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Grace and Peace
1: 1-9

As one who speaks with authority DIG: Why might Paul stress that he is an emissary? Who was Sosthenes? What do you imagine happened to him since then? What is significant about how Paul addresses this church? Why does Paul thank God for the very things that are now a source of the problems he will have to address? How does Yeshua enable you to hold out until the end and thus be blameless on the Day of our Lord Yeshua? What does it mean to be "set apart by Messiah and called to be God's holy people?"

REFLECT: Have you ever struggled to make the right choices? Are you ever tempted to make the wrong choices? Have you had issues in your life that you have had to deal with? Do you sometimes feel confused or have doubts about God or the Bible? Have you ever felt spiritually inadequate or inferior? Do you feel like you have been assaulted by a corrupt culture, or temptations that seem irresistible? Have you ever felt that, as a believer, you've failed? Then you have picked the right book! It was written for people like us.

We are set apart by Yeshua Messiah, and called to be God's holy people.

Paul's first letter to **the Corinthians** followed the customary letter-writing formula of **his** day. This template typically included the sender's name and office (or his title), the name of the addressee, a personal greeting to the letter's intended recipient(s), a wish for personal well-being, the main body of the letter (which in the case of several of **Paul's** letters tended to be much longer than the typical letter), a farewell that often included a closing greeting, and well-wished to specific individuals, and sometimes the author's signature.

Anticipating that portions of **his** letter would step on the toes of several of **his** readers, **Paul** immediately seized the initiative by stating right up front **his** credentials as an emissary appointed by **YHVH**. **From: Sha'ul, called by God's**

will to be an emissary of the Messiah Yeshua (see the commentary on **Acts, to see link click Bc – Sha'ul Turns from Murder to Messiah**)**.** Therefore, **his** words carried the weight of divine authority **(1:1a).** Indeed, given the confrontational tone of **his** letter, **Paul** puts the readers on notice that **his** words carried the full endorsement of heaven itself.

And from brother Sosthenes (1:1b). Paul gave **Sosthenes** a ringing endorsement when **he** attached **his** name to **his** own. And rightly so. **Sosthenes** had a remarkable resume. **He** was instrumental in the founding of **the Messianic community** in **Corinth**, the story of which went like this: When **Paul** first entered **Corinth** during **his** second of three missionary journeys (see the commentary on **Acts Bu – Paul's Second Missionary Journey**), **he** met Priscilla and her husband Aquila. They became good friends and associates in the tent making business. During **his** time in **Corinth**, **Paul** regularly testified to both Jews and Gentiles that **Yeshua is the Messiah (Acts 18:5).** The citizens of **Corinth** were so violently opposed to **Paul's** preaching that they were going to beat **him** up. **ADONAI** had to assure **him, "Don't be afraid, but speak right up, and don't stop, because I am with you. No one will succeed in harming you, for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10).** This was a clear indication that there were a number of **Corinthians** who would receive **Messiah** in response to **Paul's** preaching.

Paul might have been assured that no one would attack **him**, but **Sosthenes** was not so fortunate. When **Paul** was put on public trial for his preaching, a riot broke out. In an instant, **Sosthenes**, the ruler of the synagogue in **Corinth**, was seized by the bloodthirsty mob and beaten senseless (see the commentary on **Acts Cc – Many Respond to the Good News in Corinth**). But **Sosthenes** later became a **believer** and **Paul's** "brother" in **the Lord**. By adding the name of **Sosthenes** to **his** letter, **Paul** put the full weight of **his** partnership with this recognized and respected leader in **the Messianic community** at **Corinth**.[14]

To: God's Messianic community in Corinth, consisting of those who have been set apart by Yeshua the Messiah and called to be God's holy people – along with everyone everywhere (this refutes the view that **Paul's** letters, since they were written to a specific congregation, do not apply to us today) **who calls on the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, their Lord as well as ours (1:2). The Corinthians**, in their recognition of **Isra'el's God** and **Isra'el's Messiah**, were to serve in the midst of pagans as a testimony and a witness of **His** awesome power.

Believers are **set apart** (sanctified) for **YHVH**, just as the utensils in the Temple. But precisely because we are **set apart** for **God**, we must also bear the character of **God** who has **set** us **apart**. **Paul's** concept of holiness regularly involves observable behavior. That will be especially true in this letter, which is addressed to a congregation who is "talking the talk," but not "walking the walk." When **Paul** applies this language to **the Corinthians**, **he** is echoing **God's** call to **Isra'el**. This is the first of many times in the letter where **Paul** implicitly addresses and describes **the believers** at **Corinth** – a predominantly Gentile group – as members of **the** covenant **people of God**. Therefore, whatever their background, they were now caught up into the story of **God's people . . . Isra'el**.[15] Is it not the same for us today?

Before **Paul** took **the Corinthians** to task for **their** failures as **believers**, **he** carefully and lovingly reminded **them** that **they** *were* **believers**. **They** belonged to **ADONAI** and to each other in a far-reaching fellowship. That in itself should have been a rebuke to **them**, and no doubt pierced the consciences of **those** who were the least bit spiritually sensitive. In **1:2-9 Paul** summarizes **their** position and **their** blessings as **believers** in **Yeshua Messiah**, as children of **God**. It's as if **he** were saying, "Look at what **you** are! Look at what **you** have!" Only then does **he** say: **Nevertheless, brothers, I call on you in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to agree, all of you, in what you say, and not to let yourselves remain split into factions but be restored to having a common mind and a common purpose (1:10).**[16]



Consistent with the letter-writing formula of **his** day, **Paul** next inserted a warm, friendly greeting to **his** readers: **Grace to you and shalom from God our**

Father. However, unlike the typical letter writers of **his** day, **Paul** highlighted two unique words: **grace and shalom**. **Paul's** greeting is widely and correctly recognized to include a combination of traditional Greek and Jewish terms. Normally, Greek letters of that time only included the salutation *chairein*, or "greetings," which **Paul** replaced with the similar sounding *chairs*, or **grace**. **He** then attached to this *eirene*, or **peace**, the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the TaNaKh) equivalent of **shalom**. **And the Lord** (Greek: *kurios*) **Yeshua the Messiah (1:3).** The declaration of **Yeshua Messiah, Isra'el's King,** as *kurios*, would have separated **the Corinthian believers** from those who would insist that Caesar was the world's lord.[17]

Grace: This is a great word for all **believers**. It resembles the usual Greek greeting, but there is a world of difference between "greetings" (Greek: **chairein**) and **grace** (Greek: *charis*). By using the word **grace**, **Paul** reminded **his** readers that **they** were the recipients of **God's** undeserved, unearned, and unlimited favor, which **He** gives abundantly to every **believer**. So central was **grace** to **Paul's** personal experience that **he** used it 87 times in **his** 13 letters. Personally, **Paul** never lost the wonder of a holy **God** who **loved**, forgave, and blessed a **sinner** like **himself**. **He** wanted the **believers** in **Corinth** to experience the same thing.

Peace (Shalom): **Shalom** speaks of the practical result of **God's grace** in our lives. **Peace** is the usual Hebrew greeting. But the Hebrew **shalom** means more than "peace" does in English. It doesn't necessarily mean the absence of strife, but the presence of positive blessings. **It** implies the prosperity of the whole person, especially his spiritual prosperity.[18] **Shalom** transcends our circumstances and is anchored in our intimate relationship with **ADONAI**. That is **God's shalom, which passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7a), the shalom** conferred upon **the Corinthian believers**, and upon us as well.

Past benefits of grace: **Paul** recognized that in spite of the problems that **he** would have to address in **his** letter, **the Corinthians** were still people who had experienced the spiritual blessings of **ADONAI**. Thus, **Paul** said: **I thank my God always for you because of God's love and kindness given to you through the Messiah Yeshua . . . indeed, the testimony about the Messiah has become firmly established in you (1:4** and **6).** In other words, **they** weren't the same people anymore. **Their** old ways of life, marred by the **sinful** choices that **they** had regrettably made, no longer existed. **They**, who were **dead because of their sins and acts of disobedience (Ephesians 2:1),** were **made alive (15:22). They** had been given a brand-new life, a brand-new start, so much so that

it was like being born all over again. **Their** many **sins** – past, present, and future – were then removed from **them as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). YHVH** had buried **their sins** in **the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Ha'Shem** even went so far as to say: **I, yes I, am the One who blots out your offenses for My own sake; I will not remember your sins (Isaiah 43:25).** Now that's **grace**![19]

Present benefits of grace: Their problem was not that **they** lacked **spiritual gifts. Paul** told **them** that **they** had **been enriched by God in so many ways, particularly in power of speech, depth of knowledge.** As a result, **they** were **not lacking any spiritual gift (1:5** and **7a). Their** problem was how those **gifts** should function and how to discern the true **gifts** from the false ones. This was especially true regarding **the gift of tongues**. **The Corinthian believers** of the first century were not unique. **Believers** today face similar problems. **We** are saved and have **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** as a guarantee **(Second Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13-14)**. We have certain **spiritual gifts**, but we struggle with the flesh (see the commentary on **Romans Cb – The Inner Conflict**). No **spiritual gift** can guarantee that we win the struggle once-and-for-all in this life. The only way we can win consistently is to **walk by the Ruach, and** then we **will not carry out the desires of the flesh** (see the commentary on **Galatians Bv – Walk by the Ruach, and Not the Desires of the Flesh**).[20]

Future benefits of grace: They were **eagerly awaiting the revealing of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah,** which would **enable them to hold out until the end and thus be blameless on the Day of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah (1:7b-8). ADONAI's grace** not only provides past and present benefits, but also future benefits. **God** has saved us by **His grace**; **He** presently empowers us with gifts of **His grace**, and **He** guarantees the final fulfillment of **His grace**. The best is yet to come. We are grateful for past **grace**, we seek to be responsible in using present **grace**, but our greatest joy is looking forward to future **grace**.

The Greek word *apekdechomenous* **(eagerly awaiting)** means to wait with eager anticipation, and also activity. It is not idle, passive waiting, as when sitting on a street corner waiting for a bus. It involves working while we wait and watch and hope. We know that **ADONAI** takes care of **His** own. We wait **eagerly**, but not anxiously. We live in a hopeless world, and often we cannot help grieving for it, just as **Yeshua** grieved over **Jerusalem (John 13:34)**. But the world's hopelessness does not steal our joy, or our hope. We can say with **Paul, "And this is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, because I know him in whom I have**

put my trust, and I am persuaded that he can keep safe until that Day what he has entrusted to me" (Second Timothy 1:12). That Day is **the revelation of Yeshua Messiah** where He will be clearly seen in all **His** blazing glory (see the commentary on **Isaiah Kg – The Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Bozrah**).

We look for the coming of our Lord for at least five reasons:

First, it means Messiah's exaltation: That Day will bring **His** long awaited and eternally deserved exaltation. **Yeshua** will finally be crowned: **Lord of lords and King of kings (Revelation 17:14)**. **He** has been generally neglected, humiliated, despised and rejected for over 2,000 years since **His** First Coming. However, **His** Second Coming will end all that, for at that time **every knee will bow – in heaven, on earth and under the earth – and every tongue will acknowledge that Yeshua the Messiah is ADONAI (Phil 2:10-11a). He** will not come the second time **to bear the sins of many (Hebrews 9:28)**, but in **His** full glory and honor and majesty (see the commentary on **Revelation Ce – The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David Has Triumphed**).

Second, it means Satan's defeat: Messiah's return will bring **the Adversary's** final defeat, humiliation, and punishment, which **he** deserves, just as **Yeshua** deserves, and will then receive, **His** exaltation. **The Serpent** will no longer be **the ruler of this world (John 14:30)**, or **the Ruler of the Powers of the Air (Ephesians 2:2). He** will be bound for **a thousand years**, released for a little while, then chained and thrown into **the lake of fire** for all eternity (see the commentary on **Revelation Fm – Satan Will Be Released from His Prison and Will Go Out to Deceive the Nations**).

Third, it means justice for the martyrs: The Lord's return will bring retribution against all who have persecuted and afflicted **God's** faithful people. In his vision of the seal **judgments**, **John saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been put to death for proclaiming the Word of God, that is, for bearing witness. They cried out in a loud voice, "Sovereign Ruler, Ha'Kadosh, the True One, how long will it be before you judge the people living on the earth and avenge our blood** (see the commentary on **Revelation Cp – The Fifth Seal: I Saw Those Who Had Been Slain**)**?** Vengeance belongs to **Ha'Shem (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19)**, and when **the Son** returns, **YHVH** will exercise that vengeance – long deserved and delayed. **For it is justice for God to pay back trouble to those who are troubling you, and to give**

rest along with us to you who are being troubled, when the Lord Yeshua is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (Second Thessalonians 1:6-7). They fully deserve it.

Fourth, it means judgment for those who have rejected Messiah: **Yeshua's** return will mean **judgment** for all who have rejected **Him**. **John** wrote: **Next I saw a great white throne and the One sitting on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of the throne. Books were opened; and another book was opened, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from what was written in the books according to what they had done** (see the commentary on **Revelation Fo – The Great White Throne Judgment**). **The Lord** is coming to **judge** those who have rejected **Him**, for they deserve it.

*Dear Awesome Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **Your** great **love** and justice. **Your** awesome **love** welcomes all who come to **You** as their **Lord** and **Savior**. **Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28). Your** justice bends over backwards to offer salvation to all who repent and turn to **You**. **For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9). Yet if someone** chooses to not **love You** but to **love** themselves the most – then **You** will give them what they have chosen – **wrath** and eternal separation. **He who trusts in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).***

*Please bring circumstances and friends into the lives of my friends and family who do not yet **love** you as their **Lord**. May a friend share with them about your great **love**. May they see how awful things are getting in this world and recognize their need to turn to **God** for **His love** and help. Please remind them that this world will soon be over and the choice of heaven or hell can only be made before death and is a forever choice! **It is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment (Hebrews 9:27).** This world's pleasures are but a vapor and the next world's pain is eternal. Help us to know how to share about you with our family and friends. **You** are worthy of all worship! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Fifth, it means heaven for those who have accepted Messiah: For all those who have **believed** in **the Lord Yeshua Messiah, His** coming will mean heaven for all eternity. Unlike **Satan's** defeat, **justice** for **martyrs**, and **judgment** for

those who have rejected **Messiah**, our gift of heaven will be totally undeserved. That is because we are under **God's grace**. In ourselves, we deserve the same fate as they received; but in **Messiah** we are granted forgiveness, redemption, holiness and everlasting life (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**) in the presence of the unfading glory of our **Lord**.

When **Yeshua** returns **He** will **enable them to hold out until the end and thus be blameless** before **His** heavenly **Father**. When we enter heaven, we will not have all our **sins** and shortcomings flashed before us for everyone to see, as we sometimes hear in popular theology. **For there is no longer any condemnation awaiting those who are in union with Messiah Yeshua (Romans 8:1). Messiah** will announce before the eternal throne of **God** that we are now counted as being **blameless**.

We are sure of **His grace** – **past**, **present**, and **future** – because **God is trustworthy: it was He who called you into fellowship with his Son, Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord (1:9).** When **ADONAI calls** someone to salvation, **He** is **faithful** to that **call**. As a result, our future glory at Messiah's appearing is certain, **for those whom He thus determined in advance, He also called; and those whom He called, He also caused to be considered righteous; and those whom He caused to be considered righteous He also glorified (Romans 8:30)!** If **He** called us when we were lost and wretched, **He** surely will not cease to be **faithful** to that **call** now that we have come **into fellowship with His Son**. We entered the Kingdom by **grace** and we will be kept in the Kingdom by **grace**.[21]