

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 98

2 Corinthians ~ Part 5

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.

We continue to examine the topic **Regarding Sha'ul's Ministry**, which covers 2 Corinthians 2:14 to 9:15.

Splendor of the Gospel Message

3⁷ Now, if that which worked death, by means of a written text engraved on stone tablets, came with glory—such glory that the people of Isra'el could not stand to look at Moshe's face because of its brightness, even though that brightness was already fading away—

Now, if that which worked, death refers to the **Tanakh** made at **Mount Sinai**. Its effect was condemnation and death, not justification and life. This was not the fault of the **Tanakh**. Still, of sinners who were unable to meet its demands (Romans 7:13). The **Ten Commandments** were written with letters on stones (Exodus 31:18). With **God** as the source of the law, it was suitable for its human mediator to have something of **God's** glory about him.

8 won't the working of the Spirit be accompanied by even greater glory? 9 For if there was glory in what worked to declare people guilty, how much more must the glory abound in what works to declare people innocent! 10 In fact, by comparison with this greater glory, what was made glorious before has no glory now. 11 For if there was glory in what faded away, how much more glory must there be in what lasts.

One way the **Tanakh** and the **Brit Hadashah** contrast is the degree of **glory** connected with each. In the natural order, the glory of the moon (which wanes every month) is no glory at all compared with the unfading sun.

Unveiling of the Ruach

12 Therefore, with a hope like this, we are very open—13 unlike Moshe, who put a veil over his face so that the people of Isra'el would not see the fading brightness come to an end. 14 What is more, their minds were made stonelike, for to this day, the same veil remains over them when they read the Old Covenant; it has not been unveiled because only by the Messiah is the veil taken away. 15 Yes, till today, whenever Moshe is read, a veil lies over their heart. 16 "But," says the Torah, "whenever someone turns to Adonai, the veil is taken away."

These verses must be read together with 4:3–6 (see below), which continues the discussion. **Sha'ul** mixes in a second metaphor: the **stonelike** (hardness) of minds and hearts is combined with impaired vision and understanding. **Their minds**, the minds of unsaved **Jewish** people, **were made stonelike** (hard, unreceptive, stupefied), **for to this day, Sha'ul's day**. However, still valid in the present day, **the same veil remains over them** so that **when they read the Old Covenant**, the **Torah**, they do not see that it points toward **Yeshua HaMashiach** as its goal and fulfillment. And the **veil lies over their heart**, singular, referring to the community, which resists being open to the truth of **Yeshua** and exerts social pressure against searching the scriptures to see if these things are so (Acts 17:9). However, throughout history, individual **Jews** have appeared who have been open to the **Gospel** and received it.

17 Now, "Adonai" in this text means the Spirit. And where the Spirit of Adonai is, there is freedom. 18 So all of us, with faces unveiled, see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and we are being changed into his very image, from one degree of glory to the next, by Adonai the Spirit.

Now, "Adonai" in this text means the Spirit, literally, "Now the Lord is the Spirit." The phrase "in this text" is not in this text; I (David Stern) have added it to clarify what I believe is **Sha'ul's** sense. This is an essential verse for demonstrating the divinity of the **Ruach**. **Where the Spirit of Adonai is, there is freedom** to function within the framework of the **Torah** without being enslaved by it. And thus **all of us**, not just **Sha'ul** and his co-workers, but all **Believers, with faces unveiled**, with open hearts, not stonelike but sincere and unclouded, **see as in a mirror** (compare 1 Corinthians 13:12, Exodus 33:18–34:8) **the glory of Adonai, and we are being changed into his very image, from one degree of glory to the next, by Adonai the Spirit** (literally, "by the Lord, who is the Spirit" or "by the Lord, that is, the Spirit"). This is how the Spirit **"gives life"** (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Gospel Preached Honestly

4¹ God has shown us such mercy that we do not lose courage as we do the work He has given us. 2 Indeed, we refuse to make use of shameful, underhanded methods, employing deception or distorting God's message. On the contrary, by making very clear what the truth is, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

The background of this passage about **Sha'ul's** defense of his ministry is 2 Corinthians 1:12–24.

3 So if indeed our Good News is veiled, it is veiled only to those in the process of being lost. 4 They do not come to trust because the god of the 'olam hazeh has blinded their minds in order to prevent them from seeing the light shining from the Good News about the glory of the Messiah, who is the image of God.

Our Good News is veiled both to unsaved **Jews** (3:14–15) and **Gentiles in the process of being lost**—the veil remains as long as they do not turn to **Adonai** (3:16–17). Why do they not turn to **Adonai**? **Because the god of this world (olam hazeh), the Adversary, HaSatan** (2:11), **has blinded their minds** (3:14) with this "veil." Why? **In order to prevent them from seeing the light shining from the Good News about the glory of the Messiah**. As the perennial accuser and opposer of **God's** plans, **HaSatan desires** that people be lost, just as it is **God's** desire **"that all should come to repentance"** (2 Kefa 3:9).

5 For what we are proclaiming is not ourselves, but the Messiah Yeshua as Lord, with ourselves as slaves for you because of Yeshua.

This verse answers **"No"** to **Sha'ul's** earlier rhetorical question, **"Are we starting to recommend ourselves again?"** (3:1). **What we are proclaiming is not ourselves** as objects of worship, emulation, or self-puffery, **but the Messiah Yeshua as Lord** (compare 1 Corinthians 2:1–2), **with ourselves as slaves for you** (compare 1:24), helping you come to fuller knowledge of him; and we do this **because of** who **Yeshua** is.

6 For it is the God who once said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has made his light shine in our hearts, the light of the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of the Messiah Yeshua.

¹

The God who once said, "Let light shine out of darkness." This is not a literal quotation from the Torah, but it refers to Genesis 1:3, "And God said, 'Let there be light.'" The "quotation" in this form calls attention to the darkness in creation and human hearts before **God** speaks.

Every Christian should be looking to the Lord for something to do in the kingdom of God, and everyone ought to be asking God to honor him with a job too big for him....

I think it may be safely said that God is still looking for men who know their own insufficiencies so well that He can perform the miraculous through them....

This is a principle so true of us all in our human experiences. Whenever I think I can stand up and say, "I am now strong enough, sufficient enough—I can do it!" then God fades out, and there comes only grief and woe and sterility and fruitlessness and, finally, eclipse.

~ A. W. Tozer
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In our next post, we will examine **Sha'ul's Second Letter to the Corinthians**. Stay tuned for more insights and revelations.