciples into sin. To follow one's husband into sin is not a submission that is "fitting in the Lord," to use the words of Col. 3:18.

g. Unlike the situation in submitting to Christ, the wife must help her husband in the discharge of his leadership responsibility. This often requires her to inform, question, advise, and correct her husband. A wife's submission to her husband does not mean she cowers silently and occasionally utters "Yes, O Great One." She is a nonleading partner and is called to use her abilities and gifts to bless her husband and the family.

h. In a healthy marriage, husbands and wives can almost always come to a consensus on what course of action should be taken, but occasionally they cannot. In those situations where a mutual decision cannot be reached, the wife is called by God to yield to her husband's decision. I think James Hurley captures very well the spirit in which such decisions should be made:

The manner in which such decisions are handled is crucial. The husband may not be high-handed and stubborn, knowing that she will finally have to give way. That is not the model of Christ's headship. Neither may the wife be grudging and resentful. That is not the manner of our response to Christ. In the last analysis, when the two can devote no more time to individual and joint seeking of the grace

³⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:9-15" in Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 201-202.

of God to permit them to come to one mind or to be willing to yield to the other, an exchange along the following lines is in order:

Husband: "Not because I am inherently wiser or more righteous, nor because I am right (although I do believe I am or I would not stand firm), but because it is finally my responsibility before God, we will take the course which I believe is right. If I am being sinfully stubborn, may God forgive me and give me the grace to yield to you."

Wife: "Not because I believe you are wiser in this matter (I don't) or more righteous, nor because I accept that you are right (because I don't or I would not oppose you), but because I am a servant of God who has called me to honor your headship, I willingly yield to your decision. If I am wrong, may God show me. If you are wrong, may he give you grace to acknowledge it and to change."³⁷

E. Titus is to exhort the young men to be sensible, to think soundly and properly about all things. It is sometimes translated here as self-controlled. Though this is a quality for all Christians, young men are especially in need of exhortation not to be swayed from sound judgment by passions. There is an issue whether the clause "regarding all things" modifies what precedes or what follows it. In opting for the former, I am with commentators like Kelly, Mounce, Marshall, Köstenberger, and Bray³⁸ and the editors of NA²⁸. Most English translations connect it with the following clause, notable exceptions being the NEB, REB, HCSB, and CSB.

F. Titus is to show himself to be a model of good works ("in everything," if that clause goes with what follows). He is to back up his exhortations with a consecrated life, a life shaped by his faith in Christ. One cannot effectively call people to a life one is unwilling to live.

1. Specifically, in his role as a teacher of the Christian faith he is to show integrity, meaning he is to care only about pleasing God by presenting the truth faithfully. He is not to compromise the message out of fear or self-interest.

2. He also is to teach with seriousness, sometimes translated reverence or dignity or gravity. The idea is that the Christian message is not to be taught in a way that is inconsistent with its significance and grandeur and the price that was paid to underwrite it. That does not mean you must teach with a frown in a black suit; it means you must respect the message by laboring to understand and communicate it accurately and must communicate it with a seriousness commensurate with its content. The presentation is not to send a message that God's work in Christ is less significant than it is.

3. His teaching is to consist of a sound word or message, focusing here on the content of the teaching. Towner remarks, "Together these two terms (noun, 'word'; adjective,

³⁷ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 151.

³⁸ J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles: Timothy I and II, and Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960), 242; Mounce, 412; Marshall, 253; Köstenberger, 334; Gerald L. Bray, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Theological Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2019), 512.

'sound, healthy') most likely mean in effect 'the authorized gospel.'"³⁹ What departs from apostolic teaching is not sound; it is unhealthy or corrupt. The true, apostolic message cannot be condemned in the sense there is no basis for properly or rightly condemning it; it is from God.

4. One purpose of presenting a sound message that gives no basis for condemnation, and perhaps also for teaching Christian doctrine with integrity and seriousness, is that the opponent may be put to shame by being shown to lack any justifiable criticism. He is exposed as a hater, an unjust critic, which guts the criticism.

5. I have often explained how first-century, Greco-Roman slavery differed from Colonial slavery and why God may have tolerated a regulated form of that slavery in that specific social context, most recently in the class on 1 Timothy, so I will here just refer you to that discussion. Paul tells Titus, in essence, that Christian slaves are to be model slaves. They are to respect their master's authority in all worldly spheres, to be pleasing to them, not to speak disrespectfully to them, and not to steal. In sum, they are to display complete faithfulness in service. They are to do so to adorn the teaching of God our Savior. In other words, this dying to self is part of their discipleship, part of the way they reveal the attractiveness of the Christian faith. Jesus makes people better in every role or station in life, and those who see that difference are drawn to explore it.

V. The Basis of the Ethical Exhortations (2:11-14)

¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation to all men has appeared, ¹²instructing us in order that, having renounced ungodliness and worldly passions, we might live in a sensible, righteous, and godly manner in the present age, ¹³looking forward to the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us so that he might set us free from all lawlessness and might purify for himself a special people, zealous for good works.

A. The command that Titus is to instruct various groups of believers in how they are to live is rooted in the gift of God in Christ ("For"). Because of the magnificent thing God has done, we who have received his grace are obligated to live lives of gratitude, which translates into living as he would have us live.

B. In Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, the grace of God that opens the door to salvation for all human beings has been manifested in the world. Towner says, "[Paul's language] gives to the Christ-event the character of a massive incursion of the invisible, divine into visible human history."⁴⁰ Mounce states, "The thought then is that God's grace has appeared and in so doing has made deliverance available for all people. . . . This is not universalism but the PE theme that God's gift is available for all people, Jew or Gentile, slave or free."⁴¹

³⁹ Towner, 732.

⁴⁰ Towner, 745.

⁴¹ Mounce, 422.

1. This awesome grace that appeared in Christ teaches us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly manner in the present age. Because of what God has done for us, we put to death ungodly behavior and impulses and strive to live for him, which means living in a sensible, righteous, and godly manner. Life is no longer about us but about the one who died for us. As Paul says in Gal. 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; and that [life] which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.*

2. This struggle defines our life in the present age, in this overlap of ages between Christ's first coming when he inaugurated the kingdom and his second coming when it will be consummated. Until that Day, when our sanctification will be completed, we are urged, in the words of 1 Pet. 2:11, "as strangers and sojourners to abstain from fleshly desires which war against the soul."

3. This grace-driven life that we live in the present age is lived in anticipation of the glorious return of Christ. This will be the time of the resurrection and the transformation of creation into the new heavens and new earth. This is the great promise of the Bible, the complete healing of this sin-sick creation and beginning of the eternal divine utopia, a time of perfect love and fellowship with God and each other. In the glorious words of Rev. 21:1-5: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

4. It is this expectation that was behind the early church's Aramaic prayer *Marana tha* – Come Lord! – that you see in 1 Cor. 16:22. The same idea is expressed in Greek in Rev. 22:20, the next to the last verse of the book and of the entire Bible – Come, Lord Jesus!

5. This is one of the places in Scripture where Jesus is expressly identified as God (see also, Jn. 1:1, 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jn. 1:18). After working through the evidence and arguments, Greek scholar Murray Harris concludes: "In light of the foregoing evidence, it seems highly probable that in Titus 2:13 Jesus Christ is called 'our great God and Savior,' a verdict shared, with varying degrees of assurance, by almost all grammarians and lexicographers, many commentators, and many writers of NT theology or Christology, although there are some dissenting voices."⁴²

⁴² Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 185. More recent commentators affirming the identification include Knight, 322-326; Mounce, 426-431; Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 312-314; Marshall, 276-282; Köstenberger, 339-340; Yarbrough, 530; and Hutson, 234-236.

6. Jesus offered himself on our behalf to set us free from all lawlessness, from both its power and its consequences. We are a new people in a new situation. And he offered himself to purify for himself a special or prized people, a hallmark of which is their eagerness for good works. Christ's people live to his glory, live as he would have them live, as an expression of their gratitude.

7. William Mounce writes:

The emphasis on good works present throughout Titus, receives no greater emphasis than here. It is stated in v. 14. Believers are a special people, not to be occasionally interested in obedience but to carry the title "zealot for good works." It is God's grace that not only brought salvation but also teaches that the necessary outcome of salvation is to deny that which is ungodly and to pursue that which is godly. But not only does grace teach this; it is within the very purpose of the atonement not only to redeem but also to cleanse. This is not righteousness by works; it is the message of grace, the full message of grace that redeems and sanctifies. . . .

Salvation never stops with redemption but always moves to sanctification. There is no salvation apart from discipleship. Paul is not teaching the annulment of grace; he is teaching the full measure of grace and the purpose of God, to cleanse for himself a special people, a zealot for good works, so that believers may "learn to be intent on good deeds" (2 Tim 3:14). Any teaching that removes obedience from the scope of salvation comes under the same condemnation as did the Cretan and Ephesian opponents.⁴³

VI. Command to Instruct Renewed (2:15)

¹⁵Speak these things and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

A. In 2:1 he commanded Titus to "speak the things that are fitting for sound teaching." He now renews that command – "Speak these things" – after having stated the basis for those ethical instructions in 2:11-14.

B. He is told to exhort and rebuke, just as the elders are required to do in Tit. 1:9. There is a positive side, urging and encouraging others to live as disciples of Christ, and a negative side, refuting and rebuking those who oppose apostolic doctrine. He is to do so with all authority because, as Paul's representative in Crete, he has divine authority to do as the apostle directs. In exhorting and rebuking pursuant to apostolic doctrine, he has no reason to equivocate or pull his punches.

C. Since Titus is delivering the authoritative truth of God, he is commanded not to let anyone disregard that teaching by disregarding him. This is similar to what Paul told Timothy in

⁴³ Mounce, 433-434.

1 Tim. 4:12 except here he makes no reference to Titus's youth. Those who rebel against Titus's instruction are to be rebuked, and if necessary, ultimately disciplined by the church.

VII. Charge to Remind Them of Further Aspects of Christian Living (3:1-8)

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to be uncontentious and gentle, displaying all considerateness to all men. ³For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. ⁴But when the kindness of God our Savior and [his] love for mankind appeared, he saved us, ⁵not on the basis of works of righteousness which we did, but according to his mercy, through a washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that having been justified by his grace we might become heirs in accordance with the hope of eternal life. ⁸The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be intent on engaging in good works. These things are good and profitable for men.

A. Titus is to remind the saints to be submissive to governmental authorities, to obey their laws, it being understood that this duty would not apply to any law that required one to disobey God (e.g., Acts 5:29). This same duty is presented in Rom. 13:1-7 and 1 Pet. 2:13-15.

B. They also are to be reminded of Christian duties in relation to all people and not just to governing authorities. They are to be ready and willing to do whatever good work may need doing, to speak evil of no one, to be uncontentious and gentle, displaying all considerateness to all men. Christians are to be godly people, people who are helpful, not antagonistic, peaceful, gentle, and considerate. We should never act in ways that are selfish, hostile, or inconsiderate.

C. Titus needs to remind them of the grace with which they are to treat *all people* – including non-Christians toward whom it is not easy to be kind, gentle, and patient – because ("For") "we also," meaning Paul, Titus, and the Cretan Christians (standing for all Christians), were once in that category. They were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. And yet, God acted toward them with kindness, love, and grace despite how they were. Knight states:

[Paul] acknowledges that non-Christians are difficult to live with (e.g., "hateful") and thus that it is not easy to be gentle, kind, and considerate toward them. In fact, he may be dealing with this factor as an objection that Christians might raise to his admonitions. At the same time, he makes this fact part of the basis for his appeal to them (note γάρ). The Christians must consider that God's kindness and love for humanity was shown to such people, i.e., to themselves (v. 4). So Paul is only asking them to show to others, in the ways he has spelled out in vv. 1 and 2,

the attitude that God showed to them when they were sinful and hateful as the non-Christians now are.⁴⁴

D. But despite their unloveliness, God saved them through his kindness and love manifested in Christ. He did so, not based on their righteousness – they were anything but – but according to his mercy.

E. This saving took place "through a washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

1. In light of Paul's own experience of baptism, where Ananias told him to "wash away (*apolouō*) his sins" (Acts 22:16); in light of the fact the only other occurrence in the NT of this word "washing" (*loutron*) is Eph. 5:26, where the baptismal reference is widely recognized;⁴⁵ in light of the association of water, Spirit, and new birth in Jn. 3:3-5; in light of the association of baptism and receipt of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38; in light of what is said elsewhere in the NT and early church writings about baptism;⁴⁶ and in accordance with the majority of commentators,⁴⁷ Paul is saying that God in his mercy saved them at the time of their baptism, where they were reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit.

2. As G. R. Beasley-Murray summarizes the point of Tit. 3:5-6, "Baptism is the occasion when the Spirit works creatively in the believer, . . ." ⁴⁸ Other modern commentators recognizing a reference to baptism here include Kelly, Dibelius and Conzelmann, Hanson, Quinn, Stott, Collins, Yarbrough, and Hutson.⁴⁹

F. Paul says the Holy Spirit was poured out on them richly through Jesus Christ their Savior. This is a reference to the pouring out of the Spirit by Jesus Christ on the Day of Pentecost as reported in Acts 2:32-33. This is in keeping with Jesus' teaching in Jn. 7:38-39 and 14:15-17.

⁴⁴ Knight, 335.

⁴⁵ As Markus Barth acknowledges in *Ephesians 4-6*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 692: "Practically all interpreters in the East and West, in ancient, medieval, Reformation and modern times, agree in explaining [Eph.] 5:26 as a reference to baptism." Recent commentators sharing this view include A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 11:77; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 388; Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 375; PHEME PERKINS, *Ephesians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 134; Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 542-543; John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 265; William W. Klein, "Ephesians" in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 151-152; and S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 487.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., "[Some Thoughts on Baptism](#)."

⁴⁷ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, TNTC, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 217, states, "Most commentators take this washing to refer to baptism and connect *palingenesias* (here translated *rebirth*) with John 3:5." Marshall states (318), "The majority of commentators assume that it refers primarily to baptism (cf. 1 cor 6:11)."

⁴⁸ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 211.

⁴⁹ Kelly, 251-252; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972) 148; A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 190-191; Jerome D. Quinn, *The Letter to Titus*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 217; John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 204; Collins, 364-365; Yarbrough, 546; Hutson, 242-243.

The Spirit has been made available universally for all who will in penitent faith put on Christ in baptism.

G. The ultimate purpose of God's saving them by his grace through the Spirit's renewing work that occurs in conjunction with baptism is that they might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life. In other words, it is for the redeemed to receive the eternal life for which they hope (see 1:2). This is the grand vision of God, our living eternally as resurrected beings in the new heavens and new earth, a perfect reality of love, joy, and fellowship with God and one another.

H. The saying that is trustworthy, on which he wants Titus to insist, to declare without qualification or equivocation, is that God in his mercy saved the unrighteous through his grace given in Christ, making them new by the Spirit, that they may live with him forever in eternal glory. Titus is to do so to help motivate Christians to be intent on engaging in good works. The one who graciously saved us at great cost calls us to good works and empowers us to live a new life.

I. The things on which Paul wants Titus to insist, the wonderful message of God's mercy and grace in Christ, are good and profitable for all people. Those truths motivate believers to live consecrated lives for God and invite unbelievers to come to faith that they too may share in the blessings of the gospel.

VIII. Instruction for Dealing with the False Teachers (3:9-11)

⁹But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, discord, and battles over the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰After a first and second warning, have nothing to do with a factious man, ¹¹knowing that such a person has been perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

A. In contrast to the saving and motivating truths Titus is to teach emphatically, he is to avoid the foolish controversies, genealogies, discord, and battles over the law being pushed by the false teachers because those things, in contrast to the great truths of the gospel, are unprofitable and worthless. They benefit neither believers nor unbelievers.

B. Rather than dignifying the false teaching by engaging with it as a serious theological option, he is to avoid it like the foolishness it is. The false teachers simply are to be warned of their error once and again – it is not a matter for debate – and if they refuse to heed the repeated warnings, if they continue to be factious by pushing their divisive doctrine, they are to be disfellowshipped. Titus probably would understand v. 10 to be a condensed description of that process.

C. The disfellowshipping is necessary in light of the person having demonstrated by his recalcitrance that he has been perverted so as to be committed to sin, thus being self-condemned. Towner remarks, "The meaning is clear: having been admonished of error (repeatedly), the offender's persistence in the teaching and stubborn refusal to acknowledge the apostolic warning

amount to a self-pronouncement of guilt (cf. Luke 19:22; Gal 2:11). One such as this person is to be removed from the church."⁵⁰ Exclusion is the radical surgery of last resort.

IX. Final Instructions (3:12-14)

¹²When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, hurry to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, so that nothing may be lacking for them. ¹⁴And let our people also learn to engage in good works to meet the urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

A. When Paul sends Artemas or Tychichus to Titus on Crete, presumably to take over for him, Titus is to hurry to meet Paul at Nicopolis where he plans to spend the winter. We are not told what plans Paul had for him at that location.

B. Titus is to ensure that Zenas and Apollos have everything they need for whatever journey they will be making from Crete. This is how the early church enabled dissemination of the message; it showed hospitality to the brothers and sisters. I am reminded of 3 Jn. 6 where the Apostle John urges Gaius to send the missionaries on their way in a manner worthy of God. This means in a way that God would approve, a way that respects and validates the dedication of those brothers to the cause of Christ.

C. Paul tells Titus to be sure to let the community in on this good work of meeting the urgent needs of providing for Christian travelers, not to shoulder all the burden himself. It is an opportunity for them to bear fruit to Christ's glory.

X. Closing (3:15)

¹⁵All those with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with all of you.

A. All the saints who are with Paul send Titus their greetings. And Paul requests Titus to convey their greetings to the other saints in Crete, described as those who love Paul and his companions in the faith.

B. Paul desires for God's grace to be with all of them. We need his ongoing grace not only for continuing cleansing of our sin, but it is only in and through his grace, mediated by the Spirit, that we live out his purpose in our lives.

⁵⁰ Towner, 798-799.