

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

A Defense and Declaration of Gospel Freedom

Author: the apostle Paul – there is little to no debate among scholars regarding Paul’s authorship.

- This book is alluded to or quoted by several early writings including 1 Peter, Gospel of Barnabas, 1 Clement, Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origin.

Audience: Gentile Christians in the region of Galatia

- Galatians was a “circular” letter that was to be read and distributed throughout the entire region of (southern) Galatia.
- Though we are unable to know how many churches were impacted, it is clear that false teaching had spread to numerous churches in the region.
- There is much discussion around whether Paul’s letter was to the *geographical region* known as Galatia or to the *political province* of Galatia that included cities in the southern region such as Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium.
- I adhere to the “Southern Galatian Theory” which locates the writing of the letter prior to the Jerusalem council.¹



Date: between fall 46_{AD}-fall 48_{AD}

- Paul’s letter was written after establishing churches during his 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13:4-14:26).
- It is reasonable to suspect Paul wrote Galatians from Antioch before traveling to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 14:24-28).
- Acts mentions 5 visits to Jerusalem by Paul: (1) after leaving Damascus (Acts 9:26–30); (2) during a famine (11:27–30); (3) Jerusalem Council (15:1–30); (4) after 2nd missionary journey (18:22); (5) Caesarean imprisonment (21:15–23:35).
- There is discussion about whether Paul’s second trip to Jerusalem (2:10) was during the famine visit or after the Jerusalem Council. It seems most likely that it refers to the famine visit because if it was the Council visit, he most certainly would have made reference to this most significant declaration by all the apostles.

Purpose: to combat false teachers who distorted the Gospel and were leading churches into deception and division

- Judaizers were a group who confessed that Jesus was the Christ but also insisted that in order to be justified, you must adhere to Jewish customs, especially circumcision (Acts 15:1). Basically, you must become Jewish to be Christian.
- Paul makes clear that sinners are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and not by adhering to the “works of the law” (2:16). To deny this is to deny the most basic truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Galatians 2:16 could be considered the main argument of the entire letter, “*we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*”
- Paul insistently refers to his apostolic authority to ensure that the Galatian churches know the message he brings is not his human opinion, but is God’s heavenly revelation that must be received by faith (Gal.1-2).

¹ For a full discussion on the Northern and Southern Theories along with the implications for dating the book, see Dr. Daniel Wallace’s Introduction to Galatians available at Bible.org. <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-galatians-introduction-argument-and-outline>

OUTLINE OF GALATIANS

Ch 1-2 – THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL MESSENGER (Personal)

(1:1-12) Paul's Gospel

(1:1-2) The Gospel Authority

(1:3-5) The Gospel of Grace

(1:6-10) The Gospel of Disgrace

(1:11-12) The Gospel's Source

(1:13-2:11) Paul's Testimony

(1:13-14) Paul's Training in Judaism

(1:15-17) Paul's Transformation in Jesus

(1:18-24) Paul's First Trip to Jerusalem

(2:1-10) Paul's Second Trip to Jerusalem

(2:11-21) Paul's Time in Antioch

Ch 3-4 – THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (Doctrinal)

(3:1-14) The Law and Faith

(3:1-5) The Argument from Experience

(3:6-9) The Argument from Abraham

(3:10-14) The Argument from Redemption

(3:15-29) The Law and Promise

(3:15-18) The Promise to Abraham

(3:19-22) The Purpose of the Law

(3:23-29) The Promise Fulfilled in Jesus

(4:1-11) The Law and Sonship

(4:1-7) From Slaves to Sons

(4:8-11) Fear of Swapping Idols

(4:12-31) The Law and Freedom

(4:12-20) A Plea from Paul

(4:21-31) A Picture from Scripture

Ch 5-6 – THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL'S FREEDOM (Application)

(5:1-26) The Call to Freedom

(5:1-12) Freedom from Slavery through Jesus

(5:13-26) Freedom from the Flesh through the Spirit

(6:1-18) The Responsibility of Freedom

(6:1-10) Freedom to Fulfill the Law of Christ

(6:11-18) Freedom to Fulfill Christ's Calling

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