

# TITUS & PHILEMON Bible Reading Schedule

## 1 Week

### WEEK 1

The Book of Titus delivers a strong and compact message about the Gospel and the church. There are several practical topics that are of interest to me like leadership, healthy relationships in the church, and the outreach to a pagan society that desperately needed Christ. Even though Crete was a crude culture of mythology and sinful conduct, the Gospel had the power to change people and even society as a whole. The Apostle Paul seems confident in the strength and integrity of Titus who was sent to Crete with a commission to secure the birth of the church with leadership and instruction.

#### DAY 1 – Titus 1

My attention is directed to verses 5 to 9 because they refer to leadership in the church which has been my role since 1986. I was ordained at that time to the pastorate and have always served as a pastor/teacher in various capacities. But I was thinking about spiritual maturity and how this paragraph essentially outlines the life of a mature believer. That makes these commands and guidelines more relevant for each of us. Which phrase gets your attention in these verses? How might the Holy Spirit be convicting you? I learned that the quotation in verse 12 was written 500 (BC) years previously by Epimenides of Knossos. This charge was directed specifically at the Cretan claim to have Zeus's tomb on the island. It was believed that Cretan immorality resulted from their mythological belief about Zeus; religious lies that had given rise to moral corruption. Cretan culture was often known for immorality and many human vices. This led to greed and selfishness. Paul ends this chapter by rebuking the sinful posture of the people: "Such people claim they know God, but they deny him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good." Crete needed the transforming power of the Gospel desperately. Titus and those who led the church with them were so significant to the plan of God to rescue this godless island. It has never been easy to advance the Gospel but God's plan to redeem the world has never changed and continues to be the hope for a lost world. How does this first chapter speak to you?

#### DAY 2 – Titus 2

Who is Titus? I gave a quick glimpse during the introduction but let's learn some more about this Gentile convert. Titus was completely changed by the Gospel and left his home and devoted his life to assisting Paul in the proclamation of the Gospel. Titus must have been a trustworthy partner for Paul because he sent him on assignment to Corinth at least twice to deliver Paul's stronger letter(s) to the church in Corinth. Add to that his assignment in Crete which is the focus of the letter we are reading. Church history suggests that Titus stayed in Crete serving the church and eventually becoming a bishop there until he was quite old. Verses 1 to 8 are especially significant, in my thinking, since they affirm the intergenerational nature of the church. Older men and women in the church play a very important role

of support and mentoring. Too often older believers think they have no purpose in the Body of Christ. But Paul tells Titus to remind the senior adults about their role in the church and their input for younger men and women in the Body. What aspect of these intergenerational relationships catches your eye? Believers in the church at Crete are admonished to live a life of wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God. Salvation produces a changed life that desires to live holy lives and is empowered to do so. The Cretans needed to see firsthand how the Gospel transforms one's life because those who receive Christ also receive His Spirit to dwell in their hearts. The Cretan culture was especially pagan and corrupt. The change that Christ produces would show them the possibilities and cause them to want it for themselves. How do you respond to this chapter, which emphasizes the importance of our relationships within the church? What verse or statement stands out to you the most? Why?

#### DAY 3 – Titus 3

Verses 4 to 7 are the clearest explanation of being “born again” in all the Bible. Obviously, Paul refers to this paragraph as a “trustworthy saying” in verse 8. Salvation brings one from death to life. Jesus said this so clearly in John 5:24, “I tell you the truth (a trustworthy saying), those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death to life.” I really appreciate the summary in Titus 3 about the activity of the Holy Spirit in salvation... “giving us new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.” Theologically, this has been called “regeneration.” We were once dead and now in Christ we are made alive. Paul says something similar in Ephesians 2. What phrase in this trustworthy saying means the most to you? Why? Verse 10 is worth recognizing as well. I have been a pastor since 1986 and one repeated problem in the church has occurred too often, in my estimation. Too many have shared criticism and even gossip which has hurt the Church Body and divided people. “If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing to do with them.” This might seem too severe, but I know from personal experience that a quarrelsome person who is continuously critical always does more damage than any evidence of good. Again, the Church in Crete was newly formed and divisive people could damage it beyond repair if not corrected. The Book of Titus has some very significant truths and principles to live by even though it is rather short in length. I hope you found it as helpful as I have.

#### DAY 4 – Psalm 107

HAPPY THANKSGIVING! Isn't this a fantastic Psalm for Thanksgiving Day?! Obviously, the first three verses call us to praise God for his goodness. But verses 4 to 32 are just as inspiring because they remind us that when we cried out to the Lord, he heard our prayer and his response was one of love, redemption, and deliverance. In trouble and distress (Verses 4 to 9); in despair and even rebellion (Verses 10 to 16); in foolishness and near death (Verses 17 to 22); in peril and chaos (Verses 23 to 32); the Lord saves, heals, forgives, satisfies, calms, and rescues those who cry out to him for help (Verses 6, 13, 19, 28). And don't you appreciate the final verse of this Psalm, “Those who are wise will take all this to heart; they will see in our history the faithful love (hesed) of the Lord.” (V43) Isn't that the theme of Thanksgiving for today? I feel confident that reading Psalm 107 a couple of times will enrich your day and cause to reflect on the goodness of God. Amen!?!

#### DAY 5 – Philemon 1

This is Paul's most personal letter specifically to a believer named Philemon. It was written on behalf of Onesimus, a runaway slave, who was returning to Philemon, his master. Paul encouraged Philemon to go beyond the traditional master-slave relationship by welcoming Onesimus back as a beloved brother in Christ. With these reconciling words, Paul reminds us that all relationships among Christians, regardless of a person's social standing, are transformed by the love of Christ. Forgiveness is essential to the Christian life, both the receiving and the giving. The runaway slaves were usually treated severely upon capture and return to their masters. This could range from beating, whipping, branding, and even execution; all to teach runaways that the consequences were dire if they were caught. Paul is asking Philemon to do the opposite. The importance of forgiveness in the Christian community is found time and again in the teaching of God's Word. Jesus shared a strong word after reciting the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:14 & 15. "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive you." There's no question that the lack of forgiveness will disrupt one's relationship with God. Forgiveness given leads to forgiveness shared and that is what Paul is asking Philemon to do for the new believer, Onesimus. Why is forgiveness so important? What stood out to you in this short personal letter from Paul?