

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 148

Romans ~ Part 36

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 Mutual Responsibility ~ Part 2

In your home, you may find it challenging to navigate discussions around sensitive topics, such as politics or dietary choices, especially during family gatherings. Romans 14:13-23 urges you to be considerate of each other's convictions. Challenging someone's beliefs can create conflict. This week, try approaching conversations by asking questions rather than arguing your viewpoint. If your family member prefers not to eat meat for conscience's sake, respect that choice and perhaps share a meal that aligns with everyone's convictions. This will promote peace and unity in your household.

Causing a Brother or Sister to Stumble

13 Therefore, let's stop passing judgment on each other! Instead, make this one judgment—not to put a stumbling block or a snare in a brother's way.

The teaching of this verse, which expresses the central point of this chapter, is a **midrash**¹ on Leviticus 19:14, which says, "***You are not to place a stumbling block before the blind,***" or, more generally, you are not to bring cruel intended harm upon someone helpless.

14 I know—that is, I have been persuaded by the Lord Yeshua, the Messiah—that nothing is unclean in itself. But if a person considers something unclean, then for him, it is unclean;

Nothing is unclean in itself. Sha'ul is certainly not espousing moral relativism. His remark has to do not with human behavior but with **tumah** ("ritual uncleanness"). It is unsurprising that **Sha'ul**, having alluded in the previous verse to Leviticus 19, a chapter full of commandments about **tumah**, continues with a dictum on that subject. It is, nevertheless, a surprising conclusion for a **Jewish** scholar who sat at the feet of **Rabban Gamli'el** to reach; indeed, he had to be **persuaded by the Lord Yeshua, the Messiah** himself. The Bible does not always explain why some things are pure and others not. Hygiene is not the issue, for if it were, there would be no reason to exclude **Gentiles** from applying these laws. And the rabbis do not speculate. Since the laws of ritual purity apply to **Jews** only, the statement that nothing is unclean in itself should suffice to free any **Gentile** whose conscience still bothers him regarding such matters.

15 and if your brother is being upset by the food you eat, your life is no longer one of love. Do not, by your eating habits, destroy someone for whom the Messiah died! 16 Do not let what you know to be good, be spoken of as bad;

Do not let what you know is good, that one need not be in bondage to rules about food, ***be spoken of as bad,*** as a result of your flaunting your freedom to eat as you wish.

¹ An allegorical interpretation or homiletical application of a text. The hearer is expected to understand that the maker of the *midrash* is not expounding the plain meaning of the text but introducing his own ideas.

¹⁷ for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, shalom, and joy in the Ruach HaKodesh. ¹⁸ Anyone who serves the Messiah in this fashion both pleases God and wins the approval of other people. ¹⁹ So then, let us pursue the things that make for shalom and mutual upbuilding. ²⁰ Don't tear down God's work for the sake of food. True enough, all things are clean; but it is wrong for anybody by his eating to cause someone to fall away. ²¹ What is good is not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

Our actions should serve **Yeshua** and help other **Believers** grow and flourish. Objectively, *all things are clean* ("everything created by God is good, and nothing should be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving," 1 Timothy 4:4). Yet some immature **Believers** might stumble over *meat* or *drink* (1 Corinthians 8:7–11).

Base Actions Upon Conviction

²² The belief you hold about such things, keep between yourself and God. Happy the person who is free of self-condemnation when he approves of something! ²³ But the doubter comes under condemnation if he eats because his action is not based on trust. And anything not based on trust is a sin. ²

A **Believer's** sense of freedom in these matters should not translate into public behavior if another **Believer** finds the freedom scandalous. For instance, a **Muslim** convert who never ate pork or drank wine might stumble if he saw a **Believer** doing either of these things.

Our next post continues with the theme, **Regarding Mutual Responsibility**.

² Romans 14:13-23.