

GALATIANS

Conversational Version

Salutation

1:¹Paul, apostle—not appointed by human agency or by human authority, but by Jesus Christ^{Messiah} and God the Father who resurrected him—²and the Christians that are with me, to the churches in Galatia. ³Grace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴He gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this sinful age, as God had willed. ⁵Glory to him forevermore. Amen.

Gal 1:1-5

The Only Gospel

⁶I'm amazed that you're turning away so quickly from the One that called you by the grace that comes from Christ and *turning* to a different kind of gospel that's ⁷not really another gospel at all. It's just that some people are confusing you by distorting Christ's gospel. ⁸But, even if we or an angel from heaven would present a gospel different from what we presented, consider him under a curse. ⁹I repeat, if anybody presents a gospel different from the one you've received, consider him under a curse. ¹⁰Am I trying to please people or God? If I was trying to please people, I wouldn't be serving Christ. ¹¹⁻¹²I'm telling you, the message I presented *to you* didn't come from other people; Jesus Christ revealed it to me.

Gal 1:6-12

Paul's History

¹³You've heard that when I was in Judaism, I was persecuting God's church to the extreme. I was trying to destroy it. ¹⁴I was moving up *the ranks* in Judaism past many contemporaries in my nation because I was more fanatical about the traditions of my ancestors. ¹⁵But God set me apart at birth and called me by his grace. It pleased him ¹⁶to reveal his Son in me so I could present him among the Gentiles. Right away, I didn't consult other people ¹⁷or go up to Jerusalem to the ones that were apostles before me. I went away to Arabia and then back to Damascus. ¹⁸Three years later I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰What I'm writing to you is the truth. ²¹After that, I went to Syria and Cilicia. ²²Christ's churches in Judaea didn't know me by sight. ²³The only thing they kept hearing was that the one who used to persecute them was now preaching the faith he tried to destroy, ²⁴and they praised God because of me.

Gal 1:13-24

Opposition to the Judaizers

2:¹Fourteen years later, I went up to Jerusalem again, that time with Barnabas, and took Titus along. ²I went up, directed by revelation, to lay out for them the message I was presenting to Gentiles. I met privately with the recognized leaders so I wouldn't be running or had run for nothing. ³They didn't consider it necessary to circumcise Titus, a Gentile. ⁴*That trip came about* because false believers had slipped in to spy out the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to enslave us *to the Law*. ⁵To maintain the truth about the good news, we didn't back down for one minute. ⁶The recognized leaders *in Jerusalem* didn't contribute anything to me. (Who they were didn't matter. God doesn't pay any attention to that.) ⁷Instead, they saw that God had entrusted me with presenting the good news to the uncircumcised like he'd entrusted Peter with presenting it to the circumcised. ⁸The One at work in Peter's apostleship was at work in mine for the Gentiles. ⁹James, Cephas, and John—recognized pillars—shook hands with me and Barnabas to go to the Gentiles. They'd go to the Circumcision. ¹⁰The only thing was, they wanted us to remember the poor, and I was eager to do that. **Gal 2:1-10**

Paul Confronts Cephas (*Peter*)

¹¹When Cephas came to Antioch, I confronted him because he'd condemned himself. ¹²Before some men came from James, [*the Lord's brother*], he'd been eating with the Gentiles. But when they got there, he started separating himself because he was afraid of the Circumcision. ¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in that hypocrisy—even Barnabas got caught up in it. ¹⁴When I saw they weren't conforming to the true message, I said to Cephas, "*If you're a Jew but live like a Gentile, how is it that you require Gentiles to live like Jews?*" ¹⁵We're naturally Jews, not Gentile sinners. ¹⁶We know that no person's made good by doing the Law, but by trusting in Christ. We've put trust in Christ Jesus so trusting him can justify us. What people do under law doesn't make them good. ¹⁷But if while we're trying to be good in Christ, we turn out to be sinners, does that make Christ a minister of sin? Goodness, no! ¹⁸If I rebuild what I used to tear down, I make myself a sinner. ¹⁹By the Law I died to law so I could live to God. I've been crucified with Christ. ²⁰It's not me that's living, but Christ that's living in me. What I live now in the flesh, I live by trusting God's Son, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I don't cancel out God's grace. If law can make us good, there was no reason for Christ^{Messiah} to die. **Gal 2:11-21**

Law vs. Trust

3:¹Foolish Galatians! Who cast a spell on you? Right in front of your eyes I portrayed Jesus Christ crucified. ²This is what I'd like to know: did you receive the Spirit by working under law or by trusting the Person you listened to? ³Are you foolish enough to start with spirit and try to finish with flesh? ⁴Did you suffer so much for nothing—if it was for nothing? ⁵Does the one that provides you the Spirit and works miracles among you *do it* by working under law or

trusting the Person he listened to? ⁶In that way, Abraham ***“trusted God, and God considered him good”*** [Gen 15:6]. Gal 3:1-6

⁷Rest assured, then, the ones who “trust” are like Abraham. ⁸The scripture looked forward to when God would make Gentiles good by trusting. So it “presented the good news” to Abraham, ***“In you I will bless all the nations”*** [Gen 12:3; 18:18]. ⁹So God blesses people that trust like Abraham did. ¹⁰Those who work under law are under a curse: scripture says, ***“Everybody’s under a curse that doesn’t do everything all the time that the Law requires”*** [Deut 27:26]. ¹¹Obviously, law can’t make anyone good in front of God: ***“A good person will have life by trusting”*** [Hab 2:4]. ¹²Law doesn’t involve trusting: ***“The one that does them is the one that has life by them”*** [Lev 18:5]. ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse that law brings us under by becoming a curse on our behalf. Scripture says, ***“Everybody’s under a curse that hangs on a tree”*** [Deut 21:23]. ¹⁴So the blessing associated with Abraham can come to Gentiles in Christ Jesus; and by trusting, we can receive the Spirit Christ promised *us*. Gal 3:7-14

Law vs. Promise

¹⁵Take an example from everyday life. Even with a human covenant, once it’s ratified, nobody annuls it or adds to it. ¹⁶God made promises to Abraham and his seed. The text doesn’t say “seeds,” plural, but “seed,” singular, ***“to your seed”*** [Gen 12:7; 13:15; 17:7; 24:7], *that is*, Christ. ¹⁷Here’s the point: the Law, which came 430 years after the promise, didn’t annul *the* promise; *it didn’t* annul the covenant God had put in place earlier. ¹⁸If inheritance comes by law, it doesn’t come by promise. But God gave it to Abraham by *making a* promise. ¹⁹So, what was the Law for? God added it to deal with sins till the “seed” came that he made *his* promise to. Angels ordained the Law through a mediator. ²⁰A mediator mediates between two parties, not one; but God is *only* one party. Gal 3:15-20

Law Prepares for Trust

²¹So, does the Law conflict with God’s promise? Goodness, no! If there could’ve been a law that gave life, the Law would make people good. ²²But scripture locks up everything under sin so trusting could *directly* deliver the promise to the ones who trust *the promise*.

²³Till trust came into play, law held us in custody. ²⁴It served as an attendant to lead *us* to Christ so trusting in *him* could make us good. ²⁵Now that trust has come, we aren’t under an attendant anymore. ²⁶We’re God’s children by trusting in Christ Jesus. ²⁷Those of us who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸Jew-Greek, slave-free, male-female is irrelevant. We’re all alike in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If we’re Christ’s, we’re Abraham’s seed^{sg} and heirs by promise. Gal 3:21-29

Slaves and Children

⁴¹Let me point out that as long as heirs are minors, they're like servants *at present* though owners of everything *in prospect*. ²They're under guardians and trustees till the time their father specifies. ³That's like us. When we were minors, we were servants to the material-based notions the world operates by. ⁴But when the time came, God sent out his Son—born by woman under law—⁵to redeem us who were under law and to adopt us as children. ⁶Since we're children, God gave us the sense of being that his Son has; we call out, "*Dad*." ⁷So we're not servants anymore, but children that became heirs by God's *promise*. Gal 4:1-7

The Inadequacy of Law

⁸Before you knew God, you served what weren't really gods. ⁹Now, since you know him—or better, he knows you—why do you want to go back and serve weak, material-based notions again? ¹⁰You're observing days, months, seasons, and years. ¹¹I'm afraid I've labored over you for nothing. Gal 4:8-11

¹²I plead with you, become like me because I'm like you. You haven't wronged me in anything. ¹³You know I presented the good news to you at the first because of a physical handicap. ¹⁴You didn't look down on me because of it. You received me like an angel from God, like Christ Jesus. ¹⁵So where's your sense of being blessed? I point out that, if possible, you would've gouged your eyes out and given them to me. ¹⁶So, do I become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷*The ones that are confusing you* aren't seeking you out for any good reason. They want to lock you out so you'll look to them *to get in*. ¹⁸But it's always good to have someone seek you out in a good way, not just when I'm around. ¹⁹My children, I'm in labor with you again until Christ forms in you. ²⁰I'd like to be with you now and change my tone. I'm worried about you. Gal 4:12-20

The Hagar-Sarah Allegory

²¹You that want to be under law, tell me, are you listening to it? ²²Scripture says Abraham had two sons, one by a servant girl and one by a free *woman*. ²³The one the servant girl had was born physically, but the one the free *woman* had *was born* by promise. ²⁴These points set up an illustration: the women represent two covenants. ²⁵Hagar, from Mount Sinai in Arabia, bears children into bondage. She's the mountain that corresponds to present-day Jerusalem because she's in bondage along with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem above is free; that's our mother. ²⁷Scripture says,

***“Celebrate, barren one that doesn't bear;
cry out and scream, woman that's not in labor.
The woman that's single has more children
than the one with a husband” [Is 54:1].***

²⁸You're children like Isaac. ²⁹The one born physically was persecuting the one *born* spiritually; it's the same way now. ³⁰But what does the scripture say?

***"Send away the servant girl and her son;
her son will not inherit with the son"*** of the free *woman* [Gen 21:10].

³¹So we're not children of a servant girl, but of a free *woman*. **5:**¹Christ really has set us free; so stand firm; don't put yourselves back under a yoke of bondage. **Gal 4:21-5:1**

Law and Trust, Mutually Exclusive Systems

²I tell you, if you accept circumcision, Christ doesn't do you any good. ³You're obligated to keep the Law completely. ⁴You that are trying to gain righteousness by law have cut yourselves off from Christ. You've fallen away from grace *into law*. ⁵In spirit we wait by trust for the goodness we hope for. ⁶In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is relevant. What matters is trust expressing itself in love. **Gal 5:2-6**

⁷You were running well. Who stopped you from obeying the truth? ⁸The persuasion didn't come from the One that's calling you. ⁹A little yeast spreads through the whole lump. ¹⁰I have confidence in you in the Lord that you won't adopt something else. The one that's confusing you will face condemnation, whoever he is. ¹¹If I still preach circumcision, why do *the Jews* still persecute me? ¹²I wish the ones that are troubling you would mutilate themselves. **Gal 5:2-12**

Christian Freedom

¹³You were called to freedom. Just don't use it as an excuse for the flesh; serve one another with love. ¹⁴One statement fulfills the whole Law, **"Love your neighbor as yourself"** [Lev 19:18]. ¹⁵If you nip at and chew on each other, you'll end up eating each other up.

Physical versus spiritual

¹⁶I tell you, live by what's spiritual and you won't be fulfilling what's fleshly. ¹⁷Flesh pulls against spirit and *vice versa*. They work against each other, and you end up doing what you don't want to do. ¹⁸If spirit is leading you, you're not under law. ¹⁹It's clear what fleshly deeds are: sexual immorality, uncleanness, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hostility, rivalry, jealousy, rage, disputes, divisions, factions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, carousing, and so on. I tell you ahead of time, like I told you before, people that do such things won't inherit God's kingdom.

²²But spirit produces fruit like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustworthiness, ²³gentleness, self-control. There's no law against such things. ²⁴Christ's people have crucified the physical along with its drives and desires. ²⁵If we have life by spirit, let's conduct life by spirit. ²⁶Let's not be proud or jealous or irritate each other. **Gal 5:13-26**

Patience with the Sinful

⁶¹If someone gets caught up in some sin, you that are spiritual should humbly restore that person. Keep an eye on yourselves so you don't get caught up in temptation. ²Share each other's burdens and fulfill Christ's 'law' that way. ³If we think we're special when we're not, we're kidding ourselves. ⁴We each one must examine our own behavior and take pride in it only in respect to ourselves, not *in comparison* to somebody else. ⁵Each one of us has to carry our own load. ⁶The one that's being taught the message needs to share everything good with the one that's teaching it. ⁷Make no mistake, we can't mock God. We reap what we sow. ⁸If we sow in the flesh, we'll reap decay. If we sow in the spirit, we'll reap eternal life. ⁹Let's not get discouraged with doing what's right. In due time we'll reap if we don't give up. ¹⁰So while we've got a chance, let's work at doing good to everybody, especially to members of the family of faith.

Gal 6:1-10

Closing Encouragements

¹¹See what big letters I've written with my own hand. ¹²Those who want to make a good impression in the flesh are trying to get you circumcised so they won't suffer persecution for the cross of Christ^{Messiah}. ¹³They don't keep the Law themselves; they just want to get you circumcised so they can take pride in you physically. ¹⁴But I'm not going to take pride in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him the world's crucified to me and me to it. ¹⁵Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has anything to do with it; *what matters is* a new system *God has created in Christ*. ¹⁶Peace and mercy to as many as live by that principle—to God's 'Israel.'

¹⁷From now on, don't create problems for me. I *already* have on my body the branding marks of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Gal 6:11-18

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