

Galatians

Introduction, Background and Argument

1. Title

1.1 *Pros Galatas* - “*To the Galatians*”

1.2 There were a number of churches in Galatia (cf 1:2)

1.3 The term Galatians is derived from the province of Gaul from where Celtic tribes migrated to Asia Minor.

2. Authorship

2.1 Paul

2.1.1 External evidence in the early church fathers

2.1.1.1 Irenaeus

2.1.1.2 Clement of Alexandria

2.1.1.3 Origen

2.1.1.4 Marcion

2.1.2 Internal evidence

2.1.2.1 Paul mentioned by name Gal 1:1, 5:2, and classic signature 6:11

2.1.2.2 Paul’s biographical information in Gal 1-2 is consistent with his life and ministry in Acts 9:1-31; 11:19-30

3. Date and Setting

3.1 Northern Galatia Hypothesis

3.1.1 Takes the term Galatia in the ethnographic sense (i.e. cultural and geographic origin).

3.1.2 Cities Paul wrote to were not the cities Paul visited on his first missionary journey.

3.1.3 Paul visited this region for the first time on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6)

3.1.4 Paul revisited these churches later (Acts 18:23)

3.1.5 AD 53-56 if written from Ephesus or AD56 if written from Macedonia

3.1.6 Evidences in favor

3.1.6.1 Early church fathers

3.1.6.2 Lukes apparent use of Galatia in the northern sense (Acts 16:6; 18:23)

3.1.6.3 Similarities between Galatians and Romans (written in AD57)

3.1.7 Evidences against

3.1.7.1 The term *Galatia* was used exclusively in ethnographic sense by the second century AD

3.1.7.2 Paul would have had to take a radical detour on second missionary to reach the north

3.2 Southern Galatia Hypothesis

3.2.1 Takes the term Galatia in the provincial sense

3.2.2 Cities Paul wrote to were the cities Paul visited on his first missionary journey

3.2.3 This visit was prior to the AD50 Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), placing the Jerusalem visit described in Gal 2:1-10 in the Acts 11:27-30 time frame.

3.2.4 AD49 if written from Syrian Antioch

3.2.5 Evidences in favor

3.2.5.1 Paul consistently refer to geography in political terms

3.2.5.2 Paul did not mention the decision of the AD50 Jerusalem Council

3.2.5.3 Peter would probably not have acted like he did in Gal 2:11-21 after the Jerusalem Council

3.2.5.4 The history of Acts 13-14 correlates well with Southern Galatia

3.2.5.5 Barnabas would have been familiar with the Southern Galatia churches upon return, but not the Northern Galatia until later.

4. Themes and Purpose of Writing

4.1 Paul's apostolic authority was derived from God and not men, which establishes the source of his gospel as independent from, yet in agreement with Peter and others at Jerusalem.

4.2 The Judaizers admitted that justification was by grace through faith apart from works of the Law, but sanctification was by faith plus works. Paul wrote to explain that justification and sanctification were both by grace through faith apart from works of the Law from which we have been freed.

4.3 Though sanctification is apart from the Law and we are free, this does not mean legalism or lawlessness because life by the Spirit produces the fruit of righteousness.

5. Argument

5.1 Judaizers had crept in and enslaved the Gentile believers at Galatia by teaching that they were justified by faith, but sanctification required circumcision and adherence to the Law. Paul sought to restore these believers to their freedom in Christ. First, he defended his gospel as sourced in special revelation from God and his apostleship by standing up to Peter. Second, he explained that Gentiles were justified and sanctified in the same way, by grace through faith, and not by law. Third, he showed that the absence of the Law did not result in licentiousness because believers were to live by the Spirit who would produce the fruit of righteousness.

6. Outline

- 6.1 Personal: Paul's Gospel and Apostolic Authority (1-2)
- 6.2 Doctrinal: Paul's Gospel of Faith and Freedom (3-4)
- 6.3 Practical: Paul's Gospel of Freedom is Life by the Spirit (5-6)

7. Uniquenesses

- 7.1 Paul wrote to many churches (spread throughout the Galatian province).
- 7.2 Paul's greatest statement on the singular gospel (Gal 1:6-9).
- 7.3 Paul's tone is quite polemic (Gal 1:6, 8, 9; 3:1-3; 4:21; 5:12; 6:15-16).
- 7.4 Paul's epistle is very autobiographical (Gal 1-2)
- 7.5 Paul's argument is logically straightforward with less digressions than his other epistles.
- 7.6 Paul uses an allegory to explain the relationship of the Abrahamic Covenant to the Mosaic Covenant (Gal 4:24-31).
- 7.7 Paul lays out the Christian way of life that is neither legalistic nor lawless in simplest terms (Gal 5-6).

8. Controversial Passages

- 8.1 Gal 2:15 Why did Paul say Jews are not sinners by nature? Many Jews believed that they were not sinners by nature even though they were. Paul ironically applies this to Peter due to putting himself under the Law and separating from table fellowship with the believing Gentiles at Antioch.
- 8.2 Gal 5:4. Can a believer lose his salvation? If they followed the Judaizer's doctrine that they needed to be circumcised in order to be declared righteous before God, they would be placing themselves under the whole Law. Since the Law can only kill they would be severed from Christ living in them (2:20) and fallen from the grace way of life.
- 8.3 Gal 5:21. Is this a warning that believers who do the deeds of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom? Or is it a warning that believers should not live like unbelievers who will not inherit the kingdom? They are called heirs in 3:29 and 4:7. It is not consistent to say that in 5:21 if they lived by the flesh they would no longer inherit. Paul is simply saying they should not live fleshly lives like unbelievers.
- 8.4 Gal 6:15, 16. Should the *και* be translated as "and" to distinguish between "them" and "the Israel of God"? Or "even" to identify "them" with "the Israel of God." Paul is extending a special blessing to the remnant of Israel at Galatia that lived by the new creation rule.

9. Keys to Galatians

- 9.1 Key Word: Gospel or Freedom
- 9.2 Key Verse(s): Gal 1:6-9; 2:20, 21; 3:1-3; 5:1, 13; 16-25; 6:14, 15

9.3 Key Idea: Freedom is enjoyed as we live by faith, yielding to the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16).