

Being an Elder in a Tough Place: Crete

- A. Not all places for ministry are the same.
- B. Cultural challenges vary.
- C. The standard qualifications remain the same.

Ryrie's Historical Background for Titus

The probable order of significant events is this:

- 1) Paul was released from his house arrest in Rome (where we find him at the end of Acts), probably because his accusers did not choose to press their charges against him before Caesar (Acts 24:1; 28:30). Their case, therefore, was lost by default, and Paul was freed.
- 2) Paul visited Ephesus, left Timothy there to supervise the churches, and went on to Macedonia (northern Greece).
- 3) From there he wrote 1 Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3).

- 4) He visited Crete, left Titus there to supervise those churches, and went to Nicopolis in Achaia (southern Greece, Titus 3:12).
- 5) Either from Macedonia or Nicopolis, he wrote this letter to encourage Titus.
- 6) He visited Troas (2 Tim. 4:13), where he was suddenly arrested, taken to Rome, imprisoned, and finally beheaded.
- 7) From Rome, during this second imprisonment, he wrote 2 Timothy.

Charles Caldwell Ryrie, , Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 1933.

Charles Caldwell Ryrie, [Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update](#), Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 1933.

A. Not all places for ministry are the same.

1. The FEBC App for Ministry *used* to ask: “Is there any geographic area in the U.S. or Canada where you would not wish to live? YES? NO? If yes, please indicate where.”
 - How would you answer that question?
 - Could one rightly say before God, “No, I will not serve there”?
 - What about 1Cor. 16:12? (In Ac. 19:22 Tim. & Erastus went to Corinth; Apollos chose to stay with Paul in Ephesus.)
 - What about Ac. 16:6-9?
 - The response of the people is a consideration in where to minister (Ac. 18:1-10). Notice Jesus’ experience in His hometown of Nazareth (Mt. 13:53-58). “Shake the dust off your feet” in leaving the city which rejects you and your words (Mt. 10:14-15).
 - We could talk about Isaiah and Jonah in the OT, et al.

2. Would you serve in Crete?

a. What about the geography?

“Crete is a long and narrow island, spanning about 160 miles east to west. At its widest point, it is roughly 35 miles across (north to south). A ridge of mountains runs the length of the island. The highest peak, Mount Ida, stands at over 8,000 feet. Under favorable conditions, ancients could have sailed from Greece to Crete (about 100 miles) in one or two days” (Logos).

Area: 3,219 mi² (Jefferson County, NE has 576 mi²)

Population: 634,930 (2019) – Probably the pop. was significantly less when Titus was there with the heaviest concentrations on the coasts where perhaps 20 towns were located when Titus was there. Overland travel was difficult with limited roads – no sophisticated Roman road system existed as was common throughout much of the rest of the empire.



PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

- City
- One of the "Seven Churches" (Rev. 2-3)
- Paul's route

Nicopolis cf. Titus 3:12



Dalmatia see 2Tim. 4:10






3. What might determine where you would serve or not serve?

- a. What about the climate?
- b. What about proximity to family?
- c. What about proximity to medical care?
- d. What about safety and security (cf. Mt. 10:16)?
- e. What about financial support?


B. Cultural challenges vary.

1. Somebody said that Crete was the Wild West of Paul's Day <https://www.dodgevilleumc.org/2011/crete-the-wild-west-of-pauls-day/>.
That was a different culture for sure! Why would this be?
 - a. It is an island cut off from the mainland by some distance, and that potentially lends itself to a loose moral fabric. Somehow, there appears to be less accountability.
 - b. Is there evidence that such was the case in Crete? Yes, quoting "the Cretan poet Epimenides," Paul said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Lest somebody thinks that Epimenides didn't mean it, Paul bluntly said, "This testimony is true" (Ti. 1:12b-13a).
 - c. In addition to that, there was the population of false teachers on the island, "many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision," likely pushing their view that the Law was to be in effect in the Church Age and some Jewish (Gnostic) myths which likely involved ascetism. So secular and religious errorists both abounded and found their way into the churches.

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2. We have a wide array of geographical and cultural differences within the scope of FEBC towns and churches.
 - a. Some of our churches are finding it extremely difficult to locate a pastor (elder) to minister to their people.
 - b. Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Lk. 10:2b).
 - c. We ought all be willing to go and serve wherever the Lord leads. Of course, one ought to serve where he *is* first.

C. The standard qualifications remain the same.

1. One might have thought that because things were such mess on the Island of Crete with all those “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons,” not to mention those religious ascetic legalists, special measures would need to be taken. Medical professionals would need to be consulted; trained psychologists and sociologists would need to be brought in. I mean, we surely can’t believe that common people who are in *such a mess* could be brought to self-control and maturity and godliness under the guidance of the Bible and a man like Titus & the elders, right? Count me among to naïve who still believe in the sufficiency of the word of God. Yes, in this book alone, we have *everything* necessary for life and godliness.

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2. Paul left Titus in Crete to accomplish two things:
 - a. (Ti. 1:5a) “to set in order what remains”
 - b. (Ti. 1:5b) “and to appoint elders in every city”
 3. Did Titus do so? We have every reason to think that he did because later he went on to minister in Dalmatia. Sounds like mission accomplished!

Conc.

All Titus did was find and put in place men who met the qualifications found in this text of Titus 1:5-9. That is all that is necessary to bring the church to where it needs to be. If that does not bring the desired result, then the church will fold as it should according to the lessons of the churches in Rv. 1-3; specifically, Rv.1:20-2:5.