

Outline of Galatians

It is our hope that this outline of Galatians will help you as you study God's holy Word — His letter to you.

The name "Galatia" comes from the Gaul or Celts who inhabited the area. These Celts migrated from Europe to Asia minor when King Nicomedes of Bithynia invited Celtic warriors across the Bosphorus River in 278 to help him fight his brother. The invaders captured many cities until stopped by Antiochus I in 275 B.C. Until 64 B.C., Galatia was a federation of three Gaulic tribes governed by a council of 12 chieftains. Thereafter, a series of kings ruled the area until 25 B.C. when Rome made Galatia a province of the empire. Rome extended the province south into an area that was not ethnically Galatian.

A debate has existed among conservative scholars over whether Galatians is written to the north Galatians or the south Galatians. Older scholarship tended to believe that the letter was written to the northern Galatian churches, which would place the letter around the same time as the Corinthian correspondence (56-57 A.D.). More recent conservative scholarship tends to favor a southern Galatian audience, with a date somewhere around 49-50 A.D. I believe that the southern Galatian audience is most likely to be true in that we have no record of Paul establishing churches in the north of Galatia. We do in the south — the mention of Barnabas seems to favor a southern Galatian locale and the account of Paul and Peter's disagreement seems to signify a date before the Jerusalem council (49 A.D.) of Acts 15.

The chronology of Paul's life helps us date this epistle. Paul ended his second missionary journey in Corinth in 52 A.D. We know this from the reference to Gallio in Acts 18:12. Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in 51 or 52 A.D. (An inscription at Delphi states that Gallio was proconsul during the 12th year of Claudius tribunicial power and after his 26th proclamation as Emperor. The 27th proclamation was made sometime before August 52.) This means that Paul ended his second missionary journey in 51 or 52 A.D. As he was in Corinth for 18 months (Acts 18:11), the latest he could have begun the second missionary journey would have been the early part of 50 A.D. Before beginning his second missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas had gone to Jerusalem in Acts 15. This must have been in 49 A.D. Before that, Paul and Barnabas had gone on the first missionary journey and then had stayed a long time at Antioch with the disciples (Acts 13-14:28). This necessitates a date for the first missionary journey of around 47-48 A.D. Before going on his first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas had gone to Jerusalem on famine relief (Acts 11:27-30). Josephus tells us that famine conditions existed during the period of Alexander's proconsulship (46-48). The famine relief may have been in 47 A.D. Galatians 2:1 tells us that this was 14 years after something (either the previous Jerusalem visit or Paul's conversion — it has to be the conversion). Fourteen years earlier brings us to 33 A.D. as the date of Paul's conversion. This was the year many scholars believe that Christ died, although it is possible He may have died as early as 29 A.D. In any event, Paul was converted within less than a handful of years of Christ's death. My chronology of Paul's life, then, is:

- 33 A.D. — Paul's conversion
- 36 A.D. — Paul's first Jerusalem visit
- 40 A.D. ? — Barnabas goes to Tarsus and brings Paul to Antioch
- 47 A.D. — Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem with Titus
- 47-48 A.D. — First Missionary Journey
- 49 A.D. — Jerusalem Council
- 50-52 A.D. — Second Missionary Journey
- 54-56 A.D. — Third Missionary Journey
- 56-58 A.D. — Cesarean Imprisonment
- 59 A.D. — Arrival at Rome
- 61 A.D. — End of First Roman Imprisonment
- 64 A.D. — Paul's death

Taking this chronology, Galatians was written in 48 or 49 A.D., after the first missionary journey but before the Jerusalem Council.

The background for the epistle is contained in Acts 13:13-14:25. Paul and Barnabas first came to Antioch in Pisidia. They went into a synagogue and Paul stood up and gave a message recorded for us in Acts 13:16-41, emphasizing the resurrection. The next Sabbath day, nearly the whole city came to hear the word of God (Acts 13:44). Scripture says that the word was spread throughout the entire region, but the Jews were envious and had Paul and Barnabas expelled from their region.

They went to Iconium and a great multitude believed — both Jews and Gentiles. They fled from Iconium to Lystra and Derbe. At Lystra, they were first accounted to be gods and then the Jews from Antioch and Iconium came and had Paul stoned. They went to Derbe and many were converted there. They returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, appointing elders, and then returned to Antioch in Syria.

When the Gentiles became converted, certain of the Jews who were also converted wanted to apply the law to the Gentiles. The Gentiles apparently were willing to pursue the law, including circumcision. This made the Jews very happy. Paul writes the book to deal with the subject of the Christian and law.

It is not difficult to determine the theme of Galatians. It may be phrased in different ways, but the concept is clear. The book answers the question: “How should we live the Christ-life?” or “How should a Christian live?” The answer: death to self (2:19-20; 5:24) and life of freedom from law empowered by God (2:20; 5:1, 16, 22-25).

This subject is very relevant today. Christianity has lost its grasp on the gospel and has succumbed to the deception of religiosity — following rules and sacraments rather than Christ. Or else we live by what gives us good feelings. Both are wrong. Christ lives in us through faith in the promises and love in our actions.

Date: 48-49 A.D.

Structure:

Paul begins his book by arguing for the sanctity of the gospel, warning against those who pervert the gospel (1:6-10) and reinforcing the foundational truths of the gospel (1:11-2:21). He attacks the underpinning of the argument that Christians are under law, shattering it in (3-4). He sets forth the proper way to live in chapter 5-6:10, before closing.

I. Salutation 1:1-5

A. Introduction 1:1-2

B. The Gospel in Thumbsketch 1:3-5 (Focus is deliverance from the evil age)

note: Galatians is the only one of Paul’s letters to churches that does not mention thanksgiving and joins only 2 Timothy and Titus as not mentioning the word.

II. The Sanctity of the Gospel 1:6-2:21

A. Follow NO other teaching 1:6-10

note: defense of truth was necessary from the beginning.

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

| *Galatians 1:8*

- B. The gospel contained in Scripture came from Jesus Christ 1:11-24 (It came directly through Jesus Christ)
- C. Defense of the gospel at Jerusalem and Antioch 2:1-21
 - 1. At Jerusalem 2:1-10
 - 2. At Antioch 2:11-21
 - a. Peter's actions 2:11-13
 - b. Paul's response 2:14-21

| *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.*

| *Galatians 2:20*

III. Freedom from the Law 3-4

- A. Power, miracles, and blessings come through faith 3:1-9

| *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*

| *Galatians 3:3*

- B. The law justifies no one 3:10-14
- C. Faith takes priority over law 3:15-18
- D. The law was only for a tutor 3:19-24

| *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

| *Galatians 3:24*

- E. In Christ we are no longer under the tutor 3:25-4:7

| *But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

| *Galatians 3:25*

- F. Don't return to the tutor 4:8-20
- G. The allegory of Hagar and Sarah 4:21-31

| *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.*

| *Galatians 4:31*

IV. Life in the Spirit 5:1-6:10

A. To seek righteousness by doing the law is a departure from grace 5:1-6

You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Galatians 5:4

B. We are called to liberty 5:7-15

1. Included in the offense of the cross is its freedom — vs.11
2. Don't use freedom from law as an opportunity to please the flesh, but as liberty to love — vs. 13-14

C. Walk in the Spirit 5:16-25

1. Flesh and Spirit are incompatible 5:16-18
2. The works of the flesh 5:19-21
3. The fruit of the Spirit 5:22-23
4. Death to self and life in the Spirit 5:24-25

D. Do good to all 5:26-6:10

1. Care for one another 5:26-6:3
2. Examine carefully your own life 6:4-5
3. Sow to the Spirit 6:6-10

V. Closing Thoughts 6:11-18

A. Do not glory in law, but in the cross of Jesus 6:11-15

B. Blessing given only to those who walk appropriately 6:16-18

Key Idea: We live as we begin, by faith in Jesus

Key Passages: 2:20; 5:1

Key Lesson: Hold on to the liberty of relationship (trust and love); avoid the legalism of performance (do this and do not do that)