

GALATIANS

- Galatians 1:1-10** **ONLY ONE GOSPEL**
- Galatians 1:11-24** **ONLY ONE PAUL**
- Galatians 2:1-10** **THE ISSUE OF GENTILE BELIEVERS**
- Galatians 2:11-21** **JUSTIFICATION - BY FAITH ALONE**
- Galatians 3:1-14** **ABRAHAM - MAN of FAITH**
- Galatians 3:15-29** **GOD'S LAW and GOD'S PROMISE**
- Galatians 4:1-18** **BELIEVERS - SONS or SLAVES?**
- Galatians 4:19-31** **BELIEVERS - CHILDREN of SARAH or CHILDREN of HAGAR?**
- Galatians 5:1-15** **LIVING IN FREEDOM**
- Galatians 5:16-26** **LIVING BY THE SPIRIT**
- Galatians 6:1-10** **LIVING FOR OTHERS**
- Galatians 6:11-18** **BOASTING ONLY IN THE CROSS**

TWO ANTIOCHS

Some key passages:

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| 1:3-4 | The Heart of the Gospel. |
| 1:8-9 | The Purity and Unity of the Gospel. |
| 2:16, 20 | The Life of the gospel. |
| 3:11 | The way of life for the Christian. |
| 3:22-24 | The schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. |
| 4:4-7 | The fullness of time. |
| 4:22-31 | The great allegory. |
| 5:19-26 | Works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit. |
| 6:7 | Law of sowing and reaping. |

Introduction to a Study of Galatians

Read Galatians in several different translations.

Read commentaries on Galatians **after** you have read the text several times.

Some recommended commentaries on Galatians:

William Hendriksen; Curtis Vaughn; Geoffrey Wilson; and Warren Wiersbe.

Why Is This Epistle Important?

“The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine.” Thus spoke Martin Luther, who considered Galatians the best of all the books in the Bible. It has been called the “battle-cry of the Reformation,” “the great charter of religious freedom,” “the Christian Declaration of Independence.” etc.

{William Hendriksen}

The **historical background** of this epistle can be condensed into three questions:

1. Where were these Galatian churches located?
2. Who were the Galatians?
3. Who were the Judaizers and what did they teach?

First, where were these churches located?

You probably have a map in the back of your Bible, e.g. Paul’s third missionary journey.

There are two theories: 1) the North Galatian theory and, 2) the South Galatian theory. Much has been written about this question. In either case there is a message for us.

The North Galatian Theory would confine these churches to the 200 mile strip of land located in Northeast Asia Minor and named Galatia on the map.

The South Galatian Theory locates these churches in Southeast Asia Minor, or the Roman Province of Galatia including the cities of Lycaonia, Phrygia, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

During the first century, the term “Galatia” was used in two different senses.

Geographically, it referred to the territory in the north where the Gauls actually lived.

Politically, it referred to the whole Roman province of Galatia with its extended boundaries to the south.

In the third century B.C. the Gauls left their home in Southern Europe and settled in the northern part of Asia Minor. Their place was named Galatia which later became a Roman Province.

Gaul [French] is the region inhabited by the ancient Gauls, comprising modern-day France and parts of Belgium, western Germany, and northern Italy. A Celtic race, the Gauls lived in an agricultural society divided into several tribes ruled by a landed class.

The general temperament of the Gauls is reflected in this book. The Celts dominated the province. [Celtic: *kel-tic* Scottish / Irish language or people]

The Gauls had the reputation of being quarrelsome, having a craving for knowledge, being treacherous in their dealings, incapable of sustained effort, easily disheartened, always in turmoil, restless and migratory, desire for change, decidedly fickle, ready to discard the old for the new, greed for wealth, full of strife and vainglory. They went from one extreme to the other.

They were ready to receive Paul as an angel and were willing to pluck out their very eyes and give to him {4:15}, and then were just as quick to follow false teachers of another gospel {1:6}.

These false teachers were the Judaizers who followed Paul in an attempt to tear down his teaching and work.

In Philippians 3:2-6, Paul calls the Judaizers:

Dogs - a term of reproach.

Evil workers - i.e., against the Gospel of Christ.

Concision - those who were not of the true spiritual circumcision and were merely mutilated.

Their Teachings:

1. Circumcision - This was considered as a prerequisite for salvation. Acts 15:1 "... certain men came down from Judea saying, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."
2. Salvation was only for those who were from the stock of Abraham.
3. Also, one must be in the ecclesiastical system of Judaism.
4. They were given to legalism and were strong in tradition and ceremony, keeping days, weeks, years, and seasons.

These Judaizers were Paul's greatest enemies. They tried to confuse and ruin the churches; they mutilated the Gospel; they maligned Paul's character; and questioned his apostleship. They tried to destroy his works by destroying his authority and character thus taking the people back into Judaism and the Mosaic Law.

Paul, therefore, writes to defend his apostleship and to defend the Gospel, and also to repudiate Judaism. These emphases are never lost sight of throughout the book. While on his third missionary journey, probably from Macedonia or Corinth, Paul hears about the treacherous work of these Judaizers in Galatia and the danger that these churches faced. He immediately writes this epistle to combat the Judaizers and to further establish the saints in the faith.

In chapters one and two, he defends his apostleship. This is a personal section. In chapters three and four, his teachings pertain to the Gospel and are polemical [controversial].

Chapters five and six pertain to the Galatians and is the practical section.

Paul visited Galatia twice before writing this letter. The first visit came on his second missionary journey {Acts 16: 6}. And his second visit came on his third journey {Acts 18:23}.

On his first visit there he became very ill and they were kind to him. When he recovered he preached to them and they were responsive and very receptive to his gospel, {Gal 4:13-15}.

However, on his second visit he noted a change in them. So he writes this letter to deal with the problem of the Judaizers. They perverted of the gospel.

This letter belongs to the second group of Paul's letters which includes Romans and Corinthians.

Dr. Sidlow Baxter says,

“Read Romans to be grounded in Doctrine.
Read Corinthians to be guided in Practice.
Read Galatians to be guarded against Error.”

This is a severe book, but written in love. Paul has no word of compliment for them.

The Date

Direct evidence for the date is absent. As a result there is a diversity of opinion.

In Galatians 2:1; the allusion to the Jerusalem conference shows it was written after that event. That conference occurred in 50 A.D.

In Galatians 4:13; there is a reference to a “former visit,” which implies a second visit.

This second visit was around 54-55 A.D., or three years after the first visit. All scholars agree that Romans is an outgrowth of the Galatian epistle. The date of Romans can be established with accuracy, i.e., early in 58 A.D., during the 4th year of the reign of Nero. Thus the date of Galatians is set at about 57 A.D.

Summary

The author: of course, is Paul.

The occasion: To defend the Gospel; his apostleship; and to combat the Judaizers.

The Theme: Justification by faith alone, {3:11}.

Justification by pure grace alone for salvation and also for living the Christian life.

Galatians is one of four books written from this theme.

It first appears in Habakkuk 2:4 “The just shall live by faith.”

It is then quoted three times in the New Testament:

Hebrews 10:38 “The just shall live by **faith**.” Here **faith** is the emphasis.

Romans 1:17 “The **just** shall live by faith.” Here the **just** is the emphasis.

Galatians 3:11 “The just shall **live** by faith.”

In this book the emphasis is on **living** the Christian life.

We are to walk by faith and not by sight. This is a way of life for the Christian.

Galatians was hurriedly written to combat the Judaizers. A few years later, the letter to the Romans was written on the theme of justification by faith. It was written slowly and deliberately. In Romans, Paul deals with this issue in a **doctrinal** manner. The things only hinted at in Galatians are treated at great length in Romans. His passion of defense in Galatians is met with a pattern of doctrine in Romans.

Thus the best commentary on Galatians is Romans.

We have been reduced to adjectives:

“pure grace”	Grace is grace!
“sovereign grace”	There is no other kind of grace!
“Biblical Christianity”	There is no other Christianity! Only the Bible defines it!
“carnal Christians”	An impossible oxymoron!
“True truth”	Francis Schaeffer’s necessary distinction.

Galatians 1:1-10 ONLY ONE GOSPEL

Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned. {1:8}

The perversion of the truth that you **must**, as though you even could, do something in order to ensure your salvation, is as old as Satan himself. Jude calls it “the way of Cain.” At the heart of this lie is the insult to God that what the Lord Jesus Christ did for sinners is not quite enough; that faith, itself a gift of God, must be made sure or enhanced by some act of obedience such as a birth certificate, a baptism, or membership in a specific group, etc.

The subtlety is that these good works are “things which accompany salvation.” {Cf. Hebrews 6:9}

Galatians deals with the Judaizers who said that you must add circumcision to faith. The principle established is that the Judaizers then and now preach a fatal and false gospel. If you can be persuaded to trust your own deeds, no matter how its rationalized, then you are not completely trusting Christ. Jesus may as well have skipped the shame of the cross if the Judaizers are correct. Did not Jesus pray, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

It is significant that God the Holy Spirit uses a Pharisee to argue for the sufficiency of faith in the matter of salvation. Paul had a lifetime of law and works to call upon, but he counted them all as dung as far as his salvation was concerned. {Cf. Philippians 3:1-9}

1. THE SOURCE OF PAUL'S AUTHORITY 1:1-2

Paul, the apostle, (one sent forth on a mission) declares that his authority is from God and not man.

What was the Scriptural qualification to be an apostle?

Acts 1:21-23

²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." ESV

Acts 2:32

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

What was the authority of an apostle?

2 Thess 3:4-5

⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

2 Thess 3:6

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.

How do the apostles exercise authority over us today?

Jude 17

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. THE SOURCE OF PAUL'S GOSPEL

1:3-5

Verse 3 is a benediction or blessing to his hearers; verse 5 is a doxology or praise to God. Verse 4 is the essence of Paul's message.

3. THE SOURCE OF PAUL'S ASTONISHMENT

1:6-9

Paul was amazed that anyone brought under the grace of God would fall back so quickly into legalism. Paul had been trained in extreme legalism and knew its hold on a person. But Paul also knew what Christ had done for sinners and was appalled that someone would trade their own behavior for what Jesus had already done. The subtlety of legalism is that it appeals to the flesh and on the surface doesn't seem to insult God.

The "different gospel" is not just some variation of the truth but the Greek word makes it clear that it is not the Gospel at all. This matter is so serious that Paul, through the Holy Spirit, says if anyone preaches it he should be damned to hell.

How "tolerant" should we be of those who insist that works are necessary "in order" to be saved? We can love people and still not tolerate their error. But the way we love them should include telling them the true Gospel.

Always remember that it is the integrity of Jesus the Christ that is at issue, not the Baptist church or any other denomination. There are a great many Baptists, I fear, that are trusting in their works {decision, praying the "sinner's prayer," walking the aisle}, while talking about grace.

What **caused** God to save you?

Did He save you accidentally or on purpose?

4. THE SOURCE OF PAUL'S APPROVAL 1:10

Paul was accused of accommodating his message to suit his audience.
Paul was not indifferent to human opinion; he just insisted that the truth is more important than man's pride.

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Do we sometimes "back off" when we should be bold with the truth?

How do we know the truth?

How do we know we know the truth?