

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Pastoral Epistles, Session 12, Titus Introduction and Titus 1 - The Pastoral Epistles: Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers 6-min. Video Overview

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Imagine you get a letter and inside is a high-stakes mission. Your job? Go to an entire island and fix a community that's completely falling apart from the inside out. Well, that's exactly what's happening in the ancient letter we're diving into today, the Book of Titus.

It's a huge question, right? I mean, when leaders are corrupt, when people are fighting, where do you even begin? This isn't just some modern-day problem. It was the exact challenge the Apostle Paul was staring down as he looked at the situation on the island of Crete. And Paul's answer to that huge question? It starts with this opening line, sent to his trusted colleague, Titus.

There's no small talk. No, how are you doing? Just a direct, urgent command. Go and bring order to the chaos.

So let's break down what this mission was all about. Yeah, this letter from Paul, it's not just some friendly advice. Nope.

It's a strategic blueprint for a really critical assignment. The task he gave Titus was, well, nothing short of a complete organizational overhaul. So what was the plan? Well, it really boiled down to two key things.

First, find and appoint leaders who actually have integrity. And second, use that solid leadership to restore health and order to these new churches scattered all over the island. Sounds simple, but trust me, it was going to be incredibly difficult to pull off.

And this was no easy assignment because, see, Crete wasn't some blank slate. Oh, no. It was a really complex place with a rich, long history and some very, very deep-seated problems.

Okay, so let's set the scene a bit. Crete was a major player in the Mediterranean. I'm talking home of the ancient Minoan civilization, established Jewish communities, the whole deal.

Christianity had probably been on the island for decades, but something had gone seriously wrong. The churches were stagnating, maybe even going backward. Paul wasn't sending Titus to plant a new church.

He was sending him to basically reboot a community that had totally lost its way. And this right here, this gets to the absolute heart of the problem. The threat wasn't from the outside.

The decay was coming from within. You had these influential people claiming to be all religious, but their lives were telling a completely different story. They were just creating division and tearing the whole community down.

So who do you send to handle a mess like this? You don't send in a rookie, right? No way. You send your best. You send a trusted troubleshooter.

You send Titus. See, Paul and Titus, they weren't new friends. Titus was a seasoned veteran partner who had been right there in the trenches with Paul through some of his absolute toughest challenges.

Just think about that for a second. For nearly two decades, almost 20 years, Titus had been working side of side with Paul. He'd seen it all.

And Paul had total confidence that Titus could handle this high-stakes job all on his own. And if you look at his track record, man, it really tells the story. Back in the late 40s, he was at the super important Jerusalem council.

In the mid 50s, he was the guy Paul sent to negotiate the messy situation with the church in Corinth. Paul even calls him his partner and co-worker. So by the time he gets this mission decreed in the mid 60s, Titus is absolutely one of the most experienced leaders in the entire early church.

So what was Paul's big solution? Well, his blueprint wasn't complicated, but wow, was it demanding. It all came down to one thing: the character of the leaders. Titus was supposed to appoint.

Just look at this list. It's so much less about skills and way more about character. The focus is on who a person is, not just what they can do.

Words like hospitable, self-controlled, and disciplined. They're set against things like being overbearing, quick-tempered, or greedy. Paul knew that a toxic leader would just create a toxic community.

So the standard had to be incredibly high. But that very first qualification, that's a tough one. Blameless.

What on earth does that even mean? Does it mean you have to be, like, perfect? Okay, so we really got to get what blameless means in this context. It definitely does not mean sinless or morally perfect. No.

In the New Testament, it's more about a person's overall direction in life. It means their life is consistent with the gospel they say they believe. Their righteousness comes from faith, and they are actively growing, heading in the right direction.

To put it really simply, it's about your direction, not your perfection. A leader isn't someone who's already arrived at the finish line, but someone who is clearly and consistently walking down the right path. This kind of integrity was the perfect antidote to the hypocrisy that was poisoning the church in Crete.

So you might be wondering, why all this focus on behavior and good character? Well, Paul's instructions weren't just some random list of rules. They were all grounded in a really deep theological reality. You know, if you crack open this short letter and look at the most common words, it's pretty revealing.

God is right at the top, which, you know, makes sense. But the good and savior. And that last one, savior, shows up six times.

That's a lot for a short letter, and it's a huge key to understanding the whole thing. The word in the original Greek is soter. Now, you have to understand, in the Roman world, this was a huge deal.

Soter was a title for gods, or even for the emperor, a divine figure who saves or redeems. So by repeatedly calling both God the Father and Jesus Christ Savior, Paul is making a massive theological statement, especially to the people in Crete. He's confirming the divinity of Jesus in a language that culture would totally get.

And that, right there, brings us to the real heart of it all. The blueprint for Crete wasn't ultimately about enforcing rules. It was about creating a community where God's grace was so real that it actually transformed how people lived their everyday lives.

This right here is the engine for the entire mission. Real change doesn't happen because people just try harder to follow a bunch of rules. Paul says it happens because the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared.

People are saved by mercy, not because of all the good things they've done. And that undeserved kindness, that's the ultimate motivation to live a life of genuine goodness. So this all leaves us with a final thought to chew on.

This letter is basically a 2,000-year-old crisis management plan. It argues that the health of any community, any group, depends on the character of its leaders. And it argues that true, lasting change isn't fueled by rules, but by grace.

So the question for us is: how can that ancient wisdom still speak into the chaos that our own communities face today?