

Titus 3

July 22, 2020

The first eight verses of this chapter provide an amazing summary of the Christian faith: The need for salvation, the basis of salvation, and the result of salvation in our attitudes, words, and works.

It is easy to read verses 12 and 13 more or less as “rolling the credits,” nice but not essential. But look what we can learn from these few words.

First, there is a general companionable tone rather than one of command. Paul urges Titus to join him in Nicopolis if he can but does not order it. We get the sense that these men know each other well, despite being scattered around the Mediterranean, in a relationship of mutual regard and dependence.

It also is clear that Titus does not occupy a permanent position of oversight in the assembly or assemblies on Crete. He is not an elder there. Artemas or Tychicus will soon take over the specific ministry that required a special envoy from the apostle.

We read of Tychicus four other times in the New Testament, beginning in Acts 20, but there are no other mentions of Artemas. But Tychicus’ greater “name recognition” does not imply he has greater trust or authority in doing the Lord’s work. Calls to serve and gifts to do so are not reserved for the most prominent in the assembly.

Similarly, we read nowhere else of the assembly at Nicopolis. (It seems unlikely that Paul was intending to start one there, as many of those attempts ended with a quick beating and eviction, and he clearly plans to pass the entire winter there.) How many assemblies were simply and obediently following the Lord’s

direction without attracting either notice or correction? How many today?

Zenas may have been a civil lawyer, an expert in Roman law, or a scribe, an expert in Jewish law. Most scholars think he was a Jewish lawyer (for one reason, according to Calvin, that a civil lawyer would have enough means to not require help). Zenas may have been summoned to Crete to tamp down arguments that were arising about finer points of the law. Like Paul, his great knowledge of the law before conversion may have made him all the more able to show others the power of grace when freed from the law. Apollos, eloquent and learned in the O.T. scriptures (Acts 18:24), may have helped him. May we desire and use education to bring cleansing light into disputes, rather than narrowly promoting our own viewpoints.

Finally, we have the principle of hospitality toward those doing the Lord’s work.

It could be an interesting study to read only the closing greetings of the epistles, looking for lessons in conducting relations with brothers and sisters, near and far.

Notes

3:4 Acts 28:2. and here are the only two places the word *philanthropy* or “love to man” is used.

3:12 Nicopolis means city of victory. It’s probably the Nicopolis on the Greek coast northwest of Corinth, built to celebrate the sea battle of Actium where Octavian finally defeated his rivals after the assassination of Julius Caesar, thereafter becoming Caesar Augustus.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. To whom do Christians owe obedience?
2. Does verse 2 allow speaking evil on rare occasions, quarreling only in a good cause, or expressing contempt of clearly contemptible people?

3. Before being saved, were we really as bad as Paul describes in verse 3?
4. Verse 5 states that we are saved not by our own righteous works, but verses just before and after it urge us to do good works. Why should we?
5. Does the washing in verse 5 refer to baptism?
6. What is to be done with a person who causes divisions (also known as a heretic)? Is it the same as putting out of fellowship?
7. Are disputes about doctrine always the main reason for division? What else might there be?