

# Galatians Notes

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Written to a number of Churches in the region of Galatia where Paul had traveled on his missionary journeys (see [Acts Ch 13-14](#))

Written from a place of deep passion and frustration

## Backstory

Christianity began as a Jewish messianic movement in Jerusalem -----> but its message was for all humanity so it quickly spread beyond Israel. By Paul's time there was as many Non-Jewish Christians as there were Jews in the Jesus movement which sparked a huge debate (see [Acts 15](#)).

Historically the covenant people of God were focused in one ethnic group Israel and was set apart by practices commanded in the Torah such as circumcision of males, eating kosher, and observing the sabbath. Many Jewish Christians believed that for the Non-Jewish Christians to truly become part of God's family, they needed to obey the laws of the Torah. So some of the Jewish Christians ended up coming to the Galatian churches:

- undermining Paul
- demanding circumcision of the male non-Jewish Christians. So many of them were.

When Paul found out, he was brokenhearted and angry and the book of Galatians was the result

# Chapters 1-2 Summary of The Gospel of the Crucified Messiah

Paul opens by expressing his bewilderment that the Galatians have embraced a different gospel started by the Christians who bad-mouthed Paul and demands circumcision.

## Chapters 1:10-2:15 Paul Defends His Message and Authority as Apostle

Paul was commissioned by the risen Jesus himself to go to the non-Jewish world (story from Acts)

Paul says that it was only later that he went to Jerusalem to consult the other apostles like Peter or James; when he told them he wasn't requiring non-Jewish Christians to be circumcised or eat kosher, they were in full support

But the tension ran deeper...

Peter had come to Antioch to visit and see these non-Jewish Christians and he was eating and mingling with them, but when some of the Jerusalem opposition group showed up in Antioch Peter caved under their pressure. He stopped eating with these uncircumcised Christians and was avoiding them.

So Paul confronted and accused Peter of hypocrisy of not staying true to the Gospel ([2:14](#)). For Paul demanding these new Christians to become circumcised and Torah observant was wrong-headed for all kinds of reasons:

- It's a **betrayal of the Gospel** "people are not justified by the works of the Torah, but rather by the **Faith of Jesus** the Messiah, and we have faith in the messiah Jesus" ([2:16](#))
  - **Justified**: declared righteous
    - In right relationship with God
    - Forgiven and given a place in God's family
    - Resulting in transformation by grace

People are only justified through trusting what God did for them through Jesus; what's true of Him, becomes true of them. His life, death, and resurrection become theirs. "I have been crucified with the messiah and it's not I who come back to life, but the messiah living in me, and the life I now live, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me. ([2:19-20](#))

The reason that anyone can say that they are right with God or belong to Jesus' covenant family is not because of following the Torah, but because of what Jesus did for them that they could never do for themselves.

## Chapters 3-4 ...Creates a New, Multi-ethnic Family

Paul uses the story of Abraham (Genesis 12, 15)

- Declared righteous by His faith in God's promise (Genesis 15:6)
  - **God's promise** - All nations will be blessed through you and your offspring

**God's purpose** was always: one large, multi-ethnic family relating to Him on the basis of faith; not on the laws of the Torah

**Why** did God give the laws of the Torah to Israel then? (The brief and dense answer [3:19](#))(Paul will explain more explicitly later to the Romans [Romans 7-8](#))

Paul explains that the laws were given to Israel at Mt. Sinai long after the promise given to Abraham. If you read the Torah carefully, they were always meant to be temporary measure.

The Laws had a negative and positive role:

- Negative - acted as a magnifying glass on Israel's sin; they exposed how Israel shared in the sinful human condition constantly rebelling against God's law.
  - So the law which is good ended up pronouncing Israel guilty and all humanity with them; "the laws imprisoned everyone under the power of sin" ([3:22](#))
- Positive - acted like a strict school teacher that kept Israel in line ([3:24](#)) until the coming of the promised offspring of Abraham the messiah; once the messiah came He fulfilled the purpose of the laws on Israel's behalf
  - Jesus was the faithful Israelite who truly loved God and neighbor
  - As Israel's king, He died to take the curse and consequence of Israel's failure into himself and bring redemption.
  - Through Jesus, the offspring of Abraham, God's blessing can come to all people regardless of their ethnicity social status or gender

For Paul, requiring non-Jewish Christians to observe the Torah:

- Acts as if Jesus didn't fulfill God's promise or deal with our sin.
- It neglects the new freedom gained for us through Jesus and the gift of the Spirit
- It limits God's promise and blessing to one ethnic family

## Chapters 5-6...That is Transformed by the Spirit

Paul's opponents might argue the laws of the Torah they're approving to living according to God's will how will non-Jewish Christians learn this? (Ch 5-6)

- Jesus' transforming presence through the Spirit is the key

- The Laws are good - summarized by 'Love your neighbor' ([Leviticus 19:18](#)), but they don't give the power to obey them

In contrast the Good news:

- the good news is that Jesus fulfilled the laws on our behalf
- Lives in us through the Spirit
- New humans who fulfill the law by the love others

Old Humanity habits - dehumanize people: division, envy, idolatry, murder, selfishness, sexual immorality

The Torah prohibited these behaviours, but Jesus put them to death on the cross.

When a person trusts in Jesus and lives in dependence on the Spirit, His life becomes theirs, and produces what Paul calls the

fruit of the Spirit - This is Jesus' way of life that he wants to reproduce in His family, so that they become people of love joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

But this fruit is not automatic - it requires cultivation like real fruit. "If we live by the spirit we must keep in step with the Spirit ([5:25](#))

**Requires intentionality** - we have to learn how to prune off our old habits and cultivate new ones, and as we do so, we find ourselves carried along by the Spirit as Jesus reshapes our minds and hearts, and makes us into people that loves God and others. In this way the people fulfill what Paul calls the Torah of the Messiah ([6:2](#))

## Conclusion

Requirement for people to be Torah observant or circumcised misses the point.

What really matters is God's new creation:

The new multi-ethnic family of the messiah, people full of faith in Jesus who are learning to love God and others in the power of the Spirit. ([6:15](#))