

GALATIANS

The book of Galatians may be short—just six chapters, 149 verses, and 3,098 words—but it has had an oversized influence on believers throughout Christian history. Some have called it the “Magna Charta of the Christian faith.” Others have conferred on it the title of “the Christian’s _____[a] of _____[b].” Many historians believe that Martin Luther’s commentary of Galatians laid the foundation for the Reformation. Luther, perhaps the most well-known of all the reformers, said, “The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am, as it were, in wedlock. Galatians is my Katherine [the name of his wife].” It was out of his careful study of books like Galatians that Luther discovered that God’s plan of salvation was by _____[c] through _____[d], a plan that was completely contrary to the long-held Catholic teaching of salvation by _____[e]-keeping.

GALATIA AND THE CHURCHES THERE

The name “Galatia” comes from a large body of migrating Celtic people who settled in _____[f] Minor (modern Turkey) after ravaging and plundering the Greek and Roman empires for several centuries. They migrated from a region in modern France where they were known as the Gauls. When they settled in Asia Minor, they were called “Gallo-Graecians,” and that’s where the term “Galatians” comes from. These “Gallo-Graecians” dominated the whole area until _____[g] eventually conquered their territory, and in 25 B.C. the Romans combined this original region of Galatia with more territory to form a new, large Roman _____[h]—about 250 miles from north to south and up to 175 miles from east to west—and they gave it the same name, “Galatia.”

On Paul’s _____[i] missionary journey, he and Barnabas planted _____[j] congregations in the southern part of the province of Galatia. The cities in the province where they planted these churches were Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:14-14:23). These were among the first churches Paul started. After establishing a church in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas revisited the other three cities, “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith” (Acts 14:22). Paul actually came very close to losing his life while he was in Galatia. In Acts 14, Luke reported that several hostile Jewish leaders followed Paul from Antioch and Iconium to the city of Lystra, and there they _____[k] him and dragged him out of the city because they thought he was dead (Acts 14:19-20). On his second missionary

journey Paul visited the Galatian churches with Silas, “delivering decrees, which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem, for them to observe. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily” (Acts 16:1-5).

THE RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE LETTER

The author of Galatians is not disputed. Every scholar acknowledges that Paul wrote it. But there has been considerable dispute through the years as to whom Paul wrote it. Paul calls the recipients “the churches of Galatia” (Gal 1:2), but what churches was he talking about? There are two views: (1) the _____[l] Galatian view, and (2) the _____[m] Galatian view. The northern view is that Paul was writing to congregations in the original area of Galatia before the Romans expanded it southward. The southern view is that Paul was writing to the churches in the southern part of Galatia that he planted during his first missionary journey (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe). Most scholars now believe (and I agree) that Paul was writing primarily to the _____[n] churches. They believe this for a few reasons:

- The book of Acts only mentions the four churches established by Paul in _____[o] Galatia. If Paul had written this important letter to the churches in northern Galatia, Acts would have likely mentioned Paul’s ministry in that area.
- Paul usually followed _____[p] roads and preached in the major metropolitan centers. That practice would lead Paul exactly where Luke places him in Acts 13 and 14. The common trade routes, however, did not run through the northern Galatia.
- Paul normally uses Roman imperial names for the provinces, and Roman “Galatia” included the south.
- The Galatian churches participated in the _____[q] for the saints in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1), but only two South Galatians—Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra (Acts 20:4)—were among the representatives who took the offering to Jerusalem.
- _____[r] is mentioned three times (Gal 2:1,9,13) as though he is known to the readers of Galatians, and he accompanied Paul only on the journey that went to the cities of the south.

If the south Galatian view of the recipients is correct, Galatians could have been written as early as _____[s] B.C. which would probably make it Paul’s _____[t] epistle and the _____[u] book of the New Testament.

THE PROBLEM IN GALATIA

The writing of Galatians was triggered when Paul was shocked by some distressing news. The Galatian Christians had fallen under _____[v]

major misconceptions. First, false teachers had convinced the Christians that a person needed to be _____[w] in order to become a Christian, and that all Christians were bound under the _____[x] laws, regulations, and ceremonies (see Gal 2:3-5). Second, in addition to teaching the necessity of being circumcised and of keeping the Mosaic law, the false teachers also attacked Paul personally. They were convinced that he wasn't an _____[y] sent out by a revelation of the risen Lord but merely an emissary of the Jerusalem twelve apostles. The Galatians had been led to believe that, in an effort to please men, Paul changed the message the Jerusalem apostles had given him. They believed Paul had watered down the gospel by saying that it was no longer necessary to keep the Law of Moses.

Paul was furious and intensely concerned when he received news of the presence of false teachers who "want to distort the gospel of Christ" (Gal 1:7). So, he fired off this deeply personal, in-your-face, no-holds-barred letter. Galatians is the only one of Paul's letters that offers no word of _____[z], praise, or thanksgiving to its readers. After a very brief salutation, Paul immediately stated the problem that unleashed his withering letter: "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ" (Gal 1:6-7). As one commentator said, "From that point until the closing benediction (Gal 6:18) the letter is a flashing sword yielded by a burning heart."

It might seem strange that Paul would have words of commendation for the church at Corinth (1 Cor 1:4-7) but none for the Galatians. The situation was awful in Corinth too. So, why did he have some praise for the Corinthians but not the Galatians? The difference was that, as bad as the Corinthian situation was—worldliness, division, immorality, immaturity—the major problem there was bad _____[aa] rather than bad _____[bb]. In the Galatian churches, the very heart of the _____[cc] was being undermined by false teachers. The gospel of grace was being tossed aside for the false gospel of salvation-by-law-keeping. Here are a few snippets that demonstrate just how passionately "militant" this letter is:

- As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (Gal 1:9).
- You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? (Gal 3:1).
- Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal 3:3).

- My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—but I wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you (Gal 4:19-20).
- I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves (Gal 5:12).

OVERVIEW OF GALATIANS

The theme of Galatians is the central theme of the entire New Testament: Jesus Christ _____[dd] sets us free from bondage to sin and law-keeping as a way of salvation . . . and if we want to try to save ourselves through law-keeping, we’re abandoning the pure gospel and that will come with dreadful consequences. Paul supports this basic truth in each of the three sections of his letter. Let’s walk through them.

Confirming the Truth of the Pure Gospel (Gal 1-2)

Right out of the gate Paul declares that any message from any source that doesn’t agree with the gospel he preached is a _____[ee] gospel (Gal 1:1-10). In context, Paul is thinking of any message that adds anything to trusting in the work of Christ and receiving its benefits by simply obeying the simple gospel _____[ff] Paul had given them. In this section Paul also _____[gg] himself from those who are trying to undercut his authority and thereby his doctrine. He began the letter by referring to himself as “an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father)” (Gal 1:1). Throughout the first two chapters he continued to affirm his divine _____[hh] as an apostle, equal in every way to the Twelve.

Defending the Superiority of the Pure Gospel (Gal 3-4)

In chapter 3 Paul begins his argument against the claims that Christians must be circumcised and keep the law. He establishes that “grace through faith” was _____[ii] than the Law of Moses by pointing to Abraham. He says, in essence, “Abraham was not saved by law-keeping, but by his total faith in God” (Gal 3:6). He then goes on to explain that the _____[jj] of the Law was to help us understand how bad sin is and to bring us to saving faith in Jesus (Gal 3:19, 24).

Living in the Freedom of the Pure Gospel (Gal 5-6)

In Christ we’re _____[kk]. Enjoy it. But Paul makes sure that we don’t misunderstand what it means to be free in Christ. It means we’re free from law-keeping as a way to be saved. It doesn’t mean, however, that we’re free to live in _____[ll]. In other words, grace isn’t a license to live immoral lives. We are set free to _____[mm] and _____[nn]

one another (Gal 5:13-14) and to display true Christlike character (Gal 5:22-23). In other words, in Christ, we're free to love and live for _____[oo], and free to love and serve _____[pp].

LESSONS FROM GALATIANS

- The gift of salvation is given to us purely by God's _____[qq]
- Salvation by _____[rr] alone in the work of Christ is the pure gospel and our only hope (Gal 6:14).
- _____[ss] is a part of our _____[tt] response to the work of Christ (Gal 3:26-27).
- A good _____[uu] is not a substitute for faith in Christ (Gal 1:13-14; Acts 22:3; 23:1)
- Enjoy your _____[vv] in Christ (Gal 5:1). That means, once you've obeyed the gospel, begin serving and obeying God in joy rather than in the terrifying belief that every violation of God's will dooms you to hell.
- Free in Christ doesn't mean free to live in _____[ww] (Gal 5:1).
- We have been freed to do what _____[xx] wants, not to do whatever _____[yy] want.
- While _____[zz] can't save us, it helps us see how sinful we are, and how desperately we need Christ.

KEY PASSAGES FROM GALATIANS

- Galatians 1:6-9
- Galatians 2:20
- Galatians 3:1-2, 26-27
- Galatians 4:21
- Galatians 5:1, 13, 22-23
- Galatians 6:7, 14

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

[a] declaration	[ss] baptism
[b] independence	[tt] faith
[c] grace	[uu] conscience
[d] faith	[vv] freedom
[e] law	[ww] sin
[f] Asia	[xx] God
[g] Rome	[yy] we
[h] province	[zz] law
[i] first	
[j] four	
[k] stoned	
[l] North	
[m] South	
[n] southern	
[o] south	
[p] ma	
[q] collection	
[r] Barnabas	
[s] 48	
[t] first	
[u] oldest	
[v] two	
[w] circumcised	
[x] Mosaic	
[y] apostle	
[z] commendation	
[aa] living	
[bb] doctrine	
[cc] gospel	
[dd] alone	
[ee] false	
[ff] commands	
[gg] defends	
[hh] authority	
[ii] older	
[jj] purpose	
[kk] free	
[ll] sin	
[mm] love	
[nn] serve	
[oo] Him	
[pp] others	
[qq] grace	
[rr] faith	