

## Galatians - Getting a Good Grip on G-d's Great Grace

### A Summary Paper by Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

In this epistle, the Apostle Paul, formerly known as Rabbi Saul, is dealing with the troublesome heresy of **Judaizing** that seemed to follow his ministry. This dangerous and damnable doctrine was propagated by a group of very passionate, but sincerely wrong, zealous missionaries for *Moses then Messiah*, who believed with every fiber of their being that the keeping of the Torah was an absolutely necessary prerequisite for receiving salvation through faith in Y'shua the Messiah.

Paul begins this epistle by explaining that his apostolic calling was from G-d and not from men. From the outset he is establishing the crux of the gospel message that he has been called to proclaim to the nations.

*Grace and peace to you from G-d our Father and the L-RD Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah, who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our G-d and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Galatians 1:3-5*

He struggled to understand how Gentiles could be drawn away from the grace of Messiah to another gospel, which was really no gospel at all, since gospel means **Good News**, and how could a message of Y'shua plus anything, be considered good news? What did He die for anyway? So we could work harder or work smarter? The apostle was enraged by such foolishness. Especially from those whom he had so recently visited. He was so angered by this corrupt concept that he put a curse upon anyone who would dare to preach such rank heresy.

***Evidently, some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Messiah. But even if we or any angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! Galatians 1:7-8***

At the end of Chapter 2, Paul draws from his confrontation with Peter to make his argument for not seeking justification (legally declared righteous before G-d) by works, but rather justification only through faith in Messiah, plus nothing else.

***We, who were born into observant Jewish families and have not lived as Gentiles, know that a man is not justified by observing the Torah, but by faith in Y'shua the Messiah. Therefore, we too, have put our faith in Messiah Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Messiah and not by observing the Torah, because by observing the Torah, no one will be justified. I am crucified with Messiah, it is no longer I who live, but Messiah who lives in me. I do not set aside the grace of G-d, for if righteousness could be gained through the observance of Torah, Messiah died for nothing! Galatians 2:15-16 & 20-21***

Paul expresses his contempt for the Galatians departure from his clear teaching on salvation by faith in Messiah alone. He uses some of the most emotionally volatile language recorded in any of his epistles.

***You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes, Y'shua the Messiah was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the Torah, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish?***

***After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Does G-d give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the Torah, or because you believe what you heard? Galatians 3:1-5***

In Romans 10:17 where Paul states, "**Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of G-d.**" Paul is reestablishing the truth that faith comes not by the works we do, but by the grace of G-d, revealed through the preaching / teaching of His Word. Our good works are the result of His grace working in our hearts, by the life changing anointing of His Spirit and the heart-transforming power of His Word.

He further drives this point home by spelling out the spiritual condition of those who trust in observance of Torah, rather than putting their faith in the Messiah.

*All who rely upon Torah observance are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before G-d by the Torah because, **The righteous will live by faith.** Galatians 3:10-11*

*Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the Torah by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus the Messiah, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Galatians 3:13-14*

Paul is deeply committed to helping the Galatians grasp the awesome beauty and grandeur of the Gospel of the Grace of G-d. He wanted them to experience it's life-transforming power and the harmony that it could bring to a divided and deeply segregated society.

*You are all the children of G-d through faith in Messiah Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, **for you are all one in Messiah Y'shua.** If you belong to Messiah, you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26-29*

This did not mean that there are no longer differences between people, but that G-d's Spirit living within each of His children made us one in Messiah. In His presence, before His throne, there are no favorites. As the old saying goes, "The ground is level at the cross."

In the fourth Chapter, Paul is using the illustration of a tutor or guardian to portray the changing relationship between the New Covenant believer, the Torah, and the Rabbinic traditions that had been built around the Torah. The Torah was our tutor, given to us by G-d that kept the Jewish people a separate, unique, and holy covenant people, so that we could give the Holy Scriptures to the world. At the appointed time the Torah also enabled us to bring forth the promised Messiah, the Holy One of Israel. The Torah led us to faith in Messiah, so that we might be redeemed from trusting in religious tradition and from bondage to sin, so that all of us could be adopted into G-d's forever family and enjoy eternity in Heaven.

*Now what I mean, is that as long as the heir is a child and under age, he does not differ from a slave, although he may be the master of all the estate; But he is under a guardian and administrator (or a tutor and trustee), until the time set by his father.*

*So it is also with us Messianic Jews, when we were minors we were kept like slaves (under the rules of Hebrew rituals and traditions, subject to) the elementary teachings of a system of external observance and regulations. **But when the proper time had fully come, G-d sent His Son, born of a woman, born subject to the regulations of the Torah, to purchase the freedom of (to ransom, to atone for) those who were subject to the rules and regulations of Torah, that we might be adopted and be recognized as the children of G-d. And because now we really are His children, G-d has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba (Daddy), Father!** Galatians 4:1-6*

Paul reiterates his intense concern that the Galatians catch the vision of freedom in Messiah and once again uses language full of passion to penetrate their thinking and to deeply inscribe his message upon their hearts. He does not want Gentile New Covenant believers to be burdened with a yoke that he and his forefathers could not bear (Acts 15:10-11).

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty for which Messiah has made us free and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Galatians 5:1*

Paul then clarifies that this new found liberty in Messiah is not an excuse to do whatever comes naturally, but the freedom to serve G-d from the heart by loving those G-d has brought into your life. The fruit of the Spirit is the ultimate purpose of the Torah fulfilled by living out the gospel through reliance upon G-d's grace.

*For you have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for your flesh, but through (agape'- sacrificial) love serve one another. **For all the Torah is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** Galatians 5:13-14*

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. **Against such there is no Torah.** Galatians 5:22-23*

The Apostle Paul then instructs the believers to live out their walk in the Spirit by treating each person with profound grace and respect, realizing that is the godliest demonstration of how we fulfill the Torah of the Messiah and build the Kingdom of G-d in our everyday world.

*If someone is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. **Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the Torah of Messiah.** Galatians 6:1-2*

In closing Paul clinches his argument by laying down the bottom line, refocusing us on the cross of Messiah, for that is what enables us to become a new creation in Messiah. That is what really counts in the eternal scheme of all things.

***G-d forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our L-RD Y'shua the Messiah, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Messiah Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.** Galatians 6:14-15*

Galatians is a message that seems as though it was written for such a time as this. It is amazing how history keeps repeating itself and yet we still refuse to learn from it, falling prey to the same old lies, generation after generation. My prayer for the Messianic, Sabbath Keeping, Jewish & Hebraic Roots movements is that we would all return to our first love, to our L-RD Y'shua, (Jesus) the Messiah. That He would be pre-eminent (1<sup>st</sup> place) in everything. That we'd never forget that our salvation is a gift, the result of the finished work of Y'shua and cannot be earned by even our most heroic deeds and altruistic efforts. That in Him alone is found all that the human heart yearns for. That He alone is worthy of all our adoration & devotion. He alone suffered, died, & rose from the dead, so that we could know with absolute certainty that our debt of sin has been cancelled, the payment for our sin has been satisfied. He alone can provide the abiding peace of knowing our sins are forgiven and forgotten. He alone can convince us deep in our kishka's (our innermost being) that we've been blessed with the gift of life everlasting and give us the assurance that Heaven is our ultimate destination, our eternal home! These are the things that we should be focusing on and longing for. These are the truths that unite us, that answer the most essential intercessory prayers of our Messiah. These are the truths that give us new life in Messiah Y'shua and increased intimacy with our Heavenly Abba! May the great, grand, and glorious grace of our L-RD Y'shua the Messiah be with your spirit, Amen.

