

New Testament Survey

The Book of Galatians

I. Attestation and Authorship¹

- A. Findlay is quoted as saying, “No breath of suspicion as to the authorship, integrity, or apostolic authority of the Epistle to the Galatians has reached us from ancient times.”
- B. External Evidence
 - 1. Clement of Rome may allude to 3:1 in his *Epistle to the Corinthians* (chapter 2).
 - 2. Polycarp uses the language of 6:7 in his *Epistle to the Philipians* (chapter 5), of 4:26 (chapter 3) and 4:18 (chapter 4).
 - 3. Barnabas seems to allude to 6:6 in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (chapter 19).
 - 4. Marcion appears to have placed Galatians first in his *Apostolicon*.
 - 5. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria repeatedly quote Galatians and ascribe it to Paul.
 - 6. It appears in both the Old Latin and Old Syriac. The Muratorian canon places it with the rest of Paul’s Epistles.
- C. Internal Evidence
 - 1. The writer twice calls himself Paul (1:1, 5:2).
 - 2. The content and language of the book is distinctively Pauline. The issues raised in the book are exactly those issues faced by Paul in his missionary journeys.

II. Background and Destination

- A. Written to the believers in Galatia, a province of the Roman Empire or the region of Galatia in northern Asia Minor- Galatians 1:2.²
 - 1. Northern Galatia (Ethnographical Galatia).
 - a. This was the geographical area in the northern central plateau of Asia Minor just south of the Black Sea.
 - b. This area was originally populated by the Gauls around 278-277 B.C.
 - 2. Southern Galatian (Provincial Galatia).
 - a. This is the area in the south central part of Asia Minor.

¹ Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Co., 1987), pp. 212-213.

² Thiessen, pp. 214-216.

- b. The NT churches of Antioch, Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium were all located in this province.
3. North or South?
- a. We know that Paul visited the province of Galatia where he established churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.
 - b. After Paul went through south Galatia, we are told that he went through the regions of Galatian and Phrygia. Both of these regions occupy the central part of Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey.
 - c. Peter write his Epistle to those in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These five provinces make up the bulk of the modern day nation of Turkey.
 - d. Since it is possible that Paul is talking about either area, we must look at how Paul speaks of other provinces and areas. When we do so, we find that he always uses the Roman provincial name as opposed to the geographical name, except in the case when they are identical.
 - e. We know a lot about the churches of South Galatia, as their founding is recorded in Acts. We know nothing about the churches of Northern Galatia.
 - f. It is therefore, most probable, that Paul is talking about the region of South Galatia. This would include the churches of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.
- B. The Churches of Galatia
1. Pisidian Antioch - Acts 13:14-50.
- a. Paul and Barnabas come to the city from Pamphilia, the province on the southern coast of Asia Minor - Acts 13:14.
 - b. On the sabbath, both Paul and Barnabas attend the synagogue and are asked to speak. Paul then delivers a lengthy address to those attending regarding the Messiah - Acts 13:15-41.
 - c. After the sermon, many Gentiles were interested and wanted to hear more. The next sabbath almost the whole city turn out to hear the Gospel - Acts 13:42-44.
 - d. The Jews, moved with envy, cause all kinds of trouble for Paul and Barnabas. Many Gentiles believe, which cause the Jews to stir up persecution. As a result, Paul and Barnabas are driven from the city - Acts 13:45-50.
2. Iconium - Acts 13:51-14:7.
- a. After leaving Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas make their way to Iconium - Acts 13:51-52.
 - b. Paul preaches in the synagogue with the result that many Jews and Gentiles believe - Acts 14:1.

- c. As in Pisidian Antioch, the Jews stir up the multitudes against Paul and Barnabas with the result that the city is split - Acts 14:2-4.
 - d. Paul and Barnabas, after learning about a plan to kill them, leave Iconium and make their way to Lystra - Acts 14:5-7.
3. Lystra - Acts 14:8-20.
- a. When Paul and Barnabas arrive in Lystra, they find a crippled man whom they heal. As a result of this, they are taken to be Gods - Acts 14:8-12.
 - b. Paul and Barnabas speak to the crowd with the result that they kept the local priest of Jupiter from making a sacrifice to them - Acts 14:13-18.
 - c. Some Jews from Pisidian Antioch show up and stir up the crowd with the result that Paul is stoned and thrown out of the city since he is presumed dead - Acts 14:19.
 - d. Paul, however, does not die, but re-enters the city and leaves the next day for Derbe - Acts 14:20.
4. Derbe - Acts 14:21-28
- a. After preaching in Derbe with positive results, Paul and Barnabas retrace their steps back through Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch before returning to Antioch of Syria - Acts 14:21-28.
 - b. On their return trip, Paul and Barnabas ordain elders and establish the churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

III. Occasion and Date

- A. Galatians was most likely written sometime around A.D. 49.
 - 1. Most likely it was not long before the Judaizers came close on Paul's heels to preach a mixture of law and grace.
 - 2. Galatians may have been written shortly after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 where the issue of circumcision and law-keeping was dealt with. This would place its writing in the late 40's A.D.
- B. Paul writes Galatians as a treatise on the relationship of law and grace.

IV. Purpose and Plan³

- A. To show that salvation is based on the work of Christ and not on law-keeping.
- B. To substantiate his claim to Apostolic authority.
- C. To defend the doctrine of justification by faith.
- D. To establish Christian liberty.

³ Thiessen, pp. 218.

- E. To teach the methods of victory and spiritual growth.
 - F. To warn against the Judaizers.
- V. A Basic Outline⁴
- A. Introduction - 1:1-5.
 - B. The Personal Vindication
 - 1. The Occasion Thereof - 1:6-7.
 - 2. The Authenticity of His Gospel - 1:8-10.
 - 3. The Divine Origin of His Gospel - 1:11-24.
 - 4. The Official Endorsement of His Gospel - 2:1-10.
 - 5. The Consistency of His Conduct - 2:11-21.
 - C. The Doctrinal Justification
 - 1. The Inconsistency of the Galatians - 3:1-5.
 - 2. The Example of Abraham - 3:6-9.
 - 3. The Deliverance from the Law by Christ - 3:10-14.
 - 4. The Purpose of the Law - 3:15-18.
 - 5. The Relation of the Law to the Promise - 3:19-22.
 - 6. The Superiority of the Condition under Faith Compared with that Under Law - 3:23-4:11.
 - 7. The Relation Between Paul and the Galatians - 4:12-20.
 - 8. The Relation Between the Two Covenants - 4:21-31.

⁴ Thiessen, pp. 218-219.

D. The Practical Application

1. The Admonition to the Right Use of Freedom - 5:1-15.
2. The Methods of Victory and Spiritual Growth - 5:16-26.
3. The Exhortation to Forbearance and Brotherly Sympathy - 6:1-5.
4. The Argument for Liberality - 6:6-10.
5. The Warning Against the Judaizers - 6:11-16.

E. Conclusion - 6:17-18**VI. Chapters To Remember**

Galatians 1	Another Gospel
Galatians 2	Paul's Gospel Validated by Jerusalem
Galatians 3-4	Faith and the Law
Galatians 5	Liberty in the Spirit

VII. Points and Peculiarities

1. Galatians and Romans taken together define the doctrine of Justification by Faith.
2. Galatians is the only Epistle, penned by Paul, where there is no positive introduction. Paul comes out swinging in the first chapter against the fickleness of the Galatians.
3. Galatians contrasts the fruit of the Spirit with the works of the flesh.
4. Galatians tells us of Paul's training under the ministry of Christ.

VIII. A Closer Look**A. Galatians 1**

1. Another Gospel - Galatians 1:8-10.
2. The Source of Paul's Gospel - Galatians 1:11-24.

B. Galatians 2

1. The Jerusalem Council - Galatians 2:1-10.
2. Paul Rebukes Peter - Galatians 2:11-14.
3. Justification by Faith - Galatians 2:15-21.

C. Galatians 3

1. Freedom from the Law - Galatians 3:1-5.
2. God and Abraham - Galatians 3:6-18.
3. The Purpose of the Law - Galatians 3:19-29.

D. Galatians 4

1. The Fullness of Time - Galatians 4:1-7.
2. Faith and the Law - Galatians 4:8-20.
3. The Example of Hagar and Sarah - Galatians 4:21-31.

E. Galatians 5

1. Living by Faith - Galatians 5:1-15.
2. The Works of the Flesh/Fruit of the Spirit - Galatians 5:16-26.

F. Galatians 6

1. Restoration of Sinning Brothers - Galatians 6:1-6.
2. Spiritual Horticulture - Galatians 6:7-10.
3. Beware the Judaizers - Galatians 6:11-16.