

# Paul's Letter to the Galatians

## Chapter 1

### "The Minister of Defense"

**H**e was the Minister of Defense. 6'5", 300 pounds, 17 NFL seasons, All-Pro 12 times, 13 Pro Bowls, #2 all-time sacks leader, Hall of Famer, dead at 43. At 17 Reggie White became an ordained pastor. Jeff Kemp played with him in Philadelphia, describing him as gentle and caring, but on the field, focused, destructive. One Reggie arm swat put 300-pounders on their face.

### ***Game Changer***

Like Reggie, Paul went ballistic over false gospels. Erroneous salvation information is a ticket to eternal destruction, so Paul warns his readers (including us) not to be fatally fooled. **He defends his gospel in Galatians 1:1-24 (p. 408, Message).**

In a blinding flash the risen Jesus had changed "Saul" to "Paul." Based on the cross, the Lord unwrapped new benefits for believers, giving Paul this *different* "gospel of the grace of God" which says Christ will live "in us" (Colossians 1:27) Outrageous? Sacreligious?

This new gospel says by trusting in what Jesus did for us on the cross, anyone -- Jew *and* Gentile -- can be forever adopted into God's family (2 Corinthians 5:14-21) ... whereas Peter's gospel focuses on Jesus' promise to set up His kingdom of heaven on earth. But that's been temporarily scuttled because Israel refused to accept Peter's promise that if the Jewish people would repent for snubbing Jesus, He'd pop back and establish "thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven" (Luke 19:11-14; Acts 3:19-23; Romans 11:1, 11-15, 25-36).

To this day Paul's gospel is in effect (Acts 7:51-8:8; Ephesians 3:1-10; 2 Corinthians 12:1-13). Ignoring this creates confusion since if we're under God's "kingdom program," we're subject to religious laws, rituals, diets, circumcision, apparel, etc.

Peter knew something "new" had come but didn't "get it" (2 Peter 3:15-16). While the whole Bible is for us, today God conveys His salvation plan through Paul's letters. Not recognizing this explains the glut of religions. In this "age of grace" all believers are in "the body of Christ," regardless of their brick-and-mortar church. Paul says our sin nature died with Christ, and His resurrection defeated death for us (Romans 7:1-6, 8:1-4; Colossians 1:24-27 and 2:1-6).

### ***"Show Some I.D.!"***

### ***Galatians 1:1-5***

Interlopers had infected the believers, calling Paul a fraud. Worse, these outsiders had destroyed Paul's "faith + nothing" salvation offer by claiming we must also do what Jewish doctrine demands (Matthew 5:17-48). **Let's read Colossians 1:24-2:23 (p. 876, NIV) and Philippians 3:2-16 (p. 437, Message).**

When we stick to what the Bible says to us through Paul about salvation, we're reading our own God-mail. We're saved today only by trusting in what Jesus has *done*, not on what we *do*.

- It's not true that we're saved by keeping rituals, ceremonies and Moses' Law (Romans 3:38).
- We're saved by God's generosity. But it's not true that after that, it makes no difference how we live (James 2:17; Romans 5:20-6:4).
- We're saved by God's good favor, but it's not true that we *remain* saved by performing and keeping the Law (2 Peter 3:3-18).

**DISCUSS: What contact if any have you had with these?**

Retired NFL'er Norm Evans recently spoke at a former coach's funeral. "What are you learning about death?" I asked him. With an offensive lineman's flair for oratory, he replied, "It's coming."

Unless Jesus returns first, chances are good that all of us will die. After that God will ask us, "**What did you do with my Son?**" He won't grade on a curve or round off. The Bible says it's either "Nice going, good and faithful servant" or "Begone; I don't know you."

Don't count on hearing "Well, you were religious, and you tried hard; c'mon in." In Paul's day the Greeks and Romans had many gods, many "other" gospels. People are very "creative" in crafting customized roads to "the god they want." Make sure your gospel is straight from "the God who *is*" ... because eternity is a long time.

**DISCUSS: What one word best summarizes vv 1-5?**

***"You Want Blunt? I'll Be Blunt!"***  
***Galatians 1:6-12***

Galatian believers had begun circumcising babies and Gentile converts, observing feast days, diets, Mosaic law and the Talmud's microscopic regulations. These had been endorsed by Jesus on earth, so "kingdom Jews" said the "only believe" gospel fell short.

After Jesus went back to heaven, Peter told the Jews, “You sinned by sending Messiah to the cross. Repent and He’ll return and establish His kingdom, bringing “peace on earth, good will toward men.” Some believed, but religious leaders and the masses did not. So God turned from the Jews, as a people, to *all* humanity with His new message through Paul: “No more religious hoop-jumping. Just *commit* yourself to My care, *trusting* what Christ did in your place.”

God has always saved people who took Him at His word. Abraham believed Sarah, age 90, would be a mom, as God promised. Noah believed and became the first boatbuilder. Moses believed God would give His people a land that many still want to deny them of.

How could Paul threaten people with curses when we’re to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44)? Yet Jesus called religious captains who rebuffed Him “sons of the devil,” “blind fools,” and a “brood of vipers” who won’t escape hell (Matthew 23:15-34; John 8:42-47).

**DISCUSS: How could Jesus exhort us to love our enemies, then call people by harsh names?**

Under Paul’s gospel, God’s Spirit enables believers to do good works simply as a way of life, not as tool to impress God or others.

**DISCUSS: Why would some “good” works not be good?**

*Believe* rhymes with *deceive* which is satan’s mission. That lying snake accuses us (“You think God cares about YOU??”). He sews doubt (“You can’t trust God to save you. You gotta save yourself!”) He condemns (“You’re no good.”). And he destroys (John 10:10).

False gospels result in a never-ending curse, not a blessing. We have enough opinions; we need Truth. Jesus said He’s “the Truth” and “My Word is truth” (John 14:6, 17:17). Syncretism (a grab bag of beliefs) is deadly. It’s resolved by 2 Timothy 2:15 (p. 885, NIV).

**DISCUSS: What one word best wraps up vv 6-12?**

### ***“But It Seemed So Holy At The Time” Galatians 1:13-16a***

Paul, born Saul, grew up in a Jewish home in Tarsus, Turkey where Mark Antony and Cleopatra met. This “Jewish Idol” conformed to all his religion demanded, studied under the top rabbi, sat on the highest court, led the vendetta to wipe out followers of the Nazarene carpenter. His “good works” were hurting the very God he loved!

**DISCUSS: The iconic word for vv 13-16 is what?**

## ***Chilling in Arabia***

### ***Galatians 1:16b-20***

After his conversion, Paul went to Arabia to detox with and get new Truth from the risen Savior, preserved for us in Paul's letters.

**DISCUSS: And the word for vv 16-20 is ... ?**

## ***Loose Change or Real Change?***

### ***Galatians 1:21-24***

Politicians, conspiracy theorists and Liz Taylor's bridal coordinator all say change is coming. Imagine you're a first century follower of Christ, and Paul, reputedly a changed man, is coming to speak about Jesus. "Wait just a Jericho minute," you say. "Isn't he the creep who nailed our buds-in-Christ?" Paul is living proof that you can be perfectly religious, but be dead wrong!

As our Minister of defense, Jesus picked up the tab for our sin. Saved = Faith + Nothing. Getty and Townsend put this to music:

In Christ alone, who took on flesh  
Fullness of God in helpless babe  
This gift of love and righteousness  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
'Til on that cross as Jesus died  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay  
Light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious Day  
Up from the grave He rose again

And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am His and He is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny

No power of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
'til He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

On what or *whose* power are you standing? Wanna talk about it?

His Deal

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