

Galatians

Author: The Apostle Paul

Date and Setting: The scholars are not sure on the issue of date.

The two most probable times are, either around A.D. 48-49, after the completion of Paul's first missionary journey (the most popular view), or, some-time between A.D. 53-56, during Paul's third missionary journey.

Concerning the setting, "About the year 278 B.C. a large body of Gauls or Kelts, who had previously invaded and ravaged Greece, Macedonia, and Thrace, crossed over into Asia Minor. Their coming was not—at least not altogether—an unwarranted intrusion, for they arrived as a result of an invitation that had been extended to them by Nicomedes, king of Bithynia...

They belonged to three tribes: the Trochmi, Tectosages, and Tolisbogii, with whom are associated the cities, respectively, of Tavium, Ancyra, and Pessinus. All three of these tribes were *Galli*, that is, Gauls ("warriors"), also called *Galatae*, that is, Galatians ("nobles"). They rapidly gained the mastery over the native population of "Phrygians," of mixed ancestry... the newcomers were finally forced by the Romans to live in peace with their neighbors and to remain within the limits of their own territory.

Since the Gallic rulers were gifted with shrewdness they generally allied themselves with whoever happened to be "on top" in Rome. The latter reciprocated by allowing the former to be treated more as an ally than as a conquered nation. They were considered a "kingdom." During the reign of their last king, Amyntas IV, their realm was even extended southward. Upon the death of Amyntas (25 B.C.) the Romans fell heir to this already somewhat enlarged kingdom and converted it into the Roman "province of Galatia," which soon comprised, in addition to the central *and northern* territory, *to the south*: parts of Phrygia, Lycaonia, Pisidia, and Isatiria..."¹

"The Galatians had adopted the mythological polytheism of the Greeks and the Romans. Just as the Cretans were known for their lying (**Titus 1:12**), so the Galatians were known nationally as an impulsive, fickle, and inconsistent people. This could be seen in their paradoxical desire to worship Paul at one moment and to stone him the next (**Acts 14:11-19**) and also in their quickness to receive the gospel and to abandon it (**1:6**)."²

NOTES:



¹ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians and Ephesians*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979, pp. 4, 5

² Robert G. Gromacki, *Stand Fast in Liberty*, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979, p. 10

Judaizers [followers of the OT Law], had followed Paul's trail to the churches that he had established. When they located a church Paul had planted, they immediately attacked Paul, seeking to discredit him as an authentic messenger of God. Then they attacked *the theology* of Paul's message, saying that the only way to salvation was a combination of God's grace and human works, not grace alone. They also attacked *the human logic* of Paul's message of being saved by grace, without works. The Judaizers said that a theology of that nature would lead to free-for-all, everyone doing whatever they pleased.

Recipients: To the churches in the area of Galatia. There are a couple of possible areas here. ¹¹ Paul served in north Galatia during his second missionary journey (**Acts 16:6**), and revisited on his third, (**18:23**). These churches would include Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium, in the Galatian Phrygia region. ¹² South Galatia (part of the Roman Empire), is the other possibility where Paul traveled with Barnabas during his first missionary journey, (**Acts 13:13-14:23**). The providences here would be Macedonia (**Acts 16:5**), Achaia (**16:15**), and Asia, (**16:19**). Some of the churches would include Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

Purpose: 1. Vindication. Because of the Judaizers' attacks made upon him as an apostle, Paul first of all defended his apostolic call and authority. This had to be established before his doctrine of salvation by faith could be authenticated. He devotes the first two chapters to his vindication by showing how he got his Gospel [and], how the Jerusalem leaders confirmed his Gospel...

2. *Exposition*, Having verified his apostolic authority, in the next two chapters Paul sets forth an exposition of the Gospel of justification by faith as he held it and had taught it to the Galatians, A reasoned, comprehensive presentation of that Gospel in the light of the Old Testament would be its best defense.

3. *Morality*. Paul further purposed to exhibit that the life of Christian liberty does not mean a life of lawlessness or license. His opponents had attacked his Gospel by declaring that his removal of the restraining law from the life of the Christian promoted lawlessness and invited license and unrestrained lust (**5:13-25**). Paul urges them to maintain their liberty in Christ (**5:1**), to beware of the forces threatening to destroy that liberty (**5:2-12**), and to practice living a life governed by love and guided by the Holy Spirit (**5:13-25**). Such

a life bears the fruit of the Spirit, bears the burdens of the weak and needy, and never grows weary of doing good to all men (**5:16--6: 10**). The truth of justification by faith logically leads to a life of good works [and not license to sin].³

Key Phrase: “Freedom from the law”

Key Verses: 2:20, 21; 5:1

“I have been crucified with Christ; 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 for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” (Ga 2:20-21)

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (Ga 5:1)

Christ in Galatians: Christ has freed the believer from bondage to the Law (legalism) and to sin (license) and has placed him in a position of liberty. The transforming Cross provides for the believer’s deliverance from the curse of sin, law and self (**1:4; 2:20; 3:13; 4:5; 5:24; 6:14**).⁴

³ D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Volume Two, The Pauline Epistles*, Illinois: Moody Press, 1954, p. 88.

⁴ Bruce Wilkinson, and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983, p. 396.