

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 159

Sha'ul's Arrest and Trial ~ Part 4

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

We continue in the **Book of Acts**. **Sha'ul's Arrest and Trial** continues in Acts 22:22.

As you navigate public discussions that can quickly become divisive, recall how **Sha'ul** managed to connect with those around him. Make it your goal to actively listen to others' viewpoints during community discussions or social gatherings. This doesn't mean compromising your beliefs but shows that you value others. Practice asking open-ended questions that invite dialogue, allowing you to share your perspectives naturally and respectfully. By doing this, you create opportunities to demonstrate the love of **Yeshua** while effectually representing your faith.

Sha'ul's Asserts His Roman Citizenship

²² They had been listening to him up to this point, but now they shouted at the top of their lungs, "Rid the earth of such a man! He's not fit to live!"

The objection was to **Sha'ul's** message, which grants **Gentiles** equality with **Jews** as part of **God's** people. This objection was proved in Acts 21:27–30.

²³ They were screaming, waving their clothes, and throwing dust into the air;

Waving their clothes gave their anger a visible dimension. Likewise, they probably were **throwing dust** only because no stones were handy. The **dust** was perhaps not thrown **in the air** vaguely or ceremonially but purposefully and vigorously in **Sha'ul's** direction!

²⁴ so the commander ordered him brought into the barracks and directed that he be interrogated and whipped, in order to find out why they were yelling at him like this.

The **commander**, still convinced **Sha'ul** must be a dangerous criminal since he had not understood **Sha'ul's** message in **Hebrew** (v. 2), was determined to whip the truth out of him.

²⁵ But as they were stretching him out with thongs to be flogged, Sha'ul said to the captain standing by, "Is it legal for you to whip a man who is a Roman citizen and hasn't even had a trial?"

As in **Philippi** (Acts 16:36–40), **Sha'ul** makes full use of his legal rights to save himself and protect the honor of the **Gospel**. Both whipping him and binding him in chains (v. 29 below) would violate his rights as a **Roman** citizen. Since **Sha'ul** had not been charged, nor had the commander been informed of grounds for a charge, whipping **Sha'ul** before a trial would have been a misuse of authority for which the commander would have been liable. By questioning the whipping, **Sha'ul** saved the commander and himself an unpleasant experience.

²⁶ When the captain heard that, he went and reported it to the commander, "Do you realize what you're doing? This man is a Roman citizen!" ²⁷ The commander came and said to Sha'ul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes," he said.

Sha'ul's "Yes" is undoubtedly true; summary death awaited anyone falsely claiming **Roman** citizenship.

²⁸ The commander replied, "I bought this citizenship for a sizeable sum of money." "But I was born to it," Sha'ul said. ²⁹ At once, the men who had been about to interrogate him drew back from him, and the commander was afraid, too, because he realized that he had put this man, who was a Roman citizen, in chains.

Sha'ul's Trial Before the Sanhedrin

³⁰ However, the next day, since he wanted to know the specific charge the Judeans were bringing against him, he released him and ordered the head cohanim and the whole Sanhedrin to meet. Then he brought Sha'ul down and put him in front of them.

The only way the commander can now find grounds for holding **Sha'ul** is to receive an accusation from others, in this case, the **Sanhedrin**.

²³ ¹ Sha'ul looked straight at them and said, "Brothers, I have been discharging my obligations to God with a perfectly clear conscience right up until today."

Sha'ul looked straight at them and probably recognized many familiar faces in the **Sanhedrin** since he may well have once been a member himself (Acts 26:10). In any case, it will be apparent from Acts 23:6–10 in our next post that he understood his audience. **Brothers**. These people are still **Sha'ul's** brothers. However, this is not a formal meeting of the **Sanhedrin**, for **"Brothers"** is not an appropriate mode of address for a court in regular sessions (instead, it is suitable for old friends). Instead, this is the gathering summoned by the **Roman** commander (Acts 22:30). In no other **Sanhedrin** session does the person being questioned commence the proceedings with his own speech. Also, in a formal session, the identity of the **Cohen HaGadol** would have been clear to **Sha'ul**.

² But the Cohen HaGadol, Hananyah, ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth.

³ Then Sha'ul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Will you sit there judging me according to the Torah, yet in violation of the Torah order me to be struck?" ⁴ The men nearby said, "This is the Cohen HaGadol of God that you're insulting!" ⁵ Sha'ul said, "I didn't know, brothers, that he was the Cohen HaGadol; for it says in the Torah, 'You are not to speak disparagingly of a ruler of your people.'" (Exodus 22:27(28) ¹

Sha'ul's outburst is undoubtedly not the behavior of a man who had heard and understood **Yeshua's** command to turn the other cheek (Mattityahu 5:39). **Yeshua** Himself, when struck, argued the injustice of it without vexation or irritation (Yochanan 18:22). But no claim of perfection is made for **Sha'ul**. Like the heroes of the **Tanakh**, whose failings are reported faithfully along with their victories, he is shown to be a man who has not yet achieved the goal, as he admits (Philippians 3:12–13, 1 Corinthians 9:25–27). **God** saves imperfect people.

In our next post, we will continue to learn about **Sha'ul's Arrest and Trial**.

¹ Acts 22:22-23:5.