

# THE MESSAGE OF THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

*a summary for Messianic teaching and preaching*

The texts of Scripture which are commonly known as the Pastoral Epistles, composing the letters of 1&2 Timothy and Titus, frequently go unaddressed in today's Messianic community.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps unlike letters such as Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, or even 1 Corinthians—where Messianics typically already know that some more detailed investigation and consideration is required for background and linguistic points—many already believe that they know what these three letters communicate. This is not necessarily the case in Biblical Studies over the past two to three decades, where there has been a considerable factory of proposals produced on the Pastoral Epistles, not only in terms of their ancient setting and background, but also various translation issues and application dilemmas for modern-day Believers. It is certainly time for Messianics to learn to re-appreciate the place of 1&2 Timothy and Titus within the Biblical canon, and consider some of the current opinions present about them.

When were the Pastoral Epistles composed? There is actually no record in the Book of Acts of Timothy in Ephesus and Titus on the island of Crete, serving as Paul's authorized representatives without him present. This leads many to conclude that the scene witnessed in these letters follows a release of Paul from Roman imprisonment at the end of Acts 28, and involves a period of ministry anticipated by his desire to return to the East to visit friends (Philippians 1:19, 25; 2:24; Philemon 22). Paul had probably visited Crete first, leaving Titus, and then continued on to Ephesus, leaving Timothy. When Paul first writes Timothy he has departed for Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3), and he asks Titus to join him in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), as he steadily moves back toward the West. By the time 2 Timothy is composed, Paul has been arrested (2 Timothy 1:16; 2:9) and is in Rome, with the historical record being that both Peter and Paul were executed during the reign of Nero (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.25.5). The time that the Pastoral Epistles would have been written is analogous to 63-67 C.E. The specific mention of Luke present with Paul in his final days (2 Timothy 4:11) is a good clue that he may have played a role as his secretary in transcribing them.

One of the ongoing discussions about the Pastoral Epistles is whether to even call them "the Pastoral Epistles." In past history of interpretation, the letters of 1&2 Timothy and Titus were often approached as being a kind of "church manual," giving various formulae regarding how a proper assembly of Believers was to organize itself. While there are themes of

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Biblical quotations in this article are from the New International Version (NIV).

congregational structure and order present in these three letters, it cannot be dismissed that they were primarily written to Timothy and Titus, who had to stop some false teaching and errors that had manifested in Ephesus and Crete. In the case of the Ephesian assembly, the false teaching had disrupted the leadership and some distinct fixes had to be enacted. Much of the present debate over these letters is whether they present the qualifications for congregational leadership in *universal* terms for all groups of Messiah followers at all times, or in *situation-specific* terms, as they were principally given to Timothy and Titus. If the latter is the case, this would then mean that the Pastoral Epistles surely include guidelines that modern Believers are to be informed by and are to heed, but they may include some instructions that were mainly given to confront First Century problems.

It is normal to want to examine the Pastoral Epistles in the canonical order of 1&2 Timothy and Titus, but given the fact that 2 Timothy is agreed to have been the last letter of the Apostle Paul before dying (2 Timothy 4:6), it may be more useful to follow them in the order of 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy.<sup>2</sup>

### **1 Timothy**

In his first correspondence to Timothy, Paul extends greetings to his trusted associate as a kind of spiritual father (1 Timothy 1:1-2). He lets him know that he has been left in Ephesus to speak against any of the “false doctrines” (1 Timothy 1:3) which certain teachers may have circulated.<sup>3</sup> The false teaching advocated things associated with “myths and genealogies,” taking the attention of people away from “God’s work—which is by faith” (1 Timothy 1:4). While mature Believers are to emphasize things like “a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5), the false teaching instead led to “meaningless talk” (1 Timothy 1:6).

Immediately upon beginning 1 Timothy, Messianic readers are introduced to their first controversy: what did the false teaching involve? The Ephesian false teachers are among those who “want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm” (1 Timothy 1:7). While using a platform of being Torah teachers, they instead advocated things associated with the genealogies of the Torah, probably deriving some kind of myths or exaggerated stories from them. Far be it from these persons focusing on the Torah’s instructions of holiness or morality, curiosities that spawned a great deal of speculation and even lore among fringe Jewish sects, instead are what interested them. Paul is clear that in spite of a misuse of the Torah, being present in Ephesus, that there is a right way to use it:

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<sup>2</sup> The commentaries of Gordon D. Fee, George W. Knight III, and William D. Mounce examine the Pastoral Epistles in this order.

<sup>3</sup> While often rendered with “certain men,” all the Greek has is *tines* or “certain persons” (TNIV). This is important to recognize, especially as some of the Ephesian women were likely involved in disseminating the false teaching.

A close reading of the pronouns in the Greek source text within the Pastoral Epistles is in order, because while various English translations may provide “men,” “certain persons” or “individuals” from both genders are more likely in view. Cf. Payne, 299.

“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly [lawfully, NASU]. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me” (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

The main purpose of God’s Torah is actually to identify sin and condemn sinners, and no one can honestly deny how the Law certainly composes “sound teaching” (1 Timothy 1:10, NASU). Many Bibles render 1 Timothy 1:8 by giving the impression that the Torah is not intended, “made,” for the conduct of righteous people, and a few Bible readers then conclude that those who have salvation in Yeshua should not focus any time trying to really study or obey it. The actual verb *keimai* is better translated with “laid down” (RSV/NRSV/ESV), as it specifically concerns the enacting of penalties upon those who violate God’s Law (cf. Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9). For those who have been forgiven of their sins via the power of the gospel, such punishment is obviously not “laid down” on those washed by Yeshua’s shed blood. Believers are to study the Torah as Scripture and heed the Torah as a guideline for proper living, but are not going to have it come crashing down on them as they have permanent atonement for their sins in the Lord.

Paul naturally wants to encourage Timothy, in spite of some of the challenges he is presently facing. In his own experience, Paul exclaims “I thank Messiah Yeshua our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service” (1 Timothy 1:12). This is true in spite of Paul’s previous life of trying to obliterate the *ekklesia*, although he states “I acted in ignorance and unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). The grace provided in Yeshua is able to save the most decrepit of sinners, of which Paul thinks that he is among the worst (1 Timothy 1:14-15). Paul, as a persecutor of the early Believers, was shown mercy precisely because God’s ability to save *all sinners* is so great (1 Timothy 1:16), as the Lord Yeshua is to be given all praise and honor (1 Timothy 1:17).

The encapsulation of Paul’s own deliverance from sin is to help Timothy understand—and obviously the Ephesians who would eventually hear this letter as well—that those who plague the congregation too can be redeemed. Timothy is one who has had important prophecies spoken over him about his ministry call (1 Timothy 1:18), and is not to forget it. He is to remain steadfast, in spite of how some “have shipwrecked their faith” (1 Timothy 1:19). Two individuals, Hymenaeus and Alexander, are among those who have already been “handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20), being removed from the congregation because of error. It is debated whether this ex-communication is intended to be for their education/reform or be permanent, given the fact that elsewhere Paul has said that some sinners are turned over to Satan for their eventual salvation—that in being engulfed by sin they realize its futility and turn to the Lord in their final hour (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5).

Much of the discussion and inquiry made over the past two decades, regarding the Pastoral Epistles, has been focused squarely on **1 Timothy chs. 2&3**. It is these two chapters, in particular, where debate ensues over whether what is described depicts a universal condition for all assemblies of Believers, or primarily the Ephesian circumstances where

Timothy on Paul's behalf was having to fix the negative effects of the false teaching. A majority of today's Messianic Believers have taken this section to be universal. While there are important things that are to surely inform us from 1 Timothy chs. 2&3, much is lost by us failing to recognize the place of the false teaching which had damaged the Ephesian congregation, and that Paul delivered these instructions with those Believers in mind.

This section of Paul's letter begins with a rather broad admonition for all in the congregation to be eager prayers, issuing thanksgiving to God, and brought together in His *shalom*:

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

The Creator wants all human beings to be saved, and this is precisely why His Son came to Earth as a man, so that all nations might be redeemed (1 Timothy 2:5-7). It is especially in places of worship where Believers come together to affirm what the Lord has done where all division and discord are to pass away.

Paul definitely wants some of the circumstances which have erupted in Ephesus to end. To the Ephesian men he says, "I want men<sup>4</sup> everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing" (1 Timothy 2:8). Concurrent with this, to the Ephesian women he says, "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (1 Timothy 2:8-9). While various interpretations throughout history have sometimes banned people from wearing jewelry on the basis of this, given some First Century Roman trends pertaining to female "liberation" from previous social norms, things like braided hair or expensive clothing could not only have been viewed as a sign of opulence or wantonness, but perhaps also would have been associated with sexual lewdness. This was, of course, not something that the Ephesian women wanted to be thought of by outsiders as practicing. Generally speaking, some of these same things are not always viewed with various sexual connotations in the Western world today. Admonitions in favor of temperance and dignity remain true for any generation, but when 1 Timothy 2:8-9 is applied in a modern context some variance is definitely encountered.

Without question, most of the attention and debate that is witnessed on 1 Timothy chs. 2&3 is centered around **1 Timothy 2:11-15**. Liberals who believe that the Pastoral Epistles are not genuine works of the Apostle Paul, and were compiled a generation or two after his death, think that these verses are in contradiction to those other places in Paul, which depict women occupying leadership or teaching positions in the assembly, such as Priscilla (Romans 16:3-5) or Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3) or the apostle Junia (Romans 16:7), among others. Conservative evangelical Christian opinion is divided between complementarians who believe that these are universal principles and that women may not exercise leadership or teaching roles, and egalitarians who think that 1 Timothy 2:11-15 was delivered by Paul to fix the negative effects of the false teaching in Ephesus. Furthermore,

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<sup>4</sup> Grk. sing. *anēr*; the specific term meaning "male."

there are some translation issues within these verses which have to be taken into consideration.

The Apostle Paul actually gives a significant solution to much of the problem which had arisen in Ephesus, before saying anything that can be perceived as negative: “A woman should learn in all quietness and full submission” (1 Timothy 2:11). In much of not only Greco-Roman, but even First Century Jewish culture, women were not frequently taught or educated. But here, it cannot be denied that Paul wants the Ephesian women taught, *provided* they respect their teachers. While education of females is often taken for granted in the modern world, it was not something that common in the ancient world.

Continuing, though, most English versions render 1 Timothy 2:12 (in this case the NIV) with something like, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” Apparently, Ephesian women had been among some of the false teachers, who had helped spread errant ideas. This probably included some of the younger widows mentioned later, who refused to settle down and get married (1 Timothy 5:11, 13), and involved the errant idea that the resurrection had already occurred (2 Timothy 2:18). These were women who instead of teaching, needed to be taught (1 Timothy 2:11). Controversy ensues over the correct meaning of the infrequent verb *authentēō*, frequently translated as “have authority” (to be differentiated from the more common verb *exousiazō*). *BDAG* defines it as “**to assume a stance of independent authority.**”<sup>5</sup> *AMG* lists a much different definition than is often known, that *authentēō* is “to use or exercise authority over as an autocrat, to domineer.”<sup>6</sup> The KJV actually renders 1 Timothy 2:12 with “...nor to usurp authority...”

How might one’s view of women teaching or leading within the assembly—which is certainly witnessed in other parts of the Apostolic Scriptures—change when 1 Timothy 2:12 is translated with “usurp”? The TNIV notably has veered toward “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man...” If *authentēō* is actually to be understood as something akin to “usurp” or even “dominate,” then our perspective of the Ephesian issue Timothy had to fix can totally change. It is not women teaching in general that is the issue; it was various women in Ephesus trying to violently grab power. These were women who would have been untaught in the Scriptures, who may have even been illiterate to some degree, who were to instead be taught (1 Timothy 2:11). Perhaps if they showed themselves to be good students of the Word, just like some of Paul’s other female ministry colleagues, they may have been allowed to teach the assembly at some time in the future.

Further debate follows with reading 1 Timothy 2:13-14, where Paul informs Timothy and the Ephesians, “For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” Throughout much of Christian history, and even extending into parts of the Messianic movement, these verses are viewed from the perspective that women are more likely to be deceived than men, and that God favors men over women as a part of some “Creation order.” What is absent from 1 Timothy 2:13 is the normal Greek verb for “create,” *ktizō*, but a more specific verb, *plassō*. The verb *plassō* can

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<sup>5</sup> *BDAG*, 150.

<sup>6</sup> *Zodhiates, Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 288.

relate in a classical context “*to mould and form* by education, training” (LS).<sup>7</sup> This is important because the reason Eve was deceived **was not** because she was female; it is because she had insufficient knowledge of what would occur if she ate from the forbidden fruit. Adam, *only* because he was created prior to Eve and had lived a little longer, had sufficient knowledge and experience by interacting with God that he had failed to fully pass on to his wife. If Adam had told Eve more about what would happen if they disobeyed God, then Eve may have not been deceived.

The false teaching in Ephesus could have gained a wide following among the women because it had helped stir various myths and exaggerations about the figure of Eve (cf. 1 Timothy 1:4), perhaps present in some fringe branches of Ancient Judaism. Paul is clear that Eve was deceived. It was not Eve’s gender that was the cause of her deception—*her lack of knowledge formation* was. The remedy to keep the Ephesian women from falling into the same trap of deception was to see them properly educated (1 Timothy 2:11).

Another significant translation issue is present in 1 Timothy 2:15, which even complementarians are often forced to recognize.<sup>8</sup> The NIV says, “But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” Frequently, this is interpreted as meaning that the proper place for women is in the home, and that their permanent role should be motherhood. Problematically though, despite the NASU’s attempt to render this with “preserved,” the verb *sōzō* clearly means “to be saved”—and this would be read as though women will somehow be eternally saved by procreation, obviously presenting some doctrinal problems. Alternatively and far more literally with the definite article, the clause *dia tēs teknoγονias* really means “through the child-bearing” (YLT). Recognizing the promise of the *protoevangelium* in Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel,” is important here. Quite far from women finding their eternal redemption in having babies, the salvation of women is found in the promise given to Eve that the Messiah would one day be born, Yeshua being the Child-Bearing.<sup>9</sup>

Suffice it to say—simply looking at 1 Timothy 2:12 rendered with “usurp” and 1 Timothy 2:15 with “through the Child-Bearing”—is not something that many Messianic readers of the Pastoral Epistles have ever really had to consider. Even some of today’s most learned and well-informed Messianic leaders and teachers have tried to act as though these proposals are not present in contemporary Biblical scholarship.<sup>10</sup> This view of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and the

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<sup>7</sup> LS, 643.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 89.

<sup>9</sup> If you have never heard of this view of 1 Timothy 2:15 before, please keep in mind that it is referenced in a rather general, relatively conservative and common resource like the *NIV Study Bible*, 1875, which provides this as a second interpretation of the verse:

“[I]t refers to women being saved spiritually through the most significant birth of all, the incarnation of Christ.”

<sup>10</sup> This is not just an idle statement; it is based on my own personal interactions with various congregational leaders and teachers, even when referring them to general works like Zondervan’s *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, which obviously presents multiple sides to the 1 Timothy 2:11-15 discussion.

questions it asks about congregational authority structures, might just be too much for the current Messianic generation to handle.

There is actually not as much controversy surrounding 1 Timothy 3, which follows 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Although there are various churches or denominations that take this chapter as a listing of all the requirements elders and deacons must adhere to, applicable for all assemblies everywhere, commentators on the Pastoral Epistles often recognize these as being *primarily* concerned with Timothy in Ephesus. The somewhat parallel instruction that Paul gives to Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5-9), for example, notably lacks any description about proper deacons. The situation on Crete, with a much smaller and less established group of Believers, did not require deacons being appointed.

Being an overseer among the Ephesian Believers is something that Paul regards as being “a noble task” (1 Timothy 3:1). Among the requirements for the overseer is that he must be: faithful in a monogamous marriage relationship, tempered and self-controlled, a good teacher, not addicted to alcohol, not a lover of money, and a good home manager (1 Timothy 3:2-4). The poignant question is asked, “If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s [assembly]?” (1 Timothy 3:5). One who is an overseer cannot be a new Believer, and should have a good reputation with outside society (1 Timothy 3:6-7). Too much is probably made by complementarians who insist that up until today overseers can only be males, because the situation in Ephesus demanded that the women be properly trained in the Scriptures, by men who already were trained (1 Timothy 2:11). Furthermore, no reader of the qualifications for overseer believes that a male overseer *must* of necessity be married with more than one child, as both Paul and Timothy as bachelors would be then disqualified as administrators. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 includes appropriate guidelines for the Ephesian overseers, reflecting the most common situation of them being happily married men with a wife and children. New overseers were probably going to be appointed to help stop the onslaught that the false teaching had caused, and this is the main group from which they would be taken.

The requirements issued for deacons follow the same basic outline as those for overseers (1 Timothy 3:8, 12-13). While they are not invested with teaching responsibilities, they must still be able to “keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Timothy 3:9). New deacons must also be tested before they can be recognized within the leadership of the congregation (1 Timothy 3:10).

There is disagreement about what 1 Timothy 3:11 says, which in Greek begins with *Gunaikas hōsautōs*. A version like the NIV takes this to be “their wives,” meaning deacons’ wives, but more appropriately it is “The women likewise...” (RSV).<sup>11</sup> This latter rendering is important because it would affirm how females, as well as males, definitely served within the capacity as deacons in the First Century *ekklēsia*. In Romans 16:1, especially, we see Paul commend “our sister Phoebe, a servant [*diakonos*/deacon] of the [assembly] in Cenchrea” (NRSV).

Paul is unsure if he will be able to visit the Ephesians, and so he is relaying these instructions to Timothy regarding how overseers and deacons are to be appointed (1 Timothy

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<sup>11</sup> “Women *must* likewise...” (NASU); “In the same way, the women...” (TNIV).

3:14-15), especially as some previous leaders were probably removed from their positions due to the false teaching which had spread. More than anything else, Paul wants Timothy and the Ephesians to understand the greatness of “the mystery of godliness,” declaring of Yeshua the Messiah: “He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). Not only were the people to concentrate on these foundational realities of salvation history, but any overseer or deacon was to make sure to understand them. As formal leaders of the Ephesian congregation, they would be especially responsible more than anyone else to represent the faith to the outside world.

1 Timothy 4:1-5 actually summarizes a big part of what the Ephesian false teaching had advocated, being somehow associated with myths that the false teachers had exaggerated from the Torah (cf. 1 Timothy 1:4). Today’s Messianics frequently not only have difficulty understanding this short section, but they also often avoid examining it. But it is not the opening word that they tend to have a problem with: “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come from hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Apostasy from the faith is to be expected, in whatever form it may manifest. It is what the Ephesian apostasy here is related to that is a little tough to interpret:

“They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:3-5).

Messianic Believers who eat kosher often have these verses quoted at them by well-meaning Christian family and friends, in response to their dietary habits. But whatever is being criticized here is directly associated with an abstinence not only from eating certain things, but also marriage and sex. No one in today’s Messianic community believes in a forced celibacy. While there are interpreters who think that *kashrut* law is being targeted here by Paul, there are others who notice that a major issue in Ephesus was the errant thought that the resurrection had already occurred (2 Timothy 2:18). Consider how it was not until Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit that they had to start procreating, and after Noah’s Flood that humanity was given formal permission to eat meat. Believing that the resurrection had occurred, many in Ephesus could have adopted a quasi-Edenic style of life, giving into celibacy and vegetarianism. The figure of Eve, in particular, likely played some kind of role for the false teachers (1 Timothy 1:13), with many women having found it inviting to spread their false teaching (1 Timothy 4:7; 2 Timothy 3:6).

The error being addressed by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1-5, at the very most, could have had something to do with an extreme form of kosher advocated by the false teachers. Much more probable, being connected to celibacy, is how the abstention from food involved not eating any meat at all. *Kashrut* law prohibits the consumption of unclean meats like pork and shellfish, but does not prohibit eating all meat. While thanking God for food and consecrating it with prayer at meal time is quite common, we need not overlook that thanks to God and prayer are also issued during wedding ceremonies. Paul says to Timothy, “If you point these



things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Messiah Yeshua, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed” (1 Timothy 4:6). While it is important that Believers take care of their bodies, whatever the Ephesian false teaching had advocated could ultimately not help (1 Timothy 4:7).

Much of Paul’s letter is written as an encouragement to Timothy, who for whatever reasons had a huge burden to carry to help neutralize the false teaching and see the Ephesian Believers returned to the proper course of faith. The main thrust of the good news is to see all people come to salvation (1 Timothy 4:10). Timothy is to “Command and teach these things” (1 Timothy 4:11). It does not matter how young he might be compared to some of the others, as he is to demonstrate his upstanding behavior and lead by example (1 Timothy 4:12). Much of how the false teaching will be stopped will be through regular direction on the Scriptures, principally the Tanach (1 Timothy 4:13), and Timothy exercising the spiritual gifts he has been given (1 Timothy 4:14). Paul exhorts his dear friend, “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

Timothy is to demonstrate as much respect as he can in his dealings with older men and women, treating them like he would his own father and mother. Younger men he is to relate to as brothers, and younger women as sisters, with total purity (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Apparently with the Ephesian congregation, there was an issue with how to provide for various women who had been widowed. Widows who really needed help were to be given it from the assembly, although those who had families that could provide were to have family support first (1 Timothy 5:3-8). Any woman who was wealthy and could take care of widows, so the assembly would not be burdened with the expense, was encouraged to do so (1 Timothy 5:16). The requirements for widows eligible for congregational aid included, among others: being over the age of sixty, having been faithful in marriage, and known for good deeds (1 Timothy 5:9-10).

Younger widows who could still likely get married again, and involve themselves in household affairs (1 Timothy 5:14), were not to be given widows’ aid from the congregation (1 Timothy 5:11a). While there is discussion about them possibly relapsing into paganism (1 Timothy 5:11b-12, 15), if they are not encouraged to remarry within the community of faith, then they will “get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to” (1 Timothy 5:13). This lends strong support to the thought that the younger widows helped spread or propagate the false teaching.

Looking at the instruction regarding the Ephesian widows (1 Timothy 5:1-16), much can be appropriated for more modern circumstances when congregations today have various outreach or support programs, which are abused by people. There are often those who simply need momentary help to get back on their feet, rather than getting addicted to congregational resources and funds that could be used to help others in serious need. This section of Paul’s instruction to Timothy allows us to recognize that there are times when “No more!” can be legitimately said to those who have been draining a congregation dry of its beneficence.

Concurrent with this, Paul informs Timothy how “The elders who direct the affairs of the [assembly] well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17). While many of the early leaders among the First Century assembly had been independently wealthy and needed no congregational support, *diplēs timēs* does, in fact, mean “double pay,” associable with an “adequate salary” (Phillips New Testament). Paul justifies this from the Scriptures (1 Timothy 5:18), not only quoting from Deuteronomy 25:4, *but also* Yeshua in Luke 10:7. By this time in the First Century, enough Apostolic works had apparently been composed so that they were taking on the role of “Scripture” for the Believers. Paul continues by expressing how possible accusations against elders must have multiple witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19), and how any who sin can be rebuked publicly as a warning to others (1 Timothy 5:20).

As his administrator in Ephesus, Timothy is “to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism” (1 Timothy 5:21), and is to be quite cautious with those who he might lay his hands upon (1 Timothy 5:22) or associates with in ministry service (1 Timothy 5:24). An interesting word is inserted here where Timothy is told, “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and frequent ailments” (1 Timothy 5:23). Either the water in Ephesus was not very good, or after long frustrating days of fixing the problems caused by the false teaching, Timothy actually needed an alcoholic drink in order to relax and forget about little aches and pains.

The final bit of instruction Timothy is given by Paul relates to circumstances that could obviously present themselves in the course of his work. Slaves who are Believers are to serve their owners well, as a means of not only testifying to their faith, but demonstrating that they are the ones who are helping them—as opposed to the owners being the ones who provide for the necessities of such slaves (1 Timothy 6:1-2). We have a possible clue that those who have helped spread the false teaching are not only interested in fame, but possibly also fortune (1 Timothy 6:3-9). Regardless of whether or not the false teachers really wanted to get rich, Paul is clear that the pursuit of wealth can be problematic, asserting, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:10).

As Paul closes his letter, a prayer on behalf of Timothy and a doxology are issued, which express how he is to continue in the charge he has been given as a soldier in battle, and how the work he is doing will have an effect until the return of Yeshua the Messiah (1 Timothy 6:11-16). A final word is given about those who are rich, but who can use their possessions to good use for the Believers (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Timothy is to once again avoid getting involved in ridiculous fights stirred on by the false teachers, and instead live forth the sacred trust of faith he has been granted (1 Timothy 6:20-21).

### ***Titus***

While the Pastoral Epistles together do not garner a frequent amount of Messianic attention, among these three letters the least amount of time is probably given to the Epistle to Titus. Why this is the case is unknown, but while Timothy was half-Jewish and half-Greek, Titus was Greek. For some reason or another, there are Messianic Believers who are a bit uncomfortable with a Greek man like Titus being afforded great ministry responsibilities and

authority. The three-chapter letter written to him by Paul is not particularly difficult to understand if read in its entirety.

One can tell by reading the Epistle to Titus that the Apostle Paul really has a huge amount of respect and confidence in him. The letter opens with a magnanimous doxology praising God and His work throughout history (Titus 1:1-3), with Titus recognized as Paul's "true son in our common faith" (Titus 1:4). Just like with Timothy, Paul served as a kind of spiritual father to Titus, and the two formed a close bond as ministry associates.

Much of what Paul tells to Titus he had also told Timothy, although not as detailed. We see that "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you" (Titus 1:5). Paul and Titus have already worked together on the island, but Titus is to complete Paul's work. Elders are to be appointed for the Cretan Believers (Titus 1:6-7), with the qualifications being basically the same as those Timothy was given for the Ephesian Believers (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7). The notable difference between the two is the absence of deacons, an indication that these instructions are more situation-specific than they are universal. The key traits that any congregational leader are to have are summarized:

"Rather [the elder] must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:8-9).

As is common throughout many of the Pauline Epistles, the letter to Titus includes a reference to some kind of troublemakers on the island of Crete, who have been a problem to the Believers. The only description of their identity is, "For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group" (Titus 1:10). This would indicate that they were Jewish, and they may have even advocated ritual proselyte circumcision of the non-Jewish Believers to somehow "truly be" of God's people. What the troublemakers are said to have done, though, is simply spread mischief by their talk and strange teachings. Titus is instructed, "They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—for the sake of dishonest gain" (Titus 1:11). Primarily being Jewish, they actually demonstrate the low morality and ethics of the stereotypical Cretan as recognized by Crete's own historical figures (Titus 1:12-13a).

The troublemakers are to be rebuked (Titus 1:13b), and the Cretan Believers are to "pay no attention to Jewish myths or the commands of those who reject the truth" (Titus 1:14). Whatever false teaching was circulating, it involved speculations and fabricated stories which were not consistent with the mainline synagogue Judaism of the First Century. No definite clues about what they pushed on the Believers are really given, except how Paul says "To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure" (Titus 1:15). Some interpreters think that all they advocated was adherence to the Torah's dietary laws, but nothing is specifically said here about eating. It is probably best, then, to recognize that they taught a rigid adherence to various purity rituals and asceticism. Paul is clear that whatever the troublemakers' so-called "purity" involved, "They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing

anything good” (Titus 1:16). If they pushed being separate and closed off from “touching” the world in all ways, for example, it certainly did not help the cultivation of their ethics.

The main substance of Paul’s letter to Titus is centered around how he is to properly direct the behavior of the Cretan Believers (Titus 2:1-3:2), all involving how “You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Across the main players within the family, Titus is to “Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good” (Titus 2:2-3). A main job of the older women is to “train the younger women to love their husbands and children” (Titus 2:4), which while today may seem a bit obvious, wives loving their husbands was not necessarily expected of ancient women in classical society. Furthermore, even though the early *ekklēsia* taught the equality of males and females and the mutual submission of the genders (cf. Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:21ff), wives were to make the effort to demonstrate submission to their husbands, so that the Believers would not be unnecessarily criticized by the outside world (Titus 2:5).

Titus’ work extended also to young men on Crete (Titus 2:6), and being closest to them in personal status, Titus could especially “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (Titus 2:7-8). Slaves likewise were to be obedient to their owners, and demonstrate loyalty to them as a demonstration of their faith (Titus 2:9-10).

More than anything else, relevant for all of the Cretan Believers, is for them to understand how the grace of God changes people, as He desires all to come to salvation in Yeshua and live proper and upstanding lives:

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Yeshua the Messiah, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:11-14).

In asserting that God desires “a people for His own possession” (NASU), Paul directly applies Tanach concepts regarding Ancient Israel (Exodus 19:5) to Messiah followers, here mostly being non-Jews who are integrated into the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:11-13) or the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16) by their faith in Yeshua. Just as is prophesied (Ezekiel 36:25-27), God will wash them clean of their sins and enable them to live properly according to His Law, as they demonstrate the “good works” (ESV) expected and required of them. It also need not go overlooked that as Believers wait for the Second Coming, that Yeshua is directly called “our great God and Savior,” a clear attestation of His Divinity.<sup>12</sup> As Titus delivers Paul’s charge to the Cretans, he is directed, “Encourage and rebuke with all authority.

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<sup>12</sup> Grk. *tou megalou Theou kai Sōtēros hēmōn Iēsou Christou*; consult Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp 270-290 for a discussion of what in Greek grammar is known as the Granville Sharp rule.

Do not let anyone despise you” (Titus 2:15). In spite of troublemakers present, Titus is not to be intimidated, but live forth his calling as a servant of the Lord.

Given some of the bad reputation that Cretans had in the ancient world, Titus is to especially tell the Believers “to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good” (Titus 3:1). No one can argue that they were to blindly follow the Roman government in all things, but they were to respect the civil authority and adhere to secular law where it did not interfere with their Messianic faith. The Cretans were to make efforts “to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men” (Titus 3:2).

The main part of Titus’ ministry toward the Cretans was to express not only the grace of the Lord Yeshua, but how all sinners are to be born again and actively accomplishing good works:

“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Yeshua the Messiah our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone” (Titus 3:3-8).

As Paul wraps up his communication, we see another description about what the troublemakers were doing: “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless” (Titus 3:9). Whatever one considers these controversies, speculations, and fights to involve—they are associated with the Torah or Law of Moses—but they are not about being instructed from the Torah’s code of holiness. Instead, these things involved various Jewish myths or legends about figures mentioned only a few times, perhaps in various genealogical lists like Genesis 5&11, and a misuse of Moses’ Teaching is certainly in view. Titus is to warn any troublemakers once, and then a second time, before disregarding them (Titus 3:10). The sinful behavior of the troublemakers speaks for itself (Titus 3:11).

The Epistle to Titus closes (Titus 3:15) with Paul telling him that either Artemas or Tychicus will be sent to Crete as his replacement, and that Titus is to come visit with him in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Already on their way to Crete are Zenas the lawyer and Apollos (Titus 3:13). The figure of Zenas the lawyer is interesting, because if he was a Diaspora Jew who was a “*Torah* expert” (CJB), and not just a Roman lawyer, he could have helped solve whatever problems the Cretan troublemakers had stirred up by their misuse of the Mosaic Law. The Cretan Believers were to simply “learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives” (Titus 3:14). A big part of this would surely be living forth the Torah’s instruction of loving God and neighbor, and helping others via acts of service and mercy.

## **2 Timothy**

Conservative Bible scholars are widely agreed that 2 Timothy was the last letter composed by the Apostle Paul, and in reviewing its contents, it is easy to discern how it includes many final thoughts of Paul as he knows that he is going to die. Timothy will be one of those special associates who will need to continue the work of ministry, as Paul's legacy continues with people like him, and how new Believers will need to be encouraged to live forth holiness in the Lord Yeshua. The Epistle of 2 Timothy is understandably a letter where Paul pours out his heart and deep emotions to a close and trusted friend.

Beginning his final discourse, Paul begins 2 Timothy by not only wishing Timothy grace, mercy, and peace—but also expressing how he is his “dear son” (2 Timothy 1:1-2). Paul thanks God for whom Timothy is to him, not only praying for him (2 Timothy 1:3), but also how “Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy” (2 Timothy 1:4). Reflecting back on Timothy's own life and upbringing, he expresses how he has appreciated Timothy's “sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5). One of Paul's main intentions of writing Timothy is “to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:6-7). While much of what Paul will express to Timothy he had no doubt told him before, it is extremely special *in any generation* to be given a transcribed witness of a loved one's final thoughts and feelings.

Paul is in prison when writing to Timothy, and so he urges him not to be ashamed of the fact that he is in chains and to continue testifying of the Lord (2 Timothy 1:8). Timothy is to gain strength from the mighty salvation history acts of God predetermined before time (2 Timothy 1:9), and how His Son Yeshua the Messiah “destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). Only in the gospel and in the arrival of the Messiah, which Paul states he was given the honor of communicating (2 Timothy 1:11), can God's plan for the ages be truly understood. Paul has to conclude, “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard that which I have entrusted to him for that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). The Apostle Paul has been most faithful in the work allotted to him for spreading the good news, and in teaching and guiding the spiritual development of thousands of Believers. This is something that will continue until the future point of Yeshua's return to the Earth.

Timothy is one of those who has been granted the privilege of continuing Paul's service: “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Messiah Yeshua” (2 Timothy 1:13). Timothy is to take this most seriously: “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Timothy 1:14). There are those who have fallen away from the cause of Messiah (2 Timothy 1:15), as well as those who have been a great help for it as well (2 Timothy 1:16-18).

As great as it is to serve the Lord as a designated messenger, one who is to convey the good news of salvation and all of its awesome implications for human life—there will be pressures, and one like Timothy will have to be fully committed. Timothy has to “be strong in the grace that is in Messiah Yeshua” (2 Timothy 2:1). Just as Timothy has been trained by the

Apostle Paul, so will he have to pass down the same teachings to faithful persons who can teach (2 Timothy 2:2-3). With the service of the gospel comes consistent challenges, requiring a level of obedience at the level of a soldier following orders (2 Timothy 2:4), a level of endurance like that of an athlete (2 Timothy 2:5), or a level of patience like that of a farmer (2 Timothy 2:6). Paul summarizes, "Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all of this" (2 Timothy 2:7). While Timothy is given a charge by Paul to be certain, we can see here how he will be given the unique abilities that he will need to approach it, given whatever specific circumstances are encountered.

Paul himself knows what the most important thing is in life: "Remember Yeshua the Messiah, raised from the dead, descended from David" (2 Timothy 2:8). Yeshua the Messiah having conquered the power of death, and with the anticipated Kingdom coming to Earth, **can never be left out of view**. While he might be chained, the Word of God and its power in transforming people can surely not be chained (2 Timothy 2:9-10)! But while the good news brings with it great power and encouragement, it also brings with it severity. Paul summarizes:

"Here is a trustworthy saying: 'If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself'" (2 Timothy 2:11-13).

Whomever Timothy may serve, be it the Ephesians or anyone else in the future, the focus of his work must be around the surety of the Lord Yeshua (2 Timothy 2:14a). He is further instructed, "Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen" (2 Timothy 2:14b). Timothy is to always take people to the Scriptures, as "a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). This will surely work when contrasted against individuals like Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have falsely claimed that the resurrection had already occurred (2 Timothy 2:16-17), with many led astray (2 Timothy 2:18). In spite of this, "God's solid foundation stands firm" (2 Timothy 2:19; cf. Isaiah 28:16; John 3:33). Just like gold and silver have great noble purposes in one's house, so are Believers to be sure that they too are prepared and cleansed for spiritual work (2 Timothy 2:20-21). Paul's advice to Timothy, and others throughout history, who have occupied positions of leadership, is to be most appreciated:

"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:22-25).

Knowing that 2 Timothy contains Paul's final words, it is understandable that he has certain anticipations for the future. He informs Timothy of the following regarding the end-times:

"But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents,

ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

What Paul tells Timothy is probably rooted within what he saw or what he heard about going on, per some of Timothy’s own work in Ephesus (2 Timothy 3:6-9). Paul is keen to emphasize how Timothy “know[s] all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—” (2 Timothy 3:10-11a). In various places, Timothy knows how Paul has been delivered through difficulties, and how those who believe in the Messiah are likely to be persecuted for it (2 Timothy 3:11b-12).

In spite of the presence of evil, Timothy is to continue forward (2 Timothy 3:13-14), because as Paul says, “from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Messiah Yeshua” (2 Timothy 3:15). Primarily referencing the Tanach or the Scriptures of Israel,<sup>13</sup> Paul encourages Timothy with the steadfast word, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Today’s Messianic Believers have certainly taken much inspiration from this, as we desire to return *all Believers* to a firm foundation in God’s Word beginning with the Torah, and continuing on through to the Prophets, Writings, and Messianic Scriptures! Such is to enable God’s people to “be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

Paul’s final charge to Timothy is delivered in ch. 4, as he will be forwarding on work that will have an impact up until the return of Yeshua the Messiah and the arrival of His Kingdom on Earth (2 Timothy 4:1). Timothy is to simply “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). A future time is definitely coming when people will prefer to listen to things with itching ears, willfully choosing to hear various myths (2 Timothy 4:3-4). In spite of all this, Timothy is to “keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5). While this is important for anyone, whether in full-time ministry or not, to know—we are much closer today to Yeshua’s return than Timothy was almost two millennia ago. What might the implications of people preferring to hear myths with gullible ears not just mean to contemporary Christianity, **but also** to today’s emerging and rather diverse Messianic movement?

While Timothy’s duty will be to continue on where Paul left off, Paul observes how “I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure” (2 Timothy 4:6). Unlike his previous imprisonment where he was already prepared to die and be with Yeshua in Heaven, but knew he would have to continue on (Philippians 1:21-24), *here* Paul knows that he will be dying. Paul has finished the course of his life on Earth with great success (2 Timothy 4:7). All that remains subsequent to his departure are the future events of the Second Coming, resurrection, and reunion of all Believers (living and deceased)—when final rewards will be given as Planet Earth is engulfed in the Messianic Age (2 Timothy 4:8).

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<sup>13</sup> Keep in mind that in 1 Timothy 5:18, Luke 10:7 is quoted, which serves to indicate that various Apostolic materials were already gaining recognition or use as Scripture by the mid-First Century C.E.



As Paul knows that he does not have that much more time on Earth, he urges Timothy to come to see him quickly (2 Timothy 4:9). Some have deserted him in ministry, and others are out on assignment performing critical tasks, who presumably are not able to come (2 Timothy 4:10-12). Timothy is instructed to bring various personal items to Paul in Rome (2 Timothy 4:13). The personal tone of the letter is seen in how Timothy is to watch out for a certain Alexander who harmed him (2 Timothy 4:14-15), and how Paul really does not want anyone who did not come to his defense to be penalized (2 Timothy 4:16). In spite of the obstacles Paul faced then, or ever faced, he fully proclaimed the good news of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) to the nations (2 Timothy 4:17). While he faces a gruesome death in Rome, Paul testifies that “The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18). Whatever pain he will have to endure will be temporary, as Paul is soon to experience the reality of Heaven.

The Epistle of 2 Timothy ends with Paul asking Timothy to extend greetings to dear friends, and extending greetings to him on behalf of dear friends (2 Timothy 4:19-22). While the Apostle Paul has endured much during the course of his service for the Lord Yeshua, he ends his life on a rather upbeat tone of confidence. There are challenges that those like Timothy would have to face for certain—and this has been undoubtedly true even since the time of Timothy—but Paul knows deep in his heart and in his conscience that he has done the right thing. Paul is to be rewarded by finally getting to meet the Lord and Messiah He loved and served so diligently, *and* he rightly reminds not only Timothy **but anyone reading this letter** that we all have a job to perform as one day Yeshua will return and Earth will be ruled by Him! Without doubt, the fallen world system which put him, and countless others to a martyr’s death, will be shown to be worthless and impotent at the *parousia* of King Messiah.

Today’s Messianic community has much that it should be considering from the Pastoral Epistles of 1&2 Timothy and Titus, which directly affects its long term development and mission. It is true that not all of the content of these three letters is solely focused on themes of spiritual leadership, and that individual Believers who simply love God and want to serve Him can pick up much from simply reading and meditating upon them. Also not to be overlooked is how much of the content of these letters which addresses leadership was originally given to confront various errors in Ephesus and on Crete. How might this change our approach to some things, particularly some views regarding who is *or* who is not qualified to lead and teach God’s people, be they male *or* female? Is it possible that any of us need to take a closer view of sections like 1 Timothy chs. 2&3, and that we need to join into some of the conversations that have been going on in Biblical Studies? How might this alter not only your current perspective, but also help stir some well-needed changes within the Messianic movement?

What purpose do you believe the Pastoral Epistles serve? Looking at these three letters together certainly will give Messianic Believers many things to think about and reflect upon. Have we really heeded the message(s) they contain? Regardless of where any of us might stand on various issues debated from these texts, we must all stand united around the One who “gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14, ESV). Let us be eager to

perform good works, and be all of the things that the Apostle Paul would want us to be in the Lord!