

Keynotes from Tim Gamston's am Sermon on 6/2/2022

Series: "Living Godly lives in a godless culture" Part 11

Titus 3 v 12-15 "We're all in it together"

Scripture references from ESV

Titus 3:12-15 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. (See p4 for the full chapter).

The Gospel is the good news that God has secured our salvation through the work of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for everyone who comes to put their trust in Jesus.

Every human being is born with a sinful nature that refuses to submit to God and his word. This also shows in our human relationships as we steal, cheat, envy, lie and rebel against authority figures (including our parents) under whom God has placed us.

There is a day coming when we will have to stand before God as our judge, and we will be sentenced to eternal death if we are not right with him. There is nothing we can do ourselves to correct this, no matter how good a life we might lead, but the message of the Bible is that God has come himself, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect life of obedience, died on a cross and rose to life three days later.

He did that so that we can be put right with God

Jesus took our sin upon himself and his righteousness is credited to our account, so that we have a righteousness that commends us to God. When we put our trust in Jesus, God declares us righteous in his sight and we receive eternal life, coming to know and love God. This is the best news any human being could ever hear and

the mission of the church is to make sure people do hear it.

The church's part in God's mission to build his kingdom is to tell people what God has done, and to live lives of love and obedience to God, showing the difference that knowing Jesus makes.

The mission of the church isn't only for those we call missionaries. **We all have a part to play.** As soon as we committed ourselves to Jesus, we were enlisted in his service and that includes being involved in his mission to reach the nations with the Gospel. The question isn't whether I should be involved, but **HOW should I be involved?** **Titus 3:12-15** shows us 5 needs for the mission of God to be accomplished. We are all to be involved in meeting them.

1. The need for co-workers (v15 above)– the apostle Paul accomplished more for the kingdom of God than anyone other than Jesus, as the Bible shows us. Yet he rarely worked alone. Reading his letters and the book of Acts, we see that he was generally accompanied by fellow workers. It wasn't that he didn't like being alone, but rather that the mission needed co-workers because the task (to reach the whole empire with the Gospel) was too big for one man.

- He needed people to go to places he was unable to get to because he was in another region, or in prison for his faith
- He needed people to care for the churches he had planted so that he could go to other towns where the Gospel had not yet been preached.

The mission of God is about teamwork

The roles in the team may vary. Some might be called to frontline mission, while others are called to stay at home to pray for those workers, to collect news from them and distribute it to supporters or to raise funds so that the work can continue.

What is your role?

2. The need for leaders (v12) – Paul tells Titus that he is sending someone (either Artemas or Tychicus) to replace him in Crete so that Titus can come to Nicopolis. These are not just travel plans. This is about

Paul's leadership of his mission team

It is also about the leadership of the churches on the island of Crete. Titus' task on Crete is to appoint elders in the churches who will be able to teach the Bible,

correct false teaching and lead the churches. At some point, Titus will need to leave, but these newly appointed elders still need leadership to ensure the young church continues to thrive, so Paul wants to ensure there is another leader in place.

Our current age looks down on those in authority, but we need to remember that leadership is a God-given gift to his people. Leaders can act in ungodly ways, but they are given by God to mobilise and equip his people to do Gospel work, and to keep them focussed on the mission of God. (**Ephesians 4: 11-12** see p4).

The mission of God is about team work but teams need leaders.

3. The need for urgency (v12 see also Titus 1: 5 p4) – Titus had a specific task on Crete, but his time there was limited. He needed to get on with the work that Paul had set him to do, before the time came for him to leave Crete and join Paul in Nicopolis. How does this apply to us, when as far as we know we are not going anywhere? We need to see that **there is always an urgency when it comes to Gospel work.**

God has given the church a task – to make Jesus known. We need to get on with it because the clock is ticking. Jesus is coming back and then it will be too late. Equally, our time (or that of our neighbours and friends) on this earth might be coming to an end unexpectedly and then it will be too late.

We need to be getting on with the work God has given us to do.

4. The need for resources (v13) – Paul had sent Zenas and Apollos on mission, which included stopping off in Crete, possibly to deliver this letter to Titus. Titus was to ensure two things – that they were not delayed and that they had the resources they need for their mission. That would involve:

- Providing hospitality during their stay in Crete – somewhere to stay, food to eat and fellowship
- Replenishing their material supplies, ensuring they had money, travel tickets and food.

Titus was to mobilise the church to supply all of these needs (**v14**). The church needed **to learn to devote themselves to good works.** Titus was required to instruct the church

on how to respond to these needs, but they were to learn by doing, so that devoting themselves to good works became a habit.

These verses show us what it means to be co-workers. Some of the people mentioned are frontline missionaries, some have leadership qualities and some have responsibility to supply the material needs for the mission of God.

**All of God's people are to be involved in the work of Gospel ministry,
with everyone playing their part to ensure that
the nations hear the good news of God's salvation through Jesus Christ.**

5. The need for perspective – The churches on Crete are not the main focus.

- Titus has a task to do, but will then be redeployed in another location
- Tychicus served in several different churches and wasn't only pastor to the church in Crete
- Zenas and Apollos were just travelling through Crete on their way to somewhere else

These verses are not just about one church on Crete – they are about

the kingdom of God in many places

It is easy to get locked into our own church culture and forget we are part of something bigger. The local church is important and it is vital for our own spiritual health, and that of our brothers and sisters, that we belong to a local church fellowship and are actively serving in that church fellowship.

However, we must also look outside of our own church fellowship and see ourselves as belonging to the kingdom of God that exists globally. Our More on Mission focus for the next couple of weeks gives us the opportunity to

- look outside ourselves and be reminded that we are part of something bigger
- focus our attention on the kingdom of God globally
- pray for the Gospel as it is preached to the nations
- ask the Lord how we can use our gifts and resources to meet the needs of the kingdom

We need perspective and a big kingdom mentality.

What will motivate us to meet the five needs of mission?

We need to find our motivation in the triumph of God's kingdom, and Paul helps us see it in this passage. Nicopolis was a centre for trade with plenty of people passing through it. It was a great centre for mission, as people arrived, got saved and then travelled on, taking the Gospel with them.

History also may have played a part in Paul's decision to winter there. The Battle of Actium was fought out in this area on both sea and land between two Roman rulers – Octavian and Marc Anthony. Octavian's general, Titus Statilius Taurus, won the land battle, and Octavian was given the title Caesar Augustus. From then on, Rome became an Empire ruled by a king. To commemorate his victory, Octavian founded Nicopolis, which means city of victory, and enlarged the ancient temple of his (false) god, Apollo.

Now Paul is making this city of victory his home for the winter, and the place from which he will organise his mission team as they serve the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of Rome.

- He calls Titus (the same name as the victorious general) to come and meet him there so he can redeploy him
- He sends Apollos (the same name as Octavian's false god) to serve the true king, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul appears to be making a powerful statement that **the Kingdom of God will triumph over every kingdom**, including the Roman Empire. Rome had its god, king and general, all of whom are now dead and finished. In contrast, the Kingdom of God:

- has as its king - the true king, Jesus
- has as its generals – people like Titus, Paul and Apollos.
- is a kingdom that still exists today (of which we are the evidence) and is growing even in the face of hostility.

Why would you not want to be part of a kingdom like that by submitting yourself to Jesus and receiving the salvation he has secured for you through his life and death?

Why would you not want to invest in a kingdom that can't lose by giving your time to pray for Gospel workers and giving financially to see the kingdom grow?

Why would you not want to serve a kingdom that will outlast every human kingdom and empire by

- Supporting mission at home and abroad or
- Going out on frontline mission or
- Living out the gospel in the community God has placed you in?

When it comes to the mission of God, we are ALL in it together.

Ephesians 4: 11-12 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^[c] and teachers,^[d] ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Titus 1: 5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you

Titus 3 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 Saviour 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 Saviour, 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.

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Grace be with you all.