

Titus (Part One): Introduction

A World Like Ours

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I do not know anyone who is truly enjoying the times that we are living in. One would have to be truly ignorant and purposely unaware to think that these are the best of times. To many of us, these are more like the worst of times that we have ever lived through. Bad news seems to pile on more bad news. And we have incompetent leadership at the top and, by the way, so many state and local leaders as well as corporate officers and leaders in the communities in general. The way those people are kowtowing to the incompetent national leadership, the rot runs all the way through.

Well, that is what God said in the book of Isaiah, chapter 1, that it goes from the head all the way down to the toes—sick all the way, the whole body is sick. So over the past few years, having gone through this mess, most of it Covid-related, others politics-related, and now we are getting military and international affairs mixed in with what is happening over there in Kabul and the rest of Afghanistan. We have learned to trust no one. We remain skeptical of what we hear and what we read and we have learned to limit our hopes of a return to normal, whatever that may happen to be. It is kind of sad that this once great nation has come to this pass.

Sure there have been bad times before. I do not want you to get all down in the dumps about it because we have not reached the bottom yet. I mean just think, Jews in Nazi Germany or in Soviet Russia would tell us "you ain't seen nothin' yet." Of course they would say it in German or Russian or Yiddish, but that would be the gist of it. Peasants during the Black Plague would say, "You think you've got it bad? Try living as a serf during a *real* plague." Not a statistically innocuous plague like the one we have now. I understand those people have died from it, but percentage-wise it is not much of a plague. Even the children of Israel crying out for redemption to God would scoff at us and say, "You really think that your lives are worse than being slaves under a tyrannical Egyptian Pharaoh?"

When we start thinking of that, it begins to put things into a bit of perspective. I mean, really, even though times to us seem like they are bad, our lives are not terrible. Can anybody say that his or her life is really terrible? Are you in a dust heap scraping boils off your flesh with a potsherd like Job? Have you reached that point yet? I see no one in here wearing sackcloth and ashes. Think about it. While our freedoms are eroding at a record pace, most of us still have jobs that pay us fair wages. We are not starving unless we are fasting but that is our own decision. We have clothes and we have shoes and some of us have whole closets full of clothes and shoes and sometimes more shoes than clothes, just depending on your fetish, I guess.

We still have cars to drive and I could look out in the parking lot and see that there are actually kind of nice cars out there. We have gasoline to fill them with. We have mostly well-repaired roads. I know, some say North Carolina roads are terrible and South Carolina roads are bad. That is the constant fight. Who has got the worst roads? But we can still drive on them. We have restaurants, stores, and theaters, and museums and sporting events and concerts and the like that we can drive our nice cars to and have some entertainment.

Most of us, especially those of us here in the United States, can still worship God in peace and safety each week. We can buy Bibles, we can buy Bible study materials, we can speak publicly about God. We can profess to serve Christ without excessive fear of recrimination or persecution or death. We do not have to worry about that.

So, at this point, we need to temper our proclamations about just how bad it actually is. But we can say with confidence that the situation is worsening and we must take more care when we venture out into the world. We are more likely to encounter some very strange, sometimes perverse, and even downright evil people just by walking down the street. Certainly there are more godless people in this world. Most of the people out there are secular and this is more than we are used to and it has really dimmed our appreciation of our society.

Another thing we are seeing is a lot more government mandates. I have come to hate that word mandates because the word itself screams tyranny and

authoritarianism. Those are words that come out of Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia (as I used before). **Mandates**—you must do as the government tells you to do because they tell you to do them. So from an American perspective, an America that is built on the ideas of liberty and self-determination, that does not make sense. In response to these mandates and whatever is going on, more of our fellow citizens are taking sides. Many of those who support the present government have begun to become quite aggressive, especially on social media, but in certain places they have been very aggressive, both vocally and even physically, with people who refuse to comply with these orders—these mandates—that have been given from above.

Even though the people have genuine conscience or religious reasons for not complying, it seems like even those things are being slowly taken away. Because of their fear, we have become the enemy. Those who love the truth, those who want to follow the true God, those who want to maintain the freedoms of this country, these people are the enemy. So people like us, whether politically or religiously or what have you, they are being what is called "doxed." They are being canceled. They are being shouted down and threatened. I do not know how many times I have heard or seen on Twitter people making basically death threats against people who will not get this vaccine. It is scary to see how quickly the mind of the people of this nation can change.

But we have not reached the point of bloodshed yet. We are at the same position or a similar position as what Paul describes in Hebrews 12:4. He tells them there, "You have not yet resisted to bloodshed." Striving against sin has not quite come to that yet, but it may be on the horizon. I do not know if it is the near horizon or the far horizon, but we have not gotten there quite yet.

Things are bad, yes. Things are getting worse, yes. Things are not terrible. We can still maintain a modicum of normalcy in our own lives. We are not skulking down the street trying to stay away from the eyes of the Neighborhood Watch or whatnot, who is going to report us in. That has not happened yet. But it could be coming. I do not know. All indications are that

things are going to go this way at least through the Biden administration. And that is not fun to think about because he is only 212 days in out of four years. Now that really probably depresses you.

But we need to think about this, we need to have a right perspective. What we are seeing, what we are experiencing, is an unwelcome taste of what it was like to be a disciple of Christ in the early years of the church of God. That is the way I look at it. We are getting our taste of the discrimination and persecution that they received back then in the first century, especially in the early part of the first century to the middle. The faith was new to the world. They had never heard of it, and the apostles were going out and explaining it, preaching the gospel, being very confident about it, saying that God had come, He had lived as a man and He had died and our sins could be forgiven if we believe on this Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God, and to the world this was weird. And when the world thinks something is weird, they tend to strike back.

Our faith, the faith that was preached in that first century, was first thought to be a Jewish sect and it was tolerated as just a weird Jewish sect, except by the Jews, who knew it was not a Jewish sect. They did not tolerate it at all and did a great deal of persecution early on. That was part of the reason for my dad's series on "Why Hebrews was Written." Because the Jews tried to stamp it out because they did not accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah and as High Priest.

But soon, by the time we get to the reign of Nero, which happened right about mid-century, the Christian religion was singled out as a heretical sect by the Romans. They called it an atheistic religion. And the reason they thought it was atheistic is because Christians did not acknowledge the Roman gods or especially they did not acknowledge Caesar as God because everybody was supposed to do that. You know, tip a little wine out to them or make some sort of statement that the emperor was a god.

And so because of this and because he needed a scapegoat, Nero pointed at the Christians when fire swept Rome in July of AD 64 and this was an easy thing to do, to make the Christians the scapegoat for that. Not because the Christians started the fire. Nero may have done that himself, at least the tradition is that he, we say, fiddled while Rome burned. He probably played

the lyre while Rome burned and it is thought that he told his people to set it so he could built some of his own buildings.

But that as an aside, he decided that he would blame the Christians for the burning of Rome and it was very easy to do because of the public's underlying hatred of Christians because of their difference—that they were atheists that they did not believe in the Roman gods. So it was an easy thing for them to begin persecuting Christians—and they did. We know Nero killed a fair number of them in very macabre ways. And that persecution in Rome set a precedent and other cities around the empire slowly began to use that precedent as justification for their own persecution. It did not happen everywhere.

But as we get toward the end of the first century, more and more persecutions of Christians were happening. Several of the emperors had major pushes against Christians all the way to Domitian at the latter part of the first century. That was the one that got John caught in trap and he was sent to the isle of Patmos.

But these things continued to happen throughout the first century and it was just a natural, if you want to put it that way, reaction to the things that the Christians were saying and doing, mixed with a whole lot of misunderstanding and the enmity that is in human nature against the things of God. So the Gentile people of the empire, along with some of the Jews, distrusted Christians at the very least and avoided them, and in some places they discriminated against them and then persecuted them and put some to death every now and then. As I mentioned, it got worse as the first century wore on.

To get a little taste of this, if you will, in II Corinthians 11, and we will read verses 22-28. These are the perils of Paul, as it were, the sufferings that he had during his ministry. And Paul seemed to bear an inordinate share of persecution during this time. The letters to the Corinthians were written in the 50s, II Corinthians was probably around 55. So we are right in the area of the beginnings of Nero's persecution of the Jews. Probably about ten years before the fire took out a good part of Rome. But notice what Paul went through here even before this time. Let us start in verse 22. He is talking about some of his rivals there in Corinth. He says,

II Corinthians 11:22-28 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. [These are the credentials they were throwing out. And he is basically saying, look, I meet all these credentials too.] Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more [Now he is going to trump them with what he had gone through for Christ and show that his qualifications were far better than theirs. And this is what he says]: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. [That makes me laugh. "I have died several times." I mean, it is really not funny, but just the way that it says here, you know, rattling off these persecutions he has gone through and the sufferings he has had. Oh yeah, death often, frequently.] From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. [I would not want one stripe, much like much less 39 stripes five times!] Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the cities, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things [a lot of things], what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Who can even approach Paul in all the perils and sufferings that he has gone through in his Christian life? Obviously nobody. We have not reached this point yet. Paul gets a gold star for going through all of these things, and none of us has anything to compare with what he went through.

Now listen to how he describes these things back in chapter 4. After reading what we saw there in chapter 11 and come right back here, he says,

II Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore, we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at

the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Paul's attitude toward these sufferings was that, "Hey, they are there for a good purpose!" And he says, "I can take it for what's coming. What's coming is so much better than these terrible sufferings I'm going through. I'm willing to take them if that's what God says is my share."

For what it is worth (this is a little bit of an aside here), I want to point out that the Greek word in verse 17 that is translated "light," "for our light affliction," is the word *elaphron*. It probably does not mean light as in opposite of heavy. It does not mean that. It probably means something more like motivating or goal-oriented rather than the word light. If you put that in there, but for our motivating affliction, he is telling us that God is afflicting us for a purpose, for a goal, to reach a goal. And so he can look at it as something worthwhile because it is doing its job to motivate him toward the Kingdom of God. Or the other way we can think of it is as goal-oriented, "for our goal-oriented affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

That is how he framed all these persecutions and perils that he went through as driving him toward his goal. And so, in a way, you could think of them as light as compared to the great eternal weight of glory, if you will, that was awaiting him. But anyway, the word here, just so you understand this, does probably not mean light but probably means motivating or goal-oriented. (Sidebar done.)

We see Paul going through these things—these perils, having all these problems, being persecuted— and it did not happen in a vacuum. These same sorts of things, probably to a much lesser degree, were happening to normal church people wherever they were. They were not going through the deaths and the beatings most likely, but they were going through a form of persecution one way or another, whether it was just being avoided by their former friends or whether it was they were being discriminated against in the market or what have you. There could have been other things.

But Paul's persecutions, Paul's sufferings tended to put the whole church on edge because they got around. "Oh, did you hear? Paul was killed again last

night and had to be resurrected. And then he fled the city." I mean, that would put any church member on edge that this persecution could come and fall on them as well. So, with Paul going through all of these things, it made things tense wherever they were because they did not know when the local synagogue would rise up against them and throw them all out of the city or string a few up or whatever they would do, stone them, they did not know.

So they were on edge and especially in a lot of the big cities like Rome and Ephesus and Philippi and Smyrna and of course in Jerusalem, where the main persecutors, of course, were Jews. It is no wonder that over time many members of the true church fled towards the frontiers, the far frontiers of the empire and into northwestern Europe. Where the Israelites were, they moved along with them. Because at least there, out of the reach of Rome, they could practice their religion relatively freely. Out of sight of all those people who wanted them dead. And this became more of a problem as the apostate church that Constantine accepted a few centuries later rose in power. So a lot of the church members fled to find some peace.

Think about our situation. Where could we go if we had to do the same sort of thing? If we wanted to flee the persecution, where could we go? Knock on Elon Musk's door and say, "Take us to Mars."? I do not know. We filled up the earth and things are coming down to the crisis at the close, as Mr. Armstrong sometimes called it, and there is nowhere to go. And so we are going to have to figure out how to face the times that we are living into.

My point is that the church members of the early church lived under sometimes intense opposition and anti-God sentiment in the cities and towns that they lived in. Some places were worse than others: Corinth, Rome of course, Colossae, and Crete. I said Crete, but that is not necessarily a city. It is a whole island, but Crete was one of those places where there was trouble. There were several churches there in Crete and they had to face this.

Now, this sermon begins a short series on the book of Titus, and over the next three, I think, sermons (since there are only three chapters in the book), I figured an introductory sermon and one sermon for each chapter would work, but hopefully over the next three sermons, I can give you some indication of how they in the first century faced some of these similar problems to what we are going through today. Because Paul's instructions to

Titus in that book have a similar background to what we are facing today in this present evil world. It seems the more things change, the more things stay the same. And it is my hope that through these (hopefully) four sermons, we can learn a few things to help us as we slog forward through these very unsettling times now.

Like I said, this sermon is an introduction so we are going to be talking a lot about timing, geography, and the person of Titus as we go through this, because we have got to kind of set the stage for the teaching that Paul gives Titus, what he tells him to do because of these certain things that are going on, because of the situation that he is going into. So that is how we will separate the background of the book: into time, and place, and then Titus the man.

First, time. Conservative scholars think Paul penned this epistle to Titus, it is called a pastoral epistle, in about AD 64 or 65. Now, I am using a chronological system that assumes that when the book of Acts finished Paul was set free. He was not killed then. He was set free for a time and he went on another missionary journey (as they call them), or two, and that he was again arrested and imprisoned and then was killed. So there were two imprisonments. I am taking what they call the late date of Paul's death, which would be about 67 AD. So, his writing to Titus about Crete and Cretans would be somewhere in the realm of 63, 64, 65. Nobody knows for certain. I am going to say that a lot because Titus and Crete and the things that went on there are a little bit murky in terms of what the New Testament tells us.

But if Paul did write this to Titus in about 64 or 65, that would be two years or so before Paul's death. And like I said, that is itself a matter of controversy. But we are pretty sure that Nero ordered his death sometime perhaps as much as a year before Nero himself committed suicide and that was on June 9, AD 68. So it had to be before that time that Paul died, June of 68. Most people, when they look at this, they consider that it was probably sometime in 67, but it is hard to pin down.

Paul sent his instructions to Titus about leading and teaching and ordering the church in Crete at the height of Nero's madness and his accusations and persecutions of the Christians around the empire, mostly in Rome. But because the emperor was saying it was okay to do these things, they spread

from there. So it was a time of persecution and certainly a time of general anxiety and fear among God's people. Also, just to throw in here in terms of Judea and Jerusalem, these were the declining days of the Jews in Jerusalem too because the Romans came in and destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. So there was a lot of turmoil going on in the church wherever you happened to be around the Mediterranean. So the time factor we are looking at here is in the last three or four years of Nero's reign, somewhere between late 63-67 sometime. So a little bit later than the mid first century.

Second, place. The place that we are talking about is Crete, we call it Crete because it has "ete" and we say if there is an "e" at the end, it makes the "e" long in the center. Well the Greeks did not have that. They called it "Cray-tay." Not cray-cray, although they were kind of cray-cray on "Cray-tay" but it was "Cray-tay" to them. The Hebrews called it "Caf-tor." We will not go there but in Amos 9:7 and also in Jeremiah 47:4 it is very conclusive where God says that the Philistines originally came from "Caf-tor." I will call it Crete because it is a little easier than calling it "Cray-tay."

Crete was the island where the Minoans came from and they were taken over by the Mycenaeans and a lot of people were displaced and perhaps it was during that time that the Philistines left Crete and (as the sea peoples they are called in history) some of them settled there in southwestern Canaan. Anyway, Crete is a very long and narrow island. It is fairly close to the center of the Mediterranean Sea. It is 160 miles long and about 35 miles wide. So long and narrow. It is a fairly big island and it points east-west there. It is just southeast of the mainland of Greece. Between it and Turkey, or Asia Minor as it is called, it forms the southern border of the Aegean Sea. So if you can think of on the west, the mainland of Greece, on the east, Asia Minor, and like a smile or actually it is more like a straight mouth, not happy, not sad, there is Crete on the bottom of that sea that is between them. Do not confuse it with Cyprus. Cyprus is a lot further east where the coast of Turkey and the coast of Syria come together and it kind of looks like it is trying to burst the corner between them. That is Cyprus, do not think about that anymore. We are talking about Crete which is the southern edge of the Aegean Sea.

Now Paul stopped here in Crete in a place called Fair Havens on his way to Rome as a prisoner. You can find that in Acts 27 where they had to stop

there in Crete. They were trying to find a place to harbor during the winter because of the terrible conditions. But the ship's captain decided to go on from there, so they did not stay. By the way, that was AD 57. So approximately seven years before writing Titus. The New Testament fails to tell us anything about the evangelization of Crete. We do not know exactly when it happened, but we do know that Paul and Titus probably preached the gospel there at some point. And we think that it might have been immediately after Paul was released from prison the first time. That would be 62, early 63 AD. So sometime in that area and it was just after that that Paul told Timothy to go there, or to remain there.

Another thing that we probably should add into all this is that if we would go back to Acts 2 and the Pentecost in 31 AD when Luke lists all the people who were there watching what was happening there with the coming of the Holy Spirit and listening to Peter's sermon, there were Jews from Crete in the crowd and it is supposed that some of them, when they went back to Crete, founded some churches or at least had some family churches, home churches that they could worship together until one of the evangelists or the apostles came and visited them at some point. But we know for sure that by the time you get to the book of Titus in about 64 there are churches there, probably several of them.

But I told you before that Crete was not a great place to be. And one of the reasons is that Crete and Cretans did not have a very good reputation in the Greek-speaking world. The people were considered by just about everybody in the Mediterranean as brutish and coarse. They were the hicks and people from back of the hill of the Mediterranean. Look what Paul says in Titus 1: 12. I mean, this is the apostle Paul and notice what he decides to throw at us here in terms of what the people are like.

Titus 1:12 One of them [meaning one of the Cretans], a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

He says this unapologetically about the people there in Crete and I do not think he was actually excluding the members of the church by saying that, because he does make some mention throughout the book that they were following how they had been brought up—even in the church. So this is something that the Titus had to face. I mean, he does not name the poet here,

but the poet's name is Epimenides. He was a Cretan poet in the 6th and 7th century ^{BC} and seems to have been one of Paul's favorites because he quotes Epimenidies back in Acts 17:28. Epimenides is the guy who also said, "In Him we live and move and have our being."

But can we believe him? That is the question. Actually, this is the thing. His statement, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons," it creates what is called "The Epimenides paradox." It is a real theological question, paradox, that scholars scratch their heads about and write long articles about because, since Epimenides was a Cretan, he may have been lying, and if he was lying, well we cannot believe him and it just goes on and on. I cannot get into all of it. It is very confusing. But we will say God put it in here, it must be truth, that what Epimenides said was true.

Now in Paul's day, Greeks used a derogatory term, *cretizo*, in Greek, that means Cretan, and when they use that term, they meant a liar. For example, Plutarch writes that Lysander cretanized a Cretan and by it he means he used a Cretan to lie for him in a situation he needed to get out of. The Greek word *creticos* means to act in a two-faced manner. So in this way, *creticos* Cretans were known for their hypocrisy and for double dealing. The Cretans claim that Zeus' grave can be found on Crete may have contributed to their reputation as unlikely sources of truth since to the Greeks, immortal gods having a grave was very contradictory. Now you know why the men on Mars Hill in Athens scoffed at Paul when he talked about Jesus Christ in the resurrection, having called Him basically God. So he was coming across to them as a Cretan. That is why they told him, "Let's stop here. We'll come back and talk to you later."

Anyway, across the Mediterranean region, a person was thought to have lost his marbles if he trusted. They had a really big problem with the truth, speaking the truth, and witnessing to the truth evidently.

I do want to say, just as another little aside here, that we have a term "cretin" that we use in modern English. It means a stupid, vulgar, or insensitive person, a clod, a lout, an idiot, or a moron. But that has no link to the ancient idea of Cretans being liars, beastly, and lazy. They actually come from two

different sources. In fact, the etymology of cretin, the modern one, goes to old French, cretan, and then if you go back further, cretan is actually the old French word that came from Latin, Christianus. It means a Christian.

Now, I need to explain. They did not think that Christians were stupid, vulgar, insensitive louts. That is not what they meant there. This actually comes from a place in France, I believe, where for some reason there was a congenital problem among various people where they had a lot of what we would several years ago have called retarded people. Mentally deficient people were born in the area. And there were so many of them that they actually got this name cretan which means Christian, and what they were doing was the people in this region were reminding themselves that these were human beings even though they were mentally challenged quite a bit, they were still human beings. They were not animals, they were not gorillas or apes or anything. That they needed to treat them as human beings. And then when people found out about this from out of the region, they changed it to mean something more perjorative as an idiot, like that. So it does not really mean originally that they thought that Christians were for idiots, but to remind themselves that these babies that they had that were mentally deficient were Christian, as they called it, able to come to Christ.

Let us get back to this idea of the way the Cretans were, Mediterranean Cretans. Commentator William Hendrickson says, "The reputation of the Cretans was none too good. The need of thorough- going sanctification in congregational, individual, family, and public life had to be stressed here even more than elsewhere."

His conclusion is that among all the places in the Mediterranean region, the people on Crete needed the most Christian education to help them along and they needed somebody who could *push* them in their sanctification process in all areas of life. So they needed, as he says here, how they got along together in a congregation and whether they actually followed the leadership in the congregation as individuals, obviously, as members of a family and how the family members should get along and help each other, and how that they should witness to the truth in public, what their public life was like, because the implication is that many of the Cretans, being two-faced, that they had this way of living two separate lives. So the idea is they would go out in public and act like their neighbors who were liars and lazy beasts and

gluttons and whatnot, but when they would come into their families, they would try to be Christian. So they needed to learn how to balance all of this and make a right example and Paul thought Titus was the guy to do this. Poor Titus.

We will see that Paul instructs Titus to correct unruly, insubordinate, deceptive individuals *within the church*. So he was going into a fire there. They had to be rebuked about lust, their deportment in public, lack of moderation, and getting into long and sometimes divisive and contentious arguments. Does that sound like Twitter to you? Titus also had to refute false teachers that had come in there already. So Titus had quite a job ahead of him and I am glad that there was a man like Titus to do that.

Let us talk about Titus a little bit in the remaining time. His name, Titus, appears 13 times in the New Testament. That kind of surprised me because I thought it might be more. But one of the reasons why it is so few is that he is mentioned pretty much only in Paul's epistles and not anywhere else. It surprised me to find out that Luke does not mention Titus at all in the book of Acts. He is not there by name, although he may be there under a different name. That is a possibility we will go into in a few minutes. Luke certainly alludes to him as being present as a part of a group, but he does not name all the people in the group. And so he is there with Paul in certain situations, but he does not get his name written down by Luke.

Now, some have suggested, and this is kind of strange, I do not know where this came from, that Titus was Luke's brother. Do not ask me where they got it. The idea I think is that they thought that Luke would not mention his brother in the book of Acts because he was his brother. That does not make any sense. I do not know where these people got it, but it has become kind of a what you call just a rumor or something that has been attached to him, that he was somehow related to Luke. But it is a very, very, very uncertain theory because there is no proof at all that he was related to anyone that is mentioned in Scripture here.

Let us go to Galatians the 2nd chapter, and we will see the very first time Titus is mentioned. Time in terms of history, not necessarily the first time in the Book. Galatians was probably written in either the very late 40s or early 50s AD. It is quite an early epistle of Paul, probably only the books of

Thessalonians or maybe just I Thessalonians is earlier than it. So this is very early in Paul's ministry (well, 15 years into his ministry), but of the epistles that are written.

Galatians 2:1-3 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Like I said, the earliest mention of Titus and he is going with with Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. We find here also that he is definitely mentioned as a Greek. He was not like Timothy who had a Greek father and a Jewish mother. He was not half Greek, half Jewish. He was, from what we understand, a full Greek. Notice here that he says 14 years, "and after fourteen years I went up," it is 14 years after his conversion, from what most everybody thinks. So this would put the going to Jerusalem in 49, because Paul was called in 35 AD, roughly. So this would put it in 49. And what happened in 49? The council of Jerusalem. This is what he took Titus to. And of course, we know from Acts 15, that circumcision was a huge topic. As a matter of fact, other than the law itself and whether it should be accepted, circumcision was *the* main topic. Whether Gentiles should be circumcised and go through Judaism first before they came into the church. And of course the answer there, as Paul tells it here, was no. Not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised.

It looks like, if I can be so bold, that Paul actually took Titus with him as a test case, he was part of his argument. And if they made him circumcise Titus, then it would mean one thing. But he was able to prove his case theologically and he did not have to have Titus circumcised.

Let us go to Acts 15 since we have been talking about that. I want to read the first five verses here.

Acts 15:1-5 Certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of

Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders, about this question. So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

So if we would go back to chapter 14, verse 26, we would see that where they had come from was Antioch. "From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed." So it was these Jewish men having come from Judea who brought to Antioch this idea that one must circumcise Gentiles before they could come into the church. These are the ones that Paul and Barnabas argued with.

Now, this has some bearing on us because a lot of people believe that since Paul brought Titus from Antioch, that that is where Titus was from. Titus was an Antioch Assyrian. Maybe a Greek Syrian who lived there in Antioch. It is a guess. Again, no one really knows. There is nothing in the New Testament that says that Titus was from here or there, we can just make a few conjectures by where we find him and we first find him in Antioch. So maybe he was from Antioch, maybe not. We do not know. All we know is that he was Greek. And in the New Testament, a Greek can mean a true Greek, meaning that he is a descendant of Greeks, he is ethnically Greek, or it can mean that he is simply a Gentile. That is, he is not Jewish. But everything that Paul seems to say about him, I lean toward the fact that he was actually a a Greek. He was a pure blooded Greek person. But again, I have to say that that is just a guess.

Remember I said that he might have been named in Acts but just given a different name. That is in Acts 18. That is just a couple of pages over here. Paul goes to Corinth, he goes to the synagogue, he gets in a big argument

with the Jews and says, "I'm finished, I'm going elsewhere." Then it says verse 7:

Acts 18:7 He departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

If you have a margin that puts a little one or something next to the word Justus, you will find that the marginal reference says Titius Justus. Now there are people who believe that Titius Justus was the full name of Titus. Again, nobody can say for sure. What is appealing in this is that he is in Corinth and the man is called a worshipper of God. Which usually suggests a Gentile proselyte who had not fully committed to Judaism, and the fully committed part was circumcision. So this would mean that he would have been one who is not circumcised. In any case, his house stood next door to the synagogue in Corinth, and Paul was welcomed there, and it is thought that maybe Paul lived there while he was in Corinth.

Again, the evidence that this Titius Justice is Titus is quite thin, although it is appealing to believe that he was Corinthian because it was he whom Paul turned to to help him with the Corinthian problem. That is Titus, not necessarily this Justus fellow. If he were a Corinthian, it would make matters a little bit easier between him and his fellow Corinthians in terms of trying to solve the problems that they had there. Paul was an outsider. If this Titius Justus was Titus, he would have been an insider and things might have gone very smoothly in his negotiations with the church there. But like I said, the evidence is quite thin on this.

Now, what did Paul think about Titus? Let us go to Titus 1.

Titus 1:4 [He says] To Titus, my true son in our common faith.

His description of Titus here usually means that God used Paul, Paul had converted him. So he considered Titus to be his spiritual son, the same way that he considered Timothy to be his spiritual son. What he says here, if this is so that he was the one that God used to call him, this supports an Antiochin origin more than a Corinthian origin, since before AD 50 or 51 Paul had evangelized quite a bit around Antioch, but had not gone to Corinth at

all. So, this is a possibility there. However, Titus may have been from Corinth and just been living in Antioch when he met Paul. Again, the details are too sketchy to make a clear determination. But we do know that Paul had a great affection for Titus. He was his true son in the common faith.

Let us go back to II Corinthians 2. Titus has mentioned a lot in II Corinthians because he was the one that was the go-between between Paul and the church there. I want verse 13 here.

II Corinthians 2:13 [Paul says] I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother [meaning he was in Troas, he had been preaching the gospel there, and he wanted the help of Titus. But Titus and he did not meet Troas. So he said]; taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.

So he really trusted in Titus and wanted him to help him there. But notice here that he calls Titus "my brother." Not his literal brother, but brother in the faith, and someone he really got along along with.

II Corinthians 8:23 [where he says to the Corinthians] If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow worker concerning you. [He had full authority from Paul. He was a full partner with Paul.] Or if the brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.

Obviously Paul held Titus in high regard. What we find as we look throughout the New Testament is that Titus was the guy that he sent on difficult assignments, sometimes very delicate ones, as to Corinth. There in Corinth he had to handle the case of the immorality between the man who had his father's wife. He had to face down all of Paul's detractors who were trying to say that Paul did not have apostolic authority over them. And he also had to supervise the collection for the Jerusalem saints there in Corinth.

In effect, Paul used him like a relief pitcher. He was a kind of firefighter, a problem solver. He seems to have the ability just by his nature, character, and personality that God had given him, that he could tone down inflamed

situations and marshal people toward reconciliation. And he seemed to have been quite a leader—that if you gave him a goal, he was going to make sure he reached it. He just seemed to be that kind of a man.

Titus' assignment in Crete was another difficult one because as I have said, Crete's culture was one of moral decay, kind of like ours. From the tone of what he says in this and other places, Paul seems to have given him just initial instructions, kind of an outline of things, and then he granted him a great deal of autonomy as to how he would solve the problem, deal with those who are involved in this situation. And we will see this as we go through the epistle of Titus, that Paul tells him a lot of general things and Titus is just supposed to take it from there.

Now, some have inferred, and I think this is at least partially correct, that Titus and Paul had very similar personalities. Unlike Timothy, who was very introverted and not like Paul at all, did not have the same drive or zeal perhaps that Paul had. Both were driven people, both were tough, both were very dynamic, though perhaps Titus was more tactful. You know how Paul could be, he called all the Cretans lazy and liars and whatnot. Titus was more tactful and probably a better handler of personalities than Paul was. Paul was "do the work, do the work, do the work, this is how it needs to be done, do it!" Whereas Titus was probably a little bit more toned down, a little bit more, "We can do this." You know, encourage the people, not just lay it all on the line and say do it. He was able to help see them through it.

Let us go II Corinthians 7 and see that he had the emotional capacity to allay some of Paul's fears.

II Corinthians 7:5-7 For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest [You can see Paul pacing and pacing and thinking about these things and worrying and thinking, oh, no things are going terrible.], but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

So Titus was able to bring the good news from Corinth, and through his own personality he was able to soothe Paul. And the Corinthians seemed to have comforted and refreshed Titus too. We look at this from the other direction down in verse 13. He says,

II Corinthians 7:13-15 Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true. And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.

It was a mutual admiration society there between the Corinthians and Titus and Paul once all this was worked out.

Titus seems to have been a very positive man, a problem solver, jump in and help kind of servant of God. And he had a seemingly attractive, contagious attitude that could lift people up.

Let us go to Titus 3 and just kind of get into the final stages of Titus and his place in the New Testament. This is a probably around 64, 65.

Titus 3:12 When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

So at the end of the epistle, Paul tells Titus that he would soon recall him from his assignment on Crete and that he should meet the apostle there in Nicopolis. Nicopolis is a city on Greece's western coast on the Adriatic Sea facing Italy. If you think about it, you know where the boot is of Italy? Nicopolis is directly across from the instep of Italy and had a road that went directly to Rome from there. This, like I said, is the winter maybe of 65 or maybe 66. Really late in Paul's life. And Titus did eventually join Paul in Rome during his final imprisonment there. If we go back to II Timothy 4, we find the final mention of Titus in verses 9 and 10. He tells Timothy,

II Timothy 4:9-10 Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

Now, this does not mean that Titus left the faith or departed into the present world like Demas seems to have. It just means, the wording suggests that Titus had come and gone again, and likely Paul had given him an urgent errand in Dalmatia. Dalmatia, if you do not know the ancient world, that is modern Croatia. So he went off that way, perhaps to put out some fire in the churches there, or just merely to visit and strengthen the congregations that had already been made there.

And at this point he fades out of our view in the New Testament, you never read of him again. There is really no indication anywhere what he did after this. He goes to Dalmatia and simply disappears from historical view. We do not know where he ended up, where he died. Catholic tradition says he went back to Crete and was the bishop there until he died at an advanced age. But again, no solid evidence of it. We do not know. He might have stayed in Dalmatia or gone somewhere else. Nobody really knows now.

As we conclude here, I want to read just a little bit from *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* because it makes a fitting remark about Titus.

Titus was a man for the tough tasks. According to Paul, he was dependable, II Corinthians 8:17. He was reliable, II Corinthians 7:6, and diligent, II Corinthians 8:17, and he had a great capacity for human affection, II Corinthians 7:13-15. Possessing both strength and tact, Titus calmed a desperate situation on more than one occasion. He is a good model for Christians who are called to live out their witness in trying circumstances.

It is that last sentence that essentially describes my purpose in giving these sermons on Paul's epistle to Titus. We need to see him as a model of Christians who are called to live out their witness in trying circumstances.