

## Galatians

**Author:** The traditional author is the **Apostle Paul**.

**Date:** **Galatians** or **1 Thessalonians** are generally believed to be the first books written in the NT. This letter was **probably written soon after** Paul's 1st Missionary Journey, **47-48 AD**. Or, it could possibly have been written after his 3rd Missionary Journey around 57AD, or some time in between.

**Original Recipients:** Primarily **Gentile believers** in **Jesus** as Messiah.

**Type of Literature:** Historical Narrative and Personal Letter

**Content:** This letter was written to correct false teachings and to validate Paul's apostolic calling and authority. Most of the churches were filled with Gentiles. **This letter contradicts those who insisted on converts being circumcised and following traditional Judaism.** Paul disagreed about these things being prerequisites or mandatory additions for Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus. Mixing Jesus with Jewish Law was unnecessary and incompatible. The doctrine of **justification by faith in Jesus** was presented here before Romans was written.

**“Paul is clearly battling opponents who have settled in Galatia. These are Jewish Christians who would rather circumcise the Galatians—thus alienating them from their own Gentile culture—than allow Judean Jews back home to think that Christian missionaries were lax. Unlike Paul, a more seasoned missionary, these missionaries want to impose their own culture on the Galatians.”** *IVP Bible Background Commentary*

### **Galatians 1 Jesus, Paul's authority and God's grace. (24 verses)**

#### **1) Opening apostolic greeting and a general statement of faith.**

v. 1 **Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—** 2 and all the brothers and sisters with me, To the churches in Galatia: 3 **Grace and peace to you from God our Father** and the Lord **Jesus Christ,** 4 **who gave himself for our sins to rescue us** from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

#### **2) Another Gospel was being preached that mingled Jewish law and grace.**

v. 6 **I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ** and are turning to a **different gospel—** 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But **even if we or an angel** from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, **let them be under God's curse!** (Greek, *anathema*) 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to

you a **gospel** other than what you accepted, let them be **under God's curse!** (Greek, *anathema*)

**3) We are not called to be people-pleasers.**

v. 10 **Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people?** If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

**4) Paul's authority was not inferior to that of other apostles.**

v. 11 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. 12 **I did not receive it from any man**, nor was I taught it; rather, **I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.**

**5) Paul was a distinguished Jewish scholar, called by God before his birth.**

v. 13 **For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism**, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 **But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace**, was pleased 16 **to reveal his Son in me** so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was **not to consult any human being.**

**Jeremiah 1:5** "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

**Isaiah 49:1** Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: **Before I was born the LORD called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.**

**Luke 1:13** But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. **Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son**, and you are to call him **John**. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and **he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.**

**6) Three years after getting saved, he got acquainted with Peter and James.**

v. 17 I did not go **up to Jerusalem** to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. 18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get **acquainted with Cephas** and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 **I saw none of the other apostles—only James**, the Lord's brother.

7) **His ministry was generally unknown among the Christians in Israel.**

v. 22 **I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.** 23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they praised God because of me.

**Galatians 2 Gentiles don't need to become Jews. (21 verses)**

1) **Led by the Spirit, Paul defended his pattern of ministry to the Gentiles.**

v. 1 Then **after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem,** this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 **I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles.** I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.

**Note: If the visit is referring Acts 15, this would date Galatians to about 49 BC.**

2) **The other leaders affirmed that circumcision wasn't mandatory.**

v. 3 Yet **not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised,** even though he was a Greek. 4 **This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated** our ranks to spy on **the freedom we have in Christ Jesus** and to make us slaves. 5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

3) **They recognized Paul's authority and his call to the Gentiles.**

v. 6 As for **those who were held in high esteem**—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—**they added nothing to my message.** 7 On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. 8 **For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles.** 9 James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. **They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.** 10 **All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor,** the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

4) **He publicly rebuked Peter over his hypocrisy about "table fellowship."**

v. 11 When **Cephas** came to Antioch, **I opposed him to his face,** because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from **James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles** because he was afraid of those who belonged to **the circumcision group.** 13 **The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.** 14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, **I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a**

**Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?**

**5) We are justified exclusively by faith in Jesus, not by participating in Judaism.**

v. 15 "We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 16 know that **a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.** So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be **justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.** 17 "But if, **in seeking to be justified in Christ,** we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, **doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!** 18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker. 19 "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.

**6) Crucified with Christ, means dead to self and alive in Him.**

v. 20 **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.** The life I now live in the body, **I live by faith in the Son of God,** who loved me and gave himself for me.

**7) We are saved by God's grace through Jesus, not by obedience to Judaism.**

v. 21 **I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"**

**Galatians 3 Justification comes through faith in Jesus. (29 verses)**

**1) Belief in Jesus by faith alone versus also keeping traditional Jewish Laws.**

v. 1 **You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?** Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: **Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?** 3 Are you so foolish? **After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?** 4 Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? 5 So again I ask, **does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?**

**2) Abraham was a Gentile when he received God's righteousness by faith.**

v. 6 So also Abraham **"believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."** 7 Understand, then, that **those who have faith are children of Abraham.** 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: **"All nations will be blessed through you."** 9 **So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.**

**3) If you chose to live by Torah observance you must obey it all.**

v. 10 For **all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse**, as it is written:

**"Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."**

**James 2:10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

**4) We must all live by faith, not by observing the traditional Jewish regulations.**

v. 11 Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because **"the righteous will live by faith."** 12 **The law is not based on faith**; on the contrary, it says, "The person who does these things will live by them."

**Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, **The just (righteous, NIV) shall live by faith.** KJV

**Habakkuk 2:4** The just (*righteous*, NIV) shall live by faith. KJV

**5) If you religiously observe the Jewish Laws, you must keep them all.**

v. 13 **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us**, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." 14 **He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus**, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

**Story: Roger Sapp & Bill Sudduth**

**6) The Abrahamic Covenant is fulfilled by faith in Jesus, not faith in Moses.**

v. 16 **The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.** Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but **"and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.** 17 What I mean is this: **The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.** 18 For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. 19 **Why, then, was the law given at all?** It was added because of transgressions **until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.** The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. 20 A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one. 21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For **if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.** 22 But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.

**7) Sons by faith versus slaves to law.**

v. 24 **So the law was our guardian (*schoolmaster*, KJV) until Christ came** that we might be **justified by faith**. 25 **Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian**. 26 **So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith**, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

**8) Our identity is in Jesus, not through natural birth or becoming Jewish.**

v. 28 **There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus**. 29 **If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs** according to the promise.

**Galatians 4 We are becoming Christ-like Sons of God. (31 verses)**

**1) We were heirs, but spiritual slaves with no real inheritance before Jesus.**

v. 1 What I am saying is that **as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave**, although he owns the whole estate. 2 **The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father**. 3 So also, when we were underage, we were **in slavery** under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.

**2) The written Law (Torah) was fulfilled in Jesus, bringing us into sonship.**

v. 4 **But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son**, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 **to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship**.

**3) We are no longer slaves, but sons; and of course its inclusive of daughters.**

v.6 **Because you are his sons**, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 **So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir**. 8 Formerly, when you did not know God, **you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods**.

- a. **Servants have a master, but Sons have a Father.**
- b. **Servants obey out of fear, but Sons obey out of love.**
- c. **Servants inherit nothing, but Sons inherit everything their Father owns.**

**4) Warnings against mandatory Jewish feast observance.**

v. 9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? **Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?** 10 You are observing **special days and months and seasons and years!** 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you. 12 I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong.

5) **What was Paul's illness?**

v. 13 As you know, **it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you,** 14 and even though **my illness was a trial to you,** you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. 15 Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, **you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.**

**2 Corinthians 12:7** Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a **thorn in my flesh,** a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

6) **False leaders had been working divisively among them.**

v. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? 17 Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. **What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them.** 18 It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.

7) **Christ-likeness is being formed within our spirit-man.**

v. 19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth **until Christ is formed in you,** 20 how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

8) **The Old and New Covenants are contrasted.**

v. 21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. 24 These things are being taken figuratively: **The women represent two covenants.** One covenant is from **Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves:** This is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. 26 But **the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.** 27 For it is written: "Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."

9) **We believing Gentiles inherit the Kingdom of God as His sons, not as slaves.**

v. 28 **Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise.** 29 At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. 30 But what does Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." 31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, **we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.**