

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 108

2 Corinthians ~ Part 15

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 continue to examine the topic of **Defense of Sha'ul's Apostleship**, which covers 2 Corinthians 10:1 to 13:14.

Comparisons With Others

¹² We don't dare class or compare ourselves with some of the people who advertise themselves. In measuring themselves against each other and comparing themselves with each other, they are simply stupid.

We dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

~ R. C. Sproul

¹³ We will not boast about what lies outside the area of work which God has given us; rather, we will boast within our assigned area, and that area does reach as far as you. ¹⁴ We are not overextending our boasting as if we had not reached as far as you; for we did come all the way to you with the Good News of the Messiah. ¹⁵ We do not boast about the area in which others labor, but our hope is that as your trust grows, we will be magnified in your midst in relation to our own area of work so that we can go on to do even more, ¹⁶ namely, to proclaim the Good News in regions beyond you. Our hope is not to boast about the work already done by someone else. ¹⁷ So, let anyone who wants to boast, boast about Adonai; ¹⁸ because it is not the one who recommends himself who is worthy of approval, but the one whom the Lord recommends.

Expressing rich irony, **Sha'ul** does not **dare class or compare** himself with the “pseudo-emissaries” (2 Corinthians 11:13), not because they play this worldly game better than he (perhaps they do), or even because self-advertisement is ungodly (which it is), but because, for the reason given in v. 18, it is **simply stupid** (v. 12). Instead, knowing how risky boasting of any sort is, he limits his boasting to his **area of work** (v. 13, 16b). He is guided by the rule of v. 17, which he has quoted to these people before (1 Corinthians 1:31). Within that framework, he wants to boast only about the growing trust of the **Corinthians** themselves (v. 15), who are his “letter of recommendation” (2 Corinthians 3:1–3, 1 Corinthians 9:1–3) because he led them to the **Lord** (v. 14, 1 Corinthians 4:15).

Oratory vs. Knowledge

¹¹ ¹ I would like you to bear with me in a little foolishness—please do bear with me! ² For I am jealous for you with God's kind of jealousy since I promised to present you as a pure virgin in marriage to your one husband, the Messiah; ³ and I fear that somehow your minds may be seduced away from simple and pure devotion to the Messiah, just as Havah was deceived by the serpent and his craftiness.

Sha'ul felt compelled by circumstances to compare himself with those who had usurped his authority in

Corinth. He foresaw that this would seem like **foolishness** or madness to some, for which he begged indulgence. In the marriage analogy in these verses, four parties may be identified: (1) **Sha'ul** was the spiritual father of the **Corinthians**, (2) the **Corinthians** were a **pure virgin** daughter of marriageable age, (3) **Yeshua** was the bridegroom to whom the **Corinthians** were to be given **in marriage** (at His return, Revelation 19:7–9), and (4) the **serpent** was **HaSatan** working through the false teachers trying to lure the daughter away from **simple and pure devotion** to her bridegroom (2 Corinthians 13–14). The reference to the fall (Genesis 3) indicates that **Sha'ul** believed in the historical **Adam** and **Eve** (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; 1 Timothy 2:13–14).

⁴ For if someone comes and tells you about some other Yeshua than the one we told you about, or if you receive a spirit different from the one you received or accept some so-called "good news" different from the Good News you already accepted, you bear with him well enough! ⁵ For I don't consider myself in any way inferior to these "super-emissaries." ⁶ I may not be a skilled speaker, but I do have the knowledge; anyhow, we have made this clear to you in every way and in every circumstance.

In public settings, such as social gatherings or events, conversations that compare status, possessions, or achievements are common. Remember, your true identity is found in **Yeshua**, not in worldly measures of success. Instead of getting caught up in trying to impress others, focus on representing **Yeshua** well and showing His love to those around you.

⁷ Or did I sin in humbling myself so that you could be exalted in proclaiming God's Good News to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other congregations by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹ And when I was with you and had needs, I did not burden anyone: my needs were met by the brothers who came from Macedonia. In nothing have I been a burden to you, nor will I be. ¹⁰ The truthfulness of the Messiah is in me, so that this boast concerning me is not going to be silenced anywhere in Achaia. ¹¹ Why won't I ever accept your support? Is it that I don't love you? God knows I do! ¹² No, I do it—and will go on doing it—in order to cut the ground from under those who want an excuse to boast that they work the same way we do.

In 1 Corinthians 9:4–19, **Sha'ul** gave several reasons for **proclaiming the Good News to you free of charge**. Here, a new reason is given in v. 12; also see below (12:13–15) for yet another. But the **Corinthians** are so sensitive about their pocketbooks—as is evident from how chapters 8–9 are written—that **Sha'ul** cannot state explicitly to them at this time perhaps the most important reason why he will not accept their support. He does not want them to feel that they have done **God** a favor and discharged their duty to **God** by giving money to **Sha'ul**. He will not permit them to attempt to earn a ticket to heaven by legalistic work; only those less proud of their giving (vv. 8–9) can be entrusted to give. Further, **Sha'ul** is sparing the **Corinthians** the guilt they would feel if he accepted their commitment to support him, and they then failed to live up to that commitment—as seems to be highly probable, given their behavior regarding the collection for the **Judean** brothers, as reported in chapters 8–9.

Others Preaching a Ruse

Pseudo-emissaries, who of course are not really "super-emissaries" (vv. 11:5, 12:11) at all, are actually inspired by Satan, the Adversary (2:11, 12:7; see Mt 4:1N). The buffoonish red-suit-and-pitchfork image makes light of mankind's archenemy, who masquerades as an angel of light, perverting everything good to evil use in order to prevent people from trusting God. New Age religionists sometimes report encounters with beings of light; I wonder if they have read this passage.¹

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In our next post, we will continue to examine **Sha'ul's Second Letter to the Corinthians**.

¹ 2 Corinthians 10:12-11:12.