

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

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To: All Users (Galatia) [mailto:AllUsers@galatia.trinity.div]

Subject: RE: Eating lunch next to people with non-surgically-altered wangs

(3) Hey guys, I hope this message finds you feeling secure and relaxed in our Papa's warm embrace. I hope you are feeling the soul-peace of Master Jesus, (4) who has set the human race free by injecting his own glorious self into our darkness, pain, and death. This was the mission given to him by his Papa, (5) OUR Papa of boundless joy and strength forever.

(6) Okay, enough of pleasantries. On to business...

I am SO pissed-off about what I am hearing about you -- that you are abandoning reality, that you've given up on the gospel. WTF!?! You've turned your back on THE STORY of how Jesus has included us in his life with Papa in the Spirit. Instead you have cast yourself as a character in another story altogether, (7) a story that ends in tragedy, a story that's not even true! Some Used-Religion salesmen have come to sell you lemon-gospels about who you are and who God is, and YOU BOUGHT IT!!!

(8) How could you let this happen?!? It's wonderful to have an open mind, but that doesn't mean letting any old schmuck fill your brain with toxic waste! You know better than to ever let ANYONE do that. You know the gospel; you know it in your SOUL. Don't you let anyone take that away from you, EVER. Even if I myself come to you and tell you things that contradict the gospel, do NOT listen to me! If a freakin' ANGEL materializes in your midst and starts telling you lies while fanning you with his wings, don't listen to him either! (9) The gospel is the gospel, and that's that. If someone tries to convince you that you have to earn Papa's embrace, do NOT let their delusion become yours. SCREW THAT.

(10) I know these are harsher words than you are used to hearing from me, but right now I don't care whether you like what I say or not. I'm not going to just tell you whatever you want to hear. If I cared what people thought of me, I'd have to serve someone other than Jesus.

(11) Guys, I want you to understand where I'm coming from, so I'm going to tell you the story of my journey with the gospel, (12) the good news I received not from any mere human storyteller, but from Master Jesus himself.

(13) Of course you already know of my earlier life of militant religiosity. Back then, my whole life was my jihad against the Jesus freaks. (14) I was a religious Superman, head and shoulders above everyone. I was an on-fire spirit-filled Bible-thumping prayer warrior: "Gimme dat old-time re-lig-ion, it's good e-nuff for me!"

(15) But my Papa had different plans for me. Out of the sheer kindness of his great heart, he invited me onto a new journey with him. (16) He revealed his Son to me, so that I could tell the whole world about him.

But notice what I did at that point: Contrary to what you may have heard, I did NOT go ask somebody to confirm what Papa had revealed to me. (17) I didn't go up to Jerusalem to see if the "super-apostles" agreed with me. Instead, I headed straight into the Arabian desert, and then after my time there, I returned to my home in Damascus. (18) And only then, after three years did I take a trip to Jerusalem for a chat with Peter. I stayed with him for 2 weeks, (19) and in that time I didn't see anybody else except for Jesus' brother James. (20) I swear to God, this is the truth. (21) Then I went to Syria and Cilicia, (22) but the churches in Judea still had no idea who I was. (23) All they knew was the rumor: "That guy who was trying to destroy the faith is now preaching it!" (24) People were grateful and amazed at what Papa had done with me.

(2.1) Then, 14 years after that, I took another trip up to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus. The Holy Spirit told me to go, so I went. In a private meeting with the elders there, I told them about my message to the non-Jewish 'outsiders.' We just wanted to verify that we were all on the same team. (3) Anyway, Titus and his non-surgically-altered wang were right there with me the whole time, and of course nobody had the slightest problem with it. (4) But some religion-nazi spies had snuck into the meeting to scope out the wide-open life we live with Master Jesus, so that they could find some way to make us join them in their tedious religion (*Yeah, like THAT'S gonna happen*). (5) Anyway, I didn't give in to them one bit, so that our message would not get tainted with a single drop of their poison. (6) They didn't influence my message AT ALL. For that matter, NO ONE at that meeting did.

(7) It was clear to the Jerusalem elders that Papa had sent me to the non-Jews, just like he sent Peter to the Jews. (8) The One Triune God has embraced the insiders AND the outsiders. And it is this God who has sent me and

Peter with the One gospel to these two different groups of people. (9) When James and Peter and John recognized the Triune Life at work in me, they welcomed Barnabas and me as valued members of Team Jesus. They agreed completely that we should go to the non-religious while they go to the religious. (10) They asked only that I continue taking care of the poor, which of course I was going to do anyway.

(11) But when Peter came to Antioch and slipped into hypocrisy, I immediately got all up in his face about it. (12) See, he had been hanging out with the whole gang in Antioch, having a great time with everyone, regardless of whether or not they had undergone ritual wang surgery. But that stopped when the respectable religious-types dropped in to visit. In junior high terms, you can say Peter stopped hanging with the nerds, because he was afraid of what the cool kids might think of him. (13) The others – even Barnabas! – followed his lead. (14) When I saw them acting in this reality-contradicting way, I confronted Peter in front of everybody:

“Look, Peter...You’re not a religion-snob anymore. You know you’re no better than anybody else. You’re just a regular guy now. So how come, all of a sudden, people have to pass your ‘religion-test’ before they’re good enough to hang out with you? Who the hell do you think you are?!?”

(15) So that’s how it happened. I hope my story helps you see where I’m coming from. Yes, I’m proud to be Jewish. Being a Jew is a very special thing, (16) but we all know that following our religion is NOT what sets right our relationship with God and with each other. That happens only as we rely on Master Jesus to put all things right as the gospel changes us from the inside-out. NO religious act can do that. (17) As we seek to live out the good life Jesus has given to us, it quickly becomes obvious that we haven’t become perfect yet. Does that mean Jesus is to blame for our brokenness? Of course not. (18) But when I seek reconciliation for relationships that I myself destroyed, I’m putting myself on public display as the flawed and struggling human being I am.

(19) And I’m totally okay with that. Pious Paul died so that Real Paul could authentically live life in the fellowship of the Triune God. Think of it this way: Jesus is the One in whom we live and move and have our being, right? Therefore, in some mysterious way, whatever happens to him happens to ALL of us. So when Jesus died, I DIED. (20) I’m not living my own life anymore! It is Jesus’ life, and he’s living it IN me and THROUGH me, and it is a life beyond anything I have ever dared to dream. The Son is faithful to his

Papa, always and in every way. It is through reliance on HIS faithfulness that I now live this life of adventure. My unsteady faith is upheld by the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) THAT is the power of grace; it is the only thing that can put things right in us and in the world. If religion could have accomplished that, then Jesus wouldn’t have had to die.

(3.1) I cannot BELIEVE the way you have so quickly forgotten all of this. Please tell me some wizard has put a “dumb-ass” spell on you, because then all this would start to make a little sense! Have you forgotten that you saw the crucified Jesus with your own eyes? (2) Answer me this: How is it that the Holy Spirit’s peace and confidence started to fill your life? Did it happen as a result of jumping through religious hoops, or as a result of believing the truth about Papa and about yourself? (3) Are you so deluded that you think your religious accomplishments can improve on what the Spirit has already done? (4) Have you forgotten all that we experienced together? (5) Does the strength of the risen Jesus flow through your body because you’ve earned it, or because you’ve opened your mind to Reality?

(6) You know the answer as well as I do: “By trusting Papa, Abraham entered into what he had been given – a right relationship with Papa and the world.” (7) Abraham’s true descendants are those who take Papa at his word. (8) And his word says that by faith, ALL peoples will be put right with Papa and with the world. This word was spoken plainly to Abraham: “As you are blessed, all people will be blessed through you.” (9) All people who (like Abraham) open their minds to Papa will (like Abraham) be filled with what Papa has given.

(10) If you are hoping to get a good life by obeying the rules in Torah, then I have bad news for you, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not obey every single rule perfectly.” (11) So imperfect rule-keeping (the only kind of rule-keeping you and I are capable of) isn’t going to do you any good. “The good life results from faithfully knowing reality.” (12) If good life were to come from rule-keeping, then none of us would qualify for a good life anyway. (13) Because of our inability to do good, Torah has become just a curse to us. But Master Jesus rescued us by taking that curse upon himself, “the curse of hanging on a cross.” (14) By enduring the curse, he destroyed it, so that ALL peoples could (through faith) receive the inheritance promised to Abraham – the honor of carrying the Spirit’s blessings into the world.

(15) Okay guys, here’s an example from everyday life: Let’s say you get together with your lawyer so you can write a will. Once you die, your descendants cannot re-

write your will if they don't like what it says. Your will says what it says, and that's that. (16) Well, Papa was sort of writing a will when he made the promise to Abraham and his heir (a.k.a., Jesus). (17) Now listen to this: The will that was written and signed that day never got changed or replaced! The promise still stands today, regardless of what Torah said 430 years later. Torah had its purpose, and it did its job perfectly. But it had nothing to do with changing or nullifying the promise already made to Abraham. (18) Think about it! If our inheritance is conditional on our rule-keeping, then it's no longer a promise. But as we all know, it IS a promise, promised to Abraham *without condition*.

(19) So if Torah doesn't save us, then what was it good for? Simple: Papa gave us the clear boundaries of Torah to restrain our behavior just enough to keep us from destroying ourselves before the Heir arrives. With Torah (which came to us through Papa's own messengers), Moses mediated the relationship between Papa and us. (20) As humanity's ambassador to Papa, Moses did a pretty okay job. He was, after all, human. But because he was not also divine, Moses could not be a very effective ambassador from Papa to humanity. After all, a real ambassador ought to be a citizen of the country he represents. But as we all know, "God is one," and that One's name is definitely not "Moses."

(21) Please understand, I'm not bashing Torah. Torah is the servant of the promise, not its enemy. If Papa had given us rules that could have healed the world, then the rules certainly would have accomplished exactly that. (22) But that was never Papa's intent for Torah. He gave us Torah to break us of this idea that by our own efforts we can make a good life for ourselves. Our utter failure to follow Torah has made it painfully obvious to us that we are STUCK, imprisoned by our inability to live a fully good life on our own. When we come to this realization, when we acknowledge and accept our own powerlessness, we become able to receive the gift of Jesus' life. When Papa gave us his Son, he was fulfilling his promise to Abraham. When the Son of Papa united himself with humanity, he united humanity forever with the Triune Life of blessing and being blessed!

(23) Torah's rules protected us by restraining our most destructive behaviors. But Torah also gave us the bad news that Death is the result of violating those boundaries. Torah protected us but also imprisoned us. THAT WAS ITS JOB. Torah did its job UNTIL the time came for us to take the next step – To experience the transformation that comes from the renewing of our minds through FAITH.

(24) Think of it this way: We're Papa's kids. When we were little, he gave us a nanny/tutor called Torah. And we had this nanny/tutor until Master Jesus came to turn us into grown-ups whose lives are being put right by faith. (25) But now that we are grown-ups who live by faith, we no longer need our nanny/tutor to run our lives. (26) For as we learn to believe and rely upon what Master Jesus has done to unite us with our Papa, we are beginning to experience abundant life for the first time as kids who know their Papa adores them.

(27) Think back to when you were baptized. On that day you experienced how completely immersed you are in Jesus' relationship with Papa in the Spirit. Your life is forever surrounded and supported by His glorious risen alive-ness. His life fits you perfectly, like a tailor-made set of clothes. Jesus himself is the uniform that signifies that we are on his team. (28) The old team rosters have zero significance for us now. The game is not about the rivalry between the Jewish team and the Greek team. Nor is it about Slave versus Free, or Boys versus Girls. I don't care what team you used to play for. Because today, ALL of us are Team Jesus. Period. Deal with it. Together we belong to Jesus, and together with him we are the heirs of the promise -- the promise that we would be blessed to be a blessing.

(4.1) Until heirs become adults and receive their inheritance, they are as penniless and powerless as slaves. (2) Until the date set by their father, they have to do what their nannies and tutors tell them to do. (3) It's like that with the human race: While we were kids, we were dominated by powers over which we would someday rule. (4) But our Papa, on the date he set himself, gave us our inheritance by sending his Son to us. He was born of a woman, just like us. And just like us, he was born under the domination of our nannies and tutors. (5) He came to us in that place so that we could share in his freedom from it, so that the human race would emerge from childhood and claim the inheritance we have been given – a full share in Jesus' relationship with Papa.

(6) Because we ARE His sons and daughters, Papa injected into our hearts the Spirit of his Son. It is this Spirit in us who loves Papa and cries out to Him: "Papa! Father!" It is because of this Spirit that the human soul is haunted with longing for our true Father. (7) It is because of this Spirit that your heart quakes when you hear the good news. The news that you have now been embraced forever by the Father for whom you have been longing. He has adopted you as His child, the heir of His rich Life with His Son and their Spirit.

(8) Back when you did not know Papa, your life was dominated by realities that were less than divine. (9) But

now you have begun to share in the mutual knowing between Papa and his Son and their Spirit. How is it possible that now you want to turn back to living under the domination of lesser things? (10) You were sharing in the Great Dance of infinite aliveness, but now you've given that up for your new religious hobby of calculating which days are holier than other days. In what universe is that considered a good trade!?! (11) When I spent all that time sharing the gospel with you, was that just a wasted effort?

(12) You guys are my friends, and it's as your friend that I'm begging you: Lay down the religious games, re-join me in the journey of becoming authentic people in community. You have been true friends to me. (13) I remember when I first came to meet you guys. It was because of my physical disability that I first found myself among you, with the opportunity to tell you about Jesus. (14) It was hard for you to deal with my blindness, but you did. Instead of being grossed-out by me, you embraced me. In your openness to me, I experienced your openness to Master Jesus himself.

(15) What happened to the love you once felt toward me? There was a time when you would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me, if that would have helped my condition. Where are those feelings now?

(16) Are you shutting me out now, just because I'm telling you the truth? (17) Those jackals who are with you now -- you like them because they tell you pleasant lies. They tickle your ego by saying you have the potential to become "super-Christians" like they are. (18) I know it feels nice when impressive people express an interest in you, but you have to look deeper and see that their intentions are not good!

(19) You guys are like sons and daughters to me. It was an honor to be the one who spiritually "birthed" you into your new life in Jesus. And now I am again in the pain of childbirth as you fight against the new birth He has given you. (20) I wish I could be with you right now, so I could change my tone. But my tone can't help but express how frustrated and confused I am about you!

(21) Let's try another line of thought: Okay, you who want to let Torah run your lives, why don't you go ahead and do what Torah actually says:

(22) Abraham had one son from slave woman and another son from a free woman. (23) The slave child resulted from Abraham's clumsy attempt to accomplish by his own effort what Papa had promised to do for him. The free child came from Papa himself, according to what he had promised. (24) Do you see what I'm getting at here? The slave woman is Torah, bearing slave children (25) who are crushed under the weight of demands they are unable to fulfill. (26) But OUR

mother is the free woman: (27) "You with the barren womb, shout 'WOOHOO!' Burst into song and dance! For your children shall outnumber all others." (28) You, my friends, are children not of slavery but of promise. Your life is not about struggling to obey some taskmaster's demands. Your life is about receiving the beautiful life Papa has promised.

(29) But remember how the rest of the story goes. The slave woman's child abused the free woman's child. That abuse continues to this day, as the Torah-fetishists persecute those who live in the freedom of the Spirit. (30) Listen to what the Bible tells us to do in this situation: "Send them away, both the slave woman and her child. The inheritance will be received only by the free."

(31) Brothers and sisters, we are children not of slavery but of freedom!

(5.1) Why did Master Jesus smash the walls that divide us? To set us free from isolation, free for community! So grow yourself a spine, and don't back down to those that want to stick you back in your cell! (2) PLEASE listen to me: *Wang surgery is no substitute for Jesus*. If you're expecting to receive his gift by submitting to a scalpel, you will be SORELY disappointed.

(3) I'll say it one more time: This surgical procedure is JUST ONE PART of the whole Torah arrangement. If you wanted to live by the rules of Torah, you'd have to keep ALL of them flawlessly. And we all know you can't and you don't. (4) If you rely on Torah observance to make you right with Papa, you have stopped relying on Jesus. You have judged his grace unnecessary, and you are sorely mistaken!

(5) For it is by grace that we have been included in Jesus' right relationship with Papa. It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can believe this, and live in the secure hope that this gift will find full expression in our life together in the world. (6) In this context, the context of Master Jesus and what he has done for us, wang surgery isn't even an issue; the topic is utterly irrelevant. The only thing that matters is loving God and loving others, which happens ONLY as we become willing to see reality accurately.

(7) You guys were doing GREAT; you were seeing reality accurately and living in accordance with it. Who talked you into shutting your eyes? (8) Whoever it was, it was not the One you Know in your soul. (9) One bad apple ruins the whole bunch. (10) It's true, and you know it. But whoever the bad apple is, there are consequences for fogging the brains of Papa's children.

(11) Come ON, guys, THINK! Why in the world would I ever start preaching the "circumcision gospel"? And if

I did, do you think I would still be getting attacked every day by the wang-obsessed religion-Nazis? If I preached their 'gospel,' they would have no reason to be scandalized by the cross. (12) If they're so obsessed with genitalia, I wish they would just chop off their own and leave you guys the hell alone!

(5.13) You have been set free from your old self-centered darkness and isolation. USE YOUR FREEDOM. Not to enslave yourself again to your own desires, but through love to become joyful servants of one another! (14) For Papa gave us Torah to teach us this one thing: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." (15) For some time now, you've been practicing the "Eat thy neighbor" ethic. How's that working out for you?

(16) The Holy Spirit lives in your spirit; He knows reality and how to live in it. Do what he says! Yes, I know your body doesn't always agree with what your spirit knows. Your body is still learning. It still hears the echoes of your old way of thinking, and sometimes it wants to return to those old behaviors that were destroying you and the people you care about. Don't give in to your old patterns! The Holy Spirit in you is strong enough to conquer your body. Don't give up! (17) Your body (your outer self) fears the things you need most, the things the Spirit is drawing you toward. And the Spirit detests the unhealthy and dysfunctional things your body craves. What's going on inside you is war, and I know how much it hurts.

(18) But if you follow the Holy Spirit, there is no more need for Torah to restrain you. (19) Because when you see and think with the clarity of the Spirit, it becomes obvious to you that what your body craves is deadly poison:

Having sex without real intimacy, vulnerability and commitment;

Disregarding the boundaries that keep you (and others) safe;

(20) Arranging your life around things that aren't worth arranging your life around.

Trying to control things that aren't yours to control;

Letting hard feelings fester under the surface of your relationships, instead of dealing with conflicts head-on;

Attacking and excluding people who have hurt you;

(21) Valuing things more than people;

Using pharmaceuticals and parties to avoid dealing with reality;

Etc...etc...etc...

Like I've told you many times, these things are poison because they are all ways to avoid receiving what we have been promised! The kingdom of God has been given to us, and these poisonous behaviors are all ways of running away from the gift! To avoid dealing with reality is to imprison yourself inside your own toxic myths. (22) Reality is worth dealing with, because reality is where the Spirit is at work. Here in the real world, he is taking the beautiful life of Jesus and putting it inside us:

Desiring good for all people

Enjoying everyday life

Living relaxed, ready to receive whatever the future brings

Feeling happy while we wait for things

Treating all God's creatures like beloved family members

Giving and receiving with open hands, because our stuff doesn't own us

Doing what we say we'll do

Taking care not to hurt those we are capable of hurting

Behaving according to well-thought-out choices, rather than according to the moment-by-moment fluctuations of brain chemistry

There's no law against any of THAT, is there? (24) To receive this new life from Jesus is to let go of our old life and its toxic cravings and behaviors. We know what results when we follow nothing but our own urges. (25) So now instead, let's try living by the Holy Spirit's impulses, and then watch what happens as a result! (26) If we do, we will start seeing each other, not as rivals, but as friends.

(6.1) And since you ARE friends, I want you to hold each other accountable. To live in the Spirit is to live in truth, and none of us can do it by ourselves. When you see your friend crossing the boundaries of healthy living, go talk to him about it. Not to manipulate or shame him, but to gently tell him the truth about his behavior and its effects. If you keep silent or enable him in some other way, you are just helping him destroy himself, and you're damaging yourself too. (2) As friends, we share our strengths AND our weaknesses. *We get to carry each other.* That's what "Love thy neighbor" is all about. (3) And remember you're no better than anybody else; everybody's got strengths and everybody's got weaknesses. Period.

(4) Remember, you're responsible for YOUR actions, not your neighbor's. Pay attention to your own

behaviors, the ones you like AND the ones you don't, and then decide how you want to act in the future. (5) Take responsibility for your own life. Don't be a leech. Do your job. (6) If someone else's job is to teach you the gospel, it's your job to share your resources with your teacher. (7) Don't be confused: Papa has embraced you and included you in his life, but don't take that to mean that your actions no longer have consequences. Whatever kind of seed you plant in your garden, THAT is the plant that will grow there.

(8) If you seed your life with unhealthy thoughts and behaviors, you will reap a harvest of soul-disease. But if you plant in your life the knowledge and actions of the Holy Spirit, you will reap the infinite alive-ness He shares with Jesus and his Papa. (9) That's why we keep on scattering seeds of compassion in the world, even though it's hard work, and even though it's hard to see the results sometimes. We have faith that good seeds grow into good plants. (10) That's why we take every opportunity to extend compassion to all people, starting with those in our own community.

(11) Holy cow! Check out my handwriting— Now you can see why I usually dictate my letters to a scribe! (12) Those guys who are trying to push you into wang surgery—they are just posers who are scared of bearing the cross of Jesus. (13) They don't really live by Torah; they just like bragging about their artificially sculpted wangs. They want you to undergo surgery so they can brag about YOUR wangs, and that's just weird.

(14) The only thing I brag about is the cross of Master Jesus. Because of the cross, the world cannot control me anymore, and I have lost all interest in controlling the world. (15) Because now I know that the things that divide us are nothing; but the new creation that unifies us is everything!

(16) Those who live by this truth will know the grace and peace of living as children of Papa. (17) From now on, don't let the religion-nazis make trouble for me. It doesn't matter whether or not my body has been marked by human surgery. Because my

whole being has been marked by the wounds of Jesus.

(18) May your spirit overflow with the grace and peace of Master Jesus. AMEN.