

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 121

Romans ~ Part 9

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. Your role in this journey is integral, and your understanding is vital.

Judgment of God ~ Part 5

In your daily interactions, you may encounter situations where you feel judged unfairly. Remember that, ultimately, **God** is the righteous **Judge**. Rather than seeking validation from others, find peace in the fact that **God's** opinion of you is what truly matters.

Pride in Heritage

3¹ Then what advantage has the Jew? What is the value of being circumcised? ² Much in every way! In the first place, the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God.

Then what advantage (or "prerogative" or "superiority") ***has the Jew***, that is, the born **Jew** or the **Jewish** proselyte? ***What is the value of being*** physically ***circumcised*** according to **Jewish** law, a member of the covenant people? After the squeeze of Romans 2:17–29, one might expect the answer, "**None**," and there has been no shortage of anti-semites who have decided they know better than **Sha'ul**.

But **Sha'ul's** answer is ***Much in every way***, not just in one way or some ways, but every way, of which ***in the first place*** (or "most importantly" or "especially"; the **Greek** word is again "***prôton***") is the fact that ***the Jews were entrusted with the very words of God***, His *logia*, His divine communications (not limited to His promises or prophecies). This is of first importance because any other advantage of being **Jewish** stems from **God's** having chosen and spoken to the **Jewish** people. To imagine that the **Jews** are special because they have a finer ethical sense than others, or land, or some "racial genius" is to put the cart before the horse. The **Jews** were ***"the fewest of all peoples"*** (Deuteronomy 7:7), yet **Adonai** loved them, chose them, and separated them for Himself. ***He declares His Word to Ya'akov, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not done so with any other nation, and as for His judgments, they have not known them"*** (Psalm 147:19–20). In sum, having the very words of **God** is no cause for **Jewish** pride since the initiative was entirely **God's**, yet it is "in every way" a great advantage.

3 If some of them were unfaithful, so what? Does their faithlessness cancel God's faithfulness?

4 Heaven forbid! God would be true even if everyone were a liar!—as the Tanakh says,

"so that you, God, may be proved right in your words and win the verdict when you are put on trial."¹

Heaven forbid! Greek *mê genoito*, which some modern versions render literally, "**Let it not be!**" But this loses the force of the idiom, used in the Septuagint to translate the **Hebrew** expression, "**Chalilah!**" (Genesis 44:7, 17; Joshua 22:29, 24:16), which means "Profanation!" "A curse on it!" "Away with it!" "**Chalilah!**" may be

¹ Psalm 51:4

Hebrew's most intense wish for negation; therefore, KJV's "**God forbid!**" conveys the sense well. David Sterns substitutes "**Heaven**" for "**God**" in this expression because neither the **Hebrew** nor the **Greek** refers to **God** at all, and **Jewish** sensibility tends to remove words like "**God**" or "**Lord**" from curses, perhaps to avoid breaking the Third Commandment by taking **God's** name in vain (Exodus 20:7; compare Mattityahu 5:33–37. The phrase occurs fifteen times in the **Brit Hadashah**, ten of them in Romans (here, 3:6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11), the others at Luke 20:16; 1 Corinthians 6:15; and, Galatians 2:17, 3:21, 6:14.

God's Judgment Is Just

⁵ Now, if our unrighteousness highlights God's righteousness, what should we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict his anger on us? (I am speaking here the way people commonly do.)⁶ Heaven forbid! Else, how could God judge the world?⁷ "But," you say, "if, through my lie, God's truth is enhanced and brings him greater glory, why am I still judged merely for being a sinner?"⁸ Indeed! Why not say (as some people slander us by claiming we do say), "Let us do evil so that good may come of it"? Against them, the judgment is a just one! ²

Sha'ul counters a specious argument based on carrying the point of vv. 3–4 to an absurd extreme. Compare the similar self-justification of Romans 6:1–2.

In our next post, we will pick up on Romans 3:9.

² Romans 3:1–8.