

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 18

Sha'ul's Letter to the Galatians ~ Part 3

We pause the ongoing story of **Sha'ul** to examine his **Letter to the Galatians**.

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

Sha'ul Defends His Appointment as an Emissary

In our last post, we left off on the topic of **No Other Gospel** with the following verse: ***⁹ As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone preaches to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!*** We now move on to verse 10.

¹⁰ Now, does that sound as if I were trying to win human approval? No! I want God's approval! Or that I'm trying to cater to people? If I were still doing that, I would not be a servant of the Messiah.

Sha'ul was evidently being accused by certain other **Messianic Jews** of trying to win human approval, in this case, **Gentile** approval, by setting forth an "easy" **Gospel** that did not demand that **Gentiles** become **Jews** and thus be required to observe the **Torah** as **non-Messianic Judaism** understands it and as considerable numbers of **Messianic Jews** were practicing it (see posts Part 12-15 in this series). **Sha'ul's** response is to establish from the start the dichotomy between winning human approval and winning **God's** approval: one cannot aim at both, and **Sha'ul's** interest is only in the latter (compare Romans 2:29). Or, to emphasize a different side of it, if **Sha'ul** catered to people, he would not in fact, indeed could not possibly, be a servant of the **Messiah**, since no less than **God the Father**, the **Messiah** demands exclusive loyalty.

One goal we should strive to achieve every day is to be the people God created us to be rather than who those around us think we should be. While it might make you feel good to please people, it will make you feel fulfilled to please God.

Tim Tebow
Mission Possible One-Year
Devotional

¹¹ Furthermore, let me make clear to you, brothers, that the Good News as I proclaim it is not a human product; ¹² because neither did I receive it from someone else nor was I taught it—it came through a direct revelation from Yeshua the Messiah.

The **Good News**, as I proclaim it, was revealed directly (compare 2:2) by the **Risen Yeshua**. The fact that it is not a human product and that neither did he receive it from someone else nor was he taught it means that he had no reason to try to win the approval of or cater to his teachers (v. 10); for those who had been his teachers, **Rabban Gamli'el** (Acts 22:3) and other **non-Messianic Jews**, had taught him something very different (vv. 13–14 below).

¹³ For you have heard about my former way of life in [traditional] Judaism - how I did my best to persecute God's Messianic Community and destroy it; ¹⁴ and how, since I was more of a zealot for the traditions handed down by my forefathers than most Jews my age, I advanced in [traditional] Judaism more rapidly than they did.

Sha'ul communicated three things to his readers: (1) he had advanced much farther in Judaism than those who had distorted the **Gospel**, (2) he was far more zealous for the Jewish traditions than these false teachers, and (3) ironically, **Sha'ul's** zeal and advancement in Judaism led him to persecute the church before his conversion.

¹⁵ But when God, who picked me out before I was born and called me by his grace, chose ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me so that I might announce him to the Gentiles, I did not consult anyone; ¹⁷ and I did not go up to Yerushalayim to see those who were emissaries before me. Instead, I immediately went off to Arabia and afterward returned to Dammesek.

On **Sha'ul's** calling to preach **Yeshua** among the **Gentiles**, see Acts 9:15; 26:17–18; Romans 1:5; 16:26. After his conversion (Acts 9:3–9), **Sha'ul** did not feel any compulsion to travel immediately from **Dammesek** to **Yerushalayim** to consult with the authorities on the **Gospel**. He went to **Arabia** (see Acts 9:23–25; 2 Corinthians 11:32–33), then back to **Dammesek**.

¹⁸ Not until three years later did I go up to Yerushalayim to make Kefa's acquaintance, and I stayed with him for two weeks, ¹⁹ but I did not see any of the other emissaries except Ya'akov the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (Concerning these matters I am writing you about, I declare before God that I am not lying!) ²¹ Next, I went to Syria and Cilicia; ²² but in Y'udah, the Messianic congregations didn't even know what I looked like—²³ they were only hearing the report, "The one who used to persecute us now preaches the Good News of the faith he was formerly out to destroy"; ²⁴ and they praised God for me. ¹

As further evidence that **Sha'ul's** version of the **Good News** was not taught to him by others (vv. 11–12), he writes that in **Y'udah**, where the greatest concentration of believers was, the **Messianic** congregations didn't even know what he looked like, much less had they instructed him in their version of the **Gospel**.

In our next post, we will continue to explore **Sha'ul's Letter to the Galatians**, starting in chapter 2:1.

¹ Galatians 1:09-24.