



REDEEMING HOPE

Titus
Two Worlds Collide

[August - October, 2021]

Series Overview

We live in a world that tells us a singular story: that we can be our own savior. Our culture celebrates stories of overcoming and accomplishment in the midst of trial and difficulty or the person who fought, against all odds, to win no matter what. Dependence and weakness is seen as failure, and independence and projection of confidence is celebrated across the spectrum of philosophies and ideologies of our day.

Some people attempt to interpret this story through following the rules, serving others, going to church, or generally seeking to be morally good. A person who does this is considered a "nice guy". But this does not work, because they cannot meet others expectations, much less God's standards for their life. When they fail to meet these external standards, a sense of guilt for not doing the right things invades their lives and they must hide their brokenness to maintain the illusion of being their own savior. This causes immense pain, because they know who they are projecting themselves to be is not the reality of who they truly are. Many people who come from a military or religious background attempt to be their own savior through this form of self-reliant moralism.

Some people attempt to interpret this story through recreating the standard of good to match their own preferences. A person who does this is considered "brave", "independent", and "progressive" and judges others based on their perceived ability to be comfortable with their own standards and choices. But this does not work, because they cannot be consistent in their own redefinition of what is good, and even their view of godness changes over time. When they fail to meet their own standards, a sense of shame for not being the right kind of person who can be comfortable in who they are invades their hearts, and they must hide or "rediscover themselves" to maintain the illusion that they are their own savior. This causes trauma because they feel a sense of general unworthiness without a specific moral standard to point to which has been broken. Many people who come from a more urban, city-minded background attempt to be their own savior by redefining their standard of good through this form of self-reliant expressionism.

Both of these attempts are simply two interpretations of the same false story of the world: we can be our own savior.

But there is a subversive story that goes the complete opposite way of the world: The Gospel. The Gospel says we need a Savior, and that Savior is Jesus. It tells us that we cannot change or be whole in and of ourselves by either following the rules or redefining them, but rather that we need grace to see an absolutely true and faithful and Holy God who is objective, standing outside of our own moral perspective, creating the moral standard for us, then adhering to it perfectly in the Person and Work of Jesus, and then giving us His record. Since this God is too holy and too perfect for us to obtain His standard, the same grace that recognizes God as holy must also have God work to change us. This faithful and true God does not demand from us, use us, or lie to us like the ancient gods of old, but rather the True God gives everything to us, changing how we act by changing our core desires. We do good works out of a new heart that is trained by God's grace and holiness.

We find in this subversive story a new world, a world in which we have a Savior who will give to us instead of take from us. We cannot earn or fight to justify our existence, but rather when we come to the true, saving God in our weakness He saves us by His own mercy and grace. Once we are saved, we are given a new way of living in this current world that is dynamically integrated. Our weakness turns into God's strength, and by His powerful grace we can live within the world yet living differently, pointing people to this new narrative of grace by our life, our words, and our actions. This shows the beauty of the message of the True God.

Followers of Jesus find themselves living in the tension between these two stories. In a sense it is like two worlds, two completely different ways of living. And we see that with the coming of Jesus the old narrative is getting swallowed up in an entirely new story...two worlds collide.

Crete: The Island of Chaos and Debauchery

Crete is an island in the center of the Mediterranean Sea, separating the larger sea with the Aegean Sea to the north. Rising 8,000 feet above the water in the center of Crete is Mt. Ida, one of the highest peaks in the Mediterranean. Geographically, it was a crucial and strategic island for trade routes amongst the known world in the first century. Not only is the location of Crete of significance, but it is also one of the oldest cultures in recorded history. The culture of Crete predates Egypt by thousands of years, and shards of pottery from the island have been found in some of the earliest Egyptian archaeological sites. Crete is considered to be one of Europe's first advanced civilizations and is both the geographical and cultural center of Mediterranean history.



In antiquity, Greek mythology has Crete at its narrative center – Mt. Ida is where Zeus was claimed to be born, and the presence of Zeus in the culture of Crete is predominant and overwhelming. Exports of oil, wool, and grain in the fertile soil were considered gifts of Zeus' presence.

Around 1500 BC, Crete was at its peak during the reign of King Minos. Minos was a historical king over Crete, but famed to be the son of Zeus with magical powers. During his reign, there is evidence of cultural theatres, advanced pottery, and wealth due to the strategic location of the island as a major trade port. However, what secured Crete as a major historical player in antiquity was King Minos' complete naval dominance, which would mark the culture for millenia.

In spite of all these advantages, Crete's military influence was hindered by warring city-states on the island, and this lack of central leadership led to it becoming the safe-haven of pirates and thieves. By the first century BC, Rome did not look kindly on their ships and resources consistently being attacked by the factions of pirates from Crete so, in 74 BC, the Roman Senate sent Marcus Antonius to lead a failed attempt to subjugate the island under Roman rule. The island was too fortified and the people too skilled for the Roman invasion to work, but eventually Crete was annexed by Quintus Caecilius Metellus in 67 BC and came under Roman authority. Because of its position and relative isolation, Rome was unable to exert as much law and order in Crete as on the mainland, which kept the majority of the pirates and scavengers on the island continuing to operate, just now paying taxes to Rome.

At the time of Paul and Titus' arrival, Crete was populated by retired mercenary soldiers, dishonest sailors, and pirates who kept to the ancient traditions of their forefathers. The island was filled with adultery, deceit, treachery, debauchery, dishonesty, and corrupted by greed at every level. Epimenides, one of their own poets, said in 600 BC "The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!" If someone was considered a liar or a cheat in first century Roman culture, they were called a *kretizo*, which literally meant 'being a cretan'.

For over a millenia, Crete has been a prosperous, yet dangerous culture, steeped in ancient myth and pagan tradition. The people were vile: the men and women were so dishonest and sexually promiscuous that family units were rare in Crete. People consistently looked to swindle and cheat even their own family members or close friends. This was a deplorable culture in every sense of the term, but strategically located to spread the Gospel across the known world. It needed help and a strong leader, and Titus was the obvious choice of Paul to bring order and direction to this island of chaos.

Titus: The Course Corrector of the Early Church

"To Titus, my true child in a common faith"

(Titus 1:4 ESV)

Titus was an instrumental player in the forming of the early church. He was a close friend, companion, pupil, trusted confidant, and messenger for Paul. Where Paul sent him, Titus went. What Titus said, it was as if the Apostle Paul himself said it. It is hard to underestimate the authority and trust Paul laid on Titus, and they worked for decades together to see the Church form and grow into a healthy, vibrant force for the Kingdom of God in the world.

Tradition has it that he was a student of philosophy and poetry prior to his conversion, and he was led to faith by Paul on one of his early missionary journeys. Titus began to follow Paul, studying the Gospel under him and especially developing a key skill of leadership, organization, and administration in the early church. Titus was also a Greek, which offered unique challenges and opportunities as the early church wrestled with how to handle Jewish traditions in light of their new-found faith in Jesus. While Timothy was circumcised by Paul (Acts 16:3) to earn the right to speak to the Jews, Paul later rejected the need for circumcision "so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved..." with Titus (Galatians 2:5 ESV). Titus was inadvertently at the center of this argument of circumcision in Jerusalem, but remained well-respected by the early church.

As Titus grew in his skills as a pastor, Paul sent him to Corinth, a city of vast perversion, with the intention of delivering a letter from him and then staying to put the church in order (2 Cor 12:18). The Corinthian church was dealing with heresy, immorality, and greed-induced selfishness. Titus appears to be very successful, combating the heresy and immorality with Gospel truth, winning over the hearts of the Corinthians, and also setting up a tithing and giving structure to help the poor and underserved (2 Cor 7:13-15, 8:6).

Re-joining Paul on his missionary journeys, Titus was sent back to Corinth at least one another time, but then we do not hear about him specifically for a number of years. We can presume he is either with Paul or being sent by Paul on numerous, short missionary works to establish and help organize church plants, further developing his skills and assisting Paul in leading these various churches. He appears back into the narrative in Rome with Paul after his release from house arrest, and travels with him to Crete. Paul continued on but left Titus there, and we have clarity on his instructions and purpose:

"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you" (Titus 1:5 ESV)

At the beginning of the church, only a small contingent of Cretians were Christian, having been present at the Day of Pentecost and bringing the Gospel message back to the island (Acts 2:11). There was a group of house churches spread across the island and in the major cities, operating without a centralized gathering space or leader. Without strong leadership amongst the Christians of Crete, the early church was quickly plagued with rampant sexual immorality, preaching for financial gain, and leaders using their spiritual position to take advantage of church members for profit.

Titus comes in as a strong leader, removing dishonest local leadership in the house churches of Crete, placing godly leaders in key roles, counseling the families to get healthy again, and all while attempting to do this in one of the most culturally and economically difficult places in the known world. This was an incredibly difficult task, but one Titus was well-prepared for. He was Paul's course-corrector: a trouble-shooter, peace-maker, administrator, and organizer in the early church, and exactly what Crete needed.

Occasion, Purpose, and Message

OCCASION

Paul left Titus in Crete, a very corrupt and broken island filled with pirates, swindlers, and rampant immorality. While various house churches existed on the island, they were disconnected and without a centralized leadership or gathering space from which to worship together.

Paul writes Titus to put his verbal instructions to pen and parchment. The last three letters Paul wrote before his death were 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy (in that order), and this is his final record of how to establish church leadership, elders, and the qualifications for pastors moving forward.

PURPOSE

Paul is writing this letter to give Titus specific instructions on how to address the issues that the early church in Crete were encountering. These issues were (1) corruption of church leadership, (2) sexual immorality, (3) Jewish controversies, and (4) confusion about the character of God. Paul wants Titus to have a clear pathway moving forward to address each of these troubling scenarios and also have a written record for the qualifications of church leadership after he is martyred.

First, there was corruption and greed amongst church leaders, who were using their position to lie and cheat church members for financial profit. Paul is instructing Titus on how to remove those leaders, and set up godly leaders who will be models of godliness and holiness for the people.

Second, there was sexual immorality in the midst of the church, damaging the church's witness in Crete. Paul gives specific instructions for the older men, older women, younger women, younger men, and servants on how to act in light of God's glorious grace, which all revolve around self-control.

Third, there were ethnically Jewish Cretons who are claiming to be Christians, but wanting people to observe all of the Jewish laws like circumcision and creating dissension amongst the churches. Paul gives Titus clear instructions on how to address these "Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth" (Titus 1:14), which was to warn them twice and then remove them from the church.

Fourth, there was a major confusion about the nature and character of God, which was being confused with the character of Zeus and generating heresys throughout Cretian churches. This underlying misunderstanding about the character of God is what led to the corruption, sexual immorality, and controversy regarding integrating Jewish and Christian values. Paul states clearly about how God is our faithful and true Savior (referencing God as Savior six times in just 46 verses).

MESSAGE

Paul is eager for the people of Crete to understand the faithfulness and truth of the true God. God comes to save and redeem them, not to use them like their former gods. And this true God is filled with holiness and good deeds, not debauchery or greed. This God of holiness longs for His people to reflect His good deeds, and live differently so that others will follow Him.

Immediate Message for Recipients

Message 1: God is our Savior, not using us but freeing us

Message 2: God is not like Zeus or you, but holy, faithful, and true

Message 3: God's goodness, mercy, and grace are the source of our salvation, not adherence to any law

Message 4: Crete's church leadership must be chosen based on moral character and godliness

Message 5: Crete's families are vital in living out the Gospel in the church

Message 6: Good works are the mark of the true Christian who follows the true God

Globalized Message for the Universal Church

Titus answers a number of questions regarding how the Church operates in culture and within a local community:

WHO DO YOU FOLLOW? (Gospel leadership strategy): God instructs His people to not follow fancy plans or those who are the loudest or boldest, but rather to follow those with godly character.

HOW DO YOU ENGAGE WITH THE CULTURE AROUND YOU? (Gospel missionary strategy): God desires that his people don't assimilate into or withdraw from the culture, but rather participate in it and transform it with a new way of living.

HOW CAN YOU LIVE DIFFERENT? (Gospel power): God makes clear that a new way of living will only be possible through His grace, not our works.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LIVE DIFFERENT? (Gospel witness): God changes the world through His people. Your new way of living produces real, practical, real-world change.

Localized Message for Clarksville, TN

Clarksville believes:

Lies: My version of the truth and my perspective on God is all that matters. God either wants me to follow the religious rules I grew up with, or is made in my image and what I make of Him. Truth is what I make it to be, and I can justify myself and my existence by following the rules of a God that matches my aspirational values or re-creating the rules and reimagining God to reflect my values.

Debauchery: I can live my life however I want to with no consequences and no repercussions, as long as I get mine in the end. Winning is proof of my 'rightness'. Part of doing what I want and winning at life can involve hurting or harming other people, as long as they are the "bad guys" and I am the "good guy".

False gods: I can lay my life down to work, success, children, or personal desires. Those gods demand much of me, but if I meet their demands I will feel OK, worthwhile, and valuable.

God gives:

Truth: I cannot change or be whole in and of myself, but I need a faithful and true God who doesn't demand from me, but rather gives to me. I need grace to see God as He truly is, far more holy and more loving and compassionate than I imagine.

Holiness: I need the same grace that reimagines my view of God to change me, training me how to live and do good works out of a good heart.

Salvation: I need a Savior who will give to me instead of take from me. I cannot earn or fight for my rights, but rather when I come to God in my weakness He saves me by His own mercy and grace.

Mission: Once I am saved, I am given a new way of living that is dynamically integrated into my community. My weakness turns into God's strength, and by His powerful grace I live integrated in my community yet living differently, pointing people to this grace by my life, my words, and my actions.

Authorship, Audience, and Date

Authorship:	Paul the Apostle
Audience:	Titus (direct letter vs. church-letter meant to be read)
Date:	64-67 AD (after first imprisonment in Rome and before his death)
Location:	unknown
Delivered:	Artemas or Tychicus
Corspnd Texts:	Acts 2:11, 15:2, 2 Cor 2:13; 7:6,13 ff; 8:6,16,23; 12:18; Gal 2:1,3; 2 Tim 4:10
Corspnd Books:	1-2 Timothy

Themes and Literary Characteristics

Key Words:

Lie, deceive, deceivers (1:2, 1:10, 1:12, 1:14)
Truth, trustworthy (1:1, 1:9, 3:8)
Savior (1:3, 1:4, 2:10, 2:13, 3:4, 3:6)
elders/overseers (1:5, 1:7)
Lover of good/Good works (1:8, 1:16, 2:7, 2:14, 2:16, 3:1, 3:8, 3:14)

Genre:

Epistolary

Unique Elements/Themes:

Two major gospel hooks (2:11-14 and 3:3-7)

Clear Instructions/Tasks RE: leaders (ch 1)

- Appoint new leaders in the house churches
 - Replace the corrupt leaders
- Confront the old leaders
 - The character is corrupt
 - Claim to know God, their creation way of life denies Him

The New Household (ch 2)

- Homes/Personal lives that are a wreck
- Message of Jesus is discredited
- People are accusing and infighting against one another
- Raise stable, healthy families
- The Gospel must prove itself in the social square
- In the public forum, but living by a totally different value system

The New Humanity (ch 3)

- New people, new citizens (peace-filled, generous, loving)
- The transforming power of the Gospel changes us
 - Poem in 3:3-7

CH 1 - The character and conduct of leaders

CH 2 - The character and conduct of members

CH 3 - the character and conduct of the church's witness in the world

Major Theological Concepts

Holiness of God

Saving grace of God

Grace-based motivation towards holiness

Pneumatology - The Holy Spirit's work in salvation and sanctification

Christology - God as Savior

Missiology - the character of how Christians live in the world on mission and through good works

Church Discipline - how to reprove and correct dissenters within the church causing division

Broad Exegetical Outline

I. Opening (1:1-4)

II. The Occasion: The Need for Proper Leadership (1:5-9)

III. The Problem: False Teachers (1:10-16)

IV. Christian Living in Contrast to the False Teachers (2:1-3:8)

A. Proper living by age and gender groups (2:1-10)

B. Gospel basis (2:11-14)

C. Summary command (2:15)

D. Proper living, particularly with respect to outsiders (3:1-2)

E. Gospel basis (3:3-7)

F. Summary command (3:8)

V. The Problem Restated: False Teachers (3:9-11)

VI. Closing Exhortation (3:12-15)

Thematic/Timeline Outline

8/29/2021	Titus 1:1-4	Two Worlds Collide
9/5/2021	Titus 1:5-16	Godly Leadership and Protecting the Church
9/12/2021	Titus 2:1-10	Integration Leads to Transformation
9/19/2021	Titus 2:15-3:2	The Transformed Church in the Public Square
9/26/2021	Titus 2:11-14	The Beautiful Training of Grace
10/3/2021	Titus 3:3-8	The Kindness of God Appears
10/10/2021	Titus 3:9-11	Distraction, Division, and Gospel Declaration
10/17/2021	Titus 3:12-15	Mission and Fruitfulness