

God's Amazing Book

Journey Through the New Testament

I AM FREE TO LIVE FOR CHRIST

A Quick Look at the Letter to the Churches of Galatia

It is a stern, severe, and solemn message... It has been called the Magna Charta of the early church, the manifesto of Christian liberty, the impregnable citadel, and a veritable Gibraltar against any attack on the heart of the gospel. – J. Vernon McGee

Fast Facts on Galatians

Written by? Apostle Paul

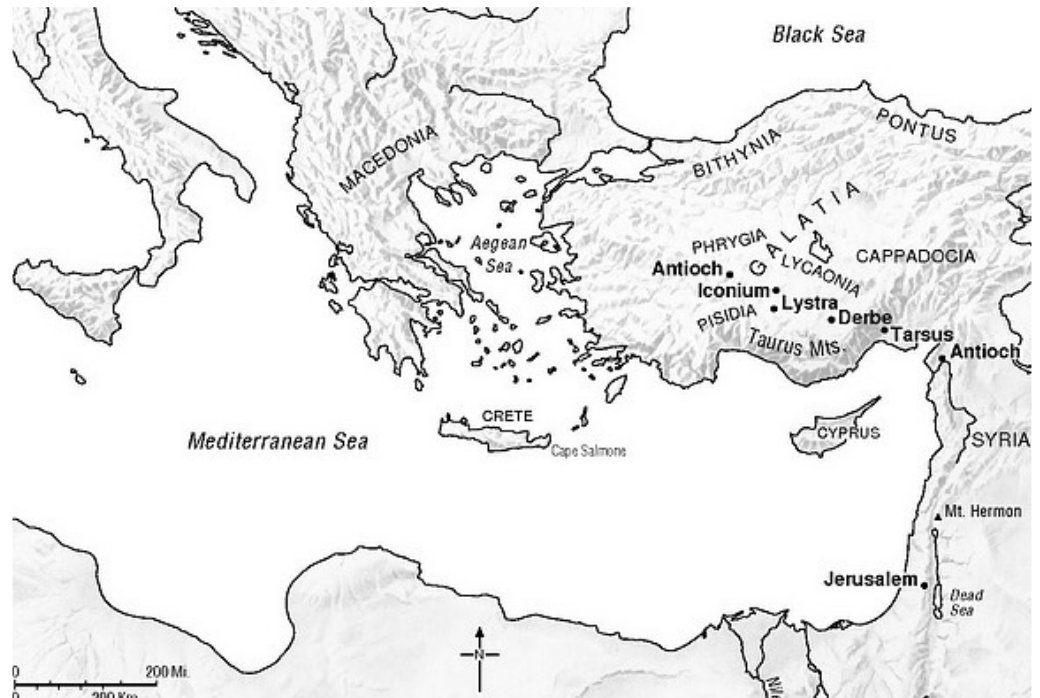
Written to whom? The churches in Southern Galatia established during the 1st Missionary Journey.

Written when? 48-49 AD (may be Paul's first letter)

Written where? Uncertain

Written why? Galatians is a letter filled with passion and zeal. Paul had heard that the Galatian Christians were falling away from the true gospel of grace and turning to a legalistic/works approach to salvation. He desired to turn them back to the freedom of salvation by faith alone. **In doing so, he argued that not only is the sinner saved by grace, but the saved sinner also lives by grace. Grace is the way to life and the way of life.**

Key Verse: Galatians 2:16



Purpose in Writing:

1. To expose the false teachings of the Judaizers who were undermining the faith of the new converts by advocating a works salvation (3:1-9)
2. To defend his apostleship, which was being challenged by the Judaizers (2:1-10).
3. To emphasize that salvation is by grace through faith alone, not faith plus Law-works (2:16-21).
4. To exhort the Galatian Christians to live in the liberty and freedom brought by Christ (5:1) and to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23).

The Importance of the Epistle

- 1. It sets forth the apostolic authority of Paul.** The only other epistle that approximates Galatians in its defense of Pauline apostleship is 2 Corinthians.
- 2. It presents the doctrine of justification by faith alone.** Paul demonstrates that the way of salvation for a sinner is by grace through faith plus nothing. Salvation had been going on before there was any Law of Moses, and the way of salvation was then, as it is now, and always will be, through faith alone, apart from Law-works.
- 3. It defends Christian Liberty.** Paul's defense of justification is the foundation on which Paul builds his structure of Christian liberty. Galatians is a declaration of freedom from religious externalism and personal frustration in one's spiritual life.
- 4. It presents a picture of the apostolic age.** In its biographical allusions and references to the conflicts and struggles of the apostolic period, the epistle yields significant information on a dimly known era.
- 5. It affirms clear differences between Christianity and Judaism.**
- 6. It was a catalyst for the Reformation.** No other biblical book played a larger part in the Reformation than Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Martin Luther (1483–1546) was so impressed with the epistle that he referred to it as his wife. "The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine" (the name of Luther's wife).

FASCINATING FACTS:

1. This was probably Paul's first letter written (48-49ad)
2. Galatians is Paul's only letter that was addressed to a group of churches (1:2).
3. Galatians is the only epistle of Paul's that does not begin with a word of thanksgiving and praise, and it is the apostle's most severe letter.
4. In Galatians, Paul makes no request for prayer from these believers, which is very unusual.
5. Galatians is Paul's only letter in which he draws attention to his handwriting (6:11).
6. Only in Galatians do we learn of a three-year period shortly after Paul's conversion in which he went into the deserts of Arabia (1:17).
7. Galatians is undoubtedly Paul's most passionate and emotionally charged epistle.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. Men who said Christians must keep Moses' law are called "Judaizers".
2. Living by God's rules without a close relationship with Christ is "Legalism"
3. Religion is "Do". Christianity is "Done".
4. We are not free to sin as much as we want to, we are free to live for Christ.

Extra: Paul arguing with Peter

Paul is on such an equal par with the original disciples that he feels free to argue with Peter, leader of the Twelve, when Peter makes a big mistake. This happens when Peter visits the church that Paul and Barnabas are pastoring in Antioch, Syria. Peter, feeling pressured by Jewish Christians who still observe the laws of Moses, stops eating and socializing with Gentile members of the church. According to Jewish law, Gentiles are considered ritually unclean. Jews who come into contact with them have to perform cleansing rituals before they can worship God at the temple.

What Peter's behavior amounts to is religious segregation within the church. At best, both groups would have considered themselves separate but equal. More likely, each group would have considered itself superior.

Other Jews follow Peter's lead, until Paul publicly confronts him, saying: "If we can be acceptable to God by obeying the Law, it was useless for Christ to die" (2:21).

POINT: Understand that your influence is important. The messages you send by what you choose to do or not do are really important as leaders.

POINT: Sometimes you have to stand up to those you look up to. We are all human.