

Galatians Book Survey

Authorship

The opening verse identifies the author of Galatians as the apostle Paul. No one has seriously questioned his authorship.

Date

The North Galatian theory - A.D. 53-57

The South Galatian theory - A.D. 48-49

Destination

- a. *The North Galatian theory.* This **older** view holds that the letter was addressed to churches **located in north-central Asia Minor** (Pessinus, Ancyra and Tavium), where the Gauls had settled when they invaded the area in the third century B.C. It is held that Paul visited this area on his second missionary journey, though Acts contains no reference to such a visit. Galatians, it is maintained, was written between A.D. 53 and 57 from Ephesus or Macedonia.

The arguments *for* the north Galatian theory.

- a. No other view existed until comparatively recent times. This, of course, does not make the view correct, but it does place the burden of proof on the more recent theory.
 - b. The natural meaning of “Galatia,” “Galatians” ([Gal. 1:2; 3:1](#)) would be to a *geographical region* in north central Asia Minor. This was the referent as used by the inhabitants (the Gauls, who originated the name). Further, this seems to be Luke’s usage (i.e., he describes places according to geographical region rather than according to political province). In [Acts 13:13; 13:14](#); and [14:6](#), Luke speaks of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia respectively, all of which are geographical terms. This indicates that he probably used the term “Phrygian and Galatian region” in [16:6](#) as a geographical term, too.
 - c. Paul most likely visited the north Galatian districts, as [Acts 16:6](#) and [18:23](#) seem to indicate. If so, then he must have visited this area twice, and there is a strong presumption that he established churches there.
 - d. [Galatians 2:1-10](#) naturally refers to the Council visit in [Acts 15](#). This can especially be seen in opposition to the south Galatian theory. If [Gal. 2:1-10](#) refers to a previous visit of Paul to Jerusalem, which one? Only two prior visits are recorded, in [Acts 9:26](#) and [11:30](#). [Acts 9:26](#) is ruled out because that is Paul’s first visit to Jerusalem as a believer: in [Gal. 2:1](#) he says he “again” went up to Jerusalem. [Acts 11:30](#) seems to be ruled out because Acts records nothing of Paul’s visit with any of the *apostles*—only that they visited the “elders” with the relief fund in hand.
- b. *The South Galatian theory.* According to this **newer** view, Galatians was written to churches in the southern area of the **Roman province of Galatia** (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. Some believe that Galatians was written from Syrian Antioch in 48–49 after Paul’s first journey and before the Jerusalem council meeting ([Ac 15](#))

The arguments *for* the south Galatian theory.

a. NEGATIVE (AND NON-ESSENTIAL) ARGUMENTS

There is no hard evidence in Acts that Paul ever visited the north Galatian district. If he had, this would of course not prove the south Galatian theory wrong, on the other hand, if he did not, it would prove the north Galatian theory wrong. There are essentially three sub-points in defense of this supposition:

(1) [Acts 16:6](#) and [18:23](#) are taken to mean, respectively, “the Phrygian-Galatian region” and “the [Roman] province of Galatia and Phrygia.” In the first instance, *Φρυγίαν* is taken (rightfully) as an adjective, and thus indicates that [Luke is here using a political \(rather than an ethnic/geographical\) term](#). This opens up the distinct possibility—even though it may be against his normal practice—that he does the same thing in [Acts 18:23](#). If so, in neither verse does Luke affirm that Paul visited the geographical region of Galatia.

(2) Even if Paul penetrated the northern region, Luke does not mention that he established any churches there, while Luke does say that Paul established churches in the south. This argument from silence bears considerable weight since, on the north Galatian hypothesis, “it is strange that so little is said about churches where such an important controversy arose as is reflected in the Galatian epistle.” Of these three “non-essential” arguments, this seems to be the strongest. Even such a staunch supporter of the north Galatian view as Moffatt admitted, “Luke devotes far more attention to South Galatian churches, and [therefore] Galatians is more likely to have been addressed to them than to Christians in an out-of-the-way, unimportant district like North Galatia.”

(3) The collection delegation contained no representative from north Galatia. The reference to Paul’s companions in [Acts 20:4](#), who were apparently part of this delegation, includes Sopater (of Berea), Aristarchus and Secundus (from Thessalonica), Gaius (from Derbe), Timothy (from Lystra), etc. The churches of Galatia are explicitly mentioned as participating in this good will gesture in [1 Cor. 16:1](#). On the south Galatian theory, Timothy and Gaius would be the delegates; on the north Galatian theory, no one is mentioned. This silence is difficult to explain.

b. THE ISOLATION OF THE NORTH GALATIAN DISTRICT

According to [Gal. 4:13](#), Paul was suffering from some illness in Galatia when he visited the region the first time. Indeed, he came there to recover. “But this would be highly improbable in the northern area, which was not only off the beaten track but necessitated a journey over difficult country.”

c. PAUL’S USE OF (ROMAN) PROVINCIAL TITLES

Although Luke’s (normal) practice may well have been to describe regions according to their geographical/ethnic names, Paul’s practice seems to be different—indeed, uniformly so. He writes “of the churches of Macedonia ([2 Cor. 8:1](#)), Asia ([1 Cor. 16:19](#)), and Achaia ([2 Cor. 1:1](#)). He also speaks of Judea, Syria, and Cilicia, but never of Lycaonia, Pisidia, Mysia, and Lydia (which are not Roman names). The presumption that he is also using the Roman title in speaking of Galatia is therefore strong.”

d. THE MENTION OF BARNABAS

Barnabas is thrice mentioned in [Gal. 2](#) (vv. 1, 9, 13)—each time as though he were familiar to the audience. (In the least, it is significant that he is mentioned in this epistle more than in any other.) This would only be true if these churches were founded on the first missionary journey, for Barnabas and Paul split up before the second journey began. It is usually objected that Barnabas is also mentioned in [1 Cor. 9:6](#)—again without introduction, yet he was apparently unknown to the Corinthians. In response, (1) Barnabas may well have become known to the Corinthians, though not via journeying with Paul; (2) more importantly, [Gal. 2:13](#) implies that Barnabas' *character* was known to the Galatians (while in [1 Cor. 9:6](#) no such implication is made).

e. [GAL. 2:1-10](#) MUST PRECEDE [ACTS 15](#)

In essence, it is extremely surprising that Paul would make no mention of the Council's decision, since it would substantially support his case and discredit the Judaizers, if [Gal. 2](#) has the same referent as [Acts 15](#) (CE 48-49). Further, whereas [Gal. 2](#) records a private conversation, [Acts 15](#) speaks of a public meeting.

f. THE NUMBER OF VISITS TO JERUSALEM

[Galatians 2:1](#) says that Paul visited Jerusalem "again," and the narrative gives the distinct impression that this is only Paul's second visit. If so, it would then correspond to his visit in [Acts 11:30](#), for Acts records only one visit prior to this ([9:26](#)). Even though Luke might not mention all of Paul's visits to Jerusalem, this works decidedly against the north Galatian theory, for if that were the case here, [Acts 15](#) would be Paul's fourth (or later!) visit. This seems to be a virtually decisive piece of evidence.

g. THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN GALATIANS AND ROMANS

Lightfoot argued that since there is obvious theological development between Galatians and Romans, Romans must come later. But, because he held to the north Galatian theory (in fact, was *the* major north Galatian proponent), he was compelled to see Galatians written during Paul's short stay in Corinth ([Acts 20:3](#)). In our reconstruction (as well as that of the majority of NT scholars), *Romans* was written during this three-month period. That would mean that Galatians and Romans were written at virtually the same time (perhaps Galatians even came after Romans by a month or two), yet Galatians seems to be less mature than Romans. Because Lightfoot is almost surely right that there is theological development between these two epistles, it is difficult to imagine such development taking place in the space of a month or two. Rather, a few years would normally be needed. If Galatians is dated c. 48-49 CE, and Romans, 56 CE, the time gap is quite sufficient.

In sum, the south Galatian theory, though not unassailable, seems by far the most satisfactory. In particular, [the arguments that seem most compelling on its behalf are:](#)

- (1) [the number of visits implied in Gal. 2:1 and mentioned in Acts;](#)
- (2) [Paul's proven use of Roman provincial terms to describe what Luke would normally describe with geographical/ethnic terms; and](#)
- (3) [the absence of any mention of the decree in Gal. 2:1-10 which would so dramatically](#)

serve Paul's purposes and prove, once and for all, that the Judaizers were not really representative of James or apostolic/Jerusalem Christianity.

Principle Personalities

- Paul
- Titus (1)
- Peter (Cephas) (4)
- Barnabas (3)
- Galatians
- Judiazers
- Abraham (9)
- Isaac (1)
- James (3)
- John (1)

Historical Setting

Probably southern Galatia, based on the arguments above. This would include churches in the southern area of the Roman province of Galatia (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey.

Geography

Currently Central Turkey

Occasion & Purpose

Bruce has a nice summary:

When, as we are told in [Acts 15:1](#), Judaeans came to Syrian Antioch and started to teach the Christians there that those who were not circumcised in accordance with the law of Moses could not be saved, it is antecedently probable that others who wished to press the same line visited the recently formed daughter-churches of Antioch, not only in Syria and Cilicia, as the apostolic letter indicates ([Acts 15:23](#)), but also in South Galatia. If so, then the letter to the Galatians was written as soon as Paul got news of what was afoot, on the eve of the Jerusalem meeting described in [Acts 15:6ff](#). This, it is suggested, would yield the most satisfactory correlation of the data of Galatians and Acts and the most satisfactory dating of Galatians. It must be conceded that, if this is so, Galatians is the earliest among the extant letters of Paul.

The purpose of this letter was obviously, then, to refute the Judaizers' false gospel—a gospel in which these Jewish Christians felt that circumcision was essential to salvation—and to remind the Galatians of the real basis of their salvation. It was the urgency of the situation which moved Paul to write even before the Jerusalem Council convened, for the churches of Galatia were at stake.

Theme(s):

Galatians has been called “the Magna Carta of the Reformation” and Luther’s “Katie von Bora.” [It is the book on which the Protestant Reformation was founded.](#) The key to this epistle is seen in 2:16: “Know that a man is not justified on the basis of the works of the Law, but on the basis of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be

justified on the basis of Christ’s faithfulness, and not on the basis of the works of the Law—for no flesh will be justified on the basis of the works of the Law.” Paul thus links Christ’s complete faithfulness to the old covenant as grounds for the abolition of the old covenant and as the basis for our salvation. In a nutshell, we are justified by faith in Christ because Christ was faithful.

- True and false gospels
- Paul's authority as an apostle
- Justification by faith alone
- Freedom

Genre and Style

Genre: Epistle or letter.

Style: The style combines the two extremes, sternness. (Galatians 1:1-24 ; 3:1-5 and tenderness (Galatians 4:19 Galatians 4:20 the characteristics of a man of strong emotions, and both alike well suited for acting on an impressible people such as the Galatians were. The beginning is abrupt, as was suited to the urgency of the question and the greatness of the danger. A tone of sadness, too, is apparent, such as might be expected in the letter of a warm-hearted teacher who had just learned that those whom he loved were forsaking his teachings for those of perverters of the truth, as well as giving ear to calumnies against himself.

Key Words

From NASB

	Col.	Gal.
Chapters	4	6
Words	2124	3223
Words per chapter	531	537
Abraham	0	5
angel(s)	1	3
believe...	0	4
beloved	6	0
body...	10	3
bondage/bondservant...	4	8
brethren	2	11
child/children	2	8
Christ	25	38
circumcised/circumcision	5	13
commandments	0	1
cross/crucified	2	7
faith/faithful	9	21
Father	6	4
flesh/fleshy	6	16
Gentiles	1	10

God	21	30
gospel	2	11
grace	4	7
hidden	3	0
Jerusalem	0	5
Jesus	7	17
Jew(s)/Judaism	1	8
just/justified/justify	4	10
law	0	32
know/knowing/knowledge	11	6
LORD	13	5
mystery	4	0
persecute...	0	5
preach.. (gospel as a verb)	1	10
promise	0	11
righteous/righteousness	0	5
Sabbath	1	0
sin/sinners	1	5
Sinai	0	2
Spirit	1	16
thankful/thanks	6	0
transgression/transgressor	2	2
uncircumcision	2	3
wisdom	6	0
works/worked	4	11

Summary	Col.	Gal.
Jews/Gentiles – Jerusalem/Sinai		
Circumcision/uncircumcision - Abraham	9	46
law/works/commandments	4	44
knowledge/wisdom/mystery	21	6
Spirit	1	16
Jesus/Christ/Father/God	72	94
gospel/preach	3	21
justify/righteousness	4	15
cross/crucify	2	7
faith/believe/grace	13	18
body	10	3
flesh/fleshy	6	16
hidden/mystery/religion	8	0

Outlines

Lesson Outline

- 1 - No Other Gospel! - Galatians 1:1-1:10
- 2 - Paul Called by God - Galatians 1:11-24
- 3 - Paul Accepted by the Apostles – Galatians 2:1-2:10
- 4 - Paul Opposes Peter – Galatians 2:11-2:21
- 5 - Faith or Observance of the Law – Galatians 3:1-3:14
- 6 - The Law and the Promise – Galatians 3:15-3:25
- 7 – Sons of God Galatians 3:26-4:7
- 8 – Paul's Concern for the Galatians 4:8-4:20
- 9 – Hagar and Sarah Galatians 4:21-4:31
- 10 – Freedom in Christ Galatians 5:1-5:15
- 11 – Life by the Spirit Galatians 5:16-5:26
- 12 – Doing Good to All Galatians 6:1-6:10
- 13 – Not Circumcision but a New Creation Galatians 6:11-6:18

From Knight

Part I: Introducing the Threat to Christian Liberty, 1:1-10

1. The Gospel of Deliverance, 1:1-5
2. Troublers of the Church, 1:6-9
3. Set Free to Slavery, 1:10

Part II: History: Paul's Authority as an Apostle of Liberty, 1:11-2:21

4. The Call of God, 1:11-16a
5. Not a Churchly Message, 1:16b-2:1a
6. The Search for Unity, 2:1-10
7. Refusing to Be Intimidated, 2:11-13
8. One Gospel for All, 2:14-21

Part III: Theology: Justification by Faith as the Basis of Christian Liberty, 3:1-4:31

9. Bewitched Believers and the Sin of Goodness, 3:1-5
10. The Abraham Lesson, 3:6-9
11. The Way of Law Versus the Way of the Cross, 3:10-14
12. The Abraham Covenant, 3:15-18
13. Another Look at Law, 3:19-22
14. Salvation's Social Results, 3:23-29
15. The Gift of Adoption, 4:1-7
16. Progress in Reverse, 4:8-11
17. A Pastor's Heart, 4:12-20
18. A Tale of Two Sons, 4:21-31

Part IV: Ethics: The Responsibilities of Liberty, 5:1-6:10

19. [A Tale of Two Ways, 5:1-12](#)
20. [The Paradox of Freedom, 5:13-15](#)
21. [The Way of the Flesh, 5:16-21](#)
22. [The Way of the Spirit, 5:22-26](#)
23. [Living by the Spirit, Part 1, 6:1-5](#)
24. [Living by the Spirit, Part 2, 6:6-10](#)

Part V: Wrapping It Up, 6:11-18

25. [Final Counsel and Benediction, 6:11-18](#)

From the Zondervan NIV Study Bible

- I. Introduction (1:1–10)
 - A. Salutation(1:1–5)
 - B. Denunciation (1:6–10)
- II. Personal: Authentication of the Apostle of Liberty and Faith (1:11—2:21)
 - A. Paul’s Gospel Was Received by Special Revelation (1:11–12)
 - B. Paul’s Gospel Was Independent of the Jerusalem Apostles and the Judean Churches (1:13—2:21)
 1. Evidenced by his early activities as a Christian (1:13–17)
 2. Evidenced by his first post-Christian visit to Jerusalem (1:18–24)
 3. Evidenced by his second post-Christian visit to Jerusalem (2:1–10)
 4. Evidenced by his rebuke of Peter at Antioch (2:11–21)
- III. Doctrinal: Justification of the Doctrine of Liberty and Faith (3:1–4:31)
 - A. The Galatians’ Experience of the Gospel (3:1–5)
 - B. The Experience of Abraham (3:6–9)
 - C. The Curse of the Law (3:10–14)
 - D. The Priority of the Promise (3:15–18)
 - E. The Purpose of the Law (3:19–25)
 - F. Sons, Not Slaves (3:26—4:7)
 - G. The Danger of Turning Back (4:8–11)
 - H. Appeal to Embrace the Freedom of God’s Children (4:12–20)
 - I. God’s Children Are Children of the Free Woman (4:21–31)
- IV. Practical: Practice of the Life of Liberty and Faith (5:1—6:10)
 - A. Exhortation to Freedom (5:1–12)
 - B. Life by the Spirit, Not by the Flesh (5:13–26)
 - C. Call for Mutual Help (6:1–10)
- V. Conclusion and Benediction (6:11–18)

From Bible.org

- I. Introduction (1:1-10)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-5)
 - B. Denunciation (1:6-10)
- II. Personal: Defense of Paul’s Apostleship (1:11–2:21)
 - A. Received by Revelation (1:11-12)
 - B. Independent of Jerusalem Apostles (1:13–2:21)
 1. Demonstrated by Paul’s Conversion and Early Years as a Christian (1:13-17)

2. Demonstrated by Paul's First Post-Conversion Visit to Jerusalem (1:18-24)
 3. Confirmed by the Jerusalem Apostles (2:1-10)
 - a. The Treatment of Titus (2:1-5)
 - b. The Approval of Paul (2:6-10)
 4. Illustrated by Paul's Rebuke of Peter (2:11-21)
 - a. Peter's Hypocrisy (2:11-13)
 - b. Paul's Rebuke (2:14)
 - c. The Principle Involved (2:15-21)
- III. Doctrinal: Defense of Justification by Faith (3:1–4:31)
- A. Vindication of Justification by Faith (3:1-18)
 1. The Experience of the Galatians (3:1-5)
 2. The Example of Abraham (3:6-14)
 - a. The Faith of Abraham (3:6-9)
 - b. The Curse of the Law (3:10-12)
 - c. The Curse on Christ (3:13)
 - d. The Blessing of Abraham (3:14)
 3. The Permanence of the Promise (3:15-18)
 - a. The Promise Given to Abraham's Seed, Christ (3:15-16)
 - b. The Law's Irrelevance for the Promise (3:17-18)
 - B. Purpose of the Law (3:19–4:7)
 1. Its Temporary Nature (3:19-25)
 2. Its Inferior Status (3:26–4:7)
 - a. Equality in the Body of Christ (3:26-29)
 - b. Slaves Vs. Sons (4:1-7)
 - C. Appeal Concerning Justification by Faith (4:8-31)
 1. Paul's Concern for the Galatians (4:8-20)
 - a. Because of their Return to Bondage (4:8-11)
 - b. Because of their Loss of Joy (4:12-20)
 2. An Appeal from Allegory (4:21-31)
- IV. Practical: Defense of Christian Liberty (5:1–6:10)
- A. Liberty Vs. Law (5:1-12)
 1. The Law Enslaves the Believer (5:1-2)
 2. The Law Obligates the Believer (5:3)
 3. The Law Alienates Christ (5:4-6)
 4. The Law Hinders Growth (5:7-10)
 5. The Law Removes the Offense of the Cross (5:11-12)
 - B. Liberty Vs. License (5:13-26)
 1. The Fruit of License (5:13-21)
 2. The Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-26)
 - C. Liberty to Love (6:1-10)
 1. Responsibility toward the Weak and Sinful (6:1-5)
 2. Responsibility toward the Leaders (6:6-9)
 3. Responsibility toward All People (6:10)
- V. Conclusion (6:11-18)
- A. Authentication of the Epistle (6:11)
 - B. Condemnation of the Judaizers (6:12-16)

1. The Motives of the Judaizers (6:12-13)
 2. The Motives of Paul (6:14-17)
- C. Benediction (6:18)

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Online Resources

Biblehub.com (Interlinear) <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/galatians/1.htm>

Biblegateway <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+1&version=NIV>

Biblica.com <http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/online-bible/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/>

Bible.org <https://bible.org/series/new-testament-introductions-and-outlines>
onlineinductivebiblestudy.com <http://www.onlineinductivebiblestudy.com/>