

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*.

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the Lord does not just concern His preservation of him through times of difficulty (2 Corinthians 3:8-9), but is most especially poignant per his pre-salvation condition as a persecutor of the assembly (1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:12-16). Because of God's faithfulness demonstrated toward him, Paul says "we faint not" (KJV), the verb *egkakeō* (ἐγκακέω) involving **"to lose one's motivation in continuing a desirable pattern of conduct or activity, lose enthusiasm, be discouraged"** (BDAG).¹⁵

Paul was not some traveling merchant with an exciting story to tell, out on the road to make money off of unsuspecting people (2 Corinthians 2:17), nor was he one trying to solicit human approval or favor (Galatians 1:10). Paul and his associates had a definite moral compass, to teach the truth from the Word of God in a non-diluted and uncompromised manner, so that it might truly bring about the significant change of bringing people to redemption. As he says in 2 Corinthians 4:2, "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God" (ESV). It might be that Paul is deliberately contrasting himself to some of those who have entered among the Corinthians, turning them against him, or at least causing them to doubt him on some level. And, that Paul would want to be differentiated from any traveling philosophers out to pilfer unsuspecting people, can also be assumed. In the estimation of Garland,

"He insists that unlike such con men he did not adjust, water down, or tamper with the gospel to stroke his listeners' egos or to avoid ruffling their feathers. He is not a flatterer using God's word only to delight the audience and bewitch them with enchanting interpreters that never question their conduct or character."¹⁶

Paul's previous writing in 1 Thessalonians 2:3-7, 10, is worthwhile to consider here:

"For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Messiah we might have asserted our authority...You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers" (1 Thessalonians 2:3-7, 10).

In some Messianic Jewish consideration of 2 Corinthians 4:2,¹⁷ it has been legitimately addressed how the Messianic Jewish movement needs to strive for a high degree of honesty when presenting Yeshua as Messiah to a wider Jewish community which rejects Him. But more particular to the issues that the Apostle Paul was writing the Corinthians about, would be how some of his (Messianic) Jewish contemporaries may have thought that he was not being too responsible with his handling of the Torah or Pentateuch. And indeed, many Christians over the centuries have concluded that the Apostle Paul was widely dismissive of any continued, positive role of the Torah in the lives of Messiah followers. Given some of the controversies present in 2 Corinthians ch. 3 preceding, it is hardly a surprise Paul has had to assert "we renounced the hidden shameful ways—not walking in deception or distorting the word of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2, TLV). Martin legitimately raises the point of how "what was

¹⁵ BDAG, 272.

¹⁶ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 206.

¹⁷ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp 500-508; Joel Liberman, *Practical Messages on Congregational Life: Commentary on 1&2 Corinthians* (San Diego: Tree of Life, 2015), pp 180-183.

questioned was Paul's handling of the Old Testament...and his claim that 'the veil' of 3:14-16 was removed only in Christ."¹⁸

Paul did not say, "We have set our faces against all shameful secret practices; we use no clever tricks, no dishonest manipulation of the Word of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2, Phillips New Testament), isolated from things that he has said and done, and what others have both said and done and said and done regarding him. Paul is not just stating some of his personal operative philosophy for ministry; Paul is defending his ministry. With others in Corinth dismissing or discrediting him, Barnett astutely observes, "It would appear that Paul is here contrasting his ministry with that of the 'peddler' so that his words are also an indirect criticism of them. Whereas Paul does not turn aside from his apostolic calling (v. 1), it is these men—he may be implying—who are guilty of (1) secretive disgraceful behavior and crafty practices...and (2) corrupting the word of God."¹⁹

Per some of the themes Paul previously invoked about Moses having to veil himself (2 Corinthians 3:12-13), Bruce draws the conclusion, "There is no 'veil' in the new covenant...everything is open and above board where the gospel is concerned, and everything but be open and above board where its preachers are concerned. Paul denies that he stoops to use methods unworthy of his message—such methods as some religious propagandists of his day did not scruple to employ."²⁰ Surely with the final atonement and final forgiveness which are accessible via the power of the New Covenant (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27), Paul can very much see that the Holy Spirit through him can communicate in more direct and decisive ways than Moses could in a previous era. That Paul would act with some continuity in a line of service involving Moses, but would be different from Moses to a degree, would have merited him some criticism from various peers.

While it is common to encounter various comparisons and contrasts proposed between the Apostle Paul, his opponents or detractors in Corinth, and/or traveling hucksters out to deceive people with their platitudes—Seifrid offers another useful vantage point. He suggests a thematic connection with what will be incurred at the final judgment, by those who act dishonorably in secret:

"The expression very likely recalls the Genesis story of Adam and Eve hiding themselves from the Lord God after eating the forbidden fruit, although they formerly were naked without shame (Gen 2:25; 3:8, 10). At the same time, Paul's language also anticipates the coming of the Lord, who will 'bring to light the hidden things of darkness' (1 Cor 4:5). The theme of the manifestation of the human being at the final judgment is an essential element of Paul's argument in this section of the letter. Paul's renunciation of 'the hidden things of shame' implies the undoing of the fall and the presence of the new creation. It implies confidence in the coming judgment, at which the legitimacy of the apostle will be truly tested."²¹

Paul does repeat some of the terms seen previously in 2 Corinthians 3:13-18 and 2:14-17, as he states, "If our gospel is veiled at all, it is veiled only for those on the way to destruction" (2 Corinthians 4:3, REB). In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul had said, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." There is an inability, just as the Ancient Israelites were unable to see the glory radiating off of Moses' face because of their sin, for the world at large to comprehend or even consider, the

¹⁸ Martin, 77.

¹⁹ Barnett, 214.

²⁰ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 195.

²¹ Seifrid, 192.

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power that the good news offers them of not just reconciliation with their Creator—but of the grand indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit to transform their character from within. The world at large is labeled as *tois apollumenois* (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις), commonly taken as “those who are perishing,” but also being represented as “those in the process of being lost” (CJB/CJSB), “those on the road to perdition” (WBC),²² or even “those who are spiritually dying” (Phillips New Testament).

Some, such as Barnett, have taken 2 Corinthians 4:3 as “a warning to Paul’s Gentile readers in Corinth not to follow the pro-Moses teaching of the ‘peddlers.’”²³ From this, it may be further concluded by others that Paul’s statement, “even if our Good News is veiled” (TLV) is intended to be anti-Jewish, or at least anti-Torah, as one needs to dismiss with Moses’ Teaching. The issue in view, however, is that while there were surely First Century Jews with a veil over their hearts and minds (2 Corinthians 3:14)—a barrier separating themselves from God—Paul also makes it clear, “whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (2 Corinthians 3:16), implying that all unredeemed humans have veils lying over their hearts, separating themselves from God.

A much better approach toward Paul’s statement of 2 Corinthians 4:3, is for readers to recognize how the good news or gospel is confounding to both Jews and Greeks (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2), with both Jews and Greeks often reacting negatively to its contents. Garland properly stresses,

“It has to do with the fundamental nature of a gospel that strikes Greeks as foolishness and Jews as scandalous. This fundamental nature is that God defeats death and evil and reconciles the world through Christ’s sacrifice, which puts an end to all human boasting. The Messiah whom God sent to save Israel was not a figure of glory who deposed Israel’s pagan oppressors and restored her fortunes in the world. Instead, he suffered and died on a cross...”²⁴

Paul’s intention in 2 Corinthians 4:3 is not to focus on any one group or sub-group as being “those who are perishing,” but instead how **all of those who dismiss or disregard the good news** are “those who are perishing.” George H. Guthrie indicates, “the apostle both continues the veil imagery begun in the previous unit at 3:14-15 (especially picking up on the spiritual blindness discussed there) and addresses a general theological motif that he covers elsewhere: the spiritual realities of a fallen world in which the advancement of God’s kingdom is opposed by spiritual forces.”²⁵ That the world is divided into the two spheres of those being saved and those perishing, is something Paul has previously stated in his letter: “For we are a fragrance of Messiah to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Corinthians 2:15). Even though he thinks that Paul is primarily speaking of his Jewish contemporaries in 2 Corinthians 3:3, Kruse still has to direct, “it is clear from other references in 2 Corinthians that the apostle in no way saw the activity of the god of this world (=Satan) as restricted to the Jews (cf. 2:11; 11:3, 14).”²⁶

Some deeply spiritual and theological constructs are invoked by Paul, given how severe it is to be among those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3). He informs the Corinthians, “In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, so they might not see the light of the Good News of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4, TLV). Those who are perishing, who have veiled hearts and minds, are blinded by *ho theos*

²² Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 74.

²³ Barnett, 217.

²⁴ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 208.

²⁵ Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 239.

²⁶ Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 103.

tou aiōnos toutou (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου) or “The god of this age” (Common English Bible), an obvious reference to Satan (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1 John 5:19). Recognizing the importance of how Yeshua has come to deliver the redeemed from the present evil age (cf. Galatians 1:4), Martin considers how “The Jewish doctrine of two ages is important for the apostle; so Satan controls this age under God’s decree. For Paul this malevolent power is seen in the blinding of human minds to prevent the light of the Gospel from penetrating.”²⁷ Calling Satan “the god of this world/age” should indicate how his powers and abilities are ultimately limited, as Satan’s influence does not extend into the world to come.

The blinding that Satan performs upon those veiled because of their sin and obstinance, is to prevent the unsaved from seeing “the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4, TNIV). The good news or gospel, by virtue of it being a message which is to see people forgiven and redeemed from not just their sins, but the powers of the present evil age, is justifiably called “the Good News about the glory of the Messiah” (CJB/CJSB).²⁸

Yeshua is further called *eikōn tou Theou* (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ) or “the image of God,” a theme not only witnessed in 2 Corinthians 4:4, but in some other key places in the Apostolic Scriptures:

“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*” (John 1:18).

“[W]ho, existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited” (Philippians 2:6, PME).

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Colossians 1:15, NIV).

“And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3).

The stress in 2 Corinthians 4:4 is meant to only indicate how seriously important the good news or gospel is, rather than make some declarative statements about the nature of the Messiah. Still, the Messiah being “the image of God,” is something which is vital to weigh, as elucidated in some additional key places which are concerned about the nature and origins of the Messiah.

For the purposes of 2 Corinthians 4:4, as Witherington describes, “when Paul speaks of Christ’s glory, he is referring to the manifestation of God’s presence in Christ, just as the glory on Moses’ face was the evidence of an encounter with God’s presence. Christ is the very *eikōn*, the image or full and true representation of God.”²⁹ **If one truly wants to encounter the God of Israel, then this has to be done via the Messiah He has sent.** Barnett connects the Messiah being “the image of God” to Paul’s own salvation experience, and also to the reality of how the Messiah’s exaltation is an indicator of salvation-historical and eschatological clearly related to the world/age to come:

“On the Damascus Road, Paul...saw the glory of God. But there was a shape to it. Paul beheld ‘the image (*eikōn*) of God,’ the glorified Christ. In the heavenly Christ the invisible God, who cannot be seen, has perfectly and fully revealed himself (cf. Col 1:15). The glorified Christ

²⁷ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 78.

²⁸ Grk. *tou euangeliou tēs doxēs tou Christou* (τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

²⁹ Witherington, *1-2 Corinthians*, 386.

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is the ultimate eschatological revelation of God. There is nothing more that can or will be seen of God.”³⁰

While he theologizes a bit on Yeshua being *eikōn tou Theou* in 2 Corinthians 4:4, connecting this with statements appearing elsewhere, Harris makes the important point of how being the “image” of something can involve either being some sort of copy or facsimile, to being in total or at least almost total equivalence:

“When Paul affirms that Christ is εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ [*eikōn tou Theou*], he is not saying only that Christ ‘subsists in the form of God’ (ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων [*en morphē Theou huparchōn*], Phil 2:6), having the nature and attributes of God, or only that he is the ‘glory of God’ (cf. τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ [*tēs doxēs tou Theou en prosōpō Christou*], 4:6; Acts 7:55), being the outshining of deity. As God’s εἰκὼν [*eikōn*], Christ both shares and expresses God’s nature. He is the precise and visible representation of the invisible God (Col. 1:15, where τοῦ ἀοράτου [*ou aoratou*] is added to εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ [*eikōn tou Theou*]). An εἰκὼν [*eikōn*] is a ‘likeness’...or a ‘visible expression’...The degree of resemblance between the original and the copy must be assessed by the word’s context, but it could vary from a partial or superficial resemblance to a complete or essential likeness. Given passages such as Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:19; 2:9, we may safely assume that for Paul εἰκὼν [*eikōn*] here, as in Col. 1:15, signifies that Christ is an exact representation...as well as a visible expression of God. ἔστιν [*estin*] is a timeless present, indicating that Christ is eternally the perfect revelation of God or at least that in his glorified corporeality Christ remains forever God’s visible expression.”³¹

What is indicated by the above summation, is that while Yeshua the Messiah is “the image of God,” and while human beings themselves have indeed been created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27)—Yeshua the Messiah being “the image of God” is much more involved. And indeed, when other factors concerning the nature and origins of Yeshua are considered, many, including this writer, have concluded that Yeshua is a part of the Divine Identity as the LORD or YHWH.

Paul and his associates declare a significant message, as he states to the Corinthians, “For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Messiah *Yeshua* as Lord—and ourselves as your slaves for *Yeshua*’s sake” (2 Corinthians 4:5, TLV). Previously in 1 Corinthians 12:3, Paul had written, “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘*Yeshua* is accursed’; and no one can say, ‘*Yeshua* is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” Further on in Romans 10:9, the essential truth of the good news is distilled to how “if you confess with your mouth *Yeshua* as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” While Paul declaring *Yeshua* as Lord (*Iēsoun Christon Kurion*, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν κύριον) is representative not just of *Yeshua*’s supremacy, and the obedience, service, and loyalty owed to *Yeshua*—it has also been correctly recognized how *Yeshua* being Lord is connected to significant Tanach themes, elucidating the identity of the One God of Israel. Noting a number of significant parallels in the Pauline Epistles with Tanach statements about the LORD or YHWH (1 Thessalonians 4:6 and Psalm 46:5; Romans 10:9-13 and Joel 2:32; Philippians 2:10-11 and Isaiah 45:22-24), Barnett properly directs how an important statement about the nature of *Yeshua* is being asserted in v. 5:

“Implicit in this brief statement is the conviction that the crucified Christ has been exalted through resurrection as the heavenly Lord; God’s suffering servant, the agent of atonement, is now the ruler of the world. Personal conviction as expressed by open confession that ‘Jesus is Lord’ issues in the salvation of God (Rom 10:9). The implication here is that lordship equates

³⁰ Barnett, 219.

³¹ Harris, pp 330-331.

with deity. ‘LORD’ regularly translates ‘Yahweh’ in the LXX, and there are numerous references to Jesus as ‘Lord’ that echo OT (LXX) passages that refer to Yahweh.”³²

The more specific theme that Paul is communicating, to be sure, concerns his ministry service. Paul and his associates are *doulos humōn dia Iēsoun* (δούλους ὑμῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦν), “your slaves because of Jesus” (HCSB) or “slaves for you because of Yeshua” (CJB/CJSB). That there is significant dedication on the part of Paul, to the cause of the good news or gospel, is clear enough. Yet, considering the place of a servant or slave, in relation to Yeshua the Messiah, can raise the question with how close a figure like Paul tries to identify himself with his Lord. Ben Witherington III observes how Paul’s statements could be viewed as him seeing himself as a suffering servant of *the* Suffering Servant:

“Does Paul here have in mind the image of a slave of his own time or of the Isianic Servant, who was given a ministry, albeit one of suffering, by God?...The role of the Suffering Servant was to preach the Good News to the poor (Isa. 61:1). So Paul would in essence see himself as the suffering servant of one who himself was the Suffering Servant (cf. Philippians 2). But in view of 1 Corinthians 9 an equally good case can be made that Paul portrays himself as an enslaved leader or sage, especially in view of the tribulation catalog that follows here in vv. 8ff.”³³

Also to be recognized, in view of additional statements appearing in this letter (2 Corinthians 11:5-6, 20; 11:23-12:10), is a contrast between Paul being a servant or slave for Yeshua, and various Corinthians being found in the process of becoming servants or slaves of Paul’s opponents—those mainly out for their own interests. Barnett interjects, “Paul’s deliberate antitriumphalism...may be tilted against those who claim to be ‘superior’ to Paul...but who ‘make slaves’ of the Corinthians...Paul’s sufferings in ministry—his ‘weaknesses’ (11:23-12:10)—are incurred as their ‘slave’ on account of Jesus.”³⁴ From this perspective, Paul’s emphasis on being a servant or slave for Yeshua, is contrasted with his detractors in Corinth being servants or slaves unto themselves, and hence likely no worthwhile or substantial cause.

Paul expresses the profound truth of how the God of Israel has not just made Himself known, but made Himself known in salvation history, via the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah. Paul says, “For God, who said, ‘Let light 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” (2 Corinthians 4:6, TLV). The statement “Let light shine out of darkness,” does echo the Genesis 1 Creation account, but not entirely. Thematically, the theme of light intruding into darkness, is one of God’s power breaking into the lives of those who are affected by the god of this age, Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4). Paul’s quotation in 2 Corinthians 4:6 was most probably adapted from both Genesis 1:3 and Isaiah 9:2:

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” (Genesis 1:3).

“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them” (Isaiah 9:2).

Scott J. Hafemann offers the general conclusion, “Against the backdrop of Genesis 1:3 as read through the lens of Isaiah 9:2, the knowledge of the glory of God revealed to Paul in the face of Christ is the means and goal of the new creation (2 Cor. 4:6) in fulfillment of the new

³² Barnett, 222.

³³ Witherington, *1-2 Corinthians*, 386.

³⁴ Barnett, 221.

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covenant (3:3, 6).³⁵ Barnett explains some of the dynamics of what Paul probably intends by stating that light has shown in the hearts of the redeemed:

“That darkness, according to v. 4, is attributable to the god of this world, who blinds the minds of unbelievers. This verse gives the answer to that; God—the true God, the creator and giver of light as opposed to the false god—illuminates the inner lives of those previously blinded by Satan. From the hitherto darkened heart of the apostle, in whom God had shone his light, now streams forth light for those who will hear the word of God—that Jesus Christ is Lord—from him. To them God shines in his light, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, fear, and guilt, removing the veil.”³⁶

Paul’s dramatic experience of salvation, in his encountering the Risen Yeshua and being blinded (Acts 9:1-19; cf. Galatians 1:13-17), certainly needs to be remembered for his statements here. Out of the darkness of Paul’s sin in once persecuting the Believers, shone forth not just the light of the Messiah, but the life of someone totally devoted to the Messiah’s service. Frequently, the pattern repeats itself when others come to saving faith in Yeshua: God shines His truth into darkness, and then out of a heart formerly darkened will shine forth the redemption of Yeshua. Seifrid connects this to various ongoing themes seen throughout Scripture, of how God acts in history to bring forth good from something once evil:

“It is ‘out of darkness’ that God causes light to shine: out of evil, God creates good; out of nothingness and death, God brings forth life. Paul thus...recalls the biblical tradition of the form and nature of God’s works: the Lord turns a rock into water (Ps 114:8), makes the wilderness a pool of water (Isa 41:18-19), turns mourning into dancing (Ps 30:11), turns sorrow into joy (John 16:20), out of death brings forth life (Rev 1:18)...[A]ccording to Paul’s word here, we cannot know God unless we know God as the Creator who performs these unfathomable, saving acts.”³⁷

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

“God Reconciling Through Messiah”

“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Messiah and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Messiah reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Messiah, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Messiah, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Paul indicates the source of the new creation as being from God, and hence not a human source, seen in his word, “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Messiah and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18, TLV).³⁸ It is not enough to simply be reconciled to the Father through the work of His Son, being made into a new creation; those like Paul and his associates have actually been *entrusted with the service* of God’s reconciliation.

Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 5:19 what the ministry of reconciliation is, “That is, in Messiah God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them; and He has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us” (TLV). As Psalm 32:2 says, “How

³⁵ Hafemann, Scott J. *NIV Application Commentary: 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), pp 180-181.

³⁶ Barnett, 225.

³⁷ Seifrid, 201.

³⁸ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *2 Corinthians for the Practical Messianic*.