

## Gal. 1:6–9 — What is the ‘different gospel’ addressed in this letter?

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July 31 – Aug. 28, 2010

*All passages from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.*

One commentator said “many interpreters and lay leaders consider Galatians to be Paul’s *magnum opus* on Christians’ divorce from the Torah of Moses” because of a lack of understanding of the “spiritual and social dynamics” of this early group of believers.<sup>1</sup> This view has been changing in the past three decades with a theological movement known as the New Perspective of Paul, in which “Paul’s view of the Law [is] far more moderate than is traditionally believed.”<sup>2</sup>

“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Messiah, for a different gospel; 7 which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Messiah. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed” (Gal. 1:6–9)

- Questions raised by this introduction are:
  - How were the Galatian congregations “deserting” God “for a different gospel” (1:6)?
  - What is this “different gospel”?
    - What “gospel” did the Galatians receive?
    - How is the “different gospel” “not another” (1:7)?
    - How is it a “distort[ion of] the gospel of Messiah” (1:7)?
    - How is it “contrary to what [they] received” (1:9)?
- Before we explore the “gospel contrary to what we have preached to you,” we will explore the what Paul actually said to the Galatian congregations.

## What was Paul’s historical contact with the congregations in the Galatian region, which is in central modern-day Turkey?

- Paul’s first journey (Acts 12:25–14:28) went through Galatia (starting in 13:13), which included stops in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, ending in Derbe in Cilicia. The entourage then retraced the route.
  - In Pisidian Antioch, Paul makes the first of his Shabbat synagogue appeals from the Scriptures that Yeshua is the Messiah and that faith in the work of Messiah was essential to peace with God (13:14–52).
    - Paul ended with the heart of his gospel:

“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. 40 Therefore take heed, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon you: 41 “Behold, you scoffers [MT: בְּגִיִּים *ba-goyim*, “of the nations” or “heathen”; LXX: καταφρονῆται *katafronetai* “despisers”], and marvel, and perish; for I am accomplishing a work in your days, a work which you will never believe, though someone should describe it to you” [Hab. 1:5].” (Acts 13:38–41)
    - Paul wasn’t shooting from the hip when he quoted Hab. 1:5 in his recorded Shabbat message in Pisidian Antioch. A study of Habakkuk 1–2 shows that the ancient warning at the time of the rebuilding of the temple in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah also applied to Paul’s time and to “that day,” a common phrase referring to the final Day of the LORD.
      - The amazing thing the LORD was going to do was “rais[e] up the Chaldeans” (1:6) to “march throughout the earth” (1:6).
        - Babylon was one of the empires God foretold would control the Land of Israel (Daniel 2).
          - Babylon conquered the Kingdom of Yehudah and destroyed the House of God that King Shlomo built.
        - Habakkuk expressed his dismay to the LORD over Babylon’s victory.

“Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?” (Hab. 1:13).

          - Babylon attributed its successes to its own strength (1:11, 16).
        - Yet the prophet trusted that the LORD would reveal the reason for this shocking correction of Israel.

“I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproved.” (2:1)
        - Indeed, the LORD revealed in a “vision ... for the appointed time [למועד *khazon la-*

<sup>1</sup> J.K. McKee. *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*, Second Edition. [TNN Press](#), 2007. p. 1

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

- moeyd]*” (2:3) that Babylon would “become plunder” for the nations it plundered (2:7).
- This happened with the return of the exiles of Yehudah under the subsequent empire, Medo-Persia (Jeremiah 25).  
“For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.” (2:14)
    - This future fulfillment is part of the promise of the “new covenant” to the houses of Ya’akov, which was exiled under Assyria, and Yehudah.  
“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them ....’” (Jer. 31:34)
  - But there is a hint of a bigger fulfillment seen in clearly latter-days prophecies, such as Zechariah 14.
    - The apostle Yokhanan was given this promise again, seen in Rev. 11:15 and 15:4.  
“Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Anointed; and He will reign forever and ever.’” (Rev. 11:15)
  - Yet the LORD revealed to Habakkuk in this vision that complete trust in His plan was necessary.  
“Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. 4 Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.” (2:3–4)
    - *proud* — עָפָל *aphal*, H6075a, “swollen,” used in the Bible to fat around the testicles for sacrifices (“offal”) or hemorrhoids.
    - *soul* — נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh*, H5315. Adam became a “living soul” נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה *nephesh khayah* (Gen. 2:7) when God breathed into him נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים *neshmat khayim*, or breath that is alive.
    - *not right* — לֹא-יָשָׁר *lo-yashar*, 3474 [448c], “to be smooth, straight, or right.”
    - *righteous* — צַדִּיק *tsaddiq*, H6662, from a verb for “to be straight, hard, perfect.”
    - *faith* — אֱמוּנָה *emunah*, H530, “firmness, steadfastness,” from אָמַן (*aman*, H539), which is derived *amen*, meaning “truly.”
    - This is the fundamental verse, quoted in Romans 1, for the Protestant reformation. Just as the authorities of Israel weren’t heeding the warning about corruption, idolatry and hindering belief in God, bringing the desolation of the temple, so too were the leaders at the time of Paul and of Martin Luther.
  - The healing of the breach between God and man comes from the death — by God’s hand, not man’s — and resurrection of Yeshua.
  - Those who God calls to hear this good news must decide to trust it:
    - Let the old “heart,” or motivations, and old “spirit,” or influencer of the motivations, “die” (Eph. 2:1–10).
      - God forgives and forgets what the “old man” (KJV) or “old self” (NASB) did, counting Yeshua’s life in his stead.
    - Actively let God create a new “heart,” or motivations, and a new “spirit,” influencer of motivations, in this case God’s Spirit.
  - Paul later expounded on this transformation from “old man” to “new man” at length in his letters to the Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and Romans.
    - **Ephesians 2–4**  
“For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. 11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision,’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands — 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Messiah Yeshua you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 ‘AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR’ [Isa. 57:19]; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.” (Eph. 2:10–18)
      - This “new man” is not just a personal transformation, but a transformation of a group of believers, declaring righteous both those who hadn’t originally been part of the calling of

Israel at Sinai (Exodus 19) and those who were, via their ancestors.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” (Eph. 1:3–4)

- A “commonwealth of Israel” that would include natural and naturalized citizens always was God’s plan, expressed to and through:
  - Khevah (Eve; Gen. 3:15)
  - Abraham (Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4)
  - the “mixed multitude” of the Exodus (Ex. 12:38)
  - Shlomo (Solomon): The temple in Yerushalayim would be the focal point of anyone of the nations who was led to call on the LORD (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:41–52).
  - Yeshiyahu (Isaiah): The temple would be a “house of prayer for all nations,” Isa. 56:7; cf. Mark 11:17).
  - Yetziq’el: God would make the houses of Yehudah and Yisrael and their “companions” part of one group of believers again (Ezek. 37:16–19).
  - The “new covenant”: Part of the “new covenant” is the work of God’s Spirit transforms the world so that “they will all know Me” (Jer. 31:31–34).
    - This parallels Yeshua prayer to the Father “that they may know You,” truly making believers part of the people of God who wouldn’t have to fear death as their final end, i.e. they would receive eternal life (John 17:3).
- Some point to Eph. 2:8–9 as evidence that a believer in Messiah Yeshua should leave the Torah behind when living in the Spirit as a “new man.”

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Eph. 2:8–9)
- *works* — ἔργον *ergon* (G2041)
  - ἔργον νόμου *ergon nomou*, literally, “works of law” (Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10), has been commonly interpreted as “observing the Law,” i.e. the Torah.
    - This phrase is a key part of the New Perspective of Paul, which explores how *ergon nomou* was understood in the first century.
      - In short, a Hebrew phrase מעשה התורה *ma’aseh ha-torah*, or “deed of the law,” is found in the writings that accompanied copies of Scripture in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The document, catalogued as 4QMMT, contains long list of behaviors considered necessary for members of the community.
      - Given the context of *ergon nomou* in *Galatians* and *Romans*, NPP scholars wonder whether Paul was addressing a common rabbinical concept of the time, i.e. conditions of membership, as discussed in *Acts* 15 and 21.
        - We’ll explore this more when we study *Galatians* 2.
  - As seen in *Habakuk* 1–2, which Paul draws from in his synagogue message at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13) and in his letters to Rome (Rom. 1:16–17) and Galatia (Gal. 3:11), God declares believers righteous through their initial and everyday trust, i.e. “faith,” in Him (Gen. 15:6).
    - That declaration of righteousness is something God gives us when He puts in us a new “spirit” — His Spirit — as part of the “new covenant,” replacing our “spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).
    - Otherwise, we are “dead in your trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1).
    - Therefore, “salvation” is something God declares out of His mercy on us in our intractable condition living “in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3), and “good works” are what mankind was originally intended to do and what the “new man” is enabled to do (2:10).
      - The apostle Ya’akov (James) explains that these “good works” are the outgrowth of faith.

“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?” (Jas. 2:14)
  - The message of Ephesians 2 was aptly summarized by a Christian songwriter, using the common biblical object lessons of a tree, seed, roots and fruit.

“I’ve found salvation’s a tree. And faith’s what you use for seed. But grace is the start of the roots. And good deeds are just fruit.”<sup>3</sup>

- Messiah taught that in parables related to trees, seeds, roots and fruit.
  - Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3–23; Luke 8:4–15)

“ ‘But the *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.’ ” (Luke 8:15)
  - One parable of a fig tree

“ ‘A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. 7 And he said to the vineyard-keeper, “Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?” 8 And he answered and said to him, “Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; 9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.” ’ ” (Luke 13:6–9; cf. Jer. 24:1–10)
  - In a warning about false prophets

“ ‘Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits.’ ” (Matt. 7:15–20)

    - Some may claim that evil people can still do good deeds, i.e. “bear good fruit.” However, the deception described here is outwardly righteous but inwardly wicked.
- Apostle Paul later in the letter to Galatia details the resulting behavior of someone freed from God’s wrath, i.e. being “under [the] law” (ὕπὸ νόμον *hupo nomon*; Rom. 6:14–15; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 9:20; Gal. 3:23; 4:4–5, 21; 5:18), to “walk according to the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Gal. 5:22–24)

  - Those who are outwardly righteous but inwardly wicked will eventually show what’s really inside them.
  - We will explore *hupo nomon* when we get to *Galatians* 3, but note for now:
    - Paul contrasted “deeds of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19–21) with “fruits of the Spirit.”
    - Paul connected one of the two greatest commandments — the “fulfilled” “whole law” of “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18; cf. Matt. 7:12; 22:40; Rom. 13:8, 10; Gal. 6:2) — with “freedom” and “walk[ing] by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:13–15).
    - Therefore, the true believer “fulfills” the Torah — πληρώω *pleroo* (G4137) is also used in Matt. 5:17 — by “walking” according to after being freed from the Torah’s ultimate punishment — the wrath of God — and being given “new life” via Messiah and the Spirit.
- Some see Yeshua’s “abolishing” of “the barrier of the dividing wall” in Eph. 2:14–15 as meaning the Law was done away with “in His flesh,” i.e. at His execution.
  - “Bringing near” those “far off” from God, i.e. non-Jews, always was part of God’s plan and included His Law.<sup>4</sup>
    - Moshe told the people of Israel:

“ ‘See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. 6 So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?’ ” (Deut. 4:5–7; cf. Ex. 12:48; Isa. 56:3)
    - Apostle Ya’akov, after quoting Amos 9:11 and Jer. 12:15 about the “rest of mankind seek[ing] the LORD,” said:

“ ‘Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble [literally, “harass”] those who are

<sup>3</sup> Apologetix. “Ephesians.” *Wordplay*. Wesscott Marketing, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> J.K. McKee “Ephesians 2:14–15.” *The New Testament Validates Torah*. TNN Press, 2008.

turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 For [because] Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.’” (Acts 15:19–21)

- Ya’akov, as was Paul in this passage from *Ephesians* and throughout *Galatians*, was addressing whether circumcision was required of believers coming to God from the nations through His Messiah (Acts 15:1, 5).
  - The elders decided to “break down the wall of separation” between Jewish and non-Jewish believers by not requiring circumcision to become a member of the body of Messiah.
  - The four required behaviors for such new believers were outward behaviors and weren’t directly listed among the “fruits of the Spirit.”
  - Clearly, these four requirements weren’t the spiritual stopping point. The preaching of “Moses,” i.e. the Torah, was part of the God’s plan for spiritual growth.

○ **Colossians 2–3**

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him — 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.” (3:5–11)

- This follows a passage some say abrogates the Law God gave to Moshe.

“When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.” (2:13–15)
- This will be a topic of a later discussion, but it is important to note the lesson discussed previously from 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3 about the “ministry of death/condemnation.”
  - Rebelling against God’s law, specifically the 10 Commandments brought the death penalty.
  - The promise of the “new covenant” was a permanent declaration of righteousness before God by the work of Messiah Yeshua and continued “walking” toward righteousness by the work of God’s Spirit.

○ **Romans 5–7**

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Messiah Yeshua have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Messiah, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Messiah Yeshua.” (Rom. 6:1–11)

- This comes after a discussion in chapter 5 of the Law of God bringing death to the rebellious and the distress expressed in chapter 7 of the person who knows there is a correct way to walk but can’t walk that way.
- Paul’s second journey (Acts 15:36–18:22) followed the Jerusalem Council with the intent to “visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are [literally, “How are they holding on?”]” (15:36) and to “delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe” (16:4).
  - But after reaching Lystra in Galatia, the entourage was “forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia” (16:6), with the Spirit providing Paul a vision and other encouragement to proceed directly to Macedonia (16:7–10).
  - In Lystra, Paul met Timothy (Greek: *Timotheos*, “truth of God”), son of a Jewish mother and “Greek”

father.

- Paul “circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” (16:3; context vv. 1–3).
- By contrast, “not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised” (Gal. 2:3).
- Indeed, the decrees of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem included:
  - The gospel would go to “circumcised” and “uncircumcised.”
  - All that was required of the uncircumcised to become members of the congregation.