

2 Corinthians 1:1-4

“Opening Greetings”

“Paul, an apostle of Messiah Yeshua by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the [assembly] of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Much of the Epistle of 2 Corinthians, is spent with the Apostle Paul defending the legitimacy of his ministry service and ideology.¹ He is “Paul, an emissary of Messiah Yeshua through the will of God” (2 Corinthians 1:1a, TLV). Paul was an apostle, commissioned directly by Yeshua the Messiah (Acts 9:15-16), although he was not among the original Twelve (cf. Mark 3:14-19) or somehow associated with the Jerusalem assembly and/or another assembly. But nevertheless, Paul was just as much an apostle as the original Twelve (1 Corinthians 9:1; Galatians 1:15-17). Paul, in fact, stands in a tradition of being commissioned and sent by the Lord, no different than how previous figures like Moses or the Prophets (i.e., Isaiah 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5) had been chosen by God for a significant service.

It has been widely recognized how Paul combines traditional Jewish and Greek greetings in his statement, “Grace to you and *shalom* from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (2 Corinthians 1:2, TLV). Normal Greek letters tended to only include the salutation *chairein* (χαίρειν) or “greetings” (cf. 1 Maccabees 10:18), which Paul has replaced with the similar sounding *charis* or “grace.” He has attached this with *eirēnē* (εἰρήνη) or “peace,” the Septuagint equivalent of *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם). It is useful for readers to consider that Paul might, to some degree, be repeating the concepts of the Aaronic Benediction here (Numbers 6:24-26). Similar greetings are also witnessed in the record of the Tanach (1 Samuel 25:6; 1 Chronicles 12:18). The thought of the peace given by Yeshua to His Disciples should also be weighed (John 14:27). In the estimation of Sampley, “Peace, no doubt for Paul’s out of his rich Jewish heritage, is the *shalom* that comes about by God’s reclamation and righting of people and their social circumstances.”²

Statements about the nature of the Father and the Son are present in 2 Corinthians 1:2, particularly in terms of the Father being identified as “God” and the Son as “Lord,” which come on the heels of remarks appearing in previous correspondence where the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema* is reworked with the Father and Son in mind (1 Corinthians 8:6). Grammatically speaking, the preposition “from” or *apo* (ἀπό) is employed to identify the source of “grace and peace” originating from two labeled entities: *apo Theou patros hēmōn kai Kurīou Iēsou Christou* (ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Murray J. Harris further details,

“God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ jointly form a single source of divine grace and peace...But quite apart from the theological implications of a single preposition, the deity of Christ is here implicitly affirmed, for a monotheistic Jew would never juxtapose a mere human being with God as a comparable fount of spiritual blessing; equality bespeaks deity.”³

Yeshua the Messiah being titled as *Kurios* (κύριος) or “Lord,” in such close proximity to the Father being titled as *theos* (θεός) or “God,” does lead many to conclude that Yeshua is to be regarded as a part of the Divine Identity, hence that Yeshua is God. But it is insufficient, based

¹ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.

² J. Paul Sampley, “The Second Letter to the Corinthians,” in Leander E. Keck, ed. et. al., *New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 11:38.

³ Murray J. Harris, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 136.

entirely on titles employed for the Messiah, to regard Him as God. Paul Barnett, who does hold to a high Christology of Yeshua being God, appropriately directs,

“*Kyrios* [κύριος] is the word used for Yahweh [יהוה] in the LXX. While many scholars have challenged any connection between Jesus and Yahweh based on *kyrios*, pointing out that *kyrios*, especially when used in the vocative (‘O Lord’), means no more than ‘sir’ as a respectful form of address. Yet it appears that Paul does use *kyrios* to identify Jesus with Yahweh, as may be seen in the way he applies to Jesus a number of texts from the LXX that refer to *Kyrios* = Yahweh.”⁴

Barnett references a number of Tanach or Old Testament passages, where the subject is the LORD or YHWH/YHVH, and where the Apostle Paul applies “the Lord” to Yeshua (Psalm 46:5 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Joel 2:32 and Romans 10:9, 13; Isaiah 45:22-23 and Philippians 2:10-11). To apply such passages to Yeshua, would Paul have considered the Messiah to be a created being, would be blasphemy against the God of Israel. Yet, if Paul considered Yeshua to be genuinely God, then to apply Tanach passages where the subject is YHWH, would be evidence of the Messiah being integrated into the Divine Identity.

Reflective readers of the Scriptures can be genuinely blessed by Paul’s laudatory statement, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3, PME). When one delves a little deeper, it is easily witnessed how 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 include a number of distinct echoes of statements and praises issued in traditional Jewish liturgy, or at least the beginnings of what would later be formalized in the *siddur*.⁵ As is witnessed at the beginning of the Amidah or Eighteen Benedictions,

“O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall declare thy praise. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, the great, mighty and revered God, the most high God, who bestowest lovingkindness, and art Master of all things; who rememberest the pious deeds of the patriarchs, and in love wilt bring a redeemer to their children’s children for thy Name’s sake....O King, Helper, Saviour, and Shield. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Shield of Abraham. Thou, O Lord, art mighty for ever, thou revivest the dead, thou art mighty to save.”⁶

Also important to keep in mind is the venue in which a letter like 2 Corinthians would be read, as Ralph P. Martin notes the likely place of “the public reading of the New Testament epistles in congregational worship services where the liturgical language of invocation and praise has its natural place.”⁷

Of course, issuing blessings to God is something seen throughout the Tanach (Exodus 18:10; Ruth 4:14; 1 Kings 1:48; Psalm 28:6; 41:13), but why does 2 Corinthians 1:3 include a stress on, “Praised be God, Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (CJB/CJSB)? Immediately preceding a significant statement about the nature of God has been asserted, as both the Father and Son are the source of grace and peace (2 Corinthians 1:2). It is easy to overlook, but the intention of 2 Corinthians 1:3 is not to make a statement about the nature of God, but instead the universal availability of His mercy and comfort. While Paul would surely agree with the liturgical exclaim, “Praised are You, our God and God of our ancestors, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah” (*Siddur Sim Shalom*),⁸ he would also emphasize

⁴ Paul Barnett, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 63.

⁵ Cf. Barnett, 67; George H. Guthrie, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 64.

⁶ J.H. Hertz, ed., *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, revised (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1960), pp 131, 133.

⁷ Ralph P. Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Corinthians*, Vol 40 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 7.

⁸ Jules Harlow, ed., *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2007), 123b.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

how there is “one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6). The mercy and comfort of God, while surely present in God’s experiences with the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of Israel, are to be decisively realized and experienced in Yeshua the Messiah. Garland properly comments,

“First, as the Father of Jesus Christ, God is no longer to be known simply as the Father of Israel. Through Jesus Christ all, both Jew and Greek, have access to the Father (Eph 2:18). One can only truly know God as Father as the Father of Jesus Christ. Second, it declares that Jesus is the foremost blessing God has bestowed on humankind (see Col 1:12).”⁹

Mark A. Seifrid also usefully states how “Gentile believers in Corinth have become God’s own people, the objects of his love and care as ‘father.’ Just as God became Israel’s father in the exodus from Egypt, through Jesus Christ, God is now the father of all those who believe.”¹⁰ While the non-Jewish Corinthians, along with their fellow Jewish Believers, share the faith heritage of Israel—especially that witnessed in the Exodus generation (1 Corinthians 10:1)—salvation history has moved forward for all to principally recognize themselves as recipients of the Father’s mercy seen in the work of His Son.

God as the “Father of mercies” (*ho patēr tōn oiktirmōn*, ὁ πατήρ τῶν οἰκτιρῶν), is something which is conceptually rooted in many prayers and exhortations issued to Him in the Tanach (Psalm 51:11; 86:5; 94:19; Lamentations 3:22; Isaiah 51:12; 63:7; 66:13; Daniel 9:9; Micah 7:18). Psalm 103:13, 17 declares, “Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him...But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children.” The love and mercy of God are customarily lauded in the traditional Jewish liturgy, before the recitation of the *Shema*:

“With abounding love has thou loved us, O Lord our God, and great and overflowing tenderness has thou shown us. O our Father, our King, for our fathers’ sake, who trusted in thee, and whom thou didst teach the statutes of life, be also gracious unto us and teach us. O our Father, merciful Father, ever compassionate, have mercy upon us...”¹¹

As important as experienced mercy and comfort is for the present—and recognizing the significant place God’s mercy and comfort has in both the Tanach and *siddur*—Kruse makes light of Luke 2:25: “And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel [*paraklēsin tou Israēl*, παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ]; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” Such an experience of “God to comfort Isra’el” (CJB/CJSB), are the anticipated realities of the Messianic Age. Kruse draws necessary attention to how the comfort experienced by God’s people in the present, is to give way to the much greater comfort to be experienced in the future, when the Messianic Age fully manifests itself at the Second Coming:

“For Paul, the messianic age had already begun, albeit while the old age was still running the last stages of its course, and it is the overlapping of the two ages which accounts for the surprising coincidence of affliction and comfort of which he speaks in the present passage...[B]ecause the messianic age has been inaugurated by Christ at his first coming, the

⁹ David E. Garland, *New American Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), pp 58-59.

¹⁰ Mark A. Seifrid, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 11.

¹¹ Hertz, *Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, pp 435, 437.

believer experiences in the present time the comfort of God as a foretaste of that final consolation."¹²

That there would be tension for God's people living in a time between Yeshua's resurrection and Second Coming, can help readers better understand the tension indicated by 2 Corinthians 1:4, as God is One "who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (NKJV). The dynamics of both comfort and tribulation or affliction, will manifest themselves in the experiences of the redeemed. For David H. Stern, he takes this reality in the direction of how both Jewish and non-Jewish Believers will experience persecution, and how while not too common to Western religious people, is something to surely be anticipated as the Time of Jacob's Trouble or Tribulation is impending:

"New Testament believers, both Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians, are promised persecution and suffering (Mk 10:30, Yn 16:33&N); Westerners often find this hard to appreciate. Jews, both non-Messianic and Messianic, will suffer too, for Jeremiah 30:7 speaks of 'the time of Jacob's trouble'; Gentile Christians must stand with them in their suffering, encouraging and comforting them."¹³

Within the strategy of Paul's letter, emphasizing the comfort of God during trial that he and his associates have experienced, should not be considered "self-centered." A huge intention of 2 Corinthians is Paul defending his apostolic service and ministry ideology, so to stress what God has done with Paul, is not to be unexpected. Yet, the Corinthians are beneficiaries of God's comfort—"so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:4, NIV)—as they are spiritually connected to Paul, and what God has accomplished through him.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

"The Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah"

"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Messiah Yeshua as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Yeshua's sake. For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah."

The Apostle Paul follows up his previous discussion (2 Corinthians ch. 3) about the New Covenant, with some important thoughts about the nature of his ministry, the good news as he declares it, and some of the significant identification he has with Yeshua the Messiah in serving those like the Corinthians.¹⁴ Paul testifies, "Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart" (2 Corinthians 4:1, NIV). What Paul labels as *tēn diakonian tautēn* (τὴν διακονίαν ταύτην), "this ministry," has been specified earlier as Paul being a servant of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6), which involves the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). For a figure like Paul, his acknowledgment of having received mercy from

¹² Colin Kruse, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 60.

¹³ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 494.

¹⁴ This entry has been adapted from the author's commentary *2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.