

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 106

2 Corinthians ~ Part 13

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 must grasp the depth of its meaning and its impact on our spiritual journey.

We examine a new topic **Regarding Collection for the Brethren in Judea**, which covers 2 Corinthians 8:1 to 9:15.

As we reflect on 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, consider how you can cultivate a spirit of generosity in your life. Challenge yourself to move beyond merely giving out of obligation but to give cheerfully and sacrificially. This can help you experience the joy and blessings of trusting **God** with your finances.

Cheerful, Abundant Giving

⁶ Here's the point: he who plants sparingly also harvests sparingly. ⁷ Each should give according to what he has decided in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ Moreover, God has the power to provide you with every gracious gift in abundance, so that always in every way you will have all you need yourselves and be able to provide abundantly for every good cause—⁹ as the Tanakh says,

***"He gave generously to the poor;
his tzedakah lasts forever."¹***

Like other good works, our stewardship flows ideally from a heart of love for **God** and others rather than from a sense of duty (see Mattityahu 22:37–40). The quotation of Psalm 112:9 is taken from a song about those who fear the **Lord** by living righteous obedience to Him, extolling them to give to the poor.

Generosity Glorifies Giving

¹⁰ He who provides both seed for the planter and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your tzedakah (charity). ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous in everything. And through us your generosity will cause people to thank God, ¹² because rendering this holy service not only provides for the needs of God's people, but it also overflows in the many thanks people will be giving to God. ¹³ In offering this service you prove to these people that you glorify God by actually doing what your acknowledgment of the Good News of the Messiah requires, namely, sharing generously with them and with everyone. ¹⁴ And in their prayers for you, they will feel a strong affection for you because of how gracious God has been to you.

Still, another reason for giving is that, by doing so, you give the recipients a reason to praise God for having met their need through you (v. 12) and for having molded you into obedient believers (v. 13). As a result, they will pray to God for you (v. 14).

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!²

Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift, namely, the opportunity to accomplish so much good for

¹ Psalm 112:9

² 2 Corinthians 9:6–15.

others, yourselves, and **God's** glory by giving to the **Judean** brothers!

We now begin a new and final topic, **Defense of Sha'ul's Apostleship**, which covers 2 Corinthians 10:1 to 13:14.

Sha'ul's Response to the Charge ~ Part 1

10¹ Now it is I myself, Sha'ul, making an appeal to you with the meekness and forbearance that come from the Messiah, I who am considered timid when face-to-face with you but intimidating from a distance. ² But I beg you not to force me to be intimidating when I am with you, as I expect to be toward some who regard us as living in a worldly way. ³

Because it is so enlightening, the following explanation is taken from David Stern's New Testament Commentary:

It is I, myself, Sha'ul. Why the emphasis? Because by some, he is considered timid (or: "humble") and "weak" (v. 10) in person, distance only gives him the courage to be **intimidating** (or: "bold"). **Sha'ul** must put an end to such criticisms because they cause people to disrespect him and his authority (v. 8) as the Messiah's emissary and to turn to more glamorous "super-emissaries" (11:5) instead. The problem is not new in Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 1:25–2:5, 4:14–21). To overcome these attitudes, **Sha'ul** has spent the last two chapters demonstrating how gentle, timid, and humble he can be at a distance—precisely the opposite of his critics' expectations. In his **appeal** to the **Corinthians** to give generously to the **Judeans**, he leaned over backward to show humility, forbearance, and tact; indeed, these qualities have characterized the entire letter up to this point. To those who deprecate such qualities, he will explain that such "weakness" is true strength (12:9–10) and that he would rather boast about this kind of "weakness" than about what superficially appears to be a strength (11:19–20, 30; compare 5:12, 1 Corinthians 1:25–2:5). Even then, he would boast only because these qualities are not natural in him but are evidence of how the Lord has changed him (3:18)—his only boasting will be about the Lord (10:17, 1C 1:31). The New Testament abounds with evidence that for **Sha'ul** in particular, such **humility and forbearance** came only **from the Messiah**. The aggressive temper he displayed before he was saved (Acts 8:3, 9:1) was not done away with but stayed on in his "old nature" (vv. 3–5) long afterward (Acts 15:2, 39; 19:30–31; 23:3–5; Galatians 5:12). He understands he is "equal to such a task" as proclaiming the **Good News** (2:16b) and "competent" to be the **Messiah's emissary** (3:5) only because **God** makes him so.

Nevertheless, those who think **Sha'ul** is capable of being bold only when at a safe distance must be warned that he will not shrink from using his authority as the Messiah's emissary: ***I beg you not to force me to be intimidating when I am with you***, which ***I expect to be toward some of you who regard us as living in a worldly way*** unless you repent and change (compare v. 11; 13:2–4, 10; 1 Corinthians 4:19–21).

In effect, in these two verses, **Sha'ul** "bites the bullet"; he is now going to deal directly with those who carp at him, and a new element enters the tone of his letter. From here on, he makes use of irony, even sarcasm, as he ridicules his opponents, especially the "super-emissaries" (11:5, 12:11) who are actually "pseudo-emissaries" (11:13), and he indicates with increasing sharpness that he will not spare those who continue to sin. He has shown how gentle he can be; now, he shows another side of himself, as he does his utmost to turn divisive troublemakers into faithful followers of the Messiah and his appointed emissary **Sha'ul** (1:1).

The phrase ***"as living in a worldly way"*** is literally ***"as walking according to the flesh."*** The term ***"flesh"*** (Greek ***sarkos***) here, and often in **Sha'ul's** writings, means the ***"old nature,"*** the emotional, mental, and volitional qualities of a person before he has submitted himself to **God**, letting the **Messiah** change him. See **Sha'ul's** explanation in Romans 7:18–25a, 8:4b–13.

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

³ 2 Corinthians 10:1-2.