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Galatians

1 Greetings from Paul, an apostle.* I was chosen to be an apostle, but not by any group of people. My authority did not come from other people. No! It was Jesus Christ and God the Father who made me an apostle. God is the One who raised Jesus from death.

2 Greetings also from all those in God's family who are with me.

To the churches (*groups of believers*) in Galatia.*

3 I pray that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will be good to you and give you peace. **4** Jesus gave himself for our sins. Jesus did this to free us from this evil world we live in. This is what God the Father wanted. **5** The glory belongs to God forever and ever. Amen.

There Is Only One Good News Message

6 A short time ago God called you to follow him. He called you through his grace (*kindness*) that came through Christ. But now I am amazed at you people! You are already turning away and believing something different from the Good News* [we told you]. **7** There is no other message that is good news. But some people are confusing you. They want to change the Good News about Christ. **8** We told you the true Good News message. So if anyone tells you a different message, they should be condemned—even if it's one of us or even an angel from heaven! **9** I said this before. Now I say it again: You have already accepted the Good News. If any person tells you another way to be saved, they should be condemned!

apostle(s) The men Jesus chose to represent him in a special way.

Galatia Probably the area where Paul began churches on his first missionary trip. See Acts 13 and 14.

Good News The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.

10 Now do you think I am trying to make people accept me? No! God is the One I am trying to please. Am I trying to please people? If I wanted to please people, I would not be a servant of Jesus Christ.

Paul's Authority Is from God

11 Brothers and sisters, I want you to know that the Good News* message I told you was not made up by any person. **12** I did not get my message from any other human. The Good News is not something I learned from other people. Jesus Christ himself gave it to me. He showed me the Good News that I should tell people.

13 You have heard about my past life. I was in the Jewish religion. I persecuted the church of God very much. I tried to destroy the church (*believers*). **14** I was becoming a leader in the Jewish religion. I did better than most other Jews my own age. I tried harder than anyone else to follow the old rules. These rules were the customs we got from our ancestors.*

15 But God had special plans for me even before I was born. So God called me with his grace (*kindness*). God wanted me **16** to tell the Good News* about his Son (*Jesus*) to the non-Jewish people. So God let me see and learn about his Son. When God called me, I did not get advice or help from any person. **17** I did not go to see the apostles* in Jerusalem. These men were apostles before I was. But, without waiting, I went away to Arabia. Later I went back to the city of Damascus.

ancestor(s) Literally, "fathers," meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

¹⁸Three years later I went to Jerusalem; I wanted to meet Peter.* I stayed with Peter 15 days. ¹⁹I met no other apostles*—only James, the brother of the Lord (*Jesus*). ²⁰God knows that these things I write are not lies. ²¹Later I went to the areas of Syria and Cilicia.

²²In Judea the churches (*groups of believers*) in Christ had never met me before. ²³They had only heard this about me: “This man was persecuting us. But now he is telling people about the same faith that he once tried to destroy.” ²⁴These believers praised God because of me.

The Other Apostles Accepted Paul

2 After 14 years, I went to Jerusalem again. I went with Barnabas, and I took Titus with me. ²I went because God showed me that I should go. I went to those men who were considered to be the leaders [of the believers]. When we were alone, I told these men the Good News* I tell to the non-Jewish people. [I wanted these men to understand my work,] so that my past work and the work I do now would not be wasted. ³⁻⁴Titus was with me. Titus is a Greek (*non-Jew*). But these leaders did not force even Titus to be circumcised.* [We needed to talk about these problems,] because some false brothers had come into our group secretly. They came in like spies to find out about the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to make us slaves. ⁵But we did not agree with anything those false brothers wanted! We wanted the truth of the Good News to continue for you.

⁶Those men who seemed to be important did not change the Good News* message I tell people. (It doesn’t matter to me if they were “important” or not. To God all men are the same.) ⁷But these leaders saw that God had given me a special work, the same as Peter.* God gave Peter the work of telling the Good News to the Jews. But God gave me the work

of telling the Good News to the non-Jewish people. ⁸God gave Peter the power to work as an apostle.* Peter is an apostle for the Jewish people. God gave me the power to work as an apostle too. But I am an apostle for the people who are not Jews. ⁹James, Peter, and John seemed to be the leaders. They saw that God had given me this special grace (*gift*). So they accepted Barnabas and me. Peter, James, and John said, “Paul and Barnabas, we agree that you should go to the people who are not Jews. We will go to the Jews.” ¹⁰They asked us to do only one thing—to remember to help the poor people. And this was something that I really wanted to do.

Paul Shows that Peter Was Wrong

¹¹Peter came to Antioch. He did something that was not right. I was against Peter, because he was wrong. ¹²This is what happened: When Peter first came to Antioch, he ate and associated with the non-Jewish people. But then some Jewish men came from James. When these men came, Peter separated himself from the non-Jews. He stopped eating with them. Why? Because he was afraid of the Jews who believe that all non-Jewish people must be circumcised.* ¹³So Peter was a hypocrite.* The other Jewish believers joined with Peter. So they were hypocrites too. Even Barnabas was influenced by the things these Jewish believers did. ¹⁴I saw what these Jews did. They were not following the truth of the Good News.* So I spoke to Peter in a way that all the other Jews could hear what I said. This is what I said: “Peter, you are a Jew. But you don’t live like a Jew. You live like a non-Jew. So why do you now force the non-Jewish people to live like Jews?”

¹⁵We Jews were not born as non-Jews and sinners. We were born as Jews. ¹⁶We know that a person is not made right with God by following the law.* No! It is trusting in Jesus Christ that makes a person right with God. So we have put our faith in Christ Jesus, because we wanted to be made right with God. And we are right with God because we trusted in Christ—not because we followed the law.

Peter The text says “Cephas,” the Jewish name for Peter. He was one of Jesus’ twelve apostles.

apostle(s) The men Jesus chose to represent him in a special way.

Good News The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.

circumcised, circumcision Cutting off the foreskin. This was done to every Jewish baby boy. It was a mark of the agreement God made with Abraham. Read Gen. 17:9–14.

hypocrite(s) Bad people that act like they are good.

law God’s law. It is represented in the law of Moses.

[This is true] because no person can be made right with God by following the law.

¹⁷We Jews came to Christ to be made right with God. So it is clear that we were sinners too. Does this mean that Christ makes us sinners? No! ¹⁸But I would really be wrong to begin teaching again those things (*the law*) that I gave up. ¹⁹I stopped living for the law. It was the law that killed me. I died to the law so that I can now live for God. I (*my old life*) was killed on the cross with Christ. ²⁰So the life that I live now is not really me—it is Christ living in me. I still live in my body, but I live by faith in the Son of God (*Jesus*). Jesus is the One who loved me. He gave himself to save me. ²¹This gift is from God, and it is very important to me. Why? Because if law could make us right with God, then Christ did not have to die.

God's Blessing Comes Through Faith

3 You people in Galatia were told very clearly about the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. But you were very foolish. You let someone trick you. ²Tell me this one thing: How did you receive the Spirit*? Did you receive the Spirit by following the law*? No! You received the Spirit because you heard [the Good News*] and believed it. ³You began [your life in Christ] with the Spirit. Now do you try to complete it by your own power? That is foolish. ⁴You have experienced many things. Were all those experiences wasted? I hope they were not wasted! ⁵Does God give you the Spirit because you follow the law? No! Does God work miracles* among you because you follow the law? No! God gives you his Spirit and works miracles among you because you heard [the Good News] and believed it.

⁶[The Scriptures* say] the same thing about Abraham.* “Abraham believed God. And God accepted Abraham’s faith. That made

Abraham right with God.”* ⁷So you should know that the true children of Abraham are the people who have faith. ⁸The Scriptures told what would happen in the future. These writings said that God would make the non-Jewish people right through their faith. God told this Good News* to Abraham before it happened. God said to Abraham, “I will use you to bless all the people on earth.”* ⁹Abraham believed this. Because Abraham believed, he was blessed. [It is the same today.] All people who believe are blessed the same as Abraham was blessed. ¹⁰But people who depend on following the law [to make them right] are under a curse. Why? Because the Scriptures say, “A person must do all the things that are written in the law.* If he does not always obey, then that person is under a curse!”* ¹¹So it is clear that no person can be made right with God by the law. [The Scriptures say,] “The person who is right with God by faith will live forever.”* ¹²The law does not use faith; [it uses a different way.] The law says, “A person who wants to find life by following these things (*the law*) must do the things the law says.”* ¹³The law put a curse on us. But Christ took away that curse. He changed places with us. Christ put himself under that curse. The Scriptures say, “When a person’s body is put (*hung*) on a tree,* that person is under a curse.”* ¹⁴Christ did this so that God’s blessing could be given to all people. God promised this blessing to Abraham. The blessing comes through Jesus Christ. [Christ died] so that we could have the Spirit* that God promised. We receive this promise by believing.

The Law and the Promise

¹⁵Brothers and sisters, let me give you an example: Think about an agreement that one

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God’s work among people in the world.

law God’s law. It is represented in the law of Moses.

Good News The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.

miracle(s) Powerful works or great things done by God’s power.

Scriptures Holy Writings—the Old Testament.

Abraham Most respected ancestor of the Jews.

“Abraham believed ... God” Quote from Gen. 15:6.

“God will use ... earth” Quote from Gen. 12:3.

“A person ... curse” Quote from Deut. 27:26.

“The person ... forever” Quote from Hab. 2:4.

“A person ... law says” Quote from Lev. 18:5.

put on a tree Deut. 21:22–23 says that when a person was killed for doing wrong, his body was hung on a tree to show shame. Paul means that the cross of Jesus was like that.

“When ... curse” Quote from Deut. 21:23.

person makes with another person. After that agreement is made official, no person can stop that agreement or add anything to it. And no person can ignore that agreement. ¹⁶God made promises to Abraham* and his Descendant.* The Scripture does not say, “and to your descendants.”* (That would mean many people.) But it says, “and to your Descendant.” (That means only one person; that person is Christ.) ¹⁷This is what I mean: The agreement [that God gave to Abraham] was made official long before the law* came. The law came 430 years later. So the law could not take away the agreement and change God’s promise. ¹⁸Can following the law give us the things God promised? No! If we could receive those things by following the law, then it is not God’s promise that brings us those things. But God freely gave [his blessings] to Abraham through the promise God made.

¹⁹So what was the law* for? The law was given to show the wrong things people do. The law would continue until the special Descendant of Abraham came. This is the Descendant mentioned in the promise. [The promise came directly from God.] But the law was given through angels. The angels used [Moses for] a mediator* to give the law to people. ²⁰But a mediator is not needed when there is only one side, and God, [who gave the promise,] is only one.

The Purpose of the Law of Moses

²¹Does this mean that the law* is against God’s promises? No! If there was a law that could give life to people, then we could be made right by following law. ²²But this is not true, because the Scriptures* showed that all people are bound by sin. Why did the Scriptures do this? So that the promise would be given to people through faith. The promise is given to people who believe in Jesus Christ.

²³Before this faith came, we were all held prisoners by the law.* We had no freedom until God showed us the way of faith that was coming. ²⁴So the law was our master until Christ came. After Christ came, we could be made right with God through faith. ²⁵Now the way of faith has come. So we don’t live under the law now.

^{26–27}You were all baptized* into Christ. So you were all clothed with Christ. This shows that you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁸Now, in Christ, there is no difference between Jew and Greek (*non-Jew*). There is no difference between slaves and free people. There is no difference between male and female. You are all the same in Christ Jesus. ²⁹You belong to Christ. So you are Abraham’s* descendants.* You get all of God’s blessings because of the promise [that God made to Abraham].

4 I want to tell you this: While the heir* is still a child, he is no different from a slave. It doesn’t matter that the heir owns everything. Why? ²Because while he is a child, he must obey the people who are chosen to care for him. But when the child reaches the age his father set, he is free. ³It is the same for us. We were once like children. We were slaves to the useless rules of this world. ⁴But when the right time came, God sent his Son. God’s Son was born from a woman. God’s Son lived under the law.* ⁵God did this so that he could buy the freedom of the people who were under the law. God’s purpose was to make us his children.

⁶You are God’s children. That is why God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. The Spirit* cries out, “*Abba*,* Father.” ⁷So now you are not a slave like before. You are God’s child. God will give you the things he promised, because you are his child.

Abraham Most respected ancestor of the Jews.

Descendant Literally, “seed.”

descendant(s) The people born in a person’s family after that person dies.

law The law of Moses.

mediator A person who helps one person talk to or give something to another person.

Scriptures Holy Writings—the Old Testament.

baptized A Greek word meaning to be immersed, dipped, or buried briefly under water.

heir A person who will be given all that his father owned.

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God’s work among people in the world.

Abba An Aramaic word. Jewish children called their fathers “*Abba*.”

Paul's Love for the Galatian Christians

⁸In the past you did not know God. You were slaves to gods that were not real. ⁹But now you know the true God. Really, it is God who knows you. So why do you turn back to those weak and useless rules you followed before? Do you want to be slaves to those things again? ^{10–11}It worries me that you follow teachings about special days, months, seasons, and years. I fear that my work for you has been wasted.

¹²Brothers and sisters, I was like you; so please become like me. You were very good to me before. ¹³You remember why I came to you the first time. It was because I was sick. That was when I told the Good News* to you. ¹⁴My sickness was a burden to you. But you did not show hate for me. You did not make me leave. You welcomed me like I was an angel from God. You accepted me like I was Jesus Christ himself! ¹⁵You were very happy then. Where is that joy now? I remember that you wanted to do anything possible to help me. You would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if that were possible. ¹⁶Now am I your enemy because I tell you the truth?

¹⁷Those people* are working hard to persuade you. But this is not good for you. Those people want to persuade you to turn against us. They want you to follow only them and no other people. ¹⁸It is good for people to show interest in you, but only if their purpose is good. This is always true. It is true when I am with you and when I am away. ¹⁹My little children, again I feel pain for you like a mother feels when she gives birth. I will feel this until you truly become like Christ. ²⁰I wish I could be with you now. Then maybe I could change the way I am talking to you. Now I don't know what to do about you.

The Example of Hagar and Sarah

²¹Some of you people still want to be under the law of Moses. Tell me, do you know what the law says? ²²The Scriptures* say that Abraham* had two sons. The mother of one son

was a slave woman. The mother of the other son was a free woman. ²³Abraham's son from the slave woman was born in the normal human way. But the son from the free woman was born because of the promise God made to Abraham.

²⁴This true story makes a picture for us. The two women are like the two agreements (*covenants*) between God and his people. One agreement is the law that God made on Mount Sinai.* The people who are under this agreement are like slaves. The mother named Hagar is like that agreement. ²⁵So Hagar is like Mount Sinai in Arabia. She is a picture of the earthly Jewish city of Jerusalem. This city is a slave, and all its people (*the Jews*) are slaves to the law. ²⁶But the heavenly Jerusalem that is above is like the free woman. This is our mother. ²⁷The Scriptures* say,

“Be happy, woman who cannot have children!

You never gave birth.

Shout and cry with joy!

You never felt the pain of giving birth.

*The woman who is alone**

will have more children

than the woman who has a husband.”

Isaiah 54:1

^{28–29}One son of Abraham* was born in the normal way. Abraham's other son (*Isaac*) was born by the power of the Spirit,* because of God's promise. My brothers and sisters, you are also children of promise like Isaac was then. The son who was born in the normal way treated the other son (*Isaac*) badly. It is the same today. ³⁰But what do the Scriptures* say? “Throw out the slave woman and her son! The son of the free woman will receive everything his father has. But the son of the slave woman will receive nothing.”*

³¹So, my brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman. We are children of the free woman.

Good News The news that God has made a way for people to have their sins forgiven and live with him forever.

Those people The false teachers who were bothering the believers in Galatia. See Gal. 1:7.

Scriptures Holy Writings—the Old Testament.

Abraham Most respected ancestor of the Jews.

Mount Sinai Mountain in Arabia where God gave his laws to Moses. Read Ex. 19 and 20.

woman ... alone This means her husband has left her.

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God's work among people in the world.

“Throw out ... nothing” Quote from Gen. 21:10.

Keep Your Freedom

5 We have freedom now. Christ made us free. So stand strong. Don't change and go back into the slavery of law.² Listen! I am Paul. I tell you that if you go back to law by being circumcised,* then Christ is no good for you.³ Again, I warn every man: If you allow yourselves to be circumcised, then you must follow all the law of Moses.⁴ If you try to be made right with God through the law, then your life with Christ is finished—you have left God's grace (*kindness*).⁵ I say this because our hope of being made right with God comes through faith. And the Spirit* helps us wait for that hope.⁶ When a person is in Christ Jesus, it is not important if he is circumcised or not. The important thing is faith—the kind of faith that works through love.

⁷ You were running a good race. You were obeying the truth. Who persuaded you to stop following the true way? ⁸ That persuasion does not come from the One (*God*) who chose you.⁹ Be careful! “Just a little yeast* makes the whole batch of dough rise.”* ¹⁰ I trust in the Lord that you will not believe those different ideas. Some person is confusing you with those ideas. That person will be punished, whoever he is.

¹¹ My brothers and sisters, I don't teach that people must be circumcised.* If I do teach circumcision,* then why am I still being persecuted? If I still taught that people must be circumcised, then my telling them about the cross would not be a problem. ¹² I wish those people who are bothering you would add castration* to their circumcision.

¹³ My brothers and sisters, God called you to be free. But don't use your freedom as an

excuse to do the things that please your sinful selves. But serve each other with love. ¹⁴ The whole law* is made complete in this one command: “Love other people the same as you love yourself.”* ¹⁵ If you continue hurting each other and tearing each other apart, be careful! You will completely destroy each other.

The Spirit and Human Nature

¹⁶ So I tell you: Live by following the Spirit.* Then you will not do the evil things your sinful selves want. ¹⁷ Our sinful selves want things that are against the Spirit. The Spirit wants things that are against our sinful selves. These two different things are against each other. So you don't do the things you really want to do. ¹⁸ But if you let the Spirit lead you, then you are not under law.*

¹⁹ The wrong things our sinful self does are clear: doing sexual sins, not being pure, doing morally bad things, ²⁰ worshiping false gods, doing witchcraft,* hating, making trouble, having jealousy, being very angry, being selfish, making people mad at each other, making divisions, ²¹ having envy, being drunk, having wild and wasteful parties, and doing other things like this. I warn you now like I warned you before: The people who do these things will not be in God's kingdom. ²² But the Spirit* gives love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. There is no law that can say these things are wrong. ²⁴ Those people who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified (*killed*) their own sinful selves. They have given up their old selfish feelings and the evil things they wanted to do. ²⁵ We get our new life from the Spirit. So we should follow the Spirit. ²⁶ We must not be vain (*conceited*). We must not make trouble with each other. And we must not be jealous of each other.

Help Each Other

6 Brothers and sisters, a person in your group might do something wrong. You people who are spiritual should go to the

circumcised, circumcision Cutting off the foreskin. This was done to every Jewish baby boy. It was a mark of the agreement God made with Abraham. Read Gen. 17:9–14.

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God's work among people in the world.

yeast Used here as a symbol of evil or bad influence.

“Just ... rise” A proverb meaning that a small thing (like a little wrong teaching) can make a big problem or that just one person can have a bad influence on the whole group.

castration To cut off part of the male sex organs. Paul uses this word because it is like “circumcision.” Paul shows that he is very upset with the false teachers.

law God's law. It is represented in the law of Moses.

“Love other people ... yourself” Quote from Lev. 19:18.

law A law system, like the law of Moses.

witchcraft Using magic or the power of Satan.

person who is sinning. You should help to make him right again. You should do this in a gentle way. But be careful! You might be tempted to sin, too. ²Help each other with your troubles. When you do this, you truly obey the law of Christ. ³If a person thinks that he is important when he is really not important, he is only fooling himself. ⁴A person should not compare himself with other people. Each person should judge his own actions. Then he can be proud for what he himself has done. ⁵Each person must accept his own responsibility.

Never Stop Doing Good

⁶The person who is learning the teaching of God should share all the good things he has with the person who is teaching him.

⁷Don't be fooled: You cannot cheat God. A person harvests only the things he plants.* ⁸If a person plants (*lives*) to satisfy his sinful self, then his sinful self will bring him eternal death. But if a person plants to please the Spirit,* he will get eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹We must not become tired of doing good. We will receive our harvest [of eternal life] at the right time. We must not give up! ¹⁰When we have the opportunity to do good to any person, we should do it. But we should give special

attention to the people that are in the family of believers (*the church*).

Paul Ends His Letter

¹¹I am writing this myself. See what big letters I use. ¹²Some men are trying to force you to be circumcised.* They do these things so that other people (*the Jews*) will accept them. Those men are afraid they will be criticized if they follow only the cross of Christ.* ¹³Those men are circumcised, but they don't obey the law* themselves. They want you to be circumcised. Then they can boast about what they forced you to do. ¹⁴I hope I will never boast about things like that. The cross (*death*) of our Lord Jesus Christ is my only reason for boasting. Through Jesus' death on the cross the world is dead* to me; and I am dead to the world. ¹⁵It is not important if a person is circumcised or not circumcised. The important thing is being the new people God has made. ¹⁶Peace and mercy to the people who follow this rule—to all of God's people.

¹⁷So don't give me any more trouble. I have scars on my body. These scars show* that I belong to Jesus.

¹⁸My brothers and sisters, I pray that the grace (*kindness*) of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with your spirits. Amen.

harvests only the things he plants Paul uses these words about farming to show that life is like a farmer planting a field. A farmer will get from the field only what he plants.

Spirit, Holy Spirit Also called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Comforter. Joined with God and Christ, he does God's work among people in the world.

circumcised, circumcision Cutting off the foreskin. This was done to every Jewish baby boy. It was a mark of the agreement God made with Abraham. Read Gen. 17:9–14.

cross of Christ Paul uses the cross as a picture of the Good News, the story of Christ's death to pay for men's sins.

law God's law. It is represented in the law of Moses.

is dead Literally, "has been crucified."

These scars show Many times Paul was beaten by people who were against him because he was teaching about Christ. The scars were from these beatings.