

“Teamwork”
Titus 3:12-15
(Preached at Trinity, June 25, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. With **Verses 12-15** we come to the end of Paul's letter to Titus and the end of the Pastoral Epistles. Titus had been left in Crete to address the issue of false teachers sowing heretical teaching throughout the churches. It was causing great damage and needed to be stopped. Titus was a loyal and trustworthy brother—a co-laborer in the Gospel. Paul was entrusting him to ordain elders in all the churches and stop the spread of the heretical teaching.
2. Paul writes of his plans to send either Artemas or Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus so Titus could join him to overwinter at Nicopolis. Paul looked forward to seeing Titus but the situation at Crete was too serious to leave them without leadership during this critical time.
 - a. It is always good to raise up indigenous people to lead new churches in foreign lands. This was what Titus was doing.
Titus 1:5 NAU - "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,"
 - b. Although training indigenous pastors is the long-term plan, outside help should continue as long as it is needed.
3. One thing we see consistently in the early church and the ministry of the apostles is the great number of Christians involved in the work. Gospel work is a group effort. We make disciples who then make disciples. We all labor together as the body of Christ.
1 Corinthians 3:6-9 NAU - "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷ So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."
4. We are all gifted in different ways, but all of us are useful and essential in the Body of Christ.
1 Corinthians 12:11-18 NAU - "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. ¹² For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired."

5. We are all a part of the all-important work of the Kingdom. We see this working out practically as Paul closes his letters by mentioning co-laborers in the work—faithful brothers and sisters laboring together for the glory of Christ.
6. Paul names two individuals under consideration to relieve Titus so he can meet Paul at Nicopolis.
- a. We don't know anything more about Artemas than what we read here. Obviously, he was hard working and trustworthy. Most likely he was a faithful pastor, experienced and able to relieve Titus in Crete.
 - b. Paul also has Tychicus in mind as a possible relief for Titus. We know him from several of Paul's other letters.
According to Paul Tychicus was a "beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant"
2 Timothy 4:12 NAU - "Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus."
Ephesians 6:21 – "But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:"
Colossians 4:7 – "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord:"
7. As Paul closes out this letter he returns to the subject of good works.
Titus 3:13 NAU - "Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them."
- A. We aren't sure who Zenas was. What kind of a lawyer was he? Was he a teacher of the Law of God or was he a Roman lawyer. Judging by his name probably the latter. His name means "Zeus-given" or "Gift of Zeus." But he was now a Christian and his chief interest was the Kingdom of God.
 - B. Apparently, he was traveling with Apollos whom we know from the Book of Acts as a Jew, mighty in the Scriptures and fervent in spirit. In 1 Corinthians we read that Apollos had become an influential leader in the church. Paul saw him as a faithful fellow laborer in the Gospel.
1 Corinthians 3:5-6 NAU - "What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave *opportunity* to each one. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."
 - C. We are not told the reason for their journey but Paul requests that they receive provision from the Christian community. They were faithful laborers and worthy of the love and care of the Christian community. Again, we can see the importance of shared labor within the body of Christ.
 - D. Paul trusted that the brethren would adequately meet their needs. Paul uses the word "diligently" which carries the idea of earnestness, of importance. He also implies the extent of their help – "so that nothing is lacking for them. Good works take many forms and can be of great benefit to God's Kingdom as well as to this fallen world.

- I. All of our labors are done as part of the body in cooperation with each other.
- A. No Christian labors alone – God has a work force.
1. In the church each member is contributing to the ultimate end of God’s purpose.
 2. In a universal sense we are laboring along with our brothers and sisters throughout the world.
 3. We are also laboring with the brethren at our particular local church
We are under the disciplines, the authority, the doctrines of this church.
- B. We are laboring together as the body of Christ.
1. It is often necessary that much labor attend the seed after it is sown
 2. Although God can save with a single hearing of the Gospel, it often takes much cultivation – much labor.
We are often merely adding to work already done by those who have gone before us.
 3. Every Christian is to share in the work – God has purposed to use each of us differently – many tools in the hand of one Master Builder.
Matthew Henry – “We work under him, and with him, and for him.”¹
 4. Not every Christian goes to the mission field. Some go, some stay home to support. And we are all a part of a mighty army of praying soldiers who pray, pray, pray.
 5. One of the greatest passages on prayer is found in Daniel 10. Daniel received an angelic word on the importance of his prayers.
Daniel 10:12 NAU - "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding *this* and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words."
 6. We are in a great warfare far beyond our understanding. It demands much prayer.
Abraham Kuyper described our spiritual war – “If once the curtain were pulled back, and the spiritual world behind it came to view, it would expose to our spiritual vision a struggle so intense, so convulsive, sweeping everything within its range, that the fiercest battle ever fought on earth would seem, by comparison, a mere game. Not here, but up there—that is where the real conflict is waged. Our earthly struggle drones in its backlash.”²

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2248.

² Sinclair Ferguson, *The Preacher’s Commentary, Vol. 21: Daniel*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988) Page 199.

II. Paul returns to the theme of good works in **Verse 14**.

Titus 3:14 NAU - "Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful."

- A. Paul has approached good works from more than one perspective
1. We've seen the inseparable relationship between sound doctrine and good works. Right doctrine must lead to right living. We must rightly apply God's Word to our lives.
Titus 3:1 NAU - "to be ready for every good deed,"
 2. We've seen that good works are essential to Christianity, but never meritorious. Good works are the result, not the cause of our faith.
Titus 3:8 NAU - "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men."
 3. Now Paul simply sets before us the practicality of good works.
 - a. Good works are essential to our teamwork. We should give attention to helping to meet the needs of our co-laborers.
 - b. "Pressing needs" in **V14** do not necessarily point to financial needs. We have to help one another. This is particularly true as we help one another in our Gospel labors—"so that they will not be unfruitful."
- B. Paul says this practice of good needs is a practice that must be learned.
Titus 3:14 NAU - "Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds."
1. Few do acts of service naturally. We tend to be keenly involved in our own needs and desires. Most see themselves as a part of the church as individuals, not as a part of a body.
 2. We learn by doing. In other words, we should become experienced in well-doing.

Conclusion:

1. Paul concludes his letter with greetings from the brothers and sisters who are laboring with him. "All who are with me greet you."
Again, we see the importance of the Christian community. The body of Christ is united together.
2. We are one body sharing a common love together.
Ephesians 4:4-6 NAU - "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."
3. You might add to Paul's expression of oneness, "One love."
4. And then Paul's final words, "Grace be with you all." Grace was foremost in all of Paul's letters.
 - A. He opened most of his letters with a blessing of grace—including this letter.
Titus 1:4 NAU - "To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior."
 - B. All that we are is by God's grace. He chose us in eternity to adopt us as His children. All by His grace.

What an excellent way to end this letter. Those who have received grace should be a gracious people, ready to show grace towards others, always prepared for good works.