

Intro to *TITUS*

Paul and Titus: Titus was a companion of the Apostle Paul, and is mentioned in several of the Pauline Epistles. Titus was with Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, and from Galatians 2, we know that he accompanied them for the famous “Council at Jerusalem” in Acts 15. He was a Gentile, and Paul was sternly opposed to having Titus circumcised. In later writings of Paul, he was with Paul and Timothy at Ephesus, and was later dispatched by Paul to go to Corinth. He later rejoined Paul when he was in Macedonia, and eventually ended up helping to establish and lead the church at Crete. Titus was on the island of Crete when Paul wrote him this letter of instruction. Paul writes this letter to Titus to give him personal authorization and guidance in meeting opposition, instructions about faith and conduct, and warnings about false teachers. He also informed Titus of his future plans for him.

Chapter 1 / Intro and Theme

One of the interesting phrases that Paul uses is that he addresses Titus as “my own son.” It is an endearing use of words that literally conveys the thoughts that Paul had towards Titus—that he felt he was a natural born, true son to him. Paul communicates to Titus the reason for leaving him with the church at Crete—so that he might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town. Elders were designated leaders of the church of Crete in each of its towns. The word, elder, is the Greek word, “presbuteros,” which means an older leader or judge. The word for bishop is the Greek word, “episkopos,” which is translated “overseer” in some translations. Both of these words speak to the structure of the 1st century church, in which there were both elders and overseers, or bishops, assigned to the local body of believers. In our structure, the elder can be synonymous with the role of a Pastor, and the overseer, with that of a deacon. In these instructions, Paul reiterates some of the same requirements, or qualifications, for these positions as he does in I Timothy.

In a more practical word for Titus, Paul addresses the subject of people who would maliciously tear down the membership with their slanderous talk. Paul instructs Titus to “rebuke them sharply” for the purposes of correction and proper application of the true Gospel.

Chapter 2 / Instructions for Living

In chapter 2, Paul gives Titus some specific words for what certain groups of people should be taught. Older men should be temperate, worthy of respect, self controlled, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance. Older women should be reverent and gentle teachers of the younger women in the congregation. Paul encourages Titus to teach the younger men self control, and to be an example for them in the area of personal responsibility and integrity. Paul also has a word of instruction for slaves to be submissive to their masters in everything.

The latter part of chapter two is an eloquent teaching on the subject of grace.

Chapter 3 / Final Instructions and Closing Remarks

In the middle of being ruled by the oppressive Roman Empire, Paul encourages Titus to teach his congregants submissive obedience....to be peaceable and considerate and humble. Paul speaks of this kind of behavior as being a direct result of one who has been saved by grace. In another piece of practical teaching, Paul tells Titus in verse 9 to “avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments about the law because they are unprofitable and useless.

In his final statement to Titus, he sums up all of his teaching with this admonition: “Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.

Intro to PHILEMON

Intro Notes

The letter to Philemon is the shortest letter written by the Apostle Paul. The letter suggests that Paul was in prison at the time of the writing. Philemon was a believer in the church at Colossae and was a slave owner. Slavery was a commonplace then, and Onesimus was one of his slaves and an unbeliever. Apparently, Onesimus had stolen from Philemon and had run away. Through divine providence, Onesimus crossed paths with Paul. Its possible that they had become acquainted before and Onesimus saw Paul as a “safe haven.”

Salutation

Interesting is the way that Paul opens this particular letter with his salutation. In other letters he refers to himself as “an apostle.” In Romans, he calls himself a “servant” of Jesus Christ. Here, in light of the fact that he is dealing with a slave and a slave owner, he calls himself a “prisoner” of Jesus Christ.

A word of thanksgiving

Paul gives thanks for Philemon for the report he has heard of the great faith Philemon has professed and because of the love he has shown for all the saints. Paul offers a prayer for Philemon that he would continue to be active in sharing his faith, so he would have a good understanding of all that we have in Christ Jesus.

Pau’s Plea

Paul prefaces his appeal with a declaration of his authority: “I have the right to demand this of you, but chose to appeal to you on the basis of love.” Paul says that he appeals to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, “who became a son while I was in chains.” Somewhere along the way, the paths of Paul and Onesimus crossed. Somewhere in their relationship, Paul led Onesimus to faith in Jesus Christ. Paul makes the statement that once “useless,” now Onesimus is “useful” to Philemon. Paul not only advocate’s for Onesimus’ return, but amazingly Paul offers to pay any outstanding debt that may be owed to Philemon.

Spiritual Application

There are some amazing parallels and applications of this story and its redemption and the story of our redemption through Jesus Christ. Like **Onesimus**, we are slaves in desperate need of freedom and deliverance. Like Onesimus, we are trespassers, and as such, we are dead in our trespasses and our sins. In Paul, Onesimus finds an advocate, one that would speak to the master on his behalf. And just like Onesimus had in the **Apostle Paul**, we have in **Jesus Christ**, our advocate. I John 2:1 says, “My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin: but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” And as Paul paid the penalty for the sins of Onesimus, Jesus paid the penalty for our sin. He released us not only from the chains of sin, but from the penalty we owed God for our transgressions.

A final word...Because of the transformation that Christ had made in his heart, Onesimus went from being useless to useful, from unworthy to worthy. The name, Onesimus, literally means “useful, profitable.” But the actual meaning of the name “Philemon” means “loving.” It took the power of love to make the slave useful. Early in the letter, Paul basically said, “I can make you do this, but I appeal to you on the basis of love.” We can force someone by the letter of the law, or we can appeal to them on the basis of love. Enforcement of the law does not change the heart, but the power of love can.