

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY OF THE
LETTER OF PAUL TO TITUS
PART ONE – INTRODUCTION

Titus was one of the group who worked and travelled with the apostle Paul later in his ministry. Others like Barnabas and Silas had a much bigger role so why did Titus have a special letter to him in the New Testament? Timothy's importance we can understand because he was so close to Paul and was taking over the work from him. Philemon was written for the sake of Onesimus, his former slave who ran away. But what was so special about Titus?

The first mention of Titus is in Galatians, the earliest letter Paul wrote.(Gal.2:1-3) Paul is describing the visit he and Barnabas made from Antioch to Jerusalem in Acts 15 to resolve with the apostles the issue which was threatening to divide the early church. Is salvation through faith in Christ alone or must it be accompanied by keeping the Old Testament Law? This was a vital question for all Christians but particularly for non-Jews for whom the Law had not been part of their upbringing. Titus, we are told, was a Greek so he would be an example of those deeply affected by the debate. The first indication that faith in Christ alone was being accepted as the only way to God is in the fact that Titus was not required by the Jewish Christians to be circumcised, the most obvious example of Law-keeping. So early in his ministry Titus had a lesson in the importance of standing up for the Gospel and being prepared to debate and resolve differences.

By far the largest number of references to Titus are in II Corinthians where it is apparent that Titus had a key role in helping the Corinthian Christians find their way back to a wholehearted faith in Christ, and so resolving their many problems. In II Cor.2:13 Paul describes how disturbed he was when he could not find Titus in Troas. The setting for this visit is Acts 20:6 where Paul gathered together an interesting group of young men for his voyage to Jerusalem, which would end with his arrest and imprisonment. This would be his last opportunity for some years to spend time with emerging leaders to teach them and further equip them for their various tasks. He would have loved to have included Titus.

How important Titus' work had been, becomes apparent in II Cor.7:6 when Paul refers to an earlier meeting with Titus in Macedonia.(Acts 20:1-3) Paul suffered depression at times when things were going badly, not for himself, but for those he loved and with whom he had spent much time. Titus had greatly cheered him up by sharing good news of what God was doing. The Corinthians were in major trouble and needed pastoring and teaching. First Paul had sent Timothy.(I Cor.4:17; 16:10) Apollos had been encouraged to go but had decided he should not do so yet.(I Cor.16:12) Titus appears to have been the one who really made a difference. Paul had told the Corinthians what a high opinion he had of Titus and he had not been disappointed. Titus enjoyed his faith in Christ and was thrilled when he saw God work in others. He really cared about his fellow believers in Corinth even though they were a tough bunch who really struggled. Titus knew how to give himself to those to whom he ministered. Consequently he had been well received in Corinth and in turn had benefited greatly from his time there. His report to Paul which

had so effectively cheered Paul up was a very positive one in which he emphasized the good things that were happening rather than the failings, of which there had been many.(II Cor.7:13-15)

Titus had the special quality, all too rare among us, of finishing what he started. His work was gracious in every sense. He knew how to give of himself, his time and his message. As a result he was the obvious one for the delicate task of reminding the Corinthians that their generous promise to help the needy Christians in Jerusalem had not yet been acted on. As a practical demonstration of the grace of God, he inspired others to do the same. He was not a high pressure fund raiser but a compelling example.(II Cor.8:5)

Titus was not just someone willing to serve when Paul asked him but God-motivated to take initiative. Titus was twice described by Paul as 'earnest' which means 'diligent' or 'in a hurry'. God's call to Titus was the top priority in his life. Nothing could be more urgent or important than the work of God. He knew how to lead a team on a difficult mission.(II Cor.8:16-22) Paul had a high regard for Titus whom he describes as 'my partner and fellow worker'. 'Partner' means 'sharer', and is from the word 'koinonia' which is used to describe 'fellowship', several fellows in the same ship. We are in this together! 'Fellow worker' is 'sunergos', 'sun' = with, and 'ergon' is work. This word is used 13 times in the New Testament, 12 by Paul. There was no hierarchy with Paul. He never describes someone as his worker, always fellow worker. His friends worked with Paul not for Paul. Their boss was the Lord.(II Cor.8:23) Titus' going to Corinth is mentioned once more by Paul with one further compliment to his faithfulness. He 'did not take advantage of you'. He was not in ministry for his own benefit, financially or otherwise.(II Cor.12:18) No wonder Paul called him 'my true child in a common faith.'(Tit.1:4)

The only mention of Paul visiting Crete is as a prisoner on a ship on his way to Rome when there was presumably no opportunity for shore leave let alone ministry. But Titus 1:5 describes Paul leaving Titus in Crete so he must have fitted a visit in at sometime. The most likely time would be after his time of house arrest in Rome in Acts 28:30,31 and before his final arrest and execution. Cretans had a reputation even with their own prophets as 'liar, evil beasts, lazy gluttons'. Crete was a challenge! Titus' wise, gracious handling of the Corinthians made him the right man for the job. How long Titus spent in Crete after Paul left we do not know. The final mention of Titus is his visit to Dalmatia.(II Tim.4:10)

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION.

1. What qualities did Titus show which would have made him very suitable for his mission to Crete? How can we develop the same characteristics? What happens if we don't?
2. How would Titus' experience in Corinth have equipped him for the task in Crete? How has God used your own experience at one time in life to prepare you for a new responsibility?
3. Read the letter to Titus through several times. What in one sentence is Paul's message to Titus? What words or ideas keep being repeated? Why are they so important?