

TOUGH GRACE IN DIFFICULT PLACES A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF TITUS

STUDY ELEVEN

Covering All the Final Bases

Titus 3:12–15

It's easy to get the idea that Paul worked alone. But when we read the end of his letters, we realize how connected he was with people.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

As we conclude our study of Titus, let's review this brief but profound letter. Years earlier, Paul had traveled to the island of Crete with Titus, spreading the gospel and deepening the believers' faith. But false teachers had also come, leading young Christians astray. Paul wrote Titus to help Titus manage the churches and deal with troublemakers.

Paul penned his letter with two primary goals: to strengthen the new converts' theology and to exhort godly behavior. *Right living through sound doctrine* is the central theme of Titus.

Sound doctrine begins with a right understanding of Jesus. In Titus, Paul referred to Jesus as “our great God and Savior” (Titus 2:13), affirming the deity of Christ in one of the clearest statements in the New Testament. Paul also declared the incarnation of Christ—“the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people” (2:11); and our security in Christ—“Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life” (3:7).

To these pillars of our faith, Paul tethered our calling—to bring honor to Christ's name before a watching world by living free from sin and “doing good deeds” (2:14).

Right living through sound doctrine requires *tough grace* to confront those who abuse their spiritual freedom and to rebuke those who cause others to stumble. We still need tough grace today to boldly reach into the most difficult places of our world with the gospel, “bringing salvation to all people” (2:11).

Paul wraps up his letter by mentioning key friends in his ministry. Let's get acquainted with these individuals and draw from them vital principles as we learn to partner with others for the sake of spreading the gospel.



Covering All the Final Bases

Titus 3:12–15



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The psalmist declared, “Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). Open your heart in prayer to receive the light of God’s grace through His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Since the beginning, God has commissioned humans to partner with Him as co-regents of creation. Although the Lord doesn’t *need* people to fulfill His plan on earth, *His sacred work usually occurs through people*. If His message is to be declared, God most often uses a human voice. If His message is to be written, He uses human fingers. If His message is to be modeled, He uses a human life. In His grace, God uses imperfect people to accomplish His perfect work.

On the other hand, it is also true that *God’s sovereign plan is unfolding, in spite of people’s weaknesses*. While God is pleased to use people, His plan is never thwarted by people. We work to accomplish His plan, but His plan is not dependent on us, for He is sovereign.

So when Paul lists the names of his co-laborers at the end of Titus, we see God accomplishing His sacred, sovereign plan through fallible people . . . just like us!



Observation: People to Note

Whom did Paul mention in [Titus 3:12](#)? Based on his request to Titus: “Do your best to meet me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to stay there for the winter” (Titus 3:12), why do you think Paul was sending one of these men to Crete?

Covering All the Final Bases

Titus 3:12–15

Read about *Nicopolis* and its location, and note interesting facts you discover.

Although Artemas is mentioned only here in Scripture, Tychicus appears elsewhere as Paul’s “beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord’s work” (Ephesians 6:21; see also, *Acts 20:4*; *Colossians 4:7*). Later, Paul sent Tychicus to aid Timothy in Ephesus (*2 Timothy 4:12*), so it’s likely he chose Artemas to go to Crete to partner with Titus.

Whom did Paul mention in *Titus 3:13–14*? What request did Paul make? What point did Paul teach?

Apollos was “an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well” (Acts 18:24). He and Zenas would have made a powerful pair of apologists, defending Christianity in public forums and continuing the work that Apollos had done in Achaia (18:27–28).

What was the tone of Paul’s final blessing in *Titus 3:15*, and to whom was it given?

Paul’s letter was likely read aloud before the church with Titus present in the assembly. How does this public pronouncement change how you understand the letter?

Covering All the Final Bases

Titus 3:12–15

All those with Paul wanted Paul to tell Titus, “We’re with you. We’re on your side!” It’s a great thing to realize how much people love you, even though they are not with you. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Priorities to Remember

Let’s draw from Paul’s final words four priorities for Christians to remember in their relationships with fellow believers in the church.

First, Paul intended to spend the winter in Nicopolis, but it’s uncertain whether he made it there or stayed there long enough to meet Titus. Sometime after Paul wrote Titus, he was arrested and taken to Rome, where Paul wrote 2 Timothy. In Paul’s final written words before his execution, he made a similar request to Timothy that he made to Titus. He said to Timothy, “Do your best to get here before winter” (2 Timothy 4:21).

What priority do you see in Paul’s requests for companionship?

Second, Zenas and Apollos brought Paul’s letter to Titus on their missionary travels, and Paul asked Titus, “See that they are given everything they need” (Titus 3:13). Zenas and Apollos were traveling light, without supplies for the next leg of their journey.

What priority do you see in Paul’s requests for assistance?

Third, assisting Zenas and Apollos gave the believers in Crete a lesson in grace-giving. Paul encouraged the churches to “meet the urgent needs of others” as a regular practice.

Covering All the Final Bases

Titus 3:12–15

What priority do you see in Paul’s words about meeting others’ needs?

Fourth, Paul closed by circling back to his favorite subject. In his opening address, “May God . . . give you grace” (Titus 1:4), and his closing benediction, “May God’s grace be with you all” (3:15), grace was foremost.

What priority do you see in Paul’s emphasis on grace?

Summarize these four priorities in your own words as positive strategies for relationships.

*Has it been a long time since you’ve told another adult, “I love you”? God tells us all the way through His Book, “I love you.” Jesus is His love story.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



Correlation: Fruitful Lives

Helping Zenas and Apollos as they passed through Crete was “a way that our people can learn to engage in good works to meet pressing needs,” Paul wrote (Titus 3:14 NET). What’s the result? So that the believers will “not be unfruitful” (3:14 NET).

We can’t be fruitful followers of Christ without caring for others. What did Paul say was his primary reason for living, according to *Philippians 1:21–25*?

Covering All the Final Bases

Titus 3:12–15

What assurance do we have that God rewards our ministry to others, according to *Hebrews 6:10*? To whom are we ultimately ministering?

Keep on ministering. Keep on giving. You can't outgive God.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Building a Lifestyle of Doing Good

Paul's instructions to Titus highlight three observations about doing good for others and two exhortations.

First, *doing good is a learned trait*. By meeting the pressing needs of Zenas and Apollos, Titus served as a model for other believers. People learn by example. We all need to see someone doing good works before it becomes our lifestyle. From whom have you learned good works? Whom can you inspire?

Second, *sensitivity to pressing needs must be acquired*. Needs aren't always obvious. We must tune in to people's needs by putting ourselves in their shoes and asking the Holy Spirit to help us see beneath the surface. Do the people you know have any pressing needs? Ask the Spirit to open your eyes.

Covering All the Final Bases

Titus 3:12–15

Third, *motivation to minister to others is found in God's rewards*. We taste the fruit of doing good works in the joy we experience now and the rewards we will enjoy in heaven. What motivates you to show care for others?

Two important exhortations emerge. Paul couldn't succeed in his ministry without the companionship of others. Friends offer support when life becomes hard to bear. So, *don't let life's challenges drive you away from people. Stay close*. In addition, *don't discount the value of unknowns whom God is using in ministry. Encourage someone*.

Whom can you encourage today? What can you do to show God's love for him or her?

The great apostle Paul cherished the importance of being together with those he loved in the faith—helping others, doing good, and spreading grace. Let's join in following his example and do the same!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You know what a tough time I've had lately and how my needs have been weighing on my shoulders. Amid the hardship, I hear Your voice saying, "I love you." I see Your love in the outstretched arms of Jesus, that reach out to me in my time of need and embrace me with grace. I know You have a good plan for my life. Help me to share Your love with fellow travelers on life's road as we walk together toward our eternal home. In Jesus' name, amen.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2006, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 11 • Page 7

