
Commentary On Galatians Chapter One

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A verse by verse Messianic commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians, chapter one.

1 Paul, an emissary, (not from men, neither through man, but through Yeshua the Anointed, and through God the Father, who raised him from the dead),

This letter is written by Paul, an apostle, that is, an emissary or sent one. Paul was sent not by men, nor any man, but by Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) and God the Father, who raised Yeshua from the dead. This means that Paul was instructed directly by Yeshua on what to preach to the nations. He neither made up his own theology, nor was he taught the theology of others. Refer to verses 11 and 12.

2 and all the brothers with me, to the assemblies of Galatia.

This letter is also written on behalf of Paul's brothers and sisters in Messiah who were with him at the time he wrote the letter, which is addressed to the churches of Galatia.

These assemblies, being in Galatia, outside of the land of Israel, were Gentile churches, which means that most of the members were not of Jewish descent or culture. These are assemblies which Paul himself established during his mission to the nations.

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Adonai Yeshua the Anointed,

Paul, in accordance with his usual practice, wishes his readers and hearers grace and peace from God the Father and from Messiah Yeshua. In this regard, it is noteworthy that he is not recorded as having done so in the name of the Holy Spirit.

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Yeshua died for our sins in order to save us from and bring us out of the evil world which exists at present, and this according to the will of God our Father. It is the Gentiles' starting to turn back to the evil practices of the world that appears to have occasioned this letter.

5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The letter opening is concluded with a glorification of God, and an emphatic amen.

6 I am amazed that you [plural] are so soon deserting him who called you into the loving-kindness of the Anointed to a different good news,

Paul is astounded that those in the gentile Galatian churches are so quickly deserting God (who called them into the grace of Messiah), for a different “good news”.

7 which is not another [the same], but there be some that trouble you, and who want to change the good news of the Anointed.

This alien “good news” is not just another flavour of the true good news which Paul had taught them, and which Messiah taught Paul directly Himself. No! There were some among them who were influencing them and perverting the good news of Messiah into something which seemed similar or the same, but which in fact is radically different. Those who sought to pervert the Gospel in the end succeeded in their purpose. They were able to have God’s Law put aside while retaining an appearance of godliness.

8 But even though we, or a messenger from heaven, preach any good news to you contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

A curse from God will be upon those who pervert the true Gospel and teach it as the truth.

The counterfeit gospels resemble the true Gospel, otherwise, no one would be fooled. The only way to know which is the true and which the counterfeit is to test against Scripture, while being wary of corrupted translations pushing a lawless message contrary to Scripture. People do, however, prefer to take the word of trusted priests, pastors or Christian “superstars” over what they can see plainly in God’s Word for themselves if only they took the time and trouble to study it.

9 As we said before, so I now say again, If any man preach any other gospel to you other than that you have received, let him be accursed.

The repetition shows that these are definitely no idle words. Furthermore, the curse is not only from Paul himself. “As we said before,” shows that it was said before, and that it is not just Paul who said it.

10 For do I now seek the approval of men, or of God? Or do I strive to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be the servant of the Anointed.

The false gospel that was being taught was pleasing to men and had an appearance of godliness, but it is not Paul’s job to please men but to please God, being the servant of Messiah.

11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the good news that was preached by me is not according to man.

But I make known to you, my brothers and sisters in Messiah, that the Good News preached or proclaimed by myself does not come from man, and is not according to any man’s teaching.

12 Because I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but [I received it] by the revelation of Yeshua the Anointed.

Because I neither received it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it was instead given to me by revelation directly from Messiah Yeshua.

All of Paul’s teaching came directly from Yeshua the Anointed, including his teaching and example of keeping all of God’s Law, none of which had lapsed since Yeshua’s death and resurrection.

13 For you have heard of my conduct in the past in Judaism, how I used to exceedingly persecute the Assembly of God, and attempted to destroy it.

For all of you have heard about how I used to behave in Judaism, how exceedingly I used to persecute the Church of God, and tried to destroy it.

Note that the author is not saying he is no longer a Jew or that his religion is no longer Judaism, as many Christians would prefer to suppose and assume. He is merely drawing a stark contrast between his behaviour then and his behaviour now. He is still a Jew in "Judaism", but his behaviour is now different.

Whatever exactly Paul thought by the term 'Judaism' or the 'religion of the Jews', (since Paul was a Pharisee, perhaps he particularly had in mind that sect) he is certainly not saying that it is the nature of Judaism to persecute Christian Jews, for Paul well knew that his own teacher, Gamaliel, did not persecute the Christian Jews as Paul did. See the following verses in Acts.

Acts 5:38-39 So in the present case I [Gamaliel] tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will be overthrown, but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found fighting against God;

Continuing with Galatians 1.

14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my kind, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

And Paul succeeded among and over his equals among the Pharisees because he showed greater zeal for the traditions of his ancestors. The Pharisees, we surmise from Yeshua's dealings with them, valued their human tradition on a par with the written Law, similar to the Jews of today.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his loving kindness,

But in due time, when God was ready, as when he was separated from his mother's womb at birth, called Paul through the working of His grace.

16 to reveal his Son to me, that I might preach him among the nations; I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

God called Paul through his loving kindness and revealed his Son, Messiah Yeshua, to him, for the purpose that Paul would preach Yeshua among the nations. Now Paul did not immediately go and confer with other men,

17 nor did I go up to Yerushalayim to those who were emissaries before me, but I went away into Aravia, and returned again to Damaseq.

neither did he go straight to Jerusalem to obtain instruction from the apostles who had been apostles before him, but instead he went into Arabia, eventually returning to Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Yerushalayim to see Keipha, and stayed with him fifteen days.

Furthermore, it was three years later (three years after his conversion experience) that he went to Jerusalem to see Peter for fifteen days only.

19 But I did not see any of the emissaries except Ya'akov the brother of Adonai.

But even then he did not see any of the other apostles, except for James, the brother of Yeshua.

20 Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God, that I am not lying.

And these things to which Paul is testifying in writing are the absolute truth, sworn before God.

21 Afterwards I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

After visiting Peter, Paul went into the Syria and Cilicia regions.

22 And I was unknown by sight to the assemblies of Yehudah which were in the Anointed,

And he was unknown in person to the believing assemblies of Judah (i.e., Jews, but not those Jews who still did not believe in Messiah Yeshua).

23 But they had heard only that he who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.

But these assemblies of the Jews had only heard about him, and what they had heard was that he was now preaching the faith which he was once occupied in destroying.

24 And they were glorifying God on my account.

And they glorified God on account of what they heard about Paul, because such a thing is indeed a miracle.