

The Book of Galatians

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Introduction

Theme = Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Overview =

- I. A Personal Defense (of Paul's Apostleship and Gospel) - Chapters 1-2
- II. A Doctrinal Defense (of Justification by Faith) - Chapters 3-4
- III. A Practical Defense (of Christian Liberty) - Chapters 5-6

Context =

A. The Writer = The Apostle Paul

- a. Saul of Tarsus, A devout Jew (Philippians 3:4-6) and former persecutor of the Church of Jesus Christ (Acts 7:58, Acts 8:1-3, Acts 9:1-2).
- b. A recipient of God's pure salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Acts 9:3-19).
- c. Called by God as an apostle of Jesus Christ (Acts 9:15, Gal 1:1, Romans 1:1).
- d. Called by God as a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2, Gal 2:9)
- e. Used mightily by God to establish Christian churches all over the Greco-Roman world of the first century during his three missionary journeys and his trip to Rome. (Acts 13-28).
- f. Convinced of the power of the Gospel to save all people, both Jew and Gentile alike (Romans 1:16).
- g. Wrote 13 New Testament epistles (possibly 14 if he wrote Hebrews).
- h. Faithful to God's call and purpose to the end of his life (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

B. The Recipients = The Churches of Galatia

- a. The Churches of Southern Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derby) established by Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey together (Acts 13-14).
- b. Consisted of Jews and Greeks of flourishing cities which were situated on a major highway and trade route of the Roman Empire.
- c. These people had personally ministered to Paul in a time of need (Gal 4:13-15).

- d. While in Galatia Paul nearly lost his life. Jews from Antioch and Iconium, caught up with Paul in Lystra and stoned him and left him for dead (Act 14:19-20).
- e. Paul and Barnabas revisited the other three cities after establishing the church at Derbe strengthening and encouraging each congregation (Acts 14:21-22).

C. The Opponents = The Judaizers

- a. Sometime after Paul left the Galatian churches, a group of false teachers surfaced and began leading the people away from the true Gospel (Galatians 1:6-7).
- b. These Judaizers did not see themselves as opponents to Christianity. They believed Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, but they taught that in order for a person to be saved they had to believe in Jesus and obey the Jewish law (particularly circumcision).
- c. They were teaching that salvation came from God but was dependent on human works. They were mixing grace and good works. Paul exposed their teaching as a false gospel: grace plus works is not grace!
- d. The Judaizers believed that in order for the Gentiles to be saved, they had to become Jews first. They believed that the Jews (i.e. their laws and customs) were superior to the Gentiles. The Judaizers' racial and cultural prejudices hindered their acceptance of Gentile believers.
- e. The Judaizers did not understand that Christ was the fulfillment of Mosaic Law.
- f. They tried to discredit Paul's authority, apostleship, and gospel. They denied that the Gospel he preached was from God (Gal 1:11-12).
- g. Paul responds in the first two chapters of the book. He affirms his apostleship, declares his independence from the original twelve disciples, and illustrates the true gospel as being the same for Jew and Gentile alike: by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

D. Time and Place of Writing

- a. The epistle was probably written from Antioch of Syria in about A.D. 49 just prior to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).
- b. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch after their first missionary journey (Acts 14:26).
- c. Peter came down from Jerusalem to visit them, fellowshiped with them, and then withdrew from the Gentile Christians only to be publicly rebuked by Paul for his inconsistent behavior (Gal 2:11-14).
- d. Judaizing false teachers had infiltrated the churches in Galatia, denying Paul's authority as an apostle and teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

- e. Reacting quickly and vigorously to Peter's actions and the threat of the Judaizers to the Galatian churches, Paul likely wrote this strong letter prior to attending the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). (adapted from Donald K. Campbell in the Bible Knowledge Commentary)

The Purpose of Galatians

- a. To declare the gospel of pure grace.
- b. To defend Paul's apostleship and message, both of which the Judaizers had questioned.
- c. To show that God's righteousness (justification) can be received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from the law.
- d. To demonstrate the Gospel of grace is for all people without regard to race, gender, culture, or economic status.
- e. To explain the meaning of Christian liberty and show that it does not mean freedom to sin.
- f. To show Christian living as daily yielding to the leadership and empowering of the Holy Spirit.
- g. To dispel Satan's efforts to disguise and suppress the Gospel of grace.

Outline of Book

Purpose : A Defense of the Gospel of Grace Alone, through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone

I. Introduction (1:1-10)

- a. The Salutation (1:1-5)
- b. The Rebuke – Addressing a corrupted gospel (1:6-10)

II. A Personal Defense (of Paul's Apostleship)(1:11-2:21)

- a. Paul's independence of the Twelve (1:11-24)
 - i. A revealed gospel (1:11-12)
 - ii. A personal gospel (1:13-17)
 - iii. A powerful gospel (1:18-24)
- b. Paul's approval from the Three (2:1-10)
 - i. An illustration of the gospel (2:1-3)
 - ii. An attack on the gospel (2:4-5)
 - iii. An agreement about the gospel (2:6-10)
- c. Paul's rebuke of the One (2:11-21)
 - i. A stain on the gospel (2:11-14)
 - ii. A stand for the gospel (2:15-21)

III. A Doctrinal Defense (of Justification by Faith) (3:1-4:31)

- a. Righteousness received through faith (3:1-14)
 - i. The foolishness of works righteousness (3:1-5)
 - ii. The father of faith righteousness (3:6-9)
 - iii. The price of faith righteousness (3:10-14)
- b. Purpose of the Law (3:15-29)
 - i. It explains God's promise (3:15-18)
 - ii. It exposes man's need (3:19-22)
 - iii. It exalts God's Son (3:23-29)
- c. Sonship in Christ (4:1-31)
 - i. Sons of inheritance (4:1-7)
 - ii. Sons of waywardness (4:8-20)
 - iii. Sons of promise (4:21-31)

IV. A Practical Defense (of Christian Liberty) (5:1-6:10)

- a. Stand in Freedom (5:1-15)

- i. The Foundation of Freedom (5:1-6)
 - ii. The Foes of Freedom (5:7-12)
 - iii. The Limits of Freedom (5:13-15)
- b. Walk by the Spirit (5:16-26)
 - i. The Desires of the Flesh (5:16-21)
 - ii. The Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-26)
- c. Bear Each Other's Burdens (6:1-10)
 - i. Caring and Sharing (6:1-5)
 - ii. Receiving and Giving (6:6)
 - iii. Sowing and Reaping (6:7-10)

V. Conclusion (6:11-18)

- a. The Selfish Judaizers (6:11-13)
- b. The Humble Apostle (6:14-17)
- c. The Gracious Plea (6:18)