

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 109

2 Corinthians ~ Part 16

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

As I have 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 deeply understood and appreciated. Your active engagement in grasping the depth of its meaning and impact on our spiritual journey is crucial and invokes a sense of the weight of this text's importance in our faith.

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

Daily, you may face challenges that doubt your worth or abilities. Just as **Sha'ul** faced numerous hardships and persecutions, remember that your identity is in **Yeshua**, not your circumstances. When you feel unworthy, recall all the ways **God** has shown His faithfulness to you in the past. This reflection on His past provisions is a reminder of His constant care and a source of empowerment that equips you to face current challenges with renewed faith and strength. Through this faith, we find encouragement and hope in the face of adversity.

Sha'ul Forced to Boast

¹⁶ I repeat: don't let anyone think I am a fool. But even if you do, at least receive me as a fool so that I, too, may do a little boasting! ¹⁷ What I am saying is not in accordance with the Lord; rather, this conceited boasting is spoken as a fool would speak. ¹⁸ Since many people boast in a worldly way, I, too, will boast this way. ¹⁹ For since you yourselves are so wise, you gladly put up with fools! ²⁰ You put up with it if someone makes slaves of you, exploits you, takes you in, puffs himself up, slaps you in the face. ^{21a} To my shame, I must admit that we have been too "weak" to do such things!

At least receive me as a fool, as you receive these other fools, the false emissaries, ***so that I, too***, like them, ***may do a little boasting***. Putting himself in the position of the **Corinthians** victimized by the false emissaries' superficial glamor, **Sha'ul** does a bit of controlled boasting to win them back (see 1 Corinthians 9:19–23). To do this, he must repeatedly protest (here, v. 23; 10:12, 18; 12:1, 6, 11) how foolish it is to boast; otherwise, they would merely take him at his word and compare his claims with those of the others. But **Sha'ul's** genuine attitude toward such boasting (see 10:17) is summed up in Philippians 3:8—compared with knowing the **Messiah Yeshua** as his **Lord**, he regards all such boasts as garbage!

Basis for Boasting

^{21b} But if anyone dares to boast about something—I'm talking like a fool! — I am just as daring. ²² Are they Hebrew speakers? So am I. Are they of the people of Isra'el? So am I. Are they descendants of Avraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of the Messiah? (I'm talking like a madman!) I'm a better one! I've worked much harder, been imprisoned more often, suffered more beatings, and been near death over and over.

Are they Hebrews? ... Israelites? ... descendants of Avraham? So am I. **Sha'ul** identifies himself as a **Jew**, as do **Messianic Jews** today. He does not call himself a "Christian." But he does proclaim himself a **servant of the Messiah**; **Messianic Jews** must not mute the fact that they serve **Yeshua** in their zeal to identify with their **Jewishness**. **I'm speaking like a madman!** See 2 Corinthians 16–21.

²⁴ Five times, I received "forty lashes less one" from the Jews. ²⁵ Three times, I was beaten with rods. Once, I was stoned. Three times, I was shipwrecked. I spent a night and a day in the open sea. ²⁶ In my many travels, I have been exposed to danger from rivers, danger from robbers,

danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the desert, danger at sea, and danger from false brothers.

"Forty lashes less one," a set phrase in **Jewish** law. For certain offenses, the **Oral Torah** prescribes forty lashes. The practice was to give thirty-nine, allowing a margin of one for error in counting, lest the prescribed punishment be unjustly exceeded, which would be far worse than meting out slightly less. Why would *the Jews*, that is, a non-Messianic **Jewish** court, have ordered him to be lashed? Because of the strong reactions he stirred up as he proclaimed the **Good News**—which is to say, on trumped-up charges or for no good reason (compare Ac 13:50–51; 14:2–5, 19–20; 17:5–8, 13; 18:12–17; 19:9; 21:27–36; 24:2–9; 25:2–11). Is this evidence of a particularly virulent form of hardheartedness among **Jews**? It is indeed evidence of hardheartedness, but such is not unique to **Jews**, for Sha'ul's following remark is, "Three times I was beaten with rods." this was a **Roman** punishment with which the **Corinthians** were familiar so that he did not need to add, "by the **Romans**." **Gentiles** were quite capable of hardheartedness, venial behavior, and disregard of justice where **Sha'ul** was concerned (see Acts 16:19–24, 19:23–34, 22:25–29, 25:9). *Once I was stoned* by a mob of **Jews** and **Gentiles** (Ac 14:19). No wonder he speaks of being *exposed to danger from*, among other things, *my own people* and **Gentiles**.

²⁷ I have toiled and endured hardship, often not had enough sleep, been hungry and thirsty, frequently gone without food, and been cold and naked. ²⁸ And besides these external matters, there is the daily pressure of my anxious concern for all the congregations. ²⁹ Who is weak without my sharing his weakness? Who falls into sin without my burning inside?

Besides nature, robbers, and hostile **Jews**, **Yeshua** had to deal with **false brothers** who betrayed Him. Everything **Yeshua** mentioned in verses 23–27 was endured during **kehillah** planting or evangelism. After converts were made, he faced cultivating these **Believers** in their faith. **Yeshua** identified emotionally and spiritually with the struggles of his converts.

Sufferings Indicate Strength

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast about things that show how weak I am. ³¹ God the Father of the Lord Yeshua—blessed be he forever—knows that I am not lying! ³² When I was in Dalmanuta (Damascus), the governor under King Aretas had the city of Dalmanuta guarded in order to arrest me; ³³ but I was lowered in a basket through an opening in the wall and escaped his clutches. ¹

Yeshua boasted of God's grace, which helped him in his weakness. This episode, **Yeshua's** first brush with persecution, is also reported in Acts 9:23–25. **Luke**, the **Gentile** author of **Acts**, noted that the **Jews** of **Dalmanuta** initiated the plot, while **Yeshua**, the Jew, remembered this as a plot of the Gentile governor of the city. There was probably a coalition of **Jews** and Nabateans serving under the governor.

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

¹ 2 Corinthians 11:16-33