



(For the entire commentary on the book of Galatians click [HERE](#). For other commentaries of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

Galatians

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS: AN INTRODUCTION

The book of Galatians is the 48th book of the Bible, and it is comprised of 6 chapters of 149 verses. It was written by the apostle Paul. There is absolutely no compelling reason to assume otherwise. Attempts to deny his authorship fall flat every time. Those who question the authenticity of Paul's authorship are inevitably liberals who probably know as much about critical scholarship as they do about other weighty disciplines like rocket science and thermodynamics.

The book is written to those in the region of Galatia. However, there are two views as to exactly where this is – the northern and southern view. What this means, where these are, and internal evidences concerning which view the Bible appears to support are too long to go over here. However, for a full discussion on this, one can go to Bible.org and read their introductory comments on the book.

The purpose of the letter is obvious from a simple read through the letter – Judaizers had come into the church and had attempted to bring the believers in Galatia back under the law of Moses. Paul spends much of the time in the epistle arguing against this. He is adamant in his stand that this is not only poison to the congregation, but it is heretical and worthy of damnation.

Book of Galatians

Author – The Apostle Paul

Date – Late 40s

Theme – Christian liberty.

Purpose :

1. For Paul to defend his apostolic authority.
2. To affirm the truth that salvation is by faith alone.
3. To correct the errors of legalism.

Presentation of Christ – Our Liberty

The Book of Galatians – Refuting the Judaizers

Book Superstructure	Book Structure	Book Outline
Law vs. Grace	Introduction and purpose.	1. Paul recounts authority - from Christ and attested by the other Apostles.
	The epistle general.	2. Refuting the Judaizers; rebuking Peter.
		3. Abraham's seed by faith - freedom from the curse of the law.
		4. The two covenants symbolized by the sons of the bondwoman and the son of promise.
		5. Casting off the yoke of bondage; life in the Spirit.
	Final greeting.	6. Boasting in the cross alone – never in the flesh.

CHAPTER 1

Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead),... Galatians 1:1

The book of Galatians contains 149 verses of immensely important doctrine. It is a book which every Christian should read and take to heart, understanding that Paul's words are doctrine for this Gentile-led church age. He will point out what is heresy and thus what constitutes a false gospel. And yet, his words are almost entirely overlooked by a vast swath of misled and misguided people in the world today.

In particular, Paul will speak against "Judaizers". These are those people who come into Christian circles and demand that the Law of Moses is binding today and that it must be observed, in part or in whole. As a benchmark for this, Paul will use the practice of circumcision. He will argue that if a Christian allows himself to be circumcised (meaning implicitly as a means of obtaining God's favor) they have set aside the grace of God and are bound to the entire law; it is a self-condemning act.

Though circumcision is the benchmark, it can be equated to any precept in the law - dietary restrictions, Sabbath observances, etc. Let us pay special heed to his words, because they are the very words of God, revealed through His designated apostle.

To open this marvelous book, he begins by identifying himself and then giving his qualifications for writing the letter - "Paul, an apostle." However, the Greek contains no article. Instead, it says "Paul; apostle." It is an affirmative statement that he is uniquely qualified to write the words of doctrine which follow. The term "apostle" is to be taken in its strictest sense. In other words, he meets the requirements of an apostle of Jesus, having been instructed by Him and having witnessed Him in His resurrected state.

In his claim as an apostle, he shows that he bears the authority to make doctrinal statements which are to be accepted and adhered to. He is the messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ and his words are to be taken as such.

His next words are, "...not from men." This indicates that he was not sent by any particular body of people. Further his commission was not from a human origin. His apostleship was higher than any such level. The meaning of "apostle" is "sent one" or "a messenger." He was sent by Christ and His message is that of the Lord. His words then bear far more weight than those who had come to infect the church with their heretical doctrine. Paul will exactly define this in the coming verses.

He also says, "...nor through man." Not only was he not commissioned by any body of men, but he was not appointed by any man. Further, no man had any part in his calling. It was solely of God. He was selected entirely by the choice of Jesus Christ for this apostolic ministry. Acts 9 shows this clearly with words spoken by Jesus -

"Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:15, 16

Going on, he confirms exactly that appointment with the words, "but through Jesus Christ." It was the Lord who appeared to Him on the road to Damascus and it was He who ordered Ananias to lay his hands on Paul for him to receive his sight once again. The commission is solely the choice of the Lord and therefore his words in this epistle are to be taken as the very words of God for life, doctrine, and practice. Anything less is to ignore the One who commissioned him.

And to finish off the verse, he notes that his authority is also from "God the Father who raised Him from the dead." As God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, it then shows that His stamp of approval rests on the Son. This is confirmed

numerous times in Scripture, but Romans 1:4 states it concisely. There Paul says that Christ Jesus is -

"...declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

It is upon Jesus Christ that God's stamp of approval rests. This defining act of God shows that Christ was approved in His earthly ministry and prevailed over the Law of Moses; God's standard for the people of the world. This is key to understanding Paul's authority to write this epistle. It is also key to see that his words concerning the law, and all of its precepts, are fulfilled in Christ on our behalf. Because of this, we are to rely not on works of the law, but on the grace of Jesus Christ alone.

God's approval is in the Son; we accept the work of the Son; and therefore, our approval will also be from God the Father who will then also raise us from the dead. Without trusting in Christ's sufficiency alone, God will not approve of us and we will stand condemned. This is the message that Paul will explain in this marvelous epistle.

Life application: Paul's words are doctrine for the church. They are to be received as such and accepted at face value. By not showing faith in what Paul writes, we are also not showing faith in the surety of the word of God, or in Christ's commission of Paul which is clearly recorded in Acts 9. Be sure to pay close attention to the words which flow from Paul's pen as we evaluate them in the months ahead.

...and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia: Galatians 1:2

Greek scholars very easily find a coldness in Paul's words here which show his immense disapproval of the situation that he must address in regard to the

churches of Galatia. First, he notes "all the brethren who are with me." The way this is structured - "and the with me all brothers," or as the Pulpit Commentary translates it, "and the brethren which are with me, one and all" gives an emphasis on the word "all." As they say it, "...there is not one of those about him who does not feel the like grief and indignation as himself in reference to the news just now received."

Further, it is to be noted that none of the brothers are highlighted as he so often names them in his other letters. He gives a general, blanket greeting without any additional note of personal greeting. It is as if there was a cumulative hush from the individuals because of their thorough disgust at what had transpired in the churches being addressed.

The severity of this tone should be a wake-up call to every Christian concerning the issue to be discussed. Every rational thinking person who reads Galatians should say, "I will hold to the gospel of grace alone, and I will reject anyone who attempts to reinsert even one precept from the law." This epistle contains the epitome of disregard for the Judaizers of the world and their corrupt attitude towards what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Whoever these "brethren" are is unknown and actually unimportant to the issue at hand. The lack of mentioning them is sufficient as a rebuke to the Galatians. All that matters to Paul is that there is a unified voice among them concerning what must be addressed. If we are to speculate, possibly those in Acts 20:4 are there with him. The record of Acts in regards to the placement of where Paul is now cannot be determined with precision.

Along with not naming the brothers with him, another note of censure can be inferred. Paul normally opens his letters with a note of commendation and thanks for the faith of the believers. Even the dysfunctional church at Corinth was given such a hearty note of approval. In 1 Corinthians 1:2, he notes those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus. Two verses later, he gives thanks "concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus."

There is no such note to the Galatians. His coming comments in verses 3 & 4 don't carry nearly the same noteworthy tone. They are simply a hopeful blessing towards them.

In Corinth, there was transgression which needed to be dealt with, it is true. But what has happened in Galatia is far worse and deals with heresy which can only lead to an apostate church. As Charles Ellicott notes, "The Corinthians had failed in the practical application of Christian principles; the Galatians (so far as they listened to their Judaizing teachers) could hardly be said to have Christian principles at all. The Apostle is angry with them with a righteous indignation, and his anger is seen in the naked severity of this address."

Where these Judaizers came from isn't known, all that is known is that they have come and they have infected more than just a single church; hence, the letter being addressed to all of the churches in Galatia. It seems that someone or some group intentionally followed behind Paul's ministry and purposely infected each church with their same sour doctrine. He has a special curse coming for such people. His pen will hold nothing back as he condemns them and anyone else who would so twist and abuse the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Life application: Context is king when it comes to biblical interpretation. If something is taken out of its intended context and inserted where it does not belong, then only bad doctrine, or even heresy, will result. One must always identify the points related to proper context before solidifying one's doctrine.