

Titus Chapter Three (vv.8-15)

The latter part of Titus 3 mainly comprises individual commands to Titus. He has already been exhorted to *remind* the believers to be subject to governing authorities (v.1). Now he must *reinforce* the faithful saying (v.8), *refuse* foolish speculations (v.9), *reject* those who were divisive (v.10), *rendezvous* with Paul at Nicopolis (v.12), *replenish* Zenas and Apollos with every necessary resource for their journey (v.13), and *relay* Paul's heartfelt greetings to the saints (v.15).

The Power of the Gospel – The Triumph of Grace [vv.3-8]

v.8. This is a **faithful saying** [*logos*] and **these things** both refer, firstly, to the doctrinal statement of vv.3-7, then the practical exhortations of vv.1-2. There are five faithful sayings in the pastoral epistles – there is a saying for *sinners* (1 Timothy 1.15), for *shepherds* (1 Timothy 3.1), for *servants* (1 Timothy 4.9), for *sufferers* (2 Timothy 2.11), and, here, for *saints* (Titus 3.8). Literally, the phrase is 'faithful the word' and refers to something that is trustworthy, reliable and worthy of full approval. This fundamental gospel truth was to be **affirmed constantly** in the sense of insisting and asserting confidently. Bible doctrine should be preached without apology; not with harshness and hesitancy but with confidence and boldness. After all, the false teachers were dogmatic (cf. 1 Timothy 1.7), so why not Titus? Kitchen says, "Titus, with words of truth, should match and exceed the confidence of those who boldly spew forth falsehoods." The purpose of such affirmation is that **they which have believed in God** may be intent on engaging in good works. Those who "have placed their faith in God" [NET] stands emphatically at the end of the sentence in Greek, and pictures not only their wholehearted acceptance of these truths – they have 'believed God' [JND] – but also their personal relationship of faith with God. The re-iteration of such truth should encourage believers to be **careful** [*phrontizō*] **to maintain good works**. *Phrontizō* means to 'think out' or devote careful attention to. Believers should be continually and proactively thinking about how they can busy themselves in helping others, for **these things** (i.e. good deeds) are **good** [*kalos*] **and profitable** [*ōphelimos*] **unto men** – they are spiritually beautiful and practically beneficial to all, not just believers. This is a matter of testimony in the wider community.

The Problem of False Teaching [vv.9-11]

With the primary exhortations to the saints complete, Paul returns to the basic reason for such exhortations – the threat of false teachers (and their doctrine) to the assemblies in Crete (1.10-16). As previously noted, these men were likely Jewish – of the 'circumcision group' (1.10) – who claimed to be Christian but insisted on blending Christianity with Jewish legalism and traditions. They likely taught that Gentile believers needed to follow aspects of the Mosaic Law such as circumcision, dietary rules, or ceremonial observances to be saved, and live holy lives. Titus is warned to avoid getting involved in all kinds of foolish speculations. These speculations had a Jewish flavour and were to no spiritual profit.

v.9. The adversative particle **but** signals a contrasting change of subject. Titus was to **avoid** the folly of the false teachers. The word "avoid" [*periistēmi*] is a compound word meaning 'to place around' (cf. Acts 25.7). Here, in the middle voice, it has the thought of deliberately walking around something so as to avoid it. Four things are to be avoided:

- **foolish questions** [*zētēsis*] which has "the basic sense of searching or investigating but came to be used for discussion or debate, especially that which was controversial and contentious," (MacArthur). These arguments were often based on human reason and imagination and were therefore "foolish" (moronic), not resulting from a sincere desire to learn but geared towards producing an argument (Thropay).
- **genealogies** – Jewish Rabbis spent their time building imaginary genealogies for OT saints. It was an obsessive tracing of family lineage and descent far beyond that recorded in Scripture. The determining of a family line back to an illustrious ancestor often became a source of pride and status.
- **contentions** or 'strife' (bitter conflict) – quarrels and rivalry arising from the foolish questions and genealogies (cf. 1 Timothy 6.4). Such behaviour easily creates a party spirit leading to division (1 Corinthians 1.11).
- **strivings about the law** – fighting and squabbles about intricate points of Mosaic Law. Jewish scribes spent endless hours discussing what could and could not be done on the Sabbath, including "Should a Jew eat an egg laid on a festival day? What sort of wick and oil should a Jew use for candles he burns on the Sabbath?"

In contrast to the word of God and good works which are "profitable" (v.8, 2 Timothy 3.16), these legal squabbles were **unprofitable** – producing no spiritual benefit – they were as useless as the Levitical priesthood in the dispensation of grace (cf. Hebrews 7.18)! They were also **vain** (empty), producing no spiritual results (fruitless). The word "vain" also describes idols (Acts 14.15), man's wisdom (1 Corinthians 3.20) and religion that doesn't change behaviour (James 1.26).

v.10. Having re-introduced the subject of false teaching, Paul advises Titus on how to deal with a particular troublemaker. He describes his *activity* (heretic), his *admonitions* and his *abandonment* (reject). As to his activity, the word **heretick** [*hairetikos*] means ‘factious’ or ‘divisive’. This is an individual that causes schism and division. The division caused by a heretic may or may not involve the propagation of false teaching, i.e. heresy (2 Peter 2.1). Instead, these individuals can cause division by their very behaviour and attitude – no false teaching may be involved at all. A heretic vigorously promotes his own opinion, refusing to consider other views contrary to his own. He thus makes a path of his own choosing and seeks to take others with him. We should always be very careful of any opinion which separates us from the fellowship of our fellow saints. Barclay says, “*Heretics are simply people who have decided that they are right and everybody else is wrong. Paul’s warning is against those who have made their own ideas the test of all truth.*” MacDonald is stronger, “*He usually has one note on his violin and plays it to death. Soon he gathers around himself people with a negative outlook, and the rest he drives away. He will divide an assembly rather than abandon his ideological hobbyhorse.*”

It is highly unlikely that such a heretic was part of an assembly in Crete. The structure of the epistle shows that Paul is reverting to his warning about false teachers (cf. 1.10-16). Rather, this man is working *outside* the assembly and akin to those who ruin (subvert) Christian households by visiting their homes to pedal their error (cf. Titus 1.11; 2 Timothy 3.6). The heretic works his way into the homes of believers, causing upset and seeking to form a splinter group around himself.

Such a person was to be given a **first** and **second admonition** [*nouthesia*], i.e. warning about ceasing a particular course of improper conduct. The man was to be “admonished” or ‘put in mind’, the word *nouthesia* implying verbal corrective instruction. According to Towner, “*the corrective process Paul outlines consists of confronting the offender with a formal verbal warning. This action applies the qualification for elders given in 1.9, drawing on the same verbal root: ‘refute those who contradict [sound doctrine].’*” Obviously, Titus has no jurisdiction over those who do not belong to the assembly, but this man is directly misleading and causing spiritual damage to the assembly, thus giving Titus the right to act.

The man was to be warned twice. If he was unwilling to change his self-chosen course, he was to be **rejected** [*paraiteomai*]. The word “reject” simply means to ‘avoid’ or ‘stay away from’. This is not a demand for ex-communication, for the man is not part of the assembly. How could Paul possibly counsel for believers to avoid other believers in assembly fellowship?! Rather, Paul is warning Titus (and the believers in Crete) to keep his distance from the man and avoid him. After all, he is self-consciously twisted by sin (v.11). His “rejection” is not a one-time act, but an ongoing stance toward one who is rebellious (cf. Matthew 18.17). Thus, the man is to be kept on the outside of the assembly and avoided.

v.11. The behaviour of the heretic in v.10 has brought certain facts to light about his character. He has refused to listen to admonition. As such, Titus (and the saints) **know** that such a person **is subverted, and sinneth** or “is twisted by sin” [NET]. The word “subverted” means ‘to turn inside out’ – he is in a state of perversion (corruption) and wholly out of touch with truth. This person is also “sinning” – he is wilfully missing the divine standard by his persistent refusal to receive correction. He is therefore **condemned of himself** – there is no need for the saints or assembly to judge this man, he is already self-judged by his own actions. This may involve his works which contradict the God he professes to know (cf. 1.16), or his refusal to abandon his self-chosen views. Towner says, “*the offender’s persistence in the teaching and stubborn refusal to acknowledge the apostolic warning amount to a self-pronouncement of guilt.*”

Salutations [vv.12-15]

In the final section of the epistle, Paul gives his final instructions and sends his greetings. These verses describe the vital and practical mechanics of ongoing Christian testimony. Paul is concerned about weather, the practical arrangements of travel, and the organisation of his spiritual manpower (preachers).

v.12. Paul’s plan was to send either Artemas or Tychicus to relieve Titus of his duties on Crete – the believers would not be left without help when Titus departed. The word **when** means ‘whenever’ suggesting Paul was not certain as to the exact time. His plans were subject to the will of God. **Artemas** is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. His name means ‘whole’ or ‘healthy’ which is most fitting given that the epistle is concerned with “sound (healthy) doctrine”. Titus is later mentioned as being in Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4.10) and Tychicus was later sent to Ephesus to allow Timothy to come to Paul in Rome (2 Timothy 4.12). As such, it was likely Artemas who was finally sent to Crete. **Tychicus** is mentioned five times in Scripture and was a well-known disciple from Asia Minor. He had the privilege of carrying the epistles to the Ephesians (6.21) and Colossians (4.7) from Rome where Paul was under house arrest. He receives high commendation in Paul’s letters being a “beloved brother” and “faithful servant” of the Lord (Colossians 4.7).

Paul instructed Titus to **be diligent to come to me** – it was a request for earnest endeavour to be undertaken without delay. The assignment of Titus on Crete was obviously not permanent, and he was therefore not the “first bishop of the Cretans” as some Bibles would have it. Paul was located in **Nicopolis** (city of victory). There were a number of cities called

Nicopolis in NT times, but the most prominent was on the western coast of Greece (Achaia). The city was founded by Augustus in c.30BC to commemorate his naval victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium. It was there that Paul had **determined** [*krinō*] **to winter** for travel was dangerous in the ancient world during winter. Interestingly, the word *krinō* suggests that Paul had thought carefully about the matter, weighed the pros and cons, and come to a settled conviction. Obviously, Paul also believed this was the will of God – but nothing of that is mentioned. Determining the will of God in a particular decision does not always involve direct divine guidance. God expects us to use sanctified common sense and reasoning according to the spiritual principles we have learned from the word of God.

v.13. It is likely that **Zenas** and Apollos were visiting Crete to encourage Titus in the work and no doubt brought this very epistle from Paul. Zenas is a Greek name (abbreviated form of Zenodorus, ‘gift of Zeus’) suggesting he was saved from a pagan background. But a Greek name does not mean he was a Gentile (as the name Apollos proves). In fact, Zenas was probably an expert in Jewish **law** and therefore a very appropriate man to send to Crete to deal with some of the detailed arguments the false teachers. In addition, **Apollos** was a man who was mighty in the OT Scriptures (Acts 18.24). They would be quite the formidable duo!

Zenas and Apollos were soon to depart from Crete, thus Titus was to **bring them on their journey diligently**. The NET has, “Make every effort to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; make sure they have what they need.” Titus was to supply these men with all the necessary articles they would need for their return journey – so that they would be **wanting for nothing**. Paul was as careful about the wellbeing of others as he was for himself. Generous material assistance for the travel of Christian workers was commonplace in the early church (cf. Acts 15.3; Romans 15.24; 3 John vv.5-8).

v.14. The practical requirements of sending Zenas and Apollos on their journey reminds Paul that this is another way the saints can engage in good works – the burden was not to fall on Titus alone, others could share the responsibility. Too often the practical side of the work of the assembly is left to a minority. The phrase **let ours** is literally ‘the ones that belong to us’, an expression of Paul’s identity and affinity with those who professed Christ in Crete. They must (imperative) also **learn to maintain good works for necessary uses** (pressing needs). Kitchen says, “The fact that such behaviour must be learned reminds us that it is not the normal course of the human heart and will, but that we must be reprogrammed to be concerned for other’s needs and to do something to help them.” For the believers to behave in this way would ensure that they **be not unfruitful** (unproductive), for good works are the fruit of the tree of salvation. Thus, the principle of seeking to help others, even in the matter of hospitality and assisting others on their journey, is the secret to avoiding the misery and tragedy of a self-centred and wasted life.

v.15. Paul gives three salutations – one from his *helpers*, one from his *heart*, and one from his *hand*. **All** the workers with Paul joined in sending their personal greetings to Titus. Paul was usually accompanied by a group of helpers (cf. Acts 20.4). It must have been of great encouragement to Titus to know, that whilst absent from the apostle, there were many who loved him and were praying for him. Titus himself was to communicate Paul’s **greetings to them that love us**. This is likely a reference to the believers in Crete (in contradistinction to the false teachers) who were filled with affection for Paul and those who laboured with him. The sphere of such love was **in the faith**, which lacks the definite article in Greek. Without the article the phrase *could* mean ‘faithfully’ or ‘loyally’, but it seems likely that on this occasion it is correct (as the KJV) to “understand (infer) the definite article and view the love as that which exists among those who have personally embraced the body of truth known as ‘the faith’” (Kitchen). William Kelly says, “the Christian faith defines the sphere in which their mutual love is exercised”. Finally, Paul sends a greeting with his own hand to *all* the saints – **grace be with you all**. His desire is that all the saints would continue to enjoy and appreciate divine favour (saving grace) and provision (sustaining grace) – that which has been the very source of their salvation (2.11) and justification (3.7).