

"THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS"

Introduction

AUTHOR:

The apostle Paul ([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 ([Ac 13:14-14:23](#)). On his second trip (49-52 A.D.), Paul and Silas visited them again ([Ac 16:1-5](#)).

It wasn't 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 at Antioch of Syria, cf. [Ac 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. [Ac 18:23](#)). This would require that Paul wrote his epistle sometime toward the end of that journey, or afterward (i.e., around 57-58 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. [Ac 13:14-14:23](#)). I also believe that the meeting described in [Ga 2:1-10](#) took place during the "Jerusalem Conference" related in [Ac 15:1-29](#). This view opens several possibilities for the place and time of writing:

1. Corinth, in the period of [Ac 18:1-17](#)
2. Antioch, in the period of [Ac 18:22](#)
3. Ephesus, in the period covered by [Ac 19:1-41](#)
4. Macedonia or Achaia in the period of [Ac 20:1-3](#)

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

PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE:

The churches in Galatia were being influenced by those who would "pervert the gospel of Christ" (**1:6-7**; cf. **3:1**). Known as "Judaizing teachers", these individuals taught that Gentile Christians needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses (cf. [Ac 15:1](#)). Paul recognized that this doctrine would jeopardize the salvation of those souls who accepted it (cf. **5:4**). Because the enemies of the true gospel were trying to support their case by 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" (**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."

KEY VERSE: [Galatians 5:1](#)

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

OUTLINE:

- I. **INTRODUCTION (1:1-10)**
 1. Salutation (**1-5**)
 2. Reason for the letter (**6-10**)
- II. **PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP (1:11-2:21)**

1. **THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF HIS GOSPEL (1:11-17)**
 1. Thesis: His gospel received directly from God (1:11-12)
 2. His pre-Christian years, and conversion (1:13-17)
 2. **HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER APOSTLES (1:18-2:21)**
 1. His first visit with Peter, and early years as a Christian (1:18-24)
 2. The council at Jerusalem (2:1-5)
 3. His sanction by James, Cephas, and John (2:6-10)
 4. His rebuke of Peter at Antioch (2:11-21)
 - a. Peter's hypocrisy (2:11-13)
 - b. His speech to Peter, how we are justified by faith in Christ (2:14-21)
- III. **PAUL'S DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (3:1-4:31)**
1. **THE PERSONAL ARGUMENT (3:1-5)**
 1. How they received the Spirit (3:1-4)
 2. From whom they received the Spirit (3:5)
 2. **THE SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT (3:6-25)**
 1. The example of Abraham (3:6-9)
 2. The curse of the Law (3:10-14)
 3. The priority of the Promise over the Law (3:15-18)
 4. The purpose of the Law (3:19-25)
 3. **THE PRACTICAL ARGUMENT (3:26-4:7)**
 1. In Christ they are one, as children of God, Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise (3:26-29)
 2. Redeemed from the law, and adopted as sons, they are no longer slaves, but heirs (4:1-7)
 4. **THE SENTIMENTAL ARGUMENT (4:8-20)**
 1. His fears over their returning to bondage (4:8-11)
 2. Their past and present relationships to him (4:12-20)
 5. **THE ALLEGORICAL ARGUMENT (4:21-31)**
 1. An allegory for those who desire to be under the Law (4:21-24a)

2. Symbolic of the two covenants; one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, and the other from the Jerusalem above which makes free (**24b-31**)

IV. **THE CALL TO STAND FAST IN THE LIBERTY OF THE GOSPEL (5:1-6:10)**

1. **A LIBERTY THAT EXCLUDES THE NECESSITY OF CIRCUMCISION (5:1-6)**
 1. Do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage (**5:1**)
 2. Circumcision means nothing; requiring it results in falling from grace (**5:2-4**)
 3. We should wait for the hope of righteousness with faith working through love (**5:5-6**)
2. **A LIBERTY THAT FULFILLS THE LAW (5:7-15)**
 1. Beware of those who would bind the Law (**5:7-12**)
 2. Use your liberty as an opportunity to serve one another with love, and you will fulfill the Law (**5:13-14**)
 3. But beware that you do not use it as an opportunity for the flesh in which you consume one another (**5:13b,15**)
3. **A LIBERTY IN WHICH ONE IS TO BE LED BY THE SPIRIT (5:16-26)**
 1. Liberty is not an excuse for license (**5:16-18**)
 2. The works of the flesh contrasted with the fruits of the Spirit (**5:19-23**)
 3. Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh and are walking in the Spirit (**5:24-26**)
4. **A LIBERTY WITH A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY (6:1-10)**
 1. For helping those with burdens (**6:1-5**)
 2. For doing good to all, thus sowing to the Spirit (**6:6-10**)

V. **CONCLUSION (6:11-18)**

1. A final rebuke to those who would bind circumcision (**6:11-13**)
2. Paul's confidence in the cross of Christ (**6:14-17**)
3. Benediction (**6:18**)