

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 142

Romans ~ Part 30

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 8

You may be feeling overwhelmed by societal expectations that compromise your beliefs. Use Romans 11:17-24 to remind yourself of your identity in Yeshua. Join or start a small group that discusses integrating faith into everyday life at work. Through shared experiences, you can form a support network that empowers each other to stand firm in your values, encouraging authenticity in the public sphere. I have been an active member and leader in small groups for years. That is one reason why we joined the church we now attend, and that is because of their emphasis on small groups.

Gentiles Not to Boast

17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you—a wild olive—were grafted in among them and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree, 18 then don't boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root; the root is supporting you.

If some of the branches, that is, unbelieving individual **Jews** but not the whole **Jewish** people, ***were broken off***, removed (temporarily, not permanently!—vv. 11–12, 23–24) from being eligible to receive what **God** has promised, ***and you Gentiles*** (v. 13), ***a wild olive, were grafted in among them***, among the branches which are still part of the tree, the **Messianic Jews**, the **Jewish** nation as represented by its **Messianic Jewish** community, ***and have become equal sharers in the rich root of God's cultivated olive tree***, then ***don't boast as if you were better than the natural branches***, neither the ones still in place (the **Messianic Jews**) nor the ones broken off (the **non-Messianic Jews**). **Gentile** pride in having been joined to the **chosen people** is utterly out of place, mainly when directed against those people! As **Sha'ul** writes elsewhere, ***"After all, what makes you so special? What do you have that you didn't receive as a gift? And if, in fact, it was a gift, why do you boast as if it weren't?"*** (1 Corinthians 4:7)

However, if you do boast, for whatever reason—carelessness, thickheadedness, or actual malice—it ought to help you stop if you ***remember that you are not supporting the root***, but ***the root is supporting you***. Or, to make **Sha'ul's** point as straightforward as it can be, whether the root is **Yeshua**, **Avraham**, the Patriarchs, the **Messianic Jews**, or all the **Jews** (see v. 16), it is a **Jewish** root, and don't you forget it!

Shifting the perspective slightly, notice that **Sha'ul** reminds **Gentile Believers** that trusting **God** also means joining **God's** people. It is no different now than it was with **Ruth** (a **Gentile**): ***"Your people shall be my people and your God my God"*** (Ruth 1:16). **Gentile Believers** have joined **Isra'el**, not the reverse (see also Ephesians 2:11–16&). For a **Gentile Believer** to look down on the people he has joined is not only *chutzpah* and ingratitude but also self-hate.

19 So you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust. However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified! 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly won't spare you!

So, seeking an excuse for pride, **you**, a new imaginary opponent (see 10:14–15), a prideful, boastful **Gentile Believer**, ***will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in,"*** the implication being that **God**

prefers **Gentiles** to **Jews**. **Sha'ul's** answer is *"true, but so what?"* which brings out the implicit irony, the point being that the opponent's statement, though true, cannot be made into a ground for boasting against the branches. Even though *they were broken off because of their lack of trust*, nevertheless, the only reason *you stay in place* is *you keep your place only because of your trust* in the **God** of the **Jews** and the **Jewish Messiah**. *So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified* of letting pride in being included with **God's** people replace trust in **God**.

²² So take a good look at God's kindness and His severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off, but, on the other hand, God's kindness toward you—provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you, too, will be cut off!

Some people think that if they have given mental assent to the proposition that **Yeshua** is the **Messiah**, they have *"eternal security"* with **God**, no matter how they live their lives. This parody of genuine trust is rightly called *"cheap grace."* The truth of the matter is that *"faith"* without actions to match is dead (Ya'akov (James) 2:14–26); in other words, **salvation** is conditional, provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you, too, will be cut off! This involves caring that faith *"works itself out in love"* (Galatians 5:6, Ephesians 2:10).

²³ Moreover, the others, if they do not persist in their lack of trust, will be grafted in because God is able to graft them back in. ²⁴ For if you were cut out of what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree! ¹

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

¹ Romans 11:17-24