

The Epistle to the Galatians

BYU New Testament Commentary Translation

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About the Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary Series

Welcome to the BYU New Testament Commentary (BYUNTC), a project by a group of Latter-day Saint (LDS) specialists offering to readers a careful, new look at the biblical records that witness the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the first generation of his Church. The commentary series seeks to make the New Testament more accessible to LDS general readers and scholars by employing much of current biblical scholarship while reflecting important LDS insights. At the same time, this effort may also be helpful to interested readers of other faiths who want to learn how a group of LDS scholars understands the Bible. A fundamental article of faith for Latter-day Saints (Mormons) affirms the Bible “to be the word of God” while adding, understandably, that it needs to be “translated correctly” in order for it to be accurately comprehensible to modern language speakers (A of F 1:10).

These objectives have helped shape the purposes and parameters of this commentary series. Serious LDS readers of the Bible search the scriptures, looking for depth and breadth in passages whose meanings and mandates may ultimately be plain but not shallow. Such readers and interpreters are served by treatments that unite faith and research, reason and revelation, in prayerfully confronting profound and difficult issues that arise in the texts and affect one’s path of progression. The New Testament has served as an influential guide to Western civilization for centuries. As such, its records have long been studied by lay people and scholars alike, resulting in a rich reservoir of information that illuminates the New Testament era culturally, historically, and linguistically. Selectively, the BYUNTC builds upon this vast body of knowledge, resting on the Greek texts of the New Testament and connecting helpful elements of linguistic, literary, historical, and cultural research and traditional scholarship together with LDS scriptures and doctrinal perspectives. The combination of all these

features distinguishes the BYUNTC from other commentaries, which are readily available elsewhere and which readers may also want to consult for more encyclopedic or specialized discussions.

The tone of the BYUNTC aims to be informative rather than hortatory, and suggestive rather than definitive in its interpretation. The opinions expressed in this series are the views of its contributors and should not necessarily be attributed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Brigham Young University, where many of those involved here are headquartered; or anyone else, though these works have benefited from input and guidance from a number of colleagues, advisors, editors, and peer reviewers.

Each volume in this series contains a new working translation of the New Testament. Calling it the “BYU New Testament Commentary Translation” ties it to the Commentary series and clarifies that it does not seek to replace the authorized KJV adopted by the LDS Church as its official English text. Rather, it aims to enhance readers’ understanding conceptually and spiritually by rendering the Greek texts into modern English with LDS sensitivities in mind. Comparing and explaining the new Translation in light of the KJV then serves as one important purpose for each volume’s notes, comments, analyses, and summaries. This effort responds in modest ways to the desire President J. Reuben Clark Jr. expressed in his diary in 1956 that someday “qualified scholars [would provide] . . . a translation of the New Testament that will give us an accurate translation that shall be pregnant with the great principles of the Restored Gospel.”

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The Epistle to the Galatians

Salutation (1:1–5)

1:1 Paul, an apostle (not from people nor through a person, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from among the dead),
2 And all those brothers and sisters with me, to the congregations of Galatia. 3 Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, Jesus Christ, 4 who has given himself because of our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil age in accordance with the will of our God, even our Father, 5 to whom be [given] glory forever and ever. Amen.

There Is No Other Gospel (1:6–10)

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly removing yourselves from the one calling you through Christ's grace into another gospel. 7 Which is not another; but there are those who distress you, desiring to change the gospel of the Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach the gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said and now again I say to you, if anyone preaches the gospel contrary to what you already received, let him be accursed. 10 Now, do I persuade people, or God? Or do I seek to please people? If I still pleased people, I would not be the bondservant of Christ.

Paul's Apostolic Call (1:11–17)

11 For I make it known to you, brothers and sisters, the gospel that was preached by me is not from any person. 12 For neither did I receive it from a person nor was it taught but through revelation from Jesus Christ. 13 For you heard about my conduct formerly in Judaism, that I, beyond exceeding measure, used to persecute the Church of God and I tried to eradicate it. 14 And I was progressing in Judaism more than many of my contemporaries among my people, being extremely zealous of

my ancestors' traditions. 15 But when God was well pleased, he set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his own grace 16 to reveal his own Son by me, so that I might preach him among the Gentiles; so I did not immediately counsel with flesh and blood, 17 neither did I go up to Jerusalem to the apostles before me, but instead, I went to Arabia and I turned back again into Damascus.

Paul's Post-Conversion Visit to Jerusalem and His Work in Syria and Cilicia (1:18–24)

18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas [Peter], and I stayed with him for fifteen days. 19 However, I did not see any of the other Apostles except for Jacob [James], the brother of the Lord. 20 Now I write these things to you, behold, before God, I do not lie. 21 Afterwards, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, 22 and I was not personally recognized by the Christian congregations of Judea. 23 But they were hearing only that "the one who persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he tried to destroy." 24 And they began to glorify God because of me.

The Jerusalem Council and Its Decision (2:1–10)

2:1 Then I again went up to Jerusalem after fourteen years with Barnabas, taking Titus with me. 2 And I went up according to revelation, and I put before them the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, but privately to those who are respected, for fear that I should be running, or had run, in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he is Greek. 4 And because of false brethren brought in secretly, who slipped in to spy on our freedom, which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us, 5 to whom we did not yield to their subjugation for a moment that the truth of the gospel might come to you. 6 Now concerning those who were respected (whoever they were, it makes no difference to me; God is impartial to people), indeed, the ones who were respected made no new suggestions to me, 7 but on the contrary, having seen that I was entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised even as Peter was with the circumcised. 8 For the one who was at work for Peter in the apostleship of the circumcised was also for me to the Gentiles. 9 Jacob [James] and Cephas [Peter] and John, who were respected as pillars, recognizing the grace given to me, gave their right hands of fellowship

to me and Barnabas that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised, ¹⁰ requesting only that we should remember the poor, and that same thing I was already eager to do.

Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch (2:11–14)

¹¹ Now when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him face to face because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain people came from Jacob [James], he [Peter] ate with the non-Jews, but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing the circumcised. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews joined in the hypocrisy along with him: and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they did not walk correctly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas [Peter] in front of them all, “If you, being a Jew, live like a non-Jew, why do you compel non-Jews to live like Jews?”

Jews, Like Gentiles, Are Saved by the Faithfulness of Christ Coupled with Their Trust in Him (2:15–21)

¹⁵ We are Jews by nature and not gentile sinners, ¹⁶ and knowing that a person is not justified through the deeds of law but only through the faithfulness of Christ Jesus, we therefore trusted in Christ Jesus so that we might become justified through the faithfulness of Christ and not through deeds of the law. For no mortal will become justified through deeds of Mosaic law. ¹⁷ But if, while seeking to become justified with Christ, we ourselves were also found sinners, is Christ then the servant of sin? Let it not be so! ¹⁸ For if I build again the things which I tore down, I show myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I, through the law, died to the law so that I might live in conformity with God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ: now I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. That life that I now live in mortality, I live through the Son of God’s faithfulness, who loved me and gave himself on my behalf. ²¹ I do not reject the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

Law and Faithfulness (3:1–5)

^{3:1} O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you? Before your eyes, Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as having been crucified! ² I want only to inquire this of you: Did you receive the Spirit from the works of the law or from hearing produced by faith? ³ Hence, are you so foolish? Having

begun by the Spirit, are you now being made whole through the flesh?
 4 Did you experience so many things in vain? If, indeed, it were in vain.
 5 Is he, therefore, who is supplying you the Spirit and working miracles among you doing so through the deeds of the law or from the hearing produced by faith?

The Lesson from Abraham (3:6–14)

6 Just as Abraham trusted in God, it also was accounted to him as righteousness. 7 Know then that the faithful ones, these are sons of Abraham. 8 Now the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faithfulness, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham—namely, “All the nations will be blessed by you” [Gen. 22:18]—
 9 so that the faithful ones would be blessed with faithful Abraham. 10 For all who are partisans of the works of the law are under a curse; for it has been written that “everyone is cursed who does not continue doing all that has been written in the scroll of the law” [Deut. 27:26]
 11 because it is clear that no one is just in the sight of God through the law because “the just shall live through faithfulness” [Hab. 2:4]. 12 But the law is not derived from faithfulness. Rather, “the one doing these deeds will live by them” [Lev. 18:5].

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become cursed on our behalf as it has been written, “Cursed is every one hanging on a tree” [Deut. 21:23], 14 so that the blessing of Abraham may come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ and so that we may receive the promise of the Spirit through faithfulness.

The Law and the Promise (3:15–18)

15 Brothers and sisters, I speak in a human manner. Similarly, a human will, once having been ratified, no one annuls or adds to it. 16 Now, the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendants, and he did not say “to the descendants,” as of many, but instead, as if regarding one individual, “and to your offspring,” who is Christ. 17 But this I say: The covenant was previously ratified by God. The Mosaic law, having come into existence after four hundred thirty years, does not void the promise [such] that it should be invalid. 18 For if the inheritance originated with the Mosaic law, it is not from the promise; but God generously gave the promise to Abraham.

Freedom from the Constraining Tutor (3:19–25)

19 Why, then, the law? It was added for the sake of the transgressions until the descendant, to whom it had been promised, should come, having been set in order through angels at the hand of a mediator. 20 Now, a mediator does not work for one party alone, but God is one. 21 So is the law opposed to the promises of God? Let it not be so! For if a law had been given that was able to bring life, certainly righteousness would come through law. 22 But the scripture imprisoned everything under the power of sin so that the promise from the faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those who are faithful. 23 Now, before the faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being imprisoned in regard to the faith soon to be revealed. 24 And so the law has been our tutor until Christ so that we might become righteous through faithfulness, 25 but now that the faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

The Dispensation of Faith (3:26–29)

26 For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 Because as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, you have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female because you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are in Christ, then you are the seed of Abraham and heirs by promise.

Becoming Children of God through Christlike Faithfulness (4:1–7)

4:1 And now I say that as long as the designated heir is a child, there is no difference between him and a bondman, even though he is a master of it all. 2 Certainly, he is under guardians and managers until the time appointed by his father. 3 And in the same way, when we were children, we were in a state of slavery by the principles of the world. 4 But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his own Son, born by a woman, subject to Mosaic law, 5 so that he might redeem those under the law in order that we might receive his adoption as a son. 6 Because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his own Son into our hearts, fervently crying out, “Abba, Father!” 7 Therefore, you are no longer a bondman but rather a son and, if so, even an heir of God.

Paul's Concern for the Galatians (4:8–11)

8 But then, not knowing about God, you served as slaves those that are not in their essence gods. 9 And now, having known God—or rather, being known by God—how do you again turn to weak and poor elemental forces to which you desire to be in bondage once more? 10 You carefully observe holy days and months and seasons and years. 11 I fear that my work with you was in vain.

Paul's Personal Appeal (4:12–16)

12 I beg you, brothers and sisters, be as I am because I am also like you. You did not ever wrong me. 13 You know that originally, on account of the weakness of the body, I preached the gospel to you. 14 You did not reject or despise your temptation caused by my body, but instead you accepted me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 So where is the happiness you felt? I testify to you that if it were possible for you to dig out your eyes, you would have given them to me. 16 So then, have I become hateful toward you for telling you the truth.

Paul's Warning Against the Interlopers (4:17–20)

17 They intensely court your favor [but] for no good reason. They want to exclude you so that you might be dedicated to them. 18 It is good to always be energetically courted for a good purpose and not just when I am present with you. 19 My children for whom I travail in birth again until Christ takes shape in you, 20 I wish I could be there with you now and to change my tone because I am perplexed because of you.

Lessons from the Two Covenants: Hagar and Sarah (4:21–5:1)

21 Tell me, those of you who want to be subject to the law, do you not understand the law? 22 It has been written that Abraham had two sons: one from a bondwoman and one from a free woman. 23 But the son of the bondwoman had been born through the body only and the other son the free woman bore through the promise. 24 These things can be taken as allegories. For these women are the two covenants: one from Mount Sinai producing bondage, which is Hagar 25 (for Mount Sinai is Hagar in Arabia) and corresponds to Jerusalem, for she is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem from above is free, which is our

mother. 27 For it has been written, “Rejoice infertile woman, who does not bear children. Break out and shout, she who does not suffer labor pains, because the children of the forsaken woman are more than those of her who has a husband” [Isa. 54:1]. 28 Now, brothers and sisters, we are children of the promise just like Isaac. 29 But even still, he who was born by only the body persecuted him who was born by the Spirit. So also it is now. 30 And what does the scripture say? “Throw out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman will not inherit with the son of the free woman” [Gen. 21:10]. 31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are no bondwoman’s children, but of the free woman.

5:1 Christ set us free in the interest of liberty. Therefore, stand firm and do not be again loaded down with the yoke of slavery.

Liberty Only through Christ (5:2–12)

2 Look, I, Paul, tell you that if you are circumcised, Christ would be of help to you in no way. 3 I testify again to every man who is circumcised that he is a debtor to carry out the entire Mosaic law. 4 You became severed from Christ, you who justified yourselves by the law. You have fallen from grace: 5 For we in spirit through faithfulness eagerly expect the hope of righteousness. 6 For, through Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters at all but instead only faithfulness expressed through Christlike love. 7 You were running so well. Who hindered you from trusting in the truth? 8 His persuasion is not from him who is calling you. 9 A little leaven works through the entire batch of dough. 10 I trust in the Lord that you will not consider any other view, and the one who is distressing you will suffer his judgment, whoever he may be. 11 Now I, brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I yet persecuted? Then the scandal of the cross would cease to be an obstacle. 12 O that those who upset you would emasculate themselves.

Life in the Spirit (5:13–26)

13 Certainly you have been called to liberty, brothers and sisters; only do not use the liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. Rather, through love, serve one another. 14 For the whole law has been made complete by one statement, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as

yourself” [Lev. 19:18]. 15 But if you bite and eat up one another, take care that you are not consumed by each other.

16 Now I say, conduct yourselves according to the Spirit and you will by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these forces are hostile to each other so that you might not do whatever you desire. 18 However, if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

19 The deeds of the flesh are plainly seen: sexual immorality, vileness, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, contention, envy, fits of rage, selfishness, discord, heresy, 21 envyings, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I warn you, as I previously warned you, that those practicing such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 By contrast, the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, 23 humility, 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 lusts. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not be conceited, neither provoking nor envying one another.

The Need to do Good for All (6:1–10)

6:1 Brothers and sisters, if someone is surprised to have been caught up in some wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore the person using a spirit of gentleness, but be concerned about yourself lest you are also enticed. 2 Bear each other’s burdens; thus, you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if a man thinks himself to be someone of importance, as he is a nobody, he deceives himself. 4 But let each person examine his own deeds, and then he alone will keep his boasting to himself and not boast to another, 5 for each one will bear his own burden. 6 Let the one being instructed in the gospel share all good things with the one instructing. 7 Do not be deceived. God is not one to be ridiculed, for whatever a person sows, this he will reap. 8 For whoever sows into the flesh shall of the flesh reap death, while whoever sows into the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9 Let us not become discouraged in doing good, for at the proper time, we shall reap if we do not give up. 10 So then, while we still have time, let us work for the good of all but particularly those of the household of the faithful.

Final Warning and Benediction 6:11–18

11 See with what large letters, with my own hand, I have written to you.
12 All who want to make a good show through the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised so that they might not be persecuted by means of the cross of Christ. 13 For not even the circumcised obey the Mosaic law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your submission to the outward rite. 14 But let it not be for me to boast except about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which, for me, the world is crucified and I to the world. 15 For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but only a new creation. 16 And as many as conform with this rule, let there be peace upon them and mercy even upon the Israel of God. 17 From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body. 18 Brothers and sisters, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.