

February 6, 2011  
The Bridge Bible Fellowship  
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Galatians 1:1-2

## Galatians: Introduction & Overview

***“Justification by GRACE ALONE through FAITH ALONE  
in the FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST ALONE.”***

**Intro & Title:** The Galatians had come to Christ on the basis of faith, but had later been misled by some people who told them they also needed works (keeping the Law). Paul finds this very disturbing so he writes to them defending the Gospel of Grace and attacking the gospel of works.

Paul starts with his credentials as an apostle with revelation from God: salvation comes on the basis of faith, not law. Men are free from the law in Christ, but this is not a license to sin. They are to enjoy freedom in Christ by living according to their new nature in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians derives its title from the region in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) where the churches addressed were located. It is the only one of Paul’s epistles specifically addressed to churches in more than one city (1:2; cf. 3:1; 1 Cor. 16:1).

**Author:** The Apostle Paul is clearly the author of this book and this is virtually unchallenged. See 1:1 and 5:2. It is apparent also that Paul wrote this book with his own hand, not by dictation to a secretary which was his normal manner of writing (6:11).

“Paul was born in Tarsus, a city in the province of Cilicia, not far from Galatia. Under the famous rabbi, Gamaliel, Paul received a thorough training in the OT Scriptures and in the rabbinic traditions at Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). A member of the ultra-orthodox sect of the Pharisees (Acts 23:6), he was one of first-century Judaism’s rising stars (1:14; cf. Phil. 3:5, 6). The course of Paul’s life took a sudden and startling turn when, on his way to Damascus from Jerusalem to persecute Christians, he was confronted by the risen, glorified Christ. That dramatic encounter turned Paul from Christianity’s chief persecutor to its greatest missionary. His three missionary journeys and trip to Rome turned Christianity from a faith that included only a small group of Palestinian Jewish believers into an Empire-wide phenomenon. Galatians is one of 13 inspired letters he addressed to Gentile congregations or his fellow workers.” (MacArthur Study Bible)

**Date(s) & Setting:** The Gentile converts of Galatia were persecuted immediately after their conversion by Jewish unbelievers from their own hometowns (Acts 13:45-50; 14:21-23). Apparently they withstood the attack so Satan changed his tactic and sent Jewish Christians (Judaizers) from outside (possibly Jerusalem) to tell them Paul had left important things out of the gospel: salvation was by faith in Christ PLUS participation in the Jewish ceremonies (i.e., circumcision, ceremonies, etc.). In other words, Gentile converts aren’t saved unless they had also become Jews. Paul writes to confront this false teaching and bring them back to the true gospel of grace.

“Galatia,” was originally used in a cultural / geographical sense of the central area of Asia Minor where the Celtic tribes settled after conflicts with the Romans and Macedonians (North Galatia). The area came under Roman domination in 189 B.C., and in 25 B.C. it was declared a Roman province. The term, “Galatia,” also had a political sense that included territory to the south that was not originally considered part of Galatia (i.e., cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe – South Galatia). Because of these two designations from Galatia, there are two theories on the setting.

The North Galatian Theory says Paul was speaking only of the cultural / geographical sense. This area was north of the area Paul visited on his first missionary journey, so he must have gone to this area on his second missionary journey on his way to Troas (Acts 16:6). On his third missionary journey he revisited these churches he had established then wrote this letter either in Ephesus (53-56 A.D.) or Macedonia (56 A.D.).

The South Galatian Theory says Paul was speaking of the wider political sense, not just the ethnic area. Thus the churches he mentions were those he evangelized on his first missionary journey

with Barnabas prior to 49 A.D. (Acts 13:1-14:23). Most biblical scholars hold to the South Galatian Theory today.

There are two primary views on the date even with the South Galatian Theory. 1) Paul wrote immediately after his first missionary journey and prior to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (c. 48-49 A.D.). 2) Paul wrote while on his third missionary journey around 55-56 A.D. Both views are held by reputable scholars.

**Theme / Purpose:** Justification by faith apart from the works of the Law, and walking by the Spirit in freedom from bondage to the Law are the themes.

Some of Paul's main purposes are: 1) Expose false teachings of the Judaizers. 2) Defend his apostleship which was challenged by the Judaizers. 3) Emphasize that salvation is through faith alone. 4) Exhort the Galatian Churches to live in the liberty brought by Christ (5:1), and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (5:22, 23).

**Interpretive Challenges:** 1) When was Paul's Jerusalem visit described in 2:1-10? 2) Does 3:27 teach baptismal regeneration? 3) Does 3:28 teach that there is no distinction between men & women with regards to their role in the local church? 4) Does 5:4 teach that you can lose your salvation? 5) Does 6:11 mean that Paul wrote the entire letter or just the end? 6) Does 6:16 mean that the church has become the new Israel and there is no future for national Israel?

**Outline:** (Modified from "Talk Thru The Bible," by Wilkinson & Boa)

- I. The Gospel of Grace Alone Through Faith Alone in the Finished Work of Christ Alone **Defended** (1:1-2:21)
  - A. Introduction (1:1-9)
    1. Salutation: The Ground of Grace (1:1-5)
    2. Situation: The Departure from Grace (1:6-9)
  - B. Gospel of Grace is Given by Divine Revelation (1:10-24)
  - C. Gospel of Grace is Approved by Jerusalem Leadership (2:1-10)
  - D. Gospel of Grace is Vindicated by Rebuking Peter (2:11-21)
- II. The Gospel of Grace Alone Through Faith Alone in the Finished Work of Christ Alone **Explained** (3:1-4:31)
  - A. Holy Spirit is Given by Faith, Not by Works (3:1-5)
  - B. Abraham Was Justified by Faith, Not by Works (3:6-9)
  - C. Justification is by Faith, Not by the Law (3:10-4:11)
    1. Christ Redeems Us from the Curse of the Law (3:10-14)
    2. Abrahamic Covenant is Not Voided by the Law (3:15-18)
    3. Law Given to Drive us to Faith (3:19-22)
    4. Believers are Free from the Law (3:23-4:11)
  - D. Galatians Receive Blessings by Faith, Not by the Law (4:12-20)
  - E. Law and Grace Cannot Co-Exist (4:21-31)
- III. The Gospel of Grace Alone Through Faith Alone in the Finished Work of Christ Alone **Applied** (5:1-6:18)
  - A. Position of Liberty: Stand Fast (5:1-12)
  - B. Practice of Liberty: Love One Another (5:13-15)
  - C. Power for Liberty: Walk in the Spirit (5:16-26)
    1. Conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh (5:16-18)
    2. Works of the Flesh (5:19-21)
    3. Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-26)
  - D. Performance in Liberty: Do Good to all Men (6:1-10)
    1. Bear One Another's Burdens (6:1-5)
    2. Do Not be Weary While Doing Good (6:6-10)
  - E. Conclusion (6:11-18)
    1. Motives of the Circumcised (6:11-13)
    2. Motives of the Apostle Paul (6:14-18)

## **1. Salutation: The Ground of Grace (1:1-5)**

## Discussion Questions:

1. Many people have seen Galatians and Romans as incredibly similar books. What are the similarities? [Take the time to read through both books and list the similarities] If they are so similar why do we need both? Why is Galatians such an important book for us to study?
2. What is “legalism?” What is “license” (antinomianism)? Give examples of how both are practiced in different religions and/or by “professing Christians.” What does Galatians have to say about these two extremes?
3. Why does Paul point out that he is an apostle? Why does he emphasize that his apostleship did not come from men but directly from God? How important is this to his argument? What is the difference between an Apostle and an apostle? In what sense are all believers “apostles?”
4. Why is the word “alone” important in the following statement: “We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone?” Why is this important to the Apostle Paul? Why should it be important to us? If someone believes in salvation by grace through faith PLUS something else can they be truly saved?
5. Have you ever questioned your salvation? Have you ever wondered if you needed to do something else beyond believing in Jesus? How does Galatians help you with those thoughts?