

# Saul Ruiz - Commentary On The Book Of Galatians

## (Chapter 1) Greeting

**1** Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—

*(Paul sets the tone in the beginning of his epistle that his apostleship is not man-made but divinely appointed by our Lord himself)*

**2** and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

*(This letter was written to multiple congregations in Asia Minor. Today this geographical area would be modern day Turkey. Based on the contents of this letter, I estimate this was written slightly before the Jerusalem council that took place in Acts Chapter 15. While the majority of these new believers would be gentiles; one could infer with how early this was written that the audience receiving this letter would have most likely been a mix of some Jews + Gentiles)*

**3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, **4** who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, **5** to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

*(Paul is reminding us that while yes Christ gave himself for our sins to save us from eternal damnation, he also delivers us from this PRESENT evil age. So that in union with him, we may live righteous lives pleasing to God in this present age NOW. He also reminds us that this salvation was initiated according to God's will not ours, lest any man should boast)*

## No Other Gospel

**6** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ *(Grace through faith alone for salvation)* and are turning to a different gospel—

**7** not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ

*(by telling you grace through faith alone isn't enough to be saved. Right away we see Paul addressing certain opponents of the Gospel of Grace who pressure new believers into thinking they aren't saved yet by spiritually mixing man-made religion)*

**8** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you

*(if anyone preaches to you a gospel contrary to Grace through faith alone in Christ for salvation and freedom from man-made religion, Paul says...)*

let him be accursed

*(let him be separated from Yeshua/Jesus. The Greek word used here is anathema. Meaning a religious ban or concretely excommunicated according to Strong's G331. Paul is trying to communicate with full assurance that the Gospel of Grace will never be added to, changed, or revoked. Paul here actually pre-rebukes Islam and Mormonism as both of these religions added onto the gospel and were founded by an angel allegedly coming down with further revelation).*

**9** As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

*(From this statement we see that Paul had already previously warned the congregations in Galatia before this letter to never accept any perversion of the Gospel. This was so serious to Paul that he says we are to consider anyone who does so as accursed and not even saved)*

**10** For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God?

*(the Gospel came from God, therefore all man-made opinions are irrelevant in regards to the Gospel)*

Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

*(You will never win a popularity contest by boldly professing the Gospel of Grace as given to us by God because it eliminates any possibility for man to glorify himself)*

## **Paul Called by God**

**11** For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

*(in other words this isn't some new idea that Paul just logically created)*

**12** For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ *(what Paul is teaching came directly from Yeshua/Jesus, not another teacher).*

**13** For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

*(Paul qualifies himself that he has been where these Jewish opponents to the Gospel are coming from)*

**14** And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers

*(This phrase “traditions of my fathers” is identical to how Josephus describes the man-made Jewish oral law in his Antiquities of the Jews, 13.297–13.298 and how the New Testament describes the man-made Jewish oral law in Mark 7:3-5. So not only is Paul articulating that he is fully competent in traditional Judaism; he’s actually more qualified than anyone the Galatians could possibly be listening to as he was far more advanced in traditional Judaism than them! Acts 22:3 tells us that Paul learned at the feet of the very famous 1st century Rabbi Gamaliel. Just from this language in Paul’s opening chapter of this letter to the Galatians we can see hints of pressure to mix the gospel of Grace with the man-made Jewish oral law)*

**15** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace *(God initiates salvation first by grace before we can even choose to accept by faith which is why no one can boast)*, **16** was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; **17** nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

*(Paul spent time alone in the wilderness with our Lord himself in preparation for his ministry)*

**18** Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. **19** But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

*(Paul trained for 3 years directly with Yeshua/Jesus before connecting with the other apostles)*

**20** (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) *(Paul says fact check me!)*

**21** Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22** And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. **23** They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” **24** And they glorified God because of me.

*(Despite Paul’s extraordinary education in traditional Judaism, it wasn’t until God’s grace called him on the Road to Damascus in Acts 9 that he came to faith. In Ephesians 3:7 Paul writes “Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power.” Glory to God alone is a consistent theme throughout this letter)*

## **(Chapter 2) Paul Accepted by the Apostles**

**1** Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

*(On this trip to Jerusalem, Paul took Barnabas who was a Jew and Titus a Greek on his trip to Jerusalem without any distinction. Barnabas is also the cousin of John Mark - the same Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark according to Peter/Cepha's testimony)*

**2** I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

*(It's interesting that whatever this "revelation" was; it was something so important to Paul he felt the need to double check with the other apostles in Jerusalem. We aren't exactly told what the revelation was. But by his wording we can infer that Paul wanted to make sure he was preaching the same gospel to the gentiles that the apostles were already preaching to the Jews)*

**3** But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

*(From this verse we can clearly see Paul is trying to demonstrate to the Galatians that the very founders of the first Messianic Community in Jerusalem themselves didn't force Titus to get circumcised. So what higher person of authority could there possibly be to say otherwise? This is Paul's point but Paul would only highlight this fact if there was pressure starting to build on the gentile believers in Galatia to get circumcised. The question is why? The Jews in the 1st century weren't going around telling pagans to get circumcised. So what were these gentile believers doing that would invoke such pressure? Most modern Christians believe the apostles taught the gentile churches to forsake the dietary laws, the Sabbath, and Feast days... But I believe the pressure to get circumcised is one of the most overlooked puzzle pieces of evidence that the apostles taught the gentiles to observe them. Exodus 12:48-49 ESV states "If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you." The reason this cannot be overlooked is because we know from Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians in Chapter 5:v7-8 says "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival" ESV. But to the 1st century Jew it would seem absolutely absurd for a foreigner to keep the Torah without being circumcised. And that's precisely what the Book of Acts records happened in Chapter 15:v5 when the Pharisees complained "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses." But the Gospel of Grace as explained by Paul according to Ephesians Chapter 2 and Colossians Chapter 2 states that in Christ you are no longer uncircumcised strangers and aliens but fellow citizens of the household of God. Therefore no man is in a position to pass judgement on gentiles for observing kosher food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath)*

**4** Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

*(Most modern Christians read this verse and initially think that the pressure to get circumcised was the “slavery” and we are free from the law of Moses. But Paul says bring “US into slavery”. Circumcision therefore could not have been the slavery he was referring to because Paul and Barnabas were already circumcised. So what was this “slavery”? If we continue the theme that Paul started laying out in Chapter 1 it’s working for your salvation rather than Grace through faith alone in Christ. So while circumcision is a biblical command, the traditional way the Pharisaic Jews understood it was unbiblical. Circumcision did not save you. At this time the Jews also used circumcision as an initiation where one would agree to take on the entire yoke of the written and oral law for salvation. But Paul taught that the Gospel meant freedom from all man-made dogma because it was nailed to the cross - Ephesians 2:14-15, Colossians 2:14-15)*

**5** to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

*(Paul is trying to set an example that even though he was circumcised; he is still not under the authority of the man-made Jewish oral law and will never require any follower of the Way to submit to it either. He refuses to let anything hinder the spread of the divinely inspired Gospel of Grace which promotes freedom from all man-made religion)*

**6** And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

*(again the Gospel came from God, therefore all man-made opinions are irrelevant in regards to the Gospel regardless of how influential or educated they appear to us)*

**7** On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised **8** (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),

*(Further confirmation that the Gospel of Grace is the same for Jew + Gentile. The “He” that worked through Peter + Paul was the Holy Spirit of Christ. As Paul wrote elsewhere in Ephesians 4:4-5 ESV “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism”)*

**9** and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. **10** Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

*(While the Gospel of Grace is the same for Jew + Gentile, the apostles such as James the brother of Yeshua, Peter/Cephas, & John - the pillars of the Way all recognized that Paul had a special calling from the Lord to teach the gentiles. The apostles commanding Paul to not forget the poor Messianic Jews in Jerusalem reminds us of Romans 11:18 when Paul commanded the gentiles in Rome “do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you” ESV now that they are grafted into Israel)*

## **Paul Opposes Peter**

**11** But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

*(We don't know what Peter/Cephas did yet. But throughout the opening of this epistle until now, Paul has made clear to the Galatians there are some among them deserting from the Gospel of Grace. Paul additionally has made clear that he along with Titus were pressured into “slavery”. We haven't been told in full detail yet what the slavery was but we know the pressure came when they visited Jerusalem. We also know Paul previously qualified himself in the opening of his letter as advanced in Judaism and likewise mentioned the very apostles in Jerusalem did not force Titus to get circumcised. This is why the natural progression of this letter leads us to believe that whatever Peter/Cephas did in Antioch also has to do with this same “slavery”).*

**12** For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

*(The man-made Jewish oral law did not allow Jews to eat anything prepared by gentiles, not even Kosher food for fear of being made common. The Jews at this time were so extreme about it that they had washing rituals for their hands, cups, pots, vessels, and couches just in case it touched a gentile as we already mentioned in Mark 7. From this verse in Galatians though most Christians who are unaware of the man-made Jewish oral law naturally jump to the conclusion that Peter withdrew from the gentiles in order not to be seen eating unclean animals.*

*For those that are unfamiliar with the man-made Jewish oral law, I understand why they would jump to this conclusion but we must be careful not to add or take away or read anything into the text it doesn't actually say verbatim. Explicitly, It doesn't say anything about unclean animals or that he separated himself because of unclean animals. Now I will admit that this verse alone also does not explicitly say that Peter separated himself because of the oral law either. But we must not ignore the fact that the Jews were not allowed to eat with gentiles regardless if the meal was Kosher according to oral tradition. In the New Testament itself we see this rule in Acts 11:2. It says “So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” ESV*

*From this verse in the book of Acts we see Peter was criticized not because of what he was eating but simply because he was eating with gentiles. I've already made mention of the book of Tobit which we do not consider scripture but highlights this same man-made Jewish rule before the New Testament period "And when we were carried away captives to Nineve, all my brethren and those that were of my kindred did eat of the bread of the Gentiles. But I kept myself from eating; Because I remembered God with all my heart." Tobit 1:10-11 KJV" So the context at this point in Paul's letter leans in favor of Peter separating due to not wanting to offend Jews who lived by the man-made Jewish oral law but let's keep reading to find out more...)*

**13** And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

*(An interesting side note I'd like to point out about this verse is that the words "rest of the Jews" demonstrates how the church in Antioch - the very first church outside of Jerusalem - the same church in Acts 11:26 where "the disciples were first called Christians" is described as a mix of Jews + Gentiles. From this verse you can see it was custom for both Jews + Gentiles to Oneg together. "Agapé Love feast" is the term used in Greek found in Jude v12 to describe this fellowship meal. I point this out because a lot of the Messianic Jewish churches today argue gentiles should go elsewhere. Some even try to dissuade gentiles from joining their congregations while likewise 99% of Sunday churches have zero biologically Jewish members)*

**14** But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

*(Now this is the first explicit clue that we are dealing with the man-made Jewish oral law and not any issues regarding Kosher food. Listen closely as Paul asks a very intriguing question to Peter/Cephas: "How can you force the gentiles to live like Jews?" But Peter didn't do anything to the gentiles. All Peter did was separate himself. In what way did Peter force the gentiles to live like Jews? The traditional Christian understanding of Peter separating from the gentiles because they were eating unclean doesn't fit the context because if that was true Peter simply left them to continue eating unbothered! Again, in what way was he forcing the gentiles to live like Jews?*

*The only explanation left is that Peter was forcing the gentiles to observe the man-made Jewish oral law that didn't allow Jews to eat together with gentiles. The apostle Peter, by separating himself and taking the Jewish believers with him, was rebuilding a wall of separation when the gospel teaches the dividing wall was broken down in Christ's flesh and there are no longer any Jew/gentile distinctions. The hypocrisy is that Peter, who taught gentiles to leave their man-made pagan ways returned to man-made Jewish ways. So to bring this full circle... Peter by removing himself is indirectly teaching the gentiles that if you want to be right with God and eat with us; be a Jew. Well how does one become a Jew? Get circumcised! Paul's letter just came full circle. It is very noteworthy that Jerome in the 4th century also agrees with this interpretation because not only was he personally against Torah observance but he was fully aware of the Jewish traditions unlike most modern readers since he learned Hebrew in Israel)*

## Justified by Faith

**15** We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; **16** yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law (*oral or written*) but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law (*oral or written*) no one will be justified.

*(This is the heart of the issue, the Gospel of Grace. The vital reminder that we are justified and set right by God by grace through faith. And anyone who would try to pervert this deserves public rebuke regardless of how important or influential they might seem. Even the first pope! ;)*

*Paul who was raised in the traditions of the Pharisees doesn't make a distinction in most of his writings or in these verses between the oral and written law. This may seem strange to us as modern readers but think of it like asking a modern Roman Catholic today if it's a sin to eat meat on fridays during lent? They will most likely say yes but there is no commandment in the Law that says eating meat on friday during lent is a sin. But to the Catholic they don't even notice the distinction between the man-made Catholic oral law and the written law of God.*

*The other apostles who were raised in Judaism follow this same pattern. For example the apostle John writes in his gospel in John 5:18 ESV "This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. " John doesn't make any distinction by elaborating it was the man-made Jewish Sabbath rules when Yeshua/Jesus obviously didn't sin or break the biblical Sabbath.*

*The apostle Peter in likewise fashion said in Acts 10:28 ESV "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation" But nowhere in the written Law of God is such a commandment found.*

*Again the one place Paul does make the clearest distinction is in 1st Corinthians 9:20-21 CJB where he says "with Jews, what I did was put myself in the position of a Jew, in order to win Jews. With people in subjection to a legalistic perversion of the Torah, I put myself in the position of someone under such legalism, in order to win those under this legalism, even though I myself am not in subjection to a legalistic perversion of the Torah. With those who live outside the framework of Torah, I put myself in the position of someone outside the Torah in order to win those outside the Torah — although I myself am not outside the framework of God's Torah but within the framework of Torah as upheld by the Messiah."*

**17** But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? (*If in our endeavor to share the gospel requires us to break these man-made laws, does this mean the gospel of Christ is leading us to sin?*) Certainly not!

*(This is the most explicit and direct statement against the man-made Jewish oral law. According to Paul himself in Romans 3:20 and Romans 7:7; knowledge of sin comes from the Law of God. So what Paul is trying to communicate here is that if people call you sinners because you broke a man-made religious law to spread the gospel, who cares? Follow the Law of Christ instead!)*

**18** For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

*(The gospel is supposed to be what breaks down the dividing wall between Jews & gentiles according to Ephesians 2:14-15, but if we're going to rebuild this wall of separation, that is the true sin, not the breaking of man-made religious laws. Paul wrote to the Ephesians 3:6 ESV "This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.")*

**19** For through the (written) law I died to the (oral) law, so that I might live to God. **20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

*(The reason why I truly believe the context here is "through the written law I died to the oral law, so that I may live to God" is because he connects this statement with the crucifixion of Christ. Which we know from Paul's own words in Ephesians 2:14-15 and Colossians 2:14-15 that all man-made dogma was nailed to the cross at the crucifixion, resulting in freedom)*

**21** I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

*(If we could be saved and made righteous by our own efforts of keeping all of the laws including the man made Jewish oral laws then Christ wouldn't have had to die. One could simply just save themselves by their own righteousness to the law. What would you even need the crucifixion of Christ for? This is the whole point Paul is trying to beat over the head of the Galatians along with the fact we should never yoke ourselves again as slaves under man-made religious systems. At first glance it can appear like Paul is against any laws entirely including God's Law by this strong language. But what actually is taking place is Paul doing away with a mainstream Jewish misunderstanding of the Law. He is doing away with anyone thinking they can be made righteous and justified in God's sight by the law.)*

*For Paul writes to the Romans in 3:28-31 ESV "For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law... Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law." But now in light of the Gospel of Grace and crucifixion of Christ, we uphold God's law which is spiritual according to Romans 7:14 free from the slavery of fleshly religious laws and leave no room for boasting in our flesh. As Paul wrote in 1st Corinthians 29-31 ESV "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.")*