

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 140

Romans ~ Part 28

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

As I've stressed in my previous post, our journey to comprehend the profound significance of **Sha'ul's Letter to the Romans** is not just a study but a crucial cornerstone of our faith.

Regarding the Jewish Experience ~ Part 6

Remember the importance of effectively conveying **Yeshua's** message in public discussions or debates where faith intersects with social issues. Use Romans 10:18 to remind yourself that words can lead to faith. Before engaging in conversations, prepare by praying for wisdom and clarity. Equip yourself with a personal testimony or a **Scripture** that embodies hope and compassion. This openness can encourage dialogue about faith respectfully and show others what genuine faith looks like.

Let's pick up where we left off in the last post: ***¹⁷ So trust comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through a word proclaimed about the Messiah.***

Isra'el Rejected Preaching

¹⁸ "But, I say, isn't it rather that they didn't hear?" No, they did hear—

"Their voice has gone out throughout the whole world and their words to the ends of the earth." (Psalm 19:5(4))

The opponent counters **Sha'ul**: "You say **Isra'el** should have trusted. I am willing to admit for argument's sake that people were sent to proclaim, but the problem is not **Isra'el's** failure to trust. **Isn't it, rather, that Isra'el didn't hear?**" **Sha'ul** replies, **No, they did hear**, as is proved by the Psalm quoted.

¹⁹ "But, I say, isn't it rather that Isra'el didn't understand?"

"I will provoke you to jealousy over a non-nation, over a nation void of understanding I will make you angry." (Deuteronomy 32:21)

The thrust and parry continue. "Granted that they may have heard," replies the opponent, "it still is not their fault that they have not come to faith in **Yeshua**. The sound waves may have struck their eardrums, **But, I say, isn't it rather that Isra'el didn't understand** the message they heard?" **Sha'ul** does not deny the possibility that **Isra'el** failed to understand, but he does not admit it as an acceptable excuse. **Isra'el** should have understood. The context of Deuteronomy 32:21, cited here, shows that **God** is using eye-for-eye justice with **Isra'el**—the rest of the verse says that because **Isra'el** has made **God** jealous and angry, therefore **God** will make **Isra'el** jealous and angry. But the final words of the poem reveal that in the end, **God** **"will forgive his land and his people"** (Deuteronomy 32:43).

²⁰ Moreover, Yesha'yahu boldly says,

"I was found by those who were not looking for me, I became known to those who did not ask for me"; (Isaiah 65:1)

²¹ but to Isra'el he says,

"All day long I held out my hands to a people who kept disobeying and contradicting."

Sha'ul concludes Part II (9:30–10:21) the same way he did Part I (9:6–29)—by recalling its opening verses. **Isaiah** 65:1 (v. 20) echoes 9:30, and **Isaiah** 65:2 (v. 21) echoes 9:31.

Always A Faithful Remnant

Part III of chapters 9–11 shows how **God** will fulfill his promises to the nation of **Isra'el**. Although Replacement theology wrongly claims the contrary, **Jewish** “disobedience” (v. 30) does not annul **God's** promises to **Isra'el**, because “**God's** free gifts His calling are irrevocable” (v. 29). **Sha'ul**, therefore, cautions **Gentile Believers** in **Yeshua** against antisemitism and false pride (vv. 13–26), while showing them what should be their active role in hastening the salvation of the **Jewish** people (vv. 30–36&NN). ¹

11 ¹ ***"In that case, I say, isn't it that God has repudiated his people?" Heaven forbid! For I myself am a son of Isra'el, from the seed of Avraham, (2 Chronicles 20:7, Psalm 105:6) of the tribe of Binyamin. ² God has not repudiated his people, (1 Samuel 12:22, Psalm 94:14) whom he chose in advance. Or don't you know what the Tanakh says about Eliyahu? He pleads with God against Isra'el, ³ "Adonai, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars, and I'm the only one left, and now they want to kill me too!" (1 Kings 19:10, 14) ⁴ But what is God's answer to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not knelt down to Ba'al." (1 Kings 19:18) ⁵ It's the same way in the present age: there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ (Now if it is by grace, it is accordingly not based on legalistic works; if it were otherwise, grace would no longer be grace.)*** ²

Sha'ul's imaginary non-**Messianic Jewish** opponent, introduced at 10:14–15, has given up trying to prove that **Isra'el** is not responsible for its unbelief. His new tack is to try to show that **Sha'ul's** message, with its accusation of **Jewish** culpability for failing to heed it, is not merely unpleasant to **Jewish** ears but inconsistent with **Scripture** and therefore unworthy of being heeded. If the opponent can make his point stick, **Sha'ul's** case will be discredited because it contradicts what **God** has already revealed. The opponent wants the reader to admit this; but if he does he must also admit an unacceptable implication, that **God** has broken His word, as promised in the **Tanakh**, “**God will not repudiate his people.**” If **Sha'ul's** message entails believing in a **God** who breaks His word, it is not **God** but **Sha'ul's** message that must be rejected.

Sha'ul's reply is couched in the strongest possible denial language (see Romans 3:4), **Heaven forbid! Sha'ul's** logical method here begins with a: **God** at least cannot have cast aside every single **Jewish** individual, **for indeed I myself am a son of Isra'el**, and He hasn't rejected me. More specifically, I am from the **seed of Avraham** as defined in Romans 9:6–13; and lest the imaginary opponent suppose he is spiritualizing that phrase and letting it include **Gentiles** (which it does in Galatians 3–4; compare 9:24 above and Mattityahu 3:9), I mean here that I am a literal physical descendant, **from the tribe of Binyamin**—a claim which, at the time **Sha'ul** wrote, could probably have been independently verified.

If you (the opponent) think otherwise, **don't you know what the Tanakh says about Eliyahu** the prophet, who thought he was the only **Jew** of his time who had not apostatized? **God** disabused him of his melancholy conclusion by saying, **"I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not knelt down to the false God Baal"** to worship him. **Sha'ul's** point is that **it's the same way in the present age** as it was then: **there is a remnant** (same word as at 9:27) of **Isra'el**, the **Messianic Jews**, **chosen** not by themselves but **by God's grace** (see Romans 6:23). Thus does **Sha'ul** recapitulate Part I of these three chapters (see 9:1–11:36), that **God** is sovereignly, justly, and, most of all, mercifully at work fulfilling His promises in history, even when our eyes and ears seem to tell us differently.

Our next post continues to examine the theme: **Regarding the Jewish Experience.**

¹ David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Commentary, Romans 11:1.

² Romans 10:18-11:6.