After a Bible reader has waded through some of the significant issues and controversies of 1 Corinthians, it is easy to treat a letter like 2 Corinthians as a kind of "appendix." The letter follows no formal outline, and shifts in its tone, so much that there are examiners who think that 2 Corinthians could actually be a compilation of multiple pieces of correspondence. *What is the point of 2 Corinthians?* That a figure like the Apostle Paul had heard about the much-improved behavior of the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:6-16), and that he was preparing this audience to see him again in person (2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1), are clear enough.

2 Corinthians is an intensely personal letter written by the Apostle Paul, to an audience which had some significant spiritual difficulties. All too frequently, it can be forgotten that a good part of Paul's ministry service was about much more than just providing First Century Believers with good theology; a good part of Paul's ministry service was demonstrating through his consistent faithfulness, a genuine emulation of the Lord Yeshua and a complete reliance upon God. To understand and appreciate a letter like 2 Corinthians, is to not just identify with the Apostle Paul and his legacy of service—but to also enter into a venue where each of us should consider how little or how much various leaders, teachers, and servants in the Body of Messiah throughout history have conformed to his example. As was directed, "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Messiah's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10, NASU). While there are bits and pieces of 2 Corinthians which we have all benefited from in our reading of Holy Scripture and personal times of meditation, recognizing the critical place of this letter for understanding the person of the Apostle Paul, and the legitimate strains and stresses of serving God, needs to be better recognized.

As today's broad Messianic movement enters into an unknowable future, *2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*—while surely presenting some important theological discussions—may surprisingly offer us more to consider about our spirituality. There are First Century background issues involving Second Temple Judaism and Greco-Roman classicism to be weighed, but there are more vital questions to be probed about the difficulties faced by an individual person like Paul. How much do we not consider ourselves as beneficiaries of not just Paul's letters, but his steadfast devotion to the Messiah? What overlooked lessons and necessary corrections do today's Messianic people need to take from 2 Corinthians—especially given the new challenges we will be facing, as salvation history steadily moves toward the return of Israel's Messiah?

2 CORINTHIANS

FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

2 CORINTHIANS
FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

J.K. McKEE

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.blog

2 CORINTHIANS

FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

© 2016, 2026 John Kimball McKee
All rights reserved. With the exception of quotations for academic purposes, no part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

Cover Image: J.K. McKee personal photo

ISBN 979-8315273677 (paperback)
ASIN B01N31NIVB (eBook)

Published by Messianic Apologetics, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries
P.O. Box 516
McKinney, Texas 75070
(407) 933-2002

outreachisrael.net / outreachisrael.blog
messianicapologetics.net / messianicapologetics.blog

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, The Lockman Foundation.

Unless otherwise noted, quotations from the Apocrypha are from the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), © 1952, Division of Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Fair Use Notice: This publication contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We make use of this material as a matter of teaching, scholarship, research, and commentary. We believe in good faith that this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law, and is in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. For more information go to: https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/107

Outreach Israel Ministries is a non-profit 501(c)3. All prices listed on the publications of Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics are suggested donations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE ..... **xi**

INTRODUCTION **1**

2 CORINTHIANS 1 ..... **25**

2 CORINTHIANS 2 ..... **45**

2 CORINTHIANS 3 ..... **67**

2 CORINTHIANS 4 ..... **101**

2 CORINTHIANS 5 ..... **117**

2 CORINTHIANS 6 ..... **139**

2 CORINTHIANS 7 ..... **159**

2 CORINTHIANS 8 ..... **173**

2 CORINTHIANS 9 ..... **189**

2 CORINTHIANS 10 ..... **201**

2 CORINTHIANS 11 ..... **215**

2 CORINTHIANS 12 ..... **231**

2 CORINTHIANS 13 245

EPILOGUE 255

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 259

BIBLIOGRAPHY 261

STATEMENT OF FAITH 279

ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIAL TERMS

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encylopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
MARV: Messianic Apologetics Revised Version*
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)

* This is a modified and adapted edition of the public domain World Messianic Bible (WMB).

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

PROLOGUE

Throughout 2015 I conducted a year-long study through Paul's letter of 1 Corinthians, which I was very pleased to see completed in the time I had originally estimated: about a year. The study was relatively consistent week-to-week, with only a few brief stops along the way, mostly for expected family and congregational activities. *There were no major, unfortunate pauses during 2015, which delayed 1 Corinthians.* One of the biggest things which did take place, during the 1 Corinthians Wednesday Night Bible Study, is that when I immediately returned home from my annual family reunion in Gulf Shores, AL the last week of June, the website domain tnnonline.net had been thefted from us, during the middle of the night when it was to be renewed. For about six weeks, between late June and early August, TNN Online transitioned into Messianic Apologetics (messianicapologetics.net), a name which is far more reflective of what I have been doing since I graduated from seminary in 2009. This upcoming, continued study on Paul's letter of 2 Corinthians, bears the distinction of being the first full study conducted for Messianic Apologetics.

Anyone who reads 1 and 2 Corinthians simultaneously, should note a definite stylistic shift. Both 1 and 2 Corinthians communicated important things to their original First Century audience, and hence us as Twenty-First Century Believers. Both 1 and 2 Corinthians are intellectually and spiritually deep pieces of correspondence. But, there is a difference between 1 Corinthians, which focuses much more on the catalogue of problems which the Messiah followers were facing, and 2 Corinthians, which is widely reflective of the ministry service and character of the Apostle Paul. Paul was personally sold out to the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, as serving the interests of the Kingdom of God and the good news is what dominated his thoughts and actions. Seeing people appreciate his unique ideology and philosophy of ministry is surely detailed in this letter. For the Bible reader examining the Corinthian correspondence, it offers an important venue to consider to what degree(s) they had taken Paul's admonitions to them seriously.

For my own research and writing, 2 Corinthians should represent a number of significant transitions. From 2006 and the Hebrews study to 2015 and the 1 Corinthians study, issues pertaining to the post-resurrection era validity of the Torah, various Torah practices, and Jewish and non-Jewish Believers in the Body of Messiah—have dominated a great deal of our focus. While these subjects will seemingly always be present in any Messianic study, **2 Corinthians significantly highlights the person of the Apostle Paul.** How did Paul act under pressure? How did Paul reason through problems? Why did Paul do things a little differently than some of the other Apostles? In examining 2 Corinthians, we will

get to reflect a great deal on the character of someone who wrote a significant block of the Messianic Scriptures or New Testament. It is hardly surprising to me, now in 2016, that 2 Corinthians will be the last commentary I write on the Pauline Epistles. And, it is my sincere hope that its completion will lead to further studies, which will provide for a greater focus on the character development of us as Messiah followers.

Certainly throughout 2015, as we went through the letter of 1 Corinthians, the letter of 2 Corinthians was quoted where necessary, and I went into 1 Corinthians knowing that 2 Corinthians would be addressed afterward. There is a real temptation, when starting an examination of the Corinthian correspondence, to treat 2 Corinthians as a kind of "appendix" to 1 Corinthians. The size of some of the commentaries on 1 Corinthians, compared to 2 Corinthians—even with 2 Corinthians being thirteen chapters, to 1 Corinthians being sixteen chapters—demonstrates how more time tends to focus on 1 Corinthians. *2 Corinthians is not an appendix to 1 Corinthians.* What 2 Corinthians is, are the deeply held emotional transcriptions of an Apostle, who wanted this group of ancient Messiah followers to really understand what they are a part of, as members of the Kingdom of Heaven and as fellow servants of the good news along with him.

Have you ever had some challenges in sitting down, and reading 2 Corinthians—perhaps after reading 1 Corinthians? Even though the audience is the same, 2 Corinthians is not the same kind of letter as 1 Corinthians. There had been some degree of resolution to the problems encountered in 1 Corinthians, even though corrections still had to be made, and there was a looming danger that problems could have flared up again. Readers of 2 Corinthians do not have to so much theorize or speculate on the involvement of claiming Believers in temple prostitution or eating meat sacrificed to idols. Readers of 2 Corinthians have to instead decisively enter into the heart and mind of the Apostle Paul, and identify with a person who did not consider himself "entitled" to various privileges, as serving the interests of the gospel was his only concern. While other Pauline letters may face controversies in terms of Greek to English or historical background issues, 2 Corinthians deals mainly with the psychology of the Apostle Paul. *2 Corinthians is going to present us with a new class of challenges to consider.* Some examiners have forthrightly acknowledged that 2 Corinthians is perhaps the most difficult of Paul's letters to understand.[i]

There are surely statements, appearing in 2 Corinthians, which all of us have quoted, or have had quoted to us, at one point or another—many of which we have genuinely appreciated as they involve Believers' necessity to place their focus on the Messiah: "Such confidence we have through Messiah toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God" (2 Corinthians 3:4-5, NASU). At the same time, a figure like the Apostle Paul identified his ministry service as one of constant "death," so to speak: "For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Yeshua's sake, so that the life of Yeshua also may be manifested in our mortal

[i] Scott J. Hafemann, *NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 19.

flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11, NASU). Was this just an observation about Paul's physical life being frequently threatened because of the subversive nature of his gospel declarations? Or, was it how a significant degree that genuine service, unto the Lord, will involve some significant degree of repetition of the Messiah's own ministry example? Deep questions, to be considered and probed are presented from 2 Corinthians. The theme of suffering (2 Corinthians 4:7, 10, 11, 12) is hardly a popular one—among others.

Sometimes as I begin a new Bible study, I am consciously aware of a theological or spiritual lesson, some intellectual or more personal fine-tuning, which the Lord wants to communicate to me. Sometimes I begin a new Bible study with no more knowledge than knowing that it needs to be conducted, in order for me to move on to other studies (which may bear more personal interest for me). I start 2 Corinthians knowing that when it is completed, there will be *Practical Messianic* volumes on all of the Pauline Epistles. I also start 2 Corinthians, with a certain excitement about what I am going to learn about the person of the Apostle Paul in the First Century Mediterranean—and also for perhaps discovering one or two critical points for my own self, which I can integrate into my own service for the Lord in Twenty-First Century North America.

J.K. McKee
Editor, Messianic Apologetics
December 2016

Many developments have taken place within the Messianic movement, and to our own family and ministry, since this commentary was originally released. This 2026 edition has smoothed over some of the discussions, offering important updates where necessary, and is reflective of our experiences over the past ten years or so. It is my sincere hope and prayer that *2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*, continues to aid many people across our faith community!

Spring 2026

INTRODUCTION

2 Corinthians (Grk. *Pros Korinthious B*) is the third longest of the letters of the Apostle Paul, and is at least the third piece of correspondence issued to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9).[1] After Bible readers have submitted themselves to what can seem to be a significant chore in dissecting 1 Corinthians, there might be great hope for 2 Corinthians to be a less complicated, more conciliatory text. 1 Corinthians bore testimony to a group of Ancient First Century Believers which was factional and riddled with spiritual problems. Each of us, in reading and approaching 2 Corinthians, innately desires to see how those problems were widely remedied, and for an amicable and pleasant interaction between Paul and the Corinthians to have reasserted itself.

While there are surely theological and spiritual controversies encountered in 2 Corinthians, which are all worthy of our attention—what is encountered more is Paul the man, Paul the servant of the Lord in hands-on and on-the-ground service to the Lord in the First Century Mediterranean. How did a figure like the Apostle Paul handle a group of (presumed) Believers like the Corinthians, who were widely dysfunctional? If it can be said that the problems in 1 Corinthians were caused more by the external challenges presented by a Greco-Roman metropolis like Corinth, then the issues present in 2 Corinthians were seemingly caused by various internal challenges and personalities which beset this group of Messiah followers. Within 2 Corinthians, Paul had to go to some lengths to defend the legitimacy of not just his apostolic ministry, but in explaining his personal values and ideology to his audience, which were rooted in his spiritual experiences with the Lord.

2 Corinthians is a different kind of letter, in comparison to 1 Corinthians. There had been some preliminary resolution to the problems which Paul was very firm in addressing in previous correspondence, but there were still some minority elements among the Corinthians, who had their doubts about Paul. The threat of there being further problems was still definitely present—and so it should hardly be a shock that the letter of 2 Corinthians is not just intensely pastoral, but is also intensely personal.[2]

[1] Please note that in spite of the common reference to 2 Corinthians as "the Book of 2 Corinthians," I am going to purposefully refer to the text as either the Epistle of 2 Corinthians or the letter of 2 Corinthians, and not use this reference. By failing to forget that this text is a letter written to a specific audience in a specific setting, we can make the common error of thinking that this was a text written *directly to us*. Our goal as responsible interpreters is to try to reconstruct what this letter meant *to its original audience first*, before applying its message in a modern-day setting.

[2] Cf. David E. Garland, *New American Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1999), 5.