

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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updated 27 September, 2007 www.tnnonline.net

**Women in Ministry:** What is your position on women in ministry? Should Messianic women be allowed to be teachers, pastors/rabbis, or occupy positions of leadership?

This is an issue that as of today, there will be no Messianic consensus. There will be teachers, congregations, and organizations that oppose women in positions of pastoral leadership, and there will be teachers, congregations, and organizations that support women in positions of pastoral leadership. Not surprisingly, the position that the editor holds is largely his own.

The common passage used against women in ministry is 1 Timothy 2:11-12: "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." Those who oppose women in positions of leadership place a very strong emphasis on these verses. Many believe that Paul has just issued a moratorium on all women in ministry for all time. It is not difficult to see why the current feminist movement has claimed that much of Christianity (and too a lesser extent Judaism) is dominated by male chauvinists, and why liberals largely discount 1 Timothy and the other Pastoral Epistles (2 Timothy and Titus) as authentically Pauline. What do we do with 1 Timothy 2:11-12?

In the Hebrew Tanach, we certainly see some women in positions of critical leadership. Heroines such as Deborah (Judges 4-5), Ruth, and Esther are certainly godly women to be considered as models of service. In significant sectors of Judaism, the issue of women in leadership is not as severe as it is in evangelical Christianity (and by extension the Messianic community) because there are significant examples of women leading others in the Tanach. **These examples cannot be disregarded in any examination of whether or not women should be allowed to occupy positions of spiritual leadership.**

While the evil woman Queen Jezebel is often cited as the example of what will happen should women be placed in any positions of spiritual authority—as "Jezebel" represents the epitome of an evil, controlling woman—Jezebel likely receives too much attention at the expense of *all* of the evil men seen in Scripture. While Jezebel is targeted as the epitome of evil women—what one *single* male example could be given to represent evil men? Pharaoh, Haman, (Antiochus Epiphanes), Judas Iscariot, the antichrist? This is difficult for many to determine. Many claim that if women are given positions of spiritual authority that things will run amok, but this is a patently weak argument in view of the fact that there are scores of examples where men have controlled things and problems have abounded. Both men and women are equally guilty of causing problems for the *ekklēsia*.

In the Apostolic Scriptures themselves, we do see women take on a significant role in leadership. In Galatians 3:28, Paul says "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua." There is a status of unity for those with faith in Yeshua the Messiah where gender roles do not significantly matter. Following Paul's visit to Philippi in Acts 16, it is the female Lydia who leads the new group of Believers, and Paul's letter to the Philippians includes a reference to two women, Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2), who presumably occupy positions of leadership. Paul extends greetings to a female apostle, "Junia," in Romans 16:7 (NRSV, ESV, HCSB). And, we cannot forget the wife-husband teaching duo of Priscilla and Aquila in Acts 18.

If there are witnesses in the Pauline corpus and Book of Acts to women being in positions of leadership in the local assemblies, then is Paul contradicting himself in 1 Timothy 2:11-12? Or, is there a part of Paul's letter to Timothy that is commonly missed or not considered?

To accurately understand Paul's remarks about women not teaching, we have to consider what 1 Timothy probably meant for the circumstances Timothy faced while overseeing his assemblies in and around Ephesus. For the cultural norms of the day, Paul's instruction "*I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments*" (1 Timothy 2:9) were undeniably appropriate. Braided hair, gold, pearls, and expensive clothing would have been considered signs of opulence. Are these signs

of opulence today? Some who embrace a strict reading of the text, as though it speaks directly to all generations and all cultures at all times—without any kind of consideration for ancient history—would say yes. The editor is a bit more cautious in making this extrapolation, and would *not argue* that this is a prohibition for women wearing these things for all time. A value judgment regarding ancient and modern culture, and what is considered “modest,” has to be made

When Paul further admonishes Timothy, “A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet” (1 Timothy 2:11-12), additional considerations have to be made. If Paul considers that a significant degree of gender barriers have been lifted in Yeshua (Galatians 3:28), has he contradicted himself? (Is this Deutero-Pauline as liberals claim?) Or, have circumstances arisen in Ephesus that require him to tell Timothy to pull back the reins on the involvement of the women in the assemblies he oversees?

It must be noted that the verb *authenteō* (αὐθεντέω) is rendered as “usurp authority” in the KJV, and this can significantly alter our perception of the circumstances in Ephesus that Timothy was facing. We know that there were women in positions of leadership in the First Century *ekklēsia*, per the examples of Lydia, Euodia, Syntyche, Priscilla, and Junia. Is it possible that with the spread of the gospel, women in Timothy’s Ephesian congregations were feeling “liberated”—and “liberated” so much so that they tried to *usurp the authority* of the already existent male leadership?

If Paul’s admonition to Timothy more specifically concerns *women usurping leadership* in the congregation, then his words “A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission” (1 Timothy 2:11, NEB), can be more easily understood. Women in the First Century Greek world were largely uneducated, untaught, or untrained (and illiterate). Men, on the contrary, were those who were largely allowed to be given some kind of schooling. If the women in Timothy’s congregation—the untaught, uneducated women—were trying to usurp the authority of the taught, trained men, Paul would absolutely want them to remain quiet and submissively learn. Many of these women could speak about things they knew little or nothing about, either from the Scriptures or society in general, and Paul would want them to be prepared *by the men who already had schooling* (and were literate).

(Of course, the ramifications of this view are quite severe for any religious movement since. If Paul’s argument more specifically concerns First Century untaught and untrained females usurping the position of taught and trained males in the *ekklēsia*, then a modern day application could be that either unqualified **females or males** are prohibited from usurping the position of those qualified for positions of spiritual leadership. This asks today’s Messianic movement questions it is largely unprepared to answer.)

With this in mind, we also have to consider what Paul means afterward in 1 Timothy 2:13-15:

“For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”

Vs. 13-14 can be interpreted that since it was Eve who was deceived by the serpent in the Garden of Eden that women are less intelligent and more susceptible to sin than men. From Paul’s First Century vantage point to Timothy—largely dealing with untrained, unschooled Greek women in Ephesus—this would have been an accurate statement. These women would be very susceptible to deception. But this is not an accurate statement to make in either Twenty-First Century America or the West because women today largely have the same educational and societal opportunities as men. Paul’s statement in vs. 13-14 is a definite reflection on the social climate of *his day*.

Continuing, v. 15 can be interpreted as meaning that the only place for women in the assembly is to be mothers and raise children. But there is a translation issue that needs to be considered for women “saved through bearing children” (RSV). The Greek clause *dia tēs*

*teknogonias* (διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας) is literally “through the child-bearing” (YLT), including the definite article. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* notes,

“This much debated verse has also been translated (1) ‘she will be saved through the birth of the Child’ [referring to Jesus Christ], or (b) ‘she will be brought safely through childbirth’” (pp 1441-1442).

The emphasis in v. 15 appears to more specifically be on “the Childbearing,” who is Yeshua the Messiah (the Seed promised to Eve in Genesis 3:15), rather than a physical act of giving birth to children. Thus, Paul’s instruction to Timothy in Ephesus is that these women are to seek their salvation in Him, and continue in proper faith, holiness, and piety. It is not a statement that women should just be placed in the corner and remain perpetually pregnant, completely oblivious to what goes on in a male-dominated and male-controlled congregation, male leaders that they are—for all time—to blindly follow without question.

The editor is personally convinced that when 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is weighed with the heroines of the Tanach, and other examples of women in positions of leadership in the Apostolic Scriptures, **that there is no major or substantial basis for excluding women from positions of leadership in the assembly today.** The major thing to consider for such individuals holding positions of leadership, either as pastors/rabbis of local assemblies or greater positions, is *not gender* but is having the right qualifications. What makes this a controversial view is that it assumes that today’s leaders in the current, largely male-dominated Messianic movement have the right qualifications (and some may not).

In time, especially as evangelical Christianity continues to struggle with the issues of women in ministry, so will today’s Messianic community likewise have to struggle with them. At present, forming any kind of consensus seems unlikely.

(For a further examination, the editor recommends you consult the books *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005] for a general overview of the options, and Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992].)

posted 27 September, 2007

**Works of the Law:** I have heard a teaching which stated that the term “works of the Law” actually refers to Rabbinical extra-Biblical commandments? Is there any substantiation for this?

There is some substantiation for believing that when the Apostle Paul uses the phrase “works of the Law” that something other than *general* Torah observance is being specified. Extrapolating this a reference to the Oral Torah as seen in the Mishnah and Talmud is going a bit too far, **and would be removed from the primary arguments seen in Paul’s letters to the Galatians and the Romans.** The proposal that is currently being made by advocates of the New Perspective of Paul (NPP) in theological studies is that *ergōn nomou* (ἐργων νόμου), “works of law,” largely corresponds to religious characteristics that were distinctively Jewish, yet recognizable by their Greek and Roman neighbors. They were regulations that kept the Jewish and non-Jewish communities separate. The term *ergōn nomou* is likely Paul’s Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *ma’asei haTorah* (מעשי התורה). This is not found in the Hebrew Tanach, but is employed in the Dead Sea Scrolls to relate to the community’s distinct religious *halachah*:

“Now we have written to you some of the works of the Law [Heb. *miqsat ma’asei ha-Torah*, מקצת מעשי התורה], those which we determined would be beneficial for you and your people, because we have seen [that] you possess insight and knowledge of the Law” (4Q399).

This statement is made after the Qumran community lays forth “A Sectarian Manifesto” (Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, p 364) regarding some observances that members of their order are to observe. These communal regulations largely regard ritual purity and who is, and who is not, allowed into *their* camp. As it has been observed, “only the *Manifesto* and Paul’s Letters to the Galatians and Romans discuss the connection between works and righteousness” (Ibid.), and indeed the major thrust of both of those letters is

that one gains entry among God's community via faith in His Son and not "works." Today among advocates of the NPP, it is suggested that when Paul uses *ergōn nomou* he is using it in a similar way to how it is used in 4QMMT among the DSS.

"Works of law" is used by Paul a total of six times in Galatians (2:16; 3:2, 5, 10), and is only used elsewhere in his letter to the Romans (3:20, 28). Generally speaking, common Christian interpretations of this phrase have advocated that *ergōn nomou* or "works of law" means "observing the law" (NIV), meaning some kind of Torah observance. It has only been in recent days with the proposals made by NPP that *ergōn nomou* takes on something different than just rote observance of the Mosaic Law. These propositions have significantly aided Messianic understanding of Paul's words (cf. Tim Hegg, *A Study of Galatians*, 11), as Paul is criticizing a sectarian observance of the Torah that impedes God's mission of blessing all nations (Genesis 12:2; Galatians 3:8-9), rather than observance of the Torah itself.

Of course, there is considerable discussion as to whether or not when Paul uses *ergōn nomou* he is really connecting it to some of the ideas we see present in *ma'asei haTorah* in 4QMMT. Many, acknowledging a connection, believe that the "works of law" of which Paul speaks are "the boundary markers that clearly distinguished Jews from their neighbors—circumcision, the sabbath, and the purity laws" (James W. Thompson, "works," in *EDB*, 1387). There are, however, Christian theologians who are resistant to "works of law" having any technical reference to either boundary markers, or to the *halachah* of a sectarian community. Those who are resistant are often so because it requires one to take a more moderate view of the Torah in Pauline literature. As T.R. Schreiner argues, "the expression 'works' (*erga*) in Paul refers to 'deeds that are performed,' and thus 'works of Law' signifies the 'deeds' or 'actions' demanded by the Mosaic Law" ("works of the law," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 977).

It would certainly be irresponsible of us to think that any time Paul uses the term "works" he is speaking of "works of law." He uses most often "works" as comparable to "deeds." Likewise, when Paul uses "works of law" or *ergōn nomou*, the Torah is somehow involved. The question is whether these "works of law" are simply "*doing what the Law commanded*" (Ibid.), or we might say, doing what the Torah commanded *in a particular way*. If it is the latter, than it can reorient our interpretation of some of Paul's words in Galatians and Romans. Paul's argument would not be against "the Torah" per se, but rather its application by a particular sector of the ancient Messianic community.

Galatians 2:15, 16 give us some clues that *ergōn nomou* is likely Paul's Greek equivalent of *ma'asei haTorah*, especially considering the way he addresses Peter. In v. 15 he tells Peter *hēmeis phusei Ioudaioi* (ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι), "we are Jews by nature," continuing in v. 16 with *eidotes de hoti ou dikaioutai anthrōpos ex ergōn nomou* (εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by works of the Law." The verb *eidotes* is a masculine plural participle, indicating that "we know" (NEB, NRSV, ESV). In other words, Paul is communicating to Peter as a fellow Jew, and we can deduce that as Jews they had some ideas as to what "works of law" meant as a technical phrase.

Christian commentators recognizing the connection have only so far been able to concede that "works of law" in the Pauline corpus pertain to Jewish identity markers. So, while not being obedience to the Mosaic Torah, per se, "works of the law" were those things that were to clearly separate Israel from the Gentile world around it, namely the Sabbath, appointed times, and dietary laws (cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians*, pp 218-220). While this may prove discouraging to some Messianic interpreters—as these are three elements of Biblical practice that we believe God is restoring to His people—the discussion of "works of law" being something else than Torah observance as a whole certainly opens up our interpretational possibilities. Likewise, as Dunn describes it, it should allow us to see the corporate, *and not just the individualistic aspect*, of justification:

"[W]orks of the law' have for too long been understood as 'good works by which individuals try to gain acceptance by God'; that fundamental misunderstanding has skewed the whole exegesis of the letter, distorting or concealing the Jewish (as well as Christian) recognition

of the priority of God's grace, and losing sight of the corporate dimension of the discussion of an individualistic doctrine of justification by faith" (Ibid., 246).

A good way to synthesize the two somewhat competing concepts of (1) "works of law" only being observing the Torah, and (2) "works of law" only being the *halachah* of a sectarian community, is (3) recognizing "works of law" as the *halachah* of a sectarian community, but as a subset of general "works." From this point of view, when Paul says in Galatians 2:16 that "a man is not justified by works of the Law," he does legitimately speak of "observing the law" (NIV) to attain justification. At the same time, though, concurrent with Paul's *specific incident* with Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:14), and what he wants the Galatians to understand, "works of law" keys us in to how a particular group has decided to apply the Torah. Observing "works of law" then relates to *how* one is keeping the Torah, more than just keeping it. The clear emphasis for Paul is that "justification"—being a part of God's covenant community—comes via faith in His Messiah, not following the *halachah* or identity barriers of a particular sect or clique.

The controversial part of not being "justified" by "works of law," particularly for some from more fundamental Christian backgrounds, is believing that "justification" is more than just an individual's vindication before God via the work of His Son. Given the usage of *tzedakah* (צְדָקָה) in parts of the Tanach pertaining to Israel's status before God, and the issues that Paul is facing in Galatians (and to a lesser extent Romans) pertaining to the non-Jews' inclusion in the community of faith, such justification is *also corporate*—not just individualistic. One's entry into God's covenant community is not "works of law," namely the *halachah* of a particular group (in the specific case of Galatians, those requiring ritual circumcision)—but it is faith in the Messiah of Israel. While individual justification *may come first*, a clear result of that is being in covenant relationship with one's brothers and sisters who have also been redeemed.

"Works of law" being the particular *halachah* of a sectarian community gives much not only for the contemporary Church to consider, but also for today's Messianic community. Do we allow people to join our assemblies because they have made a proclamation of faith in Yeshua? Or, in the case of some Messianic congregations, because they fit a series of requirements? Today in some sectors of the Messianic community, non-Jewish Believers are spurned unless they undergo some kind of ritual "conversion" that only the denomination can offer. But this goes against Paul's clear instruction. Not only does one's personal redemption not come from keeping "works of law," but one's inclusion among God's people is not to occur from "works of law" either. Instead, one is to stand justified before God on the basis of faith in Him, and one is to be accepted in the *ekklēsia* on the basis of faith in Him.

(This entry includes excerpts adapted from the editor's forthcoming commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*, Second Edition.)

updated 27 September, 2007

**Wrath, spared from:** How do you, as a post-tribulational ministry, respond to the fact that we are spared from God's wrath? Does this not mean that we are spared from the horrors of the Tribulation period?

No one can deny the clear Biblical reference of 1 Thessalonians 5:9: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah." Neither this, nor other passages such as Romans 5:9 are in dispute by us as post-tribulationists. However, it is important *that we determine what the wrath of God is*, something very few pre-tribulationists do. Pre-tribulationists errantly consider the entire Tribulation period to be God's wrath.

There are two primary Greek words used in the Apostolic Scriptures translated as "wrath" in our English Bibles: *orgē* (ὀργή) and *thumos* (θυμός), each indicative of a particular type of wrath or anger of God.

*BDAG* defines *orgē* as "strong indignation directed at wrongdoing, w. focus on retribution, *wrath*" (p 720). This is necessary to understand because it indicates that *orgē* "wrath" is most often reserved for the Divine punishment of God on sinners in His eternal punishment upon them.

Thayer adds to this, telling us that *orgē* is indicative of “*anger exhibited in punishing, hence used for the punishment itself*” (p 452).

*Thumos*, on the other hand is described as “*a state of intense displeasure, anger, wrath, rage, indignation*” (BDAG, 461). Thayer remarks that it means “*passion, angry heat...anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again*” (p 293). This does not indicate a “wrath” that is constant, but one that is only momentary.

The comparison of these two words is that *orgē* “denotes *indignation which has arisen gradually and becomes more settled*” (Ibid.) *Orgē* is the Divine wrath used to describe eternal punishment of unbelievers, whereas *thumos* is used to describe the anger of God poured out during the Tribulation period.

Interestingly enough, the only times the word *orgē* (Divine wrath) is used in the Book of Revelation are in a post-tribulational context (6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15). It is used after the sixth seal (Revelation 6:16-17), the seventh (or the last) trumpet (Revelation 11:18), the seventh vial/bowl (Revelation 16:19), and is most importantly used to describe the eternal punishment of the condemned in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 14:10). Believers are indeed spared from the *orgē* wrath of God, as (1) the *orgē* or Divine wrath of God is poured out *after the Tribulation period*, and (2) the *orgē* of God is for those who reject the Messiah and suffer eternal punishment.

It should also be noted that numerous references exist throughout the Tanach or Hebrew Scriptures describe that the judgment of God is poured out on the Day of the LORD (Isaiah 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 30:3; 1:15; 2:1; 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18; 20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:14; Malachi 4:5). Although there are numerous interpretations that are given for the term “day,” more often than naught this is in reference to the time when Yeshua returns and defeats His enemies at Armageddon, initiating His Millennial reign. As Nahum 1:2 proclaims, “A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; the LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies.” Presumably, before the Day of the LORD takes place, Believers have been removed from Planet Earth, because the wrath of God is reserved for the unrighteous.

The Apostolic Scriptures also speak of the Day of the LORD, which we should most certainly presume is the *same event spoken of by the Prophets in the Tanach* (cf. Acts 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). The Word of God is clear that during this time period His wrath will be poured out. But what do we define as the wrath of God? The Apostle Paul offers us a fairly good explanation:

“For the wrath [*orgē*] of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath [*orgē*] for yourself in the day of wrath [*orgē*] and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS” (Romans 1:18; 2:5-6).

“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath [*orgē*] of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them” (Ephesians 5:3-7).

The above Scripture quotations from Romans 1:18, 2:4-6, and Ephesians 5:3-7 both speak of wrath or *orgē* of God in regard to eternal damnation. *Thumos*, on the other hand, is indicative more of the *anger* of God, not always related to eternal punishment. In some instances, it is notable that *thumos* is also used to describe the wrath, or indignation or anger, of Satan. The following are a selection of quotations from the Book of Revelation where *thumos* is used:

“For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath [*thumos*], knowing that he has *only* a short time” (Revelation 12:12).

“So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath [*thumos*] of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles” (Revelation 14:19-20).

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, *which are* the last, because in them the wrath [*thumos*] of God is finished” (Revelation 15:1).

In determining what the wrath of God actually encompasses, we would suggest that you be sure of what Greek word is used in the source text, and then compare the context of the passage. Ultimately, the wrath of God is eternal damnation, which all Believers, Tribulation saints or otherwise, will be spared from. However, once defining what the “wrath of God” actually is, and distinguishing the Greek words *orgē* and *thumos*, we can then begin to address the more important question: **Will Believers experience hard times?** This is a question that many pre-tribulationists answer incorrectly.

Many popular pre-tribulationists say, “Why would anyone want to go through the Tribulation?” They would be correct as no one should want to go through the Tribulation. By no means is experiencing the Tribulation something one *should ever* wish for.

But, many of the same pre-tribulationists ***prey on people's emotions*** rather than dealing with the facts that Believers in the Messiah *have and will experience hard times*—something American Christianity has never really had to face. We would be keen to heed the Prophet Isaiah's words: “I seek You with all the spirit within me. For when Your judgments are wrought on earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. But when the scoundrel is spared, he learns not righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9b-10a, NJPS).

(This entry includes adapted quotations from the editor's book *The Dangers of Pre-Tribulationism*.)

added 16 January, 2006