

GALATIANS

Introduction to Galatians

AUTHOR: The Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:1; 5:2). This was the unanimous view of the early church, and even those modern critics who challenge the authorship of many of the New Testament books concede that Galatians is truly Pauline.

BACKGROUND OF THE EPISTLE: During his first missionary journey (46-48 A.D.), Paul together with Barnabas had the opportunity to establish several churches in the Roman province of Galatia (Acts 13:14-14:23). On his second journey (49-52 A.D.), Paul and Silas visited them again (Acts 16:1-5).

It was not long however, before some Jewish Christians came in and began teaching that Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses (similar to what happened in Antioch of Syria mcf. Acts 15:1). In an effort to persuade the Galatians, it appears the tactic was to discredit Paul as an apostle, challenge his concept of the gospel of Christ, and charge his doctrine with leading to loose living.

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING: Dating Galatians is affected by one's view of whether the churches of Galatia were located in the north central part of Asia Minor (ethnic Galatia), or in the south-central part (the Roman province of Galatia). The "North Galatia Theory" maintains that the churches were in the north, and that Paul had not been there until the beginning of his third missionary journey (54-55 A.D, cf. Acts 18:23). This would require that Paul wrote his epistle sometime toward the end of that journey, or afterward (i.e., around 57-57 A.D. or later).

I subscribe to the "South Galatia Theory," which identifies the churches of Galatia as those established on Paul's first journey (cf. Acts 13:14-14:23). I also believe that the meeting described in Gal.2:1-10 took

place during the “Jerusalem Conference” related in Acts 15:1-29. This view opens several possibilities for the place and time of the writing:

1. Corinth, in the period of Acts 18:1-17
2. Antioch, in the period of Acts 18:22
3. Ephesus, in the period covered by Acts 19:1-41
4. Macedonia or Achaia in the period of Acts 20:1-3

With such uncertainty one cannot be dogmatic, but in view of Paul’s lengthy stay in Ephesus, which would seem a likely possibility, and the date would be A.D. 55.

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE: The churches in Galatia were being influenced by those who would “pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6-7, Gal 3:1). Known as “Judaizing teachers,” these individuals taught that Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:1). Paul recognized that this doctrine would jeopardize the salvation of those souls who accepted it (Gal 5:4). Because the enemies of the true gospel were trying to support their case for undermining Paul’s authority as an apostle of Christ, it was necessary to verify that he was truly an apostle “not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father”

(Gal 1:1). Therefore, Paul writes:

**TO VERIFY HIS APOSTLESHIP AND THE GOSPEL OF
JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST**

Because of his outstanding defense of the gospel of Christ in which we have freedom from sin and the law, this epistle has frequently been called “The Magna Carta of Christian Liberty.”

**“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,
and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Gal. 5:1**

Outline

INTRODUCTION (Gal 1:1-10)

1. Salutation (Gal 1:1-5)
2. Reason for the letter (Gal 1:6-10)

I. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP (Gal. 1:11-2:21)

A. THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF HIS GOSPEL (Gal 1:11-17)

1. Thesis: His gospel received directly from God (Gal. 1:11-12)
2. His pre-Christian years, and conversion (Gal 1:13-17)

B. HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER APOSTLES (Gal 1:18-2:21)

1. His first visit with Peter, and early years as a Christian (Gal. 1:18-24)
2. The council in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-5)
3. His sanction by James, Peter, and John (Gal. 2:6-10)
4. His rebuke of Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-21)
 - a. Peter's hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-13)
 - b. His speech to Peter, how we are justified by faith in Christ (Gal 2:14-21)

II. PAUL'S DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (Gal 3:1-4:31)

A. THE PERSONAL ARGUMENT (Gal. 3:1-5)

1. How they received the Spirit (Gal 3:1-4)
2. From whom they received the Spirit (Gal. 3:5)

B. THE SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT (Gal. 3:6-25)

1. The example of Abraham (Gal. 3:6-9)
2. The curse of the Law (Gal. 3:10-14)
3. The priority of the Promise over the Law (Gal. 3:15-18)
4. The purpose of the Law (Gal. 3:19-25)

C. THE PRACTICAL ARGUMENT (Gal, 3:26-4:7)

1. In Christ they are one, as children of God, Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise (Gal. 3:26-29)
2. Redeemed from the Law, adopted as sons, they are no longer slaves, but heirs (Gal. 4:1-7)

D. THE SENTIMENTAL ARGUMENT (Gal. 4:8-20)

1. His fears over their returning to bondage (Gal.4:8-11)
2. Their past and present relationships to him (Gal. 4:12-20)

E. THE ALLEGORICAL ARGUMENT (Gal. 4:21-31)

1. An allegory for those who desire to be under the Law (Gal. 4:21-24a)
2. Symbolic of the two covenants; one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, and the other from Jerusalem which makes free (Gal 4:24b-31)

III. THE CALL TO STAND FAS Y IN THE LIBERTY OOF THE GOSPEL (Gal.5-6:10)

A. A LIBERTY THAT EXCLUDES THE NECESSITY OF CIRCUMCISION (Gal.5:1-6)

1. Do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1)
2. Circumcision means nothing; requiring it results in falling from grace (Gal. 5:2-4)
3. We should wait for the hope of righteousness with faith working through love (Gal. 5:5-6)

B. A LIBERTY THAT FULFILLS THE LAW (Gal 5:7-15)

1. Beware of those who would bind the Law (Gal. 5:7-12)
2. Use your liberty as an opportunity to serve one another with love, and you will fulfill the Law (Gal. 5:13-14)
3. But beware that you do not use it as an opportunity for the flesh in which you consume one another (Gal. 5:13-15)

C. A LIBERTY IN WHICH ONE IS TO BE LED BY THE SPIRIT (Gal. 5:16-26)

1. Liberty is not an excuse for license (Gal. 5:16-18)

2. The works of the flesh contrasted with the works of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23)
3. Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh and are walking in faith (Gal. 5:24-26)

D. A LIBERTY WITH A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY (Gal. 6:1-10)

1. For helping those with burdens (Gal. 6:1-8)
2. For doing good to all, thus sowing to the Spirit (Gal. 6:6-10)

IV. CONCLUSION (Gal6:11-18)

1. Paul's final rebuke (Gal. 6:11-13)
2. Paul's confidence in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14-17)
3. Benediction (Gal. 6:18)

OUTLINE OF GALATIANS-A BOOK OF CONTRASTS

- A. Paul's authority from God not man: Contrast between divine and human authority (Gal.1:1-5).
- 1) Paul affirms his commission or authority (Gal. 1:1-2)
 - 2) The authoritative message (Gal. 1:3-5)
- B. The one gospel or another gospel: Contrast between the true gospel and any other gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).
- 1) The instability of the faith of the Galatians (Gal. 1:6).
 - 2) The false teacher's reversal of the gospel (Gal. 1:7).
 - 3) The denunciation of the false teachers (Gal. 1:8-9).
- C. Pleasing men or God? Contrast between the favor of men and the favor of God (Gal. 1:10-2:21).
- 1) Paul's denunciation of the false teachers indicated he is not a man pleaser (Gal. 1:10).
 - 2) Paul's gospel came from God, not man (Gal 1:13-17).
 - 3) Paul's "autobiography" of his conversion and commission confirm that he serves God and not man (Gal. 1:13-2:21).
 - a) Paul's conversion and call: From God not man (Gal 1:13-17).
 - b) Paul's first visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18-24).
 - c) Paul's second visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10).
 - d) Paul's clash with Peter's action under pressure: Contrast between professing salvation by faith in Christ while living by law and professing and living by faith (Gal:2-11-21).
 1. Peter's separation from the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-13.)
 2. Paul's rebuke (Gal. 2:14).
 3. Paul's declaration of justification by faith: Contrast between justification in Christ and works of the law (Gal. 2:15-21).
 - a. Jews no better than Gentiles (Gal 2:15-17).
 - b. Dead to the law and alive to God (Gal. 2:18-19).
 - c. Christ the agent of death to the Law and life in God Gal. 2:20-21).
- D. The Gospel over the Law: Contrast between the power of the Gospel and the Curse of the Law (Gal. 3:1-4:31).

- 1) The gospel confirmed by experience: Contrast between faith and works; also spirit and flesh for justification (Gal. 3:1-5).
- 2) The gospel confirmed by Scripture: Contrast between the promise and the Law as the way to the inheritance of Abraham (Gal. 3:16-18).
 - a) Sons of Abraham by faith or works (Gal. 3:6-9).
 - b) Redeemed by the Law or Christ (Gal. 3:10-14).
 - c) The inheritance by Law or promise (Gal. 3:15-18).
- 3) The Law was preparatory and provisional (Gal. 3:23-4:11).
 - a) Under the Law or in Christ (Gal. 3:23-29).
 - b) Slaves or sons (Gal 4:1-11).
- 4) The relationship between Paul and the Galatians: A personal note interrupting Paul's argument which contrasts the Galatians' former attitude toward Paul and their present attitude. It also contrasts Paul's attitude toward the Galatians with that of false teachers (Gal 4:12-20).
- 5) The gospel illustrated by Paul's interpretation of Isaac and Ishmael: Contrast between the slave son (An illustration of those under the Law) and the free son (an illustration of those under grace (Gal. 4:21-31).

E. Living under the gospel rather than the Law (Gal. 5:1-10).

- 1) A call to freedom (Gal. 5:1-25).
 - a) The danger of the message of bondage: Freedom vs. legalism (Gal. 5:1-12).
 - b) The true nature of freedom: freedom vs. license (Gal 5:13-15).
 - c) The way of freedom: Fruit of the spirit vs. works of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-25).
- 2) The everyday exercise of freedom (Gal. 5:26-10).
 - a) No self-centeredness (Gal. 5:26).
 - b) Gently restore the fallen brother (Gal. 6:1).
 - c) Share the burdens (Gal. 6:2).
 - d) Know one's own need of grace ((Gal. 6:3).
 - e) Test one's own labor rather than criticizing their neighbor's (Gal. 6:4).
 - f) Shoulder your share of the load (Gal. 6:5).
 - g) Share with those who minister (Gal. 6:6).
 - h) Sow to the spirit rather than the flesh (Gal. 6:7)
 - i) Do not grow weary in service (Gal. 6:9).
 - j) Do good to all men (Gal> 6:10).

F. Summation: The essence of Christian faith is to glory in the cross of Christ in contrast to glorying in the flesh (gal. 6:11-18).

OUTLINE OF GALATIANS-JESUS MEANS FREEDOM

- A. Jesus means freedom under the authority of God (Gal. 1:1-5).
 - 1) Commission of the gospel of freedom (Gal. 1:1-2).
 - 2) The message of freedom (Gal. 1:3-5).

- B. A threat to freedom in Jesus by another gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).
 - 1) The freedom of Grace disturbed by another gospel (Gal. 1:6).
 - 2) The distortion of the gospel of freedom (Gal. 1:7).
 - 3) A denunciation of the variance from the gospel of freedom (Gal. 1:8-9).

- C. Jesus means freedom to stand under God's Word rather than man's word (Gal. 1:10-2:21).
 - 1) Freed to seek only God's favor (Gal. 1:10).
 - 2) Freedom to speak only God's good news (Gal. 1:11-12).
 - 3) Freedom to serve only God confirmed by Paul's "autobiography" (Gal. 1:13-2:14).
 - a) Conversion to freedom initiated by God, not man (Gal. 1:13-17).
 - b) Paul's freedom under God confirmed by the approval of the gospel: Paul's second visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10).
 - c) A conflict tests the freedom bestowed by the gospel of grace-a demonstration of freedom (Gal. 2:11-13).
 - 1) Peter surrenders his freedom (Gal. 2:11-13).
 - 2) Paul rebukes the action and affirms the freedom of the gospel (Gal. 2:14).

- D. Jesus means freedom through justification by faith (Gal. 2:15-21).
 - 1) Freedom for Jew and gentile is by faith, not works (Gal. 2:15-17).
 - 2) Freedom means dead to the Law and alive to God (Gal. 2:18-19).
 - 3) Freedom is the gift of the finished work of the cross Gal. 2:20-21).

- E. Jesus means freedom for the gospel has broken the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:1-18).
 - 1) Freedom in the Spirit by faith confirmed in experience (Gal. 3:1-5).
 - 2) Freedom in the Spirit by faith confirmed in scripture (Gal. 3:6-18).
 - a) Freedom for Abraham and his sons by faith, not works (Gal. 3:6-9).
 - b) Freedom from the curse of the Law by faith in the work of Christ (Gal. 3:10-14).
 - c) Freedom a gift promised by God, not a price purchased by man (Gal. 3:15-18).

F. Jesus means freedom from the bondage of sin exposed by the Law (Gal. 3:19-4:31).

- 1) Under Law man's bondage in sin is confirmed (Gal. 3:19-22).
- 2) Under Law man's bondage in sin is secured (Gal. 3:23-29).
- 3) Under Law man is bond slave not a free man (Gal. 4:1-31).
 - a) An appeal to the Galatians' former satisfaction in freedom. (This interrupts Paul's argument to illustrate the change in their reception of him and to contrast Paul's attitude toward the Galatians with that of the false teachers). (Gal. 4:12-20).
 - b) An interpretation of Isaac and Ismael to illustrate slavery under the Law and freedom under Grace (Gal. 4:21-31).

G. Jesus means freedom under Grace (Gal. 5:1-6:10)

- 1) Freedom from the yoke of slavery under the Law to life under grace
 - a) Freedom from legalism (Gal. 5:1-12).
 - b) Freedom from license (Gal. 5:13-15).
 - c) Freedom to the way of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25).
- 2) Freedom exercised under Grace (Gal. 5:26-6:10).
 - a) Freedom to give self to others (Gal. 5:26-6:2).
 - 1) Free to trust God's Grace (Gal. 5:26).
 - 2) Free to restore a fallen brother (Gal. 6:1).
 - 3) Free to share a brother's burdens (Gal. 6:2).
 - b) Freedom to shoulder responsibility
 - 1) Shouldering the responsibility for our need of grace (Gal. 6:3).
 - 2) Shouldering the responsibility for evaluation of our labors (Gal. 6:4).
 - 3) Shouldering the responsibility for our own work (Gal. 6:5).
 - 4) Shouldering the responsibility to share with those who minister (Gal. 6:6).
 - c) Sowing to the Spirit is not growing weary in service (Gal. 6:9).
 - d) Sowing to the spirit is doing good to all men (Gal. 6:10).

H. Jesus means freedom to glory in the work of Christ on the cross in contrast to glory in self-merit (Gal. 6:11-18).