



Titus - Chapter Three

III Titus 2:1-3:11 - Christian Living in Contrast to the False Teachers (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Three

Paul returns to the theme of good works that are the natural outworking of faith in Christ Jesus. The lifestyle of believers must be shaped by the Gospel, which calls for them to comply with the civil authorities providing that it does not negate their duties toward God. What Paul has to say in this chapter is not new, but reflects agreement with both his own earlier thinking and that of Peter. It also calls for an outworking of good deeds as a natural demonstration of faith.

Paul uses a technique of illustrating what life was like before Christ and the transformation that is brought about by his appearing. This act of salvation was borne out of the love that God has for humankind, the centerpiece of his created realm.

Paul addresses the issue of false teaching one final time, links it again with Jewish thinking, and restates the need to combat such false doctrine with true Gospel proclamation.

The letter comes to its conclusion with a call for Titus to join Paul on the mainland, providing information of who will be joining Titus in Crete and whom he should release from service. The letter has the standard greetings before Paul calls for the grace of God, not just on Titus' life but for all those on Crete.

III.b. Titus 3:1-11 - Maintain Good Deeds

Paul concludes this third major section with instructions once again on the way a disciple should live and the rationale for doing so, which results from what God has done for those who believe and the changes that has brought to their lives. Believers must live in this world, but they are not of this world. As the Father sent Christ into this world to minister, so he sends believers to be ministers in the world as well, as Jesus had made clear: *<<I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world,* New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world>> (John 17:14-18). A proper Christian lifestyle should have its outworking in the good deeds they naturally do.

III.b.i. Titus 3:1-2 - Proper living, particularly with respect to outsiders

Paul returns to describing Gospel living, this time with reference to interaction with outsiders. Christian conduct outside of the church is to be sensitive in two directions, to government authorities (v.1), and to all other people (v.2). In general the qualities encouraged here are in contrast to the description of the false teachers given in Titus 1:10-16.

¹ Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

Titus 3:1

Remind them is a reference to all the groups that make up the church structure.

To be subject to rulers and authorities. Jesus did not come to oppose the legitimate civil governments, for he desires the world to be ordered and not chaotic: <<*for God is a God not of disorder but of peace*>> (1 Corinthians 14:33a). Elsewhere, Paul expands on this command: <<*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God*>> (Romans 13:1), something with which Peter concurs: <<*For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honour everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honour the emperor*>> (1 Peter 2:13-14).

Essentially, this instruction calls for Christians to participate in this level of the social structure, as far as possible, according to society's rules. Loyalty and obedience to the state, being seen to be a law-abiding citizen and paying due taxes are an expectation for the disciple of Christ and were explicitly taught: <<*Jesus said to them, 'Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'* And they were utterly amazed at him>> (Mark 12:17).

Ready for every good work. Whereas the false teachers are: <<*unfit for any good work*>> (Titus 1:16b), one of the purposes of the Cross is to create a people: <<*zealous for good deeds*>> (Titus 2:14b), and to motivate them to be prepared to undertake such tasks when the opportunity presents itself.

² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone.

Titus 3:2

Speak evil of no one. The best advice to a disciple of Christ is that, if they cannot think of anything good to say about someone, they should say nothing: <<*If any*

think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless>> (James 1:26).

Avoid quarrelling because this is not only a poor witness but it damages relationships. King Solomon wrote: <<*One who forgives an affront fosters friendship, but one who dwells on disputes will alienate a friend*>> (Proverbs 17:9), then continues: <<*The beginning of strife is like letting out water; so stop before the quarrel breaks out*>> (Proverbs 17:14).

To be gentle is another excellent quality to be attained in all interpersonal relationships: <<*Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom*>> (James 3:13). Being gentle in Spirit was one of the great qualities of Jesus the man: <<*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*>> (Matthew 11:29).

The list closes with a call to take the initiative to show all manner of good to all sorts of people. Perfect or every courtesy, Greek *prautēta*, is a good translation of an often misunderstood word, literally meaning meekness or gentleness.

The Christian lifestyle calls believers to live at peace with everyone, wherever possible, showing true humility and gentleness in speech and social interaction. However, it is not doormat Christianity, but living a life of service and love. Paul's language portrays Christian living in relation to all people as reasoned forbearance in every aspect of life, the putting of the concerns of others ahead of one's own.

III.b.ii. Titus 3:3-7 - Gospel basis

As in Titus 2:11-14, Paul explains how his exhortations to godly living (vv.1-2) are based on the Gospel. This Gospel statement is presented in a traditional conversion formula - 'formerly ... but now', highlighting the ethical and practical change effected by grace. Before moving onto the nature of the rescue by Christ, Paul summarises the characteristics of life without Christ. Verses 4-7 consist of a single, densely packed sentence of theology, originally thought to be part of a liturgical creed. Paul modifies and inserts the material at this point to describe the experience of becoming a Christian.

³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another.

Titus 3:3

For is omitted in some translations, e.g. NCV, NET, NIV, which is unfortunate as Paul lays down a foundation for leading a life in the world that is demonstrably different from that of unbelievers and this word links to the reason that Paul gives, although it is not clear whether he is addressing the question of why believers ought to live this life or why they can live it. Perhaps his material answers both of these questions!

We ourselves is not restricted to Paul and Titus, nor indeed the others in his team. It is intended to encompass all disciples and describes the type of lifestyle characteristics they would have displayed prior to coming to faith, but should be in

the process at least of moving away from. People may not accept some of these personality traits in themselves, but it is a true reflection of a sinful nature that is inherent in all of mankind: <<***Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God***>> (Romans 3:23). If only it could be seen from God's perspective, sin would be truly understood and rejected.

It should also be noted that Paul does not isolate himself from his former way of life. In fact, he goes to great pains to highlight it: <<***You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors***>> (Galatians 1:13-14), <<***For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God***>> (1 Corinthians 15:9), and: <<***The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost***>> (1 Timothy 1:15), which are listed here in chronological order of writing. These are the words of a man who had been passionate about serving God since he was a young child!

Foolish, disobedient, led astray. It should not be overlooked that Paul uses language to describe the person before salvation in terms that would describe the false teachers or the outcome of their own proclamations. The problems of these heretics were never far from the surface in the Pastoral Epistles, for they were a danger to the early church, as well as themselves, and remain so today. The source of deception is false teaching, be it worldly philosophies or distorted Christian doctrine. The message to believers is clear: stay away from the doctrines of the false teachers. It should perhaps advise against self-deception as well, which can also come out of the false teaching, or false thinking at least, to lead people away like lost sheep: <<***I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek out your servant, for I do not forget your commandments***>> (Psalm 119:176), where David demonstrates there is a path back to God. This was the source of so much hope in his life for he trusted God to provide such a path: <<***The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long***>> (Psalm 23).

Slaves to various passions and pleasures. The language of enslavement has its roots in the calling of God's people from slavery in Egypt into the freedom of the land that was flowing with milk and honey: <<***The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey***>> (Deuteronomy 26:8-9), and it was from such enslavement that Jesus had come to release his people from once again, not captivity to another race but bondage to the self-deceptions of the world system: <<***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free***>> (Luke 4:18). Amen.

⁴ But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Saviour appeared,

Titus 3:4

Goodness and loving kindness stand in stark contrast to the description of lost humanity in v.3. The difference is due to the appearance of God our Saviour. In the Pastoral Epistles Paul refers to both God and Christ as Saviour, which is in keeping with both OT Scripture and the very essence of the Godhead. That God our Saviour appeared is clearly a reference to Jesus for: <<*No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known*>> (John 1:18). Refer to comments made on 1 Timothy 1:8-10 and Titus 2:9-10.

Loving translates the Greek *philanthropia*, which literally means 'love for humanity'. God's fatherly love for humankind is thus declared to have been expressed in Jesus' incarnation.

Kindness, is the Pauline word *chrestotes*, which he used to great effect when writing to the Roman church: <<*Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realise that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*>> (Romans 2:4), and: <<*Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity towards those who have fallen, but God's kindness towards you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off*>> (Romans 11:22), which shows God's kindness to be an instrumental factor in bringing people to repentance.

The link in v.4 between God's kindness which appeared and Christ, the embodiment of this kindness, is then clear in the salvation his appearance brought. Although it may be accidental, the Greek *chrestotes* sounds very similar to the Greek *Christos* or Christ, suggesting an intentional interpretation of God's kindness at the outset.

⁵ he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5

The transformation described in vv.3-7, 'formerly ... but now', is not based on human effort, as seen in: <<*We ourselves, slaves*>> (v.3), but God saved us. God must act before salvation occurs.

Salvation comes not because of any works but through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Some have understood this as saying that baptism is the water of rebirth that causes salvation. However, in this context human deeds are clearly downplayed, i.e. not because of any works, and the emphasis is on divine action and initiative, that is, he saved us. Therefore, the water of rebirth described here is the spiritual cleansing, which is outwardly symbolised in baptism.

The ideas expressed here are similar to those spoken of by Jesus during a meeting he had with the Pharisaic leader Nicodemus: <<*Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.'* Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having

grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit>> (John 3:3-5).

⁶ This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:6-7

This Spirit he poured out on us richly is most likely a reference to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as foretold by the prophets: <<For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring>> (Isaiah 44:3), and: <<Then afterwards I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit>> (Joel 2:28-29), which Peter had quoted at Pentecost. However, the Spirit has always been in operation throughout eternity: <<In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters>> (Genesis 1:1-2 ESV), coming upon individuals for service to God: <<But when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the Israelites, who delivered them, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel; he went out to war, and the Lord gave King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim>> (Judges 3:9-10), <<Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah>> (1 Samuel 16:13), <<But now you say, "Go, tell your lord that Elijah is here." As soon as I have gone from you, the spirit of the Lord will carry you I know not where; so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have revered the Lord from my youth>> (1 Kings 18:11-12), <<Then the spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the Thirty, and he said, 'We are yours, O David; and with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to the one who helps you! For your God is the one who helps you.' Then David received them, and made them officers of his troops>> (1 Chronicles 12:18), <<The spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded>> (2 Chronicles 15:1), and: <<But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin>> (Micah 3:8).

Jesus Christ our Saviour follows on to the comments made in v.4 and clearly indicates that Paul recognises the deity of Jesus, not just as the Christ of God, but as God incarnate.

Justified by his grace. Justification, as it is often pointed out, is salvation seen from a forensic or legal perspective. It is the judge's declaration of righteousness. But the grounds are not that the defendant has been found to be free of guilt. Rather, the defendant's guilt has been paid for by another, that is, by Christ; and so it is a matter of grace, an unmerited participation in Christ's righteousness. Paul often coordinates salvation and justification, or uses the terms almost

synonymously: <<For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved>> (Romans 10:10).

Heirs according to the hope. What is the goal of God's redemptive work? It is eternal life: <<But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord>> (Romans 6:22-23), and: <<If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit>> (Galatians 6:8).

Through justification, the believer takes up the privileged position of an heir, as Paul often points out: <<For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void>> (Romans 4:13-14), <<And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God>> (Galatians 4:6-7). What is just as amazing as the free gift is that it was achieved through personal empowerment: <<He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God>> (John 1:10-13).

The unique thing about God's family is that every Christian shares this position equally. None is entitled to a greater share than another, for the object of inheritance is eternal life: <<And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life>> (Matthew 19:29), and: <<A certain ruler asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?''>> (Luke 18:18). But the inheritance is yet to be received, so it remains an object of hope. Nevertheless, the certainty of God's past acts in Christ guarantees the certainty of what is still to be fully obtained. Such is the nature of hope in Jesus as the Messiah of God.

III.b.iii. Titus 3:8 - Summary command

As with Titus 2:15, Paul breaks into the flow of the letter to summarise what he has been saying in order to reinforce what he has been instructing Titus and all others who would subsequently read this letter.

Although v.8 is dealt with as a separate paragraph, it has strong links back to vv.4-7 and should be read with this in mind.

⁸ The saying is sure.

I desire that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone.

Titus 3:8

The saying is sure is the last of the five such statements that feature in the Pastoral Epistles: <<*The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost*>> (1 Timothy 1:15), <<*The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task*>> (1 Timothy 3:1), <<*The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance*>> (1 Timothy 4:9), and: <<*The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him*>> (2 Timothy 2:11).

As recently stated, the command I desire that you insist on these things is similar to: <<*Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one look down on you*>> (Titus 2:15), both statements carrying a significant tone of authority. Again, note the emphasis on good works as a mark of those who have come to believe in God: <<*They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work*>> (Titus 1:16), and: <<*He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds*>> (Titus 2:14). Consider also Paul's statement in v.1.

These things are excellent and profitable to everyone indicates the true outward focused nature of the church, looking to benefit whole communities beyond those that are part of the church congregation.

Faith, hope and trust in Christ should not be seen as a free gift of God that operates independently from the receiver of the gift. Human responsibility is a key part of becoming a successful and dedicated disciple of Christ.

III.b.iv. Titus 3:9-11 - The Problem Restated: False Teachers

Paul returns to the problem of false teachers. Thus, the discussion of Gospel living in the major section Titus 2:1-3:8, is flanked by discussion of those who claim to believe this Gospel but fail to live it out.

The sombre tone of these verses reflects the gravity of the situation that Titus faced in the Cretan churches. Paul focuses on the utter uselessness of the false teaching and the depravity of the heretics. There is a danger for those who will listen to them. Yet a note of hope, however muted, is sounded.

This conclusion to Titus has distinct similarities to some of the concluding remarks given to the Romans: <<*I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offences, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded. For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise in what is good, and guileless in what is evil. The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*>> (Romans 16:17-20).

⁹ But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Titus 3:9

But. The reference to the usefulness of correct doctrine in v.8 sets up the contrast with the unprofitable and worthless nature of the false teaching. As elsewhere in the letters to Timothy and Titus, the exact content of the false teaching is not clear. The point is that it is foolish, unprofitable and worthless for everyone.

Avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law was a feature of some of the Rabbinic teachings that had led the Jewish people away from the true requirements of God to follow traditions. Paul had spoken of this to Timothy as well: *<<I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith>>* (1 Timothy 1:3-4), and: *<<Remind them of this, and warn them before God that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening>>* (2 Timothy 2:14). Again, it indicates that the false teaching was based on the dissention of the circumcision group who were trying to influence Gentile believers to convert to Judaism before coming to faith in Christ: *<<For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love>>* (Galatians 5:1-6).

¹⁰ After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions, ¹¹ since you know that such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned.

Titus 3:10-11

Have nothing more to do with anyone describes the final stage of church discipline, see also 1 Corinthians Chapter 5. A divisive person who refuses to repent and change after being confronted: *<<'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'>>* (Matthew 18:15-20), which fits well with after a first and second admonition, showing himself to be perverted and sinful; thus, he is self-condemned.

The NT is clear about seeking the repentance of such people, but it is equally clear that refusal to receive rebuke eventually shows that one is not in Christ and must be excluded from the Christian community. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the individual and not any disciple or leader: <<David said to him, 'Your blood be on your head; for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, "I have killed the Lord's anointed"'>> (2 Samuel 1:16), and: <<When they opposed and reviled him, in protest he shook the dust from his clothes and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles'>> (Acts 18:6).

Some church members find such disciplinary measures harsh and believe it to be outside of the love that Christ has for all people. However, it must be remembered that church leaders have a responsibility to God to protect the church and the individuals concerned from sin and its deadly effects. Sometimes taking the harshest measures is the act of love that an individual needs to come back in repentance to God.

IV. Titus 3:12-15 - Final Messages and Benediction

In typical fashion for 1st Century letters, Paul closes with reference to travel plans and greetings. As is also typical of Paul, even these items echo the main thrust of the letter.

¹² When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

Titus 3:12

Do your best to come to me. Although Paul had left Titus in Crete in order to get the churches there properly established, he was not expected to stay there indefinitely. The language also recognises the uncertainty of travel in those days. Paul would have been overjoyed at their reunion as he had been when they met up in Macedonia some years earlier when Paul had travelled up from Ephesus and Titus from Corinth: <<But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus>> (2 Corinthians 7:6).

Artemas is not mentioned elsewhere in the NT. When I send indicates that Paul is sending other workers to continue building and supporting the church in Crete so that Titus can join Paul for other missionary work. Titus was a gifted evangelist, whereas the others, Tychicus certainly, as will be seen shortly, were faithful ministers, and Paul would not wish to use the gifts of one where another more suited was available so as to release the gift for use elsewhere: <<The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ>> (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Tychicus is mentioned as an Asian who accompanied Paul on his third journey: <<He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia>> (Acts 20:4). Tychicus had acted as courier for some of Paul's letters in the past: <<So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything. He is a dear

brother and a faithful minister in the Lord>> (Ephesians 6:21), and: <<*Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow-servant in the Lord*>> (Colossians 4:7). He also brought the letter to Philemon which was delivered at the same time. It is likely he also replaced Timothy in Ephesus, so he could travel to see Paul for one last time in Rome: <<*I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus*>> (2 Timothy 4:12). He was most likely the courier of that letter too.

Nicopolis was a port city in Epirus, on the west coast of the Greek peninsula and about 200 miles or 322 km northwest of Athens, thus giving further insight to Paul's 4th missionary journey schedule.

It is not known if Titus reached Paul in Nicopolis but it seems that he may have been with Paul in Rome around the time of his final imprisonment before being sent to Dalmatia, although he may have travelled directly there from Nicopolis, as it is



The map of Greece shows Nicopolis

just further north up the coast. Either way, Paul's final letter indicates that was Titus' intended destination: <<*Do your best to come to me soon, for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia*>> (2 Timothy 4:9-10).

For I have decided to spend the winter there is a further indication of how difficult travel was, either by land or sea, in that era: <<*Since the harbour was not suitable for spending the winter, the majority was in favour of putting to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, where they could spend the winter. It was a harbour of Crete, facing south-west and north-west*>> (Acts 27:12), <<*Three months later we set sail on a ship that had wintered at the island, an Alexandrian ship with the Twin Brothers as its figurehead*>> (Acts 28:11), and: <<*I will visit you after passing through Macedonia – for I intend to pass through Macedonia – and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way, wherever I go*>> (1 Corinthians 16:5-6). Jesus spoke of the difficulties that the time of great tribulation would cause if it came at that time of year and commanded: <<*Pray that it may not be in winter*>> (Mark 13:18). Although after that time, God will put all things to the way they were meant to be: <<*On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter*>> (Zechariah 14:8).

¹³ Make every effort to send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and see that they lack nothing. ¹⁴ And let people learn to devote themselves to good works in order to meet urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive.

Titus 3:13-14

Make every effort to send, on their way, see that they lack nothing shows Paul's concern for the support of fellow missionaries and thus speaks of the church's role in supporting mission, and addressing cases of urgent needs, today! John had called upon his friends to support others in missionary work as they do so for the Lord: <<*Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the friends, even though they are strangers to you; they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God; for they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from non-believers. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers with the truth*>> (3 John 5-8).

Zenas is not mentioned elsewhere in the NT. That he was a lawyer is again a demonstration of how the Gospel impacted both the poor and those in higher levels of the social echelon. Some commentators have made reference that he may have been a teacher of the Mosaic Law. Although this is possible, there is no further support for this in the text.

Apollos is undoubtedly the popular speaker mentioned elsewhere: <<*Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures*>> (Acts 18:24), <<*While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples*>> (Acts 19:1), and: <<*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth*>> (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Having stressed good works throughout the letter, and having just called for assistance of fellow labourers (v.13), Paul addresses this theme once more. This opportunity to assist Zenas and Apollos is one more example of how Christians can be involved in good works, relieving needs and furthering the Gospel. These two may have been working with Titus on Crete or they may have travelled there with the letter from Paul for just a brief visit. The latter would seem more probable given the language used.

Let people learn to devote themselves to good works. While praying for gifts and asking God to show them his will for their lives is appropriate, believers are also called to service in other ways. There are plenty of opportunities to serve God through the church and believers should be prepared to learn while undertaking the work that is necessary. The key statement from Paul here is that they may not be unproductive, for that would not only be an unfulfilled life but the source of poor witness before the God they profess.

¹⁵ All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with all of you.

Titus 3:15

Grace be with (all of) you features in other letters: <<*The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*>> (Romans 16:20), <<*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you*>> (1 Corinthians 16:23), <<*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you*>> (2 Corinthians 13:13),

and: <<*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*>> (1 Thessalonians 5:28). It is also the closing statement in the letter to the Hebrews, the authorship of which is much debated: <<*Grace be with all of you*>> (Hebrews 13:25).

Grace be with all of you. Although written primarily to Titus, Paul's letter will be read to fellow workers and probably to the entire church congregations, for this was standard practice: <<*And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea*>> (Colossians 4:16).

There can be no greater gift from one believer to another than to receive the blessing of God's grace upon their life. It was clearly a heartfelt prayer from Paul that all should have this great blessing bestowed upon them.