

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 192

Philippians – Part 2

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

Reflections on Imprisonment ~Part 2

Joy Over Preaching

¹⁵ True, some are proclaiming the Messiah out of jealousy and rivalry, but others are doing it in goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter act from love, aware that I am put where I am for defending the Good News; ¹⁷ while the former announce the Messiah out of selfish ambition, with impure motives, supposing they can stir up trouble for me in prison. ^{18a} But so what? All that matters is that in every way, whether honestly or in pretense, the Messiah is being proclaimed; and in that I rejoice.

In **God's** providence, many have responded to the **Good News of Yeshua the Messiah** proclaimed by a hypocrite. It is the **Gospel** that saves, not the preacher. The insincere **evangelist** is storing up for himself judgment, but those who have come to **Yeshua** because of His words have entered eternal life.

Sha'ul's Dilemma

^{18b} Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that this will work out for my deliverance, (Job 13:16) because of your prayers and the support I get from the Spirit of Yeshua the Messiah. ²⁰ It all accords with my earnest expectation and hope that I will have nothing to be ashamed of; but rather, now, as always, the Messiah will be honored by my body, whether it is alive or dead. ²¹ For to me, life is the Messiah, and death is gain. ²² But if by living on in the body I can do fruitful work, then I don't know which to choose. ²³ I am caught in a dilemma: my desire is to go off and be with the Messiah—that is better by far—²⁴ but because of you, the greater need is to stay on in the body.

Consider the fact that faith is otherworldly, selfish, and oblivious to this world's pains. On the one hand, **death is gain** (v. 21); and v. 23 teaches that when a **Believer** dies, he is immediately with the **Messiah** in some unspecified way (according to Philippians 3:21 and 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 he will later receive a resurrection body). This is **better by far** for **Sha'ul** himself than staying alive, precisely because eternal **life is the Messiah** (v. 21; Yochanan 1:4, 11:25, 14:6). Nevertheless, **Sha'ul's** choice is to remain alive **because of you** (v. 24), because the **Philippians** need him. Conclusion: precisely **because** of his **Messianic** faith, **Sha'ul** does not ignore the needs of this world; though recognizing the benefits to himself of the *'olam haba*, he chooses to minister to others here in the *'olam hazeh*. (see Glossary page)

²⁵ Yes, I am convinced of this; so I know I will stay on with you in order to help you progress in the faith and have joy in it. ²⁶ Then, through my being with you again, you will have even greater reason for boasting about the Messiah Yeshua.

Various Exhortations ~ Part 1

Stand United

²⁷ Only conduct your lives in a way worthy of the Good News of the Messiah; so that whether I come and see you or I hear about you from a distance, you stand firm, united in spirit, fighting with one accord for the faith of the Good News, ²⁸ not frightened by anything the opposition does. This will be for them an indication that they are headed for destruction and you for deliverance. And this is from God;

United in spirit ... one accord. Unity is a central theme of this letter (2:2 16, 4:2; compare Yochanan 17:20 26), as well as of 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians. With its context, verse 28 is essential for **Messianic Jews**. **Sha'ul** counsels boldness in communicating the truth of the **Gospel**. When, as **Jews** who trust in **Yeshua the Messiah**, we are ***united in spirit, fighting with one accord*** (using non-worldly weapons!—2 Corinthians 10:3–5, Ephesians 6:10–18) ***for the faith of the Good News***, then we are enjoined to be ***not frightened by anything the opposition does***. On the contrary, our boldness, reflecting our refusal to succumb to fear, ***will be for them***, the opposition, ***an indication*** that our destiny is superior to theirs; one hopes also that it “will heap fiery coals of shame” on their head (Romans 12:21), leading them to repentance.

The content of fear differs from place to place. Throughout the world, **Messianic Jews** face rejection by family, friends, and the **Jewish** community. In the **State of Isra'el**, **Believers** fear loss of their jobs, unpleasantness from **Gospel**-opposing neighbors and co-workers, violence from **anti-Gospel** zealots, and governmental imposition of restrictions on evangelism. Non-permanent residents fear being expelled from the country, since the Interior Department need not give reasons for refusing to extend visas.

Nevertheless, many in the Land are brave witnesses who believe 1 Kefa 4:14–16: ***"If you are being insulted because you bear the name of the Messiah, how blessed you are! For the Spirit of the Sh'khinah, that is, the Spirit of God, is resting on you! ... If anyone suffers for being Messianic, let him not be ashamed; but let him bring glory to God by the way he bears this name."*** **Sha'ul** writes that when tempted to give in to fear he ***"does not lose courage"*** (2 Corinthians 4:1–2). Let **Messianic Jews** and all **Believers** everywhere continue to communicate the **Good News** about **Yeshua** ***"with humility and fear,"*** (1 Kefa 3:16) not of the opposition but of **God**, who will one day judge whether we obeyed His commission to make **talmidim** of all nations (Mattityahu 28:19), including our own.

²⁹ because for the Messiah's sake it has been granted to you not only to trust in him but also to suffer on his behalf, ³⁰ to fight the same battles you once saw me fight and now hear that I am still fighting. 2 ¹ Therefore, if you have any encouragement for me from your being in union with the Messiah, any comfort flowing from love, any fellowship with me in the Spirit, or any compassion and sympathy, ² then complete my joy by having a common purpose and a common love, by being one in heart and mind. ¹¹

The four **if** statements in this verse 1 form the basis of **Sha'ul's** appeal. These phrases express conditions that are assumed for the sake of argument. Both **Sha'ul** and his readers will be inclined to believe the truth of these conditions. ***Complete my joy***, not ***"make Sha'ul happy,"*** reminded them that their steadfastness completed **God's** call on his life. Four actions on the **Philippians'** part explain what **Sha'ul** meant. In our next post, we continue to examine **Sha'ul's Letter to the Philippians**.

¹ Philippians 1:15-2:2