

Galatians – Part 1

Introduction & Structure

Aaron Orendorff

Author – Paul (1:1)

Audience – Predominately Gentile churches throughout Galatia (1:2) that Paul and Barnabas planted during their first missionary journey (Acts 13-14).

Date –Between AD 48 and 58

D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*

In protesting that he had a divine commission and not one derived “from any human source” (1:12), Paul lists his contacts with the Jerusalem apostle. These include a visit to Peter (1:18), “then after fourteen years” a visit again “in response to a revelation” (2:1-2; “again” indicates a second visit). These correspond to the visits in Acts 9:26; 11:25-30 (462).

On balance, it seems best to hold that Paul’s two visits to Jerusalem are those of Acts 9 and 11 (Gal. 2 will refer to private contacts on the famine visit on this view; it is hard to date Peter’s vacillation after Acts 15), and that Paul wrote Galatians just prior to the Jerusalem Council. If the council is rightly dated AD 48, then this is the date of Galatians (464).



F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians (NIGTC)*

When, as we are told in Acts 15:1, Judean visitors came to Syrian Antioch and started to teach the Christians there that those who were not circumcised in accordance with the law of Moses could not be saved, it is antecedently probable that others who wished to press the same line visited the recently formed daughter-churches of Antioch, not only in Syria and Cilicia, as the apostolic letter indicates (Acts 15:23), but also in South Galatia. If so, then *the letter to the Galatians was written as soon as Paul got news of what was afoot, on the eve of the Jerusalem meeting described in Acts 15:6ff.* This, it is suggested, would yield the most

satisfactory correlation of the data of Galatians and Acts and the most satisfactory dating of Galatians...if this is so, Galatians is *the earliest among the extant letters of Paul*...Galatians, whatever its date, is a most important document of primitive Christianity, but if it is the earliest extant Christian document, its importance is enhanced (55-6; emphasis added).

Occasion

D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*

From Acts 13-14 we learn that Paul and Barnabas evangelized the southern part of the province of Galatia by going first to the synagogues, where they preached to Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. But in each city Jews stirred up opposition, and the preachers turned to the Gentiles and made converts from among them...Throughout the region the church was predominately Gentile.

But after Paul and Barnabas left the scene, apparently some Jewish Christians came into the area and taught that those who embraced the Christian salvation must submit to Jewish law, the Torah (465).

Paul distinguished these false teachers – “Judaizers” as they are commonly termed – from the native members of the churches he and Barnabas planted (4:17; 5:10). In light of the letter’s text, the substance of their teaching seems to have been primarily two-fold:

- (1) They attacked *Paul* himself – both his *authority* as an apostle as well as his *integrity* as a preacher and follower of Christ.
- (2) They insisted on the *necessity* of circumcision (i.e. a return to certain terms of the Mosaic law, or Torah) in order to experience full covenant membership. This insistence effectively denied (or nullified) the exclusive sufficiency of faith in Jesus Christ.

D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*

Paul points out that the acceptance of circumcision means the acceptance of the obligation to carry out the whole law of which it is a part (5:3)...[other forms of] keeping the law were apparently insisted on...Putting all this together, it seems that the false teachers saw Christianity as a modified Judaism; they were teaching that to be in covenant relationship to God means to submit to the requirements of the law (466).

The *gospel* was seriously compromised by this new teaching...What the Galatians were in danger of doing was not adding some interesting new insights into the meaning of Christianity but of returning to the law-covenant in such a way that the climactic triumph of the gospel was implicitly called into question (468).

Central Themes

Galatians 2:16, “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.”

1. The *apostolic* (i.e. God-given) authority of Paul (1:1, 10-2:10).
2. The nature of the *gospel itself*; that is, justification before God is based *exclusively* upon a by faith appropriation of the atoning cross-work of Christ (1:3-9; 2:11-3:14; 5:1-6; 6:12-15).
3. The organic, sequential and climactic continuity of God’s *covenants* (i.e. from Abraham to Moses to Christ) (3:7-4:7; 4:21-31).

4. The nature of the Christian's practical experience of Spirit-produced freedom and fruit (4:8-20; 5:1-6:18).

D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*

This short letter has an importance out of all proportion to its size. There is always a tendency for people to think that their salvation (however it is understood) is something that is to be brought about by their own achievement. How they understand salvation may vary, and the kind of achievement they see as necessary may correspondingly vary. But that their eternal destiny rests in their own hands seems a truism, so obvious that it scarcely needs stating. Christianity has often been understood as nothing more than a system of morality, as the careful observance of a sacramental system, as conformity to standards, as a linking up with others in the church, and so on. There is always a need for Paul's forthright setting out of the truth that justification comes only through faith in Christ. This must be said over against those who stress the importance of works done in accordance with the Torah or any other achievement of the sinner.

The Christian way stresses what God has done rather than what sinners do to bring about salvation. There can be no improvement on the divine action by any human achievement, by way of either ritual observance or moral improvement. The cross is the one way of salvation, and no part of Scripture makes this clearer than does Galatians (4:3-4).

Structure

F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians (NIGTC)*

1. Salutation (1:1-5)
2. No Other Gospel (1:6-10)
3. Autobiographical Sketch: Paul's Independent Gospel (1:11-2:14)
4. Faith Received the Promises (2:15-5:1)
5. Christian Freedom (5:2-12)
6. Flesh and Spirit (5:13-26)
7. Mutual Help and Service (6:1-10)
8. Concluding Comments and Final Greeting (6:11-18)

Daniel B. Wallace, "Galatians: Introduction, Argument, and Outline"

- I. Introduction (1:1-10)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-5)
 - B. Denunciation (1:6-10)
- II. Personal: Defense of Paul's Apostleship (1:11-2:21)
 - A. Received by Revelation (1:11-12)
 - B. Independent of Jerusalem Apostles (1:13-2:21)
 1. Demonstrated by Paul's Conversion and Early Years as a Christian (1:13-17)
 2. Demonstrated by Paul's First Post-Conversion Visit to Jerusalem (1:18-24)
 3. Confirmed by the Jerusalem Apostles (2:1-10)
 - a. The Treatment of Titus (2:1-5)
 - b. The Approval of Paul (2:6-10)
 4. Illustrated by Paul's Rebuke of Peter (2:11-21)

- a. Peter's Hypocrisy (2:11-13)
 - b. Paul's Rebuke (2:14)
 - c. The Principle Involved (2:15-21)
- III. Doctrinal: Defense of Justification by Faith (3:1-4:31)
 - A. Vindication of Justification by Faith (3:1-18)
 - 1. The Experience of the Galatians (3:1-5)
 - 2. The Example of Abraham (3:6-14)
 - a. The Faith of Abraham (3:6-9)
 - b. The Curse of the Law (3:10-12)
 - c. The Curse on Christ (3:13)
 - d. The Blessing of Abraham (3:14)
 - 3. The Permanence of the Promise (3:15-18)
 - a. The Promise Given to Abraham's Seed, Christ (3:15-16)
 - b. The Law's Irrelevance for the Promise (3:17-18)
 - B. Purpose of the Law (3:19-4:7)
 - 1. Its Temporary Nature (3:19-25)
 - 2. Its Inferior Status (3:26-4:7)
 - a. Equality in the Body of Christ (3:26-29)
 - b. Slaves Vs. Sons (4:1-7)
 - C. Appeal Concerning Justification by Faith (4:8-31)
 - 1. Paul's Concern for the Galatians (4:8-20)
 - a. Because of their Return to Bondage (4:8-11)
 - b. Because of their Loss of Joy (4:12-20)
 - 2. An Appeal from Allegory (4:21-31)
- IV. Practical: Defense of Christian Liberty (5:1-6:10)
 - A. Liberty Vs. Law (5:1-12)
 - 1. The Law Enslaves the Believer (5:1-2)
 - 2. The Law Obligates the Believer (5:3)
 - 3. The Law Alienates Christ (5:4-6)
 - 4. The Law Hinders Growth (5:7-10)
 - 5. The Law Removes the Offense of the Cross (5:11-12)
 - B. Liberty Vs. License (5:13-26)
 - 1. The Fruit of License (5:13-21)
 - 2. The Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-26)
 - C. Liberty to Love (6:1-10)
 - 1. Responsibility toward the Weak and Sinful (6:1-5)
 - 2. Responsibility toward the Leaders (6:6-9)
 - 3. Responsibility toward All People (6:10)
- V. Conclusion (6:11-18)
 - A. Authentication of the Epistle (6:11)
 - B. Condemnation of the Judaizers (6:12-16)
 - 1. The Motives of the Judaizers (6:12-13)
 - 2. The Motives of Paul (6:14-17)
 - C. Benediction (6:18)