

Titus

Background information

Paul's distress

Paul has described his great distress while waiting for Titus to return from his visit to the Corinthians.

Paul was worried and fearful for several reasons.

For one, he had sent Titus with a severe letter of rebuke for the Corinthians about his previous, painful visit with them.

He had instructed them to correct an influential man among them guilty of sin. How would they receive Paul's letter? Would they reject him and his correction? Would they repent and change course?

Paul may also have been concerned about Titus' well-being since Titus failed to show up for an arranged meeting with Paul in Troas.

On top of all of that, Paul and his co-workers may have been afflicted by additional opposition in Macedonia that contributed to his stress.

Now, though, Paul reports that God provided for him great comfort when Titus returned with his good report from Corinth, resolving both the issue of Titus' safety and the Corinthians' response to Paul's letter.

The Corinthians did, indeed, repent from their sin and express their love for Paul.



Battle of Actium

You are in for a treat. A nice, warm from the oven wintry surprise from Paul's letter to Titus. As he ends his epistle, Paul gives Titus instructions regarding a network of people he is organizing and sending throughout the Roman Empire:

“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. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful. All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.” (Titus 3:12-15)

Have you heard of the Battle of Actium?

The year is 31 B.C. In the previous decade, Octavian, Mark Antony, and Marcus Lepidus formed the Triumvirate, each ruling portions of the Roman Republic while seeking to squash other rivals.

Triumvirate - (in ancient Rome) a group of three men holding power, in particular (the First Triumvirate) the unofficial coalition of Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus in 60 BC and (the Second Triumvirate) a coalition formed by Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian in 43 BC.

During that time, Mark Antony—officially married to Octavian's sister Octavia—had begun a public affair with Cleopatra of Alexandria. After disappointing military efforts in Parthia, Antony beguiled and arrested the Armenian king, parading him in chains back to Alexandria in a sham display of victory. At the conclusion of this celebration, Antony and Cleopatra bestowed upon their children lands that did not belong to them—but to the Roman Republic and Parthia. This was particularly inflammatory because the majority of the lands were bequeathed to Caesarion, a child Cleopatra claimed to have conceived with Julius Caesar

Antony declared Caesarion the rightful son of Caesar, giving him the title “**King of kings**”. Octavian took obvious offense, being the legally adopted son and heir of Julius Caesar.

This created an irreconcilable breach, which led to September 2, 31 B.C.—the battle of Actium. In this naval conflict, the battleships of Octavian clashed with Mark Antony’s fleet off the coast of Italy. Using smaller, more maneuverable ships, Octavian dealt a decisive blow to Antony and Cleopatra’s armada by sea. On land, Octavian’s general Titus Statilius Taurus forced Antony’s troops into total surrender.

This battle was the turning point in Roman history. After his victory, the senate bestowed upon Octavian the title we all know him by: Caesar Augustus. Rome was no longer a republic, but an empire ruled by a king.

Three years later, Caesar returned to the shores of Italy opposite Actium and founded a city to memorialize his momentous victory. He named it Nicopolis —“Victory City”. Roman historian Suetonius writes,

“To extend the fame of his victory at Actium and perpetuate his memory, he founded a city called Nicopolis near Actium, and provided for the celebration of games there every five years; enlarged the ancient temple of [his patron god] Apollo...”

It is in this Nicopolis—the monument city to Caesar Augustus’ strategic victory and newly minted dynasty—that Paul planned to visit in winter (**Titus 3:12**).

Herein lies the irony: from Caesar's Victory City, Paul was strategically organizing the spread of the Kingdom of the eternally victorious Christ. He summoned Titus—who shares his name with Caesar's famous general at the Battle of Actium—to Nicopolis. He commissioned Apollos—no longer speedily working for Caesar but as servant of Jesus Christ.

While Paul “[waited] for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), he labored under the certain belief that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Revelation 11:15).

Posted by Chad C. Ashby on June 26, 2017