

The Book of Galatians: Introduction and Overview

I. The Historical Context of the Book of Galatians

- A. Paul's conversion to Christianity in AD32 or AD33 is described in Acts 9. He went to Jerusalem for the first time since his conversion in AD36 (Recorded in Acts 9:26-30, referred to in Gal. 1:18-20)
- B. God directed Peter to proclaim the gospel to [Gentiles](#) (non-Jewish people) in Acts 10.
1. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem challenged Peter on this in Acts 11.
 2. When Peter explained how God had told him to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles, and how they had believed in Jesus and received the Holy Spirit just as the Jewish converts had, they agreed with what Peter had done.
 3. The gospel spread to the Gentiles, who received Christ in [large](#) numbers.
- C. Paul visited Jerusalem a second time in AD46 with famine relief funds, at which time he and Barnabas (with Titus) met privately with some leaders of the church, James, Peter and John. (Recorded in Acts 11:27-30, referred to in Gal. 2:1-10)
At this time they discussed the issue of Gentiles coming to faith.
- D. Paul and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey in AD 46-48 (recorded in Acts 13-14) and proclaimed Jesus to the Jewish people in Pisidian Antioch, but the gospel got a [mixed](#) reception. (Acts 13:13-52)
So Paul became the Apostle to the Gentiles.
- E. Some time later (perhaps AD48) Peter came to Antioch, fellowshipped with and ate openly with the Gentile converts to Christianity.
1. But then some Jewish Christians came from Jerusalem, and they refused to fellowship with and eat with Gentiles who had not converted to Judaism.
 2. Peter followed their error and so did the rest of the Jewish Christians in the church at Antioch.
 3. Paul rightly saw this hypocrisy as a threat to the [purity](#) of the gospel and to the unity of the church, so he immediately challenged and rebuked Peter. (Gal. 2:11-14)
- F. Sometime after Paul established churches in Galatia and moved on, Jewish teachers arrived from Jerusalem claiming that Paul was wrong in his doctrine.
1. They claimed that Gentiles had to keep the Law of Moses (practice Judaism) to be saved. (Galatians 1)
 2. Paul wrote this letter (the Book of Galatians) to the churches that Paul and Barnabas had planted on the first missionary journey in the area of Galatia, probably from Antioch in AD48 or AD49 just before the Jerusalem Council, which is recorded in Acts 15.
- G. When some men arrived at the Jew-Gentile church in Antioch from Jerusalem saying that Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be [saved](#), a decision was made to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to discuss the issue with the apostles and the elders of the church to reach a final decision. (Acts 15:1-5)

II. The Purpose of the Book of Galatians

- A. Paul wrote the Book of Galatians to defend the gospel against those who sought to [add](#) the requirements of the Mosaic Law (ritual Judaism) to faith in Christ for salvation.
- B. Paul wrote the Book of Galatians to defend his apostleship.

1. Charge #1: Paul is not a true [apostle](#).
Paul responds by explaining that he was called directly and personally by Jesus Himself to be an apostle, not by any human.
2. Charge #2: Paul's gospel is not [the](#) true gospel.
Paul responds by explaining that he got his gospel directly and personally from Christ Himself, not from any Apostles at all.
Paul also responds by explaining the basis upon which God reckons a sinful person righteous. Paul points to Abraham as a person who was declared righteous by God on the basis of his faith, long before the Law of Moses was given.
3. Charge #3: Paul's gospel encourages [immoral](#) living, by not requiring adherence to the Law of Moses.
Paul responds that Christianity leads people away from the Law to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, dwells within and produces holy fruit. (5:22-23) The internal change wrought by the Holy Spirit results neither in legalism or license, but true freedom to serve God fully without slavery to sin or rules.

III. The Structure of the Book of Galatians

- A. Chapters 1-2 Appeal from Personal Experience:
The Role of [Grace](#) in Relation to the Gospel
1. Grace declared in Paul's gospel (1:1-10)
 2. Grace demonstrated in Paul's conversion and call to proclaim the gospel (1:11-24)
 3. Grace defended in Paul's ministry (2:1-21)
 - a. Before the church collectively (2:1-10)
 - b. Before Peter personally (2:11-21)
- B. Chapters 3-4 Appeal from Doctrinal Truth:
The Role of [Faith](#) in Relation to the Law
1. The theological argument 3:1-5
 2. The scriptural argument 3:6-14
 3. The logical argument 3:15-29
 4. The legal argument 4:1-11
 5. The personal argument 4:12-18
 6. The allegorical argument 4:19-31
- C. Chapters 5-6 Appeal for Practical Application:
The Role of the [Holy Spirit](#) in the Christian Life
1. Live in liberty, not bondage (5:1-12)
 2. Live in the power of the Spirit, not the flesh (5:13-26)
 3. Live for the benefit of others, not self (6:1-10)
 4. Live for God's glory, not man's praise (6:11-18)

IV. Important Lessons from the Book of Galatians

- A. Salvation is by God's grace through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not earned or deserved based on adherence to any code of [conduct](#) or observance of any religious [ritual](#).
- B. Grace is not freedom to sin, and does not lead us to sin.
- C. Grace frees us to live holy lives in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Key terms: grace 7x, faith 23x, Law 23, law 9

Message

Faith in Jesus + anything else ≠ the gospel.