

GALATIANS - Plain Sense Paraphrase

3-28-17

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CHAPTER ONE

This letter is from Paul, an apostle - a sent one. I was not sent by any group of people or any human authority, but by Jesus Christ himself and by God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

2 All the brothers and sisters here join me in sending this letter to the house churches of Galatia.

3 May God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

4 Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live. 5 All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

6 I am astonished that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you into the amazing grace that is in Christ Jesus, unto a false message that pretends to be the Good News 7 but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the good news concerning Christ.

8 Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different Gospel than the one we preached to you. 9 I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Gospel than the one we taught and you welcomed, let that person be eternally condemned.

10 Is my objective to please people by what I teach, or to please God? I cannot be the servant of the Lord if my aim is to please people.

11 Dear brothers and sisters, I guarantee that the gospel message I proclaim is not based on mere human reasoning. 12 I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

13 You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God’s church. I did my best to destroy it. 14 I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.

15 But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him 16 to reveal his Son to me so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles.

When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with anybody. 17 Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus.

18 Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days. 19 The only other apostle I met at that time was James, the Lord’s brother. 20 I declare before God that what I am writing to you is not a lie.

21 After that visit I went north into the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And still the Christian house churches in Judea didn't know me personally. 23 All they knew was that people were saying, "The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!" 24 And this news of my conversion caused them to praise the Lord.

GALATIANS 2

Then fourteen years later, I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too. 2 I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there I met privately with those considered to be leaders of the church, and shared with them the message I had been preaching to the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure that we were in agreement, for fear that all my missionary efforts had been, or would be, wasted. 3 And they supported me and did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile.

4 Even that question came up only because of some so-called believers there—false ones, really—who were secretly brought in. They sneaked in to spy on us and take away the freedom from following the Mosaic Law we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations. 5 But we refused to give in to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the true gospel message of grace for you and all others who would hear it.

6 And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as

great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.) 7 Instead, they saw that God had given me the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews. 8 For the same God who worked through Peter as the apostle to the Jews also worked through me as the apostle to the Gentiles.

9 In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews. 10 Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do.

11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. 12 When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised - as Jewish law would require them to be. But afterward, when some Jewish friends of James arrived, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision for salvation. 13 As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's example, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

14 When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws as a means of salvation and are living apart from their laws, like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish laws?"

15 "Unlike heathen Gentiles, you and I, as Jews, have been taught to obey the Law from our birth. 16 Yet we now know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. So, we have believed in Christ Jesus, and have been made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one can ever be made right with God by obeying the law."

17 But what happens if, when we claim to be made right with God through faith in Christ, we are then found to still be sinners. Would that mean following Christ makes us sinners? Absolutely not! 18 Rather, we are sinning if we return to the old system of obedience to the law we have already proven to be useless.

19 Every time I tried to keep the law, I failed, and it kept condemning me to death. The fact is that I *had* die to the Law and stop trying to meet the Law's requirements as a means to righteousness and salvation, in order to have the righteousness, salvation and life that is truly pleasing to God: Christ's life. 20 When Jesus died on the cross in my place, my old self died. So, now, even though it's obvious that I am alive, I no longer try to live righteously by keeping the Law, but Christ lives His life through me. The life I now live in this body is a life of continually believing in the finished work of Jesus Christ and His life within me, who loved me so much that He died for me.

21 There is no way I intend to discard the grace of God, or treat it as meaningless by continuing to try to keep the law in order to be saved. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die for us and offer us salvation by grace.

GALATIANS 3

Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you to turn you away from the truth? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross.

2 Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. 3 How foolish can you be? After starting the Christian life through the power of the Holy Spirit, why are you now trying to live the Christian life through your own human effort? 4 Haven't you learned anything from all your past efforts? I certainly hope so.

5 I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law, or because you believe in Jesus?

6 Just as "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith," 7 the real children of Abraham are those who put their faith in God.

8 What's more, the Scriptures — looking forward to this time when God would make the Gentiles right in his sight because of their faith — tell us that God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you." 9 So, then, all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

10 But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under its curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law."

11 It is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is *through faith* that a righteous person has life." 12 This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, "It is through *obeying the law* that a person has life."

13 But Christ rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law, when he was crucified on the cross, taking upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is crucified." 14 Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers in Jesus now receive the promised Holy Spirit *through faith*.

15 Dear brothers and sisters, here's an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or amend an irrevocable agreement, so it is in this case. 16 God gave the promises to Abraham and his child.

[And notice that the Scripture doesn't say "to his children," as if it meant many descendants. Rather, it says "to his child"—and that, of course, means Christ.]

17 This is what I am trying to say: God could not break the promise about Christ He made with Abraham, when He made a new promise about the Law, 430 years later, to Moses. 18 For if the good things God promised were to

be acquired by our good works [keeping the Law], then they would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God gave them to Abraham as a promise, by His grace.

19 Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the arrival of the Child who was promised. Obviously this law was not a firsthand encounter with God. It was arranged by angelic messengers through a middleman, Moses. 20 So, if there is a middleman as there was at Sinai, then the people are not dealing directly with God, are they? But the original promise was the direct blessing of God, received by faith!

21 Is there a conflict, then, between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it. 22 But God deliberately declares in His Word that we are all bankrupt sinners — with nothing whatsoever to offer God for our salvation, so that He can offer salvation, by His grace, to all who simply put their faith in Jesus.

23 Before this new way of 'faith in Christ' was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed.

24 Let me put it another way. The law was our tutor to teach us how much we needed a Savior, and salvation by faith in Him, rather than depending on our works. 25 But now that we understand that salvation comes through faith in Jesus, we no longer need the law to tutor us.

26 We now realize that the only way to become children of God is through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 All of us who have testified of our faith in Christ by being baptized are now *in* Christ — like all of us being in one room. 28 The separations and distinctions are all gone: there are no more Jews or Gentiles, servants or masters, males or females. We are all one, in Christ Jesus - parts of His Body.

29 And now that we are in Christ, we are the true children of Abraham. We are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to us.

GALATIANS 4

SONS OF GOD; NOT SLAVES UNDER THE LAW

Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had. 2 They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set. 3 And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the elementary teachings of the Jewish law - a system of external observations and regulations.

4 But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

6 And because we are his children, God has put the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, causing us to think of God as our loving Father. 7 So, you are a slave no longer! You are God's own child! And since you are his child, God has made you his heir, through your faith in Christ.

8 Before you Gentiles knew God as your Father, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. 9 So, now that you have found God (or should I say, now that God has found you), why do you want to go back and become slaves once more to the ineffectual and useless religious rituals of this world? 10 You are trying to earn favor with God by observing certain days or months or seasons or years. 11 I fear for you. Perhaps all the time I spent teaching you was wasted.

MAINTAIN YOUR FREEDOM FROM THE LAW

12 Brothers and sisters, I beg you to adopt my ways in this matter, as I adopted your ways, when I first preached to you, and you were so kind. 13 Surely you remember that, even though I was suffering physically, I taught you the truth of the Good News. 14 And my physical condition did not cause you to despise me or turn me away. No, you took me in and cared for me as though I were an angel from God or even the Messiah, Jesus, himself.

15 Where now is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? I am sure you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible. 16 You loved me, then, for teaching you the truth. Does telling you the truth now cause you to see me as an enemy?

17 The false teachers you've been hearing are so eager to win your favor, but their intentions are not good. They are trying to turn you off about me so that you will pay attention only to them. 18 I'm not jealous—it is a good for you to be excited about doing right, whether I'm teaching you, or someone else is.

19 Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives. 20 I wish I were with you right now so I could speak these things to you, instead of write them. For I am gravely concerned about you.

21 Tell me, you who want to live under the Old Testament law, do you even know what the Old Testament teaches? 22 In the Old Testament we read that Abraham had two sons, one from his slave wife and one from his freeborn wife. 23 The son of the slave wife was born out of a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God's own fulfillment of his promise.

24 These two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants. The first woman, Hagar, represents salvation by keeping the Law the people were given at Mount Sinai — the law that made them slaves. 25 Now a days, most Jews are just like the people at Mount Sinai in Arabia, because they still live in slavery to the law. 26 But the other woman, Sarah, represents salvation by grace. She represents freedom from the law, and *she is our* mother. 27 As Isaiah said,

"Rejoice, O childless woman,
you who have never given birth!
Break into a joyful shout,
you who have never been in labor!
For the desolate woman now has more children
than the woman who lives with her husband!"

28 And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac.

29 But you are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law, just as Ishmael, the slave child, born by human effort, persecuted Isaac, the free child, born by the power of the Spirit.

30 But what did Sarah say at the conclusion of that Old Testament story? "Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the free woman's son." 31 So, dear brothers and sisters, the Old Testament teaches us that we are not children of the slave woman; we are children of the free woman.

GALATIANS 5

So, make sure that you hold onto your freedom in Christ, and don't get tangled up again in slavery to the law.

2 Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ is of no benefit to you. 3 As I've said before, if you are trying to find favor with God by keeping the Old Testament law, you must obey every Mosaic regulation. 4 If you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, Christ's death on the cross is of no value to you! You have failed to understand and take advantage of God's grace.

5 We Christians, eagerly wait to receive by faith the salvation God has promised us. 6 And when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, being circumcised or being

uncircumcised makes no difference. What is important is a genuine faith in Christ, expressing itself in love for Christ and for one another.

7 You were running the race so well. Who was it that turned you away from following the path of truth? 8 It certainly wasn't God, for He is the one who called you off the law path, to begin with! 9 This false teaching has the potential of permeating all of you, like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough! 10 I am trusting the Lord to keep you from believing this false teaching. And God will judge that person, whoever he is, who has been confusing you.

11 Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised to be saved — as some say I do — why am I still being persecuted by the Jews? If I had stopped preaching salvation by grace through faith in the crucified Christ, they wouldn't still be disturbed with me. 12 I wish somebody would "cut off" those troublemakers who are teaching that you need to be circumcised to be saved!

13 For you have been called to live in freedom from the law, my brothers and sisters. But, of course, don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. 14 For the entire Mosaic law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 Don't continue to bite and devour each another, or you may end up consuming each other!

16 So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. 17 The

sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so our desires are never free from their pressures. 18 And by submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit, you will also be free from having to be concerned about keeping the law of Moses.

19 It's easy to know when you are following the desires of your sinful nature — sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life is not a Christian and will not enter Heaven.

22 But, instead, here's the kind of fruit the Holy Spirit produces in our lives when we follow Him — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, 23 gentleness, and self-control. And you won't find anything in the Jewish Law against any of these things.

24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. 25 Since our new life comes from the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. 26 Let us not become conceited, or irritate each other, or be jealous of one another.

GALATIANS 6

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are more spiritually mature should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. But be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.

2 Share each other's burdens, and in this way you will be obeying the law of Christ - which is LOVE. 3 If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

4 Mind your own business, and do your own work well, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else.

5 For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

6 Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

7 Don't kid yourselves: God's principles hold true in every area of life. You will always harvest what you plant. 8 Just so, those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest the decay and death that comes from that sinful nature. But the one who plants in response to God, following the leading of God's Spirit, will harvest a crop of eternal life.

9 So let us never stop doing what is right. When the time is ripe, we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. 10 So, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

11 You can tell this letter is really from me, because of my extra-large handwriting.

12 Those who are trying to force you to be circumcised are trying to look good to others. They don't want to be persecuted for teaching that the cross of Christ alone can save. 13 The fact is that those who advocate circumcision don't keep the whole law themselves! They only want you to be circumcised so they can boast about you being their disciples.

14 As for me, may I never boast about anything *except* the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of what Jesus did for me on that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died.

15 In summary, it doesn't matter whether a person has been circumcised in his flesh, or not. What matters is whether one's heart and life has been transformed by his faith in Jesus as his Savior. 16 May God's peace and mercy be upon all who live by this principle; they are the true children of God.

17 From now on, don't anybody bother me about my authority as an apostle, and the absolute truth of the things I teach. My body is covered with scars from serving the Lord Jesus.

18 May the grace that our Master Jesus Christ gives so freely be deeply and personally yours, my friends. Amen.