

## Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 20

### Sha'ul's Letter to the Galatians ~ Part 5

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.*

In our last post, we left off in Chapter 2:14 with *Sha'ul* describing his travels to *Yerushalayim*. In this post, he begins to explain his **Doctrine of Justification**.

#### The Law & Yeshua

*<sup>15</sup> We are Jews by birth, not so-called 'Goyishe' (Gentile) sinners'; <sup>16</sup> even so, we have come to realize that a person is not declared righteous by God on the ground of his legalistic observance of Torah commands, but through the Messiah Yeshua's trusting faithfulness. Therefore, we, too, have put our trust in Messiah Yeshua and become faithful to Him so that we might be declared righteous on the grounds of the Messiah's trusting faithfulness and not on the grounds of our legalistic observance of Torah commands. For on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands, no one will be declared righteous.*

These two verses are the key to how *Sha'ul* regarded the **Law of Moses**; thus, they are the key to the letter to the **Galatians** and the **Romans**. He who seizes their true meaning can help repair the grave damage done to the unity of **Jews** and **Gentiles** in the **Body of the Messiah** by those who have misunderstood *Sha'ul's* view of the **Torah**. In these verses, *Sha'ul* pivots from defending the authority behind his version of the **Gospel** (which he began in the very first verse of the letter and has made his central topic since 1:10) to explaining why, under the **New Covenant**, it is wrong to **Judaize Gentile Believers**. From here to the end of the book of **Galatians**, he will be attacking the **Judaizers** and defending the true **Gospel**, according to which **Gentiles** need not become **Jews** to follow *Yeshua*, the **Messiah**.

*<sup>17</sup> But if, in seeking to be declared righteous by God through our union with the Messiah, we ourselves are indeed found to be sinners, then is the Messiah an aider and abettor of sin? Heaven forbid! <sup>18</sup> Indeed, if I build up again the legalistic bondage which I destroyed, I really do make myself a transgressor.*

In typically rabbinic teaching fashion, *Sha'ul* anticipates an objection the **Judaizers** might make. The objection is two-pronged. First, and easily disposed of: Is the **Messiah an aider and abettor of sin**? The idea of a **Messiah** who promotes or serves sin is **Jewishly** unthinkable, a contradiction. Even if all who claim to trust in the **Messiah** were worse sinners than everyone else, it would be their own fault, not the **Messiah's** (compare Romans 3:3–4).

The second part of the objection might be stated by the **Judaizers** this way: "You have been seeking to be righteous before **God** by uniting yourself with *Yeshua*; but instead of attaining righteousness, your condition is that of sinners (just like the **Goyim**, whom we call '**Goyishe sinners**', because you don't observe the Torah." But *Sha'ul* answers by asserting that what the **Judaizers** regard as sin is not sin at all, not transgression of the **Torah**. For the **Judaizers** apply the label, "sinner," not to those who disobey what is genuinely the **Torah**, but to those who do not submit to the system which results from perverting the **Torah** into legalism.

*<sup>19</sup> For it was through letting the Torah speak for itself that I died to its traditional legalistic misinterpretation so that I might live in a direct relationship with God. (emphasis added)*

Instead of being shut off from **God** by legalistic misinterpretation of the **Torah**. Literally, *"so that to God I might live."* There is a **Torah** to be observed (see 6:2 below), but it isn't the legalistic system made of it by much of the **non-Messianic Jewish** world.<sup>1</sup>

***<sup>20</sup> When the Messiah was executed on the stake as a criminal, I was too, so that my proud ego no longer lives. But the Messiah lives in me, and the life I now live in my body I live by the same trusting faithfulness that the Son of God had, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.***

As a part of my daily devotional time this year, I read **Kingdom Living: The Essentials for Spiritual Growth** by Dr. Tony Evans. He shares that his life verse is Galatians 2:20. *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* (ESV) I have that copied on a 4x6 photo stock on my nightstand and read it when I awake and when I lay down. BTW, I highly recommend this book for your own personal studies.

***<sup>21</sup> I do not reject God's gracious gift; for if the way in which one attains righteousness is through legalism, then the Messiah's death was pointless.*** <sup>2</sup>

**The contrast in Galatians 5:16-21 is not between man's spirit and man's flesh, but between the life led by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and the life that serves the flesh, man's fallen nature.**

**R. C. Sproul**

If the way in which one attains ***righteousness is through legalism***, through any form of self-generated effort, and specifically, through legalistic following of **Torah** commands, then the **Messiah's** death was pointless, and so is His ongoing resurrected life. We will explore this concept more in our next post.

In our next post, we will continue to explore **Sha'ul's Doctrine of Justification**, starting in chapter 3:1.

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<sup>1</sup> ***Bear one another's burdens - in this way, you will be fulfilling the Torah's true meaning, which the Messiah upholds.***

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 2:15-21.