

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 118

Romans ~ Part 6

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

As I've emphasized in my previous post, we're on a journey to understand the profound significance of **Sha'ul's Letter to the Romans**, a crucial cornerstone of our faith. This significance isn't something to be taken lightly, but to be deeply understood and appreciated. Your active engagement in grasping the depth of its meaning and its impact on our spiritual journey is not just important, it's crucial. It's a responsibility that you, as a seeker of faith, must actively embrace, for it holds the key to our spiritual growth and understanding.

Judgment of God ~ Part 3

Do not judge others based on their actions or beliefs, for you are imperfect. Instead, your focus should be on reflecting **God's** love and grace in your interactions with others. Show kindness and understanding, even when faced with disagreement or conflict. This is the path to follow, a path that leads to compassion and understanding, not judgment.

All Are Sinners

¹ Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, passing judgment; for when you judge someone else, you are passing judgment against yourself; since you who are judging do the same things he does. ² We know that God's judgment lands impartially on those who do such things; ³ do you think that you, a mere man passing judgment on others who do such things, yet doing them yourself, will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or perhaps you despise the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience; because you don't realize that God's kindness is intended to lead you to turn from your sins. ⁵ But by your stubbornness, by your unrepentant heart, you are storing up anger for yourself on the Day of Anger, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed;

Now, let's delve into the urgency of repentance and spiritual growth. The **Bad News** we learned about in our last post is not over. Perhaps you are not caught in the mire of 1:18–32 but perceive the condition of others who are and rightly condemn them. Your sin is pride, and **Sha'ul** has a word for you: spotting the evil in others has not rooted out the evil in you - or, as the folk saying has it, *"It takes one to know one."* **Sha'ul** accuses you, who have made yourself a judge, less for passing judgment on others than for not passing equally severe judgment on yourself (compare Mattityahu 7:1–4, Ya'akov 4:11–12). You cannot stand outside humanity, supposing you are unique; you, too, must turn from your sins. This is the only reason **God**, in His mercy, has held back His anger against you. True, He has always shown such mercy: **Adam** and **Eve** did not die on the day they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but hundreds of years later (Genesis 2:17, 3:1–22, 5:1–5); **Noah's** generation heard him warn them and was given 120 years to repent (Genesis 6:1–7:6, 2 Ke 2:5); **Jonah** announced doom to the inhabitants of Nineveh, but they turned from sin and were spared (for a while). Nevertheless, there is urgency, because the **Day of Judgment** will surely come, with its solemn consequences (vv. 7–8), and you do not know when that will be (1 Th 5:2). The **Talmud** expresses the same concern.

God's Judgment Is Impartial

⁶ for He will pay back each one according to his deeds.

This idea is also found in the **Tanakh** at Job 34:11, the **Apocrypha** at Sirach 16:14, and the **Brit Hadashah** at Mattityahu 16:27, Yochanan 5:29, and 2 Corinthians 5:10.

⁷ To those who seek glory, honor, and immortality by perseverance in doing good, He will pay back eternal life. ⁸ But to those who are self-seeking, who disobey the truth and obey evil, He will pay back wrath and anger.

The **Bad News** concludes where it began in 1:18, with **God** repaying *wrath and anger* to those whose deeds demonstrate their lack of trust in Him. But v. 7 offers a ray of hope; indeed, it gives the kernel of the **Gospel**.

⁹ Yes, He will pay back misery and anguish to every human being who does evil, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile; ¹⁰ but glory and honor and shalom to everyone who keeps doing what is good, to the Jew first, then to the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.¹

The **Bad News**, like the **Good News**, is universal: "***All have sinned and fall short of earning God's praise***" (Romans 3:23). To prove this, **Sha'ul** must show that it applies to **Jews** as well as to **Gentiles**; this is his subject from here to 3:20. Some **Jewish** people, he says, may think that belonging to **God's** chosen people or having detailed knowledge of the **Torah** may save them from **God's** wrath and guarantee them eternal life—they may consider Romans 1:18 valid for **Gentiles** but not for themselves. That such a view was not uncommon among **Jews** in the first century is suggested by Mattityahu 3:9–10, Acts 10:28, and Galatians 2:15.

Sha'ul starts in vv. 9–10 by relating the summary in the preceding two verses *to the Jew first, then to the Gentile*—to the **Jew** first and foremost because his **Torah** knowledge should make him more aware of how **God** functions. Since ***God does not show favoritism***, the criterion He uses in judgment is not whether an individual's life situation places him within the framework of the **Torah** as a **Jew** but whether he has **sinned** (see Romans 2:12, which we will dig deeper into in the next blog in this series).

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

¹ Romans 2:1–11.