

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding an open Bible. The person is wearing a grey button-down shirt. The Bible is open to a page with text, and the person's right hand is resting on the page. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the book.

NEW TESTAMENT

in a year - July

Daily Bible Reading Plan

JULY 1

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-21

DONE

1. Verses 12-17. Once a person knows they are 'saved' or 'justified', what attitude should they adopt to life? Even after they have 'grown up' as a Christian and become 'mature', what concern should still dominate their thoughts? What are they never justified in doing? How in consequence ought I to be acting?
2. Verses 18-21. What kind of outlook, interest and expectation should a Christian have, and why? By contrast, what kind of appetite and interest dominates some? What difference should the cross of Christ make to my daily life? Cf. Gal. 5:24; 6:14.

JULY 2

PHILIPPIANS 4

DONE

1. Note in detail how the believer's relationship to the Lord should make a difference: (a) to their own condition, (b) to their attitude to circumstances, and (c) to their relationship to people. Note the importance of the mind and its right use; and note what God can do for our minds. Cf. Is. 26:3. Examine your own life to discover ways in which you can trust Christ to make you 'different'.
2. What teaching is implicit in this passage about: (a) the bond effected by Christian giving; (b) the need for regularity in it; (c) the way God looks at it; and (d) the way in which he repays it? Cf. Luke 6:38.

EPISTLE OF COLOSSIANS

DONE

Colosse was one of a group of three cities (of which the other two were Laodicea and Hierapolis; cf. Col. 4:13), situated in the Lycus valley about a hundred miles inland from Ephesus. Paul had not visited these cities himself (2:1), but was given a full account of the situation at Colosse by Epaphras, who had founded these churches (1:7; 2:5; 4:12, 13).

While there was cause for thanksgiving (1:3-5; 2:5), there was also grounds for deep concern because of the dissemination of a plausible false teaching, which, dressed in the garb of an enlightened philosophy (2:8), claimed to be a higher form of Christianity. Did they want full emancipation from evil? Then they must observe circumcision and practice a strict discipline. Did they want access to the divine presence? Then they must worship angelic beings, by whose mediation they might draw nearer to the throne of God. No doubt these teachers gave Jesus a high place, but it was not the supreme place.

Paul's answer is to set forth Christ Jesus as pre-eminent in every sphere, and as all-sufficient for the believer's need. This is the main theme of the letter, which stands out among all Paul's epistles for the fullness of its revelation about the person and work of Christ. Although brief, it also contains a wealth of practical instruction for Christian living.

The book can be divided as follows.

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1:1-8 | Greeting and thanksgiving |
| 1:9-14 | Petition |
| 1:15-20 | The pre-eminence of the Son of God |
| 1:21-23 | The Colossians share in the blessings of the gospel. |
| 1:24-2:7 | Paul's part in God's plan |
| 2:8-23 | Answer to the Colossian heresy: the all-sufficiency of Christ as Savior |
| 3:1-17 | Practical implications of participation in Christ |
| 3:18-4:1 | Acting rightly in household relationships |
| 4:2-6 | Prayer and witness |
| 4:7-18 | Personal references, greetings, etc |

JULY 3

COLOSSIANS 1:1-14

DONE

1. Of what blessings that God has made ours in Christ does the gospel speak? What results did this gospel produce in the experience of the Colossians who heard it? Have I made as much progress as they had?
2. In his prayer for the Colossians, for what further progress in the things of Christ does the apostle ask? Carefully note the items in Paul's prayer. In which of these directions do I most desire or need myself to make progress?

JULY 4

COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

DONE

1. What is revealed in verses 15-20 concerning our Lord's relationship to God, to creation, and to the church? What practical effects should this revelation have on our Christian faith and life?
2. Verses 21-23. From what condition, at what cost, and with what goal in view has Christ rescued us? What is required of those who desire fully to enjoy these benefits?

JULY 5

COLOSSIANS 1:24-2:7

DONE

1. In 1:24-29, what does Paul say about: (a) his sufferings (cf. Acts 9:15, 16), (b) his commission, (c) his theme, and (d) the method, aim and inspiration of his ministry?
2. 2:1-7. What is essential if Christians are to stand firm in the faith and not be misled? How can they gain encouragement to continue and become more fully established? Do you (a) desire such progress for yourself, and (b) pray like this for others?

JULY 6

COLOSSIANS 2:8-23

DONE

1. What four defects does Paul find in the false teaching (verse 8)? In what ways does he then set forth Christ as the one, absolutely sufficient Savior (verses 9-15)? List the treasures and the benefits that are ours in him.
2. Verses 16-23. It is quite clear that the false teachers stressed: (a) the observance of holy days, (b) the worship of angels, and (c) ascetic practices. On what grounds does the apostle show all these to be mistaken, useless and hurtful as a means of salvation?
3. Verses 11-15. How is the way in which Christians have been 'circumcised' distinguished from the rite practiced by the Jews? By what ceremony has Jewish circumcision been replaced for Christians? How is its symbolism related to the death and resurrection of Christ? Cf. Rom. 6:1-14.

JULY 7

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

DONE

1. Verses 1-11. What results, positive and negative, should follow from being 'raised with Christ'; in other words, what should the experience make us: (a) do, and (b) stop doing?
2. Verses 12-17. Make a list from these verses of the divinely intended characteristics of active Christian living, and prayerfully examine your own living in the light of these standards.

JULY 8

COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:18

DONE

1. 3:18- 4:1. Observe how, in giving directions about the life of a Christian household, Paul urges 'upon each

party its own duties and the other's rights'.

2. What overriding concerns should influence-all alike, and why?

3. 4:2-6. List the activities demanded here as essential: (a) to prayer, and (b) to our relationships with non-Christians. In my own practice of Christian self discipline, to which of these points do I need to give more attention? Can I learn from verses 3, 4 and 12 how to pray for others?

EPISTLES OF I AND II THESSALONIANS

DONE

Almost certainly these two letters were the first books of the New Testament to be written. They were written in Corinth during Paul's second missionary journey, and not long after the church at Thessalonica had been founded, about 50 AD (Acts 17:1-10). In them we get an insight into the life of a local Christian church within about twenty years of the death and resurrection of our Lord. The first letter was written on Timothy's return from a visit to Thessalonica, and the second a few months later. They are among the most personal of the Apostle's letters in the New Testament, and present a vivid picture both of himself and of his readers, while revealing also the marvelous results of his missionary work in a great heathen city, the capital of Macedonia.

The Apostle was greatly encouraged by the report, which Timothy brought, of the church's steadfastness under persecution and of its continued progress.

But there were some matters that gave him concern, in particular the wrong views that were held about the second coming of Christ. This is then the chief theme of the two letters. It is shown to be a comfort in bereavement, a motive for endurance, an inspiration to hope, a safeguard in temptation, a help to purity, a challenge to watchfulness, a ground of rejoicing, and a separating and sanctifying power. The apostle's great aim is summed up in I Thess. 3:13.

This book can be divided up as follows:

1 THESSALONIANS

1:1-10	The founding of the church
2:1-20	Service for Christ
3:1-4:12	Sanctification and daily behavior
4:13-5:28	The second coming and Christian conduct

2 THESSALONIANS

1:1-12	The second coming and persecution
2:1-12	Further teaching about the second coming
2:13-3:18	Final exhortations

JULY 9

I THESSALONIANS 1

DONE

1. What explanation does this chapter give of the way in which these Thessalonians became Christians? Am I taking a similar share in the reception and spread of the gospel of Christ?

2. Pick out the outstanding features of the Christian life and character of these converts. Making every allowance for the difference in circumstances, is our Christian life of this kind?

3. What marks of a work of the Holy Spirit are mentioned here? Can we share in a similar experience?

JULY 10

1 THESSALONIANS 2

DONE

1. Verses 1-12, 17-20. List all the characteristics of a faithful Christian worker that these verses mention. Which do I particularly need to work on?
2. Verses 13-16. Consider the place of the Word of God in the work of the gospel. What differing responses does it evoke from those who hear it? Is this still true today?

JULY 11

1 THESSALONIANS 3

DONE

1. In what ways did Paul show his love and concern for the Thessalonian Christians? When, like Paul, we pray for our fellow-Christians, what does his example suggest that we ought to pray for them?
2. What is taught here concerning suffering for Christ? Cf. John 16:33; 2 Tim. 3:12. To what dangers does such an experience expose us (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8, 9), and how are they to be successfully faced?
3. Verses 11-13. How are love and sanctification linked in these verses? Does this teach us anything important about what is involved in becoming holy?

JULY 12

1 THESSALONIANS 4

DONE

1. Verses 1-12. What aims and aspects of Christian living are emphasized in these verses? Why should we so live? And what makes such a standard of living possible for us?
2. Verses 13-18. In what ways do these words on the Lord's return bring comfort? State in your own words what Paul says will happen. On what grounds can we be sure of our share in such a wonderful hope?

JULY 13

1 THESSALONIANS 5

DONE

1. Verses 1-11. How will the 'day of the Lord' break upon the world, and what will it mean (a) for people in general, and (b) for Christians? Cf. Matt. 24:32-44; Luke 21:25-28.
2. What practical effects should the prospect of the Lord's return have on our attitude and behavior? Make your own list of the injunctions of this chapter and examine your own life in the light of them.

JULY 14

2 THESSALONIANS 1

DONE

1. Verses 5-12. When men suffer for Christ what two prospects of things which are to be fulfilled by Christ at his return should be a comfort to them? What two complementary things will Christ then do?
2. Notice the subjects of Paul's thanksgiving and prayer for his fellow Christians at Thessalonica. Is this how you pray for others? Compare your aims in the Christian life with those implied here to be desirable.

JULY 15

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

DONE

1. What advice and warnings does Paul give here to encourage a healthy attitude towards the Lord's return?
2. Examine the methods, motives, power and end of Satan and his human agents. What does this teach us about the subtlety and nature of sin? Who are to be deceived thereby, and for what reasons?

1. 2:13-15. We are shown here that God has taken the initiative in our salvation. What steps has he taken? What is his purpose for us? And what part is our responsibility?
2. Consider Paul's four prayers for his readers and also the prayer which he asks them to pray for himself. What can we learn about Paul's circumstances and about his ambitions, both for himself and for the Thessalonians? Do we share similar ambitions when we pray?
3. 3:6-13. What is the place and importance of daily work and other mundane tasks in the life of the Christian? Is there a tendency to underestimate the importance of these nowadays?

EPISTLE OF I TIMOTHY

DONE

Timothy was Paul's dearly loved companion and helper whom he first found at Lystra (Acts 16:1-3) and ever afterwards regarded as a son (1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1). He was with Paul on his missionary journeys and during his imprisonment in Rome (Col. 1:1), and was sent by Paul from time to time on important missions (1 Thess. 3:1-6; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10, 11; Phil. 2:19). At this time he had been left at Ephesus to check tendencies to false teaching (1 Tim. 1:3, 4) and to superintend the affairs of the church as the apostle's representative (1 Tim. 3:14, 15). The letter belongs to the last period of Paul's life, between his first and second imprisonments in Rome.

Paul's main purpose in writing was to guide and encourage Timothy in his work. The letter is full of practical advice concerning church affairs and the preservation of purity of life and doctrine. It exhorts the worker for God to be uncompromising in loyalty and devotion to duty.

The book breaks down in the following sections:

- 1:1-2 Personal address and greeting.
- 1:3-20 The apostle and his gospel.
 - 1:3-11 The gospel in contrast to false teaching.
 - 1:12-17 The gospel in Paul's experience.
 - 1:18-20 The gospel as committed to Timothy.
- 2:1-15 Guidance concerning praying and teaching in the congregation.
- 3:1-16 Qualifications for church ministry.
- 4:1-5 Warning concerning false teaching.
- 4:6-16 Exhortations to Timothy concerning his teaching and personal behavior.
- 5:1-6:2 Instructions concerning special groups within the church widows, elders and slaves.
- 6:3-21 Concluding advice. Renewed warnings against false teaching and covetousness.

Timothy is reminded of the purpose for which he was left at Ephesus. Verses 12-17 are a digression in which Paul breaks out into thanksgiving for God's grace towards him.

1. What is the nature of the false teaching which Paul attacks? From verses 3, 11, 12, 18 and Gal. 1:8, 9, 12 consider why Paul would not allow any deviation from the gospel.
2. The spurious doctrine evidently exaggerated the law as a means of righteousness. How does Paul indicate in verses 8-15 the limitations of the law and the superiority of the gospel?
3. Compare your own experience of the gospel with that described in verses 12-17. What outstanding features does Paul emphasize?

JULY 18

1 TIMOTHY 2

DONE

1. Verses 1-7. What theological truths form the basis for confidence in prayer? 2
2. For whom, and for what, should we pray (verses 1-4)? What kind of people ought we to be in personal behavior if we wish to be effective in prayer and pleasing to God when we meet to pray? With verses 8-10, cf. Ps. 66:18; Is. 59:1-3; Mark 11:25.
3. Verses 9-15. Paul is not deprecating the role of women in the service of Christ (cf. Rom. 16:1ff.; Phil. 4:2, 3), but he does here forbid women 'to teach or to have authority' over men in the local church. Is it conceivable that today change may be permitted in women's part, or is Paul appealing here to the permanent consequences of the difference made by the Creator between male and female? What is the significance of verses 13 and 14?

JULY 19

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

DONE

1. Verses 1-7. What are the qualities required in those who exercise leadership in the church? Note what Paul says about their: (a) personal character, (b) Christian experience, (c) general reputation, and (d) abilities. Why does Paul put such stress on the personal life of a Christian leader?
2. What qualities are necessary for deacons (verses 8-10, 12, 13) and deaconesses (verse 11)? Compare your answer with the answer to Question 1. Note how largely the element of self-discipline enters into these qualifications. In the light of this passage, how do I measure up to the standard God requires?

JULY 20

1 TIMOTHY 3:14-4:5

DONE

1. What truths about the Christian church are signified by the descriptive phrases of 3:15? Consider each in turn. Cf. Eph. 2:19-22; 2 Cor. 6:16-18. (See Note below.) What demands ought these truths to make on us?
2. Note from where the false teaching described in 4:1-5 would arise; and by what kind of people it would be propagated. What, according to Paul's teaching here, is the true Christian position with regard to: (a) marriage and (b) foods that may be eaten? Cf. Heb. 13:4; Rom. 14:2, 3, 6b.
3. 3:16 may quote part of an early Christian hymn. What do these statements declare concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ? What are the sphere and the extent of his Lordship?

JULY 21

1 TIMOTHY 4:6-16

DONE

1. Make a list of all the things that Timothy is here told to do and to avoid in order to become 'a good minister of Christ Jesus'.
2. Distinguish in this passage (and in the list made in answer to Question 1) between actions that concerned: (a) Timothy's personal life, and (b) his public ministry. What can we learn here concerning the connection of these two?

JULY 22

1 TIMOTHY 5:1-6:2

DONE

1. Note Paul's concern for others, and his detached interest in the special conditions and needs of particular groups. What can we learn here concerning the way to treat people?
2. How ought the elderly, e.g., widows, normally to be cared for? Why does Paul advise against the giving of church support to younger widows? 3

3. 5:19-22. Of what dangers and responsibilities is Timothy made aware here? What, in principle, can be learned from these instructions for my own guidance? **DONE**

JULY 23

1 TIMOTHY 6:3-21

DONE

1. Verses 3-5, 20, 21. What characteristics of false teachers are mentioned here? What is lacking, and what out of place, in their attitude and practice? From these statements make a list of things to be avoided, if you wish to be an acceptable teacher of the things of God. Set over against them the positive aims desirable in a true man of God (verses 11-14).

2. Verses 6-10, 17-19. What are the perils of covetousness and wealth? What is the proper attitude to, and use of, material possessions? On what should our desires and hopes be fixed?

DONE

EPISTLE OF II TIMOTHY

DONE

This letter is of peculiar interest because it is Paul's last, written during his final imprisonment in Rome when he was aware that his death could be not for long delayed. It reveals that his last days were spent without material comfort. There was no immediate earthly reward to crown his long years of labor. For one reason or another his friends had left him (1:15; 4:10, 12, 16). Amid the dreary limitations of his imprisonment he asks for his old cloak to be brought to keep him warm and his books for him to read (4:13). He urges Timothy to come quickly so that he can see him before his death (1:4; 4:9, 21).

In such difficult circumstances he exhorts his son in the faith to be faithful to the truth. He is more concerned for Timothy and for the future of the gospel than for himself. Steadfast and confident to the end, he has still the same message to give to all who are called to the service of Christ. What the Lord requires in his workers is faithfulness, even to death; to watch, to endure, to work and fully to discharge the obligation of their office: to finish their course; and live in anticipation of the crowning day that is coming. For all such is laid up in store 'eternal glory'.

DONE

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| 1:1-5 | Opening greeting and thanksgivings. |
| 1:6-2:13 | Exhortation to steadfastness, single-hearted purpose and courage in the service of Christ. |
| 2:14-26 | Rules of conduct for the servant of the Lord. |
| 3 | A dark outlook. Paul's own example. Value of the Scriptures. |
| 4:1-8 | Final charge, made more urgent by the prospect of Paul's death. |
| 4:9-18 | Personal details of Paul's circumstances and experiences as a prisoner. |
| 4:19-22 | Closing greetings and benediction. |

JULY 24

2 TIMOTHY 1

DONE

1. Picture Paul's circumstances. See also 4:9-13. What positive Christian truths sustained and encouraged Paul as he lay in prison?

2. Note how Paul reminds Timothy of the demands and cost of Christian service. Express in your own words the chief points of Paul's counsel and exhortation to him. To which of these do you particularly need to listen?

3. What do verses 3-7 reveal concerning the value of a God-fearing and Christian home and upbringing? Cf. 3:14, 15.

JULY 25

2 TIMOTHY 2

DONE

1. What do verses 1-13 teach about the Christian life concerning: (a) what it demands from those who embrace

it, (b) the source of its strength, and (c) its final end? Seek personally to face the challenge of the illustrations that Paul uses.

2. Verses 14--26. What should be the Christian dominant aim and purpose? What should be his attitude to: (a) evil things, and (b) enemies of the truth? Note: (a) what Timothy is repeatedly told here particularly to avoid; and (b) by what methods he is to seek to win back to the truth those who are misled.

JULY 26

2 TIMOTHY 3

DONE



1. Verses 1-13. Of what are the evil traits listed here a characteristic expression? What by contrast ought true Christians to be like? How can we counter such evil tendencies: (a) in ourselves, and (b) in the community to which we belong?

2. Verses 14-17. What great things can the right use of the Bible do for us? Note its contributions at each stage from (a) early childhood and its dependence on others, through (b) adolescence and its discipline, to (c) mature manhood and its active service. What must we do fully to enjoy these benefits?

JULY 27

2 TIMOTHY 4

DONE



1. What ministry is Paul urging Timothy to fulfill here? Make a list of the main points in Paul's charge to him. How does this chapter also indicate the possibilities of failure, and its causes? What challenge ought I to find here concerning my own Christian service?

2. Consider Paul as he faces death. Note: (a) his consciousness about the past; (b) his confession about, and his confidence in, the present; (c) his hope for the future. How far can and do I share his experience and his outlook? Note Paul's words in I Cor. 11:1.

EPISTLE OF TITUS

DONE



Titus was a Gentile convert (Gal. 2:3), led to faith by the apostle himself (Titus 1:4). He accompanied Paul on some of his journeys and was sent by him on important missions to churches, as, for example, to Corinth (2 Cor. 8:16-18, 23; 12:17, 18) and to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10). This letter reveals that Paul left him in Crete to establish the churches of that island (1:5).

This letter is very similar to 1 Timothy and was probably written about the same time, in the interval between Paul's two imprisonments. It is therefore earlier than 2 Timothy. It emphasizes the importance of order and discipline in the churches. The gospel had evidently made rapid headway in Crete, but church government was as yet undeveloped (1:5). False teaching also had to be countered, and the apostle has some strong words to say on this subject. But, above all else, the letter stresses the Christian's calling and obligation to live a holy life. It contains also two great doctrinal passages (2:11-14; 3:4-7), which stand out like mountain ranges in the landscape.

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| 1:1-4 | Opening greeting. |
| 1:5-16 | The need to appoint elders in the churches as a safeguard against the spread of doctrinal error. |
| 2:1-10 | Instructions concerning the conduct of various classes in the Christian community: the aged, the young, Titus himself, slaves. |
| 2:11-15 | The doctrinal basis for the appeal to holy living. |
| 3:1-7 | Exhortation to submission and gentleness, leading up to a further doctrinal statement. |
| 3:8-11 | The Christian's obligation to maintain good works, and to avoid profitless discussion. |
| 3:12-15 | Personal closing messages. |

JULY 28

TITUS 1

DONE

1. Verses 1-4. What does Paul tell us here concerning the origin and the aims of his ministry? What was the basis of his assurance?
2. Verses 10-14. What was wrong with those whom Paul criticizes here? Make a list of their faults and failings. How, by contrast, are sincerity and genuineness revealed?
3. Verses 6-9. Make a list of the qualifications desirable in a Christian minister which are mentioned here. Compare them with those stated in 1 Tim. 3:1-13.

JULY 29

TITUS 2

DONE

1. Verses 1-10. How can Christians 'make the teaching about God our Savior attractive'? Examine carefully the characteristics demanded from the different classes mentioned, and summarize them briefly in your own words. Which characteristics ought you particularly to desire and cultivate?
2. Verses 11-14. What reasons are given here why a Christian should live differently? (a) What should you give up? (b) How should you now live? How far is this true of you?

JULY 30

TITUS 3

DONE

1. Verses 1-7. How ought we as Christians to behave in relation to: (a) civil authorities, and (b) our fellow-men? What double awareness about ourselves should inspire such conduct?
2. Verses 4-7. What are we told here about: (a) the source and method of salvation, and (b) our present state and future hope? Do you realize as you ought how 'richly' (verse 6) you are endowed?
3. Verses 8-15. By what actions and by what abstinence should genuine faith in God express itself? What is necessary on our part to ensure that this happens?

EPISTLE OF PHILEMON

DONE

The epistle to Philemon contains no systematic presentation of doctrine. It has one main purpose- to ask Philemon to receive back a runaway slave who had been in his service and who had absconded with his money. The man had come into contact with Paul in Rome and had been converted and transformed into a new man. It was not easy for Paul to let him go; it was harder still for Onesimus to face his former master. But it was hardest of all for Philemon to take him back. These men were Christians, however, and that made all the difference.

The letter is one of great charm, tact, graciousness and love, and provides an unforgettable picture of Christianity in action. Though no place-names are mentioned, it is clear that the letter was written at the same time as that to the Colossians.

JULY 31

PHILEMON

DONE

1. What light does this letter throw on Paul himself? Is he putting into practice Col. 3:12-14? Consider closely the appeal he makes and the arguments by which he reinforces it.
2. What had happened to Onesimus (whose name means 'useful' or 'profitable') to make him start living up to his name? Has acceptance of the Christian faith made us useful: (a) to the person who led us to Christ, and (b) to those who are our employers, or in a comparable position?