

# **The Structure of Titus**

## **Criss-cross Chiasmus as Structural Marker**

by

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### **Abstract**

*In terms of structure, Titus is one of the most neatly crafted epistles in the New Testament, its key structural marker has gone largely unnoticed in scholarly literature. In this article, I set forth a proposal that criss-cross chiasmus provides the structural skeleton around which the letter is built. I point out three occurrences of this technique in the letter and illustrate how it might be used as the primary organising principle of the letter's macrostructure.*

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## 1. Introduction

Until recently, almost nothing had been written about the structure of Titus. I find this surprising, for it may well be the most delicately structured of all Paul's letters. Three recent works (Clark 2002, Van Neste 2002 and 2004) have tackled the structure of Titus by analysing the discourse features of the letter.

Despite the undoubted contribution that both Clark (2002) and Van Neste (2002 and 2004) have made to our understanding of the discourse features of Titus, neither of their proposals as to the macrostructure of Titus seems to give sufficient consideration to a key structural technique used in the letter—a form of criss-cross chiasmus.

In this article, I shall set forth a proposal that criss-cross chiasmus provides the structural skeleton around which the letter is built. I shall point out three occurrences of this technique in the letter and illustrate how it *might* be used as the primary organising principle of the letter's macrostructure. In the next article, I shall analyse the linguistic clues within the letter that corroborate the contention that the author deliberately use criss-cross chiasm to organise this letter.

## 2. Review of Scholarship

### 2.1 *The Traditional View*

Few commentaries grapple in a meaningful way with the structure of Titus. The overwhelming majority accept the traditional view of the letter's structure. The traditional view holds that the body of the letter, Titus 1:5-3:11, consists of three sections:

1:5-16	Establishing leadership in the churches
2:1-15	Household code for various groups
3:1-11	Christian behavioural standards

With minor variations, the major commentaries accept this breakdown of the structure. However, since they make little effort to grapple with the discourse features of the letter or to analyse markers of cohesion and shift, it seems their understanding of the structure is more taken for granted than well thought through. Diagram 1 summarises the structural divisions in commentaries.

*Diagram 1: How commentators outline Titus*

	1:5	1:10	2:1	2:10	3:1	3:9	3:11
Lea & Griffin							
Liefeld							
Hendricksen							
Towner							
Gruthrie							
Hughes							
Mounce							
Knight							

All forms of the traditional view take Titus 2:1 and 3:1 as major section boundaries. The diagram reveals minor variations within the traditional view. Liefeld (1999) and Lea & Griffin (2001) support the traditional view without alteration. All eight commentaries agree that Titus 2:1-15 is an independent major section of the letter. Four commentators divide Titus 1:5-16 into two sections, one dealing with elders' qualifications (1:5-9) and another dealing with their responsibilities (1:10-16). Likewise, four commentaries divide Titus 3:1-11 into two sections, one giving instructions for all believers (3:1-8) and another providing instructions regarding false teachers (3:9-11).

## 2.2 *The Linguistic Views*

Since discourse analysis rose to prominence in Biblical studies, scholars have used discourse features and patterns to identify the structure of Bible books. Three important structural studies of Titus have been conducted: Banker (1987 and 1994), Clark (2002) and Van Neste (2002 and 2004).

Banker (1987 and 1994) employed the method known as *semantic and structural analysis* (see Beekman, Callow and Kopesec 1981). The method consists of dividing the letter into semantic units by identifying the boundaries and markers of coherence, then analysing the semantic relationships between the units. When the semantic relationships are identified, the structure of the letter emerges naturally.

Banker's analysis showed that "the structural organisation of the body of the epistle is basically chiasmic" (1994:27). He noted that in 1:5 and 1:9, the epistle introduces the two main topics to be addressed in the following sections. It then proceeds to discuss them in reverse order. This creates a chiasmic pattern with four constituents, an A-B-B-A pattern. By using this approach, he saw the macro-structure of Titus 1:5-3:8 as follows:

A.	Appoint elders	1:5-9
B.	Establish order	1:10-3:8
	1. Correct false teachers	1:10-16
	2. Teach sound doctrine	2:1-3:8

Banker's identification of how Titus 1:5 and 1:9 signpost the chiasmic structure of the letter was a big step forward. It challenged the prevailing assumption that Titus 2:1 marked a major structural break within the letter.

Van Nest (2002 and 2004) set out to demonstrate the cohesion of Titus by means of cohesion and shift analysis. First he sought to delimit the boundaries of each paragraph by analysing discourse markers of continuity and discontinuity. He used such factors as "literary form (or subgenre), topic, subject, participants, verb tense, person, and number, as well as temporal and local frames of reference" (2004:9) to demonstrate the internal cohesion of each paragraph. Next, he analysed the linguistic and thematic links between paragraphs to demonstrate the cohesion of the entire letter. He concluded with

a proposal as to the macrostructure of the letter. His proposed macrostructure is chiasmic.

A.	Body opening	1:5-9		
	B.	Opponents	1:10-16	
		C.	Doctrine	2:1-15
		C.	Doctrine	3:1-8
	B.	Opponents	3:9-11	
A.	Body closing	3:12-14		

The body opening (Titus 1:5-9) introduces “the need for elders to (a) exhort in sound doctrine and (b) refute opponents” (Van Neste 2003). The body itself develops these two themes in a chiasmic arrangement. Van Neste’s analysis of the markers of coherence and shift is thorough, building on the foundation laid by Banker.

Clark (2002; cf. Keating 2003) too analysed the discourse features of Titus, but produced a vastly different synthesis the letter’s macrostructure from those suggested by Banker and Van Neste. Clark argued that the key structural marker lies in a paragraph pattern consisting of a hortatory paragraph in the foreground followed by an explanatory paragraph in the background. The explanations are introduced by the conjunction γάρ; their main verbs are in the indicative mood. The main verbs in the hortatory paragraphs are in the imperative mood. After an explanatory paragraph (marked by γάρ), the introduction of an imperative verb marks a shift to a new main section. Applying this method, the sections of Titus should be as follows:

Section A: 1:5-1:13a	hortatory subsection:	1:5-9
	explanatory subsection:	1:10-13a
Section B: 1:13b-2:15	hortatory subsections:	1:13b-2:10
	explanatory subsection:	2:11-15
Section C: 3:1-8	hortatory subsection:	3:1-2
	explanatory subsection:	3:3-8
Section D: 3:9-11	hortatory subsections:	3:9a, 10
	explanatory subsections:	3:9b, 11

The pattern is not completely consistent. The hortatory subsection of Section A does not contain any imperative verbs, but the list of qualifications for elders is directive in tone. Section B has three hortatory paragraphs, each governed by an imperative—*ἐλεγε* governs 1:13b-16, *λάλει* 2:1-5 and *παρακάλει* 2:6-10. In Titus 2:1, *λάλει*, coupled with *σὺ δέ*, marks a new major section, so the hortatory subsection 1:13b-16 does not contain its own explanatory paragraph. Finally, the explanatory note in 3:11 is introduced by the causal participle *εἰδὼς* instead of by the conjunction *γάρ*.

### 3. The Macrostructure of Titus

The contention of this article is that, leaving aside the opening greetings (1:1-4) and the closing remarks (3:12-15), the author signposts the structural divisions of the body of the letter by using a rare form of chiasmus that I shall call criss-cross chiasmus. The device has two parts: (a) *announcement of purpose* and (b) *reverse development*. The announcement of purpose introduces two topics to be developed in the following section. These topics are then developed in reverse order, with greater emphasis on the second. Banker (1994) and Van Neste (2004) both picked up on this pattern, but in my view neither pursued it far enough as the key to the macrostructure of the letter. There are two and a half instances of this technique in Titus.

The first announcement of purpose occurs in Titus 1:5, a verse that introduces not only Paul's purpose for leaving Titus in Crete, but also his purpose and agenda in writing the letter to Titus.

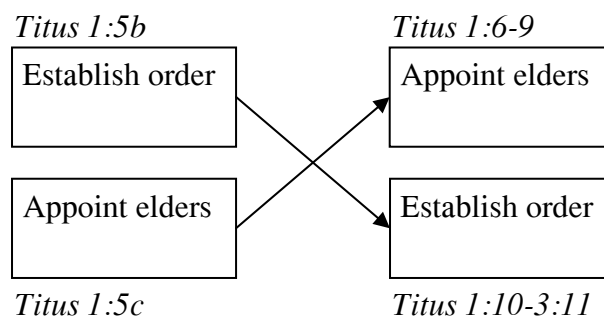
- 5a For this reason I left you in Crete,
- 5b that you would set in order what remains
- 5c and appoint elders in every city

The two purpose clauses introduce the letter's agenda. They also serve to identify its major structural division, for the remainder of the letter addresses these two topics in reverse order. The opening announcement divides the letter into two unequal parts.

A <sup>1</sup>	Establish order	1:5b
	B <sup>1</sup> Appoint elders	1:5c
	B <sup>2</sup> Appointing elders	1:6-9
A <sup>2</sup>	Establishing order	1:10-3:11

This criss-cross chiasmus is easier to visualise if it is diagrammed. Diagram 2 shows the pattern.

*Diagram 2: Criss-cross chiasmus of Titus 1:5-3:11*



The label “establish order” is not very descriptive. The instruction itself (τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώση) refers to finishing a work previously begun (Smith 2000). Paul and Titus began a task while they were both in Crete; Paul commissioned Titus to complete it. The remainder of the letter indicates that the task in question was establishing the church in sound doctrine and warding off the threat of false teachers.

Several commentators (e.g., Hendriksen 1957; Lea and Griffin 2001) treat 1:5b-c as one command, deeming καί (“and”) to be epexegetical. They would translate it as “that you may set in order what remains, namely, appoint elders in every city”. However, Banker (1994) is surely correct that καί is copulative. The two clauses indicate separate tasks. Several arguments converge in support of this interpretation. Firstly, the bulk of the letter deals with other matters, while appointing elders occupies only four verses. Secondly, appointing elders was probably not a task already begun; thus it would not fall under “what remains” (τὰ λείποντα). Finally, the book is structured chiasmically (Banker 1994; Smith 2000; Van Neste 2004). The author introduces two topics, then proceeds to discuss the second topic first, later returning to the first topic. This implies that 1:5c and 1:5d are separate topics

that are developed in 1:6-9 and 1:10-3:11 respectively. Admittedly, in the context of this paper the third point represents a circular argument. Nevertheless, it seems best to regard “set in order what remains” and “appoint elders in every city” as separate tasks.

The second announcement occurs in Titus 1:9. In the mould of a gifted orator, the conclusion to the first main section (Titus 1:6-9) serves as a natural bridge to the next main section (Titus 1:10-3:11).

- 9b so that he will be able
  - 9c both to exhort (*parakalein*) in sound doctrine
  - 9d and to refute (*elegchein*) those who contradict

Titus 1:9 concludes the list of qualifications for elders by stating two purposes for which an elder must be well grounded in sound doctrine. These two purpose clauses not only lay down a job description for elders, but also set the agenda for the remainder of the letter. The switch from the third person, the potential elder, in 1:6-9 to the second person, Titus himself, in 1:10-3:11 does not break the link because Titus was then serving as an interim elder. Paul called upon him to model the role of an elder by performing the two tasks required of elders—teaching sound doctrine and silencing false teachers.

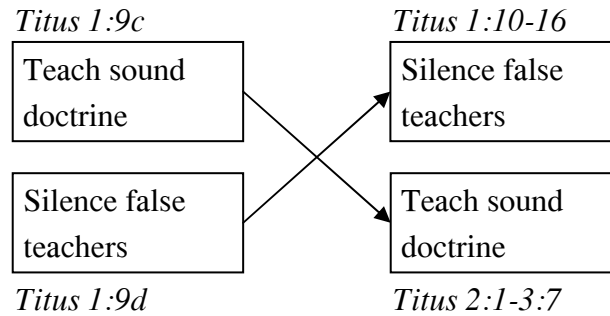
Just as Titus 1:5 divided the entire body of the letter into two unequal sections, which the author treated in reverse order, so Titus 1:9 divides the remainder of the letter’s body into two unequal subsections. Once again, the two topics are treated in reverse order, yielding the following structural arrangement.

- |                |   |         |
|----------------|---|---------|
| C <sup>1</sup> | Teach sound doctrine                    | 1:9c    |
|                | D <sup>1</sup> Silence false teachers   | 1:9d    |
|                | D <sup>2</sup> Silencing false teachers | 1:10-16 |
| C <sup>2</sup> | Teaching sound doctrine                 | 2:1-3:7 |



Diagram 3 illustrates the criss-cross pattern of the announcement of purpose and its reverse order development.

*Diagram 3: Criss-cross chiasmus in Titus 1:9-3:11*



Whereas normal chiasmus emphasises the central elements, this technique gives greatest natural prominence to the peripheral items. Two things signal the natural prominence of the items: (1) in the announcement, the item mentioned first is most emphasised; (2) in the exposition, the item receiving the greater amount of space is most emphasised.

Thus Titus 1:5 divides the main body of the letter into two sections, (1) establishing order and (2) appointing elders. The main focus is on establishing order. This is evident from the fact that 88 percent of the body of the letter is devoted to establishing order and only 12 percent to appointing elders.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the section of the letter that deals with establishing order is divided into two subsections by the announcement in Titus 1:9. The two subsections are (1) teaching sound doctrine and (2) silencing false teachers. The focus is on teaching sound doctrine, as indicated by the fact that 70 percent of the section is devoted to it while only 30 percent deals with silencing false teachers.

The third and final occurrence of the criss-cross pattern sheds light on the structure of Titus 3, particularly the role of Titus 3:8-11 in the argument of the

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<sup>2</sup> These figures are calculated on a simple verse count. The body of the letter contains 38 verses, of which 33 are devoted to establishing order, 4 to appointing elders and 1 is introductory.

epistle. Hendriksen (1957), Hiebert (1978), Knight (1992), Clark (2002), Van Neste (2002 and 2004) and several leading translations, including the NIV and the NKJV, divide Titus 3 as if 3:3-8 and 3:9-11 are paragraph divisions. This division creates two major problems. First, it awkwardly groups the asyndetic 3:8 with the preceding paragraph. Second, and more important, it leaves 3:9-11 dangling disjointedly at the end of the letter, as if the author unexpectedly and inexplicably returned to the topic of 1:10-16.

The better division is to group 3:3-7 and 3:8-11 (or 3:3-8a and 3:8b-11) as paragraphs. Guthrie (1957), Dibelius and Conzelman (1972), Fee (1988) and Quinn (1990) all support this division, as do CEV, NET, NRSV, NA27 and UBS4.<sup>3</sup> However, only Banker (1994) explicitly draws attention to the chiasmic patterning of the epistle as the rationale for this division.

In the argument of the epistle, Titus 3:8-11 functions as the conclusion to the main division of the letter dealing with establishing order (1:10-3:11). Just as the relationship between the introduction and the body is chiasmic, so too is the relationship between the body and the conclusion.

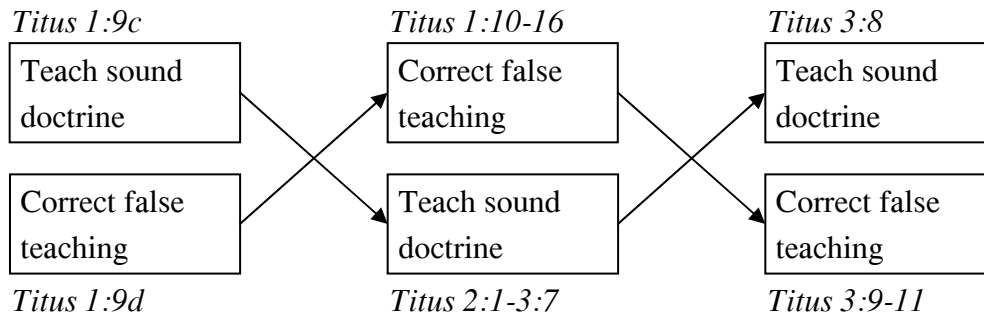
C <sup>1</sup> Teach sound doctrine	1:9c	}	<i>Introduction</i>
D <sup>1</sup> Silence false teachers	1:9d		
D <sup>2</sup> Silencing false teachers	1:10-16	}	<i>Body</i>
C <sup>2</sup> Teaching sound doctrine	2:1-3:7		
C <sup>3</sup> Teach sound doctrine	3:8	}	<i>Conclusion</i>
D <sup>3</sup> Silence false teachers	3:9-11		

The criss-cross pattern of the letter conclusively swings the decision in favour of treating 3:8-11 as a separate section. In the argument of the letter, this section serves as the conclusion to the main section on establishing order (1:10-3:11). Diagram 4 illustrates the extended criss-cross patterning.

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<sup>3</sup> Opinions differ as to whether πιστός ὁ λόγος (“this is a faithful saying”) belongs with 3:3-7 or with 3:8b-11. I have previously stated my reasons for believing it belongs with 3:8b-11 (see Smith 2000). For the purposes of this structural analysis, it matters little whether one groups it with what precedes or with what follows.

Diagram 4: Criss-cross chiasmus of Titus 3:8-11



#### 4. Summary and Conclusion

I propose that a criss-cross arrangement of announcements of purpose followed by reverse-order development provides the basic structural framework for Titus. The first announcement of purpose (1:5) divides the letter into two unequal sections, a small section dealing with appointing elders and a large section on establishing order. The second announcement (1:9), divides the large section into two unequal subsections, a short one about silencing false teachers and a longer one on teaching sound doctrine. Finally, an asyndetic paragraph concludes the argument of the section on establishing order with concluding instructions on each subdivision.

On the basis of the preceding observations, I propose that a linear outline of Titus should reflect the following structural framework.

- |    |                           |           |
|----|---------------------------|-----------|
| A. | Introduction              | 1:1-4     |
| B. | Appoint elders            | 1:5-9     |
| C. | Establish order           | 1:10-3:11 |
|    | 1. Silence false teachers | 1:10-16   |
|    | 2. Teach sound doctrine   | 2:1-3:7   |
|    | 3. Conclusion             | 3:8-11    |
|    | a. Teach sound doctrine   | 3:8       |
|    | b. Silence false teachers | 3:9-11    |
| D. | Conclusion                | 3:12-15   |

If my contention is correct that criss-cross chiasmus provides the primary structural framework of the letter, then the traditional view of its structure,

which treats Titus 2:1-15 as an independent major section, becomes untenable. It would also argue against Clark's (2002) view that alternating genres (hortatory and explanatory) provide the clue to the letter's structure. It confirms, with minor adjustments, the structural analyses of Banker (1994) and Van Neste (2002).

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