

Titus

Chapter 3

Be Ready for Every Good Work

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. 3 For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. 9 But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

3:1–2 NT teaching is not confined to the area of personal salvation but includes much instruction about practical living. Although believers are citizens of heaven (Php 3:20), they must also submit themselves to earthly government (see Ro 13:1–7; 1Pe 2:13–17) and help promote the well-being of the community. (CSB)

3:1 *rulers and authorities.* The terms refer to all forms and levels of human government (cf. Eph 3:10; 6:12 for application to angels). (CSB)

every good work. Many of Paul’s admonitions point Christians toward good works that stem from a godly life; this passage starts with good citizenship. (TLSB)

3:2 *speak evil of no one.* Do not indulge in slander, insults, or character assassination. (TLSB)

perfect courtesy toward all people. Gentle, courteous conduct stands in contrast to quarrelsome attitudes and evil speech; it strengthens the Christian’s credibility and personal witness. (TLSB)

3:3 *once foolish.* Life without Christ tends to follow the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness in God’s view (cf 1Co 1:25). People who can remember their life before they became Christians are often amazed and dismayed at how foolish and distorted it was. This passage provides a succinct description of how badly we need God’s grace. (TLSB)

3:4 *when.* God’s timing is impeccable: He sent Christ into the world at just the right time for humanity, and He met the Cretans with Law and Gospel at just the right time to show them His grace. He still reaches us with such excellent timing. (TLSB)

loving kindness of God. The reasons why God did not simply banish fallen man but acted to save him (cf. 2:11). The Greek here for “love” is *philanthropia*, “love for mankind.” (CSB)

3:5 *not because of works.* Every aspect of our salvation described in 2:11–14; 3:4–7 depends on God’s action; none of it depends on what we do. Even though Paul repeatedly urges Christians to prepare for and perform good works, these are the harvest of God’s grace in saving us from our sins and are not prepayments or repayments for His salvation. (TLSB)

saved us ... according to his mercy. Salvation is not achieved by human effort or merit but comes through God’s mercy alone. (CSB)

God’s love and the grace He extends to us are in keeping with His merciful nature. (TLSB)

washing of renewal. Baptism is a means (“through”) of our rebirth, a means through which the Holy Spirit produces in us faith as a gift of God—all because of God’s mercy (grace). The Lord’s Supper and the Word are the other means of grace by which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts (see Eph 5:26; 1Pe 3:21 and notes). (CSB)

Baptism brings new life and spiritual cleansing. God provides this Baptism as a means for us to receive His grace. “Baptism may certainly be called a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water. Such power is given to Baptism by the Word that it is a washing of new birth” (LC IV 27). Cyril of Alexandria: “The blessed apostle sets forth and proves that baptism is that wherein the old man dies and the new man is born” (ANF 5:388). (TLSB)

3:7 *justified by His grace.* “Justification before God is regeneration” (FC SD III 19). (TLSB)

heirs. Once justified and purified, God adopts us into His family as coheirs with Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

hope. God promises eternal life, and believers can look forward to spending eternity with Him. (TLSB)

3:8 *saying is trustworthy.* A reference to the doctrinal summary in vv. 4–7. This phrase, which occurs only here in Titus, appears four other times in the Pastoral Letters (1Ti 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2Ti 2:11) and nowhere else in the NT. (CSB)

Vv 4–7 present a unified statement of salvation in Christ, representing the Christian’s experience: God’s initiative in sending Christ; His merciful rescue of us; Baptism for rebirth and cleansing; the indwelling Spirit, who makes us rich in Christ; justification and acceptance into God’s family; and the hope of eternity with our heavenly Father. (TLSB)

devote themselves. God prepares good works for Christians to do (Eph 2:10), and we need to pay attention and not shirk these opportunities. (TLSB)

3:9 *about the law.* A reference to the situation described in 1:10–16. A similar problem existed in Ephesus (see 1Ti 1:3–7). (CSB)

May be the Law of Moses, but Paul may mean man-made extensions of God’s Law (cf 1:10). (TLSB)

3:10–11 Direction for excommunication as a means of Church discipline. The reason for excommunication is not a person’s misunderstanding per se, but that the person persistently teaches and imposes that misunderstanding on others, creating division in the Church, the Body of Christ. (TLSB)

3:10 *a person who stirs up division.* The Greek for this phrase became a technical term in the early church for a type of “heretic” who promoted dissension by propagating false teachings. (CSB)

A template for discipline, to be exercised by spiritual leaders of the Church. Titus needed to discipline the false teachers who afflicted the churches on Crete. He is to warn them once and then a second time, which seems patterned after Mt 18:15–17. Cf Gal 6:1; Rm 16:17. Irenaeus of Lyons: “Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth” (ANF 1:416). “Paul commands that godless teachers should be avoided and condemned as cursed” (Tr 41). (TLSB)

3:11 Stubborn refusal to listen to correction reveals inner perversion. (CSB)

warped. Reflects distorted or possibly perverted doctrines of the false teachers. (TLSB)

3:1–11 God brings us out of sin and into new life in Christ, beginning with the cleansing and rebirth He provides in Baptism. This is all accomplished by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not by anything we can do on our own. Those who stray away from God’s truth and stir up division among God’s people must be disciplined by the Church. We are committed and fervent in our beliefs, but we also check ourselves, our words, and our behavior against God’s trustworthy Scripture. We pay attention to the guidance, counsel, and teaching of our pastor and elders. • O God, Your Word and Sacraments sustain, guide, and nurture me in the one true faith. Guard me against all error. Amen. (TLSB)

Final Instructions and Greetings

12 When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. 13 Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. 14 And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. 15 All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

3:12 *Artemas or Tychicus.* Co-workers with Paul; only Tychicus is mentioned elsewhere in the NT (Ac 20:4; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 2Tm 4:12). (TLSB)

Tychicus. Paul’s trusted co-worker, who on various occasions traveled with or for Paul (Ac 20:4; Eph 6:21–22; Col 4:7–8; 2Ti 4:12). (CSB)

Nicopolis. Means “city of victory.” Several cities had this name, but the reference here apparently is to the city in Epirus on the western shore of Greece. (CSB)

A city on the west coast of Greece. (TLSB)

decided to spend the winter there. Indicates that Paul had not arrived there when he wrote and that he was still free to travel at will, not yet having been imprisoned in Rome for the second time. (CSB)

Ships provided the most expedient way to travel to destinations around the Mediterranean Sea, but storms stopped most marine traffic and impeded other forms of travel during the winter. (TLSB)

3:13 *speed ... on their way.* The Greek verb seems to be a technical term for moral and financial support of missionary endeavors (see Ac 15:3; 20:38; 21:5; Ro 15:24; 1Co 16:6, 11; 2Co 1:16; 3Jn 6—which are all of its occurrences in the NT). (CSB)

Zenas the lawyer. Mentioned only here in the NT. If he was a Jewish convert, “lawyer” means that he was an expert in the Mosaic law; if he was a Gentile convert, that he was a Roman jurist. (CSB)

Zenas ... Apollos. More co-workers with Paul; only Apollos is mentioned elsewhere (Ac 18:24–19:1; 1Co 1:12; 3:4–22; 4:6; 16:12). They probably brought Paul’s Letter to Titus. The Roman government had a postal system for official purposes; private letters were hand-carried by professional messengers or trusted friends. (TLSB)

Apollos. A native of Alexandria and one of Paul’s well-known co-workers (Ac 18:24–28; 19:1; 1Co 1:12; 3:4–6, 22; 16:12). The two travelers apparently brought the letter from Paul. (CSB)

lack nothing. Titus and the churches on Crete should provide whatever these men needed for travel to their next destination; this was part of the hospitality mentioned in 1:8. (TLSB)

3:15 *All who are with me.* Probably Artemas, Tychicus (v 12), and perhaps others, all of whom were co-workers and missionaries with Paul. (TLSB)

with you all. Suggests that Paul expected Titus to share the Letter with the churches on Crete. (TLSB)

3:12–15 Paul’s closing remarks mention four co-workers who, with him, spread the Gospel and minister to churches in various locations. Paul and the others could not perform such ministries without the help of other Christians, so his closing includes instructions for their support. Whether or not we personally work in outreach ministry, we need to support others as they evangelize, teach, and minister in Christ’s name. God, who redeemed us with the precious blood of Jesus and saw to it that we received His dear message, will give us opportunities to serve and support others. What a privilege to serve with our brothers and sisters in Christ in God’s kingdom! • Entrust me, dear Lord, with the opportunity to tell another person of Your redeeming love. Amen. (TLSB)