

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 96

2 Corinthians ~ Part 3

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

As I emphasized in my previous posts, we are delving into the profound significance of **Sha'ul's Letters to the Corinthians**, a crucial cornerstone of our faith. This significance is not to be taken lightly, but to be deeply understood and appreciated, invoking a sense of the weight of this text's importance in our faith.

Reasons for the Letter

²³ I call God to witness—He knows what my life is like—that the reason I held back from coming to Corinth was out of consideration for you! ²⁴ We are not trying to dictate how you must live out your trust in the Messiah, for in your trust you are standing firm. Rather, we are working with you for your own happiness.

The phrase ***I call to God to witness*** is a solemn pledge to be telling the truth (Romans 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:5, 10). Instead of the visits planned under happier circumstances (2 **Corinthians** 1:15–16), **Sha'ul** had made a painful visit to **Corinth** (2:1 below). He, therefore, canceled his previously announced itinerary. Time was needed to heal the raw emotions raised on both sides. Verse 24 summarizes the relationship between ministers and those under their care. This relationship, as **Sha'ul** emphasizes, is not about lording over others but about working gently with them, underlining the importance of our own spiritual communities.

In Chapter 2, **Sha'ul** explains the changed plans (see 1:15ff) and shows his love and concern for the **Kehilah** and its spiritual needs.

² ¹ So I made up my mind that I would not pay you another painful visit. ² For if I cause you pain, who is left to make me happy except the people I have pained? ³ Indeed, this is why I wrote as I did—so that when I came, I would not have to be pained by those who ought to be making me happy, for I had enough confidence in all of you to believe that unless I could be happy, none of you could be happy either. ⁴ I wrote to you with a greatly distressed and anguished heart and with many tears, not in order to cause you pain but to get you to realize how very much I love you.

In Chapter 11:23–28, we'll discover that Sha'ul enumerates the numerous trials he endured for Yeshua's sake, and he identifies the greatest burden as "the care of all the Kehilah's" (v. 28). A true shepherd, Sha'ul carried these infant Kehilah's on his heart and on his shoulders, like the High Priest of Israel (Exodus 28:12–21). Tears are a significant part of a spiritual ministry. Yeshua wept; Sha'ul ministered with tears (Acts 20:19 and 31); and Psalm 126:5–6 declares that there will be no harvest without tears. This profound emotional and spiritual burden that Sha'ul bore for the Kehilah is something we can all empathize with, fostering a deeper connection with the text.

Sha'ul did not want to visit the **Kehilah** as a stern father but as a loving friend. The **Kehilah** should have brought joy to his heart, not sorrow. If he had made them sorry, how could they, in turn, make him glad? He wanted to give them time to make matters right in the **Kehilah**; then, he would visit them, and their fellowship would be joyful. When he wrote to them, he wrote with a pen dipped in tears. He even wept over that letter. (v. 4). (He may be referring to 1 **Corinthians** or an even sterner letter that we do not have.) In chapter 1, **Sha'ul's** theme was abundant comfort; here, it is abundant love. "Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8). Where there is love, there is always the burden of seeing others enjoy themselves best. How many times have pastors wept over wayward **Believers**? Yet God honored **Sha'ul's** tears and worked in the **Kehilah** to put sin away.

Troublemakers to Be Forgiven

⁵ For just as the Messiah's sufferings overflow into us, so through the Messiah our encouragement also overflows.

This may refer to the incestuous man of 1 Corinthians 5:1–5. More likely, the reference is to an episode regarding the false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:4) because **Sha’ul** spoke about a sin he had personally forgiven (2:10 below).

⁶ For such a person the punishment already imposed on him by the majority is sufficient, ⁷ so that now you should do the opposite—forgive him, encourage him, comfort him. Otherwise, such a person might be swallowed up in overwhelming depression. ⁸ So I urge you to show that you really do love him.

Although the **Kehilah** discipline is experienced as punishment, the intention is redemptive. Upon repentance, **Believers** are to forgive and comfort. The congregation must be careful not to overwhelm a returning sinner with excessive grief. The most severe **Kehilah** discipline possible is excommunication (Mattityahu 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:5). The phrase ***I urge you to show that you really do love him*** refers to restoration after repentance.

¹¹ And you must add your help by praying for us; for the more people there are praying, the more people there will be to give thanks when their prayer for us is answered.

Behind the sin and discord in the **Corinthian Kehilah**, **Sha’ul** saw **HaSatan**, the evil one. His schemes always include thwarting the unity of **Believers** for which **Yeshua** so fervently prayed (Yochanan 17).

Eagerness for Titus’ Report

¹² Now, when I went to Troas to proclaim the Good News of the Messiah, since a door had been opened for me by the Lord, ¹³ I could not rest because I failed to find my brother Titus. So I left the people there and went on to Macedonia. ¹

Troas was a coastal city in the northern part of the province of **Asia**. **Sha’ul** went there after the riot in **Ephesus** (Acts 19:23–41) on his way to **Macedonia** (Ac 20:1–2). **Titus** is not mentioned in **Acts**. He was **Sha’ul**’s proof that **Gentiles** could be converted without works of the law such as circumcision (Galatians 2:3). That **Sha’ul** (the **Jew**) called both **Timothy and Titus brother** (2 Corinthians 1:1) shows that his primary identity was as a **Messianic Believer** rather than as a **Jew**. **Titus** was effective as **Sha’ul**’s ambassador in dealing with the **Corinthian** crisis. Later, he represented the apostle to **Believers** in **Crete** (Titus 1:4).

In your relationships, strive to be trustworthy and consistent in your words. Be known to speak honestly and openly, even when it's complicated. This will build trust and strengthen your connections with others.

In our next post, we will continue to examine **Sha’ul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians**. Stay tuned for more insights and revelations.

¹ 2 Corinthians 1:23 - 2:1–13.