

CLASS NOTES: GALATIANS

INTRODUCTION

Authorship

Pauline authorship of Galatians is virtually unquestioned. It is one of seven epistles that critical scholarship generally regards as indisputably Pauline (the others are Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon). Not only does the text clearly identify itself as from the hand of Paul (1:1; 5:2), but Paul adds an authenticating note at the end of the epistle (6:11). Furthermore, Galatians is quoted or alluded to by the early church fathers such as Barnabas, Clement (c. A.D. 95), Polycarp (c. A.D. 155), Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 165) Irenaeus (c. A.D. 200), Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 215), and Origen (185–254). Galatians is included in the Marcionite (A.D. 140) and Muratorian (A.D. 180) Canons. The epistle is also part of the earliest extant collection of Pauline manuscripts (P⁴⁶), a collection usually dated no later than A.D. 200.

Date

The issue of dating Galatians is inseparably tied to whether one holds to a North or South Galatian theory. Thus, we must now briefly examine this debated issue.

Traditionally, interpreters have taken what is called the North Galatian theory. That is, Galatians was originally written to churches in the geographical region known as Galatia, in *north* central Asia Minor. In this view, Paul visited the region during his second missionary journey (cf. Acts 16:6; 18:23) and his visit to Jerusalem is recorded in Galatians 2 and Acts 15. This would mean that Paul likely wrote Galatians during his third missionary journey, probably while he was in Corinth (see Acts 20:3). The likely date of Galatians would then be sometime in A.D. 55 or 56. This view is supported by its antiquity, the supposed “natural” meaning of “Galatia,” as a geographical designation, Acts 16:6 and 18:23 seem to suggest that Paul visited the region, and the striking similarities between Galatians 2:1–10 and Acts 15.

However, beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a new view called the South Galatian Theory began to be promoted, most notably by W. M. Ramsey. In this view Galatia is not a geographical designation but a Roman political designation for an area south of geographical Galatia. That is, Paul was referring to the province of Galatia which included cities such as Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium. These cities were visited during Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–14:28). In this view, one is not necessarily committed to identifying Paul’s Jerusalem visit in Galatians 2 with Acts 15. Indeed, according to Galatians 2:1, Paul visited Jerusalem “again,” which likely corresponds to the second Jerusalem visit mentioned in Acts 11:30 (cf. 9:26). Galatians could then be dated as early as A.D. 47–49, prior to the Jerusalem Council. In this scenario the epistle was likely written from Antioch. The South Galatian View is supported by several arguments. First, there is no explicit evidence in Acts that Paul ever visited the north Galatian district. Second, Acts 16:6 and 18:23 probably refer to “the Phrygian-Galatian region” and “the province of Galatia and Phrygia.” Third, the relief collection for Jerusalem was not accompanied by anyone from the North Galatia region. Fourth, Paul typically uses Roman

provincial designations (e.g., Macedonia [2 Cor 8:1], Asia [1 Cor 16:19], and Achaia [2 Cor 1:1]). Fifth, Barnabas is mentioned as a familiar character three times in Galatians 2 (vv. 1, 9, 13), meaning that the churches in Galatia would have likely been established during Paul's first missionary journey since Paul and Barnabas split up before the second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–41). Sixth, some have noted that there is theological development between Galatians and Romans. This development would require time and only the Southern theory gives sufficient time between the writing of Galatians and Romans. Finally, it is likely that Galatians 2:1–10 preceded the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 since Paul does not mention it. Linking Galatians 2 with Acts 11:30 also harmonizes well the number of trips that Paul made to Jerusalem.

We conclude that the evidence seems to favor the South Galatian theory meaning that Galatians was probably written from Antioch sometime before the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49, between A.D. 47–49. This would mean that Galatians is probably one of Paul's earliest epistles, if not the earliest, and one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of the New Testament books to be written.

NORTH GALATIAN THEORY	SOUTH GALATIAN THEORY
Traditional view	More recent view
Galatians is to be understood geographically	Galatians is to be understood politically (the province of Galatia)
Paul visited the region during his second missionary journey (cf. Acts 16:6; 18:23)	Paul visited these cities during his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–14:28)
Paul wrote Galatians during his third missionary journey, probably while he was in Corinth (see Acts 20:3)	Paul wrote Galatians from Antioch
Galatians 2 and Acts 15 record the same visit to Jerusalem	Galatians 2 and Acts 15 may or may not record the same visit to Jerusalem (see "again" in 2:1)
A.D. 55 or 56.	A.D. 47–49

Original Recipients

The second verse of Galatians identifies the original recipients of the epistle with "the churches of Galatia." Paul generally identified specific cities (Thessalonica, Corinth, Colossae, etc.) or specific persons (Timothy, Titus, Philemon). However, as noted above Paul is addressing a province (Galatia) rather than naming a specific city. Nonetheless, "the churches of Galatia" should be identified with the cities that Paul evangelized on his first missionary journey (Acts 13–14), namely, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch.

Historical Setting

The cities of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch were located in Asia Minor, or what would be modern-day Turkey. As noted earlier, these churches were recently established during

Paul's first missionary journey (Gal 1:6). Both Acts 13:46 and the contents of Galatians suggest that Paul is primarily addressing Gentile Christians. The main issue addressed in Galatians was the doctrine of justification of faith, a central part of Paul's message that he preached on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:38–39). This polemical epistle was most likely refuting Jewish Christians (Judaizers) who had questioned both Paul's apostolic authority and his teaching. F. F. Bruce reconstructs the probable scenario well.

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 even of the Jerusalem meeting described in Acts 15:6ff.¹

Purpose

The purpose of Galatians is clearly polemical. Paul seeks to meet the Judaizers' charges against him, to refute the false works-oriented gospel that they were advocating, and to teach the believers in Galatia how to live out their freedom in Christ.

Contribution

The contribution of Galatians is directly related to the issue of salvation and the gospel message. On the one hand, it is a direct rejection of all attempts to work for one's salvation. On the other hand, it is an affirmation of salvation by grace through faith.

Literary Matters

Galatians is an epistle, beginning with a salutation (1:1–5), followed by the body of the epistle (1:6–6:10), and closing with a benediction (6:11–18). However, unlike Paul's other epistles, there is no thanksgiving section. T. George suggests that it is best to see Galatians as a "pastoral letter."²

Some such as O. Betz have also argued that Galatians follows the pattern of ancient rhetoric.³ But the rhetorical approach is problematic⁴ and has not gained widespread acceptance. This is not to deny that there are certain rhetorical features. For example, M. C. Tenney has noted the

¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 55.

² Timothy George, *Galatians*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1994), 62.

³ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 14–15.

⁴ See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, Guides to New Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 34.

prominence of figures of speech in Galatians.⁵ These figures of speech include similes, metaphors, allegory, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, irony, litotes, meiosis, euphemism, and rhetorical questions. One aspect that few dispute is the polemical tone of the epistle. As Efird notes, “There are really ‘few’ niceties in the letter.”⁶

Hans Dieter Betz's Proposed Rhetorical Structure		
1:1–5	<i>Epistolary Prescript</i>	Introduction to the letter
1:6–11	<i>Exordium</i>	Introduction to the argument
1:12–2:14	<i>Narratio</i>	Statement of the facts
2:15–21	<i>Propositio</i>	The point to be defended
3:1–4:32	<i>Probatio</i>	Arguments for the proposition
5:1–6:10	<i>Exhortatio</i>	More emotional appeal to the readers
6:11–18	<i>Epistolary Postscript</i>	Concluding remarks

Message

The message of Galatians is, “The gospel must be defended so that its essence and its effect would be properly understood and applied.” That Paul believes that the gospel itself is at stake helps to explain the urgent and strident tone that pervades the book.

Basic Outline

- I. Paul introduces his epistle (1:1–5).
- II. Paul defends the origin of the gospel that he proclaims (1:6–2:21).
- III. Paul defines the essence of the gospel that he proclaims (3:1–4:31).
- IV. Paul details the application of the gospel that he proclaims (5:1–6:10).
- V. Paul concludes his epistle (6:11–18).

EXPOSITION

I. Paul introduces his epistle (1:1–5).

- A. Paul identifies the senders and the recipients (1:1–2).
 1. The senders are identified (1:1–2a).
 2. The recipients are identified (1:2b).

⁵ Merrill Chapin Tenney, *Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty*, Rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 135–49.

⁶ James M. Efird, *The New Testament Writings: History, Literature, Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 122.

29 Indicatives in Galatians (according to Danny Akin)

1. The gospel is rooted in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:1).
2. The gospel delivers us from the present evil age to the glory of Christ (1:3-5).
3. There is only one gospel and to desert it is to be damned (1:6-9).
4. The gospel is ours by divine revelation and not human imagination (1:10-12).
5. The gospel is grounded in a gracious election (1:15).
6. The gospel is constantly in danger of being lost and needs to be defended (2:4-5).
7. The gospel that saves Gentiles is the same gospel that saves Jews (2:7-9).
8. There are ethical imperatives that follow the gospel (2:11) and no ethnic distinctions in the gospel (2:12-14).
9. The gospel is good news that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not by works of the Law (2:15-16).
10. Through the gospel, we are identified with Christ and His work on the cross (2:20).
11. The love of Christ for sinners is made evident in the gospel (2:20).
12. We receive the Holy Spirit by faith in the Gospel, the same Spirit who justifies and sanctifies (3:2-5).
13. The gospel that saved Abraham in the past is the same gospel that saves us in the present (3:7-9).
14. Relying on good works not only does not save but actually curses (3:10-11).
15. The gospel is the good news that Christ has redeemed us from the curse as our penal substitute (3:13-14).
16. The gospel is rooted in a covenantal promise that precedes the law (3:17).
17. The law is good because it shows us our sin (3:19, 21).
18. The law is good because it is our school teacher who leads us to Christ to be justified by faith (3:25-26).
19. The gospel unites us to Christ where we're all one in him—soteriological not ecclesiological (3:27-29).
20. The gospel is grounded in Trinitarian theology (4:4-6).
21. Gospel redemption leads to adoption as a child of the Father (4:7).
22. The gospel gives us a knowledge of God freeing us from rules (4:8-11).
23. Faithful ministers will be passionate for the ministry of the gospel even if it results in anguish and a broken heart (4:12-20).
24. Works-salvation leads to slavery, while Mt. Sinai leads to freedom (4:21-31).
25. To pursue salvation by works obligates us to keep the entire law perfectly (5:1-3).
26. To be justified by works is to fall away from justification by grace through faith (5:4-6).
27. The gospel that saves us and sanctifies us (5:7-8).
28. To preach a false gospel invites judgment and calls for the strongest condemnation from the faithful (5:10-12).
29. The indicative of the gospel naturally leads to the imperatives of the gospel (5:13-6:20), which opens onto the imperative section of the letter.

- B. Paul invokes a wish-prayer (1:3–5).

II. Paul defends the origin of the gospel that he proclaims (1:6–2:21).

A. Paul commences his defense by noting the reasons for the epistle (1:6–10).

1. Paul's first reason for writing is the desertion of the gospel message (1:6–9).

Paul's Opponents Described As . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "some who are disturbing you" (1:7) • "false brothers secretly brought in to spy" (2:4) • "certain men from James" (2:12) • "who has bewitched you" (3:1)

2. Paul's second reason for writing is the defense of his gospel ministry (1:10).

B. Paul continues his defense by noting the origin of his gospel and his ministry (1:11–2:21).

1. Paul received the gospel by divine revelation (1:11–12).
2. Paul received his ministry by divine appointment (1:13–2:21).
 - a. Paul recounts his conversion and early years as a Christian (1:13–17).
 - b. Paul recounts his first visit to Jerusalem following his conversion (1:18–24).
 - c. Paul recounts his second visit to Jerusalem following his conversion (2:1–10).
 - d. Paul's rebukes Peter for hypocrisy (2:11–21).
 - 1) Paul recounts Peter's hypocrisy (2:11–13).
 - 2) Paul rebukes Peter's hypocrisy (2:14).
 - 3) Paul relates the theological reason for the rebuke (2:15–21).

A Timeline						
Church of Antioch established by Christians who left Jerusalem due to persecution after Stephen's death	Barnabas and Paul minister at the church of Antioch	Paul and Barnabas visit Jerusalem to deliver a gift to the Judean Christians and agree with the pillar apostles concerning the evangelization of Jews and Gentiles	Paul and Barnabas depart from Antioch to take their "first missionary journey," visiting Cyprus and southern Asia Minor, including churches in the province of Galatia	Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch, report of their efforts to the church and spend "a long time with the disciples"	While Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch, Peter visits and there is a divisive conflict over table fellowship in which Paul rebukes Peter	Continuing controversy at Antioch ultimately results in the Jerusalem Council and the apostolic decree recorded
Acts 11:19–21	Acts 11:22–30	Acts 11:22–30; Gal 2:1–10	Acts 12:25–14:25	Acts 14:26–28	Gal 2:11–14	Acts 15:1–35
after 35	43–46	Autumn 47	April 48–Sept 49	Sept 49	Autumn 49	Autumn 49

III. Paul defines the essence of the gospel that he proclaims (3:1–4:31).

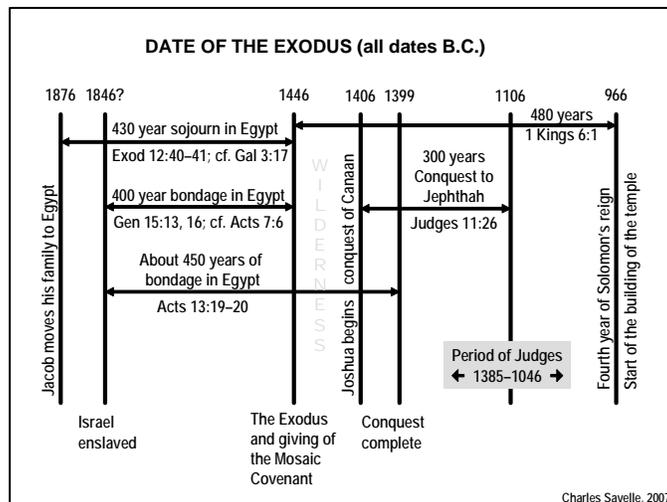
- A. Paul defines the issue through the experiences of the Galatians (3:1–5).
1. Paul defines the issue by expressing his concern that the Galatians have been "bewitched" (3:1).
 2. Paul defines the issue by asking how the Galatians received the Spirit (3:2).
 3. Paul defines the issue by asking about the Galatians' sanctification (3:3).
 4. Paul defines the issue by asking whether the Galatians' suffering was in vain (3:4).
 5. Paul defines the issue by asking the Galatians about the gift of the Spirit and miracles (3:5).
- B. Paul defines the essence of the gospel with the example of Abraham (3:6–9).
1. Abraham's justification was by faith (3:6).
 2. Abraham's "sons" are sons of faith and share in his blessing (3:7–9).
- C. Paul defines the essence of the gospel by contrasting it with the curse of the Law (3:10–14).

1. Paul states that the curse is not overcome by works of the Law (3:10–12).
 - a. For those who are under the Law are also under its curse (3:10).
 - b. The curse can only be overcome by faith as Habakkuk 2:4 states (3:11).
 - c. Law and faith are mutually exclusive (3:12).

2. Paul states that Christ redeemed believers from curse of the Law (3:13–14).
 - a. The statement: Christ redeemed believers from the curse of the Law (3:13).
 - b. The rationale: So that Gentiles in Christ might receive the Abrahamic blessing and the promise of the Spirit (3:14).

1. *Christ was cursed*
 2. *Christ was cursed by God*
 3. *Christ was cursed by God for us*

- D. Paul defines the essence of the gospel in terms of the Abrahamic Covenant (3:15–18).
1. Paul notes the unchanging nature of covenants (3:15).
 2. Paul notes that the object of the Abrahamic Covenant was the seed (Christ) and not the nation (3:16).
 3. Paul notes that the Law does not set aside the Abrahamic Covenant and its promise because inheritance is according to promise not Law (3:17–18).



- E. Paul defines the essence of the gospel by noting the true nature of the Law (3:19–22).
1. The Law was designed to be temporal (3:19–20).
 2. The Law is unable to impart life (3:21–22).
- F. Paul defines the essence of the gospel as a change in position in relation to the Law (3:23–29).
1. Positionally, before faith the Law was to lead us to Christ (3:23–24).
 2. Positionally, as sons of God now, we are no longer under the Law (3:25–27).
 3. Positionally, there is oneness in Christ and with Abraham (3:28–29).
- G. Paul defines the essence of the gospel in terms of heir-ship and son-ship (4:1–11).
1. The position of Gentiles believers prior to the redemptive work of Christ can be compared to an heir who is a child (4:1–3).
 2. The position of Gentile believers after the redemptive work of Christ can be compared to one who possesses all the rights of an heir and a son (4:4–7).
 3. Failure to live as heirs and as sons returns the believer to bondage (4:8–11).
- H. Paul defines the essence of the gospel through two appeals (4:12–31).
1. Paul appeals to the relationship that he shares with the Galatians (4:12–20).
 2. Paul appeals from an allegorical illustration (4:21–31).

<i>Allegorizing</i>	<i>Paul's Allegory</i>
1. The historical meaning is insignificant (if even true)	1. The historical meaning is significant and true
2. The “deeper” meaning is the true meaning	2. Parallels are drawn to make a point
3. The “deeper” meaning is the “exposition” of the record	3. Paul did not say the allegory was the “exposition” of Genesis 16
4. Everything in the Old Testament may be allegorized	4. When Paul allegorized, he said he was doing so
From Roy Zuck, <i>Basic Bible Interpretation</i> , 46.	

The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah (Gal 4:21-31) ⁷	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hagar (the slave) • [Ishmael], son of the slave • born according to the flesh • covenant of Mt. Sinai • bearing children of slavery • present Jerusalem (seeking justification by works of the law) • persecuted the child of promise • covenant of circumcision and law observance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah (the free woman) • Isaac, son of the free woman • born according to the promise/Spirit • [new covenant in Christ] • [bearing children of freedom] • Jerusalem above (seeking justification by faith in Christ) • persecuted by the child of the flesh • covenant of promise, freedom and Spirit

IV. Paul details the application of the gospel that he proclaims (5:1–6:10).

A. The practical application of the gospel entails rejecting legalism (5:1–12).

1. Legalism is rejected because it enslaves the believer (5:1–2).
2. Legalism is rejected because it obligates the believer (5:3).
3. Legalism is rejected because it turns one away from grace (5:4–6).

Four Reasons Why 5:2–4 Does Not Teach a Loss of Salvation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paul calls them brethren in v. 11 2. Paul is describing two systems, not two states, i.e. saved and lost 3. The verb <i>katargeō</i> (v. 4) looks at an effective relationship being cut off 4. Logically, if this taught a loss of salvation, one step under law would do it

4. Legalism is rejected because it hinders obedience (5:7–10).
5. Legalism is rejected because it removes the offense of the Cross (5:11–12).

B. The practical application of the gospel entails rejecting license and embracing love (5:13–15).

⁷ David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards, *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 119.

13 Imperatives in Galatians (according to Danny Akin)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will not indulge and pander to the flesh (5:13, 16-21). 2. In love we will serve others (5:13-14). 3. We will not brutalize one another in word or action (5:15). 4. We will live in the Spirit whom we received when we believed (5:22-26). 5. We will engage in spiritual restoration (6:1-2). 6. We will be humble (6:4-5). 7. We will serve and do our part in the body. 8. We will bless those who teach us (6:6). 9. We should embrace and reaping (6:7-8). 10. We won't grow weary in well-doing (6:9-10). 11. We will accept persecution for the cross of Christ (6:11-13). 12. We will boast only in Christ and His cross (6:14-15). 13. We will pursue peace, mercy, grace and Christ (6:16-20). |
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C. The practical application of the gospel entails walking by the Spirit (5:16–26).

1. Walking by the Spirit means deliverance from the desire of the flesh (5:16–21).
2. Walking by the Spirit is characterized by spiritual fruit and crucifixion of the flesh (5:22–26).

<u>Living Spiritually:</u>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To walk (<i>peripateō</i>) in the Spirit (v. 16) • To be led (<i>agō</i>) by the Spirit (v. 18) • To live (<i>zaō</i>) by the Spirit (v. 25a) • To keep in step (<i>stoicheō</i>) with the Spirit (v. 25b) |
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D. The practical application of the gospel entails service (6:1–10).

1. Service involves bearing one another's burdens (6:1–2).
2. Service involves humility and personal responsibility (6:3–5).
3. Service involves materially supporting teachers (6:6).
4. Service is governed by the principle of Sowing and Reaping (6:7–10).

V. Paul concludes his epistle (6:11–18).

A. Paul includes a self-authentication (6:11).

- B. Paul gives a final condemnation concerning the Judaizers (6:12–16).
- C. Paul offers a final appeal and benediction (6:17–18).