This letter appears to be the first of the pastoral letters: see the introduction to the first letter to Timothy.

This was early in the year 58 A.D. and shortly before, Paul had written a letter to the Christians of Rome. Paul thinks that he does not have any more work to do in the eastern part of the Roman Empire and he prepares to go to the western part of the Empire, especially Spain. In fact, God had planned things differently: in a short time, Paul would be arrested in Jerusalem and after several years of captivity in Caesarea, he would be taken to Rome to be tried before the emperor’s tribunal.

Paul said goodbye to the communities of Greece and of “Asia,” the province of the empire corresponding to western Turkey (Acts 20:25). It was no doubt the day before meeting with the presbyters (elders) of the Ephesus area, a meeting that took place in Miletus (Acts 20:1), that Paul wrote this letter that precisely gives special attention to pastors of the Christian communities. The other important points of the letter deal with the duties of Christians according to their situation in society, respect for their social obligations and submission to authorities. Here, Paul repeats or develops what he had presented in the second part of the letter to the Romans. This same letter inspires him a few shortcuts about God’s plan that we find in 1:3-4; 2:11-14 and 3:4:7.

Paul was already thinking about his journey to Rome. He did not know that he was going to be arrested in Jerusalem and he planned to go to the capital of the empire by land after handing the collection he had brought over to the Jerusalem Christians (Rom 15:25-28). One of the stages was Nicopolis on the west coast of Greece, an area that Paul had evangelized (Rom 15:19) and where he had arranged to meet Titus who was in Crete.
1 From Paul, servant of God, apostle of Christ Jesus, at the service of God's chosen people, so that they may believe, and reach the knowledge of truth and godliness.

2 The eternal life we are waiting for was promised from the very beginning, by God, who never lies, and as the appointed time had come, he made it known, through the message entrusted to me by a command of God, our Savior.

3 Greetings to you, Titus, my true son in the faith we share. May grace and peace be with you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

On the elders of the Church

5 I left you in Crete because I wanted you to put right, what was defective, and appoint elders in every town, following my instructions. They must be blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, and not open to the charge of being immoral and rebellious.

6 Since the overseer (or bishop) is the steward of God's House, he must be beyond reproach:

- He must be hospitable (v. 8). The Church is communion more than organization. Everyone must be welcomed and feel at home in the house of the presbyter or the bishop. He must also welcome the brothers and elders from other districts in order to assure unity and communion among different communities. The human balance in this bishop is then part of his vocation: he cannot be a man of uneven character whose interventions could wound, whose authority ignores the elementary rules of social contact and respect of persons: although known for their faith, Church leaders are often reproached for not knowing how to act in a human way.

- He must be blameless (v. 6), not he alone but his family as well. His fitness to preside is essential to his vocation, and he will not be accepted by the community if his background gives an unfavorable witness.

8 On the contrary, he must be hospitable, a lover of what is good, wise, upright, devout and self-controlled.

9 He must hold to the message of faith, just as it was taught, so that, in his turn, he may teach sound doctrine, and refute those who oppose it.

10 You know, that there are many rebellious minds, talkers of nonsense, deceivers, especially the party of the circumcised. They have to be silenced when they go around disturbing whole families, teaching, for low gain, what should not be taught.

12 A Cretan, one of their own prophets, has said, “Cretans: always liars, wicked beasts and lazy gluttons.” This is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, if you want them to have a sound faith, instead of heeding Jewish fables, and practices of people who reject the truth.

15 To the pure everything is pure; to the corrupt and unbelieving, nothing is pure: their minds and consciences...
have been defiled. They pretend to know God, but deny him with their deeds. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for doing anything good.

**Live as responsible persons**

1. Let your words strengthen sound doctrine. 2. Tell the older men to be sober, serious, wise, sound in faith, love and perseverance.

3. The older women, in like manner, must behave as befits holy women, not given to gossiping or drinking wine, but as good counselors, able to teach younger women to love their husbands and children, to be judicious and chaste, to take care of their households, to be kind, and submissive to their husbands, lest our faith be attacked.

4. Encourage the young men, to be self-controlled. 5. Set them an example by your own way of doing. Let your teaching be earnest and sincere, and your preaching, beyond reproach. Then, your opponents will feel ashamed and will have nothing to criticize.

6. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters, and to give satisfaction in every respect, instead of arguing.

7. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, teaching us to reject an irreligious way of life, and worldly greed, and to live in this world, as responsible persons, upright and serving God, while we await our blessed hope—the glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus. 8. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from every evil, and to purify a people he wanted to be his own, and dedicated to what is good.

9. Teach these things, encourage, and reprove with all authority. Let no one despise you.

10. They must not steal from them, but be trustworthy. In this way, they will draw everyone to admire the doctrine of God our Savior.

11. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, teaching us to reject an irreligious way of life, and worldly greed, and to live in this world, as responsible persons, upright and serving God, while we await our blessed hope—the glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from every evil, and to purify a people he wanted to be his own, and dedicated to what is good.

12. Teach these things, encourage, and reprove with all authority. Let no one despise you.

13. Remind the believers, to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, and to be ready for every good work.

14. Tell them to insult no one; they must not be quarrelsome, but gentle and understanding with everyone.

15. We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient and misled. We were slaves of our desires, seeking pleasures of every kind. We lived in malice and envy,
What remains here is an insistence on social virtues; it was the same in 2:5; 2:10 and also 1 Timothy 2:2 and 2:11.

8. Possible translations for the word Paul uses here are “sects” or “heresies” (v. 10): they are two aspects of a Greek word that means “selection.” Instead of accepting the faith as the Church transmits it, a heretic chooses what seems most important to her and what she likes the most. She rejects part of the message and leaves the Church taking with her disciples to form her own group. In preferring her own judgment to the doctrine of the Church, she loses the in-depth faith attitude; she destroys unity and condemns herself, even though she keeps a major part of the message.