

Josh Mangelson 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world

Karin Peter 00:33

Welcome to "New'Brew" the *Project Zion* series that takes us through the New Testament by explaining, I messed that up, by explaining, exploring and experiencing the text. All you "He'Brew", "She'Brew", "New'Brew" listeners, sorry about that opening. Our guides to the New Testament are Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith, and I'm your host, Karin Peter. Now before we begin, I'm reminding listeners that you can view all of the "New'Brew" episodes on, and see Tony and Charmaine's slides, on the *Latter-day Seeker Ministries YouTube Channel*, so be sure to check that out. So, today's episode is what Tony has called, I got his email this morning, "Party with the Pastorals", which would be really fun if the pastorals weren't so horrible. So that's where we are today. We are in 1 and 2 Timothy, and these are a little different than the letters we've been exploring, the letters of Paul. So, as fun as it's going to be, let's get into it on 1 and 2 Timothy. Tony, Charmaine?

Tony Chvala-Smith 01:43

And I did say, "Party with the pastorals in moderation".

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 01:50

Well, that makes more sense, then, all right. So, one of the first things you need to remember when you're reading the pas- pastorals is, so this is 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, but we'll mostly be looking at 1 and 2 Timothy today, is that they have a problem. You know, what do you do when the founder of the church is long gone, he's been dead for a while, and you have these churches that you're trying to lead and trying to give advice to, and there's new struggles that Paul never had to deal with? And we don't know what he would say, and we're not quite sure how his theology would respond to these things. And, but we need to address the realities that are happening right now, and we need to figure out how are we going to help this new Christian movement survive into the future. And so, there's this trying to find this balance between, that's the author is one of these people who is trying to find the balance between what has been and what is presently happening, the crises that are happening in congregations all the time, and how are we going to move forward in a culture that, in lots of ways looks like it's trying to undermine, what we're about, and Jesus hasn't come back yet, so how do we get in there for the long haul? So, there's all those things that the author is having to deal with.

Karin Peter 03:38

You're making a compelling case, Charmaine, but I'm buying none of it.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:41

Oh, then the...*[inaudible]*

Karin Peter 03:41

So, let's go on and see where we go.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 03:43

I want...questions in your discomfort. We need that because, because this is one of those places, it's so important to understand this, because that latent tendency among people to think of scripture as God's words, words right from God's mouth that we're supposed to live by. That's deadly when you come into this kind of a setting where the setting is completely different from the initial impulse of the church. The

leaders are more affected by longevity, the idea of how do we kind of customize ourselves to society so that we don't get killed, we don't get wiped out, but also their own discomfort with some of the radicalness that is in this message. The other thing to remember, as we're reading 1 and 2 Timothy, and I'll mentioned it again, but they don't have a set of the Gospels lying around. They may have seen one of the Gospels by this time, 'cause we're saying they're around about 100, maybe latest 110. They might have bits and pieces of what will eventually be a Gospel, but they don't have all the stories of Jesus and His teachings that are in the Gospels. They probably don't even have what we have, which is seven letters from Paul, that we know came from Paul. They might have one or two, but they don't, you know, they, things have been mostly passed on orally. And now they are the leaders in the church, and they got to figure it out. So, I think that's really an important begin, place to begin, and to realize that they're both in a very different place than previous writers like Paul, in different place from us. And, and yet some things may still be relevant for us, so I, that's where I would start is, they've got a problem.

Tony Chvala-Smith 05:54

So, what do we got here? We've got three texts, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus and they each come off as letters. On the surface, they are letters. The second one, 2 Timothy, is what scholars call a testamentary letter. In other words, 2 Timothy is different in that it's trying to represent what would have been Paul's last words to one of his closest proteges. And Timothy and Titus...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 06:21

Paul's imagined words.

Tony Chvala-Smith 06:22

Uh hum, Paul's imagined words, yeah. We're going to come to this a minute, because we're gonna get right out here on the table. These, critical scholarship does not believe these books were written by the historical Paul during his time, so we're gonna get that out on the table and flesh it out here in a minute. But Timothy and Titus, who were historical figures, part of Paul's mission and his delegates, and you know, they represented him, they would have probably been dead by now, too. So, Timothy and Titus become representative figures in these letters. They represent local leaders in whatever these congregations are. They represent local leaders. Two generations after the time of Paul...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 07:01

At least.

Tony Chvala-Smith 07:02

At least two generations after the time of Paul. We're talking, these are very late texts. In fact, one of my professors, whose Greek was way better than mine once said, when I read these, this is the Greek of the second century, and so 100-110 is a pretty darn good date for them. You really can't push them back earlier than that in terms of the language. So, so the question then is, let's, let's talk about the authorship question, because what we have to deal with now, is what biblical scholarship refers to as the phenomenon of pseudonymity, right, pseudonymity. It's a big fancy word. Pseudonymity means false ascription. It's an unfortunate word because false always sounds bad to us, but when scholars use it to refer to types of writing, what they mean is that we're looking at a text whose actual author is unknown, but who used the name of a revered figure from the past. So that's the practice of pseudonymity. A pseudonymous text is a literary type in which the author uses somebody else's name, in this case Paul's name. But it was this, this practice was common in Jewish circles from about the fourth century BC on. The book of Daniel was not written by a historical Daniel. The wisdom of Solomon, in the Deuterocanonical text, was not written by Solomon. There's a whole bunch of pseudonymous texts under the name of Ezra. So as...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:35
And this was understood that this...

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:37
Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:37
...these weren't the authors. I mean, this...

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:39
Right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:39
...was a commonly understood way of telling a story or giving a piece of history,

Tony Chvala-Smith 08:47
Right. And it appears that pseudonymity arose in the time when, when people figured that the period of, the period of, of sacred encounter with God was kind of passed. But we're still, we still have new questions and new issues. How do we deal with the issues in our own time? We borrow the name of a figure from the sacred past and we, as much as we can, write as if he were writing to us now. And so that, that seems, that seems like copyright violation in our context, but you got, just, we just have to, like, close off a whole bunch of assumptions we have about texts and about writing to understand this phenomenon in the ancient world.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:33
Though, we're going to bring up here in a few minutes that this still happens today. It's an accepted practice today. We just may not think of it in the same way.

Karin Peter 09:44
We have ghost writing that happens today. We have a spouse or a child finishing a series of books when the, when the parent, or husband, or wife author, authors dies,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:55
And putting their name on it.

Karin Peter 09:57
Their name.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 09:58
Exactly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 09:59
Yeah. So, borrowing here from, from the scholar Luke Johnson, who points out that in the first century, people distinguished between writer and author, right. We don't make that distinction, but the first century did. To write in Paul's name in the late first century is to write under his authority, so the readers understand that this, this, Paul is the author, but not the writer. And the readers of these texts would also have understood that Paul was long dead.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 10:31
Right.

Tony Chvala-Smith 10:31

But they also would have understood that the, the writer, whoever he was, I'm assuming probably it was a he, but the writer...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 10:39

Yeah, definitely.

Tony Chvala-Smith 10:41

...has, yeah, in this case, but the pastorals definitely, the writer has some connection to some traditions that come from the historical Paul, and thus has a certain kind of authority to write them. But we, we, knowing what we know now, we cannot assign this text, these text to Paul.

Karin Peter 10:59

Right.

Tony Chvala-Smith 11:00

And also, it's really important to understand that modern biblical scholarship, and I'm talking about Catholic scholarship, Jewish scholarship, Protestant scholarship, secular scholarship, really has never considered pseudonymity as something like an act of fraud. The recipients would have recognized the literary form. Everybody knew what they were doing. What happens is you get several generations removed in the canonization process and the name Paul now becomes a sacred name, and so, so it's just assumed that the text had to have been written by Paul.

Karin Peter 11:30

Right.

Tony Chvala-Smith 11:31

Yeah, but they're, they're just too distant from the original situation.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 11:34

And again, we remind everyone that these things were not written to be scripture, they were written to groups who were having specific situations and, that they needed to deal with, and so, you know, there's not a sense either that they're being, that they're being fraudulent, but they also, but that may not have gotten passed on to future generations. But the history of how this was written was not necessarily passed on, just the words. And so, our human tendency to, to make everything like, well, it's there on the page. Well, you just read it and that's what it means. And it's like, well, not always. There's often a history behind it.

Tony Chvala-Smith 12:19

In scholarship, we refer to these Pauline letters as Deutero-Pauline. That includes 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus, and then 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians, those six. Six of the 13 letters that have Paul's name on them are Deutero-Pauline, and a little later we'll, we'll show you a picture.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 12:38

I can do that in just minute here.

Tony Chvala-Smith 12:39

Yeah, we'll, we'll show you a picture of how, very likely how this Pauline tradition developed. So, that's just important to know. But you know what? In the Hebrew Bible, in Isaiah we have Isaiah of Jerusalem, and then as many as two or three other prophets or prophetic writers who continued that, that author's work under the name of Isaiah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 12:58

Isaiah, yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 13:00

So, it's not an uncommon thing. It's just, it just, it bothers contemporary readers because of our sense of ownership. Plus, we've had 500 years of, of the, a Protestant assumption that the Bible is the sole authority for theology, and if it's the authority, it must be, everything must, in it must be true, and therefore, if it says Paul, it must be Paul. That's just bad, sloppy theology. And not even the reformers like Luther thought of it like, quite like that. So, so, we've got to get over our sloppy theology and we have to get over our sense, our individualistic sense of, of authorship if we want to understand what's going on in these text.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 13:37

Which is more our problem than it is, would have been a problem in their time.

Tony Chvala-Smith 13:41

Right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 13:41

So, Karin, you've already given some examples, but there, some others that, that still a common literary thing to use. I don't know how many might be interest-, might be familiar with *The Boxcar Children*, a story about four children who are orphaned and live in an abandoned boxcar. And these, the first 19,19 I think, were written by Gertrude Chandler Warner. She died in '79, but there are, there continued to be books written, and there's like 150, you know, and they're brought up to date. So, they're not from the, you know, 1920s or '40s, when she was writing. They're from 2020 and kids are wear-, you know, have cell phones and all of that, but she's long dead. But they all are, say that they are authored by her. There's not even another author mentioned as the subsequent author. And so, this is, in this other series that are that way too. They're written by different authors. That's acknowledged that she's not around anymore, but, but that's the only name that's on it. And some other things like the Gene Roddenberry with, I don't know if I spelled that right, but anyhow, with a lot of the *Star Trek* things. His name will be there as creative inspiration or something like that, even though, you know, I think he died in '91. And so, you know, anything that's come after, it might have had some of his starting ideas, but not, definitely he did not write it or produce it. So, I think it's just good to remember that this is not so strange from, from how we typically would look at things.

Tony Chvala-Smith 15:36

I mean, it would probably be helpful if the pastorals, if the author said, "Writing in the name of Paul, inspired by ideas I think I got from Paul, but I'm not Paul."

Karin Peter 15:47

But I'm not Paul, and I'm really upset with what's happening now, so I'm gonna write it, period.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 15:52

Right.

Tony Chvala-Smith 15:52

So...

Karin Peter 15:52

Whether or not, yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 15:55

Exactly.

Tony Chvala-Smith 15:55

So, where we'll go next, then is...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 15:58

Do you want to look at that?

Tony Chvala-Smith 16:00

Not quite yet. We'll pull it and then...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:01

Okay. We'll, the screen, okay.

Tony Chvala-Smith 16:01

Yeah. I want to give the data first.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:05

Okay.

Tony Chvala-Smith 16:05

I'm actually gonna give some data to show why scholars actually believe, I think rightly, that with these texts, the pastorals did not come from Paul. I think before we do that though, we need, we just say, well, what can we tell about the actual author? We can tell some things about the actual author. We, the actual author of the pastorals appears not to have known Paul personally. The Deutero-Pauline text, Colossians, one might argue that that author was close enough who, he could have, but this author is two generations or more removed. He doesn't appear to know Paul directly, but only orally. He's got oral bits and pieces. There's, there's no, there's no clear evidence in the pastorals that he had copies of like the Pauline letters. Charmaine mentioned that. In fact, in some places, he says things that Paul would never say, like the opposite of what Paul would have said. And so, he doesn't have direct access to Paul's letters, certainly not a collection of them. This author is more shaped by Roman cultural norms and wants, and is struggling with how much to align with them. He aligns with them a lot more than, than Paul would, would have. And also, here's something that's quite different. The historical Paul, in some of the letters we've covered already, the historical Paul, when he, when he had a problem to deal with in a congregation, he, he wants to argue with it theologically, right? This author doesn't do argumentation. This, this author does top down, don't ask questions, here's what we inherited, here's the tradition. He uses the word, the Greek word *paradaki* which means the deposit. We've got this deposit from the apostolic period. This is what we go with. And so, if you want, if you want to stay faithful, you follow this stuff.

Karin Peter 17:59

Okay, I'm just gonna, I'm just going to interject here for all our listeners who come from a different Restoration heritage tradition, this is Joseph Smith versus Brigham Young. That's what we're talking about in the difference in how the ideas are applied.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:17

Okay, sure, yeah, yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 18:17

Interesting, yes, yes. That's a nice analogy.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:18

Yeah, right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 18:21

So those concepts are still around, but how are they going to be used? And in this case, too, there are gaps. There are places where the things Paul said, this author doesn't know how Paul would have dealt with this situation because it's completely different. And so, he tends to rely on culture in those places.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:45

And even if this author had had some of Paul's letters, they're not scripture yet, so he, he would have felt some kind of freedom to try and, try and use what he could have Paul to deal with his own situation. And he deals with, with situations in a way unlike how Paul would have dealt with them. That's, I think that's quite telling. So now we're gonna go to debt. How do we, how do we know that this author is not Paul, right? So here I'm gonna rely on two scholars. I'm gonna rely on Bart Ehrman, who's a very good New Testament scholar, and then the standard graduate school textbook for New Testament is a text translator from, from German by, the text is by Werner Georg Kümmel. Kümmel's *Introduction to the New Testament* is something PhD students in New Testament have to read. And so, here's some data. Number one: in the pastorals, these three letters, there are 848 different Greek words. Of the 848, 306 of them occur nowhere else in the Pauline letters...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:48

In the Pauline letters that we know come from Paul.

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:49

...and even, and even, and even in Colossians and Ephesians, right. So, there's a whole bunch of vocabulary here that is just not Paul's vocabulary. That means a third of the vocabulary in the Pauline letters is not even Pauline, right. And then, of, of those words...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:07

A third of them in the pastorals.

Tony Chvala-Smith 20:09

Right. A third of them in the pastorals.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:11

You said, in the Pauline [*inaudible*].

Tony Chvala-Smith 20:12

Yes.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:13

Got it.

Tony Chvala-Smith 20:13

They're not even, not even, not even Pauline. So, two thirds of those 306 words are used by second century Christian authors, right. Here's an example. The second century Christian bishop, Ignatius of Antioch uses the word *hairedidaskaleo* (sic), which in Greek means to teach heresy, to teach what is other, different from. Well guess where it appears? It appears in, twice in 1 Timothy. So, we know we've

got a word there, that you know, it's like, it's like, you know what, the word groovy doesn't show up before the late 1960s, right. So, so the word dates itself.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:50

And, and it's possible that that word wasn't needed until this later period in the early Christian Church's development, and suddenly there are these philosophies and, and other theologies that are seen as taking them off the path. And so suddenly, there's the need for this word that, throughout, but it's not until this time period's beginning...

Tony Chvala-Smith 21:15

Right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:15

...of the second century and of the very end of the first century.

Tony Chvala-Smith 21:16

Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:16

...end of the, the very end of the first century.

Tony Chvala-Smith 21:19

And so, not, certain words that Paul does use are used differently here. For example, "righteousness" in the historical Paul's writings, refers to a whole new right relationship with God. It's a relational term...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:32

And it's dependent on Christ. It's not us doing stuff.

Tony Chvala-Smith 21:36

Here in the pastorals, righteousness is the equivalent of the Greek word for piety, for being pious, upright, you know, decent citizens, right.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:45

Praying at the right time and being socially acceptable in different settings.

Tony Chvala-Smith 21:51

Paul, only once in the undisputed letters uses the term *the* faith. He never, he never thinks of the faith as a body of ideas. Faith for him is a dynamic relationship. Abraham and Sarah, like, trust in God's promise in Christ. You throw yourself on this promise in trust. Well, in the pastorals, faith becomes *the* faith, becomes a body of ideas, a body of traditions, the deposit and so on. So, also, 1, 1 Timothy says that, that Eve was the deceiver, right, doesn't blame sin on Adam, blames sin on Eve, right. Paul never refers to Eve like that. In fact, for Paul, when Paul wants to talk about the universal condition of human sin, he uses the phrase "in Adam". So, so, the author of 1 Timothy, like, completely reverses Paul's understanding of sin. For Paul, it's metaphorical. We are all in Adam. Everybody's last name is Adam. It's like one, one theologian has put it, but in, in, in Timothy, no, it's Eve's fault. Eve was the receiver. So, and also then in terms of, in terms of grammar and style, the pastoral's lack. Paul likes these little short words in Greek, *nuni* (sic), which means "all right, so", right. That's how Paul writes. The pastorals lack that kind of, those characteristics of Paul's diction. So, all kinds of data that indicate that we're not in the first generation of, of Christian thought and writing. We're, we're two, two generations at least removed from that. So, we'll go to a visual now that, from our perspective, is a way to understand how the Pauline tradition develops, and I want to be very clear that 1 and 2, Timothy and Titus are part of

the Pauline tradition, but they're a whole way out from the center. The center would be those seven undisputed letters, some of which we've covered and bothered Karin with in previous...

Karin Peter 23:58

I've read them all as we've gone through.

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:01

Then we have a tier out, second generation Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, probably these are '70 to '85, in that, in that next generation, once Paul is gone. Colossians you can kind of make a case that it's from Paul. It's not, you know, maybe about 55-60% of current scholarship would say it's not really from Paul, but it's, it, you know, it might have been but not really. Second Thessalonians is definitely not from Paul himself. Then you get out to Ephesians 1, 2 Timothy and Titus. And these are horses of a different color, right. We're dealing with 90 to 110. Ephesians style and theology is quite, though Ephesians is, is very much an interpretation of the heart of Paul's message, clearly the style and the situation is not anything Paul had-, Paul would have written or had to face in his lifetime. And then 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are among the latest letters of the New Testament. 2 Peter would be only later than them, like about 120 or after. So, so the Pauline tradition is developing in concentric rings, and of that last ring Ephesians, the author of Ephesians knows Paul's thought really well, in fact, has a copy of Colossians in front of him that he's working from, but 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, their knowledge of Paul is in terms of little fragments, little sayings, but clearly do not, at least I think, don't have any Pauline letters in front of them that they're working from. So, there's a way to imagine this developing tradition.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 25:33

And, you know, we know that Paul dies somewhere, the earliest probably '70-, '64, and the very latest '68. And so, all of these markers that indicate that this is a much later writing, is its own kind of very strong argument. So that's, it's a, and I think we would want to say as we go here, just because they're not written by Paul doesn't mean then that they're not useful. Obviously, they were useful to churches and leaders, because they got passed along just like Paul's own letters, and they got copied and they got sent to other places, and, and, you know, they eventually, over this period of 300 years or so, become scripture too, so by, by 400. So, they were useful to some people. And, and it wasn't just that Paul's name was on it. There was some of the content in it that people found useful and made sure it lived on.

Tony Chvala-Smith 26:37

So now let's, we're going to get into the issues behind the pastorals. Because I think this, this really can help us understand some of the difficult passages in them, and what's going on. What is this author write this stuff, right. And so, it's really important to recognize that the pastorals, and by the way, the term pastoral epistles has been used since the mid 1700s to link these three together and modern scholarship would say, yeah, this is, this is the same author writing these three, but they're each different in their own way. So, they each have to be kind of, we put them together the same. On the other hand, they really do need to be read individually, to get the value of each of them, so.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:19

Because I think one of the things that is a danger, it's been a danger for me. And as we've been going through these again, it's like, man, I really like 2 Tim-, 2 Timothy, and there's some really excellent stuff there. And there's not all the baggage that I find in 1 Timothy, against women and slaves and all of those kinds of things. And in fact, we had this long discussion about, you know, is there any scholarship that entertains the idea that 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy might be written by different people?

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:53

And some, some scholars, I've discovered since our conversation, want to argue that 2 Timothy has authentic fragments of a Pauline letter in it but it's hard to prove, but it's kind of likely.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 28:00

Well, it's his use of grace and his idea of grace, it's there in 2 Timothy, and this, this gentleness that we've talked about in Philippians, there's some of that in there. His, his idea of, of right, with being right with God is a gift through Christ, it's more there than it is in 1 Timothy, we're in 1 Timothy, it's about doing this, this, this and this. So, so don't throw out 2 Timothy. Because, just because 1 Timothy is, is very disturbing in some places, especially I think, for women it is and it should be seen as disturbing and not helpful.

Tony Chvala-Smith 28:51

And so, if, if all three of these do ultimately come from the same hand, how, how do we make sense of that? Well, one way to make sense of it is that the author being at this removed from Paul and not having Paul's letters in front of him to correct him, but knowing bits and pieces and fragments and trying to interpret Paul for Pauline churches much, much later, this author has not himself fully integrated Pauline ideas. He's working with cultural ideas and Pauline ideas and some fit here and some fit there. He doesn't have any kind of systematic way of pulling it all together like the Paul of Romans does. And so, if this author had had Romans I wonder what would be different, but he apparently didn't, so just a way to understand how, how 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy can be so different in tone, but also literary forms. 2 Timothy is written as these were, as if these were Paul's final words to his, his most beloved protegee, Timothy, you know. What, what, what would you say if the executioner is coming down the hallway and the last things you get to say to the person who you trust most to carry it on, how would you say it? So, it has a different, different feel to it. But, but, but here we have to understand that we've take them as a whole. We are in an entirely different time and context from the undisputed letters of Paul. Christianity has been around and now, by this time, there's such a word as Christian. And the Roman, Roman officials in different places have started to take notice and started to push back. And if these letters come from the second, early second century, then a Roman governor in Bithynia, in what is northern Turkey today, is writing the Emperor Trajan and saying, what am I supposed to do with these people?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:35

There, they are, they're atheists, you know, because they don't believe in the Roman gods, and that can't be good for the culture to have these atheists around.

Tony Chvala-Smith 30:47

So, so, we've got, and Charmaine mentioned, the *parousia* has not happened, Christ has not returned. It's it looks like it's gonna be a long, indeterminate future and people, people are suspicious of us. How do we do with all this suspicion? I know, I have an idea. We need to fit in?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 31:07

Well, let's, let's show that we're even better citizens than everybody else, by how we treat people and how we live out certain conventions of society. We don't want to look like we're disrupting the order, in any way. And so, let's show ourselves as, as people to be an, as, as examples. Yeah, we won't be doing the Roman worship and those kinds of things. We won't, we won't be doing those things on the festivals, but in the rest of the time, let's show that we're good people, trustworthy, honest, live simply that we're not, you know, we're not greedy, and all of those kinds of...

Tony Chvala-Smith 31:51

That our households and our marriages are going to look just like, and even better than good Roman households and marriage. That's kind of the situation here. But also, there's an internal crisis in these

churches as well. And I think that still the most plausible reconstruction of the crisis that the author is dealing with, is that these Christian communities are being infiltrated by an idea connected to a philosophical religious system called Gnosticism. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word, gnosis, which means knowledge. And it's a, it's a highly speculative system. I'll give you a few markers in a minute. But the author in fact, in 1 Timothy 6:20, says, it warns them about what is falsely called the gnosis, what is falsely called knowledge. And when you read through them all, the author's constantly warning against myst-, mystical speculations, and ascetic, you know, body denying practices and, and the forbidding of marriage and stuff like that.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:49

And certain kinds of foods. And...

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:52

Yeah, so that, that squares with what we know about the Gnostic systems that developed in the second century, that they, that they often forbade, their, their adherence to do all kinds of things that were physical because, because the, the Gnostic myth starts with the idea that the physical world is a cosmic mistake created by an inferior deity, and that in this cosmic mess that turned up a physical world, what happened was that some pieces, some little fragments of the, the primordial, we'll call it "the one", if I use the word God, be careful, because we're not talking about a personal deity, but we're talking about this prime, primordial, inwardly turned, silent, beautiful one, but some, some lights, light sparks got shed off of it. It was, was shedding like cat dander, and some of these light sparks got trapped in this body created by an inferior deity and they want we long to go home.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:50

In the body, in, in the world, there's, but only some of us, some people have received the spark, and then there's the rest, which, who are basically duds. So, this becomes a problem.

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:07

So, the way you can tell who, who is in the know, is in a Christian community where this is being passed around, this idea is, some people who buy it, then are going to have their own little secret society within the, within the community of these people who have knowledge, right. They know the real stuff.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:26

And they have the knowledge to get, as that is, passwords to the next level of.

Karin Peter 34:33

So, we're getting, we're getting really, really close to Nauvoo here and you're making me terribly uncomfortable, so I'm just saying.

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:40

[inaudible]

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:41

Yeah? Well, it's all kinds of gnostic stuff going on there, as far as passwords, and this whole society of those who are on the inside, and then the rest who are oblivious to the reality of who they really are, yes.

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:58

Except what we know about Gnosticism isn't from the second centuries that, while some Gnostic systems typically were very anti-body. Sadly, there were some not...

Karin Peter 35:09

Okay, that's *[inaudible]*

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:12

So sadly, in Nauvoo, there were some not anti-body stuff. There were some...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 35:16

When maybe there should have been.

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:18

...so, there was some, some unfortunate, illicit body stuff going on there. So that's, that's different. But the whole idea of an inward, inner group that has the secret knowledge that's been passed on by a revealer.

Karin Peter 35:29

Right, right.

Tony Chvala-Smith 35:31

So, in Gnosticism, you know, it's different forms. Salvation, involves awareness, coming to the awareness that you really don't belong here. Your inner spark is trapped in the muck of your body, and you're learning secret knowledge. When you die, that spark will be released, and you've got secret knowledge that will help you ascend back through all these levels to get, kind of, merge back into the one. And interestingly, in 2 Timothy 2, the author criticizes two people who have been teaching that the resurrection has happened already. That's, Gnostic, Gnostic Christian groups took the idea of the resurrection of the body and said, no, it's not about bodies, it's about once you know our stuff, then you're already raised from the dead,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:16

Right? But this is all about the mind. This is about the mind elevating, elevating, elevating. And so, they're saying, oh, the resurrection has already happened, and we can now go through these different upward stages, just like Jesus did. And Jesus might even be the password at one of these places, or the, the gatekeeper.

Tony Chvala-Smith 36:37

Interestingly, at the same, kind of the same time, the letters, the letters assigned to John, 1 and 2, 1, 2 and 3 John, that author is dealing with something similar, where adherents to Gnostic ideas are teaching that Jesus is not really a physical being. He's just, he just has like a, he's kind of like a hologram. He took on the disguise of a body so he could get down here and teach us the right stuff. But his, his body, his death, his crucifixion, that doesn't have anything to do with us, really. That's, so, that's going on...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:07

Different places, yeah.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:07

...yeah, right, the end of the first century, beginning of the second century. So, in the pastorals, you can see all kinds of little signs that the author is having to struggle with this. People are forbidding people to marry. Paul did not forbid people to marry. He said, I wish, you know, the end is near, you know, you'll be happier if you're like me and single, but if you need to, go ahead, it's fine. And if you get married, have sex, that's 1 Corinthians 7 in a nutshell. And...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:33

And there's even implications that there's sex happening before marriage, but you know.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:37

That's, but that's a story for another time, so.

Karin Peter 37:40

We didn't we do that episode. I don't understand.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:44

This, we'll do the sexy Testament episode. There are people who are, who are telling other folks the resurrection has already happened. You need to abstain from, don't eat this, don't touch this, don't do this, don't touch that. They're, behind it is the idea that creation, the physical creation is bad, and in order to be a spiritual person, you have to deny the physical creation. It's really important to know that when we get into some of the difficult texts in here, because that's probably behind the scenes. So that's, that remains, to me the most compelling, kind of, scholarly reconstruction of the background of the letter, the backstory for why the author is doing what the author is doing.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 38:26

Right. And you can, you can see that that's the issue in a number of places.

Tony Chvala-Smith 38:30

So, like, how does, how does the, how does, we'll just call the author "the pastor", because it'll be simpler and some scholars do that. But how does the pastor say, let's respond to this? Well, number one, focus on sound teaching. Well, what is sound teaching? Sound teaching is the deposit. It's, it's those things that we've gotten, that go back somehow to the apostolic era that are now in the form of little, little credos, little, little statements. Hold to that. That will, that will see us through. And then the author says, let's stay focused on the scriptures, by which he means the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint. Focus on the scriptures, because the scriptures remind us of the Good Creator and the good creation, remind us that God is involved in the world and not remote from it...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:14

And so, that that's hitting right at the heart of the Gnostic ideas that are infiltrating.

Tony Chvala-Smith 39:21

And then the author says, let's focus on church structure. Now what we have in the pastorals is an emerging kind of sense of office. Bishops and presbyteries or elders, bishops and presbyters, they're not fully differentiated, but they're, they're, they're, they're related functions; Bishop, overseer, presbyter, elder, than deacons. And among the deacons, if you read 1 Timothy closely, Charmaine was doing this earlier, the reference to women there means women deacons, so there's deacons with, women who are deacons, and then possibly a group of women who are called widows, right, who are real, real widows, but have a certain kind of function within the community,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:02

Which is to uphold in prayer and support the rest of the congregation. So, it's kind of a spiritual, spiritual formation, spiritual foundation. So, they're, it sounds like there's teaching happening maybe by the widows, but definitely prayer is a huge piece of this, but it is seen, it, there are descriptions of what, what they are to do if they've taken on that role in the congregation.

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:35

So, what we have here, in the pastorals is, I think Ehrman refers to it is as, clergy, canon and creed, right, creed being the, creed being those statements that are part of the deposit, canon being the Hebrew Scriptures, there's not a New Testament, and clergy being Bishop, elders, deacons, widows, people who are in charge, and who have a certain, a certain kind of authoritae in the, in the communities. So, the other thing out there, such as avoid speculation, right? In other words, avoid...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 41:05

Don't be talking about silly things.

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:06

Yeah.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 41:06

Don't be talking about, uses the term wives' tales...

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:10

Old wives' tales.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 41:

... or mytho-, or these myths. So...

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:13

And, and what we know about Gnostic systems from later in the second century, and I think it applies here is that, they love they love to speculate on what was going on up there, and out there and, and how we, how we got into this mess in the first place, and they, they actually liked to interpret Genesis, but they gave wild, wild interpretations of it. And they liked myths and genealogies, typically genealogies of the, of the spiritual beings who were above this world. Where do they come from? And how did they, how did they evolve out of the one? And the author says, 1 Timothy 1, "...do not occupy yourself with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith," right? So, avoid that stuff. And then finally, this is where the hard stuff comes in, in the, in these letters and that, that the way that one of the ways the author is, author is trying to deal with the situation is, let's keep the same order and decorum and family structure that are in the patriarchal structures of the Roman world. That's where we legitimately are going to chafe when we read 1, especially 1 Timothy, so, let's the author repeats common Greco-Roman tropes about men, and women, and wives and, and women being gadabouts, and all, all this kind of stuff. It's, this was part of the, the gossip culture of the Greco-Roman world, but also that was part of the highly...

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:45

Caricaturing.

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:45

...yeah, caricaturing of women in a highly structured patriarchal society. Basically, the author is saying, let's, we said this earlier, let's not draw too much attention to ourselves, the, the Roman household. Let's do the Roman household, but even better. And this is where we're, as we're reading and studying and struggling with these texts, we have to recognize that when it comes to the description of household relationships in these letters, there's nothing distinctively Christian in them. It's the kind of stuff you would have found in any pagan moral philosopher, in this timeframe. And so that that gives us important interpretive lenses to do and do some work when we're writing these letters.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 43:29

And it also helps us see something of the evolution that has happened in the last 40 years of Christian development and figuring out how does, how does it fit? Does it fit? And how will it survive, so.

Tony Chvala-Smith 43:49

And you know, reading these texts, there's, there's a word of warning to us in our own time. Whatever, whatever progress you make, you can lose it all. You can back you can backtrack on it. If you're not careful, you'll backtrack on it. So and that's there's a kind of a backtracking here in a way that if the historical Paul could have been shunted ahead into these churches, I think he might have said, Why are you saying that?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 44:14

I might have inserted a few other things into his actual letters to help remedy that yeah, because there is a lot there is you can see that the loss already have many of the I would call more radical parts both of of Jesus interaction with everybody. But I would note especially with women and Paul's own seeing women as co-workers, co-leaders, you know, and the likelihood that that Roman's is actually been has actually been sent with Phoebe, and that she's probably the one who is reading it and transl, in helping them understand what's in it, you know, translating it into their setting, taking this complicated theology and and explaining it to them. So it's so unlike, in many ways, and those who have read parts of First Timothy will probably know the the pieces that we're talking about. And we'll look a little bit closer at some of those in a minute here.

Tony Chvala-Smith 45:25

So we've been kind of doing the explain. We're going to switch into explore. Those are sort of melding together here, I think a little bit, but I will go first to Karin, what were some questions? What were some questions that came up with you?

Karin Peter 45:38

So yeah, so as a as a feminist here was the first thing that really became apparent, not just as I read the text, but then I went and read several commentaries, just refresh my, my memory. Seminary was a long time ago, so and it, it helped my ire to some to some degree, but even within Community of Christ, I find, well, you stated it, Charmaine you said, they've got a problem happening that they're addressing, we have a problem. And our problem is that we have many of us lament, that the church and by that I mean Community of Christ is bowing to cultural norms. That we're we're losing our true and foundational fundamental purposes, and we're just letting culture drive what we do, and they use these very texts to prove our bowing to culture to cultural norms, which these very texts were bowing to cultural norms.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:52

And the fact that they're using them is that they're bowing to another set

Karin Peter 46:58

of cultural set of cultural norms, because they really are the just casual reader of this, the person that picks up and reads First Timothy, because it's their turn to preach this coming Sunday, doesn't really grasp that these ideas that are being shared are absolutely contrary to what they would find if they read Paul's actual letters, that he was all about breaking down divisions between people. And, and here we have some structure that is, is sanctifying divisions between people. And, and that's harmful, and we need to be willing to name that if we're going to use these scriptures. So that's my first just kind of overwhelming, kind of that's still with us, we still have that with us. And

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:51

I think that is really one of the dangers, you know, as much as it's helpful to say, you know, cultural or societal expectations or norms. There is not in any culture today, only one set of cultural norms. So, there may be, you know, those that are more progressive, or those are more inclusive, but within our culture, there's also the very exclusive aesthetic culture, cultural norms, some that come out of religious backgrounds, but some that don't, and, you know, and so, people can be just as influenced and completely directed by a certain set of cultural norms in our time, you know, Christian nationalism, for example, they can totally have, be using those as their gauge for judging other people, while judging other people who have are taking the more progressive and inclusive cultural norms as the way that that we should be moving forward as a church. So it's, it's a, it's a handy little phrase cultural norms and societal norms. But it's also we have to realize that there's several of those going on, and it's which ones we're aligning with, are probably the one will probably reveal a great deal about us.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 47:57

Who do you choose to align with?

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:25

That's, that's, that's a, that's a, I'm going to say right now. That's a shallow throwaway use of have the text.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 49:34

Careful because I'm going to be talking about social norms. Don't throw me under the bus yet.

Tony Chvala-Smith 49:41

I don't know. I hear people say we need to be countercultural. And the thing is, who is not cultural? Right? We are culture shaped creatures. The question is, do the cultural norms and values we aspire to? Do they align with our best understanding of the reign of God that Jesus preached them as well? Have some kind of measuring stick. And in the New Testament, some of the cultural values that are upheld align better, and some worse and I'm fret willing to say when the past orals these, these use of Greco Roman moral moral tropes about men and women and slaves do not align well. And we have to say that when I was when I was when I was a graduate student at Toronto School Theology at this professor absolutely loved (...), he was a New Testament scholar. And I remember one time in a in a seminar, we were a bunch of us, who were clergy. And he was he was a Lutheran, he was Lutheran minister, but he was also a great New Testament scholar. And we said, we said, Professor, what do we do with some of these texts? And he said this, he said, "Well, sometimes we have to preach against the Bible."

Karin Peter 50:57

There you go.

Tony Chvala-Smith 50:59

You want that's pure Luther, that's Martin Luther coming out there. And so sometimes we have, we have to say, this text. It's part of our working bibliography. But this text does not align with the best things we know about God, Christ's Spirit and community,

Karin Peter 51:16

Which they didn't know when they wrote this text. (Right) Because it simply wasn't available.

Tony Chvala-Smith 51:21

So, I have an idea, instead of shallow uses of the Bible, why don't we teach deeper uses deep, deep exegetically sound theologically reflected? Let's, let's, let's make that part of our church culture, so that

we don't just have shallow appeals to, let's let's practice slavery again, because it's in the Bible and, and to be against slavery is, is simply to be cultural. It's like, well, that's nonsense.

Karin Peter 51:52

Although it was what many Christians used in the 19th century, to support their and, and this this book, First Timothy is what many Christians used in 1970s, to defeat the ERA. And so you know, we just have to be willing to acknowledge that sometimes there are portions that in context might have been helpful, but you don't carry those forward, and

Tony Chvala-Smith 52:16

also used to push back against suffrage in the early 1900s.

Karin Peter 52:20

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And it's still use to enforce modesty codes. Even in Community of Christ, we have unwritten modesty codes, that that are only directed at women.

Tony Chvala-Smith 52:31

Yep. So maybe some suggestions for how to how to work with these texts. And, and here, we say,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:41

And remember to this is not all. Oh, First Timothy, exactly. But there are some pretty pretty deserved.

Karin Peter 52:48

But it was the part that got me, you know, ticked off enough that I made the notes for today's podcast.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 52:54

And that neat, we need to look at those and and say, What are these? And so yeah,

Tony Chvala-Smith 53:01

First thing, what we do with all exegesis, we, we, we start with with the assumption, the text deserves to be understood on its terms first. That means in terms of setting, authorship original context, who are the first read, potential first readers, we want to understand why is the author writing the stuff to those people? And then, and then we try to discern how might that have been useful to them? Because next point, we are actually reading somebody else's mail, and it may not apply to us. Right. So those are those are some things we we have to do and also the next thing, certainly in community, Christ, we do not want to treat biblical passages as recipes, or as Instagram posts from God. That's not how we do scripture. And so let's get that out of our heads. And if if people from other churches say your your church is not biblical, the term biblical covers a multitude of sins. I'm sorry. We're, how about if we're biblical in a better way, right? That we're trying to understand the texts and honor them and interpret them carefully, but also say that's not that's not for us. So we have to do some some sifting, sifting and sorting here and we have to, you know, the theologian Paul Van Buren says "the Bible doesn't say anything because the Bible doesn't have a mouth." And there's a lot of mouthy users of the Bible who don't understand what the friggin texts are actually about. Right? So we just, we just have to name that and call that my getting a little bit passionate about this? (Laughter...just a little bit) The Bible is not a book. It's a library of very diverse books written in very diverse times and places. (By very different people.) Absolutely. And these people sometimes don't agree with each other. And so we with the past orals, as with any book, we have to search for the jewels amidst the straw. You know, it's not all jewel, and there's some straw there a lot of straw And here's a personal analogy. Guess what, our own lives are like that, too. There's jewels and straw gems and straw in each of us. So, so instead of judging the text, let's just remember that, hey, we're like this too. There are some things. There's some things about Karin and Charmaine, that people would want to know

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 55:18

What?! What?!

Karin Peter 55:22

I don't believe that about Charmaine, because I think she glows in the dark from her from her Halo, but definitely with me.

Tony Chvala-Smith 55:28

I strongly did not did not bring myself into the scenario. So and so then then, for example, when you're, if the lecturing has us preaching from first to second Timothy or Titus, then we need to say would not not say Paul says here? No, Paul doesn't say here. It's better to say something like the Pauline author says, or the author who is writing on behalf of Paul, who has been dead for a long time, you've got we've got to get this. We've got to put this in front of people so that they recognize that. So then we asked her, do these texts help us understand Pauline theology? Well, first of all, no, they don't. If you want to understand Paul's theology, you have to work, you have to give primacy to the seven texts that all scholars agree came from Paul. That's where you start. On the other hand, you can say, well, yes, this these texts help us understand how Pauline theology was received, and reinterpreted and maybe misinterpreted later, right. So even here negatively, that the pastorals can give us an example. But I want to go back to what Charmaine said our musical by the way, there's some real gems, some real beautiful gems in these texts. In fact, I preach from Second Timothy a couple of months ago at in a in a reunion, and I love Second Timothy is a powerful poignant text to preach from so. So there's some beautiful stuff here. And I wanted to give one example of where the so the author of First Timothy especially, uses some of this stock and trade moral teaching that the pagan philosophers were preaching in the marketplace every day. Here's an example. Plutarch, Plutarch is a great moralist, Greek moralist he's writing from about this period late first early second century, and he has a text called advice to brides and grooms. Let me read you some of it.

Karin Peter 57:33

Like Dear Abby, (What's that)? Like, Dear Abby?

Tony Chvala-Smith 57:37

Yeah, the these moralists, they give people advice about everything. But Plutarch says this, "So it is with women also, if they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended. But if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier, your figure, then the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by a man over the woman, not as the owner has control over a piece of property. But as the soul controls the body by entering into her feelings and being knit to her through goodwill." Now, that's a Greek moralist teaching how husbands and wives ought to behave. And you don't need me to to parse it, because there's

Karin Peter 58:21

It comes out of that that whole was it. Aristotle, Aristotle that said, women are so of the earth that they're like, lower than animals on the scale of earthiness? I mean, the whole idea was very much a Greco Roman idea of where, where, where women kind of were and sort of creation.

Tony Chvala-Smith 58:44

And so the, the author first First Timothy, this is this is the same, this is his worldview.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 58:51

Yeah. And there's, like, you'll note that there's no acknowledgement that, that husbands or men might be mean spirited or controlling, right? Violent or not, without good intentions, there's nothing that would

indicate that, only that men with you know, it's their, like the soul, and they are so gentle and wonderful. And it's like, Oh, please.

Tony Chvala-Smith 59:17

And the soul or mind, and that culture is considered higher than the body controls the body,

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 59:23

again, that earthiness of women who can't help themselves, but be who they are, and as this lesser impulse driven being.

Tony Chvala-Smith 59:34

So the author of First Timothy, were basically repeats the conventional wisdom about conventional cultural wisdom about husbands and wives of men and women and who's, who's, who's above and who's below and so on. Right. Here's, here's the issue for interpretation. There's nothing distinctively Christian about that. (Right) Paul himself tries to understand marriage Christologically, the author of Ephesians, even later tries to understand marriage Christologically.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:00:06

And they both come up with a kind of, if not equality, because yeah, I think we have to be pretty straight there. mutuality. And that's quite quite different from what this author doesn't, and what the culture would have done.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:00:22

So here's the thing, interpret interpreter, we've got to interpret we've got to make, we've got to make decisions, we do have to rank texts. And there's nothing distinctively Christian about that kind of view of men and women and marriage. It's ancient Roman patriarchy at work. And so we just have to name that and say, Alright, we're not going to use this text in a wedding. We're not going to talk about the man being the head and the woman being whatever, you know, because, because it, you know, the pagan philosopher Plutarch would say it too. And it's like, well, what's distinctively Christian about that? Right? Not that I have anything against pagan philosophers, it's just, they don't have anything to tell us about what it means to be Christian. Right. So they let them do what they do. And so interpret, interpret, interpret. And just something to add, here's that, probably an unfortunate consequence for us over the long haul in Christian history. Is that the that Paul has gotten himself interpreted through the lens of the past orals. Yeah, that's that's been an unfortunate consequence.

Karin Peter 1:01:28

Although he does have some of its own stuff that gets him in trouble periodically.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:01:34

He does, but the pastoral team and domesticate Paul Yeah. And that's, that's not that's not going to help us understand the historical Paul, nor is it gonna help us understand earliest Christianity and its most radical form. So on the other hand, as, as we've been saying, Gosh, there's some absolutely beautiful stuff in the pastorals that really deserves time and attention. And you know, so these, the, the author of these texts thinks of salvation as having a universal reach God, our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved. That's First Timothy and Titus, the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all right? There's no sense that the saved are a tiny group of the elect. Rather, God's reach is universal here. So that's Pauline, right? That's Paul.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:02:30

So yes, God is God's salvation is for believers and non believers. Yeah, it'll be better for believers because they can participate in it more, but God's desires for all to be saved.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:02:42

And, and also, it, it breaks your heart to read this part of Second Timothy, where the author is depicting Paul, in his final days, he seems to know stuff about Paul. Paul being abandoned by pretty much all of his colleagues and friends, he's, he's alone. He very likely died in Rome during the reign of Nero. And the author of Second Timothy has Paul say, as for me, I'm already being poured out as a libation. The offering that nobody got to use, it's just poured out. And the time for my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith rights. Paul wouldn't talk about it quite like that. But it's it's absolutely beautiful, right? It's it just, it just wrenches your heart. And it's clear, this author knew something about Paul's final days. And that Paul, the person who had a team of many people, men and women, different ethnic ethnicities, Paul died alone in the end. And so it's, uh, the authors seem to know that, and yet Paul, hung in there with it right till the very end. So I don't know, some amazing stuff. Any other questions Karin, before we go on into experience?

Karin Peter 1:03:55

No, I, I think it this is a really good example of what you have really told us to be careful of since we started He'Brew, and that is, we must look at scripture in context and explore a little bit and avoid that shallow interpretation that you talked about, Tony, because we don't take the time to dig deeper a little bit and discover the context of something.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:04:21

Yeah, and we can't say it enough, you know, that in Community of Christ, we don't see scripture, as God dictated. You know, these are human beings and, and as we go into the experience part, you know, that's our goal in this part is to approach a scripture by considering, you know, how does it highlight the lives of real people trying to live out what they believe in their relationship with God. And so sometimes, it's the writers own experience or the people that he's writing to, or sometimes it's us how, how can the script You're affect us and our relationship with God. And, you know, and that means we're going to look at the writer, what is influencing him in this case? What are the cultural pressures? What are the pressures within the church? What is their worldview? In this case, we can tell that this is a person who has a sense that men should have privilege over women. I mean, I think it's clear. And so these writings, All scripture is heavily influenced by what's happening in the writer's life. And so this is their attempt to write down in this case, again, pastoral advice. These are there's some real issues here that are happening in this congregation, and he's trying to or in congregations, probably more likely, that, that he's trying to give them some guidelines to help them win their way through the maze of difficulties that that they have, and in the maze of difficulties that are always there, and congregational life. And so that means that you know, his ideas that are shaped by his cultural norms, his biases, well, of course, they're going to come out in his writing, just as they would and do in our own today. So, so we we don't determine if a scripture is valuable by whether it says exactly what we would say today, because that would be silly to think that they would say, in the past, exactly what we would say today with all of the things that shape us. But the purpose of the Scripture is to be a window, a window into someone else's relationship with God, and with people. So today, we're going to look at a difficult text, and not for the purpose of agreeing with it or suggesting that it's how we should live or to grow spiritually. But it's in order to give us a window into the author's world and to see what there might be. And we've kind of touched on this already, that really, that relates to us as well, we will see he is very susceptible to some cultural norms and biases. And we see that they don't fit with Christ's or Paul's more radical message and approach. So, but as but in looking at that, we will examine ways in which we may, unconsciously and uncritically let our own cultural norms shape our faith and discipleship in rather unhelpful ways. So here's the text, we're going to work with one of those infamous ones. First Timothy 2:8-15. And it's even hard to, to read some of this, I have to just admit that right in front. So "I desire them that in every place, the men should pray lifting up holy hands without anger or argument. Also, that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their

hair braided or with gold pearls or expensive clothes, but with good works as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man she is to keep silent. For Adam was first and then Eve. And Adam was not deceived. But the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness with modesty." All right, so Oh, my unfavorite ideas in pretty much the whole Bible, kind of right here in this one little one little passage.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:09:22

So, first of all, this is one of those places where maybe we do need to preach against what's in the Bible. And especially we need to acknowledge that this, these ideas are in direct opposition to Paul's actual teachings, on who has access to Christ and to God, because here, there is this sense, especially in that verse 11, let a woman learn in full submission, and women can't teach or have authority over a man. That would imply that women can only learn about God and their Father have access to God or Christ by a man's teaching. And, and Paul didn't see that Paul saw as Christ. Christ's presence here on earth meant that all people have access to God, that's part of the whole message that Jesus lived. And so who should be speaking in the church? Well, even then some of the places in First Corinthians where Paul is trying to figure out whether, you know, they obviously have this question about women having their hair up or down and worship and, and he's really struggling with that. But he's acknowledging that women are prophesying and speaking in church. And that that's, and he's talking about it in a way that says, Well, of course, that's how things go. And so this, this idea is completely in opposition. Again, the likelihood, this is would be pretty strong evidence that this author does not have Paul's other writings in front of him, because I think he wouldn't have been able to get away with this. And then the very meaning of grace, you know, the whole she'll be saved through childbearing. Whoa. That's, that's someone in a in the New Interpreter's Study Bible, it's, it talks about how this is an interpretation of Genesis 2:15-22, it's somewhat forced reading of it, meaning it's kind of emphasize the wrong thing in it. But Paul would never say that salvation comes through Christ, for all who believe in Christ. And so to put this out there is that that's how women will be saved, would be totally contrary to that whole idea of grace of Christ as God's message of grace to all of creation. And those first few verses, no, actually the middle ones, 11 and 12, those come right, from household codes, codes of proper domestic behavior, that were popular in antiquity. And again, from the new interpreter Study Bible. So here is an author who is his own opinions and his own background are coming out here. And, you know, it's really, there's a part of me that that wants to kind of diagnose what his issue is, with women. And I have no way of really knowing but it is here on the page, it's, it's obvious that, for him, women are less than and they need to be instructed. So even in the earlier spot, sorry. It'll be in the later spot where it talks about bishops and deacons. And it's, and there's no gendered language about the deacons. It's talks about deacons, and then it talks about then there's some extra advice to women deacons, and then going back to deacons in general. And so he feels like he has to control women's behavior. The whole thing about women being gossips. And only women who are truly widows should be on the list, then the list here are those who would be supported, but also those who would be seen as these kind of the spiritual praying foundation of the congregation don't want the younger women on there, because they're still sexually active. While he doesn't say that, but yeah, he does. And they might just they might embarrass us by they're going after men, and maybe doing inappropriate things. So there's, there's a control issue going on, for sure.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:14:20

So I think this is just one of those places where we see this coming, clearly coming through the page, as some of the cultural expectations, household codes, that that he's affected by and that he's using, perhaps because of some issues in this congregation, and just perhaps because that's the way he thinks the world should be kind of an authoritarian, definitely leaning on relying on the patriarchy and hierarchy that can come through both the Old Testament and his culture. And, and he's lost, or

perhaps he never knew the revelate revolutionary ways in which Paul and Jesus included women, as full disciples, as leaders, and as the financiers of their work. He seems to not know that at all. So, what do we do with a passage like this? Well, perhaps we use it to reflect back on ourselves. And here's a couple of questions for us to ask ourselves, because we're not beyond being influenced negatively, or on Jesus, like, by the cultures influence on us. So when do I find myself judging women, by standards that are culturally set, rather than Jesus set? And this is an equal question for men and for women. When do we look at women and say, Oh, really? That that's too bad, you know, kind of like, oh, you know, fashion, judgments compartment judgments, how outspoken they might be. But also, other ways, education with too much or too little. There's just all kinds of ways that women in our culture today are judged. And so where do I find myself judging women, by certain standards that are culturally set rather than Jesus said, and maybe for women, maybe you're judging yourself by those as well? And to maybe be able to see the difference might be helpful in letting go of some of those? And then the second, in what ways do I assume I am better than others based on gender or gender identity? I think that's a question we need to dig deep on. Because, you know, sometimes I can think badly of men. Sorry. And I think that that's just a question that we all need to be to be looking at.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:17:49

So our society has lots of dismissive ways of characterizing or even caricaturing those who are defined by poverty, immigration status, physical appearance, mental health issues, gender, sexuality, incarceration, history, addiction, and, and there's more, there's all kinds of other things that our society gives us. So that we can just kind of write off other people, we don't have to take them seriously. We don't have to see them as a child of God, we are going to see them as our brother and sister. And we all are influenced with it by that even if we don't always buy in. So, again, some self awareness questions to ask, who else? Do I give myself permission to marginalize using society's trivializing or belittling views? And that covers all of us, whichever set of cultural biases we may be using? And here's another question to help us look honestly, at our own stuff. Who do I find it hard to see Christ in? Who am I afraid to acknowledge as equal to me?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:19:25

So we can see that the author of First and Second Timothy and Titus, we can see him struggling with the difference between what culture says about all people and what Jesus and Paul said and try to exemplify about all people. So when we are honest, we will probably if we're honest, when and if we're honest, we will probably see this author struggle in ourselves. So I have one more place to go. So being aware is the first step, which we've been doing with these previous questions. And I encourage you to spend some time with those questions yourself, prayerfully, see where that takes you, you might be surprised. So that's the first step, become aware. And the second is planning for intentional change with the help of the Spirit. So, here's a little journaling activity, that I encourage you to take a few minutes with at least, and see where, where it might take you and see how the Spirit may touch you in this. Your Spirit of love and acceptance helped me to see. And that can be a person or a group of people in a new way, helped me open my eyes, my heart, and my life to them. As I tried to shake off society's judgment of them, please replace that with... and then continue with your journaling from there and see where your own heart and the Spirit might take you.

Karin Peter 1:21:16

Thank you for those Charmaine and especially for highlighting that particular difficult passage within First Timothy. So in our, in our interest of time today, only because some of us are rushed, and by some of us, I mean me. So I do have a closing thought and I found it really interesting because you quoted a Lutheran minister who was a New Testament scholar that you studied with in Princeton and mine is from my favorite Lutheran minister who's Nadia Bolz-Weber because she is because she swears I'll be honest, that's why. But she said this, "So my argument in this book is this." And she's talking about her book, Shameless, the Sexual Reformation. "We should not be more loyal to an idea, a

doctrine or an interpretation of a Bible verse than we are to people. If the teachings of the church are harming the bodies and spirits of people, we should rethink those teachings." So I think that, in a nutshell, is kind of what you shared with us about looking at the pastorals, not all bad, not all good. But there are some things we need to rethink for our own time and place. So do we know what we're going to be exploring next?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:22:48

Yes, we'll be going into James next.

Karin Peter 1:22:53

Oh, all right, the book of James, which is a favorite, I think of restoration people. So we'll see where that goes for us in our next episode. Until then, I'm Karin Peter, and you've been listening to Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith our navigators through the New Testament. This is called New'Brew part of Project Zion Podcast. We thank you for listening.

Josh Mangelson 1:23:22

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