

Paul's Closing Remarks and Benediction

Titus 3:12-15

Titus 3:12-15 - *"When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. ¹³ Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing.*

¹⁴ And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

¹⁵ All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen."

Background Notes

In the closing verses of Paul's letter to Titus, a number of different names are mentioned. When Titus went to visit Paul at Nicopolis, either Artemas or Tychicus was to replace Titus on the island of Crete (v12). This is the only mention of Artemas in the New Testament. Tychicus is mentioned in Acts 20 as a fellow worker with the apostle Paul. He was also mentioned in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 4, as the Christian brother who probably carried the epistles from Paul back to Ephesus and Colosse. Possibly Tychicus also carried this letter to Titus.

Tychicus was a dependable "Christian mailman." He may have felt like he was only a messenger, but he had an extremely important job! Suppose the letters to the churches in Ephesus or Colossae had never made it? What if the letter to Titus had been lost? And that's a good lesson for all of us. Sometimes we think our Christian service is insignificant - but **everything** that is done for the Lord is very significant.

At the end of verse 12, Paul said that he had decided to spend the winter at Nicopolis. There were several cities by that name. It simply means "City of Victory." Most likely, the Nicopolis where Paul spent the winter was in Achaia, on the west coast of Greece. Verse 12 indicates that Paul was not in prison when he wrote this letter, and we assume that Titus did make it to Nicopolis to visit Paul.

Zenas the lawyer is mentioned only once in the New Testament – here in verse 13. (So you see, all lawyers are not bad!) Zenas may have been an expert in Mosaic Law – perhaps a former Jewish scribe. Or, as his Gentile name suggests, he may have practiced Roman law. We can't be sure.

Apollos (v13) is probably the well-known eloquent preacher who came to Ephesus in Acts 18. He was a Jewish man who was "mighty in the Scriptures," but he needed further instruction through Priscilla and Aquila. He later moved on to continue teaching in Corinth. Many of the Corinthian Christians were followers of Apollos, and formed the "Apollos party" (1 Corinthians 1). Notice that Paul showed no jealousy of Apollos here. Apollos had a great following, and may have been more eloquent than the apostle Paul himself - but Paul was not jealous of Apollos. This is a good lesson for us. Jealousy and divisions will only hinder or destroy the work of the Lord.

The benediction, “*Grace be with you all,*” indicates that even though the book of Titus was a personal letter from Paul to Titus, Paul’s benediction extended to all the believers in the churches of Crete.

Doctrinal Points

1. The “good life” of a Christian servant is busy and exciting.

Something is wrong if you think the Christian life is boring. If you’re living a biblical lifestyle and doing Christian service, life is **not** boring - it’s busy and interesting and exciting!

We hear a lot these days about “the good life.” The world’s idea of “the good life” is a large homes, luxury vacations, a portfolio of stocks, the latest electronics, lots of pleasures - but you know as well as I do that there’s no lasting fulfillment in any of those things. The **real** “good life” is the Christian life, and it’s busy and exciting!

Look at Titus. He was busy serving on the Mediterranean island of Crete, establishing the churches there. He was about to travel by sailing ship to visit Paul. Meanwhile, he would have the opportunity to enjoy fellowship with Zenas, the lawyer, and Apollos, the great and eloquent speaker who was “mighty in the Scriptures”! Titus probably showed them around the island, arrange speaking engagements for Apollos, and then helped to send them on their way. Notice that he was to send them “*on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing.*” Titus was responsible to help these brothers with anything they might need for their journey. We, too, are responsible to help and minister to Christian preachers, teachers, missionaries - and even lawyers - who are serving the Lord!

Titus certainly wasn’t sitting around twiddling his thumbs all day. He had a busy, varied and interesting life. This should be true of our lives as well. Is your Christian life boring? Something’s wrong if it is, and it doesn’t have to be! Get more involved in Christian service. There are plenty of opportunities for everyone. “The good life” for the Christian servant is busy and exciting.

In my job as a research scientist, I had a busy and interesting life in the field of science and engineering. When I left that secular job to serve the Lord full time, I thought I’d be leaving that exciting life behind me. Not so! Serving the Lord has been far busier and far more exciting! The good life of the Christian servant is busy and exciting.

2. The “good works” of the Christian servant are learned and frequent.

Verse 14: “*And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.*”

This is the sixth time in the book of Titus that “good works” are mentioned. The “good works” in verse 14 are good works of Christian service - **not** good works for earning salvation. No! There’s no such thing. Good works cannot save you.

Salvation is a free gift from God, and we receive it by simply trusting in the finished work of redemption that was accomplished by Jesus Christ upon the cross.

After salvation, however, good works should characterize our lives as Christians. The fact that Christian good works are mentioned so often shows that they are a primary theme in the book of Titus. We are not only to be sound in doctrine, but we are also to “*adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things*” (2:10). We make our doctrine and our message attractive to others by our good works. We are to adorn our sound doctrine with good works.

Titus 3:8 said that we should be careful to maintain good works: “*Those who have believed should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.*” Now in Titus 3:14 we are instructed to **learn to maintain good works**: “*Let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.*”

In other words, **doing good works is a learned behavior**. By nature, we are all selfish. We must **learn** to do good works - and we learn by doing. Just as a person learns to swim by a combination of instruction and practice, so a Christian learns to do good works by a combination of instruction and practice.

So, older Christians are responsible to be good models, and to teach the younger Christians how to do good works. Christian service field trips, missions trips, maintenance work around the church - service projects in which younger and older people work together are good and biblical. That’s the way our younger people learn how to do good works. I know several young people whose lives were turned around when they went on a mission trip to Mexico. There they learned to do good works on a work crew, working side by side with older believers.

Notice that good works are not only **learned**, but they are also to be **frequent** - because they are to meet urgent needs. There are always urgent and pressing needs around us, so good works should be frequent in our lives.

Some good works are long term and well-thought-out projects or events. Other good works are unexpected, when we must get involved on the spur of the moment to help with an unexpected urgent need. Yes, this can be disruptive for our busy lives, but remember - good works are good and profitable to men (v8), they meet the urgent needs of desperate people, and they definitely bring forth fruit (v14).

What would you do if a pressing need came up just as you’re about to go on vacation? Think that over. The good works of a Christian servant are learned and frequent.

Practical Applications

1. Use your talents and training for the Lord.

Zenas, the lawyer, was using his talents and training for the Lord. We don’t know whether he was still practicing law or not, but I’m sure he was advising the apostle Paul on legal matters – and Paul certainly needed advice on legal matters!

I'm sure Zenas used his talents and training for the Lord in that way, and perhaps he served the Lord in other ways as well.

Dr. Luke also used his talents and training for the Lord. He became Paul's personal physician. He also served the Lord in other ways, especially by writing at large part of the New Testament: the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

We, too, should use our talents and training for the Lord. Whether we're in full-time Christian ministry or secular employment, there are always ways we can use our talents for the Lord. So, use your talents and training for the Lord!

2. Don't leave your ministry stranded.

When Paul asked Titus to come to Nicopolis, he didn't leave the believers on Crete stranded. He didn't tell Titus to just leave and come for a visit with Paul in Nicopolis – he made sure the ministry was covered. He sent Artemas or Tychicus to care for the churches on Crete (v12).

This is a good lesson for us today. Don't leave your ministry stranded! For example, if you're a Sunday school teacher and you have to move away, try to find another faithful teacher to carry on your ministry. That's a responsibility. In fact, if the Lord doesn't provide a replacement for you, that may be an indication that He doesn't want you to move!

Here's an illustration. When I left the Young Life ministry to go to seminary, I waited for the Lord to provide another staff member to carry on with various areas of ministry that I had been doing. It was an essential part of deciding whether I should go to seminary or not. The Lord is not in the business of leaving ministries stranded and left without proper care. When I called back to see how the ministry was going, I discovered that it was going better than when I'd been there! At first that was a little tough to hear! How could it possibly be going *better* than when *I* was leading it?! [laughter] Yet when I thought it through, that was exactly the way it should be. That was evidence that our move to seminary was the Lord's will. God had definitely been at work in the decision we made to leave the Young Life ministry and move on to seminary.

So, if you must move away, find a replacement! Don't leave your ministry stranded!