

**Text:** Titus 3:12-15

**Title:** Closing Words

**Truth:** If you want to be fruitful, be devoted to good works.

**Date/Location:** Sunday September 12, 2021 at FBC

## Introduction

Last time we learned from 3:8-11 that Christians are to maintain good works and to avoid useless contentions and divisive people. As I think I indicated, we need to be very much on our toes about these kinds of things: especially about divisive matters.

In our own **church** we have expressed or lightly veiled divisions over the vaccine, COVID best practices, politics, and probably other things that I am forgetting.

In our **nation**, we have deep divisions. In fact, I saw a headline that said one notable military person believes that *division* is what he fears for our nation the most—not terrorism or economic problems or anything else. These divisions are fomented by political operators who *want* such divisions to gain political advantage and leverage change in the national governance and social fabric.

God hates this and we need to make sure we are not party to it in any way. That is most certainly easier said than done. That is in part because each of us “knows” that we are right and believes those on the “other side” of the division in question are dummies or immoral, or whatever.

I believe that if we kept our focus on our Lord, and what our mission is, these things would correct themselves, or at least not rise to a level of significance that would cause hateful division. We might end up ignoring them or realizing how foolish they are.

We must remember that our hope is not in political ideologies or structures, religions, militaries, financial systems, or in luck that we may avoid the next catastrophe or that divisions will not affect us. Our trust is in **Christ** no matter what the external circumstances are—no matter how good or how bad. Because of this, we *must*

focus on doing good in the name of Jesus Christ and avoiding stupid differences and divisive people.

The texts we have read and learned about in Titus touch our lives today just as much as they did centuries ago when they were first written. The apostle Paul ends with some of his own life situation. It was as real as it gets.

## **I. People Ministering with Paul, 3:12-13**

- A. Artemas. He is only mentioned here in the Bible. Perhaps he was a fellow minister who could provide “furlough coverage” for Titus when he left Crete for a little while to see Paul.
- B. Tychicus. Paul was unsure if he would send Artemas because the other possibility was Tychicus. He was from Asia Minor (Acts 20:4). He was a dear brother and faithful serve of the Lord, a messenger Paul used to convey messages from prison to various churches (Eph. 6:21, Col. 4:7). Later, he was sent to Ephesus at the end of Paul’s life (2 Timothy 4:12).
- C. Zenas the lawyer. He was more than a lawyer because he was a Christian as well. The journey with Apollos is not specified as to destination or purpose. It was mutually understood by Paul and Titus. The letter, by the way, indicates a close communication between the two men even over a long distance.
- D. Apollos is mentioned in Acts 18:24, 27, 19:1, and more than a half dozen times in 1 Corinthians. He was a powerful preacher, probably highly educated, and began to be an itinerant minister of the gospel. Titus was told to send these two men on quickly and with all the provisions that they required for whatever mission they were on.

## **II. Titus to Journey to Paul in Nicopolis, 3:12**

- A. Paul urged that Titus come to Nicopolis (“city of victory”)<sup>1</sup>. Many cities had this name. This one likely was the most well-known,

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<sup>1</sup> According to Wikipedia, “The city was founded in 29 BC by Caesar Augustus in commemoration of his victory in 31 BC over Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium nearby.”

northwest of Corinth in Greece. If you draw a line from Rome southeast toward Ephesus, that line would pass just north of Nicopolis in Macedonia. This is a city that I have overlooked in my previous Bible study, partly because it is only mentioned in this verse. Nowhere else does it appear in Scripture.

- B. From Crete to Nicopolis is a journey of 780 km or nearly 500 miles. That would be quite an arduous trip. Perhaps Titus was supposed to finish his work before going to Nicopolis or pass on the rest of it to the helpers Paul sent his way and leave immediately. I do not know why the movement of people was necessary. We could perhaps speculate, but there is little profit in doing so.
- C. Since this portion of Scripture was written in the early to mid-60s AD, Paul was in Nicopolis at some point after his first imprisonment in Rome, and before his execution around 67 AD. He was planning to spend winter there.

### III. Good Works Emphasized Once More, 3:14

- A. Learn to maintain good works. This idea of “learning” is not instruction but practice and experience. There is a difference between book work and apprenticeship. The translation “maintain” and “engage” (NKJV, NASB) are a bit weak. The idea of “devote” fits better. The word means that we show an interest in, a concern for, and take a leading role in doing good works. And finally, what are good works? Well, they are work, and they are good. They are not vacation, and they are not bad.
- B. Meet urgent needs. These works you are doing are helpful in supplying “necessary needs,” things that are lacking in the lives of other people. It should not be too difficult to ascertain that a thing is a necessity. We are not called to maintain good works to meet luxuries, i.e., unnecessary wants. There is too much legitimate need in the world to be distracted with wants.
- C. The goal is to live a productive life, not a useless one. God is concerned with *productivity* among other aspects of sanctification. We have the power to *produce* things. If we are not producing, we are living unproductively. Obviously, this is not the same thing as GDP and labor force productivity that you read about in the

financial news section. But it is not disconnected entirely from it either. God has made us to work. It is necessary to work. It is good to work. Adam and Eve worked the garden. It is fulfilling to work. It is productive to work. And when we work a job, we can earn a living and have finances to use for other good works (2 Cor. 9:8). These good works make us truly productive in God's sight.

- D. God began the ultimate good work in you and will bring it to completion (Phil. 1:6). We are called to be fruitful in every good work (Col. 1:10). We must be prepared, fit vessels for every good work (2 Timothy 2:21). Scripture equips us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17). Desire for the office of a bishop is a good work (1 Timothy 3:1). Women are called to be diligent in every good work (1 Timothy 5:10) as a pre-requisite to be supported by the church if they become a widow. Of course, we must not be such as those who falsely profess to know God and are thus disqualified for every good work (Titus 1:16).

## Conclusion

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every **good work** to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The apostle closes his letter with a short passing of greetings—from his co-workers to Titus and a request for Titus to pass Paul's greetings to those who know and love him in the Christian faith. Evidently the letter, although to Titus, is expected to be shared with some coworkers. It appears from this that Titus was likely the leader of a small missionary team.

Finally, Paul wishes divine grace upon all who are present with Titus, including the named recipient of the letter. Oh, how we need that which we do not deserve. Thank God for His grace.

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