

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 117

Romans ~ Part 5

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

As I emphasized in my previous post, we embark on a journey to understand the profound significance of **Sha'ul's Letter to the Romans**, 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. It's a responsibility that you, as a seeker of faith, must engage in actively.

Judgment of God ~ Part 2

In this post, we learn from David Stern that when people stray from **God**, He eventually gives them over to the consequences of their horrific error—in physical (v. 24), emotional (v. 26), and mental (v. 28) dimensions, that is, in every aspect of their lives. Sexual sin (v. 24) and, in particular, homosexuality (vv. 26–27) are singled out as punishments from **God**, punishments which themselves are sins. Homosexuality was rife throughout the first-century **Roman Empire**, as it is today. This is why the Gay Liberation Movement can gain a wide hearing as it seeks equality, acceptance, and approval of homosexuals and their behavior.

The essential attitude of people who believe the **Bible** should be to love sinners while hating their sins. But **Believers** must accept the **Bible's** judgments on what is and is not sin. Moreover, denouncing the sin is an aspect of loving the sinner; this enables him to repent, be forgiven, and change. All of this can be done compassionately and effectively; the real tragedy is that few Christian churches try to minister to homosexuals.

Homosexuals who have put their trust in **Yeshua the Messiah** acknowledged their homosexual behavior and fantasies as sin and become part of a community of **Believers** in the **Messiah** who love, care, and pray for them have found that the Holy Spirit gives them strength to flee their temptations, turn from their sin and live **Godly** lives, either in heterosexual marriage or in celibacy. Like former substance abusers, many recognize that they are weak in their former sin but rely on **God** day by day to keep them free of it (compare 2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Those who refuse **God's** offer of help receive *the penalty appropriate to their perversion in their own persons*—vice becomes self-perpetuating, self-avenging, and productive of its own punishment.¹

Idolatry Leads to Immorality

²⁴ This is why God has given them up to the vileness of their hearts' lusts, to the shameful misuse of each other's bodies. ²⁵ They have exchanged the truth of God for falsehood by worshipping and serving created things rather than the Creator—praised be he forever. Amen

Because they rejected the truths of **God** revealed in creation, **God** punished the **Greco-Roman** world by delivering them to *the vileness of their hearts' lusts*. A similar scenario played out in the life of **King Ahab** of **Isra'el**, who continually rebelled against **God** (1 Ki 16:29–33). As a judgment, **God** permitted a lying prophetic spirit to deceive **Ahab** to his doom (1 Kings 22:22–23). The ancients were enmeshed in polytheistic idolatry, and in their devotions to their false **Gods**, they practiced all sorts of immorality.

Unnatural Replaced Natural

¹ David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Commentary

²⁶ This is why God has given them up to degrading passions; so that their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural; ²⁷ and likewise the men, giving up natural relations with the opposite sex, burn with passion for one another, men committing shameful acts with other men and receiving in their persons the penalty appropriate to their perversion.

Lesbians and homosexuals often argue that this verse only prohibits sexual abuse of children, or else they say that **natural sexual relations** are not violated when men and women who are born with a tendency for homosexual desires (as they claim) practice homosexuality. But **Sha'ul** clearly says lesbianism is **unnatural**, and the **Bible** elsewhere strictly prohibits all homosexuality (e.g., Leviticus 18:22). The **Creator** intended male and female to be joined in marriage (Genesis 2:24). As an example of the sort of sexual perversion **Sha'ul** would have been aware of in his day, the emperor **Nero** castrated a boy named **Sporus** and married him. Such *degrading passions* result in *the penalty appropriate to their perversion*.

Sinfulness Replaced Purity

²⁸ In other words, since they have not considered God worth knowing, God has given them up to worthless ways of thinking so that they do improper things. ²⁹ They are filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and vice; stuffed with jealousy, murder, quarreling, dishonesty, and ill-will; they are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God; they are insolent, arrogant and boastful; they plan evil schemes; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are brainless, faithless, heartless and ruthless. ³² They know well enough God's righteous decree that people who do such things deserve to die; yet not only do they keep doing them, but they applaud others who do the same. ²

The downward slide gathers speed. With the necessary changes, the above description applies to all kinds of sins. Verses 29–31 are the **Bible's** most comprehensive list of the evils people invent for themselves, and v. 32 shows the state of man in deepest depravity, in which *not only do they keep doing* these things, *but they applaud others who do the same*, thus forming a **Godless** society opposing everything **God** wants from his beloved creation, humanity. Even so, in each one, a voice of conscience still protests that it is **God's righteous decree that people who do such things deserve to die**, as has been the case from the days of **Adam** and **Eve** (Genesis 2:17) until now.

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

² Romans 1:24–32.