

NT Survey – Galatians
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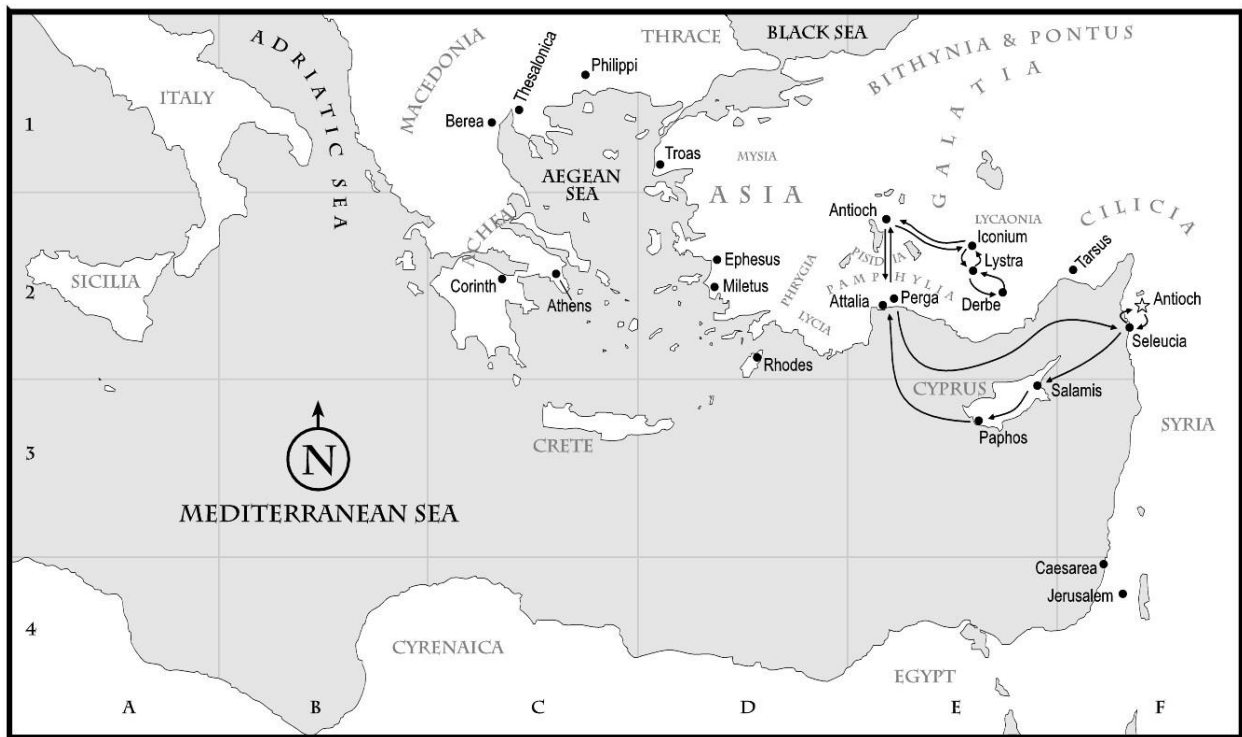
Title and Author

Galatians derives its title from the region in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) where the churches addressed were located (Gal 1:2). Southern Galatia, where Paul ministered during his first missionary journey is most likely this region. The authorship of the apostle Paul is undisputed (Gal 1:1-2).

Date of Writing and Introduction

Acts records Paul’s ministry in Galatia during his first missionary journey (AD 48-49) where he ministered in Perga (John Mark leaves), Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra (perhaps Timothy converted here), and Derbe (perhaps Titus converted here). In Galatians 2, Paul described his visit to the Jerusalem Council, so most likely Galatians was written shortly after the Council in AD 49-50. Paul probably wrote from Antioch after his return from the counsel.

Date	Event
48-49	First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)
48	Ministry in Cyprus; Saul referred to as Paul (Acts 13:4-12)
49	Ministry in Galatia: Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:13-14:20)
49	Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 14:21-28)
49-50	Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29)
49/50	Paul took Titus to Jerusalem (Gal 2:3)
49/50	Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 15:30-34)
49/50	<i>Galatians written from Antioch</i>
50-52	Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)



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Christianity was born in Jerusalem and spread throughout Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the known world. The first converts and most of the early leaders were Jewish men and women who accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah. They obviously struggled with their dual identity: traditional Jewish teaching driving them to strictly obey the law versus newfound Christian faith inviting them to celebrate freedom from the law. Also, what about the Gentiles? How could they possibly become a part of the Kingdom of Heaven when they did not know God's Messiah in a Jewish way?

Keeping this controversy alive were the Judaizers, a group of Jewish false teachers in the church who were determined to undermine the doctrine of justification by faith. They taught that Gentiles had to submit to Jewish laws and traditions in addition to believing in Jesus in order to be true Christians.

What shocked Paul most was that the Galatians bought into this heresy. Many of them left "sound doctrine" to follow these teachings. Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to refute this teaching and call believers, both Jew and Gentile, back to the pure gospel. Galatians is the only epistle Paul wrote that does not contain a commendation for its readers—that obvious omission reflects how urgently he felt about confronting the defection and defending the essential doctrine of justification.

Outline

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
- II. Personal Defense of Paul's Ministry (1:10-2:21)
- III. Doctrine of Justification Explained (3:1-4:31)
- IV. Practical Application of Justification (5:1-6:10)

Summary

Introduction (1:1-10)

1:1-5 – Salutation – Like most of Paul's letters, he begins with a salutation. His apostleship has nothing to do with man (either in sending or authority); it is all about God. He wants to make it clear to the recipients of the letter that he is an apostle by the will of God. Here he attributes this to the First and Second persons of the Godhead.

Paul goes on to give a summary of the gospel: from eternity past God the Father chose those whom He would save from sin. At His perfect time, He sent Jesus into the world who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. This is all to the Triune God's glory!

❖ **Am I continually reminding myself of all that God has done for me through Christ?**

1:6-9 – Denunciation – Paul normally commends his readers before launching into the main subject of his letter, but the letter to the churches of Galatia has no commendation. Its absence stressed the seriousness of his readers' error and the urgency of his appeal.

Paul was "amazed" that they had defected from the gospel of grace and were accepting false teaching. This different gospel was a distorted gospel of Christ; a radical departure from the "grace of Christ". It was a non-gospel of works. If anyone perverts the gospel of the grace of Christ, they are to be accursed: "anathema" meaning "devoted to destruction". Paul is speaking in strong terms to show the Galatians the folly of their actions.

Personal Defense of Paul's Ministry (1:10-2:21)

1:10-17 – Source – Paul begins the defense of his ministry and the gospel which he preached by stating that he is different than the false teachers (Judaizers) because he was seeking God's favor, not man's. This is a critical characteristic of a bond-servant of Christ.

❖ **Do I seek to please God or man?**

The gospel is not man-made. It is divine in origin. Paul did not make up the gospel, nor receive it from man, nor was he taught it, but he received it by direct revelation of Jesus Christ (a self disclosing of the Son of God). Paul's claim to the authority of apostleship and his knowledge of the gospel message was acquired through direct revelation (Acts 9 and 26). Paul goes on to discuss the events of his early ministry to demonstrate that it was from God alone that he received the gospel. To support this he presented a selected overview of his experience:

1. Paul begins by stating that he was a hater of God and God's children – he was a zealous persecutor of the church – he tried to destroy the church. His works as a Jew outshone the works of any of the false teachers who were criticizing him (Phil 3:4-6). He was moving up the ladder of the Pharisees.
2. God, by His grace, had set Paul apart from before he was born. He was one of the elect. He was called supernaturally and specifically to preach among the Gentiles. Paul did not immediately seek out a teacher nor present himself to the apostles in Jerusalem, but he went away by himself into Arabia and then returned and ministered in Damascus.
3. Three years later, Paul had an interview with Peter but was still largely unknown by sight to the church as he trained workers and ministered in Tarsus and Antioch (Acts 11).

Paul was all about glorifying God: “but only, they kept hearing, ‘He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.’ And they were glorifying God because of me.”

Date	Event
33	Saul stoned Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60)
33	Saul's persecution of the church (Acts 8:1-3)
33/34	Saul encounters Jesus on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-21)
33/34	Saul went away to Arabia to be with the Lord (Gal 1:17)
36/37	Saul back in Damascus preaching Jesus (Acts 9:22-35)
36/37	Saul goes to Jerusalem to become acquainted with the Apostles (Acts 9:26-29)
37	Saul goes to Caesarea, then to Tarsus (Acts 9:30)
~41-43	Barnabas and Saul minister in Antioch for one year (Acts 11:19-26)
47	Barnabas and Saul take the contribution for the brethren in Judea (Acts 11:30)
47	Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch with John Mark (Acts 12:24-25)
48-49	First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-14:28)
48	Barnabas and Saul set apart by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3)
49	Paul's ministry in Galatia (Acts 13:13-14:20)
49	Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 14:21-28)
49-50	Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29)
49/50	Paul took Titus to Jerusalem (Gal 2:3)
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❖ **What am I all about? What thoughts, motives, and actions show who I am?**

2:1-10 – Authority Approved – Fourteen years later (some 17 years after his conversion on the road to Damascus) Paul returned to the Jerusalem church (most likely for the Jerusalem Council) with Barnabas and Titus giving the Apostles a decisive opportunity to correct his gospel of grace if it needed correcting. Instead, Peter, John, and James offered the right hand of fellowship and did not insist that Titus, a gentile, be circumcised. To the contrary, they blessed his ministry to the Gentiles. It appears that Titus was taken along as a visible demonstration to the Judaizers that God had called gentiles independent of following Jewish customs or keeping the law.

2:11-21 – Authority Demonstrated – Sometime after the friendly meeting in Jerusalem, Peter visited Antioch, the church led by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11-13). While there, visitors from Jerusalem pressured Peter into hypocritical behavior. His actions indicated that it was necessary for Gentiles to observe Jewish dietary rules even though God had taught him differently. Paul was forced to confront Peter because of this error. Peter’s yielding indicates that Paul’s teaching was correct.

¹⁴...I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? ¹⁵“We *are* Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; ¹⁶nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. ¹⁷But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! ¹⁸For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.** ²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

❖ **How do I live, as myself or as Christ living in me?**

This section not only crystallizes the essence of the gospel of grace versus the counterclaims of the Judaizers, but it also serves as the a major hinge in the letter. It prepares for a following exposition of justification by faith alone by clearly stating Paul’s thesis.

Doctrine of Justification Explained (3:1-4:31)

Paul’s defense of salvation by faith alone points out in the strongest terms the incompatibility of faith and works as methods of obtaining justification and sanctification. Because the distorted "gospel" being spread by the Jewish false teachers was based on an understanding of the law of Moses and other Jewish teachings and traditions, Paul builds his defense of justification by faith alone from OT Scriptures.

3:1-5 – Experience – Paul begins with an appeal to the Galatians to examine their own experience. The Galatians had been changed by salvation – salvation by grace through faith. Yet they had turned away from the way of grace and thought to be completed by works.

Having received new life in Christ by faith, they had been persuaded to live out their new lives by the old way of works. They had turned back from grace to law from faith to works, from Calvary to ceremony, from freedom to bondage. MacArthur NT Commentary - Galatians

Paul asked the Galatians a series of questions to force them to examine their own experience.

1. You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?
2. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?
3. Are you so foolish?
4. Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
5. Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?
6. So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

It is foolish to be attracted to the message of Christian growth by works of the flesh when they have been clearly taught the truth of the continued working of God’s grace through His Spirit. Their own personal experience points to salvation by faith alone.

❖ **What am I pursuing to be “perfected” – grow in sanctification?**

3:6-9 – Abraham – In order to support his rhetorical questions Paul refers to the example of Abraham, father of the Jewish nation, and his relationship to the law as presented in Genesis 15. How was Abraham justified, made right with God, saved? Was it by circumcision? No, circumcision was not instituted yet. Was it by Law? No, the Law was not written yet. How then was he saved?

⁶Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Gal 3:6

Abraham's faith was credited to his account as righteousness, and, Paul goes on to say, all who follow that classic example are Abraham's spiritual children and are blessed in the same way he was. What the Scripture says about Abraham points to salvation by faith alone.

3:10-4:11 – The Law – The Judaizers taught that salvation was by Christ plus the Law. This is bad theology with no hope. The Spirit, through Paul, shows that the Law cannot save, but it was given for a purpose and it clearly points to salvation through faith alone.

Everyone who tries to reach God through keeping the Law is “cursed”. “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.” (v10) No one is able to keep the whole law. It is a no win situation. The curse of the Law is death. Fortunately, Jesus' death on the cross brought our curse on Himself so we could receive the blessing of salvation by faith, just as Abraham did.

The giving of the Law does not invalidate the promise of salvation by faith. Paul gives an intricate argument based on the verbal (extending to the very words) and plenary (including all of the words) inspiration of Scripture.

What is the purpose of the Law then?

1. To show us the depth of our transgressions; the sinfulness of our sin (v19).
2. To shut up everyone under sin (to declare that we are all sinful) (v22).
3. To be our tutor to lead us to Christ (v24).

Paul makes it clear that by faith in Christ Jesus we become sons of God. We are each baptized into Christ, we have clothes ourselves with Christ. As saved people there is no inequality: there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Paul makes it clear that we are no longer a slave to sin nor the law:

¹Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, ²but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. ³So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. ⁴But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷**Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.** Gal 4:1-7

Paul ends this argument by asking the Galatians, “But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, **how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?**” (4:9)

❖ **Have I turned (or am tempted to turn) back to weak and worthless elemental things?**

4:12-20 – Paul’s Appeal – Paul gets very personal and appeals to memories of their past relationship. Paul tells them, “I beg of you, brethren, become as I *am*, for I also *have become* as you *are*.” Paul was free from the works of the law for salvation, just as the Galatians had become. He was concerned about them in this time of spiritual sickness just as they had been concerned for him in his earlier time of physical illness. He reminded them of when they had first received the gospel from him they had honored him and sacrificially nursed him back to health. He presented this as evidence of his concern, risking their friendship to tell them the truth.

❖ **Do I present the truth in love even at a risk?**

4:21-31 – Illustration from Scripture – As a climax to his argument concerning justification by faith from the OT, Paul created an allegory or illustration from the two sons of Abraham: Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael, the child of a slave, represents the covenant of the law made at Mt. Sinai and the slavery of Jewish legalism. Isaac, represents the child of free Sarah, in line with the promise to Abraham. We are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

Practical Application of Justification (5:1-6:10)

Having nailed down his argument for freedom in Christ through justification by faith alone, Paul looks to the practical application of that freedom. Paul carefully shows that freedom in Christ is a Spirit guided life-style within the limits of a new "law" given by Jesus himself: the law of love.

5:1-12 – Freedom from Ritual – Paul states his principle clearly: it was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. It is important in this section to note the pronouns Paul is using. Those that are seeking to be justified by works are not true believers. Even though they are around Christians (and attend Christian events), they are not true Christians because they are adding works to faith. They are seeking to work their way into a relationship with Christ. These people are “severed” from Christ and have “fallen from grace”. Christ alone and faith alone are not the way in which they are seeking to be justified. They never exhibited true saving faith to begin with. But, “we” (all true believers) have the Spirit and are progressing in sanctification.

5:13-15 – Freedom from License – The danger of misunderstanding freedom in Christ is a tendency toward self-indulgence, which can express itself in cruel words and actions toward other believers. True spiritual freedom shows itself in love, both for God and for others.

❖ **Do I change liberty into license?**

5:16-26 – Freedom from Flesh – The kind of love just mentioned goes against our natural inclinations. In order to act in love, we need to live in the power of the Spirit allowing Him to guide our attitudes, decisions, and actions. Paul makes it clear that the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. Therefore, we must walk by the Spirit, and not carry out the desire of the flesh.

So we can know what these two states (walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit) look like, Paul lists some results of each (the things that are “evident”).

Deeds of the flesh: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, **and things like these**

Fruit of the Spirit: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

This life of self control and love is not automatic. Even though the flesh was crucified with Christ, the tendencies toward pride and sinning still exist. We must be constantly filled with the Spirit.

❖ **How do I walk?**

6:1-10 – Freedom to Practice Love – Mature Christians (those who are “spiritual”) must, in the power of the Holy Spirit, restore sinning believers while taking care to ensure they are not tempted to pride.

We are to support others who are overloaded with cares or responsibilities and work very hard to carry own responsibilities in the body without pride.

Part of this load sharing is the support of biblical teachers who share with us.

In all of this we are to not lose heart in doing good deeds in love, which bring about long-term harvests of eternal reward.

❖ **Do I see these things true in my life? Am I striving to see them true?**

6:11-18 – Conclusion – Paul finishes his letter to the Galatian churches by taking the manuscript from his unnamed scribe and writing in a large script. He summarizes the issues covered in the letter by pointing out the pride involved in trusting in works, in this case represented by circumcision, over trusting by faith in the Cross of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to make them a new creation.

Those who walk by the rule of faith apart from works will have peace and mercy upon them. Paul singles out a second group from the general group of those that trust alone in Christ – Jewish believers. These are both physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham. The repetition of "upon" that makes this distinction. Also, "Israel" always refers to physical Jews everywhere else in the NT (65 times).

Homework

Read Ephesians.