



Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

Chapter 1 , Verses 6 - 10

by Tim Kelley

Before continuing, let's review what we've seen so far:

- We found that Paul was a *sent one*, a *shaliach*, a man given a mission by those who had authority over him. Paul was not simply wandering around looking for converts. He knew who he was sent to, and he performed his assigned tasks.
- The Galatians were people in Asia Minor who were descendents from the *Lost Ten Tribes of Israel*. They were the exiles spoken of in Acts 2, by Peter, and of course, by Paul.
- Paul's message was that of *grace* and *peace*. He taught that by God's grace Israel was being called back to the peace that would come when the Davidic (Messianic) Kingdom would be restored, as he expected would happen in his day.

So with that, let's continue . . .

►^{ESV} **Galatians 1:6-10** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ 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. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 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. ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Paul was amazed that the Galatians were quickly turning from what they had been called to and are now submitting to *another gospel*, which we would suppose to be the contrary teachings of others. Paul went on to say that it's not another gospel; so therefore, it must be a different slant on what he had previously delivered to them. What's more, by jumping down to verse 10, we see that it's his opinion that this new and different gospel, or shall we say, this new *take* on what he had taught, serves the purpose of pleasing men, not necessarily God.

So let's analyze what Paul has through the understanding of the context of the day.

The first thing we should ask is "What is the *gospel*?" Most believers would say that the gospel is the message about Jesus. In fact, in the heading of the first book of the New Testament, my Bible says "The Gospel According to Matthew". It does the same for the other three "gospels". Wikipedia says that the gospel is –

. . . an account that describes the life of [Jesus of Nazareth](#)¹.

Various other web sites have a similar definition. The phrase "gospel of Christ" (or something similar) is actually used a number of places in the scripture, including –

^{NKJ} **Mark 1:1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

But this is the only place in the *gospels* that we see this term. Other places are in the writings of Paul². Neither Luke (the writer of Acts), Peter, James, John (in his epistles) or Jude use this term. It's relevant to note that Paul also used the terms gospel of peace³, *the gospel of God*⁴ or the *gospel of the grace of*

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel>

² Rom. 1:9; Rom. 1:16; Rom. 15:19,29; 1 Cor. 9:12, 18; 2 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Cor. 9:13; 2 Cor. 10:14; Phi. 1:27; 1 Thes. 3:2; 2 Thes. 1:8;

³ Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15;

⁴ Rom. 15:16; 1 Thes. 2:2,8; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Peter 4:17 (though not Paul)

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God⁵. Another of Paul's uses the term is where he refers to the gospel as *my gospel* and *the mystery of the gospel*.

Strangely, Paul never used the term *gospel of Jesus*, instead it was gospel of Christ. We know that "Christ" is not Yeshua's (Jesus') last name, but is instead a *title* meaning "the anointed one". The Jews would refer to him as "the Messiah", or "Mashiyach". The title mashiyach (Strong's 4899) is used a number of places in the Tnakh⁶ in reference to the anointed priests, the kings, and in the book of Daniel to the King of Kings, Messiah Yeshua. Thus the title "Christ" implies a ruler, a king . . . and a king implies a kingdom. And that's just how Yeshua described the *gospel*.

^{NKJ} **Matthew 4:23** And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom . . .

^{NKJ} **Matthew 24:14** "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world . . .

^{NKJ} **Mark 1:14-15** Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Thus, the gospel that was being changed, or maybe a better term would be *twisted*, was not the message of The Messiah who had died so that His people could be redeemed, but a message about the Kingdom of God and the Messiah's role in bringing it about.

So again, what is the gospel? The Greek term we find in the New Testament is "euaggelion" (Strong's 2098), a term that means "good news". To the first century Jewish people, the best news they could receive would be that Messiah has come and that they would soon be free from Roman subjugation, because with the coming of the Messiah, they expected the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel. In fact, this was the very last question His disciples asked Him before Yeshua ascended to His Father –

^{ESV} **Acts 1:6** So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

They were hoping for the prophesied restoration of the Kingdom of Israel under David's descendant⁷, and in the eyes of the 11 disciples (Judas was dead), Yeshua was the one. So part of the good news of the kingdom was that the Messiah had arrived.

To get a better understanding of the *gospel of the kingdom* - especially how it would come about, it's important to know the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word for *gospel* - "euaggelion", and that word is word "basar" – (בָּשָׂר - Strong's 1319). Here is a passage that clearly describes the good news – the gospel – as it's conveyed in the Old Testament.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 52:1** Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion . . . ² Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. ³ For thus says the LORD: "**You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.**" ⁴ For thus says the Lord GOD: "My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian (**the enemy of Israel**) oppressed them for nothing. ⁵ Now therefore what have I here," declares the LORD, "seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail," declares the LORD, "**and continually all the day my name is despised.**" ⁶ Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I." ⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news (basar), who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." ⁸ The voice of your watchmen- they lift up their voice; together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion.

⁵ Acts 20:24;

⁶ The Jewish acronym for the Old Testament, the **T**orah, the **N**evi'im, and the **K**etuvim (Law, Prophets, Writings)

⁷ Isaiah 9:6-7; Dan. 2:24; Obadiah 1:17 – 21; Micah 4:8

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This passage goes on to show that they would be redeemed by the death of Messiah, thus the *good news* is that their messiah would be the one who would restore them; He will gather them - they would not be restored by their own actions. Continuing in the Isaiah 52 passage -

^{ESV} **Isaiah 52:12** For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight, for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Those last two words “rear guard” is the Hebrew word *asaph* (אָסַף - Strong's 622) which means “gatherer”). Yeshua will *gather* His people from the four corners of the earth, just as been prophesied so many times. Israel will not be redeemed by their observance of Torah, just as Israel in the Exodus was not redeemed because of Torah. Instead, Israel was redeemed because of the promise God made to Abraham (Exodus 2:24. Only after they crossed the Red Sea (where they were “saved”⁸) were they led to Mt. Sinai where they were given the Torah. Thus Torah observance did not provide their redemption. They were redeemed by the blood of the lamb. This is important in understanding Paul's letter to the Galatians, and in fact, all of Paul's writings. But don't get me wrong! I'm not saying that Torah observance is not what God wants, in fact Torah observance is how we show that we are redeemed!

There are many more passages which show that the “good news” is the message of the redemption of Israel and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 40:9-11** Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news (**basar**); lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news (**basar**); lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" ¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹ He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news (**basar**) to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

So when we compare the Old Testament with the New Testament, we find that the *gospel message* is the same – the Messiah has come and He will begin to gather His people back and restore the Tabernacle of David, the Kingdom of Israel.

Before leaving this topic I want to pass this along. The Hebrew word *basar* has another meaning besides *good news*. It is also the Hebrew word for *flesh*⁹ as in –

^{NKJ} **Genesis 2:21** And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the *flesh* in its place.

In this example (as well as in other instances), the flesh spoken of is the skin, and we know what skin is – it's what holds our bodies together. It's what keeps our organs intact. Without skin, our bodies would come apart. I submit that this is not merely a coincidence. Instead, I believe YHVH is telling us that the *gospel of the kingdom* is what held Israel (especially Judah) together for 3000 years and is what should hold us together as well . . . just a thought.

Let's now take a moment and talk about this phrase in verse 6 – “from Him who called you”. In most English translations, the word “Him” is capitalized which in my view is correct. YHVH is the one who does the calling, not men. But it's important to know who are the called ones? There again, the Tnakh makes it very clear – Israel is God's called out people.

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 43:1** But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; You *are* Mine.

So Paul is clearly narrowing down who the gospel applies to, and that is *God's people Israel*.

⁸ Exodus 14:30

⁹ Strong's 1320 - It's the same spelling, only the vowel points are different

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Moving on to verse 7, we see that Paul is saying that the *gospel* that is being brought into the Galatian community is not another, but is instead a perversion of the true gospel. In the margin of my Bible it says that it's a *distorted* gospel. The Greek word is *metastrepho* (Strong's 3344), and in two other places in the New Testament, it means *to turn* as in turning to something that's opposite from what it was.

^{NKJ} **Acts 2:20** The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

^{NKJ} **James 4:9** Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.

The Hebrew equivalent – *haphak* (הִפְּקָה – Strong 2015) means basically the same thing. Though the gospel - the message of the kingdom being taught by the “some that trouble you”- was still the same gospel, certain aspects of that message were being twisted and perverted, and whatever that perversion was, it was causing distress for the people. I would submit that it's similar to telling someone that if they don't understand a certain scripture a certain way, they are in danger of *hell fire*. Obviously, the perverted message was such that it caused many of the Galatian people to change their view, at least in respect to Paul's understanding of the gospel.

Paul is so upset about this, and so sure of his gospel message, that he believes that the perpetrators of this revised and twisted gospel would be *accursed*, no matter who they were . . . even a messenger from God! By implication, this would include Yeshua himself since He is the Messenger of the Covenant!¹⁰ The Greek word for accursed is *anathema* (Strong's 331) a reference to an animal that has been devoted to God, usually as a result of a vow, and therefore unable to be redeemed. In other words – it was going to die¹¹. Paul used the same word in Romans, this time referring to himself and his devotion to Israel. It's my opinion that in the Roman's case, he was saying that his devotion to the gospel message was such that it's all he lives for.

As is usual with Paul, he likely had scriptural basis for the sentence he would have placed on the perpetrators. He obviously believed they were changing the gospel message for some reason, but because the gospel (the message of The Kingdom) is given in the Tnakh, he would have been justified in saying that they had broken at least this Torah command –

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 4:2** "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

By altering the gospel message, the perpetrators would have been either adding to or, taking away from the message as it's conveyed in the Tnakh.

In verse 10 Paul reveals what he believes has motivated the perpetrators of the twisted gospel . . . PRIDE! Whatever their twist was, it was motivated by their desire to be accepted by their peers. Paul seems to be saying that he knows that he would be looked upon more favorably if he were to use the same bent that the perpetrators did, but he's not interested in pleasing man, he's only interested in pleasing God.

The Greek word for persuade in this verse is *peitho* (Strong's 3982) and “persuade” is an unfortunate and confusing translation of it. *Peitho* has a number of meanings and uses in the New Testament. It can mean “to induce one by words to believe”, but can also mean “to win one's favor”. It appears Paul had the later understanding in mind. I believe a more correct translation is given in the English Standard Version –

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:10** For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Paul is in a way convicting himself in this verse by admitting that there was a day that even he set about to please men. Maybe this was in the days when he was willing to search out and accuse those from his

¹⁰ Malachi 3:1

¹¹ Lev. 27:29; see Acts 23:14

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own people who were believers in Messiah Yeshua¹², something he openly admits to later in this chapter as well as in other epistles.

Paul may also have been taking a slam at, or at least making a contrast between himself and Peter, his fellow apostle, for his hypocrisy in Antioch when he refused to sit at the table with "non-Jews". We'll talk about this more when we get to chapter 2.

So in review, we see that:

- The gospel message is not a message about Messiah Yeshua, but is instead a message about His role in restoring the Kingdom of God to Israel.
- That the perpetrators were not presenting a new gospel, but were presenting a different twist on the gospel that Paul is very upset with.
- The motivation for presenting the new twist is for the purpose of pleasing men, not God.

Next time, we'll attempt to get to the end of chapter 1.

¹² Gal. 1:13;23