

Galatians

Who, When, Where

Written by Paulus (Paul). Paulus was originally a fanatical Pharisee, persecuting, imprisoning, and even killing Christians for teaching what he thought was heresy, that Yeshua was the Anointed, (The Jewish Messiah). After meeting Yeshua in a miraculous way on the road to Damascus, Paulus became not just a Christian but one of Christianity's most fervent preachers and teachers. He spent most of his life as an itinerant missionary, with all the perils that that brought with it, to the towns and cities which lay along the route between Jerusalem and Rome. Paulus died in Rome somewhere in the 60'sAD, and wrote most of the letters which we have in the New Testament.

If the trip to Jerusalem Paulus is talking about in Galatians 2 is the same as the one described in Acts 15, then Galatians was clearly written after that, putting it somewhere after 50AD. Some people think it may have been written at the same time as Romans, while Paulus was on his way to Jerusalem, in the late 50's AD.

Galatia was an area in the northern and centra part of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). It had been invaded by the Gauls (French) who ruled it for about 300 years before the Romans took over just before Yeshua was born. And by the time Paulus was travelling around it had shrunk a bit to be mainly the northern part.

In Acts we read of Paulus visiting several cities in the southern part of the original Galatia: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. But we don't know whether Paulus was writing to those churches in this letter, or another group of churches further to the north.

Summary

So many Christians say that we should keep the 10 Commandments. But is that really true?

And if we should, does that mean we have to keep the others too, like the pork one, and circumcision?

And if we don't, how do we decide which ones to keep? How do we know what's right and wrong? How do we decide who's sinning?

How can we tell who's really a Christian?

Before You Read

Do Christians still have to keep the ten commandments?

All of them?

Which ones can we ignore now?

How do you decide what's right and wrong for your life? Do you have a set of rules?

Key Verses

Galatians 1:6

I marvel at how quickly you're being transposed from the one who called you in the grace of the Anointed, to a different good news

The Galatians were adding the Law back onto Christianity. Paulus didn't see this as a small thing, but as a totally different good news altogether.

Do you do that? Do you add rules? Or are you living and teaching the real good news of Yeshua?

Where would you be if Paulus' curse in verse 9 came into reality?

Galatians 1:13-14

For you heard of my behaviour in Judaism, that I inordinately persecuted the assembly of God, and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many contemporaries of my own generation, and was by nature an extreme zealot of the traditions of my fathers.

This is such an amazing passage about the grace and forgiveness of God. Paulus was one of the worst enemies of early Christianity. Passionately imprisoning and killing Christians wherever he found them.

If that was your time, and you had an enemy like that, how would you pray? I think I'd be praying that he would have a heart attack.

God's prayer?

That he would be saved. And not just saved but 100% turned around that he became one of the greatest Christian leaders of all time.

I need to have God's vision for other people. I'm pretty judgmental and unforgiving compared to him. Maybe you're not.

Galatians 1:17-18

nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were ambassadors before me, but I went into Arabia, and then later returned again to Damascus. Whereupon, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to inquire of Petros, and I stayed with him for fifteen days.

This is something that is easy to miss when we read the New Testament. It didn't all happen in a few days.

From the time Paulus was saved around 33-34AD, three or four years after the execution of Yeshua. And then he went to Arabia for a while before returning to Damascus. Where he lived for 3 years before going up to Jerusalem to meet Petros for the first time. 7 years after Yeshua.

Galatians 2:1

Fourteen years after that I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus.

So now we're up to about 50-51AD. A lot of time has passed, it wasn't just a few weeks.

This is most likely the "Council of Jerusalem" mentioned in Acts 15 where they went up specifically to discuss whether Christians needed to keep the Law. The very context for this letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 2:10

only that we should remember the poor, which was also the very thing I was eager to do.

Remember the poor?

Know any of them personally?

What does "remember the poor" mean to you?

Go here: <http://www.globalrichlist.com> and enter your annual income. If you're reading this on a computer, then you're probably in the top 1% of the world's wealthiest people.

Does that change what "remember the poor" means to you?

Where do the poor live? What do they eat? How much do they earn? What are their biggest problems?

How can you help them?

Galatians 2:11

when Petros came to Antioch, I stood up to him to his face because he was clearly wrong.

Remember Romans 14? About how those who are strong should consider those who are weak?

How about when another strong Christian seems to be wrong? What should you do? Keep quiet so they don't stumble?

Go and see them. Talk it out. Maybe it's you that's wrong. Listen to their argument.

Make yours.

And if they're still wrong, ... stand up to them. Otherwise, like Petros was doing, they will lead others astray who follow them in their error.

This might cost you some friends. Modern Christians seem so anti-confrontation. They seem to think that any kind of confrontation or conflict is a bad thing.

That's just weakness and fear. That's not what men of God should be like. Christians should be spiritual warriors, not wimpy cowards.

Act in love, but don't be afraid of conflict.

Galatians 2

Paulus confronted Petros pretending that living the Jewish lifestyle was right for Christians.

This is a super important passage for Christians. We do **not** have to live like Jews. In fact, it is wrong if we do. We do not have to keep the old testament laws and regulations. In Yeshua we have freedom, and to deny that is to deny who we are as Christians.

This is so important that Paulus publicly stood up to Petros over this one issue.

Galatians 2:20

I've been executed with the Anointed, and I'm no longer alive, but the Anointed lives in me. And what I now live in the flesh is in the faith of the son of God, who loves me and gave himself up on my behalf.

You died with Yeshua 2,000 years ago, but you have been born again. But it is no longer you who is living, it is Yeshua living in you.

Awesome.

Galatians 3:3

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the spirit, you're now being completed by the flesh?

Paulus' message in Galatians comes out over and over again. We are not under the Law. We do not have to keep the old testament rules.

How did you become a Christian? Was it by keeping some rules? Was it by living a certain way? Was it by **doing** anything?

It certainly wasn't. You became a Christian when Yeshua was executed. You became a Christian because of what he did, not because of anything you have done. (Or haven't done). You became a Christian through the work of the holy spirit.

So now you're a Christian. How do you live your life? Do you have a list of do's and don'ts? Are you trying your best to be a good person? Or are you following the same principle that got you here in the first place. Trust the holy spirit to do his work and cooperate with him.

His job is to conform your character to that of Yeshua. There are no rules, there is no list, you do not need guilt.

Let him have his way in your life and let him transform your thinking and your behaviour into what it should be.

Are you so foolish that you would try and do it yourself?

Galatians 3:10

For as many as are of works of law are under a curse, for it's been written, "Everyone who doesn't continue to do all the things which have been written in the scroll of the law is accursed."

Paulus is reminding us here. If you say you're keeping the Law. If you say you keep the 10 Commandments. Then you better make sure you keep ALL of them. If you don't you are putting yourself under a curse.

The next verse goes on to say that **nobody** will be declared righteous that way. And that the righteous will live by faith. Faith saved you, faith will change you. Works couldn't save you, works can't change you.

Galatians 3:17

And this is what I'm saying – the law, coming four hundred and thirty years later, doesn't invalidate a covenant which has been confirmed by God in the Anointed, so as to nullify the promise.

The promise of righteousness by faith came first. Before the Law. God promised Abraham that Yeshua would bring righteousness, 430 years **before** he gave the Law to Moshe.

Yeshua was always God's plan A.

By the way, because of this verse we know that the Jews were in Egypt only 215 years, not 400 as commonly misunderstood. And of those probably only the last 80-90 were in slavery. Check out this [timeline](#) to see other key events in Bible history.

Galatians 4:7

So that you're no longer a slave, but a son. And if you're a son, you're also an heir of God through the Anointed

We are no longer slaves to the world. We are sons and heirs of God.

How different would your daily life be if your father was king of your country? How differently would you approach things? What would you change if you woke up tomorrow and found out this was actually true but you hadn't known.

Your father **is** king of the country. He is king of everything.

Is it time for you to wake up? Is it time for you to realise you are not subject to the rules and regulations of the world?

Galatians 4:10

You're observing days and months, and seasons and years!

The Old Testament was filled with festivals and special days. But they were all part of the Law which Yeshua nailed to the stake. They're done. No more rituals, no more special days, no more temple. We have a New Testament now which goes beyond all that. We are sons of God. But there is something in us as humans that loves all that religion, that loves big flashy temples, and special holidays with their traditions. So we keep going back to that even though the Bible tells us not to. In our Western culture it is really difficult to walk away from Christmas and Easter. But isn't that exactly what this verse is calling us to do? To rise **above** that. Isn't that exactly what Romans 14 is calling us to do?

We are no longer ignorant slaves, we are sons of God and we need to live like it.

Galatians 4:22

For it's been written that Abraham had two sons – one by the slave girl, and one by the free.

This is really deep. Paulus goes on to explain over the next few verses. Read them and then come back here.

Ishmael, the son born to the slave, born of the flesh, represents the old covenant, the Law, and slavery to it.

Isaac, the son born to the free woman, born of the spirit, represents the new covenant, the promise, and freedom.

Christians are children of Abraham. Through the promise. Not through the Law. We do **not** need to keep it.

This [article](#) explains why in a bit more detail.

Galatians 4:30

But what does the writing say? "Throw out the slave girl and her son. For the son of the slave girl shouldn't share an inheritance with the son of the free."

This is not talking about Ishmael and Isaac, it's talking about the law and the promise. About the Old Testament way and the New Testament way.

Throw the law out. We are children of the promise.

Galatians 5:1

It was for freedom that the Anointed freed us – so stand then, and don't become entangled again by a yoke of slavery.

Yeshua has freed us. What is this yoke of slavery Paulus is talking about? It's the Law. It's living life by a set of rules and regulations which you use to judge yourself and those around you.

That is **not** Christianity. It's Judaism.

We have a new way. Yeshua. And the freedom he brought us into. It's scary, but it's better.

Galatians 5:16

And I say, walk by the spirit and you won't fulfil the desire of flesh.

Isn't this a better way? Instead of struggling in your own self will to keep the law, and failing all the time even when you do your best.

Hand yourself over to the spirit, who can liberate you from the desire to satisfy your flesh. Isn't that better? Doesn't that give control to the one who has the power to actually do something about the problem?

Doesn't that give you an immense feeling of freedom?

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustworthiness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there's no law.

If you hand yourself over to the control of the spirit and stop trying to live by rules and regulations you will see the fruit of the spirit manifesting in your life.

Your behaviour will be changed. Your thinking will be changed.

Your whole life will be changed.

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if a person is overtaken by some transgression, the spiritual of you should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, watching carefully yourself so that you won't also be tested.

Are you spiritual? Are you "above average"?

(A recent survey found that 80% of people think they're above average. I guess 30% of them were wrong :)

Do you watch out for others and help them in their struggle? Do you watch out for yourself when you do?

You are rushing onto the battlefield to rescue your wounded fellow soldier. It's pretty likely that someone will try to shoot you?

Galatians 6:2, 5

Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of the Anointed.

For each one will bear their own load.

These two verses so close together seem to contradict each other. But this just shows how important it is to look at details.

Verse 2 says burden. In Greek this word means a very heavy load, beyond what you would expect a single man to be able to lift by himself.

Verse 5 says load. In Greek this word means a load, like you might have in a backpack, or a bag over your shoulder.

Spiritual people will be able to bear their own load. But even the strongest of us will need help every now and then to bear those really heavy burdens.

The death of a spouse, some immense loss, a public failure, a family tragedy, ... there are many more.

Even if you're the most spiritual person you know, let others help you when you need it. It's God's way. It's his body working as it should. It glorifies him.

Galatians 6:10

So then, as we have occasion, we work good towards all, and especially toward those who are of our household of the faith.

Especially toward Christians. There's nothing wrong with that. They're family. We should make sure they're looked after first.

The offerings for the poor in Acts weren't just for anyone, they were for the poor and suffering Christians in Jerusalem. This isn't discrimination. It's family, looking after one another.

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

So, do Christians have to keep the ten commandments?

Clearly not according to Paulus. We are no longer under the Law. We still have to live good lives and to choose wisely, but we do not have a list of laws and rules governing our behaviour. We probably wouldn't break many of the old rules, except the ones about pork, and shellfish, and the Sabbath, and tattoos, and all the ones about washing before meals, and dealing with mould, and menstruation, and where we can pray and worship God, and giving a tenth to the priests, and keeping all the festivals like Passover, and... wow, there are a lot of them we already don't keep!

Yaakov (James) said, "For anyone who keeps the whole law, but who trips up in one thing, has become liable for all of it." So if we **think** we're keeping the law we're in big trouble. Because we're not.

Paulus made it very clear that we don't have to keep it because Yeshua already fulfilled it and established a new covenant with us.

This article explains all this in more detail.

[Rules for Christians](#)

Paulus summarised "The Law" the same way Yeshua did. "Love your neighbour as you do yourself."

Do you think that's a good way to decide what the right course of action usually is?

But this is not a rule. It's a principle to live by. A principle to measure everything you do to see if it fits right.

Galatians is about living life based on principles rather than by a list of rules. The difference is subtle, but it's also massive.

Do you get it? Do you need to pray for wisdom and read Galatians again? This is so critically important for you to understand. Yet sadly many Christians, even pastors and teachers, get this wrong. If you really don't get it, keep begging God until you do.