

Titus 3:12-15 - April 25, 2021

Godly People in Our Lives

JD Farag

Good morning and welcome to our second service. We're so very glad that you're joining us online. We have two services on Sunday morning. The first is our Prophecy Update, and the second service is our study through the Bible. We are currently in the book of Titus, and actually Lord willing, today we will complete the book of Titus. Our text is Chapter 3:12-15.

And once we're done with the Book of Titus, we have actually the book/very short letter to Philemon. Then after Philemon, you know what comes after Philemon? Hebrews? That's what I'm talking about.

So here's the thing: I was thinking about this just this morning. So on Thursday nights, we are going through the Book of Isaiah. Do you realize absent the rapture, between now and maybe a couple of weeks from now, we will be on Thursday nights in the book of Isaiah, and on Sunday mornings, we'll be in the Book of Hebrews? It doesn't get any better than that, all right.

So looking forward to that. After the Book of Hebrews is the Book of James, then 1st and 2nd Peter, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, very short book Jude, and then Revelation. Yeah! Then after that, the rapture can come. Actually, the rapture can come anytime now, thank you very much. All right, if I might trouble you to stand, you can follow along as I read, beginning in verse 12, Titus Chapter 3. This is the end of the Apostle Paul's letter to Titus.

And actually, I don't want you to look at the screen, and I'm going to ask the guys not to put it up because it's got the wrong date and last week's text, just to give you an idea of what kind of week I had. They actually corrected it, but it reverted back to the -- anyway, enough of my problems when it crashed. Let's read the Word of God.

Follow along with me, verse 12. "As soon as I send Artemus or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis because I have decided to winter there. Do everything you can to help Zenas, the lawyer, and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need." "Our people (verse 14) must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives."

"Everyone (verse 15) with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Let's pray if you would please join with me.

Thank You, Lord, so much. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You for this portion here in Your Word that we have before us today. Lord, we know that there's something here that You want to show us; otherwise, it wouldn't be here in Your Word. There's something here that You want to speak to us, and so we want for the Holy Spirit, as only You can, Lord, to speak clearly, personally, if need be, confidentially into our lives, into our hearts, in and through Your Word, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen and amen.

You can be seated, thank you. So I've been really looking forward to this text today. I want to talk with you today about the Godly people that the Lord brings into our lives as an encouragement for us and a help to us.

Now, I am keenly aware that at first read, the text that we have before us here at the end of Paul's letter to Titus can seem insignificant, inconsequential. I mean all he's doing is kind of closing, and you know, kind of like what we do, say hi to everybody, give them our love, and got a couple guys here need to have them taken care of, and then well, let's be honest, we're in church.

But when you read a passage like this, if you're anything like me, and I believe that you are, you kind of read past it, read through it, and then you just move on to what's next after it. Don't look at me like that, you know, you do.

I mean, after all, it's just kind of the, you know, end of the letter, and there's no doctrinal, or is there? Oh, surely this is just kind of the formality at the end of the letter, or is it? What do we know to be

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true? That all scripture is God-breathed, inspired. Never imagine for a second that God says, "Hey Paul, you know, this letter to Titus is kind of short, let's kind of add some filler towards the end, if you don't mind."

No, every word in God's Word is in God's Word for a reason. It's for our instruction, our exhortation, sometimes a rebuke. We don't like that, but it's here for a reason. And that's what I want to talk about today. Upon closer examination, what we find in this passage is that the Apostle Paul is taking the time by the Holy Spirit to make mention of the people that God has brought into his life at just the perfect time.

I want to take just a moment and draw your attention to these four men that Paul mentions here, and this for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that these four men were real people, that were really good friends with the Apostle Paul, that was there for the Apostle Paul, that loved the Apostle Paul, and Paul loved them.

Now I know that might sound like a firm grasp of the obvious, but I think we're all prone and do err greatly when we do this, but it's very easy to when you're reading the scriptures, especially the epistles, to not see these people as real people. These were people like you and me.

Oh, certainly they dressed differently, and certainly, the customs were very different. That day was very different, especially as a believer in and follower of Jesus Christ. But these were still people like you and like me, and these are brothers in Christ that we're gonna see in heaven, by the way. And we have the privilege of being introduced to them here at the end of Paul's letter.

Actually, we were introduced to them prior, but Paul mentions them here, and in so doing it -- and this is why I believe we have this passage in our Bibles. It speaks to the types of people that God is always so faithful to bring into our lives for such a time as this, as it were. I mean, these are people that are such a blessing, and God knows it.

And so God brings them into your life and think about this. This is the Apostle Paul we're talking about. I don't know how you picture the Apostle Paul in your mind's eye. I'm sure he was, you know, this mighty man, unflinching fearlessness, walked into a room, everybody stopped talking, that's Paul. Do you know who that is?

But this was a man like us who got very tired, very discouraged, went through unspeakable difficulty. And this was a guy that just needed a brother to be there for him. He needed a friend. He needed someone, and God brought that someone into his life at just the perfect time in his life when he really needed them. And that's what we're gonna see, and again, this is why I believe it is that we have this in our Bibles.

What follows are three types of people that God is always faithful to bring into our lives, and when He does, by the way, know that you are loved, and you never want to lose those people. The first one is in verse 12, and it's the faithful encouragers. Oh, my goodness, we could use some encouragers in the body of Christ. Would you agree?

So here Paul tells Titus that he wants him with him when he's in Nicopolis for the winter, and he wants Titus to come as soon as he sends either Artemus or Tychicus. Now we don't really know about Artemus. Some historians and Bible commentators suggest he was a pastor of a church in the area at the time.

Certainly, he was, even though we have no mention of him in scripture; he was certainly a faithful friend to the Apostle Paul. The reason is that Paul is making the decision as to whether or not to send Artemus or Tychicus. And that should tell us something. It's an indication that both were these faithful servants.

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And I want to hasten to say something here, and it's very important and please don't miss this. I want to use the word "faithful" synonymous with the word "loyal." And the reason is, is because these men had what is so rare today in a word, loyalty, loyalty. They're faithful, they're reliable, they're dependable, they're loyal. And by virtue of Paul mentioning that he would send either one of these two men so that Titus could come, which should tell you something about his relationship with Titus.

Oh, he loved Titus so much. He wants Titus to come to him, and he knows he's got to send somebody so he can. So he's got two guys at the top of his list, and it's these two men. And I believe the reason is, is because they were faithful. They were loyal, especially loyal.

In Acts 20:4, we're told that Tychicus is one of the brothers who accompanied Paul when he set sail for Syria through Macedonia after the Jews had plotted against him in Greece. Think this through with me. Tychicus was loyal to Paul at a time when Paul had this plot against him quite frankly to kill him. I'll tell you, it's at times like that, that you want a Tychicus by your side when you go through things like that.

In Colossians Chapter 4:7-9, Paul says of Tychicus that he is a dear brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord. He's sending him along with this guy by the name of Onesimus for the express purpose that they may know about their circumstances, speaking of Paul, and that their hearts would be encouraged. Stay with me on this.

Here's Paul. Tychicus is so faithful. He's such an encouragement. He's such a blessing. I'm gonna send him to you because I know you need to be encouraged. And he'll be an encouragement to you. And the circumstances were such, and their hearts were such that Paul deems it necessary to send a man that he knows will really encourage them.

Can I just speak for a moment real quick on the need for encouragement? I remember hearing many, many years ago, a great illustration delineating, distinguishing between the police and a paramedic. So you have an accident, and at the scene of the accident, the police are the first to show up. Now, the police's role is to determine who violated the law, who ran the red light, if you will. But then, when the paramedics show up, their purpose is not to see who's at fault but to minister to the needs of the injured.

You see where I'm going with this? I'll tell you this illustration has stuck with me over the years and has served me well over the years. The point being is that we have in the body of Christ today way too many policemen and hardly any paramedics. You know the word "para" by the way, paraclete in the Greek New Testament's original language describing the Holy Spirit, para, parallel, paramedic, paralegal, parachute, para, come alongside. This is a para. I need somebody to come alongside me. I need a para; I need a Tychicus.

I need a paramedic. I don't need the police. I already know who's at fault here. You; no, it's me, I'm at fault, I know who's to blame. I don't need any help with that, and by the way, when it comes to the law, that's not our role; that belongs to the Lord. We need to be paramedics.

And by the way, another illustration: That's a healthy body. When a body is unhealthy, there are cells in the body that are actually attacking the other cells in the body. We actually have a word for it. You know what it is? Wait for it: Cancer.

Yeah, a healthy body -- well, here's another illustration. I'm full of illustrations today, I guess, but this is my favorite one. You know how it is when -- well, I'll just use the hammering a nail, and you hit your thumb. Yeah, well, I guess you can finish the rest of this.

But the whole body hurts, and especially if you have a low tolerance for pain like I do. I get a hangnail; I'm praying in my prayer language. "Oh, Jesus, oh Lord" -- it's a hangnail. My whole body

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rushes -- that's just outwardly. Internally, everything in my body is going emergency, emergency, urgent! Thumb got bashed by the stupid idiot who hammered it with a nail, with a hammer! And what does my other hand do?

It goes, owww, I'm loving on it, kissing on it. I'm actually talking to it. "Oh, it's okay, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I shouldn't use a hammer, I'm so sorry."

Can you imagine? You bash your thumb with a hammer, and your other hand goes, "You had it coming; that's what you get." What? We need a Tychicus when we get hurt. And we're gonna see that here too in 2nd Timothy Chapter 4:12.

This is really interesting. We're told that Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus and wanted Timothy to do his best to come to him. That's where Timothy was, and he wanted him to come quickly, and here's why. He says that Demas has just deserted him and Alexander the metalworker has harmed him. Timothy, I need you.

Yeah, but you're the Apostle Paul; you don't need anybody. No, I need my Timothy. I'll send Tychicus. I just need a brother right now. I've been deeply hurt. I've been betrayed. I've been deserted. I've been harmed. I've been hurt. Timothy, I need you, I need you, man. Can you imagine Timothy? I'll be right there, Paul.

And just being there, by the way, just your presence there. I know I've been on both sides of mourning. I've been the one who has mourned. And you have those friends that are there for you. And just being there, they don't even have to say anything, just the fact that they're there, they're present there. That was a Tychicus. That's a faithful encourager that drops everything and is just there for you.

I've also been on the other side of that. You know, we mourn with those who mourn, we rejoice with those who rejoice, and when you are privileged to just be there for somebody who's really grieving, really hurting, you don't have to say anything.

In fact, we could learn a thing or two from Job's friends, right? What I find very interesting is, and we went through the book of Job. What a trial just studying through the Book of Job was. But there was that point where they get there, and you know, I could just imagine, and this really happened.

I mean, it was pretty graphic, but I mean he's -- you know, the boils are itching him, and he's scraping them with broken pieces of clay and sitting on this, junk heap, this dust heap, and here come the friends. And can you imagine that seeing their friend like that, and they were speechless, and they did so good because it didn't say one word. They just sat there with him, being there.

Then they opened their mouths. And he got chapter after chapter as they just go on. And you know what's really interesting about that and Job's friends? They falsely accused him, pointing the finger of blame at him. What he needed more than anything at that time was not a police pointing the finger. There must be some deep sin in your life. No, I need a paramedic.

It's been said, it's in the context of the marriage relationship, but sometimes husbands, our wives, don't need our mouths. They need our shoulders. Yeah, I'll speak for myself on that one because I got a mouth, man, I'll tell you. And by nature -- and this is okay, it's the way God wired us -- but you know men are like get in and let's fix this thing.

It doesn't work that way. I learned that the hard way, got the scars to prove it. What's wrong, honey? Because we're all about fixing it. You can't fix this. Will you just stop talking? Stop talking. That's the first thing you can do. I want to help. You want to help me; stop talking, that'll help me. Just be here. Just listen.

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And then, I didn't mean to go this far into this, but maybe this is for somebody here. Of course, it's not for me because I have the perfect marriage; I'm the pastor. Is there a lightning bolt coming anywhere? So you're just there for them and just listen. Let him talk. Don't interrupt them and really listen. Don't think about what you're going to say next.

You know how we do that? You're in a conversation with somebody, and you're not; you're listening, but you're not really listening to what they're saying. And so you're very good at inserting the "hmm" and the "is that right" in the right spot. And then they say something that is met with a "hmm" or a "is that right," and then they catch you, busted, you weren't really listening, were you? No.

Why weren't you listening? Because you were actually thinking about what you are going to say because what you have to say is more important than what they were saying. That's why you weren't listening to them in the first place. Don't look at me like that again. Right? We do that.

Just be there. Just be there for him. Just your presence there, and here's another thing, one last thing. I haven't used "one last thing," right? Yeah, okay. Well, this is one of the one last things. They know the scriptures that you're just dying to quote them.

You know what I'm talking about? Oh, we're so smug in our spiritual piety. Well, you know God works all things together for good to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose. Don't quote that verse.

First, they already know that verse probably better than you. But that's like pouring salt on a wound. What they need is: Look, I don't know what God's doing here, but God is doing something here. And I just want you to know I'm gonna be there for you no matter what happens. And I don't care what it is. You can call me anytime day or night, and I will come. I don't care what time it is. And I will be there for you, and I will do whatever I can to walk with you through this. That's a Tychicus. That's loyalty. That's loyalty.

It's a whole other topic for another time. There's no loyalty anymore. I'll tell you in my culture, in the Middle East as an Arab, in fact, well, yeah, let's see if I can give you the short version of this. So in the Arab culture, back in the day, if I could say it that way, they were nomadic people, and they would travel great distances and go long periods, often without food or even water, for that matter. S

o when they were in, and as nomads traveling these great distances and they would come upon a tent, and you would invite them into that tent and give them water to drink and food to eat, watch this. You're loyal till death and will go to your death because of that. That's a cultural dynamic in the Middle East because, in effect, they saved your life. So it's life for life. They saved your life; you will save their life if that situation ever presents itself. That's called loyalty. That's called loyalty.

And again, the Apostle Paul with this Demas guy -- and get this: How would you -- for well-nigh 2000 years, all of God's people, like us today, all of these generations later have read by name Demas and Alexander. God by the Holy Spirit deemed it fit to have the Apostle Paul record for all of the generations the names of these guys. Why, to shame them? No, I think it's because of this. We all have a Demas who has deserted us, abandoned us at a time of our greatest need. And we've all had an Alexander that has hurt us deeply. But God.

And I think that's why we have their names here. They are offset, for lack of a better way of saying it, by the Artemus and the Tychicus. Well, this brings us to our second one in verse 13 and its gifted advisors.

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So here, Paul tells Titus to do everything he can to help this guy by the name of Zenas. And we're told what his occupation is; he was an attorney. So for all you attorneys online, we love you so much and bless you. But actually, this is not an attorney like you.

Hang on for just a second. So you got Zenas and Apollos, and Paul says to Titus, I don't care what it is or what it takes, but whatever they need, you take care of it. These guys mean that much to me.

Now, what's up with this Zenas guy? Was he an attorney? No. Is he a trial lawyer? No. He was an expert in the law of Moses. Oh, and Apollos, well, we know about Apollos. He was a very gifted scholar, a very gifted teacher. In fact, he was such a good orator that there was a problem, a conflict that had arisen in the Corinthian church.

And Paul addresses it in his first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 3. I think it's Chapter 3. And he rebukes them for saying, hey, I am of Apollos. He's a much better orator than Paul. When Paul talks, it's like he's got a mouthful of gravel. It's hard to even understand what he says, accent added.

So we're of Apollos. And then here you got these other guys over here, and there's this division taking place. And they're like, well, we're of Paul. Paul's like, stop it! I know Apollos is a gifted teacher. I know he's a very gifted orator. I know he keeps your attention. When he's speaking or filling in that day, you all show up. You hear I'm coming to town, you run away. You don't come. Paul's coming, uh oh. Hey, who's speaking today? Apollos. Oh, wow, cool.

And that's what was happening there in Corinth. And Paul addresses it, and he rebukes them for it. I only mentioned that because it gives us a glimpse into who these men were. These were very gifted men. I would even argue that this is just a suggestion that I would make humbly because they were also very intelligent men.

And the reason I highlight that is because I don't know what it is, but it's almost like when you are a Christian, you're supposed to be anti-intellectual. No way. God is the God of the intellect. God gives us that intellect. These were intellectuals. These were guys that were very gifted, very smart.

So if Paul had a question, get Zenas on the phone, send him a text. I'm trying to bring it into, you know, modern day. He's the expert. God's gifted him and Apollos, too; make no mistake about it. This guy knew his stuff. He might have been a great orator, which doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be a gifted scholar, but this guy was a scholar, man.

This guy knew the Word and think about this. It's not like Paul didn't. Are you kidding me? It is believed by some Bible commentators that the Apostle Paul had a very high intellect. If he is the one -- and it's immaterial, it's irrelevant; if we needed to know who wrote the book of Hebrews, God would have told us who wrote the book of Hebrews.

But in fact, now that I think of it, some have even suggested that the Book of Hebrews is so doctrinally meaty and mighty that it would have had to have been either Apollos or Paul who wrote it just the way it's written. Certainly, it's inspired, but still, God uses the God-given intellect that He's gifted a man with, and he uses it.

You know, there's kind of this notion, I guess for lack of a better word, that when you come to Christ, you have to assassinate your intellect, you know, because the two are not compatible, if you will. Because when you come to Christ, you just ho-ho-ho ho ho!

And you'll hear it -- sorry for that. What is that, Road Runner? That's bad; I had a flashback there. You'll find something like that. You'll find that notion coupled with something like this. Oh, that's a blind faith. Blind faith?

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No, it's not. It's not a blind faith. It's an intelligent faith. It's an intellectual faith. It's a God-given intellect. And you go throughout scripture, and time and time again, you'll see that recorded in the pages of Holy Writ. I just had another flashback, if you don't mind.

You know in school when your teacher would say, "Put your thinking caps on?" They stopped saying that to me; they just gave up. It's kind of like, I don't have a thinking cap. In other words, put your intellectual, God-given intellect on because, see, God's given us the ability to think, to reason, to reason through. This faith is an intellectual faith; it's a reasonable faith. Come let us reason together.

So for Paul to mention them here, to me, is an indication of their profound intellect, their God-given intellect, their gifts God-given, their talents, and they were of invaluable help to the Apostle Paul. You know, throughout the Proverbs, we studied through the Book of Proverbs. That was such a great study, as was the Psalms, as were all the books.

But throughout the Proverbs time and time again, the wisdom is that with many advisors, many counselors, plans will succeed, the multitude of counsel, Godly counsel. But with too few, they will fail.

Again, one last thing on this, we'll move on. Not quite, but we'll get there. You know, it takes humility, right, to admit, hey, I need some advice. Do you? Whoa, this is the Apostle Paul we're talking about again, right? Paul, come on, you know everything.

No, I need some counsel here. I need some Godly counsel. I need a gifted adviser that can kind of walk through this with me.

Oh, I thank God for those men in my life that God has brought into my life that have had Godly counsel. I mean, I think of Ahithophel, although it ended badly with him and David. But it's said of Ahithophel, the most trusted and gifted adviser to King David, that it was as the oracles of God when he spoke. And God will do that.

Often times He will speak through that gifted adviser, and it will be a word exactly and fitly spoken for exactly what you needed to hear. And God will speak through that brother, that sister, that adviser. But it takes humility to ask.

Hey, you know I don't have all the answers. This one's got me a little bit stumped; this is a head-scratcher. You know, I'm, of course, praying and asking God. You know, God's going to reveal to you His will. Never think for a second that God doesn't want you in His will more than even you yourself want to be in His will.

And isn't it true that one of the things that we want more than anything is to know God's will? And God is not up in heaven playing this heavenly chess game with it. Can you imagine? Wow, JD's almost figured it out. Quick, get down there, change the board. He almost figured this thing out. He almost figured out what My will is.

No, it's more like this. Hey, this guy is having a hard time. Send someone; he needs an Apollos; he needs a Zenas. And then they come alongside, and here's how God does it. And it's what I like to refer to as the four legs on the table of God's will.

First and foremost, and you need all four of these, it's God's Word. You know, it's not God's will if it's incompatible with God's Word. If it's not in God's Word, I assure you, on the authority of God's Word, it's not God's will because God would never contradict His Word. First and foremost, God will speak to you and advise you through His Word.

So it's the Word of God, Number 1; Number 2, the peace of God. This is very important, and again, they all work in tandem and concert one with the other. And it's that peace where the Holy Spirit is

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like this is the way, walk ye in it. This is good between the Holy Spirit and me. It's the Holy Spirit bearing witness with your spirit, and you just have this supernatural peace that this is God's will and it's God's Word.

Let me flip that around and maybe this will help with the contrast. If you have a pause or a check or something that just doesn't quite sit right and you don't have a peace about it, never ever, ever go against that.

Oh my goodness, I've done that. I've learned the hard way, and I've got the scars to prove it where God would -- it's been said that God will direct our steps, but He'll also direct our stops.

And if God is giving you a -- better said, He's withholding his peace from that decision, don't move, don't move. Oswald Chambers said it best this way, "When in doubt, don't."

That's God checking you and stopping you. And it's not necessarily that He's denying you. Sometimes it's not that hey, that's not My will, it's just not My timing. It that quip, really well said, "When I'm wrong, God says, "Grow." When the request is wrong, God says, "No." When the timing is wrong, God says, "Slow." But when I'm right and the request is right, and the timing is right, God says, "Go." Wait for the green light.

You know what we do? I'm going to bring in the traffic illustration now. Look out. I know this one; I have a degree in this one. What happens when we see the yellow light? You know what yellow light is?

Just so we're clear, the yellow light means slow down and prepare to stop. But I'm in a hurry. So what do we do in the yellow light? And oh, by the way, it's a conspiracy. They're all yellow right when I get up there, every single one of them, on the way to church, and God is saying it's pretty bad when God has to use stoplights.

Hey, whatever it takes, right? But what do we do when we see the yellow light? We speed up! Come on. What's the matter; we're in church. Be honest with yourselves. Do you know that yellow light could save your life?

We have a sister that's a police officer and has become a dear friend. And she shared with my wife, and I went time, we went to dinner, and we're just, you know, she was sharing some of them -- I just love police officers because they have so many stories, you know? And so she was sharing with us about how when she'll pull over somebody for speeding, and she'll say to them -- and this stops them, and they have no answer for it.

So she's writing them the ticket that you're trying to get out of. And we come up with the most magnificent reasons as to why, you know? Oh, I didn't realize I was going that fast. You know that's one of the most popular ones. I've actually got a whole list. I'm happy to email it to you after if you want.

Actually, let me hasten to say I've not had a traffic violation in over 33 years. Upstanding citizen of the community, I'll have you know. That's not because I don't exceed the speed limit. I just haven't been caught; praise the Lord for that.

But she'll say to them as she's writing out that ticket, "You know what, sir? I probably just saved your life." Okay, now let's take that into the context of our text. God wants to save you. You know there is safety in the multitude of counselors. God wants to save you oftentimes from you. He's trying to save you from yourself because of your own proclivity and propensity to blow through all those yellow lights. And you do so to your own peril. And God wants to stop you and slow you.

Number 3: Providential Circumstances. You've got God's Word, God's peace, God's providence. This is when God, in concert with His Word and His peace, will choreograph the steps of the

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circumstances and orchestrate your steps. So a door gets shut here, redirection. A door gets open here; let's go through it. And then the next door gets shut, and you're looking for the window because sometimes God will go through a window.

Here we are: "Look, God, open the doors." "I don't want to use the door this time. I want to use a window." It's the providential circumstances that God arranges in His sovereignty providentially, and it's a confirmation of sorts.

So here you've got God's Word, you've got God's peace, and then all of a sudden, the circumstances line up, and that's God's way of saying yeah, that's a confirmation. And the fourth one is what we're talking about here. It's those brothers and sisters in Christ that come alongside you and advise you and encourages you and council you, godly counsel. And those are the four legs on the table of God's will.

There's something else here to know before we move on. And it's very interesting, and I didn't see this until, I think it was Friday, but it has to do with the names of three of the four men that Paul mentions. Aside from Tychicus, you've got Artemus, Zenas, and Apollos.

Now, why is that important? Because all three of their names are derived from the most pagan gods of that day. Apollos, Zeus, Artemus: These were demonic gods. How would you like to be named that? I'm trying to think of a modern-day equivalent. I'm having a hard time thinking of one, but that was their name.

And by the way, the name in that culture and that day was the nature. It wasn't just cruel parents. Hey, let's name him Apollos. I know, let's name him Wahid; he'll have fun with that. He'll have to change that and come up with a legal A. K. A.

So what's the point? The point is this: You never know who it is that God will choose and use to have a profound impact in your life. And oh, by the way, God chooses them. Again, I'm heavily leaning on Oswald Chambers. But he said something to the effect -- maybe it wasn't Chambers -- it might have been Tozer -- both of these guys, you just read them, and you just start question your salvation. They're just so, you know, in your face and blunt and to the point, that's a good thing.

But he said something to the effect of. "You can't choose the hands that God uses to crush the grapes, making it into wine in your life." See, if I had my choice, I wouldn't choose them. I don't want them. I'd rather have Brother So-and-so. But they're kind of like heavenly sandpaper.

You know what I'm talking about? I wouldn't choose -- they would not be my first choice. I would not have -- I mean, let's just be honest. I wouldn't choose Apollos or, for that matter, this Zenas. I would choose Larry or Bob. They're "mo betta," both of them.

But never be dismissive of those people. They're the last and the least. They're the ones that you would never think that God would choose to use. You know why He does that? Well, it's also -- in fact, it's in the context of 1 Corinthians 3 of this whole issue with Apollo and Paul.

You know what Paul goes on to say? He says, "God chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and He chooses the weak things of this world to shame the strong." See, we don't do that. Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks at the heart.

And we're drawn to, we're prone to want to choose the strong, the wise. Hey, I need wise counsel. I need somebody with wisdom. Well, thank you very much. Picture of pipe, a hat, I don't know, one of those beanies, you know? Well, I'm so glad you asked; in my opinion, it would seem that the...

No, God's going to bring a Zenas, an Apollos. Hey Paul, dude, here's the deal: I wouldn't have chosen that. I want the other guy. Never dismiss the people that God chooses and uses.

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Our last one verses 14 and 15, and this is huge, not that the other ones aren't, but these are the devoted helpers. Paul's final remarks to Titus are really an exhortation of sorts "To be devoted to doing what is good and providing help (notice) for urgent needs." It's like the urgent care center of the church. It's been said that the church is not a showroom for saints; it's a hospital for sinners.

And there's always the accompanying saying that "Hey, are you looking for the perfect church?" "I'm looking for the perfect church." Okay, well, if you happen to find one, don't go to it because you'll ruin it. How about that?

Or how about this one? I don't know what it is, it must be something I ate, but I just thought of this one. You know how it is when you talk to a nonbeliever, maybe you're sharing the Gospel with them, or you're inviting them to church, and they'll say something like, "Ah, that church is full of hypocrites." They're right.

So what I like to say is, "Yeah, I know; we got plenty room for one more, come on, let's go!" That's what this church is, right? That's what the church is, right? It's a place where you go just as you are. The body of Christ just rushes to that need. That's a healthy church, that's a healthy body.

I really don't know if it's possible to overstate just how valuable these devoted helpers are, especially during those difficult times of great need. It is my personal belief that the people that God has there for us during those times, these are the people that have untold treasures in heaven, untold treasures in heaven that awaits them.

Let me close this way; I kind of left this open, and I want to give the Holy Spirit some elbow room, and this is not something I can have notes for because it's really not from the notes; it's from the heart. Just bear with me. My wife and I brought our two boys, ages five and three at the time, here to Hawaii. My wife is from here, born and raised Kailua girl. They have a saying: You can take the girl out of Kailua, but you can't take the Kailua out of the girl.

So I brought her back, and talk about providential circumstances, God's will, God's Word, God's peace, Godly advisors, and gifted counselors. Over a period of about a year-and-a-half, we had determined that yes, this was God's will that we start over, come here, start a church.

This is 2003; in fact, we moved here on December 7th, 2003. I'll never forget this because I mean, leave it to me. We flew here on Pearl Harbor Day, and I'm an Arab. And I just think that you know, God's got a sense of humor, Pearl Harbor Day. And this was right after 9/11. That was 2001; this is 2003. So things were a little bit touchy back then.

We come here, we just land, and boy, it was rough for the first couple of years. Truth be told, I really believed and actually was listening to the father of lies and started believing the lies that I had made the biggest mistake of my life that this was not God's will, that I just wanted to come here because I wanted to bring my wife here and I wanted to live in Hawaii. Here am I, Lord, send me, right? Somebody's gotta do it.

The first couple of years were brutal, brutal. But God. He brought people into our lives, for which I have no words to express how grateful I was for them, especially during that time. 2004: We started a Bible study on a Friday night, went through the Book of Revelation. That's always a good way to start, I guess. Had about 12, 13, 14 people.

Our first Sunday morning service was on February 2nd of 2005. And again, this is why I know God has a sense of humor. I remember that date very well because it was Super Bowl Sunday. We started our first Sunday service on Super Bowl -- it's a gift, I'm telling you right now, it's a gift.

We're meeting in this waiting room that -- I'm not exaggerating when I say this -- it's probably, I would say, if not the same size, smaller than the women's restroom. That was our church in the Aloha Pregnancy and Counseling Center. And we did that for a while, and then God opened up the

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door for us to rent the SDA church in Kaneohe. That was a miracle. Because they don't need it on Sundays, so God gave us that. We were there for 12 years.

But right after that, my wife and I learned that we were pregnant with our third child. Now we've had other pregnancies, but we lost the babies, one in the second trimester. But we were so excited. We're like man... and we're praying, God, we want a girl. I mean, when you've had two boys, plenty, no more. We want a girl. And sure enough, we were pregnant with a girl.

In the 8th month of pregnancy, we learned that she had an anomaly, a chromosome abnormality that the medical community refers to as incompatible with life. It's known as Trisomy 18. And they told us that there's a 50% chance that your baby will be born alive. And there's only a 10% chance that she'll see her first birthday.

And I'm looking at you, and there are some here in this service today that were there with us during that time. And as you might imagine, my wife and I were absolutely devastated. And this did not help because the enemy's right there. "See, I told you, I told you this wasn't God's will. Look at what's happening here."

Well, she survived the birth; we resuscitated her. She required round-the-clock care. My wife and I would sleep in shifts. I had a business that was my tent-making ministry. And we would sleep, you know, I had the morning shift. At 4:00 a.m., she would stay up with our daughter Noelle till 4:00 a.m. I think it's all a blur now, and we had her for four months and six days. And then, at Kapiolani Hospital, she died in our arms and went to be with Jesus.

And I want to tell you something: Were it not for those that God brought into our lives, we would have never made it through that. We would have never made it through it. And I want to say to those of you who were there for us, I will never forget, I will never forget it, how you were there for us. You just loved on us, prayed for us; you were there for us. It was overwhelming.

And the church was very small at that time, by the way, less than 50 people. I mean, again, there are no words. It wasn't long after that that the church started to grow. We kept our hands to the plow. And as they say, the rest is history.

I just wanted to share that because I love you so much. You were there for me, and I will never forget it. How you encouraged me and loved us through that. And I will even take it further, and then we'll close. Had it not been for your love, your love, I don't know that I would be standing here as it is my privilege to be week-in and week-out.

I mean, I'm looking at this church, I'm like, oh Lord, wow! And here's the thing: I don't go there very often, but sometimes the Lord will just say, "You know, um, I could have found somebody else, you know, deliverance will come from another." I can't even imagine somebody else standing here being the pastor of this amazing church, this loving church.

Again, I mean, why I went there now. I love you so much, and I thank you so much. And for those of you who are new or relatively new to this church, I want you to know something about this church. This is a loving church, man. And I say this often, and this is the last thing, okay? Some of you are just saying, please, you're killing us. If I wasn't the pastor of this church, this is where I would go to church. Are you kidding me? You guys are the real deal.

You know, today we had -- okay, this will be the last thing. Today we had -- in fact, why don't you stand, and we'll have the worship team come up. Today we had, and they might still be here for Second Service. We have online members coming and visiting because they want to come before the vaccine is required. So we have all these online members and had a couple, actually two online members, both of whom were from Sacramento, California.

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And I just, I cannot even begin to thank you enough because they will say to me, "Wow, this is an amazing church!" I'm like, "I know." It's a healthy pride, okay, it's a healthy pride. It's such a blessing. You have no idea as a pastor of a church when you hear a visitor say, this is a real-deal church. This is a loving church. And I just want you to know I love you very much. I love you so much, and I thank you so much.

[Applause]

Okay, now that I've smudged everyone's mascara, including mine, why don't we pray?

Father, thank You so much. Lord, this text; forgive us, Lord, we would have perhaps just rushed through it or read past it and even skipped over it. But Lord, there's a word for us here. And Lord, I just want to thank You for those people that You bring into our lives.

Even now, as I pray this and say this, some are thinking of the people that You brought into their lives during some really tough times. Perhaps even now is that time, and you've brought just the right person at just the right time to lift up their hands and walk with them through this.

And Lord, thank You so much. Lord, we love You, in Jesus' name, Amen.