

# NT Reading Plan 2020

Living Hope Fellowship

Titus

Titus rounds out the three books known as the Pastoral Epistles (Paul's personal letters to pastors Timothy and Titus). It's brief but packed with glory.

## Faith

Pastoral ministry revolves around teaching the Christian faith to people regularly. Whether brand new to Christianity or walking with Christ for many years, each of us need the gospel daily. Imagine a church where the Bible isn't taught (that wouldn't be a church!) let alone central to every aspect of ministry. The faith (what all Christians have believed through history) is the epicenter of all ministry and vital to personal growth in godliness. Every pastor, every saint, every church, every ministry must center around the *biblical* doctrines of Christianity. Many people claim to be biblical but their works say otherwise (1:16).

Paul has been sent as God's servant and Christ's apostle to build the church up in "the faith", "the knowledge of the truth," "in his [God's] word" (1:1-3). This faith comes to be believed by "God's elect" through biblical "preaching," resulting in the "hope of eternal life," which God promised before Genesis 1:1 (1:1-3). God has chosen people to be his own, made the promise of salvation before anyone was ever created, and has entrusted ministers to preach the salvation message of Christ. This should give any pastor great confidence in ministry. As we're faithful to preach the faith, God is faithful to his promises. He will save whom he chose and that faith will produce a change in each Christian "which accords with godliness" (1:1).

1. What other synonyms can you find for "the faith" in Titus? See 1:9, 14; 2:1, 5, 10. Also compare the first and last verse of the letter.

2. It's a requirement for elders to be able to teach the faith (1:9) but teaching doesn't stop with them. Pastors are to teach the saints to be teachers in their own spheres of ministry. Read 2:1-10 again. Who teaches whom? Where should you best plug in to this model of training in the faith today?

## Good Works

The result of teaching the faith should be salvation yielding godliness in every saint. Paul continually interweaves the necessity of Bible teaching with the application of that teaching. Good doctrine must lead to good works. Everything of Christianity hinges on the sequence of those two, however! Doctrine comes first: a preacher or teacher tells you about Christianity. You believe the truth about who God is and what he has done through Christ: you first put your faith in Christ. Salvation is by faith not works. But the saved person then goes on produce good works because of the change God has made in that person. Good works don't get you saved or keep you saved. They're an evidence that God saved you. Salvation is explicitly NOT by good works but the gracious work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit (3:4-7).

3. Good works has a particular connotation in our society that evokes everything from helping an elderly lady across the street to championing social justice. The gospel certainly has implications for how we treat vulnerable populations and uphold justice in our society but we

have to be careful to let the Bible inform us about what it's talking about by good works, not the culture. Strip everything you think about good works out of your mind for a moment and read the letter with new eyes. Paul does not give Titus an exhaustive list of good works, but what are things that *he does* list as good works to pursue?

4. How many times can you spot the word "good" in these 3 chapters? It's part of a requirement for an elder (aka pastor), conversely, false teachers aren't fit for good works, salvation isn't by [good] works, pastors are to be a model of good works for others to follow, slaves are to exhibit the "good"-ness of Christianity to their masters, every saint is to be "ready" and "to devote themselves" for good works.

5. Read 3:1-7 again. The whole train of thought here flows out of one command that begins the chapter: a reminder to submission and obedience to whom? Verse two extends the force of that first command to how we behave to everyone, not just government. How much do you resist what it just said?

6. Find the "for" in 3:1-7, this is the reason why you should obey the command. See how Paul applies the gospel, the Christian faith, to a people to call them to good works, something they don't want to do at all? The gospel is the only thing that changes our wicked hearts. And if it truly is our motivation, our hearts will change. How we need daily reminders of God's grace!

### God & Savior

Our Savior is dear to us as believers! Without him, we would have nothing, no hope, no life, no lasting change, only imminent doom and damnation. Titus is only 3 chapters but it mentions "savior" more than any other NT book (only Isaiah at 66 chapters mentions the title more in the whole Bible!). But who is the Savior?

In every chapter, there is a partnering of God our savior with Jesus Christ our savior. Though the title of savior isn't attached to the Holy Spirit in Titus, his role in our salvation is stated in 3:5-6. This distinctly Christian doctrine of the Trinity is denied by cults such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and sects of Judaizers. But the Bible expressly teaches that God is one being in three persons, each of whom are co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent.

God the Father		God the Son	
1:3	God our Savior	1:4	Christ Jesus our Savior
2:10	God our Savior	2:11	our great God and Savior Jesus Christ
3:4	God our Savior	3:6	Jesus Christ our Savior

The cults even call Jesus savior but they don't understand the implications of the term, therefore they deny the deity of Christ. For Jesus to be savior he must be God (for YHWH alone is the only savior who ever was, is, or will be (see Isaiah 43:10-11)).

Furthermore, they deny Greek grammar. Paul is even more explicit about Christ's equality with the Father. Not only does he equate the Father and the Son (not as the same person but same in deity, godhood, glory, essence, nature) three times with the shared title of savior, he actually calls Jesus "our great God" (2:13). English can be a bit ambiguous in 2:13. Is Paul talking about two people (our great God + our savior Jesus Christ) or one person (our great

God who is the savior Jesus Christ)? While English doesn't seem conclusive, the Greek text (which the NT was originally written in) is unequivocally precise! Paul says that our great God = our savior = Jesus Christ. He's describing the same person in multiple ways. Greek grammar here is a slam dunk, therefore this is one of the most precious verses to both establish and defend this cardinal doctrine of the faith (also see 2 Pet 1:1)!

7. 2:11-14 comes in a context which is not just highlighting Christ's deity but uses doctrine to compel the church(es) under Titus to act a certain way. Doctrine is always used pastorally to encourage, convict, etc., not just academically and intellectually to fill the mind. How should Christ's future appearing, the coming of our God and Savior, affect how you live today? How does God the Father's past work affect how you should live today?