

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 29

Sha'ul's Letter to the Galatians ~ Part 14

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

In our last post, we left off in Chapter 5:1 with **Sha'ul** describing the **Allegory of Sarah and Hagar**. In this post, we continue to explore his **Doctrine on Messianic Liberty**.

Circumcision: A Matter of Law ~ Part 2

⁷ You were running the race well; who has stopped you from following the truth? ⁸ Whatever means of persuasion he used was not from the One who calls you. ⁹ "It takes only a little hametz to leaven the whole batch of dough." ¹⁰ I am confident that since you are united with the Lord, you will take no other view, and I am confident that the one who has been disturbing you, whoever he may be, will have to bear his punishment.

Chametz, "leaven," is familiar to **Jews** from the **Pesach** (Passover) ritual) here, it could stand for sin, wrong ideas, or ungodly people ("One bad apple spoils the barrel"). See 1 Corinthians 5:6–8, where **Sha'ul** quotes the same famous proverb.

¹¹ And as for me, brothers, if I am still preaching that circumcision is necessary, why am I still being persecuted? If that were the case, my preaching about the execution stake would cause no offense whatsoever.

There was a group of people (call them the Out-of-Touch) whom we had not encountered before this verse, who had not kept up to date with what **Sha'ul** was saying and doing. They claimed he was still preaching that circumcision is necessary for **Gentiles** who wish to join **God's** people, as he had before he was saved. The **Judaizers** misappropriated this false rumor as evidence that **Sha'ul** himself approved their insistence on the circumcision of **Gentile** believers.

Sha'ul's answer implicitly references a second hitherto unmentioned group; I will call them the Super-Jews. They are zealous **non-Messianic Jewish** missionaries, the kind **Yeshua** said would "**go about over land and sea to make one proselyte**" (Mattityahu 23:15). It is interesting that when **Sha'ul** wrote - in contrast with now - his proclaiming **Yeshua** as the crucified **Jewish Messiah** would have caused him no difficulties in the Jewish community, had he continued preaching that **Gentiles** who come to faith in **Yeshua** must then convert to Judaism. It was not because of his preaching about the execution stake that the Super-Jews objected to and persecuted him. By itself, **Sha'ul** said, that would not offend whatever. Instead, he claimed that **Gentiles** could join the people of **God** without getting circumcised. **Sha'ul** insisted that trust alone was sufficient, so the Super-Jews persecuted him. Their persecution refutes the **Judaizers'** false claim that **Sha'ul** is still preaching that circumcision is necessary.

***¹² I wish the people who are bothering you would go the whole way and castrate themselves!**¹*

I wish. **Sha'ul's** choleric personality leads him to make intemperate use of his gift for sarcasm, neither his first nor his last; for another, see Acts 23:2–5, and compare his behavior as a nonbeliever at Acts 8:3. The people who are bothering you about getting circumcised are neither the Out-of-Touch nor the Super-Jews, but the **Judaizers**. They would go the whole way and castrate themselves, literally, "**would indeed cut themselves off.**" The **Torah** declares a castrated cohen unfit to perform priestly duties (Leviticus 21:20) and, "**He who has been wounded in the stones or has had his sexual organ cut off shall not enter the assembly of Adonai**" (Deuteronomy 23:2). But there is also a punning reference to being cut off from

¹ Galatians 5:7–12.

one's people, a common sanction in the **Torah: Sha'ul** wishes these pests would be deprived of contact with the **Messianic Community**.

In our next post, we will continue to explore **Sha'ul's Doctrine on Messianic Liberty**, starting in chapter 5:13.