

Galatians Overview

Key Contributions of Galatians

- Relationship of the law to the gospel
- True gospel versus false gospel
- Life in the Spirit only possible by faith

I. Author

- Few scholars dispute Pauline authorship of Galatians.
- Galatians is believed to be one of Paul's earliest epistles.
- It is the only epistle addressed to any church planted on his first missionary journey.

II. Date

- A. The debate centers around North Galatia (AD 53) or South Galatia (AD 47/48).
1. The northern area was ethnically Galatian (settled by Gauls in the 3rd c. BC).
 2. The southern area included cities that Paul visited on his first missionary journey as outlined in Acts 13:13–14:28. This area also included various ethnic groups included in the Roman province known as Galatia. The most natural way to address these churches would be as “Galatians.”
 3. The southern Galatia theory aligns better with the account in Acts of Paul's activity in the southern area and with the Acts 15 account of the Jerusalem Council. Moreover, there is no record in Acts that Paul visited cities in the northern area.
- B. Aligning Accounts of Paul's Visits to Jerusalem in Galatians and Acts
1. Paul's Visits Jerusalem in Acts

Acts 9	first visit after conversion
Acts 11	famine relief aid visit with Barnabas
Acts 15	the Jerusalem Council
 2. Paul's Visits to Jerusalem in Galatians

Gal 1:18	3 years after conversion	// Acts 9 – first visit after conversion (both theories)
Gal 2:1–10	14 years after conversion	// Acts 11:25–30 (southern theory)
		// Acts 15:1–2 (northern theory)
Gal 2:11–16	Paul confronts Peter/Cephas	
 3. Implications
 - ☞ On the northern theory, Galatians is written after the Jerusalem Council.
 - ☞ On the southern theory, Galatians is written before (or during) the Jerusalem Council.

📖 Overall, the southern theory is more likely because Paul does not mention the Jerusalem Council in Galatians; furthermore, Peter’s refusal to eat with Gentiles is better explained before Jerusalem Council than after.

📖 Thus Galatians is most likely written just prior to Council, about AD 48.

C. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–35)

- The key question: What must I do to be saved? (Acts 15:1-5)
- Judaizers: faith in Christ plus circumcision (false gospel) vs. faith in Christ alone (true gospel)
- The Council considers both Peter’s experience with Cornelius
- Peter spoke on behalf of faith alone; Paul and James agreed (15:11-21)
- This is then followed by James’s argument from Scripture (Amos 9:11, 12).
- A godly solution is proposed: salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone, but Gentiles are to recognize Jewish sensitivities and to forego some practices in order to facilitate fellowship. This is not legalism, but setting aside freedom for love.

A comment about circumcision

III. The Purpose of Galatians

A. Paul’s Apostolic Authority (Galatians 1-2)

- This reaffirmation of Paul’s apostolic authority was essential for exhorting the Galatians to return to the gospel that was first preached by him (Gal 1:11-2:21).
- These “Judaizers” came from outside Galatia; Acts 13-14 shows that local Jews opposed Christians but did not introduce different “gospel.”
- The Judaizers claimed to be Jewish Christians, but may not have been Christians at all. It is unclear what exactly they believed.

B. The True Gospel vs. the False Gospel (Based on the Abrahamic Promise) (Galatians 3-4)

- True Gospel: Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone . . . no additives!
- False Gospel: Salvation is through faith . . . PLUS [insert some additive here!].
- The Argument from Abraham: He received the promises by faith, not obedience to the Law.

C. Life in the Spirit Is Only Possible Through Faith (not the Law) (Galatians 5-6)

A comment about the “New Perspective on Paul”

Outline of Galatians

- I. Introduction (1:1–10)
- II. Paul and the Nature of His Apostleship (1:11–2:21)
 - A. Preconversion Days (1:11–14)
 - B. Conversion (1:15–17)
 - C. First Meeting with Jerusalem Leadership (1:18–24//Acts 9:26-30)
 - D. Second Meeting the Jerusalem Leadership (2:1–10//Acts 11:25-30)
 - E. Correcting Cephas (2:11–21)
- III. Grace over Law (3:1–4:7)
 - A. Drawing upon the Galatians' Own Experience (3:1–5)
 - B. The Argument from Scripture (3:6–18)
 - C. The Promise to Abraham (3:15-18)
 - D. The Purpose of the Law (3:19–25)
 - E. The Results of Faith (3:26–29)
 - F. Maturing into Sonship (4:1–7)
- IV. An Appeal to the Galatians (4:8–5:12)
 - A. An Appeal to Maturity (4:8–11)
 - B. An Appeal to Their Personal Relationship (4:12–20)
 - C. An Allegorical Appeal (4:21–5:1)
 - D. Warnings and Reproof (5:2–12)
- V. Freedom in Christ (5:13–6:10)
 - A. Proof of One's Grounding (5:13–26)
 - B. Practical Ethics (6:1–10)
- VI. Conclusion with Personal Appeal (6:11–18)