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God’s Seal of Approval

1: 15-22

God’s seal of approval DIG: What was Paul being accused of? Who led the charge against him? What does ADONAI guarantee through the Ruach Ha’Kodesh? What is His seal of approval? Why is that important? What does Paul mean when he says the God’s promises are “Yes” in Messiah? Corinth was the commercial center of the Roman Empire. What do the metaphors in 1:22 indicate what Yeshua has done for believers?

REFLECT: What does Paul’s example mean to you in terms of how you relate to others? What does it mean that Yeshua is the “Yes” of God’s promises to you? What have you promised to God? What has He promised to you? Can you keep all the promises you make to God or other people? Can God keep all of His promises to you? How would you paraphrase the “business deal” of 1:22 into today’s terms? How have you experienced this type of spiritual “new deal.”

ADONAI has set His seal of approval upon us, and given us His Spirit in our hearts guaranteeing everything He has promised us.

When you think about the criticisms that had been leveled at **Paul** in **Corinth**, they seem quite trivial. First, **they** picked at **him** for changing **his** travel **plans** (**to see link click AI - Change of Plans**). In **his** first letter **he** had mentioned that it was **his plan** to come by land through **Macedonia** and then to **visit them**. Evidently **they** had understood that **he** was coming to **them** first, and were upset at what seemed to **them** a change of **plans**. In **their** childlike behavior **they** had completely forgotten that **Paul** had qualified **his plans** with the words: **I am hoping to spend some time with you if he Lord allows it (First Corinthians 16:7).**⁴⁷

The subject of **Paul’s visits** is taken up intermittently throughout **his** letter – here, **2:1-2** and **12-13, 7:5-7, 8:16-24, 12:14** and **13:1**. More than any other of **his**

letters, **he** does not progress straight from one subject to next, but constantly moves back and forth in **his** writing between distance and presence, past and future, advice and praise, comfort and warning, abstraction and detail, theology and practice, reverence and irony, a firm hand and kid gloves. The effect is to create a many-layered texture of humanness.⁴⁸

Paul begins by outlining the travel **plans he** had intended to follow before **his plans** changed, as well as his motivation for those initial **plans**. At the time of the writing of **First Corinthians**, during the previous calendar year, **Paul** outlined **his plans** for a **visit to Corinth**, which would coincide with **the Corinthians’** finalization of the collection for **the poor Jews in Jerusalem**. **He** would leave **Ephesus** after **Shavu’ot** (in the spring), travel through **Macedonia** during the summer and fall, and arrive in **Corinth**, where **he** would spend the winter before being sent on **his** way to **Jerusalem (First Corinthians 17:5-6)**.

As things turned out, however, **he** made an unscheduled **visit to Corinth** beforehand, which resulted in **pain** for both **him** and **the Corinthians** (see **Ao - Paul’s Painful Visit**). It was probably during this **visit** that **he** changed **his plans**, confident of **the Corinthians’** understanding of **him**. At the time **he** felt **the Corinthians** would give **him** the benefit of the doubt on such a change, especially since it would involve **the benefit of two visits** instead of one. Reflecting on **his** original **plans**, **he** now writes: **So sure was I of this that I had planned to come and see you, so that you might have the benefit of a second visit. I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, visit you again on my way back from Macedonia, and then have you send me on my way to Y’hudah (1:15-16)**. The implication being that **the second visit** would be more pleasant, and for a longer period of time than **his** brief and **painful visit**.⁴⁹

But **Paul** enemies, led by **the false apostles** (see **Af - The Problem of the False Apostles**), pounced on this minor change in travel **plans** and accused **him** of not being trustworthy and being double-minded. **They** ridiculously, but apparently with some success, argued that if **Paul’s** statements about **his** travel **plans** were untrustworthy, why should **the Corinthians** believe anything that came out of **his** mouth. However, **Paul** was not two-faced. **His** circumstances had changed, but not **his** heart attitude. Here **Paul** affirms that **he** is loyal to **his** flock.⁵⁰ **His** travel **plans** had been overruled by **ADONAI**, whom **he** followed without hesitation.

Paul categorially denies that **his** change of travel **plans** was due to any flaw in **his** character. **His plans** were made for **their benefit (1:15)**; therefore, they were not

made **lightly**. **Did I make these plans lightly? Or do I make plans the way a worldly man does, ready to say, “Yes, yes,” and “No, no,” in the same breath (1:17)?** He did say one thing and do another, but that didn’t mean **he** was indifferent to **them**, that **he** made **his plans** without thinking, or that **he** was irresponsible. **He** goes on to explain that **his** shift in **plans** was made after the painful visit, with them in mind. **The apostle** simply didn’t want to cause **them** any more sorrow. Nevertheless, at least some of **the Corinthians** denounced **him** for lacking integrity.

Paul then strategically begins to shift the focus from **his** own **trustworthiness** to the **trustworthiness** of **ADONAI**. **As surely as God is trustworthy, we don’t say “Yes” when we mean “No” (1:18)!** **The apostle** uses these same words at two other places in the **Corinthian** correspondence (**First Corinthians 1:9** and **10:13**). It’s as if **Paul** is saying, “With **God** as my witness,” thus appealing strongly to **YHVH** as **the One** before whom **he** lives with integrity, pointing to **Him** as the ultimate witness of **his** motives and actions. Therefore, **Paul** does not respond to doubts about **his** character by saying, “**Trust me!** I know what **I’m** doing and it’s for **your** own good.” Rather, **he** says in effect, “**Trust God, His promises** have been fulfilled in **Messiah**, and our **trustworthiness** in dealing with **you** has been guaranteed by our preaching **Messiah** to **you**.”⁵¹

So **Paul** confidently asserted: **For the Son of God, the Messiah Yeshua, who was proclaimed among you through us - that is, through the preaching of me and Sila (Silas, Silvanus in Acts 15:22) and Timothy during Paul’s Second Missionary Journey** (see the commentary on **Acts Cc - Many Respond to the Good News in Corinth**). This **Word** of the gospel was not filled with contradictions or wracked with uncertainty, with **God** giving a **promise** one minute and taking it back in the next. Rather, the word of **promise**, that word of which **Yeshua** is the heart, **the Author**, the content, the subject, the perfecter and the relational goal, has been answered **with Him** a resounding “**Yes!**” **It is always “Yes” with Him. That is why it is through Him that we say the “Amen,”** in effect our “**Yes,**” **when we give glory to God (1:19-20b)!**⁵²

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **Your promises** are all one-hundred percent trustworthy. **You** never get too busy to forget a **promise**. **You** are never too sick or too tired to help. **Your love** is always operating at one hundred percent all the time, and is matched by **Your** perfect omniscience – knowing all about the problem and all about the best way to solve it. **You** are a **God** who desires to bless and to guide **me**. **Your promise** to always be with **me** – in good and in hard times,*

during the day, and all night long, is so comforting to **me**. **For God Himself has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).**

Praise **You** that any where in the world that **I** go, **You** are always right there with **me**. **If I go up to heaven, You are there, and if I make my bed in Sheol, look, You are there too. If I take the wings of the dawn and settle on the other side of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me (Psalms 139:8-10).** It is such a comfort that when it is **dark** and **I** don’t know where to go or what to do, **You** see with the light of the future because nothing is **dark** to **You**. **If I say, “Surely darkness covers me, night keeps light at a distance from me,” even darkness is not dark for You, and night is as bright as day - darkness and light are alike (Psalms 139:11-12).** Your **“Yes”** is trustworthy! **I love** to trust, worship and obey **You**. Thank **You** for being my **promise-keeping**, wonderful heavenly **Father!** In **Yeshua’s** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen

For however many promises God has made, they all find their “Yes” in connection with Yeshua (1:20a). Sometimes **He** fulfills **them** in **His** own **Person**, **“He has become wisdom for us” (First Corinthians 1:30); He is the last Adam**, so that **His** resurrection is guaranteed (**First Corinthians 15; Romans 5:12-21**). More than that, **YHVH** fulfills all **His** other **promises** through **Him**, because **He** embodies **the fulness of the Trinity (Colossians 2:9)**, **YHVH** accomplishes everything through **Him (John 1:1-5; Colossians 1:16-18; Heb 1:1-3).**

Replacement theologians, who teach the traditional but mistaken doctrine that the Church has replaced **the Jews** as **God’s people**, misuse this verse. They say that since **God’s promises find their “Yes” in connection with Yeshua**, and **Yeshua** came two thousand years ago, “all the Old Testament **promises** have, in some mystical sense, already been fulfilled in **Messiah**, so that none remain for **the Jews**.” But the verse doesn’t say or mean that all **the promises** have already been fulfilled in, through, or by **Yeshua**. **He** is the instrument through whom **God the Father** has fulfilled, is fulfilling, and will fulfill every **promise He** has ever made to **the Jewish people** – including **the promise** that **they** will return from the diaspora to possess and live in **the Land of Isra’el**, **the promise** that the Kingdom will be restored, with **the Son of David, Yeshua Ha’Meshiach**, on the throne ruling and reigning from Jerusalem. Therefore, this verse, quite the opposite of saying that the Church has replaced **the Jews** in **God’s** future **plans**, assures us that **YHVH** will fulfill every single one of **His promises** to **the Jews** (see the

commentary on **Romans Cn - The Centrality of Isra’el in the plan of ADONAI**), and must not be turned into a pretext for cancelling **them!** Because, in the view of Replacement theologians, all **the promises** of **YHVH** made in the TaNaKh to **the Jews** have already **found their “Yes” in Yeshua**, **they** must necessarily regard as a fluke the existence of the State of **Isra’el** and the fact that a third of the **Jews** in the world now live there. For them this is a mere coincidence that no connection with prophecy fulfillment! ⁵³



Next we can see why **Paul** introduced the idea of **the trustworthiness** of **Messiah, the One** in whom **ADONAI** promises find **their “Yes.”** For it is in **trustworthy Messiah** that **Paul** and **his** co-workers have been established and **anointed** by **YHVH** as messengers of the gospel, and it was through **Messiah** that **the Corinthians** had received **the seal of the Ruach**. Simply put, **Paul’s** answer to those who said he was wishy-washy because of the change in **his** travel **plans**, is that **God’s** work in **his** life guaranteed **the trustworthiness** of what **he** said. So to explain the nature of this work of **Ha’Shem** in **his** life, **Paul** introduces us to **four important words**.

First, moreover, it is God who establishes (Greek: *bebaioo*, meaning *to establish, to confirm, or to walk where it is fully reliable*) believers in **Messiah** at salvation (**1:21a**). This is the saving grace that puts believers **into a firm union with the Messiah (Romans 8:1, 16:11-3; First Corinthians 1:30, 3:1, 7:22; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:2 and 28, 4:7)** and with each other. **Paul’s truthfulness** could not be separated from that of **the Corinthians**, and to deny it was to deny the reality of **their** own spiritual life. Because **they** were

fellow members of the body of **Messiah**, by attacking **Paul’s truthfulness, the Corinthians** ripped the fabric of the church’s spiritual unity. As **their spiritual father (First Corinthians 4:15)**, to deny **his truthfulness** was, figuratively, to saw off the branch on which **they** were sitting.⁵⁴

Second, He has anointed (Greek: *chrio*, meaning *to commission them for service*) **us (1:21b)**. *Chiro* is found in four other places in the B’rit Chadash, once in **Hebrews 1:9**, “**O God, Your God has set You [Messiah] above Your companions [the angels] by anointing You with the oil [the Ruach Ha’Kodesh] of joy (Hebrews 1:8-9 quoting Psalm 45:6-7 CJB)**. And three times in the writings of **Luke (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27 and 10:38)**, where **he** uses it twice quite explicitly with respect to the **anointing of the Ruach**, and arguably it is implied in the third. Given the emphasis on **the Spirit** in the present context it is best to see here a reference to **Paul and his collogues** having been **anointed by the Ruach**, recognizing that **their** commission is intimately bound up with that. The related noun *chrisma* describes the **anointing** of all believers at the moment of faith into one body (**First Corinthians 12:13**).⁵⁵

Third, He has put His seal upon us (Greek: *sphragizo*, which *signifies ownership and the full authority of its owner*). In commercial documents it is the sealing of letters and sacks so the nobody could tamper with the contents. Used figuratively, *to seal* means *to keep secret or stamp with a mark of identification* (see the commentary on **Revelation Cr - Then I Heard the Number of Those Who Were Sealed, 144,000 from all the Tribes of Isra’el**). In **Ephesians 1:13b-14a**, **Paul** would say, “**You were sealed with the promised Ruach Ha’Kodesh who guarantees our future inheritance.**” Here, as in **Ephesians 4:30** and **Second Timothy 2:19**, it refers believers’, stamped with **God’s seal** of approval, receiving the indwelling **Ruach (Romans 8:9)**, whose presence identifies them as **ADONAI’s** true and eternal possession, whom **He** will protect and keep.⁵⁶

Fourth, and He has given us His Spirit in our hearts guaranteeing (Greek: *arrabon*, meaning *a down payment or a deposit, the first installment*) **everything He has promised us (1:22)**, even eternal life (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **Paul** develops this idea in **Ephesians 5:25-27**, where the Church is portrayed as the bride-to-be and **Messiah** as the expected bridegroom. On **His** return they will be married. Meanwhile, the Church is in the process of being **cleansed through the Word**, so that **she** might be presented to **Messiah** as **a radiant bride without spot or**

blemish.⁵⁷

Some people think that **ADONAI** is like a cosmic killjoy whose favorite word is “No!” But nothing could be further from the truth. **God’s** favorite word is “**Yes.**” Now, it doesn’t mean **He** condones sinful behavior, but **He** greatest desire is to say “**Yes**” to us. **YHVH** has made over eight thousand **promises** to you in the Bible and every one of those **promises** is “**Yes.**” Here are five **promises** that every believer should claim. We all claim different **promises** at different times in our lives. That’s human nature as we go through different circumstances. There is **a promise** for whatever you are going through in **God’s Word**.

God loves you unconditionally. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angles nor other heavenly rulers, neither what exists nor what is coming, neither powers above nor powers below, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which comes to us through the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord (Romans 8:38-39). How do we know that **God loves us** unconditionally, because **First John 4:16** says: **God is love.** How do we know? Because the Bible says: **For God so loved the world that He gave His only and unique Son, so that everyone who trusts in Him may have eternal life (John 3:16).** But how do we really know? Because **God’s Word** says that **God demonstrates His own love for us in that Messiah died on our behalf while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8).**

God loves you unconditionally, just the way you are. You don’t have to clean yourself up. You don’t have to fix yourself. You don’t have to get new clothes, you don’t have to get your tattoo removed. **He loves** you just as you are. But here is the other side of the coin. But **God loves** you too much to leave you like you are. When you come to **Him**, **He** is going to mold you into **His** image. **He** is going to transform you into the likeness of **Messiah**. **He** is going to make you a little more like **Yeshua** each and every day.

Since you have trusted in Yeshua, you are eternally secure in Him. Everyone who calls on the name of **ADONAI** will be saved (Romans 10:13). **ADONAI** is not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9). How do I know that? Because **God’s Word** promises it. **If I raise my eyes to the hills, from where will my help come? My help comes from ADONAI, the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip – your Guardian is not asleep. No, the Guardian of Isra’el never slumbers or sleeps. ADONAI is your Guardian; at your right hand**

ADONAI provides you with shade - the sun can't strike you during the day or even the moon at night. ADONAI will guard you against all harm; He will guard your life. ADONAI will guard your coming and going from now on and forever (Psalm 121:1-8). How do I know that? Because **First John 5:11** says: **God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Those who have the Son have the life** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**).

God formed you intentionally and He knows you intimately. For you formed my inmost being, You knit me together in my mother's womb. I thank You because I am awesomely made, wonderfully; Your works are wonders - I know this very well. My bones were not hidden from You when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes could see me as an embryo, but in Your book all my days were already written; my days had been shaped before any of them existed (Psalm 139:13-16). God formed you in **His** image and intentionally made you to have a relationship with **Him**. And **He** knows you intimately: **Examine me, God, and know my heart; test me, and know my thoughts. See if there is in me any hurtful way, and lead me along the eternal way (Psalm 139:23-24).** You need to know something about **God**. There is not public life and private life with **Him**. **He** knows everything about you. **He** knows your thoughts. **He** not only knows what you do, **He** knows why you did it. There is not anything that you can tell **God** about what you're going through and what you're feeling that **He** doesn't already know. So be honest with **Him**.

God has a plan for your life. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). The original context of this passage is from **Jeremiah** to the exiles in **Babylon** after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Ej - A Letter to the Exiles**). But we can make an application to us today because the Bible says that **our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20)** and we are **strangers**, in effect, **aliens** and **temporary residents on the earth (Hebrews 11:13b; First Peter 2:11a)**. **God** has formed you with a purpose. **When you call to me and pray to Me, I will listen to you. When you seek Me, you will find Me, when you search for Me with all of your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).**

You can do all things through Messiah. We are all human and there are times when we feel weak and don't think that you can put one foot in front of the other.

But **God's promise** is that you **can do all things through Messiah who gives you strength (Philippians 4:13). What then are we to say to these things?** Think of all the profound questions to which **God** says **"Yes."** Do you **love** me? Am I forgiven? Am I secure in **Your love**? Is there any purpose for my life? Is there life beyond the grave? To all these questions and more, **God** answers with an everlasting **"Yes!" For if God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 5:31)?**⁵⁸