

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 94

2 Corinthians ~ Part 1

Note: To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.

As I emphasized in my previous posts, we are delving into the profound significance of **Sha'ul's Letters to the Corinthians**, a crucial cornerstone of our faith.

Introduction

Sha'ul's Second Letter to the **Corinthians** is the sleeper among the four traditional 'chief letters' of the apostle: **Romans**, **Galatians**, and the **Corinthian** correspondence. It does not have quite the contemporary feel of 1 Corinthians, with its issues of unity, sex, lawsuits, men and women in the **Kehilah**, and tongues, or the theological profundity of Romans, or the nearly uncontrollable passion of Galatians. But 2 Corinthians is more than a sleeper; it is something of a sleeping giant.

In this letter (or, as some think, a collection of letters), **Sha'ul** bares his soul, and the soul of his **Gospel**, to the Corinthian community of **Believers** he 'fathered.' He does this to effect a reconciliation between them and him, and, ultimately, he believes, between them and **God**. In doing so **Sha'ul** takes the considerable risk of sounding entirely self-promotional and of further alienating the **Kehilah**. However, what **Sha'ul** is up to in explaining and defending his apostleship—and in asking the **Corinthians** to fulfill a financial commitment to the **Jerusalem Kehilah**—is a defense of the **Spirit-filled** and life-giving cruciform shape of **Messianic** life and ministry, whether his or that of his recipients.

Reconstructing the events that occurred in the relationship between **Sha'ul** and the Corinthians leading to the writing of 2 Corinthians is a complex task. The challenge is especially complicated by the contents of the letter itself since various parts seem to have distinct agendas and tones, referring to different past events and reflecting different contemporary situations. Many scholars have, therefore, concluded that 2 Corinthians is a composite of several letters. They suggest that a later editor pieced together fragments of several communications from **Sha'ul** to the **Corinthians**. Their theories range from the simple to the moderately complex to the unwieldy.

Most interpreters do agree, however, that there are three distinct components to 2 Corinthians: chapters 1–7; 8–9, and 10–13. We shall return to the question of how these components are connected, but for now, we can offer a brief, tentative summary of the events behind each of these sections. On almost any reconstruction these events and the letter(s) they generated are to be dated to the mid-50s (54–57 CE), and the correspondence was almost certainly sent from Macedonia (see 7:5).¹

This letter is sent with **Titus** and others who are returning to **Corinth** to receive funds for the relief of the brethren in **Judea** who need financial assistance.

Salutation

1¹ From: Sha'ul, by God's will, an emissary of the Messiah Yeshua and Brother Timothy,

To: God's Messianic community in Corinth, along with all God's people throughout Achaia:

2 Grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

Gratitude for God's Comfort

³ Praised be God, Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, compassionate Father, God of all encouragement and comfort; ⁴ who encourages us in all our trials, so that we can encourage others in whatever trials they may be undergoing with the encouragement we ourselves have

¹ Michael J. Gorman, Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters, Second Edition.

*received from God. ⁵ For just as the Messiah's sufferings overflow into us, so through the Messiah, our encouragement also overflows. ⁶ So if we undergo trials, it is for your encouragement and deliverance; and if we are encouraged, that should encourage you when you have to endure sufferings like those we are experiencing. ⁷ Moreover, our hope for you remains staunch because we know that as you share in the sufferings, you will also share in the encouragement.*²

By any estimation, 2 Corinthians 1:3–7 frames the Bible's greatest text on comfort. The word "comfort" occurs no less than ten times in its noun and verb forms in this brief paragraph—essentially one-third of all thirty-one occurrences in the New Testament.

~ R. Kent Hughes

Praised be God, Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, compassionate Father, God of all encouragement and comfort, who.... This follows the liturgical formula for a **Jewish b'rakha** (blessing); see Ephesians 1:3–14, 1 Kefa 1:3–4. Notice that the praise is directed to **God the Father**, not to **Yeshua the Messiah**; **Messianic** faith does not "substitute **Yeshua** for **God**." **Encouragement and comfort.** Both words are used in v. 3 to translate one Greek word, "**paraklēsis**," in vv. 4–7, only one is used as shorthand (see Yochanan 14:16, Acts 4:36). **God** encourages and comforts those who suffer. The **Messiah** called His followers to share in His sufferings (Luke 9:23, Romans 8:17–18, Colossians 1:24). **Brit Hadashah Believers**, both **Messianic Jews** and **Gentile Believers**, are promised persecution and suffering (Mark 10:30, Yochanan 16:33); 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 Believers** must stand with them in their suffering, encouraging and comforting them. **Messianic Jews** share with **Gentile Believers** **God's** encouragement and comfort; it gives them supernatural strength to encourage others (vv. 4–7).

Busyness puts us all under a load of pressure. When the pressure on you mounts, how do you decide which way to go and which priorities you will pursue? How do you choose when there is job pressure, financial pressure, family pressure, pressure to do church and ministry work, and pressure to take some time off? How about pressure to compromise, to get angry, to lead a secret thought to life? Or the pressure that takes you away from walking closely with God?

~ Patrick M Morley
Walking with Christ in the Details of Life

In our next post, we will continue to dig into **Sha'ul's Second Letter to the Corinthians**. Stay tuned for more insights and revelations.

² 2 Corinthians 1:1-7.