

# GALATIANS

## **Paul greets churches in Galatia (1:1-5)**

**1** From Paul, an apostle, one raised up and sent, not by men or through men but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. <sup>2</sup>I write, together with the brothers who are with me.

To all the churches in Galatia:

<sup>3-5</sup>May grace and peace be imparted to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who sacrificed Himself for our sins to free us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for all eternity. Amen. It shall be so!

## **One true gospel (1:6-9)**

<sup>6-7</sup>I am amazed that you have fallen away so quickly from God, who called you through the grace He showed you in Christ; to follow another gospel, which is really not good news at all. There are some who are causing trouble among you because they want to distort the true gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But if any of us, or even an angel from heaven, should preach any other gospel other than that which we have already taught you, let him be cursed. <sup>9</sup>As I have already said and repeat again: if anyone preaches a gospel that is any different from the one received through our teaching, let him be cursed.

## **Paul: set apart for God's purposes (1:10-24)**

<sup>10</sup>Does that sound as if I want your approval or God's approval? Am I trying to please men? If I still wanted to please men, I certainly would not be a servant of Christ! <sup>11</sup>For, my brothers, the gospel I continue to make known to you does not originate with any man. <sup>12</sup>No, I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it by anybody. Rather I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ Himself!

<sup>13</sup>For you have heard how I conducted myself as a devout Jew, that I persecuted the church of God aggressively and did all I could

to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>I also advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries, being such an ardent zealot to maintain the traditions passed down from our fathers.

<sup>15-17</sup>But I now realise that from the time of my birth it pleased God to set me apart for His purposes. He called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me, so that I might preach the gospel among the nations. When He did this, I did not confer with others, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were already apostles, but I went to Arabia before returning to Damascus. <sup>18</sup>Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to meet Peter, and I stayed with him for fifteen days. <sup>19</sup>Of the other apostles I saw only James, the Lord's brother.

<sup>20</sup>I assure you before God that what I am telling you is no lie. <sup>21</sup>Later I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup>I was personally unknown to other churches in Judea, comprised of all those who are in Christ. <sup>23</sup>They only heard that the one who had persecuted them was now preaching the faith he had tried to destroy. <sup>24</sup>And they gave glory to God because of me.

### **An apostle to the nations (2:1-10)**

**2** Fourteen years later I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with me as my companion. <sup>2</sup>I went in obedience to revelation I received from God and I described privately to the leaders there the nature of the gospel which I proclaim among the nations, for I wanted to be sure that I was teaching what was right. <sup>3</sup>Although he is a Greek, it was not deemed necessary for my companion Titus to be circumcised. <sup>4</sup>But some false brothers came among us in a covert way to spy on us because of the freedom we have in Christ, wanting to return us to slavery. <sup>5</sup>But we would not submit to their wishes even for a moment, so that you might continue to walk in the truth of the gospel – that we are saved by faith in Christ, not through trying to obey religious laws.

<sup>6</sup>I am not concerned about anybody's reputation, for God does not judge by appearances. However, those who were regarded as important leaders added nothing to what I was preaching. <sup>7</sup>Quite the opposite; they saw that I had been entrusted with proclaiming the gospel to the uncircumcised Gentiles, as Peter was commissioned to take the gospel to the circumcised Jews.

<sup>8</sup>For God's Spirit anointed Peter to be an apostle to the Jews and that same Spirit anointed me for the nations. <sup>9</sup>James, Peter and John, who were regarded as the pillars of the church, gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and myself, recognising that God had

given me grace for the Gentile nations, as they had for the Jewish people.<sup>10</sup> They only asked that we should remember the poor, something I was very keen to do.

### **Paul opposes Peter (2:11-21)**

<sup>11</sup>But when Peter visited Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face because of the shameful way he acted. <sup>12</sup>He ate with the Gentiles until some men arrived who had been sent by James. He then sat apart from the Gentiles out of fear of the Jewish believers who belonged to the circumcision party. <sup>13</sup>The Jewish believers also acted wrongly and they even persuaded Barnabas to join them.

<sup>14</sup>When I saw that they were not behaving according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of everybody else: "If as a Jew you do not live as a Gentile, why should you make the Gentiles live as if they were Jews?" <sup>15-16</sup>We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, but we know that no man is made acceptable before God by doing the works of the law, but only through faith in Christ Jesus. We Jews were saved through that same faith in Christ Jesus, for it is only by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law that we were saved; for by such works no one is made acceptable to God.

<sup>17</sup>But if in seeking to be found acceptable to God because we are in Christ we find that we still act as sinners, does this mean that Christ encourages sin? Don't even suggest such a thing! <sup>18</sup>For if I build again things that were once destroyed, I demonstrate that I myself am a law breaker. <sup>19</sup>For through the law I died to living in religious legalism that I might now live for God.

<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified together with Christ; the person I was no longer lives, but Christ now lives in me. The life I live in my body I live by faith in God's Son, who has loved me by giving Himself on my behalf. <sup>21</sup>I do not set aside God's grace. For if I could have gained acceptance through the religious law, then Christ died for nothing!

### **Saved only by faith in God (3:1-12)**

**3** How foolish you Galatians are! Who has cast a spell on you to prevent you from obeying the truth? It was clearly shown to you that Jesus Christ has won complete acceptance for us when He was crucified. <sup>2</sup>So I want you to tell me this: Did you receive the Spirit through obeying the religious law, or by responding with faith when you heard the truth about Jesus Christ? <sup>3</sup>Are you really so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now trying to be

made perfect through your self effort? <sup>4</sup>Have you suffered so much for nothing – if all that has been accomplished is more self-effort!

<sup>5</sup>So did the One who gave you the Spirit and who worked miracles among you do so because of your obedience to religious rules and regulations, or because you responded with faith when you heard the truth?

<sup>6-7</sup>In the same way that Abraham was considered right and acceptable because he believed God, know that those who believe now are the true sons of Abraham.

<sup>8</sup>The Scripture foresaw that God would make the nations acceptable to Him by faith, and so the gospel was preached to Abraham long ago by saying that “All the nations will be blessed by you.”

<sup>9</sup>Therefore those who have faith are blessed together with Abraham, who also had faith.

<sup>10</sup>Those who depend on obeying the religious law are under a curse, for it is written, “Everyone who does not obey everything written in the book of the religious law is cursed.” <sup>11</sup>So clearly no one can be made acceptable before God by the religious law for “those who are right before God shall live by faith.” <sup>12</sup>But the law is not based on faith. It depends on what a man does, not what he believes.

### **Access to the blessings of Abraham through Christ (3:13-25)**

<sup>13</sup>Christ has saved us from the curse of not being able to obey the law perfectly by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed.” <sup>14</sup>In this way, He brought us back to God so that the Gentile nations might receive the blessings of Abraham through Christ Jesus, and that we might receive by faith the promise of receiving God’s Spirit.

<sup>15</sup>Brethren, I put it to you in human terms. Nobody can cancel or add to a legal agreement made between people. <sup>16</sup>Now God gave His promises to Abraham and to his seed. He did not use the plural ‘seeds’ referring to many, but to ‘Seed’ meaning to One, even Christ Himself.

<sup>17</sup>Let me explain: The law that was given 430 years later did not cancel out the agreement previously made by God, so that His promises would be of no account. <sup>18</sup>If it were possible to receive the inheritance by your own actions, no promises would have been needed. But God made definite promises to Abraham.

3:8 *Genesis 12:3*

3:10 *Deuteronomy 27:26*

3:11 *Habakkuk 2:4*

3:13 *Deuteronomy 21:23*

<sup>19</sup>If this is the case, why was the law given in the first place? It was given because of people's sins, and was to last until the coming of the Seed referred to in the promise. It was delivered through angels by the hand of a go-between. <sup>20</sup>Such a mediator does not represent one party only; but God is one.

<sup>21</sup>Does this mean that the law contradicts God's promises? Certainly not! For if it were possible for the law to give men God's life, then they could be made acceptable before Him by the law. <sup>22</sup>But the scripture declares that everyone is in bondage to sin, so that what was promised by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe in Him.

<sup>23</sup>Before this faith was possible we were guarded by the law, restricted until the time came for faith to be revealed. <sup>24</sup>Therefore the law was a guide to point us to Christ, so that we might be made acceptable to God by faith in Him. <sup>25</sup>Now that this faith has arrived, we have no further need for such a guide.

### **Adoption as God's sons (3:26-4:7)**

<sup>26</sup>For all of you are made sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>All those who have been baptised into Christ have been clothed with Christ. <sup>28</sup>In Him there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free man, neither male nor female, for all of you in Christ Jesus are made one with God. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed and heirs of all that is promised.

**4** I will explain it like this: While the heir is a minor he differs little from a servant, even though he inherits everything. <sup>2</sup>He is put under the authority of guardians and trustees until the time appointed by his father.

<sup>3</sup>Similarly, while we were minors we were in bondage to worldly powers. <sup>4-5</sup>But at His appointed time God sent His Son, born of a woman and born under the law, so that He might save those who live under the law, that they might be adopted as His sons.

<sup>6</sup>And once you became His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, enabling you to call Him, 'Abba, Father!' <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but now a son! And because you are a son, you are one of God's heirs.

### **Paul's concern for the Galatians (4:8-20)**

<sup>8-9</sup>Before you knew God personally, you were in bondage to false gods; but now that you know Him, or, rather, since God knows you

personally, how can you turn back to those weak and useless things? Do you want to be in bondage to them again? <sup>10</sup>You are again observing special days, months, seasons and years like unbelievers! <sup>11</sup>I fear that all my hard work among you has been in vain. <sup>12-13</sup>Brothers, I urge you to identify with me in my freedom, as I came and identified with you. I am not accusing you of doing anything wrong against me personally, for you are aware that it was in a time of physical weakness that I preached the gospel to you. <sup>14</sup>Even though my condition was a trial, you neither despised nor rejected me, but you received me as an angel of God, as you would have treated Christ Jesus Himself!

<sup>15</sup>What, then, has happened to your life of blessing? For I can testify that if it were possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. <sup>16</sup>So have I now become your enemy because I speak the truth to you?

<sup>17</sup>There are people who show great concern for your welfare, but in completely the wrong way. They want you to break fellowship with me, so that you might follow them. <sup>18</sup>But it is good for you to remain zealous for the truth at all times, not only when I am present with you. <sup>19</sup>You are my little children, for whom I continue in labour until Christ has been fully formed in you! <sup>20</sup>I wanted to be with you at this time and to be able to speak in a different tone; but I am worried about you.

### **Children of the free woman - not the slave (4:21-31)**

<sup>21</sup>Tell me, those of you who want to return to living under the law, do you not take seriously what the law says? <sup>22</sup>For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave girl and the other by a free woman.

<sup>23</sup>The son born to the slave girl was born of the flesh, by the natural course of events, while the one born to the free woman was the result of God's promise. <sup>24</sup>Now this is symbolic of two different covenants. One was established on Mount Sinai, which gives birth to children who live in slavery, like Hagar the slave girl. <sup>25</sup>So Hagar stands for Mount Sinai that is in Arabia, and this corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem that is in bondage with her children. <sup>26</sup>But the heavenly Jerusalem is free and is the mother of all of us that are free. <sup>27</sup>For it is written:

“Rejoice, barren one who does not give birth. Break out with shouts you who are not in labour, for the children of

the desolate woman are more than the one who has a husband.”

<sup>28</sup>Now, brothers, like Isaac we are children of promise. <sup>29</sup>But just as the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is still the same now. <sup>30</sup>So what does the scripture say? “Be rid of the slave girl and her son, for surely the slave girl’s son will not share the inheritance of the free woman’s son.”

<sup>31</sup>So then, my brothers, we are not children of the slave girl but of the free woman!

### **Freedom in Christ (5:1-15)**

**5** Christ has set us free to live in freedom. So stand fast in that freedom and do not allow yourselves to be yoked again in slavery.

<sup>2</sup>Listen carefully: I, Paul, tell you clearly that if you allow yourselves to become legalistically religious again, Christ will be of no value to you. <sup>3</sup>I say it again to everyone, if you have become legalistic you are obligated to obey every aspect of the religious law. <sup>4</sup>For those of you who are trying to make yourselves acceptable through obeying the religious code have become separated from Christ; you have deserted the life of grace. <sup>5</sup>For it is by the Spirit that we eagerly await the hope of our eternal acceptance by faith. <sup>6</sup>For in Christ Jesus neither being a Jew nor a Gentile is of any significance; all that matters is that you live a life of faith that is expressed in a life of love for God and others.

<sup>7</sup>You were making such good progress. So who is now preventing you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup>This certainly is not the influence of the One who has called you. <sup>9</sup>A little yeast soon affects the whole lump of dough!

<sup>10</sup>In the Lord I have confidence in you, that you will not be side-tracked. Anyone who tries to influence you in that way will certainly be judged, no matter who he may be. <sup>11</sup>Brothers, if I am still preaching conformity to the religious law, why am I still being persecuted? For in that case the offence caused by the cross would have been abolished. <sup>12</sup>I wish that those who cause all this trouble, persuading you Gentile believers that you must be circumcised and so become subject to the religious law, would apply the knife to themselves.

<sup>13</sup>Brothers, you were called to live in freedom, but do not use your freedom from legalism as an opportunity to do whatever you like. No, instead serve one another as the outworking of your love

4:27 *Isaiah 54:1*

4:30 *Genesis 21:10*

for one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole of the law can be fulfilled through obedience to the one command that says, "You are to love your neighbour as yourself." <sup>15</sup>However, if you fight and snap at one another you had better watch out or you will destroy each other.

### **Life in the Spirit (5:16-26)**

<sup>16</sup>So I say, walk in the ways the Spirit leads you, and you will not gratify what your self-life desires! <sup>17</sup>For that self-life desires what opposes the Spirit and the Spirit leads you in ways that involve denying that self-life. These are two contradictory ways. This means that you are not free to do whatever you wish. <sup>18</sup>But if you choose to be led by the Spirit you will not live under the bondage of the religious law.

<sup>19-21</sup>This self-life will manifest itself in such works as these: adultery, sex outside of marriage, other forms of immorality and lust, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, divisions, jealousy and outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions to authority, party factions, envy, murder, drunkenness, orgies and other such things. As I have warned you before, those who live in such ways will not inherit God's Kingdom.

<sup>22-23</sup>However, the fruit the Spirit produces in you is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against such things! <sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed to the cross their passions and desires that contradict the Spirit!

<sup>25</sup>So if we live by the Spirit, let us keep ourselves in line with what the Spirit desires. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, neither provoking nor envying one another.

### **Continue to do good (6:1-18)**

**6** Brothers, if someone yields to sin, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Be careful in case you also are tempted. <sup>2</sup>Carry each others burdens, for by doing so you will fulfil Christ's law. <sup>3</sup>For if anyone considers himself important when he is really nothing, he only deceives himself. <sup>4</sup>Let each one test the things he does to see if he has anything to boast about, without worrying about what others do. <sup>5</sup>In this sense each one has to look out for himself.

<sup>6</sup>Let the one who is taught the Word share all that is good with his teacher. <sup>7</sup>Do not be fooled; God is not to be mocked! For anyone will reap according to what he has sown. <sup>8</sup>So the one who sows to



please himself will reap the destruction that comes from such a lifestyle. But he who sows obedience to the Spirit will reap what the Spirit gives: eternal life.

<sup>9</sup>So let us never be discouraged from doing what is good, for in due course we shall reap abundantly if we persevere. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, let us do good to everyone whenever we have the opportunity to do so, but especially in regard to our fellow members in the family of faith.

<sup>11</sup>Look at these large letters; I am now writing in my own hand (instead of dictating). <sup>12</sup>Those who are concerned about appearances want you to obey the external requirements of the religious law; they would like to force you to be circumcised. But the real motive is so that they will not be persecuted for trusting in the cross of Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup>For even though they were circumcised, they do not keep the law themselves; they only want to boast that they have exercised control over you.

<sup>14</sup>As far as I am concerned, I will boast in nothing except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. <sup>15</sup>For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; all that matters is that you are a new creation. <sup>16</sup>May peace and mercy be on those who follow this rule, for they belong to God's true Israel.

<sup>17</sup>Last of all, let no one cause me any further trouble for I bear in my body the wounds of Jesus.

<sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, my brothers. Amen! It shall be so!

