

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, in those difficult times when life feels numb and love seems far away, come gently, we pray. Bring a word, a touch, a sense of Your presence; and place within us the seeds of hope and renewal. Then, with every day that passes, may we increasingly know the transforming power of Your love deep within, and rejoice in Your graciousness and care. Thank You Lord Jesus; AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Christmas

*We will pray this week that the message of Christmas will become clearer to the world as it is celebrated in millions of homes and churches. Pray for Christ to bring peace to our world.*

### On-going prayers

- Pray for all who work across the world for the health of nations
- Pray for the country of Israel and all people who live there
- Give thanks to God for the life of each member of your family

## Meditation

Rescue us, Lord Jesus Christ,  
by Your Holy Spirit, rescue us.

Restore our bodies through rest,  
and strengthen them with exercise;

Replenish our minds by the Word,  
and fill our hearts with Your truth;

Re-ignite Your fire of love in us,  
so that we may shine for You;

Recover our zeal to live the Faith,  
by challenging us to do Your will;

Replace the tiredness in our hearts,  
with the vigour of Your enthusiasm;

Recharge our souls through worship,  
so we may enjoy Your presence;

Renew us, Lord Jesus Christ,  
by Your Holy Spirit, renew us.

## Bible Study - Titus 3:12-15

<sup>12</sup> When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there. <sup>13</sup> Do all you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and see that they have everything they need. <sup>14</sup> Let our people learn to engage in doing what is good, so that daily needs are met and so that they do not live fruitless lives. <sup>15</sup> Everyone who is with me sends greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith; grace be with you all.

## Review

It is typical of Paul's many letters that he ends with greetings to certain individuals and some final words of encouragement. After this short letter to Titus, the greetings are interesting insofar as they mention Tychicus and Apollos, but the others (Artemas, and Zenas) only appear here in scripture and are not known of elsewhere. The picture we have is of Paul consciously commenting on and directing some of the affairs of the church, and in almost all the letters, Paul seeks to ease the way of individuals who are going about the work of the church, in activities of mission and administration.

**Tychicus** It is interesting that Tychicus and Apollos typify these two aspects of the life of the church; administration and mission. Tychicus is mentioned in several of Paul's letters (Eph 6:21, Col 4:7, 2 Tim 4:12) and also the Acts of the Apostles (20:4), and on each occasion he is described as a diligent servant of the Lord, going about the work of delivering letters, explaining things for Paul and ministering to congregations. He was not the leader of a church, but he is certainly someone Paul regarded as indispensable, and seems to fit Paul's own description of the gift of 'service' or 'administration' mentioned in Romans 12:7.

**Apollos** Apollos is quite different, and he represents the mission of the church. Some believe that the name Apollos was common, and the reference here has no connection with the Apollos we know from elsewhere in the New Testament. This may be the case, but we do not know for certain, and we can continue to suggest this was the same man. Apollos was a Jewish convert to Christianity who was learned, and he preached with great success in the early days of the church (Acts 18:24f.). The main difficulty with Apollos appears to be that Paul reckoned he did not 'know the Holy Spirit' (Acts 19:1f.), so when Paul arrived at Ephesus where Apollos had preached, the new converts there were unfamiliar with the work and power of the Holy Spirit. Neither did they know what connection this had with the gift of salvation received through Christ (we could say that many people still have the same problem)! Paul corrected the situation, because as far as he was concerned, the Spirit was the means of God's work in the world through Christ. At the beginning of Corinthians, Paul addressed the continuing differences between 'parties' of those who followed him and those who followed Apollos (1 Cor 1:12, 3:4f.). However, the brief reference in Titus to Apollos seems to be perfectly amicable, and suggests that if there had been differences between these two great preachers of the early church, they were now overcome. Paul asked the church under Titus to give him all the help he needed to go on his way, doing the work of the Gospel (3:13).

**Paul's final advice** Following the same theme which ended yesterday's passage (3:10,11), Paul concluded his letter by encouraging the church in Crete to 'engage in doing what is good'. Life for many people in the days of the Roman Empire was not easy, and elements of communal living and collective responsibility were expected of those who accepted Christ and followed the path of discipleship. This could only work if, as Paul said, everyone was active in 'good works' and 'enabled daily needs' to be met (3:14). The church may have developed since the first Christian community in Jerusalem was set up like a commune (Acts 2:43-47, 4:32-37), but it was essential for the young church to be a place where care for all was the norm, and people were encouraged to use their potential to the full, including women (Gal 3:28, Rom 16:3,6,etc.). Such a community life of affirmation and support was attractive and has always been attractive to people who might not otherwise give credence to the Gospel, and Paul knew that it was a major tool for God's mission to bring salvation to the world.

**Greetings** Paul's final greeting mentions love, faith and grace, using words which are familiar to us if we have read other letter endings written by Paul. Some say that the

omission of 'peace' (although it is mentioned in Paul's greeting – see 1:4) is an indicator that Paul may have not written the letter, but nothing so drastic can be concluded by one word. It may simply be that in speaking to Titus and the church in Crete, Paul was 'signing off' to a group of people who were almost wholly Gentile, and the greeting 'grace' ('charis') was simply what was expected and what was given. What seems very clear is that this letter is a fascinating addition to Paul's letters, addressing a young church with affection, and encouraging its leader, Titus, to act with responsibility in managing the growing life of God's people on the island. The warmth of the greeting is now an encouragement to us all.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss the importance of administration to the life of the church, and the qualities necessary for a good church administrator.
2. Does the church of God give a good example to the rest of the world of people who care for each other? How can we improve this image?
3. What does this passage mean by the expression 'fruitless lives' in verse 14, and how can the church help God's people to be fruitful?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*The ending of Paul's letter to Titus is straightforward, but it does throw up a number of interesting issues. I have always felt that there must surely be a need for balance in the church between administration and mission. Tensions between those who feel that the church's resources should be used in mission and those who seek to maintain its structures are profoundly unhelpful. The mission of God's church depends on the security and effectiveness of the local church, and the church itself has no purpose except to do the work of God. The two are and always have been entirely interdependent.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Where do you see yourself within this passage of scripture? As an administrator, a missionary, or as one who does 'good deeds' within the life of the church? Pray about this because the Lord may wish you to be something other than you perceive yourself to be!*
- *Fast and pray for the administrators and missionaries within your church, and ask the Lord to bless the witness of your church within the community in which it is set and the wider world.*

## Final Prayer

Give me, Lord God, a heart that is open to Your guidance and Your will. May I be prepared to go wherever you may call, and have the courage to stand against all evil, according to Your grace; and help me to serve others under all circumstances, so that You may be glorified in everything I do. Thank You, Lord God. AMEN