THE LETTER TO TITUS

Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness –

Background

Titus was Paul’s “partner and co-worker” 2 Corinthians 8:23 who had previously been sent to Corinth to settle some difficult issues there (2 Corinthians 7:5-16). He was a Gentile and went to Jerusalem with Paul as a test case on the question of did Gentile men need to be circumcised (Galatians 2:1-3). Paul and he had started churches on the island of Crete and Paul had moved on and left him there to finish establishing the churches they had started. Most evangelical scholars would say the letter was written in the early 60’s AD.

Introduction

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Paul was first a “servant” and secondly “an apostle.” Romans 1:1 “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle”. In the letter to Philippi, Paul introduces himself and Timothy as servants. In most of his letters he introduces himself as an apostle. Where he says both, servant comes first. Leaders are to be servants first.

“An apostle of Jesus Christ.” Luke 6:13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.

Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.

*“Apostolos* is, literally, one sent forth (*apo,* from, *stello,* to send).” *“Apostello,* literally, to send forth.” Both definitions are from Vine’s.

Paul, James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silas and Timothy (I Thessalonians 2:6), probably Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7) and perhaps Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25 in Greek) are all called apostles. The Latin equivalent is *“missionem”,* from which we get our word missionary, and which means essentially the same thing.

Of the original twelve apostles, only Matthew, John and Peter wrote Scripture. Of the other men called apostles only Paul and James wrote Scripture. Paul had authority only in the churches he established and submitted to the Elders in Jerusalem. Missionaries have authority in the churches they establish until local leadership is appointed. The apostle John says he “will call attention to what he (Diotrephes) is doing,” not that he will remove him or even rebuke him (3 John 9&10). Peter appeals as a fellow elder to other elders (I Peter 5:1). Luke

This letter is a senior missionary writing to a younger “partner and co-worker” about what needs to be done in the difficult job he has trusted him to finish (Titus 1:5 “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished.”)

“To further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness” The meaning of this part of the verse depends on the translation of a preposition which occurs twice and has several meanings. Translations vary from “to bring about faith in God’s elect” to “according to the faith of God’s elect.” I like the NIV because it translates the preposition the same way in both cases (“to further”), but I am not sure if it is right in the first half of the verse.

The NIV translation of the second half of the verse lines up well with 2 Peter 1:3 “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” A major part of Paul’s mission was to teach the truth that produced a godly life.

In the Hope of Eternal Life

Titus 1:2&3 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time. And which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

“In the hope of eternal life.” Hope is the confident expectation of something good. Paul is a servant and an apostle serving in the confident expectation of eternal life.

“Which God, who does not lie.” Hebrews 6:18&19a God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

“Promised before the beginning of time.” The root word means to announce. God purposed and announced (promised) that He was going to give eternal life to those who would believe in Him before the creation of man, before the creation of time, the creation of the physical universe. Although the resurrection to eternal life is implied in the Old Testament it is not unequivocally stated. “The Sadducees say there is no resurrection” (Acts 23:8).

“And which now at his appointed season he has brought to light.” The teaching about the resurrection and the hope of eternal life was first taught by Jesus without details. Matthew 22:31&32 “But about the resurrection of the dead – have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

The teaching about eternal life was then revealed in greater detail to Paul and the other apostles and prophets. Ephesians 3:4&5 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.

John 14:26 “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 16:13 “But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

To Titus

Titus 1:4 To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ our Savior.

2 Timothy 2:2a To Timothy, my dear son:

Philippians 2:22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

“In our common faith.” 2 Corinthians 8:23a As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker among you;

Grace (God’s unmerited favor and enabling strength) and peace (not only peace with God but also the peace of God) coming from both God the Father (who is also our Savior – verse 4) and Jesus Christ our Savior.

Isaiah 43:11 I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior.

Things to Remember

Paul was first a servant, then an apostle. No matter what our position, we should first be a servant.

This is a letter from a senior missionary to a younger co-worker whom he has left in Crete to finish a difficult assignment.

The knowledge of the truth leads to godliness.

Paul lived, and we should live, in the hope of eternal life, which is an anchor for our soul.

God does not lie.

The truth about the resurrection and eternal life was purposed and announced in heaven before the creation of the universe, but not clearly proclaimed until spoken by Jesus and then clearly taught by the apostles and prophets (including Paul) after the Holy Spirit came.

Paul made disciples, mentoring young men who became co-workers.

God sends His grace and peace to all of us, not just Titus.