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Bond Servants of Messiah Yeshua

1: 1-2

Bond servants of Messiah Yeshua DIG: Why did Paul have two names? When did the change come? Did Paul abandon his Jewish roots? What examples can you give? Paul often starts his letters with the words grace and peace, how does that sum up the Gospel? How does your life illustrate grace or peace? Why was Timothy circumcised? What is a bond-servant? Why is service essential in the life of a believer?

REFLECT: How would you rate your single-minded devotion to Messiah? Who are you following? Do you have two masters? Would “grace and peace” or “guilt and pressure” be a better description of your experience with Messiah right now? What does grace and peace mean to you? How has God shown you grace in your life? How have you shown grace to others? Why is it dangerous for you to declare Yeshua as Lord?

Paul’s imprisonment *by* Rome symbolized his bondage *to* Yeshua Messiah.



This letter is from **Paul and Timothy**, bond-servants of Messiah Yeshua (1:1a Greek). The writer of this letter to the **Philippians** had two names, **Sha'ul**, which means *to ask* or *pray*, his **Hebrew** name, and **Paul**, coming from the Latin, meaning *little*, his **Gentile** name. There are indications that **Paul** was small in stature, hence his **Latin** name; he was also a man of prayer, and thus he lived up to his **Hebrew** name.⁸ Starting in **Acts 13:9** we encounter **Paul's** two names: **Then Sha'ul, also known as Paul, filled with the Ruach Ha'Kodesh, fixed his gaze upon him.** Here the one sent to the **Goyim** is called both **Sha'ul** and **Paul**. This decisive shift from the name **Sha'ul** to **Paul** happens only after **Paul** sets off on his first missionary journey among the **Gentiles** (see the commentary on **Acts, to see link click [Bm - Paul's First Missionary Journey: Paul is Sha'ul and Sha'ul is Paul](#)**). From now on, **Luke** will call him **Sha'ul** only in regards to his past (**Acts 22:7** and **26:14**). The name **Paul** appears 132 times in **Acts Chapters 13-28**. This did not mean that **Paul** had abandoned his **Jewish** roots, as he would later declare in his testimony: **I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Isra'el and a member of the tribe of Benjamin - a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Torah (3:5 NLT).** Not only that, but **Paul** made it his practice to visit the local synagogue when he entered a new city to evangelize (see **Acts [Bo - Paul's Message in Pisidian Antioch](#)**).

Timothy was a fellow **bond-servant of Messiah Yeshua**, sharing the same

single-minded focus on pleasing **the Master**. He was **Paul's son in the faith (First Timothy 1:2)**, not only an apprentice, but also a cherished companion, to whom **the apostle** would pass on a remarkable spiritual legacy and ministry. **Paul** names **Timothy** side by side with **himself** because **he** intended to send **Timothy** to **Philippi** soon. **Paul's** two inspired letters to **Timothy** were written several years later, the first after **the apostle** had been released from **his** first imprisonment in Rome and the second during **his** second imprisonment there (see the commentary on [Galatians Ae - Dates of Books in the B'rit Chadashah](#)). **Timothy** was so captivated by **Messiah** that he cared more about the believers in the church at **Philippi** than **his** own comfort or safety (**2:19-24**). In **Timothy's** coming they will experience **Paul's** love, for **Timothy** is **Paul's** spiritual **son**, and **sons** resemble **their fathers**.⁹

As a loyal coworker with **Paul**, **Timothy** is introduced to us as **the apostle** who began **his** second missionary journey (see [Acts Bu - Paul's Second Missionary Journey](#)) to the Asia Minor **Messianic congregations**. The purpose of the journey was to share the rulings of **the Jerusalem Council** (see [Acts Bs - The Council at Jerusalem](#)) announcing that **Gentiles** could become members of the Messianic Community without first converting to Judaism. **Timothy** is introduced in **Acts 16:1-4: Paul traveled to Derbe and Lystra, where he recruited Timothy, a reputable young believer with a Jewish mother and a Greek father. To facilitate ministry among the local Jews, Paul circumcised Timothy, and they proceeded to deliver the decisions of the Jerusalem council to the Messianic congregations, strengthening their faith.**

In this introduction, we learn that **Timothy** was the son of a **Greek father** and a **Jewish mother** who had become a believer in **Yeshua** (and we learn in **Second Timothy 1:5** that **his grandmother, Eunice**, was also a **Messianic Jew**, making **Timothy** a third-generation **Messianic Jew**). Though we don't know for sure why **Timothy** wasn't **circumcised**, it appears that **his Greek father** may have objected to having **his son circumcised**, possibly because of **the Greek** visual ideal of not desecrating the perfect human form by removing the foreskin. But then, it could be that **his father** rejected what **circumcision** could represent for **his son's** identity: separation from **the Gentile** society and inclusion with **the people of Isra'el**. However, **Paul** didn't want **Timothy's** possibly ambiguous **Jewish** identity to be a roadblock to the work of sharing **their** message among **the Jewish** population of Asia Minor.¹⁰

Bond-servants translates the plural of the often-used Greek word *doulos*, which

describes a person owned by someone else and thus subservient to and dependent on that person. When used in the B'rit Chadshah, *doulos* describes willing, determined, and devoted service. It reflects the attitude of **a slave** during the Dispensation of Torah (see **Exodus Da - The Dispensation of Torah**) who refused the opportunity for freedom and voluntarily resubmitted **himself to his master for life**. The Torah provided that **if the slave plainly says, "I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man," then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently (Exodus 21:5-6)**. Speaking of all faithful believers, **Paul** declared: **Now we have been released from the Torah, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in the new way provided by the Spirit and not in the old way of outwardly following the letter of the Torah (Romans 7:6)**. To the **Corinthians** he explained: **For a person who was a slave when he was called is the Lord's freeman; likewise, someone who was a free man when he was called is a slave to Messiah (First Corinthians 7:22)**.

In that spirit, **Paul** and **Timothy** did not think of being **bond-servants of Messiah Yeshua** in anything but positive terms. Nor did **they** think of **themselves** as **bond-servants** of the Church of Rome, or any other person or institution, but exclusively of **Messiah Yeshua**. **Paul** reminded **the elders** from the **Ephesian** church of that single-minded devotion when **he** met with **them** near Miletus: **I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and ministry which I received from the Lord Yeshua, to testify solemnly of the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24)**. That devotion is required of every believer, but especially of those called to the ministry.

Paul's physical **bonds** were not really marks of **his bondage** to Rome but to **his Lord**. **His** imprisonment *by* Rome symbolized **his bondage to Yeshua Messiah**. **My imprisonment in the cause of Messiah, he explained, has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and . . . most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have much more courage to speak the word of God without fear (1:13-14)**. It was **Yeshua** who would assign all **his** duties and meet all **his** needs. **The Lord** declared very clearly that **no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24a)**. And because **the Lord** is such a loving **Master**, **His**

bond-servants can testify with **Paul: He told me: My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is brought to perfection in weakness. Therefore, I am very happy to boast about my weakness, in order that Messiah's power will rest on me (Second Corinthians 12:9).**

To all God's people (Hebrew: *kedoshim*, meaning *holy ones* or *set apart ones*) **in Messiah Yeshua. All God's people** are *holy* and *set apart*, not because **they** are **themselves righteous**, but because **they** are **in Messiah Yeshua**, whose **righteousness** is imputed to **them**. That means that all of **the righteousness** of **Messiah** is transferred to our spiritual bank account, so there is union with **Messiah**, and what is true of **Him** is true of us, minus **His** deity. A Buddhist does not speak of himself as being *in* Buddha, nor does a Muslim speak of himself as being *in* Mohammed. A Christian Scientist is not *in* Mary Baker Eddy or a Mormon *in* Joseph Smith. They may faithfully follow the teaching and example of those religious leaders, but they are not *in* them. Only believers can claim to be *in* their **Lord**, because they have been made spiritually one with **Him** (see the commentary on **Romans Bp - The Messianic Mikveh**). To **the Galatians Paul** declared: **I have been crucified with Messiah; and it is no longer I who live, but Messiah who lives in me (Galatians 2:20)**. So, being **in Messiah Yeshua**, and therefore being acceptable in **His** sight, is the believer's supreme source of **joy**.¹¹

Living in Philippi: Paul wrote the letter to the people in **Philippi**, a **city** in what is now in Greece. **It** was an important **Roman colony** city, in fact, the only such **colony** that **Luke** actually describes as such. It lay on the Via Egnatia, the main east-west route across **Macedonia**, connecting Rome with its eastern provinces. While **the city** was originally built, fortified and named after **Philip of Macedonia**, father of Alexander the Great in 358 BC, the **Philippi** that **Luke** and **Paul** knew was a metropolis run on **Roman** principles and **Roman** law. This is a very important fact as the story develops. **Roman** citizenship was highly valued in such a place. **The city** prospered not only because **it** was in a very fertile region, but because there were still active mines in the area, especially gold mines.

Philippi was a military **city**. When Antony was defeated by Octavian in 31 BC, he not only made **the city** a **Roman colony**, but he even gave **Philippi** the *ius italicum*, the legal character of a part of Italy, even though it was outside Italy. This was the highest honor that could be given to a provincial city, for it meant that **the Philippians** were self-governing, exempt from poll and land taxes, and they could purchase or sell land and engage in civil lawsuits. It was, in short, a microcosm of **Roman** life at that time.¹² **Philippi** had a small Jewish population (see **Acts By** -

Lydia's Conversion at Philippi), so **Paul** was writing to a mostly Gentile community.

Along with the Overseers and deacons (1:1b Greek): **Paul** made a point to include in **his** opening words a greeting to **the elders** and **deacons**. In doing so, **he** was showing that there was established leadership over the church in **Philippi**. As is clear from **Acts 20:17, 28** and **Titus 1:5,7**, **overseer** is another term for **elder**, the most common name for the office in the B'rit Chadashah (**Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2, 4** and **6; James 5:14**). **Elders** are also referred to as **pastors** (or **shepherds** in **Acts 20:28** and **First Peter 5:1-2**), **pastor-teachers** (**Ephesians 4:11**), and **bishops** (**Acts 20:28; First Timothy 3:2**). **Their** high qualifications are set forth in **First Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:6-9**. **Overseers**, or **Elders**, are first mentioned in relation to the famine relief money sent by **the church of Antioch** to **the elders** in **Judea** by the hands of **Sha'ul and Barnabas** (**Acts 11:30**). **They oversee** in the local churches by **preaching, teaching** (**Titus 1:9**), setting godly examples, and generally leading by the guidance of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. As far as **deacons** are concerned, **their** role is primarily one of practical service (see **Acts Av - Deacons Anointed for Service**), rather than **preaching** or **teaching**. **They** are required to meet the same high moral and spiritual standards as the **elders** (**First Timothy 3: 8-13**).

Grace and peace to you: **Paul** used this common greeting in several of **his** letters to churches (**Romans 1:7; First Corinthians 1:3; Second Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:2; Colossians 1:2-3; Second Thessalonians 1:2**), as well as in one letter to an individual (**Philemon 3**). It is an expression of **the apostle's** deep love for fellow believers, even the immature ones in **Corinth** who caused **him** much grief. But **he** must have felt an especially deep sense of **joy** and gratitude for the believers at **Philippi** who, in stark contrast to those in **Corinth**, had brought **him** immeasurable satisfaction and comfort.¹³

Grace: The Greek word **grace** (*charis*) is a wonderful word. It has been said, "It is hardly too much to say that the Greek mind has no word uttered itself and all that was at its heart more distinctly than in this." When this word is brought over into the B'rit Chadashah one can substitute the word "God" for "Greek." It is hardly too much to say that **God** has no word in **His** heart more important than this. In its use among the pagan Greeks it referred to a favor done by one Greek to another out of pure generosity of his heart, and with no hope of reward. When it is used in the B'rit Chadashah, it refers to that favor which **God** did on the cross when **He** stepped down from **His** judgment throne to take upon **Himself** the guilt and penalty of

human sin. In the case of the Greek, the favor was done to a friend, never an enemy. In the case of **God** it was an enemy, the sinner, bitter in his hatred of **God**, for whom the favor was done. **God** has no strings tied to the salvation **He** procured for mankind at the cross. Salvation is given to the believing sinner out of the pure generosity of **God's** heart. The Greek word referred to an action that was beyond the ordinary course of what might be expected, and was therefore commendable. What a description of what took place at the cross! The **grace** spoken of here is sanctifying **grace**, that part of salvation given the believer in which **God** causes him or her to be conformed into the image of **Messiah** through the ministry of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. The **Hebrew** word for **grace** is *chen*, defined as *favor, grace, charm, or acceptance*. It signifies kindness, beauty, or a gracious attitude, often used to describe finding favor in the eyes of others of **God**. It appears 69 times in the TaNaKh.

Peace: The word **peace** (Greek: *eirene*) in classical Greek means *to bind together*, in the B'rit Chadashah, the operation of **God's grace** is binding the believing sinner to **God** and **His** life. **Paul** drew on the deep meaning of **shalom**, meaning *peace, wholeness, or security* in the TaNaKh. By using **grace** and **peace** together, **Paul** sent the **Philippians** both a common Greek and Jewish greeting to begin **his** letter to this church.

From God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah (1:2 CJB). **Paul** completes **his** greeting, making clear to **the Philippians** that **grace** and **shalom** came from **God the Father** and **the Lord Yeshua**. In light of other writings of **Paul**, including the early Messianic hymn in **Philippians 2:6-11**, the apostle acknowledges the divine nature of **Yeshua** and **His** eternal unity with **God the Father** and elsewhere with **the Spirit of God** to form **the Triune God**. **Paul** saw no problem in greeting **the Philippians** with a word that united **Yeshua** with **the One God of Isra'el**, here designated as **the Father**. It is the divine **Son** working in the world with **the Father** to fulfill the divine plan and bring **grace** and **peace**, that **Paul** has in mind here, entrusting this knowledge to **the Philippians**. Beyond making an important theological point about the lordship and divine nature of **Yeshua**, **Paul** begins **his** letter with a significant and dangerous political declaration - that **Yeshua** is **Lord**, which was in contrast to the expected acknowledgement of Caesar as Lord.¹⁴

Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for the riches of **Your** grace that enables all who trust in **You** to be "**in Messiah**," which brings every spiritual blessing! **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who has blessed us**

with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah (Ephesians 1:3). The benefits of being “in Messiah” extend thru all eternity for it promises the seal of inheritance of the promised Ruach Ha’Kodesh, which enables access to the Father. To serve You now on earth as a bond-servant is a joy, for Messiah dwelling in our hearts gives believers strength to grasp the love of God! I pray that from His glorious riches He would grant you to be strengthened in your inner being with power through His Ruach, so that Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to grasp with all the kedoshim what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Messiah which surpasses knowledge, so you may be filled up with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:16-19). In the Name of Messiah Yeshua, and the power of His resurrection. Amen