

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

- Date** ■ Unknown, likely about A.D. 53
- Place** ■ To the Roman province of Galatia (in present-day central Turkey)
- Type of Source** ■ Religious text (original in Greek)
- Author** ■ Attributed to Paul
- Historical Context** ■ Paul is an important figure of early Christianity. His letters make up a significant portion of the New Testament. Paul was an active missionary who was called by Jesus to convert non-Jews to Christianity. Paul's letters provided basic ideas about Christianity, encouraged Christians through times of persecution, and reminded all Christians to support one another.
- Internal Context** ■ Paul wrote this letter to offset the influence of others who had visited Galatia. The opponents taught that Galatians should follow the Jewish law laid out in the Torah. Paul had fought long and hard on this issue, which he details in this letter. He also argues that Jewish law was meant to end with the arrival of Jesus.

Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him [Jesus] from the dead— and all the members of God's family who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!

Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently **persecuting** the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, who had set me

This translation of Paul is the New Revised Standard Version. This translation was made under the supervision of the National Council of Churches. Other translations vary somewhat from this translation.

persecuting

Prior to his conversion, Paul had been involved in the death of the Christian leader Stephen. (Acts 8:1)

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apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the **Gentiles**, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit **Cephas** and stayed with him for fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except **James the Lord's brother**. In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! Then I went into the regions of Syria and **Cilicia**, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; they only heard it said, 'The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God because of me.

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with **Barnabas**, taking **Titus** along with me. I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be **circumcised**, though he was a Greek. But because of false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us—we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and **John**, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.

But when Cephas came to **Antioch**, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to **eat with the Gentiles**. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy...

Why then [is] **the law**? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator. Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one.

Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law. But the scripture has imprisoned all things under

Gentiles
non-Jews

Cephas
Cephas is the Aramaic version of "Peter" (both mean "rock"). Peter was the main Christian leader, first in Jerusalem then in Antioch.

James the Lord's brother
Also called James the Just. James became the leader of the Jerusalem Christians after Peter. He was the most important Christian leader to insist on observance of Jewish law by Gentile converts.

Cilicia
a Roman province in southeastern Turkey, near Syria

Barnabas
a Jewish convert from Cyprus who was a partner with Paul

Titus
a Greek convert who was also a partner with Paul

circumcised
Circumcision is a ritual performed on all Jewish males. It is relatively painless on infants, but very painful on adults.

John
one of the early followers of Jesus

Antioch
the capital of Roman Syria

eat with the Gentiles
The Law of Moses forbids Jews from eating with non-Jews.

the law
the Torah, or the first five books of the Hebrew Bible

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the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be **justified** by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are **Abraham's offspring**, heirs according to the promise.

justified

accepted. Paul believed that faith in Jesus was enough to be accepted by God, rather than obedience to ritual law.

Abraham's offspring

Abraham was the founder of Judaism. He was also the ancestor of both Arabs and Jews.

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