

Paul's Letter to Christ's Congregations of Galatia

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Chapter 1

Notes

Greeting

1 Paul, an emissary, (not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ¹ and God the Father, the one who raised Him from among the dead), 2 and all the brothers with me, to the congregations of Galatia:

1. Paul immediately set out to defend his credentials as one personally commissioned by Jesus Christ. His opponents challenged both his message and his credentials.

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and [from our] Lord, Jesus Christ, 4 who has given Himself for our sins so that He may extricate us out of the present wicked age, according to the will of our God and Father. 5 To Him be glory unto the ages of the ages², Amen!

2. The Bible does not conceive of "eternity" as timeless, but as a series of finite, perpetual ages with no end in sight.

Rapid Defection from the True Message

6 I marvel that you are so suddenly defecting from Him who called you by Christ's grace to an altered³ message. 7 It is not another⁴, except that those disturbing you also wish to distort the message of Christ. 8 But even if we, or a messenger from heaven, should proclaim a message to you beside⁵ what we [already] proclaimed to you, may he be accursed! 9 As we have previously stated, and now I repeat again, if anyone delivers you a message beside⁴ what you received [from us], may he be accursed!

3. Gr- "ετερος" strange or altered, a foreign message

4. Gr- "αλλο" It is not "another" of the same kind, but a complete perversion of Christ's message

5. Gr- "παρα" literally, "beside." It implies an addition to Paul's message.

The Source of Paul's Message

10 For am I now convincing men or God? Or am I seeking to please men? If I still seek to please men, I would not have become Christ's servant. 11 For I am informing you, brothers, the message I proclaimed [to you] is not according to man. 12 Neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught [by man], but by revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you heard of my behavior when in Judaism, that I used to exceedingly persecute the congregation of God and ravage her. 14 And I progressed in Judaism

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above many contemporaries of my nation⁶, being much more zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, (who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace) 16 to reveal His Son through me⁷ so that I might proclaim Him among the nations, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. 17 Nor [did I immediately] go up to Jerusalem to those who were emissaries before me. Instead I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus⁸. 18 Then, after three years, I went to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and I stayed with him fifteen days. 19 But the other emissaries I did not see, except James⁹, the Lord's brother. 20 (Now, look, what I write to you in the presence of God, I am not lying!) 21 After that, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, 22 and was unknown by face to the congregations of Judea, those in Christ¹⁰. 23 But they only heard this: "Our previous persecutor now preaches the Faith he used to ravage." 24 And they glorified God in me.

Chapter 2

Endorsement by the Jerusalem Emissaries and Elders

1 Then, fourteen years later, I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, also taking Titus. 2 Yet, I went up according to revelation, and submitted the message that I preach among the nations, yet privately to those of reputation to ensure I am not running, or had run, for nothing. 3 But not even Titus, being Greek, was required to be circumcised 4 because of the clandestine false brothers, (who came in secretly to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us). 5 To whom we did not yield subjection, not for an hour, so that the truth of the message might be consistent towards you.¹ 6 Yet, from those seeming to be important (whatever they were makes no difference to me – God does not consider appearances), nothing was added to me² by those of importance.

7 On the contrary, perceiving that I had been entrusted the message of the uncircumcised, just as [the message of] the circumcised was to Peter, 8 (for the one acting in Peter unto [being] emissary to

6. The sense of the Greek is Jews of comparable age

7. This is no doubt a reference to Paul's experience on the Damascus road, and Christ's commission to him (cf. Acts 26:15-18). Note the preposition is "through" (Gr- διὰ).

8. The time Paul spent in Arabia can be placed between verses 19 & 20 of Acts 9. Upon returning from Arabia to Damascus, after receiving Christ's revelation, Paul "preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard him were amazed..." (Acts 9:20-21a).

9. By this time James had been appointed the leading elder of the Jerusalem congregation

10. "the congregations of Judea, those in Christ" distinguishes Messianic congregations from non-Messianic ones (Jewish synagogues).

1. These verses show that there was clearly a legalistic faction within the Jerusalem congregation that was operating outside the leadership. Compare Acts 15:4-7.

2. The leaders of the Jerusalem congregation found nothing lacking in Paul's message to the Gentiles.

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the circumcised was acting in me unto the nations).
9 And realizing the grace given to me, James, Kaphas³, and John gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the nations, and they to the circumcised⁴, 10 [saying] only to remember the poor. This I was already eager to do.

Paul's Rebuke of Peter at Antioch

11 However, when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he was at fault. 12 For, before some came from James, he ate together with those of the nations. But, when they arrived, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcised. 13 And the other Jews played the hypocrite also. Even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy!

14 But when I observed their improper behavior toward the truth of the message, I said to Peter in the presence of all,

"If you, having been a Jew, are living like the nations and not like the Jews, why do you require the nations to become Jewish⁵? 15 'We are Jews, not sinners of the nations!'⁶ 16 Yet, having observed that man is not justified by works of law but only through faith of Jesus Christ⁷, we too believe in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith of Christ and not by works of law (because no flesh will be justified by works of law). 17 Yet, if seeking to be justified in Christ we are also found sinners, doesn't that make Christ a dispenser of sin?⁸ May it never be!"⁹

18 For if I keep rebuilding the things I destroyed, I am making myself a transgressor. 19 For I, by law, unto law have died so that I should live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ¹⁰, yet I live! But it is no more I who is living, but Christ in me. What I am now living in the flesh, I live in faith unto the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

3. Aramaic name for Peter

4. Here the leadership agreed on a division of their missions and territory, based on their perception of what the Spirit was doing in Peter and in Paul.

5. The sense seems to be that Peter's action implied that the Gentiles could only be equal with the Jewish believers if they became Jews (circumcised).

6. This statement seems to be a sarcastic summary of the elitist impression Peter was giving to the Gentiles

7. Here, Paul reminded Peter of what he had observed firsthand at Cornelius' house, that the Spirit was given to Gentiles entirely apart from observance of Jewish customs (see Acts 10:44-48 & 11:15-18)

8. When an emissary of Christ was openly sinning in front of the Gentiles, in effect it made Christ a dispenser of sin (through His emissary).

9. There is disagreement over where Paul's quotation of his rebuke of Peter ends. We have placed it here because of the switch from first person plural to first person singular in vs. 18.

10. This is likely a reference to Paul's baptism (see Rom. 6:2-6)

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Chapter 3

Paul's Rebuke of the Galatians

1 Oh foolish Galatians! Who bewitched you not to embrace the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed as having been crucified? 2 I only want to hear one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by works of law or by the proclamation of faith? 3 Are you this foolish, [to suppose that] having begun in the Spirit you are now completed through flesh? 4 Have you suffered so much for nothing, if it really was for nothing? 5 So, does the one supplying the Spirit to you and working miracles among you¹ [do so] from works of law, or from hearing of faith?

1. This is likely a reference to special Apostolic power Paul himself displayed in their presence (cf. Acts 8:14-19 & 2 Cor. 12:12)

The Inheritance Comes by "Promise" through the Abrahamic Covenant

6 In the same way Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto righteousness for him, 7 understand accordingly that those of faith, these are the sons of Abraham. 8 Yet the Scripture, having foreseen that God is justifying the nations by faith, has previously announced the message to Abraham that "*in you all nations shall be blessed*" [Gen. 12:3]. 9 Consequently, it is those of faith who are blessed with faithful Abraham.

2. If there was any question whether Paul's previous references to "works of law" meant observance of the Law of Moses, he settles the question decisively with this quote of Deuteronomy 27:26, referring specifically to the "Book of the Law" which Moses placed with the ark of the covenant (cf. Deut. 31:26).

Only Perfect Obedience to the Law Avoids its Curse

10 For, all who partake of works of law are under a curse. For the Scripture says, "*Accursed are all who do not persevere in all things written in the book of the law to do them.*" [Deut 27:26]² 11 But, it is obvious that no one is justified by law because, "*The just shall live by faith*" [Hab. 2:4]. 12 The law³ is not of faith, but [only] the man doing them [all] "*shall have life through them*" [Lev. 18:5]⁴.

3. It is not merely the concept of legalism that Paul contrasts with faith, but observance of "the Law" of Moses, indicated by the definite article.

4. That is, if "life" is to be had through observance of "the Law," it comes only to those with perfect obedience to every commandment.

Jesus, the Subject of the Abrahamic Promise, Rescues from the Law

13 Christ has ransomed us from the curse of the law³, having become accursed for us, (for it is written, "*accursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*" [Deut. 21:23]), 14 so that the blessing of Abraham may come unto the nations through Christ Jesus, that

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through faith we may receive the promise of the Spirit. 15 Brothers, I will relate a human comparison: Once a human covenant has been certified, no one circumvents or supplements it. 16 Likewise, the promises were given to Abraham and his “seed.” It does not say “seeds” as in the plural⁵, but in the singular, “and to your seed” [Gen. 22:18 LXX], who is Christ. 17 Also, I say this: The law, which came four hundred thirty years later, cannot circumvent the covenant under God that was previously certified [pointing] to Christ⁶. 18 Because, if the inheritance comes through law, then it is no longer by a promise. But, [it was] through a promise that God favored Abraham.

The Temporary Purpose of the Law

19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the “seed” should come who was promised, (being ordained through messengers⁷ in the hand of a mediator⁸). 20 Now, a mediator does not [represent] only one [party]. But, God is one⁹. 21 Then, is the law in conflict with the promises of God? May it never be! For, if a law could have been given capable of giving life, righteousness would have come through law. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, so that the promise of faith of Jesus Christ may be bestowed upon the believers. 23 But, before the faith was to come, we were supervised under law, being kept in protective custody¹⁰ for the faith about to be revealed. 24 Therefore, the law came as our guardian¹¹ unto Christ, so that through faith we might be justified. 25 But, once the faith came, we are no longer under a guardian.

Believers Partake of Abraham’s Promised Inheritance through Baptism

26 For you are all the sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For, all of you who have been immersed unto Christ have been clothed with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither servant nor free man; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if

5. Gr- “as referring to many”

6. The singular “seed” in the Abrahamic promise points forward to Christ, the specific “seed” of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed.

7. Gr- “αγγελος” (cf. Deut 33:2 LXX, Acts 7:53 & Heb. 2:2)

8. The “mediator” likely refers to Moses.

9. Having given the meaning of “mediator” (one who represents two parties in a contractual arrangement), Paul then indicates “God is one,” implying that his arrangement with Abraham needed no mediator (because it was by unconditional “promise” and not by reciprocal action on Abraham’s part). In this way he contrasted the Law of Moses with the promise of Abraham, the former being conditional, needing a mediator, and the latter unconditional, needing no mediator.

10. The sense is of being encircled for preservation.

11. The Greek word refers to a child’s guardian overseeing his education and activities until he becomes an adult.

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you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Chapter 4

1. Yet, as long as the heir is a minor, he is no different than a servant, even though he may be master of all. 2 But, he is under instructors and managers until the time designated by the father. 3 Likewise, when we were children, we used to be under the principles of the arrangement¹, having been placed in servitude. 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 in order to ransom those under law, so that we may receive the adoption. 6 Since you are also sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your² hearts, calling, "Abba³, Father!" 7 Likewise, you too are no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ⁴.

Paul Perplexed by Their Rapid Change of Heart

8 However, when you did not know God, you served what were in essence not [really] gods. 9 But now having known God, or greater still, having been known under God, why are you turning aside to impotent and bankrupt principles to which you again want to be in bondage? 10 You are observing days, months, seasons, and years. 11 I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you for nothing! 12 I beg you brothers, become like me as I [became] like you⁵! In nothing you have wronged me. 13 You have observed that through weakness of flesh I previously proclaimed the message to you. 14 And you did not despise the impediment that was in my flesh⁶, nor reject me, but received me as a messenger of God, like Christ Jesus [Himself]! 15 Where then is the blessing you [once] had? I testify to you that if possible, you would have dug out your own eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I therefore become your enemy by being truthful with you?

Tactics of the Preachers of Moses

17 Deceitfully they desire you⁷. Yet they decide to exclude you so that you might envy them⁸.

1. Gr- "κόσμος" literally, "orderly arrangement" (cf. Rom. 3:19 & Col. 2:20).

2. NU text has "our" (first person plural).

3. An Aramaic term of endearment for father, similar to "papa"

4. NU text omits "through Christ."

5. cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23

6. cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-10

7. Paul contrasts his truthfulness (v. 16) with the deceitful motives of the preachers of Moses.

8. By excluding from salvation and fellowship uncircumcised Gentile believers who were not observant of the Law, these false teachers sought to make them jealous so they would submit to circumcision and observance of the Law.

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18 But it is good to always be desirous of what is good, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My little children, for whom I again labor in childbirth until Christ may be formed in you, 20 I wish I were present with you now to change my tone, because I am perplexed by you.

Allegory Contrasting the Mosaic and Abrahamic Covenants

21 Tell me, you who prefer to be under the law, don't you hear the law? 22 For it was written that Abraham had two sons, one from a servant woman, and the other from a free [woman]. 23 But indeed the one from the servant woman was born according to the flesh. Yet, the one born from the free [woman] was by promise. 24 These things are symbols. They represent the two covenants⁹. Indeed, the one from Mount Sinai¹⁰, which gives birth to slavery, is represented¹¹ by Hagar. 25 For this Hagar, (which is Mount Sinai in Arabia), corresponds to the present Jerusalem. She is in slavery with her children. 26 But the greater Jerusalem is free! She is the mother of all of us! 27 For it has been written,

"Rejoice oh barren, the one unable to bear children! Burst out and shout, you who have no contractions, because she who was deserted has the multitude of children rather than her who has a husband!" [Isaiah 54:1]¹²

28 But, we brothers, like Isaac, are the children of the promise.

29 Even as then, the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one [born] according to spirit, so also it is now. 30 Yet, what does the Scripture say?

"Cast out the servant woman and her son! For the son of the servant woman shall never¹³ be an heir along with the son of the free woman." [Gen. 21:10]

30 Consequently, brothers, we are not the children of the servant woman, but of the free [woman].

9. literally, "they are the two covenants"

10. The Law of Moses given on Mt. Sinai

11. literally, "which is Hagar"

12. Paul's use of this quotation was apparently intended to remind them of the promise to Abraham. He was promised a multitude of descendants through Isaac (Gen. 22:17). Yet, he was also promised to become the father of "many nations" (Gen. 17:4-5). It seems Paul's point was that the number of those who become Abraham's seed from the nations through Christ would greatly outnumber those who were merely his sons by birth.

13. Paul used the Greek double negative here, roughly translated "absolutely not."

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Chapter 5

1 Christ liberated us for freedom! Stand firm, then, and do not be ensnared again by the yoke of slavery.

Stern Warning to Those Contemplating Circumcision

2 Look! I, Paul, tell you that if you get circumcised, Christ will not profit you at all. 3 And again I certify to each man getting circumcised, he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 Whoever is justified by law is excluded from Christ. You have abandoned grace. 5 For we in spirit anticipate the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight, but faith operating through love. 7 You used to run well. Who hindered you [so as] not to be persuaded by the truth? 8 This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven infects the whole lump [of dough]! 10 I have become confident towards you in the Lord that you will be mindful of nothing else. Yet, the one troubling you shall receive condemnation, whoever he is. 11 Now brothers, if I still preached circumcision, why do I continue to be persecuted? Then the scandal of the cross has been invalidated! 12 I wish those disturbing you would castrate¹ themselves!

Stern Warning to Those Abusing Their Liberty

13 Brothers, you were called to freedom. Only don't use freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, serve each other through love. 14 For the entire law has been satisfied in this one statement, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" [Lev. 19:18 & Mark 12:31]². 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware, or you may consume each other³. 16 Now I say, walk in spirit and under no circumstances should you satisfy the lusts of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires to overcome the spirit, and the spirit [desires to overcome] the flesh. And these are adversaries of each other, so that you cannot do what you desire. 18 But, if you are being led by spirit, you are not under law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious, they are: adultery, sexual perversion,

1. The Greek word means to amputate the genitals. Paul seems to wish the teachers of circumcision would be deprived of the very thing in which they gloried, their circumcised organ.

2. Paul no doubt quoted the command in Lev. 19:18 because it had previously been quoted by Jesus Himself as the fulfillment of the whole law (Mark 12:28-34).

3. Paul apparently referred to a well known parabolic tale of two snakes that swallowed each other by the tails until they completely consumed each other. Paul seems to be warning that the legalistic and judgmental spirit inherent in Law keeping would eventually destroy unity.

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impurity, shamelessness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, arguments, malice, anger, strife, divisiveness, heresy, 21 envy, murder, intoxication, partying and similar things. Of these I forewarn you, as I told you before, that those who keep doing⁴ these kinds of things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Life that Pleases God

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, virtue, faith, 23 humility, self control. Law cannot condemn these sorts of things⁵. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its influence and lusts. 25 If we are living in spirit, we should be walking in spirit. 26 We should not become conceited, challenging each other or envying each other⁶.

Chapter 6

1 Brothers, if a man is overcome by some sin, you who are spiritual restore him in a spirit of gentleness, being mindful that you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's load. Fulfill the Law of Christ in this manner. 3 If someone supposes himself to be something, yet is nothing, he is self deceived. 4 Let each validate his own work, and then privately he will boast¹, and not to others. 5 For everyone shall carry his own responsibility.

Concluding Remarks

6 Now, those [of you] who are being taught in the Word, be contributing in everything good to the one teaching.

7 Don't be fooled, God is not mocked. For whatever a man may plant, that is what he will harvest. 8 The one planting for the flesh, from the flesh he will harvest destruction. But the one planting for the Spirit, from the Spirit he will harvest perpetual life. 9 Let's not tire of doing good. For at the appointed time we shall harvest, not being idle². 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, we should do good to all, but particularly to the family of faith.

4. In Greek a present participle indicating continuous action.

5. Since any moral obligation to the Law is satisfied in observance of one command, "love your neighbor as yourself" (vs. 14), those who live by the Spirit, and whose lives produce the fruit of the Spirit, cannot be judged or condemned by any commandment or law.

6. The apparent results of legalism.

1. "Boast" in a good sense. That is, proclaim to himself his satisfaction with his own works.

2. There is no condition in the Greek as is translated in many versions (*if* we are not idle, or *if* we do not faint). "Idle" is a present participle with the particle of negation, literally, "not being idle." The present tense of the participle is relative to the time of the future tense verb, "harvest." Hence, the proper sense is that we will harvest, not being idle at the appointed time of harvest. We will have something to harvest.

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11 Look at the largeness of the text³ that I have written to you with my own hand!

12 All those determined to make the flesh appear good, these are the ones requiring you to be circumcised so that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. 13 For not even those being circumcised are law – keeping. But they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. 14 But far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom the [former] system has been crucified to me, and I to the [former] system. 15 Because, in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision has any weight, nor uncircumcision, but a new structure. 16 And whoever marches by this standard, may peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. 17 From now on, let no one trouble me. I am bearing the scars of the Lord Jesus in my body. 18 May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers, Amen.

3. Scholars are divided about whether Paul referred to the length of the epistle or the size of the print. It is most likely the latter since this is not a particularly long epistle, and Paul apparently had very poor eyesight (cf. Gal. 4:13-16 & 2 Cor. 12:7-10). His other epistles were dictated and written by an associate.

Written to the Galatians from Rome
