

**May 16, 2010**  
**Titus 3:12-15**

Alright good morning. Take your Bibles out with me and let's go back to our study of Titus together. We are in the last few verses of this short but incredible letter. Today we'll look at verses 12 through 15 of chapter 3.

But I want you to do me a favor for a minute. I want you to erase the past 2000 years of church history. Go back to the first century – the Roman empire was the known world. If you were to list the major world religions, Christianity wouldn't even make the list. At best it is a little tangent from Judaism. Its followers claimed that some nobody Jewish guy from Galilee named Jesus who had been crucified was actually the Jewish Messiah and that he had come back to life from the dead. But the average guy on the street – no clue – never heard the gospel. The world is pagan.

Now onto that scene comes another little nobody Jewish guy named Paul. He had encountered this risen Jesus and had been charged by him to take the gospel to the Gentile – the non-Jewish – world. That's a big job. How's he going to do it?

Remember – 2000 years ago – there's no KLOVE, AirOne or TBN or sermon tapes or conference tour DVDs. There's no printing press – no post office – much less an internet. Dude couldn't even get around fast. Couldn't drive in a car – ride on a train – fly in a jet – he had to walk or go in a boat from city to city. And he couldn't pick up a phone and call his partners anywhere – there's no text messaging, no Twitter, no Facebook, no iphone – there is no app for that. He had to use hand-written and hand-carried letters that would take weeks, sometimes months to get there.

And yet Paul pulled it off. He launched the Christian message to the Gentile world and permanently changed the history of the planet. How did he do it?

Let me put it this way: how do we do it?

The same way Paul did. And we get a glimpse of that today in these verses – it isn't the full picture – but it is a valuable one. We're going to see that **Paul reached the world through a TEAM of believers committed to ministry**. Let's look at what **Titus 3:12-15** shows us. TEXT

We have looked at a lot of incredible truth and theology and doctrine and instructions and warnings in our study of Titus. And it would be easy for us to come to these verses today and think – ok these last 4 verses are no biggie – just the wrap up – nothing for us here. And that would be a huge mistake. In fact in some ways this is the most important part. I'll tell you why. **Every instruction about doctrine, every warning about heresy, every encouragement to holiness and good works is effective only as it is REALIZED in the lives of PEOPLE**. And that's what we see in these verses. So let me introduce some of these real people to us and then we'll look at what we learn from them. Some of these you'll recognize, others – not so much.

Obviously he isn't mentioned here, but Titus is the starting point. He is Paul's faithful delegate – sent to Crete to work with a very difficult group of people and a less than stellar situation. The last time we see him in Scripture he is heading for Dalamatia which is modern day Albania, but he is like a son to Paul – a solid, faithful man of God.

Then we in verse 12 we find Artemas. We know nothing about this guy. This is the only time he is mentioned in the Bible. But the fact that he is mentioned as one Paul would send to take on the task Titus has of setting things straight in Crete – making sure the right guys are in leadership – handling the false teachers – all that would not be entrusted to a man with weak character or little faith. And if the timing was such, then when Paul sent Tychicus to replace Timothy at Ephesus, there is a good chance that Artemas did come to Crete to replace Titus.

Speaking of Tychicus, he ought to be familiar to those of you who have been here a few years since we also looked at him in our study of Colossians. He was with Paul on the missionary journey from Corinth to Asia Minor in Acts 20. He was the one who took the letter of Ephesians and the letter of

Colossians to those churches. Remember in Colossians 4:7 Paul says this guy is: “*a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.*”

So in verse 12 Paul tells Titus – look I’m going to send somebody to take your place and I want you to come meet me in Nicopolis for the winter – I want to spend some time with you, so meet me there.

Then in verse 13 you meet a couple other guys. First we find Zenas the lawyer. We don’t know anything about him either. We don’t even know what kind of lawyer he was – whether he was a Roman litigator kind of lawyer or a Jewish expert in the law kind of lawyer. We just don’t know. He is – by the way – the only Christian lawyer mentioned in the Bible – for what it’s worth. Interpret as you’d like.

But he is coming with Apollos and Apollos we know a lot about. In Acts 18:24-25, Luke describes Apollos as a Jew from Alexandria who was “*a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.*”

So Apollos comes to Ephesus and begins to speak and gets invited to the home of Priscilla and Aquila who take him aside and Acts says they “*teach him the way of God even more adequately*”. And the fact that such a learned and accomplished speaker was willing to listen shows that he also had a humble, teachable heart. And later he had a tremendous ministry in the city of Corinth.

And so in verse 13 Paul tells Titus to do all he can to help these two guys on their way. We don’t know where they were going – they are just on some missionary enterprise. Paul is moving the troops around so to speak and when they get to Crete, they had this letter to give to Titus and he was to meet their needs – whether it was spiritual or material or food or housing or whatever – take care of them and send them on their way. And we’ll come back to that in just a minute, but for now jump down to verse 15 with me.

Paul says “*everyone with me sends you greetings.*” Don’t know where Paul was – maybe Macedonia which might mean somewhere like Philippi – but wherever he is, he isn’t alone – he’s working with a team – a church – of other believers where he is at that includes more than Zenas and Apollos. Paul didn’t hole up on his own in ministry.

Then the rest of verse 15 says “*Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.*” He’s talking about the friends and fellow Christians there where Titus is in Crete. And there may be a subtle allusion to those who did not love Paul – which would be the false teachers that we saw Paul tell Titus to rebuke and refute and silence in the church. But we also see here that the reason that we love each other is because we share a common faith in Jesus Christ. “*Those who love us in the faith.*” This is a great reminder again about what the unity of the church is all about – yes **there is value in everyone getting along and literally liking each other – but what holds us together, the UNITY of the church is around the TRUTHS of the faith – everything else is peripheral.**

What all this says is Paul telling Titus “You’re part of a team. These guys are going there and you’re coming here and you do this and we’ll do this and this is the plan.” Paul didn’t labor alone. He had a team of believers committed to ministry – who worked with him for the cause of Christ. He viewed every Christian as a team member with a vital role to fulfill. Nobody was a benchwarmer. And that is still true here.

**If you know Christ as Lord, the Holy Spirit has gifted you so you can serve Him in the mission. You need to see yourself as a vital MEMBER of the team – committed to ministry.**

That word ‘ministry’ may scare you because it has taken on what some call a “stained-glass connotation.” In other words – “Pastors are called into the ministry, but I’m just a normal Christian.” That is not a biblical distinction. **Ministry just means SERVICE and every Christian is saved to serve Jesus Christ. Ministry should be the OVERFLOW of your walk with Jesus.** Think about it this way – if you’re cup is full up with Jesus, you can’t carry it without slopping over on others. That’s

ministry. Just like we saw last week when we were looking at Mary in Luke how God reminded us that when you Worship Jesus – when you Learn Truth – when you Build Community – you can't help but be used by God to Reach Your World – that's what our vision of doing life in Christ together here is all about!

That's ministry. It may be in a structured form – teaching Sunday School or playing on a worship team or leading a LINK or serving in kids or youth ministries or it may mean inviting new people over for a meal and encouraging them in their walk with Christ. But **there should be no such thing as a BENCHWARMER Christian**. If you're saved, you're called to ministry on God's team. And that's what Paul even lays out here back in the verse we haven't talked about yet – **verse 14** - look at it with me. *“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives.”*

The NIV translation there unfortunately clouds the meaning. The New American Standard has a closer word choice to the meaning of the Greek when it says: *“And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds **to meet PRESSING needs, that they may not be UNFRUITFUL.**”*

**The issue** here isn't daily necessities of life or productive lives in the connotation that we probably think of those terms – but **meeting pressing needs – mainly of others – as the fruit of our relationship with Jesus**. That's the kind of good deeds being focused on here. **But the focus on GOOD DEEDS as a summary of the Christian life is all through this letter.**

In **Chapter 1:16** he denounces the false teaches because they were *“detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.”*

In **2:7** he tells Titus to *“In everything set them an example by doing what is good.”*

In **2:14** he says that Jesus *“gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”*

In **3:1** he tells Titus to *“Remind the people... to be ready to do whatever is good.”*

In **3:5** he clarifies that we are not saved on the basis of good deeds but then in **3:8** he emphasizes that *“that those who have trusted in God” will be “careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.”*

And now here again in **3:14** he repeats one last time that Christians must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good. You don't get the impression that good deeds are an optional extra you may want to consider in your spare time, do you?

No – this is one of a several of **principles for TEAMWORK in the church** that God is giving us today in this passage. The first one we just saw is that **We are each responsible to engage in GOOD DEEDS**. And we'll come back to that in a second as well. But let me pull out a few other principles for us as we are challenged with the team work required as the church of God to accomplish the mission of God. Not only is each of us responsible to engage in good deeds, like we saw all through chapter 2, **we are all INTERDEPENDENT as the body of Christ**.

You see that here? Paul was an extremely gifted missionary and ambassador for Jesus. But he needed others. It wasn't just a one way street where the Christians and new churches needed Paul. We see here that Paul needed Titus by his side badly enough to ask him to leave the work in Crete and spend the winter with him in Nicopolis.

It takes the whole body to do ministry. **We must involve OTHERS in the ministry and trust them to do it**. If you've worked with other people at all – you know what I know – that it is almost always easier to just do it yourself rather than get other involved.

D.L. Moody used to joke that the best committee consists of three members – where one is sick and the other can't come to the meeting.

But if you are involved in leadership at any level, you've got to get others involved or you will eventually burn yourself out and limit your effectiveness. Paul had Titus in Crete, Timothy in Ephesus, Zenas and Apollos on the move, Artemas and Tychicus all over the place.

Another principle in team work we can pull from this is that **our SUCCESS is not in proportion to numbers, but to faith and obedience**. In other words I'm not saying and the truth is not that if you can just get enough volunteers, our efforts will succeed. Jesus just picked 12. Then at

another point he picked just 70. And that was to reach the world. Paul traveled all over the place and engaged a lot of people in the cause of Christ but he seemed to really work through only a few good men. Faith and obedience are much more effective and important than numbers for numbers sake.

Still in interdependence, we see another principle here – **we can't be afraid to enlist COMPETENT people on your team.** Paul is a great example here. Sometimes a leader who is trying to promote himself more than Christ will make sure not to enlist team members who may outshine him. But who is one of Paul's guys here? Apollos. Paul was comfortable having a guy on his team who was a much better, more eloquent speaker than Paul was. Not to mention that Titus, Timothy, Artemas, Tychicus were all solid enough guys that Paul could entrust oversight of key churches to their care. We have to look for faithful men and women and hand things off to them and trust them to do the job of ministry for the glory of God because that's the goal.

In fact, another principle I want us to see when it comes to the team work of God's mission and our interdependence together is that **we've got to be able to PROMOTE other's ministries.** In these few verses in Titus we see Paul not only trusting but promoting the ministry of Artemas and Tychicus. He tells Titus to do whatever he can to help Zenas and Apollos. And when it comes to Apollos – remember what happens when he is Corinth? He is so effectively used by God there, that people in the church are dividing into factions of some who follow Paul and some who follow Apollos. And when Paul addressed it, he didn't put down Apollos to promote himself, he said they were both servants of Christ and both played certain roles but God is the one who makes effectiveness. Paul was willing to put Apollos at the same level as himself and encourage others to benefit from Apollos' ministry. Listen – this is huge – we've got to promote our teammates and help them succeed. We all serve the Lord in this and our aim should be not to promote ourselves but to see Jesus exalted – no matter who it is through!

That's how Paul reached the world for Christ – through a team of believers committed to ministry – who operated on these same principles of team work:

- That everyone is responsible for being active on the team, in the mission, in good deeds
- That we are all interdependent in the church and body of Christ – there are no effective lone rangers out there for Jesus
- That what we look for isn't numbers but faith and obedience to Christ
- That not only do we put talented and gifted good people into ministry around us, we promote and encourage others' ministry with no regard for our own names but only for the glory of Jesus

And that brings us back to where we started. That all that God has shown us in this letter - every instruction about doctrine, every warning about heresy, every encouragement to holiness and good works is effective only as it is realized in the lives of people – and folks we are those people.

When Paul says in verse 14 that *“our people” must “learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful”* – that includes you and me! **Verse 14 includes YOU!** Why? Why is that so important? Because **an UNFRUITFUL life is not a good testimony to the saving power of God** is it? That's still what chapter 3 is all about – the church's relationship with the world around it. And even our team work in ministry is crucial in that because the world needs to be able to see the fruit so they can see that our lives are blessed and witnesses for God's saving power and grace – so that, like **Matthew 5:16** says, *our light shines in a way that men can see our good deeds and glorify our God in heaven.*

Why do you think verse 14 where Paul points that out comes right after Paul wrote verse 13 where he tells Titus to do whatever he can to help Zenas and Apollos? Because that was the opportunity right in front of his face. And that is what we have to learn in being devoted to doing what is good as well.

Listen – this is where it gets personally practical – **the best way for a Christian – for you and me – to live a FRUITFUL or productive life – to do good in the name of Jesus – real good – lasting good – is simply to seize the opportunity RIGHT IN FRONT of us. And then seize the next one. And then the next one, until you find your life mattering to others and the ministry of God’s Kingdom in ways you could scarcely have imagined before.**

Church let me bring this home by just asking three questions.

**First – are you on the TEAM?**

By that I mean, have you experienced the kindness, love, mercy, and grace of God at the cross? Have you been justified by His grace so that now you are an heir of eternal life? If not, do not make the mistake of thinking that you can do any good works that will get you into heaven. First, you must come to Christ as a helplessly lost sinner and receive by faith His free gift of eternal life.

If you have done that, the second question is: **Are you a benchwarmer or are you COMMITTED to ministry?** Are you using whatever gifts God has entrusted to you so that one day you will hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Master”? God wants to reach Wichita Falls – Sheppard Air Force Base – Old High, Ryder, McNeil – MSU – your office – your neighborhood through a team of believers committed to ministry because they have tasted the abundant grace of Jesus Christ.

So the last question is: what is right in front of you? Don’t wait for a church program or a youth mission trip or a special service – don’t wait for “when you have time” or “when you get your life perfected” or “when it seems right” – folks it’s right when God puts it right in front of you. Seize the moment while you still can – big or small – and move to the next and watch your life impact the Kingdom.

**Truth is only effective when it affects YOU enough to effect OTHERS through you.**

So God is challenging me – He’s challenging each of you and all of us together to **devote yourself to being fruitful for the glory of God by doing what is GOOD – by working WITH other Christians – by taking whatever OPPORTUNITY is right in front of you.**

Reach your world by doing life in Christ one step at a time together.

Let’s pray.