

A LOOK AT THE BOOK GALATIANS

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AUTHOR AND DATE

No serious discussion challenges the Pauline authorship of Galatians.

Paul is repeatedly mentioned as author by diverse external sources including Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Marcion, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Internal evidence also confirms that Paul wrote the letter.

The serious discussion concerning the writing of Galatians relates to its *date*.

The debate revolves around whether "Galatia" refers to the northern geographical region, which Paul did not visit until the second missionary journey, or the political province which extends to the south including the churches Paul visited on the first journey with Barnabas.

Those who hold the south Galatian view normally place the date before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, assuming Paul would have used that decision in his argument had it been earlier. They place the date at A.D. 48-49.

Proponents of the north Galatian view place the letter after the council, in about A.D. 55. One main reason for the later date is the problem of fitting fourteen years after Paul's conversion into the time before the famine visit in A.D. 46.

It is also argued that the book parallels the general pattern of Romans and Galatians.

The later date fits chronology better, while the south Galatian view seems to fit the description of events better.

There is nothing in the south Galatian view itself that denies a later date, if the letter was written after the Jerusalem Council.

It seems preferable to refer 2:1-10 to the Jerusalem Council and date Galatians about A.D. 55 (= late date).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After Paul founded the church in Galatia, he continued on his trip.

As usual, the Judaizers followed Paul and made definite inroads into the churches of Galatia.

The controversy centered on obedience to the Mosaic Law.

Three kinds of Judaizers developed:

1. *WHO* can be saved? For the original Judaizers, salvation was only for the Jews!

Answer: Acts 10-11

Salvation is for all who trust Christ, whether Jew or Gentile.

2. *HOW* can a Gentile be saved?

The Judaizers eventually accepted Peter's testimony that Gentiles could be saved, but they had to keep the law to obtain salvation.

Answer: Acts 15

Neither Jew nor Gentile is saved by keeping the law.

All must come by faith.

3. *HOW should a Gentile LIVE* to please God? The issue is *sanctification*.

Answer: Galatians (also Colossians, Philippians, and other books)

Sanctification, like salvation, comes by faith alone.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to refute the position of the Judaizers.

He demonstrates that it's impossible to reconcile salvation by faith with sanctification by law.

The two cannot exist together.

In Galatians Paul deals with **three issues**:

1. The Judaizers tried to attack his credibility by denying his authority and his message.

So, Paul defends his apostleship and his message 1-2

2. The Judaizers' message contradicted the gospel.

Paul presents the doctrine of sanctification by faith—the message of liberty in Christ.

3-4

3. The Judaizers built a religious system around their legalistic doctrine.

Paul responds by presenting the lifestyle that a true doctrine of sanctification will produce 5-6

What are the implications of the message of Galatians for Christians living today?

GALATIANS

REALLY FREE: Sanctified by Faith in Christ

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DEFENSE OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP AND MESSAGE 1-2	DEFENSE OF PAUL'S DOCTRINE 3-4	DEFENSE OF PAUL'S PRACTICE 5-6
Greeting 1:1-5	Proof from Their Reception of the Holy Spirit 3:1-5	Conflict between Two Systems 5:1-6 Summary 5:1 Alienation by law 5:2-4 Righteousness by faith 5:5-6
Surprise at Their Departure 1:6-9	Proof from the Blessing of Abraham 3:6-9	Rejection of the Judaizers 5:7-12
Source and Confirmation of His Message 1:10-2:21 His content revealed by Christ 1:10-12 His commitment to Judaism 1:13-14 His conversion and preparation 1:15-17 His communion with the saints 1:18-24 His confirmation by the apostles 2:1-10 His confrontation with Peter 2:11-14 His conclusion concerning the problem 2:15-21	Proof from the Redemption 3:10-14	Liberty Enslaved by Love 5:13-15
	Proof from the Promise Given to Abraham 3:15-18	Walk in the Spirit 5:16-26 Conflict between the flesh and the Spirit 5:16-18 Fruit of the flesh 5:19-21 Fruit of the Spirit 5:22-23 Exhortation to live by the Spirit 5:24-26
	Proof from the Purpose of the Law 3:19-4:11 Addition because of sin 3:19-22 Function of the guardian 3:23-25 Fulfillment of the purpose 3:26-29 Treatment of a minor 4:1-5 Freedom from bondage 4:6-7 Contradiction of their desire for slavery 4:8-11	Obligation to Each Other 6:1-10 Restoration of the fallen 6:1 Assistance for those in need 6:2 Necessity for self-examination 6:3-5 Support for teachers 6:6 Reaping a valuable harvest 6:7-9 Summary appeal to good works 6:10
	Proof from the Reception They Gave Him 4:12-20 Their attitude toward him 4:12-16 His attitude contrasted with Judaizers 4:17-20	Personal Concern for Them 6:11-18 Personal touch 6:11 Comparison of motives 6:12-16 Desire to end dispute 6:17 Benediction 6:18
	Proof from the Old Testament Illustration 4:21-31 Contrast between two sons 4:21-23 Contrast between two covenants 4:24-27 Application to the Galatians 4:28-31	