

# THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

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## **Introduction:**

The book is a companion to Romans. Romans was written to show that, in this age, there's no difference between Jew and Gentile and that man is saved by grace through faith, plus nothing. Nothing as in no baptism, no sacraments, no church membership, no ordinances, no priests, and no high priest (accept Jesus Christ), no baby sprinkling, no rosaries, and no prayer beads, no candles, no Mariolatry, etc. . . .

Galatians was written to prove that a saved sinner is kept by grace through faith. The constant theme of Galatians is that after you are saved you do nothing to stay saved. Although it is apparent from the material in Galatians 5 that you had better be careful how you live, this is not for the sake of getting to Heaven; it is for the sake of staying in good health, living a long life, and bearing fruit for the Lord as a Christian.

## **Statistics:**

6 chapters, 149 verses, and 3,084 words

## **Author:**

Paul wrote this epistle to the Galatians between A.D. 57-60. Galatia refers to the "land of the Gaul's." There are differences of opinion as to the exact location of Galatia, but all Bible students agree that the Galatians lived in Asia Minor (probably northern Asia minor; See Acts 16:6 and I Peter 1:1) The Galatians spread all over Europe, for Gaul was the early name for France and its inhabitants. One ancient writer said the language the Galatians spoke was a Celtic dialect. That dialect (Gaelic) wound up in Southern Ireland.

## **Purpose of Writing:**

The purpose of the letter has three related aspects. First, Paul wrote to defend the authenticity of his apostleship which the false teachers had questioned. By doing this they were also questioning the credibility of Paul's gospel. In the first two chapters, Paul argues that his gospel is not of human origin, but from a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Next, he defends the doctrinal position of justification and sanctification by faith. He argues for the grace of God and against the law as the means of sanctification (chapters 3-4). Third, in defending grace, Paul is careful to argue against its perversion in license. He argues for a life controlled by the Spirit (chapters 5-6).

## **Key Verse: 2:16**

## **Destination:**

Paul addresses his letter to "Unto the churches of Galatia" (1:2). The term "Galatia" had two possible meanings in Paul's day. It could be an ethnic reference to the Gaul's who had migrated from Western Europe and settled in the north-central regions of Asia

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Minor, or it could be a political reference to the Roman province named Galatia which included the southern regions of Asia Minor.

Older commentators generally favored the ethnic use of “Galatia”, or the North-Galatian theory. They contend that Paul visited these northern cities on his second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16:6; 18:23).

In support, they cite the tradition of the early church, the lack of any mention of illness (4:13) on his first missionary journey through south Galatia, Luke’s alleged inclination to use territorial, not Roman provincial, titles to describe Paul’s itinerary, and the similarity of the characteristics revealed in the epistle with the Gaul’s reputed behavior (fickle, quarrelsome, boastful, immoral, lovable, exasperating).

Since the research and advocacy of Sir William Ramsay, most scholars are convinced that Paul was addressing the churches in the wider political province called Galatia. These would be the churches he planted on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13-14:23) before the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

Thus the visit referred to in (2:1-10) must have been the famine relief visit of Acts 11:27-30. Support for this view comes in several ways. First, “Galatia” was the only collective title that could have been used to describe the different cities and regions Paul visited in that part of Asia Minor (Cf. I Corinthians 16:19, “churches of Asia”).

Second, the major travel routes went through the cities of the south and Paul would have traveled these in keeping with his characteristic strategy to evangelize the major centers of population and commerce.

In addition, Barnabas, referred to three times in chapter 2, would have been familiar to the churches in the south, not the north, because he was with Paul on his first journey, but not the second.

Finally, the delegates who accompanied Paul in delivering the collection to Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:1-4) include Gaius and Timothy from the south (Acts 20:4), but no one from the north.

Also, the Judaizer’s would have been more likely to pursue Paul in the south. Furthermore, if Galatians was written after the Jerusalem council, Paul would likely have referred to the important decree in his refutation of the Judaizer’s and Peter would not have acted the way he did with Gentiles (2:11-21).

In addition, Barnabas, referred to three times in chapter 2, would have been familiar to the churches in the south, not the north, because he was with Paul on his first journey, but not the second. Finally, the delegates who accompanied Paul in delivering the collection to Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:14) include Gaius and Timothy from the south (Acts 20:4), but no one from the north.

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While the evidence for either view is not conclusive, the South-Galatian theory appears to be the more likely of the two. The arguments for the North-Galatian theory can be answered adequately. Still, the final verdict does not seriously affect the interpretation of the epistle.

The Gauls were barbarians who lived in Western Europe, but migrated into Italy, and finally Asia Minor, where they were confined to the north-central and eastern regions.

The name Galatia referred to this specific area until 25 B.C. when it was converted to a Roman province that soon included new areas to the south. Roman writers commented on the distinct racial characteristics of the Galatians, which included great impressionability and fickleness. The population of Galatia was also composed of minor segments of Phrygians, Greeks, Romans, and Jews.

The address of the epistle to the Galatians (1:2) shows that it is a circular letter meant to be passed from church to church in Galatia. Paul visited the southern regions of Galatia on his first missionary journey and planted churches there (13:13-14:23).

In the epistle, he assumes the position of founder of these churches (1:8, 11; 4:19-20). The Christians of Galatia were mostly Gentiles, as is seen from their past idolatry (4:8) and the attempt by Judaizers to circumcise them (5:2; 6:12). There may have been some Jews present, however, as apparently is assumed in (3:27-29) and the use of the Old Testament in Paul's argument (3:7-12; 4:21-31).

### **The Occasion:**

The immediate occasion for the epistle is stated clearly in (1:6-10). Paul had received a report that some false teachers were perverting the gospel he had preached. These false teachers were Judaizers who tried to turn the Galatians from the grace of God to the law as a means of sanctification (3:3). They were pressuring the Galatians to be circumcised (5:2) and observe Jewish "days and months and times, and years" (4:10). They had also attacked Paul's apostleship, as seen from his defense in chapters 1-2. Furthermore, the conflicts among them evidently resulted in dissension and quarreling (5:15). The effect of the false teaching was taking its toll as some had already begun to turn from the grace of God in the gospel (1:6; 3:1-3). Paul wrote in response

### **Argument:**

Paul begins the defense of his apostleship and his gospel in the very first verse. He reminds the Galatians that his apostleship is not from men, but is from the risen Lord Jesus Christ. This would include his message also, the substance of which is given in (1:4). Paul opens with no commendation or thanksgiving as in other letters, but immediately addresses the business at hand.

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The fickle Galatians have already begun to turn away from the grace of God to “unto another gospel” (1:6). His condemnation of those who are responsible for this perversion is in the strongest terms, showing the seriousness of the perversion (1:8-9). Paul does not fashion his message to please men, but as a servant of God he pleases God (1:10).

The first phase of his argument is a personal defense of his apostolic authority and the message entrusted to him (1:11-2:21). He argues that he received the gospel directly from God (1:11-24); not from any man, but through a divine revelation of Jesus Christ (1:11-12).

To support this, he recounts the circumstances of his conversion (1:13-17) and his independence from the apostles at Jerusalem (1:18-24). His commission to preach to the Gentiles and his message were quite apart from human influence.

The apostles at Jerusalem did confirm Paul's gospel, however (2:1-10). Fourteen years after his first trip there, he returned again to explain his calling and message (1:1-2). The outcome of his presentation to the apostles was that his refusal to have Titus circumcised was upheld and nothing was added to his gospel when they welcomed him into the apostolic fellowship (2:1-9). He was only encouraged to remember the poor (2:10). Paul has shown that his gospel is authentic, and from the start he has not conceded to legalistic demands.

Another confirmation of his gospel of grace is illustrated by the account of his rebuke of Peter's inconsistent conduct (2:11-21). When Peter came to Antioch he ate with the Gentiles, but then withdrew from them for fear of the Jews who came later. Other Jews, including Barnabas, followed him. This drew a strong rebuke from Paul in a personal confrontation (2:11-14). As a saved Jew, Peter was living free from the law as a Gentile, but his actions implied he expected saved Gentiles to submit to the Jewish law.

Paul's doctrinal justification for his confrontation points out the inconsistency of Peter's actions (2:15-21). As saved Jews, Paul argues, it is clear that justification is apart from the law through faith in Jesus Christ (2:15-16). A return to the law is inconsistent with the believer's death to the law and life in God (2:17-20).

A return to the law nullifies God's grace which is the basis of our righteousness (2:21). Paul's personal argument shows the inconsistency of a dependence on the law from the circumstances of his calling his divinely revealed gospel, and his consequent actions. Now he addresses the Galatians with a strong doctrinal argument defending justification by faith to show that sanctification is by the same means (3:1-4:31).

His explanation of justification by faith (3:1-4:6) begins with a discussion of justification apart from the law (3:1-14). He first points out the inconsistency of the Galatians' experience (3:1-5).

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Their salvation, reception of the Spirit, suffering as believers, and their witness of God's miraculous works is all a result of faith, not law. Therefore, why are they turning to the law or sanctification (3:3)?

Abraham is then used as an example of justification by faith (3:6-9). All those of like faith are "blessed with faithful Abraham" (3:9). On the other hand, those who try to be justified by the law are under a curse (3:10-14).

This is the testimony of the Old Testament, as well as the fact that the "just shall live by faith" (3:10-11). Christ delivered from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us so that Jew and Gentile might receive the promised blessing of Abraham through faith (3:13-14).

Paul's rejection of the law in justification and sanctification could lead to questions about the purpose of the law and its relation to justification by faith. Thus he explains the purpose of the law and its relationship to faith (3:15-4:7).

His first point is that the Abrahamic covenant is not annulled by the law (3:15-18). God's promise was to Abraham and his "Seed", that is Christ, four hundred and thirty years before the law and thus cannot be broken.

What is the purpose of the law then? Paul goes on to explain that the law was given to lead us to faith in Christ (3:19-24). It was only temporary until this "Seed", who is Christ should come (3:19-20). The law never could give life, but condemns to sin (3:21-22) so that we are forced to Christ for justification through faith (3:23-24).

The law, having done its work, is no longer over the believer, but there is a new freedom in Christ which makes us God's sons (3:25-4:7). This new position in God's family is obtained by faith in Christ and makes all believers equal as Abraham's seed and heirs of the promise (3:25-29).

Paul illustrates this new relationship and privilege (4:1-7) by referring to a child heir, who as a minor, is no different from a slave, but at the appropriate time designated by his father, realizes his inheritance (4:1-2).

In like manner, Christians were once under the law as slaves until God sent His Son at the appropriate time to adopt us as children (4:3-7). He has shown conclusively that Christians are no longer under the law.

On the basis of this doctrinal argument, Paul makes a passionate appeal for the Galatians to live under grace and not law (4:8-31). He addresses their return to observance of the law, which is more consistent with their condition before salvation than after (4:8-11).

He then appeals to them on the basis of his past relationship with them (4:12-20). He wants them to adopt his position (4:12a) with the same openness and affection they had for him when he was first among them (4:12b-15).

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The Judaizer's are trying to steal that affection by making Paul look like an enemy (4:16-18). The emotional burden of their situation is causing pain to Paul (4:19-20). He labors "in birth again" 4:19), this time for sanctification not salvation.

His final appeal is from the illustration of two contrasting covenants in the Old Testament (4:21-31), Abraham had two sons, one born from a bondwoman (Ishmael and Hagar), and the other as a result of a promise to a freewoman (Isaac and Sarah).

Paul is only speaking symbolically (4:24) when he uses the example of these two sons to illustrate the bondage of the law and the freedom of the promise (4:24-28). Just as the two boys fought, so the law and the promise are incompatible (4:29-30).

His conclusion is that believers are the children of the freewoman, and therefore free from the law (4:31). Thus the Galatians have no business returning to the law for sanctification. They are free from it, and sons of God in Christ according to the promise.

Paul must now tell the Galatians how God has provided for their sanctification through the Spirit. He does this in such a way as to defend Christian liberty against the charge that it leads to license (5:1-6:10).

He urges them to stand fast in their Christian liberty (5:1) because returning to the law puts them under obligation to keep all of it and estranges them from Christ and his grace (5:2-4). Circumcision will not profit them at all; only "faith working through love" is profit (5:5-6). These dangerous consequences cause Paul to condemn the Judaizer's in the strongest terms (5:7-12). He denies he preaches circumcision, as some are charging (5:11; Cf. 2:3).

His appeal is to practice their liberty without license, but under the restrictions of love and the control of the Spirit (5:13-26). Liberty is not an opportunity to serve self, but others. If one loves, he fulfills all the law (5:13-15). The proper way to exercise liberty is through the power of the Spirit (5:16-26).

The Christian who walks in the Spirit will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh because the two are at odds with each other (5:16-18). This is evident in their respective results (5:19-23). Paul's appeal is based on common sense: Since the new life is given by the Spirit, it must also be sustained by the Spirit (5:24-25). If the Galatians walk in the Spirit, their conflicts with one another will be prevented (5:26).

Paul has said that a life lived in love and in the Spirit will result in service and benevolence toward one another (5:13-14, 22-23). He therefore gives a final appeal to demonstrate the fruit of love and the Spirit by doing good to all people (6:1-10). He first urges them to bear one another's burdens, especially in restoring a sinning person (6:1-5).

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Then his exhortation is to help one another by providing for temporal needs (6:6-10). This pertains to all men, but first those in the church, especially teachers of the Word. Such spiritual sowing will reap spiritual rewards (6:8).

Paul's conclusion brings a final rebuke of the Judaizer's and their desire to boast in the Galatians' fleshly submission to the law (6:12-13). In contrast, Paul is determined to boast only of what God has done in making him a new creation (6:14-15). His blessing is for those who follow this principle (6:16).

He is particularly sensitive to the believing Jews among them, the "Israel of God", because of his strong castigation of the Judaizer's. Before his closing benediction, Paul refers to the marks in his body as a result of his suffering for the gospel (6:17); a final argument that he is a servant of Christ. By arguing for his authenticity as an apostle, Paul also establishes the authenticity of his message. He preaches the free grace of God which saves and sanctifies apart from the law. This is how the Galatians were saved, and must be how they continue in the Christian life.

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Paul wrote Galatians to \_\_\_\_\_ the authenticity of His apostleship which the \_\_\_\_\_ teachers had questioned.
2. Second Paul wrote Galatians to defend the doctrinal position of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Third Paul wrote Galatians to defend \_\_\_\_\_, Paul is careful to argue against its \_\_\_\_\_ in license. He argues for a life controlled by the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ that a man is not justified by the \_\_\_\_\_ of the law, but by the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be \_\_\_\_\_ be the faith of Christ, and not by \_\_\_\_\_ of the law: for by the \_\_\_\_\_ of the law shall no flesh be \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Judaizers tried to turn the Galatians from the \_\_\_\_\_ of God to the \_\_\_\_\_ as a means of sanctification.
6. The Christian who walks in the \_\_\_\_\_ will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh because the two are at odds with each other.
7. Paul's conclusion brings a final rebuke of the \_\_\_\_\_ and their desire to boast in the Galatian's fleshly submission to the law.