

## INVITATION TO TITUS

After the apostle Paul was released from prison in Rome, he discovered that renegade leaders were preying on the community of Jesus-followers that he'd helped establish in Ephesus. He left his longtime co-worker Timothy in that city with a letter authorizing him to replace those leaders and restore order. A similar situation on the island of Crete required Paul to commission another long-time collaborator, Titus, to act as his representative there. Like his first letter to Timothy, Paul's letter to Titus is addressed to his co-worker but meant for the people of the community to hear as well. Paul confers his own authority on Titus and instructs him to appoint godly leaders and oppose predatory teachings. After describing the proper qualifications for community leadership, Paul identifies the teaching that must be opposed. From what he says, it's similar to the one in Ephesus: a combination of selective Jewish observances (such as being circumcised and abstaining from certain foods) and the pursuit of controversial speculations. Like the teaching in Ephesus, it wasn't helping people live purer lives. Instead, it was making them unfit for doing anything good. Therefore, in the instructions Paul gives to the members of the community about how to live out their varying stations in life, he stresses how they can and should do what is good. The grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people, he says, so that God's people can live a new kind of life. Paul ends his letter with some personal instructions to Titus. He reveals that he's planning to fulfill his longtime dream of bringing the good news about Jesus to the western part of the empire. He's expecting to spend the winter in Nicopolis, a city on the west coast of Macedonia that will provide an excellent jumping-off point for this trip. He trusts that his co-workers

will help restore order to the communities in the eastern part of the empire in time to accompany him on this new venture.

