

TOUGH GRACE IN DIFFICULT PLACES A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF TITUS

STUDY ONE

A Little Letter of Enormous Importance

Selected Scriptures from Titus

God's grace guides our doctrinal understanding; however, that's not enough. We must have grace and godliness. Sound doctrine and good deeds.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

At the heart of Christianity is grace—God showering His favor on those who don't deserve it, and that includes everyone. All have sinned, and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). To save us, God sent His Son to bear sin's curse on the cross and make eternal life available to anyone who puts his or her faith in Christ.

But God's grace is more than a theological *concept*. It's transformational *power*. The same grace that saves us releases us from sin's enslavement and empowers us for godliness. God's grace penetrates the hard exterior of people's hearts, counters the lies that control them, drives away shame, cuts through chains of sin, and liberates people to live as God intended.

The world may seem too dark and some people too sin-hardened for grace to be effective. But grace is a powerful spiritual force. It's *tough*. Tough enough to tackle any sin, soften the hardest heart, and transform both character and culture. God's tough grace can reach into the most difficult places of our world, and it can change anyone from the inside out.

The book of Titus inspires Christian leaders to preach grace in difficult places and to unleash it as a powerful, transformative force. Titus is a brief letter, but it has enormous importance for church leaders today and for any Christian seeking spiritual maturity.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open the Scriptures, open your heart to receive God's message through His Word. Pastor Chuck Swindoll prays as he begins his study: "Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it."¹ Use the following space to write your prayer.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Titus is one of three pastoral epistles, along with 1 and 2 Timothy. These concise instruction manuals for church ministry are just as relevant today as in Titus' day. Titus is only 46 verses. Take a few minutes to read the book, looking for the twin themes of grace and godliness. As you read, use Pastor Chuck Swindoll's Bible chart on Titus as a guide. The chart is available [online](http://insight.org) at insight.org, and it is printed here.

TITUS OVERVIEW BIBLE CHART

| | TAKING CHARGE | GIVING ADVICE | DOING RIGHT |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| | Titus 1 | Titus 2 | Titus 3 |
| | Elders Rebellious people | Older men and women Younger women and men Titus and all leaders Slaves | What to do What not to do |
| EMPHASIS | Elders Enemies | Present | Future |
| ISSUE | Setting up the right leadership | Instruction for particular people | Attitude and conduct toward good and bad |
| A CHURCH | ... in good order (<i>Titus 1:5</i>) | ... with good doctrine (<i>Titus 2:1</i>) | ... of good deeds (<i>Titus 3:1</i>) |
| THEME | Titus' role in encouraging right living through sound doctrine | | |
| KEY VERSES | Titus 1:5; 2:10; 3:8 | | |
| CHRIST IN TITUS | Jesus is our great God and Savior, who redeems and purifies His people (<i>Titus 2:13-14</i>). | | |

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Observation: Key Questions and the Big Picture

Now, let's dig deeper using the *Searching the Scriptures* principles which Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains in his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*.²

Observation is the foundational phase and answers the question, "What does the passage say?" As you read the sections below, observe the context and key words. Look closely for commands, contrasts, statements of truth, and cause-and-effect. Accurate interpretation depends on careful observation.

Key Questions

Who wrote Titus? The answer is in the opening line: "This letter is from Paul." How did Paul describe himself and his life's calling in *Titus 1:1*?

Paul's mission was to spread the gospel to the farthest places in the world. The book of Acts ends about AD 60 with Paul in Rome awaiting trial for his bold witness. Two years later, Paul was finally released . . . but this aging missionary in his sixties didn't stop preaching. He traveled to Ephesus, where he strengthened the church and put Timothy in charge. Then he sailed to Macedonia (*1 Timothy 1:3*) where he wrote 1 Timothy. Then Paul ventured to the island of Crete. Paul's ship had sheltered at Crete on his voyage to Rome (*Acts 27:7–8*) and now Paul returned to minister there.³

After a while, Paul departed Crete and left Titus to pastor the fledgling church. Wintering in the port town of *Nicopolis*, Paul wrote Titus in AD 63 to encourage and instruct him in the ministry (*Titus 3:12*).

Who was Titus? How did Paul address his protégé in *Titus 1:4*?

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What positive statements did Paul make about Titus in his correspondence with the Corinthian believers in [2 Corinthians 2:13](#); [8:23](#); [12:18](#)?

Paul trusted Titus. Their relationship went back years to Paul's first days as a missionary. Concerned that the Jewish Christian leaders might disapprove of his outreach to gentiles, what did Paul do according to [Galatians 2:1–3](#)? What do you learn about Titus from these verses?

Titus was a living illustration of grace. Gentiles didn't need to become Jews or keep Jewish laws such as circumcision to follow the Jewish messiah. The gospel of grace was clear: *All people* could be saved by faith in Christ alone, "not because of the righteous things [they] had done" (Titus 3:5).

Where was Titus? The island of Crete was no paradise for pastors. Locate the island of Crete on a map in the back of your Bible or find it on the online map, "[Paul's Missionary Journeys](#)," at [insight.org](#). What do you notice about Crete's location?

To what Old Testament ethnic group is the island's history connected, according to [Jeremiah 47:4](#)?

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According to *Titus 1:12*, what ill reputation hung over this place?

Why write Titus? Crete was a notorious hideout for mercenaries, a goldmine for cutthroat traders, and a port-of-call for raucous sailors on shore leave. What assignment did Paul give Crete's new pastor in *Titus 1:5*?

In this difficult place, Titus must rely on God's *tough* grace to pierce hard hearts, protect the weak from spiritual predators, and call sinners to repent. What strong directives did Paul give in *1:10–11*, *2:15*, and *3:10*?

The Big Picture

Titus is a miniature seminary education, conveying what to preach, how to develop leaders, and how to deal with difficult people. At the heart of Paul's message is *Titus 2:11–12*. What parallel themes do you see in these verses? The first is in 2:11 and the second is in 2:12.

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How does *Titus 2:13–14* sum up the central message of Titus?

If this message of Titus was lived out, you would find it the simplest thing to share Christ. First, you'd be solidly rooted in God's grace. Salvation is by grace through faith apart from works. Then, you'd have a life that stands on grace. I'm telling you, those without Christ will be attracted. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Grace and Godliness

Interpretation digs into the meaning of a biblical passage, defining key terms that communicate God's truth. Look up *grace* in a commentary or one of your Bible-study tools. For an online resource, consult the article, "[What Is the Definition of Grace?](#)" at [gotquestions.org](#). In your own words, write a definition of this essential concept.

Paul stated his life's calling as helping "to know the truth that shows them how to live *godly* lives" (Titus 1:1, emphasis added). What is godliness? What does a *godly* life look like?

Why is grace essential in producing godliness?

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When I think of the Christian life, I visualize the cross. The vertical beam symbolizes our relationship with God through Christ. The horizontal beam symbolizes how we relate to other people in purity and righteousness. Our message blends the vertical and horizontal—sound doctrine with true godliness.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Grace and Godliness in Action

Correlation compares our passage with other Scriptures. During a previous missionary journey, Paul gave Titus an equally difficult assignment. Paul got wind that some in the Corinthian church taught grace as a license to sin. Immorality was spreading through this church like a virus.

Paul sent a letter of confrontation, 1 Corinthians. Then Paul sent Titus to Corinth with a follow-up letter (now lost) and a mission to reform the church. Paul prayed that his letter and Titus would be effective, and his prayers were answered.

Read the following verses in which Paul relays the outcome of Titus' visit. What positive results do you find? What qualities do you see in Titus?

2 Corinthians 7:5–9: _____

2 Corinthians 7:13–15: _____

How did repentance in the Corinthian church illustrate the way *grace* leads to *godliness*—the two main themes in Titus?

My hope is that all of us will be rooted in God's grace, mercy, and power, and that our lives give evidence to these truths so that we think differently than the world, live differently, act differently, and respond differently.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Learning Significant Lessons

Titus teaches that we shouldn't preach grace without also emphasizing godliness, for true grace produces godliness. Here are three benefits of this theological two-sided coin.

First, *grace and godliness make a church effective and stable*. How do you see grace and godliness at work in keeping your church balanced?

Second, *grace and godliness make a home sensible and sane*. How can you implement grace and godliness to improve your homelife?

Third, *grace and godliness cause the world to be curious and attracted*. How do grace and godliness help your church draw people?

Is there a difficult place in your life that requires God's tough grace now? If so, call upon the Lord to shower His grace upon you in this area.

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Titus faced a tough assignment to bring order to the church in Crete. He couldn't do it alone. He had to rely on divine strength, just as we must lean on God's grace in the challenges we face. Draw your life's power and energy from Christ and His grace today.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, in my own strength, I do not have the resources to manage my life. I need Your powerful grace to meet the tough issues I face. I need Your strength to do what's right when people do me wrong. I need your compassion that flows from Your heart of grace to love the difficult people in my life. I trust in You today and I depend on Your infinite, marvelous grace. In Christ's name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. See the online article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)" for an overview of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method.
3. Perhaps Paul founded the Cretan church at this time, or Jews from Crete who were present at Pentecost decades earlier may have been among Peter's early converts in Jerusalem and taken the gospel back to their land ([Acts 2:11](#)).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2006, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

