

Fruitful Living
Titus 3:12-15
ABC 3/21/21

Try to go back in your imagination to the 1st century. Rome ruled the world. If you were to ask about the prominent religions of the day, Christianity would be missing or listed as a branch of Judaism. Its followers claimed an obscure Jew who'd been crucified was the promised Messiah & had been raised from the dead. But the average Roman hadn't of Jesus or Christianity. Then here comes a Jewish man named Paul. He'd met the risen Jesus & was commissioned to take the gospel to the Gentiles. How would he go about doing it? He couldn't broadcast the gospel by radio, TV, or internet. He didn't have a printing press. He didn't even have bulk mailings. There was no way to move quickly from one location to another. He had to walk, ride, or take a boat. He couldn't pick up the phone & talk with others. He communicated by hand-carried letters that took weeks or months to be received. In spite of these limitations, Paul broadcast the gospel to the Gentiles & changed the world's history. How did he do it? Before we get to that, let's personalize it: How do we get the message to the Rogue Valley & beyond? The same way Paul did. The last 4 vss of Titus give a glimpse of how Paul functioned, spreading Christianity. It's not a complete picture but it's a valuable one. Paul reached the world through a team of believers committed to ministry together. Paul was never a one-man-show, no lone-ranger. He always worked with others committed to the same goal. Our text today gives a snapshot of Paul's team at this time of his ministry. We're going to look at his team & at some principles for ministry. **12-15**

1. Team Members Paul wrote this letter to Titus partly to tell Titus to join him in **Nicopolis**, on the coast of Greece. But Titus can't leave Crete until his replacement arrives. Paul knows the work in Crete isn't done. But he wasn't sure when he would send a replacement for Titus or who it would be.

A. ARTEMAS is only mentioned here in the Bible. From his name we guess he wasn't a Jew. Because Paul considered him a worthy replacement for Titus, we are confident he was a competent, knowledgeable, faithful, mature man of God, & a faithful preacher & teacher. If Paul ended up

sending **Tychicus** to Ephesus & Titus met Paul in **Nicopolis** & then headed north to Dalmatia (2 Tim 4:10, 12), then **Artemas** probably replaced him in Crete.

B. Tychicus was another faithful Gentile believer mentioned a handful of times in Scripture. He was a native of today's western Turkey. He accompanied Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem, carrying the collection for the needy believers there (Acts 20:4). He'd previously carried letters to the Ephesians & the Colossians & told those churches about Paul's circumstances (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-9; Eph 6:21). Paul sent him to Ephesus to relieve Timothy, so Timothy could try to join Paul in Rome before his execution (2 Tim 4:12). Paul calls **Tychicus our beloved brother & faithful servant & fellow bond-servant in the Lord** in Col 4:7. He appears to have been with Paul in his final days because Paul says he sent him to Ephesus at that time (2 Tim 4:12). Tradition says he was the 1st bishop of Lystra.¹ **12**

There were as many as 10 cities in NT times that were called **Nicopolis**, which means *city of victory*. All named by military conquerors to commemorate a victory. The **Nicopolis** where Paul planned to **spend the winter** was probably on the west coast of Achaia, the southern province of Greece, & founded by Octavian after his victory over Marc Antony & Cleopatra at the battle of Atrium in 31 BC. Paul was obviously still free but it's likely he was arrested in **Nicopolis** & taken to Rome from there. It also was from **Nicopolis** that Titus later traveled to Dalmatia (2 Tim 4:10), today's Croatia & Serbia.² Titus was to make haste or spare no effort to meet Paul in **Nicopolis**, where he'd decided to winter. The distance from Crete to **Nicopolis** is some 300 miles. Titus would be free to leave Crete & join Paul because, presumably, **Artemas** or **Tychicus** will have arrived to take his place, at least temporarily, as overseer of the Cretan churches. & Paul's letter to Titus, or a copy of it, would be available to furnish leadership reminders to Titus's replacements.³ Titus should not only do his best to meet Paul in **Nicopolis** but Paul also requests Titus to help 2 people **on their way**. **13**

C. Zenas the Lawyer, like **Artemas**, is only mentioned here in the Bible. His Greek name may mean he was a Gentile lawyer but he may have been a Jewish expert in the Mosaic law. Whatever the

¹ Schnabel, *Paul & the Early Church*, p 1120

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *Titus*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 167.

³ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy & Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, p 557

case, he had set aside his career long enough to accompany Apollos on this trip. As with **Artemas**, we can safely assume that **Zenas** was a godly believer in whom Paul had great confidence & for whom he had great love. It's possible **Zenas & Apollos** carried this letter to Titus on Crete.

D. Apollos is mentioned numerous times in the NT & always favorably. He was a Jew from Alexandria in northern Egypt, an eloquent orator, mighty in the Scriptures, & fervent in spirit (Acts 18:24-25). In Acts 18 he received instruction from Priscilla & Aquila. The fact that he listened & learned from them shows he had a humble, teachable heart. Later his teaching at Corinth was so well received it created a division between his followers & those of Paul. But, as far as we can tell, Paul & Apollos themselves were always on good terms & this statement confirms that. Whenever **Zenas & Apollos** arrived on Crete & wherever they may have been headed, Titus was urged to help them **on their way so that nothing is lacking for them**. Since **Apollos** was from Alexandria, it's suggested that he & **Zenas** may have been heading in a southerly direction from Paul, to Crete, & then finally on to Alexandria.⁴ These 2 men were partners of Paul & faithful co-laborers in the work of the kingdom. It wasn't an age of credit cards & electronic itineraries; traveling Christian workers were often dependent on local generosity for their sustenance. Paul emphasizes this by saying, **so that nothing is lacking for them**, with a possible emphasis on **nothing**.⁵ Titus should support them in every respect. Despite the urgent tone & wide-ranging counsel of Paul's letter, Titus's attention cannot be only on himself & his churches; he is expected also to share Paul's heart for the wider spread of the gospel in regions beyond Crete. That spirit of mutual support & care should always characterize the church. Under the sovereign Lord, leaders are interdependent, called & commissioned to trust & assist one another as fellow servants of our Savior & Lord.⁶ **14**

E. Our People refers to the Christians in Crete. All believers, even those who go unnamed, even those from obscure towns in Crete, were part of the team. They were to learn to take the lead in the doing of **good deeds**, which we'll come back to as it's a major theme in this little letter. **15**

⁴ Schnabel, *Paul & the Early Church*, p 1286

⁵ In Greek **nothing** is the 1st word in its clause

⁶ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Titus*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 168.

F. All Who Are With Me We don't know for sure where Paul was when he wrote this. But we know he wasn't alone. Zenas & Apollos, if they carried this letter, were with him. There was a community of Christians wherever Paul was & he fellowshiped with these saints. This final vs is a statement from friends to friends. It's all-encompassing. The word **all** is used twice, at the beginning & the end of the vs. All who were with Paul express their greeting. Like Paul, they know the challenges Titus is facing & they want him to know they care, stand with him, are on his side, & are one with him in the work. **Greet those who love us in the faith.** Likewise, Titus was to give Paul's greetings to the Christians in Crete. Paul's final words aren't just his usual practice, but provided great comfort to Titus & the Christians on Crete. **Grace be with you all.** Only God's **grace** will give us balance, self-control, wisdom, & endurance. Discouragement is an ever-present enemy to those in the ministry. God's amazing **grace** is what we need at all times, especially when tough times come. Only His **grace** can sustain us & it is all we need.⁷

As we've seen, Paul didn't work alone. He had a team of believers committed to ministry, who labored with him in the cause of Christ. He viewed every Christian as a gifted member of the team, with a vital role to fulfill. None were benchwarmers. That should be true of all of us. If you know Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit has given you gifts to use in ministry for Him. You need to see yourself as a vital team member, committed to ministry at ABC. That word, *ministry*, may scare you because it's taken on a professional implication. You may think, *Pastors are in the ministry, but I'm just a layperson.* The Bible never makes that distinction. *Ministry* means service & every Christian is saved to serve. Ministry, service should be the natural result of your walk with Jesus. It may be structured, such as teaching SS, helping with music, organizing outings or meals, or whatever. Or it may mean inviting new people at church over for a meal & encouraging them in their walk with Christ. But there should be no such thing as a Christian benchwarmer who only subs in once in a while. If you're saved, you're called to ministry on God's team.

2. Team Principles Although these vss may seem like irrelevant vss at the end of this short letter, there are many principles of team ministry included here.

⁷Daniel L. Akin, [Living Doctrine: The Book of Titus](#), ed. Craig G. Bartholomew & David Beldman, pp 68–69

A. Every Christian is to be Involved in Good Deeds Good works is a reoccurring theme throughout this short letter. The phrase occurs 7x in a letter that's only 46 vss long, driving home the point that though we aren't saved by faith plus works, we are saved by a faith that works (Eph 2:8-10; Titus 3:5).⁸ In 1:16, Paul condemns the false teachers, who were **detestable & disobedient & worthless for any good deed**. In 2:7, he exhorts Titus **to be an example of good deeds**. In 2:14, he says we're to be **zealous for good deeds**. In 3:1, he tells Titus to remind the believers **to be ready for every good deed**. In 3:5, he clarifies that we aren't saved on the basis of good deeds, but in 3:8 he again emphasizes that **those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds**. Now, in 3:14, he repeats one last time that Christians must learn to take the lead in **good deeds**, using the same phrase as in vs 8. You can't get the idea that **good deeds** are optional for the Christian. If you're a Christian, you must be zealous for **good deeds**. Obviously the hospitality & help asked for on behalf of **Zenas & Apollos** serves as an example of what Paul is after. It seems he's talking about such things as providing help to Christian strangers passing through. In other words, Paul is eager that the Christians on Crete learn to be ready at all times to do good, to invest their lives in the service of others, & in the service of the gospel. Then, when the opportunity arises, as it often will, they'll be ready. That's Paul's prescription for a fruitful, productive life.

As we've seen, our faith as Christians rests on this foundation twice described in Titus: 1st in chpt 2 (11-14) & then again in chpt 3 (4-7), that God is our creator & the creator of all things; that Jesus Christ is God the Son in human flesh; that He died on the cross for our sins; that He rose to life again; that the Holy Spirit was given to the church to equip her to carry the good news about Jesus to the world; that Jesus is coming again to judge the world; & that those who believe in Him will enjoy eternal life with Him. Based on those truths is the life that we're to live in response. A life of love, purity, & goodness for the sake of others & the glory of God. It's a law of obedience to God's commandments, but it's also a life of service, of acts performed to bless others & to further the cause of Christ. But what acts? What services? What are we, in particular, to do? What are these **good deeds**? That's a difficult question & one that can't be answered specifically for any Christian.

⁸ Daniel L. Akin, [Living Doctrine: The Book of Titus](#), ed. Craig G. Bartholomew & David Beldman

Certainly, I can't answer that question for you & you can't answer that for me. It's a case of **whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might** (Eccl 9:10). It's a case of learning to do what is good by meeting the opportunities that are placed before you. This seems to be Paul's meaning with **Zenas & Apollos**. Titus & the Cretan Christians were to show them hospitality & help them on their way. They were, & we are, *to relieve the pressing needs of others*.⁹ Paul's point is that there are opportunities that come along, such as **Zenas & Apollos'** needs, & we must be ready & willing to diligently help. Years earlier, Paul had pointed to a Macedonian community where believers gave selflessly for a cause far beyond their own horizons (2 Cor 8:1–5). At that time, he urged Titus to stir up the Corinthians to similar generosity based on the Macedonians' example (2 Cor 8:6; 9:1–5). Paul drew on an important underlying principle grounded in the OT: **the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows generously will also reap generously** (2 Cor 9:6; Prov 11:24). All this is relevant for Titus's task, & the Cretans' responsibility, in the current setting. The Cretan believers should learn to do good for meeting urgent needs in order that they won't be **unproductive**, literally *not be without fruit*. In Ephesians Paul warns of **fruitless deeds of darkness** (5:11) & Jesus charged His followers to **bear much fruit** (Jn 15:8). Peter gave instruction to keep believers **from being ineffective & unproductive** & unfruitful (2 Pt 1:8). Saving faith is more than just agreeing with some biblical truths.¹⁰ True saving faith puts boots on the ground in practical ways of helping others. But we must have the right heart, the right motives, the right attitude in the doing of good.

Legend tells of a humble old man who wished to do good to others, but not to receive their praise. So he wrote letters of blessing & encouragement, placed them in bottles, & set them afloat on the seas where, through the power of wind & wave, they went throughout the world, cheering many gloomy hearts, lifting many drooping hands, & strengthening many weakened knees. Like that old man, each of us knows the deceptive nature of our own hearts when it comes to **good deeds**. Our hearts are so twisted & wicked that the good we do for others is sometimes designed to bring good

⁹ Harris, *Prepositions & Theology*, pp 90–91

¹⁰ Robert W. Yarbrough, [The Letters to Timothy & Titus](#), ed. D. A. Carson, pp 558–559

to ourselves. We give of our money so others will see our generosity; we give of our time so others will give us honor; we invite people into our homes so they'll be impressed with our possessions or hospitality. Wise Christians learn to distrust their own hearts, motives, & actions. Jesus addressed this temptation when He told of those who love to give generously but only with great fanfare & publicity. He told of others who love to pray, but only where they can be seen & honored by others. To such people He said it's far better to give & to pray in secret, for then they'll receive the blessings God dispenses in secret. But if they give & pray only to be seen by others, that fleeting, public recognition is all the blessing they'll receive. The good we do for others should be done in secret to whatever degree possible. A million dollars printed on an oversized check & paraded before the church is of much less value in the eyes of God than \$20 given in secret. A gift is no gift at all if its purpose is to enhance the reputation of the giver. The widow's mite is a great treasure when it's given in secret from pure motives. Likewise, the best of our prayers are the ones uttered silently, known only to ourselves & to the God who hears. The simplest private prayer uttered from the depths of a broken & contrite heart is far more precious than the most eloquent public prayer uttered from an arrogant heart. God weighs the heart before the deeds. & just as we'd all do well to keep our good deeds secret from others, we do well to keep them secret from ourselves. What do I mean? We do well to dwell on our past **good deeds** just as warily as our past sins, because both can weaken & lead us astray; both can invite us to be defined by what we've done, not what we do. We live in the present, not the past. We gain little from pondering the good or bad deeds of yesterday. But we can gain much when we turn our attention to the day at hand, to consider not how we were a blessing yesterday, but how we can be a blessing today. For each day brings its opportunities to give, to pray, to bless, & to do. Yesterday's generosity can't fulfill today's lack or yesterday's prayers comfort today's sorrow. The man who's hungry today can't be filled by yesterday's meal. Our calling isn't to hoard good deeds & count them out like a miser does his money. Rather, it's to do good with liberality & generosity, & to leave the accounting to God, because He's the One who promises to remember every word, every deed, every prayer, &

every gift. We can & should be quick to forget & to entrust it all to Him, because He's the One who keeps perfect records.¹¹

Are we engaging in **good deeds**? **Engage** speaks of a consistent pattern or lifestyle of good works. **Good deeds** are to be the habit of our lives. They're the norm, not the exception. Good works are to meet pressing needs so that we won't **be unproductive**. When a fruit tree bears no fruit, there's not much use of it. Jesus said in Jn 15:2, **Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; & every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit**. Some have more fruit than others, but Jesus is clear that all who are connected to Him will have fruit. How can we bear more fruit? Jesus tells us:

Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned... My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples (Jn 15:4-6, 8).

True Christians, are known, not by some past decision or a prayer with their lips, but by their fruit.

Mt 7:17-21 says,

Every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven...

True saving faith in Jesus alone is at the root of salvation, but good works are the inevitable fruit of salvation. So how do we **learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs**?

1. Abide in Christ. It's impossible to bear fruit apart from Him, continuing, remaining with Him. Spend time with Him in prayer & His Word.
2. Get to know needs in the body & meet them as you can. If you aren't getting to know people, you're not going to know the needs God might use you to meet. Talk with people & help as you can.
3. Encourage others by example & exhortation to good deeds. As the writer of Hebs 10:24 tells us, **consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds.**

¹¹ Adapted from Tim Challies, 3/10/21, www.challies.com/articles/keep-your-good-deeds-secret-from-even-yourself/

4. Think often of God's saving you to glorify Him. Titus 3:4-7 clearly stressed God's sovereignty in salvation but in vss 8-15 our responsibility is emphasized. God is sovereign in salvation. It's all by His work, but we're responsible & to be very active in our sanctification. We live by, & because of, the life God gave us in regeneration. A corpse that's been resurrected & has been given a new heart can't help but show signs of life. The same is true of the spiritual dead who were given spiritual life. There will be signs of life, there will be the fruit of **good deeds**. Again, we're not saved by good works, but we're saved for good works. In fact, Js 2 says faith without works is dead. In other words, it's not true genuine saving faith, but merely an empty profession. Godliness & **good deeds** are the result of God in us. As we work together, doing **good deeds**, we must also realize...

B. We're Interdependent Although Paul was extremely gifted, he needed others. It wasn't a one-way street where Christians needed Paul. No, Paul needed them as well. He needed Titus at his side badly enough that he asked him to leave Crete & spend the winter with him. Paul was always a team player. We need each other. Because of that we must...

C. Involve Others in Ministry & Trust Them To Do It If you've worked with people, you know it's often easier to do it yourself rather than involving others. It's said that DL Moody used to joke that the best committee consists of 3 members where one is sick & the other can't attend. If you're not working with others, you aren't functioning as God intended. Paul recruited & trained Titus to oversee the work in Crete & now he has 2 possible candidates to replace him, **Artemas & Tychicus**. Also, Paul encourages Titus to enlist the churches in Crete to provide financially to help **Zenas & Apollos** in their travels. We must all work together to function properly. Don't be afraid to get others to work with you. Paul was comfortable having **Apollos** on the team, even though **Apollos** was more eloquent than Paul. He trusted Titus, Timothy, **Artemas, & Tychicus** enough to entrust the oversight of churches to their care. We must look for faithful people & hand things off to them, trusting them to do the job well.

D. Promote Others Paul often promoted & praised the ministries of others. Here he promotes the ministries of **Artemas & Tychicus** & encourages Titus to help **Zenas & Apollos**. When the church in Corinth formed into factions, with some saying, **I am of Apollos**, Paul didn't put Apollos down &

promote himself. Instead, he pointed out that he & Apollos were both servants of Jesus. Paul planted, Apollos watered, & God gave the increase (1 Cor 3:5-6). Paul was willing to put Apollos on the same level as himself & encourage others to benefit from Apollos' ministry. That's an important principle: promote others & help them succeed. We all serve the same Lord & our aim shouldn't be to promote ourselves, but rather to see Christ exalted.

E. Be A Servant Leader Even though Paul was an important man with an extensive ministry, he always showed concern for the needs of others. Here, he's concerned that the churches in Crete help **Zenas & Apollos** on their way, so they lack nothing. He also emphasizes the need for the churches to engage in **good deeds**, meeting the needs of others. Paul set that example. He was always demonstrating by example what it means to serve others.

F. Model Living By Faith God works through our faith. There's no area that requires more faith than that of financial support. While Paul was very open about mentioning the financial needs of others, such as **Zenas & Apollos** or the needy saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8 & 9), we never find him mentioning his own needs for support, except after the needs have been met (Phil 4:10-20). He could have written to Titus, *Before you come, I must tell you that if the saints in Crete don't give generously to my needs, we'll have to limit the ministry & many won't hear the gospel through us.* But he never did that. Paul learned to trust God & be content when his funds were low. It was in the context of trusting God for support that he wrote, **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me** (Phil 4:13).

G. Live By God's Grace. Paul closed all of his letters with some mention of God's **grace**, but it wasn't just a formality. Here, it literally reads, *The grace be with you all.* **The grace** is the amazing, abundant, sustaining, all-sufficient grace of God. It was His **grace** that reached down to that angry persecutor of the church on the Damascus Road & changed his heart. It was completely undeserved. Paul deserved God's judgment, but received His mercy. God's **grace** motivated Paul to suffer hardship & persecution for the gospel. God's **grace** as shown at the cross was Paul's only message. If anyone perverted the **grace** of God, Paul **accursed** them (Gal 1:6-9). If any church turned from God's **grace** to a system of works for salvation, Paul rebuked it in the strongest of

words (Gal 5:4). God's **grace** was sufficient to sustain Paul in trials & keep him from exalting himself (2 Cor 12:1-10). Paul's entire theology & preaching can be summed up by that one word, **grace**.

There are many Christians who, at best, dabble at serving the Lord. But how many can honestly say, *I'm a zealot for serving the Lord?* If you aren't zealous for **good deeds**, it's because you've lost sight of the right motivation. That motivation is the kindness of God our Savior & His love for us as sinners that appeared in the person of Jesus Christ. He broke into our lives & saved us, not on the basis of things we've done, but according to His mercy. By His power, He regenerated us from spiritual death to eternal life. He renewed us by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. The result is that being justified by His grace, we now are heirs according to the hope of eternal life (3:4-7). That's why we should be zealous in serving Jesus Christ & in the doing of **good deeds**. Let me close by asking 2 questions: 1st, are you on the team? By that I mean, have you experienced the kindness, love, mercy, & grace of God at the cross? Have you been justified by His grace so you're now an heir of eternal life? If not, don't make the mistake of thinking you can do any good works that will get you into heaven. You can't. You must come to Christ as a helplessly lost sinner & receive by faith His free gift of eternal life. If you've done that, the 2nd question is: Are you a benchwarmer or are you all in, committed to **good deeds** & ministry? Are you using whatever gifts God has given you so that one day you'll hear, **Well done, good & faithful servant ... enter into the joy of your Master** (Mt 25:23)? God wants to reach the world, including the Rogue Valley, through a team of believers committed to ministry because they've tasted His abundant grace. How are you helping that to happen? In closing, listen to the words of John Piper:

*Be a people zealous for **good deeds**. Be a people who aren't enslaved to worldly comforts, but who consider it more blessed to give than to receive. Be a people who dream not about the comforts of bigger salaries or days of vacation & retirement, but who dream about how many different & creative ways we can make a name for the glory of the grace of God here & around the world.*¹²

¹² John Piper, www.desiringgod.org/messages/good-deeds-and-the-glory-of-god