

# Galatians - Introduction & Background

## Authorship

It is generally acknowledged that Paul is the author of the letter to the Galatians. As far as the internal evidence is concerned, the book identifies Paul as the author two times (Gal 1:1; 5:2). Also, the autobiographical section of the letter (Gal 1–2) harmonizes well with what is presented of Paul's life and ministry as recorded in the Book of Acts (Acts 9:1–31; 11:19–30). In addition, the theology of Galatians is equivalent to the theological viewpoint that Paul presented in his letter to the Romans. External evidence also supports Pauline authorship. Galatians was both quoted and attributed to Paul by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and even Marcion.

## Audience, Place of Writing, Date

An interpreter's view regarding audience, place of writing, and date of this letter is dependent upon whether he holds to the Northern or Southern Galatian theory. Paul refers to his audience as those in Galatia (1:2) and the Galatians (Gal 3:1). Such a designation could refer to the Celtic people, later called Gauls, who migrated from Western Europe through Italy and Greece and settled in north central and east central Asia Minor. The predominant cities of this region included Ancyra, Pessinus, and Tavium. Such a designation could also refer to territories added to the south after the area was turned into a Roman province following the conquest by Augustus in 25 B.C. The principal cities of this area included Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

Those holding to the Northern Galatian theory prefer to interpret "Galatia" in its earlier ethnographic sense. Proponents of this view hold that Paul established churches in Northern Asia Minor on his second missionary journey after the Holy Spirit had forbade him from preaching in Asia (Acts 16:6–8). On his third missionary journey he visited these churches (Acts 18:23) and later wrote to them either from Ephesus in A.D. 54 or Corinth in A.D. 57. The Northern Galatian theory represents the traditional view of the church. Lightfoot is its best-known scholarly defender.

The Northern Galatian theory has several points in its favor. First, "Galatians" usually identified people in the north. Second, because Luke typically referred to districts rather than provinces (Acts 13:13–14; 14:6), he is likely doing the same thing to describe Paul going through Galatia in Acts 16:6. Third, similarities existed between the way the Galatians are described in the letter and the Gallic inhabitants of North Galatia. Both could be described as fickle, quarrelsome, boastful, immoral, loveable, and exasperating. Fourth, Paul's audience seems to be comprised primarily of Gentiles (Gal 4:8; 5:2; 6:12)<sup>1</sup> and fewer

Jews settled in the north. Fifth, the style of the letter matches that of Romans and 2 Corinthians and these were both written during Paul's third missionary journey. Sixth, Paul mentions an illness (Gal 4:13) and such an illness is not mentioned in his first missionary journey (Acts 13–14).

However, these points seem to be outweighed by the Southern Galatian theory. Those holding to this view prefer to understand the term "Galatia" in its later provincial sense. This view maintains that after establishing various churches in southern Galatia on his first missionary journey (Acts 13–14), Paul wrote to these churches at the conclusion of his first missionary journey from Syrian Antioch. He wrote the letter in A.D. 49 just prior to the Jerusalem Council. Some nuance the view further. If Galatians 4:13 refers to Acts 16:6, then the book was written after the Jerusalem Council. On the other hand, if Galatians 4:13 refers to Acts 14:21, then the letter was written before the Jerusalem Council. The Southern Galatians theory represents the majority opinion in scholarly circles today. Ramsay is its best-known scholarly defender.

The Southern Galatian theory has the following points in its favor. First, the churches established by Paul in the Book of Acts are all located in the south rather than the north. Second, some of the representatives that accompanied Paul in delivering the offering to the needy saints in Jerusalem were from the south, such as Gaius and Timothy, while none were from the north (Acts 20:4; 1 Cor 16:1). Third, roads from Tarsus, Paul's hometown, pass directly through the cities of South Galatia rather than North Galatia. Fourth, although a trip into Northern Galatia would have constituted a radical detour on Paul's second missionary journey, no similar detour occurred with Paul's trip into South Galatia on his first missionary journey. Fifth, the southern cities were more strategic from an evangelistic point of view given their location, population, and commerce. Thus, Paul's visit to these southern cities would be in keeping with the same evangelistic strategy that he employed elsewhere. Sixth, the size of these cities would have also made them a desirable target for the Judaizers as well. Seventh, the remoteness and isolation of Northern Galatia makes it unlikely that Paul would have traveled there. This is especially true considering Paul's illness (Gal 4:13). Eighth, such remoteness makes it equally unlikely that the Judaizers would have traveled there. Ninth, Paul typically refers to provincial titles rather than districts in his writings.

Tenth, Paul refers to Barnabas with no formal introduction (Gal 2:1, 9, 13). Because Barnabas accompanied Paul only on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:2), Barnabas would have been unknown to the Northern Galatians whom Paul supposedly encountered on his second missionary journey. Thus, Barnabas would be deserving of a fitting introduction in the letter. Eleventh, if Galatians had been written after the Jerusalem Council as the northern theory demands, Paul certainly would have cited this ecclesiastical ruling as precedent in his letter. This ruling dealt with circumcision and the believer's

relationship to the Law. These were the same issues Paul was dealing with in the letter to the Galatians. A related question is why did Peter act the way he did as recorded in Galatians 2:11-21 if the Jerusalem Council decree had already been handed down? Twelfth, it seems likely that Galatians was written prior to the Jerusalem Council since Paul concludes the autobiographical section of his letter by describing himself as being in Antioch (Gal 2:11). Acts 14:26 locates Paul in Antioch just prior to the Jerusalem Council. Thirteenth, Acts 16:6-8 and Acts 18:23 at best offer tenuous support for the Northern Galatian theory. In fact, Acts 16:6-8 seems to say that the Spirit forbade Paul to preach in Northern Galatia. Fourteenth, the details found in the Book of Galatians are consistent with the way the first missionary journey is described in Acts 13-14. Both sections of Scripture mention Paul's reception by the Galatians as a deity (Gal 4:14; Acts 14:12) as well as the injuries inflicted upon him by persecutors (Gal 6:17; Acts 14:19). Fifteenth, according to Ramsay, "Galatians" is a fitting name for the inhabitants of the south.

In sum, if the Southern Galatian theory is true, then Paul wrote the letter to the churches he had just established in Southern Galatia on his first missionary journey. Paul wrote the letter at the conclusion of his first missionary journey from Syrian Antioch in A.D. 49 just prior to the Jerusalem Council. Although much scholarly ink has been spilled in the debate between the Northern and Southern Galatian theories, it is unlikely that any interpretive issue within the book are significantly altered if an expositor holds to one view or the other.

### **Purpose and Occasion for Writing**

The Judaizers had quickly infiltrated the churches that Paul had established on his first missionary journey (Gal 1:6). They began to teach these new believers (Gal 4:6; 5:16) that although they had been justified by faith it was necessary that they be sanctified through submission to the Law (Gal 3:3).<sup>2</sup> Apparently the Judaizers had succeeded in shifting the Galatians to this new theology by attacking the credibility of the Apostle Paul. Perhaps the argument was made that Paul was not an original apostle (1 Cor 15:8) and therefore his theology is not authoritative. The Judaizers also argued that sanctification without the Law leads to license.

When Paul received word of this departure, he quickly wrote the Galatians a sharply worded letter designed to counter this false teaching. First, Paul writes to vindicate his apostleship by explaining that his gospel originated from God and not man (Gal 1-2). Thus, the Galatians should listen to Paul's message rather than that of the Judaizers. Second, Paul expounded upon the doctrine of salvation by faith alone (Gal 3-4). Here Paul is primarily dealing with sanctification issues (Gal 4:19) although he also deals with justification in an attempt to explain that the whole salvation experience is accomplished by grace rather than Law. Third, Paul explains that sanctification without the Law does not lead to license but rather a life empowered by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5-6).

### **Unique Characteristics**

First, the letter is extremely autobiographical in nature. Only 2 Corinthians gives more autobiographical information about the Apostle Paul. Second, the letter is the only one that Paul wrote that addressed a group of churches as opposed to a single church or a single individual. Thus, the letter can best be described as a circular letter. Third, the letter reflects a severity of tone coupled by moments of tenderness (Gal 4:19). This tone is best explained by the urgency of the moment. Fourth, Paul appeals to multiple literary features in an attempt to convince his audience. These include the use of personal experience, Old Testament exegesis, logic, warning, rebuke, rhetorical questions, allegory, and exhortation.

### **Message and Application**

Christians achieve sanctification by depending upon the resources offered by the Holy Spirit rather than through submission to the Law. In other words, the believer is sanctified in the same way he is justified. Both experiences come about through the work of the Holy Spirit. This message is applicable to many modern believers who follow a list of extra biblical "dos and don'ts" in an attempt to please God in their daily life. Such a view is a misguided view of sanctification. Rather, biblical sanctification occurs when believers yield to the resources of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16).

### **Outline**

#### **I. Autobiographical (Gal 1:1—2:21)**

##### **(1) Introduction (1:1-10)**

###### **(A) Greeting (1:1-2)**

###### **(B) Gospel (1:3-5)**

###### **(C) Denunciation (1:6-10)**

###### **(a) Departure (1:6)**

###### **(b) False gospel (1:7)**

###### **(c) Test for truth (1:8)**

###### **(d) Judgment against false gospel (1:9)**

###### **(e) Response to criticism against him (1:10)**

##### **(2) Paul defends his apostleship (1:11—2:21)**

###### **(A) Independence (1:11-24)**

###### **(a) Thesis (1:11-12)**

###### **(i) Revealed directly from Christ (1:11)**

###### **(ii) Not revealed through traditional educational methods (1:12)**

###### **(b) Before conversion (1:13-14)**

###### **(i) Persecution of the early church (1:13)**

###### **(ii) Advancement in Judaism (1:14a)**

###### **(iii) Zeal for religious traditions (1:14b)**

###### **(c) Conversion (1:15-16a)**

###### **(i) God set him apart from conception (v15a)**

- (ii) God called him (1:15b)
  - (iii) God revealed Himself to him (1:16)
- (d) After conversion (1:16b-24)
  - (i) Paul did not confer with anyone (1:16b)
  - (ii) Paul did not go to Jerusalem (1:17)
  - (iii) Paul's minimal contact with the apostles (1:18-19)
  - (iv) Paul's testimony (1:20)
  - (v) Paul's agreement and limited contact with the Judean churches (1:21-24)
- (B) Interdependence (2:1-10)
  - (a) Paul's coming (2:1)
  - (b) Paul's concern (2:2)
  - (c) Paul's companion (2:3)
  - (d) Paul's conviction (2:4-5)
  - (e) Paul's commission (2:6-9)
  - (f) Paul's commendation (2:10)
- (C) Rebuke of a lead apostle (2:11-21)
  - (a) Conflict (2:11)
  - (b) Cause of the conflict (2:12)
  - (c) Consequences of the conflict (2:13-14)
  - (d) Content resulting from the conflict (2:15-21)
    - (i) Justification by faith alone (2:15-16)
    - (ii) Response to charge of license (2:17-18)
    - (iii) The believer's union with Christ (2:19-20)
    - (iv) Legalists make Christ's death unnecessary (2:21)

## II. Doctrine (Gal 3:1—4:31)

- (1) Doctrine explained (3:1-29)
  - (A) The charge (3:1)
  - (B) The questions (3:2-5)
    - (a) How did you receive the Spirit? (3:2)
    - (b) Are you now being perfected by the flesh? (3:3)
    - (c) Have you suffered so much in vain? (3:4)
    - (d) On what basis does God work miracles among you? (3:5)
  - (C) The children of Abraham (3:6-9)
    - (a) The pattern of Abraham (3:6)
    - (b) The progeny of Abraham (3:7)
    - (c) The purpose of Abraham (3:8)
    - (d) The promise of Abraham (3:9)

- (D) The purpose of the Law (3:10-25)
  - (a) The Law's inability to justify (3:10-12)
  - (b) Christ redeemed us from the Law's curse (3:13-14)
  - (c) The Law does not nullify faith (3:15-18)
  - (d) The purpose of the Law is to lead us to Christ (3:19-25)
- (E) The Privileges of adulthood (3:26-29)
  - (a) Sons of God (3:26)
  - (b) Baptism into Christ (3:27)
  - (c) One with other Christians (3:28)
  - (d) Children of Abraham (3:29)
- (2) Doctrine illustrated (4:1-31)
  - (A) Domestic: Guardian (4:1-11)
    - (a) Law: preparation for sonship (4:1-3)
    - (b) Christ: source of sonship (4:4-5)
      - (i) God sent forth His Son (4:4)
      - (ii) In order to:
        - (a) Redeem those under the Law
        - (b) Adoption
    - (c) Spirit: confirmation of sonship (4:6)
    - (d) Our new position: consummation of sonship (4:7)
    - (e) Hold fast: obligation of sonship (4:8-11)
      - (i) Before conversion (4:8)
      - (ii) After conversion (4:9)
      - (iii) Law described (4:10)
      - (iv) Paul's fear (4:11)
  - (B) Personal (4:12-20)
    - (a) Paul's appeal (4:12a)
    - (b) Paul's remembrance (4:12b-16)
    - (c) Paul's warning (4:17-18)
    - (d) Paul's desire (4:19-20)
  - (C) Biblical (4:21-31)
    - (a) Introductory question (4:21)
    - (b) History (4:22-23)
    - (c) Allegory (4:24-26)
    - (d) Application (4:27-30)
      - (i) Grace ushers in blessing (4:27)
      - (ii) Continue on in the supernatural (4:28)
      - (iii) Understand why you are being persecuted (4:29)

(iv) Excommunicate the Judaizers (4:30)

(e) Conclusion (4:31)

### III. Practical (Gal 5:1—6:18)

(1) Balance in the Christian life (5:1-26)

(A) No to legalism (5:1-12)

(a) Exhortation to reject legalism (5:1)

(b) Reasons to reject legalism (5:2-12)

(i) Makes Christ unnecessary (5:2)

(ii) Obligates one to keep the whole Law (5:3)

(iii) Causes us to fall from grace (5:4-6)

(iv) Thwarts spiritual progress (5:7-10)

(v) Empties the cross of its offense (5:11-12)

(B) No to license (5:13-15)

(a) Our calling to freedom (5:13a)

(b) What we are free to do (5:13b-15)

(i) To oppose the flesh (5:13b)

(ii) To love one another (5:13c)

(iii) To serve one another (5:13d)

(iv) To fulfill God's moral Law (5:14)

(v) To not harm others (5:15)

(C) Yes to the Spirit (5:16-26)

(a) Promise of victory (5:16-18)

(i) Command (5:16a)

(ii) Promise of victory over the flesh (5:16b)

(iii) Conflict described (5:17)

(iv) Victory over the flesh through the Spirit rather than the Law (5:18)

(b) Works of the flesh (5:19-21)

(i) Sexual sins (5:19b)

(a) Immorality

(b) Impurity

(c) Sensuality

(ii) Religious sins (5:20a)

(a) Idolatry

(b) Sorcery

(iii) Social discord (5:20b-21a)

(a) Enmities

(b) Strife

(c) Jealousy

- (d) Outbursts of anger
  - (e) Disputes
  - (f) Dissensions
  - (g) Factions
  - (h) Envy
- (iv) Intemperate sins (5:21b)
  - (a) Drunkenness
  - (b) Carousing
- (v) Generic sins (5:21c)
  - (a) "and the like"
- (vi) Conclusion (5:21d)
  - (a) "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God"
- (c) Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23)
  - (i) Mental or God-ward attributes (5:22b)
    - (a) Love
    - (b) Joy
    - (c) Peace
  - (ii) Interpersonal and man-ward attributes (5:22c)
    - (a) Patience
    - (b) Kindness
    - (c) Goodness
  - (iii) Personal or self-ward attributes (5:22d-23a)
    - (a) Faithfulness
    - (b) Gentleness
    - (c) Self control
  - (iv) Conclusion (5:23b)
    - (a) "against such things there is no law"
- (d) Provision for victory (5:24-26)
  - (i) Provisions (5:24-25)
    - (a) Co-crucifixion with Christ (5:24)
    - (b) Holy Spirit (5:25)
  - (ii) Flesh to be conquered (5:26)
    - (a) Pride
    - (b) Dissension
    - (c) Envy

(2) Service to:

- (A) Sinning Christian (6:1)



- (B) Burdened Christian (6:2-5)
    - (a) Bear one another's burdens (6:2)
    - (b) Pride prevents burden sharing (6:3)
    - (c) Testing one's own actions prevents pride (6:4)
    - (d) The believer can test his own actions based upon his willingness to carry his expected load (6:5)
  - (C) Teachers (6:6-9)
    - (a) Responsibility for all believers to financially support the teaching of God's Word (6:6)
    - (b) Law of sowing and reaping (6:7)
    - (c) Application of the law of sowing and reaping to supporting teachers (6:8)
    - (d) Exhortation not to give up (6:9)
  - (D) All (6:10)
  - (3) Conclusion (6:11-18)
    - (A) Paul's autograph (6:11)
      - (a) Paul's emphasis
      - (b) Paul's amanuensis
    - (B) Paul's adversaries (6:12-13)
      - (a) Avoid persecution (6:12)
      - (b) Hypocrisy (6:13a)
      - (c) Seeking a personal following (6:13b)
    - (C) Paul's boast (6:14-15)
      - (a) Paul's boast in the cross (6:14a)
      - (b) The cross yielded two benefits (6:14b-15)
        - (i) Caused the world to lose its power over Paul (6:14b)
        - (ii) Brought forth a new creation (6:15)
    - (D) Paul's benediction (6:16-18)
      - (a) Paul's blessing (6:16)
      - (b) Paul's credentials (6:17)
      - (c) Paul's conclusion (6:18)
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(1) Who wrote it?

- Paul (Gal 1:1; 5:2)

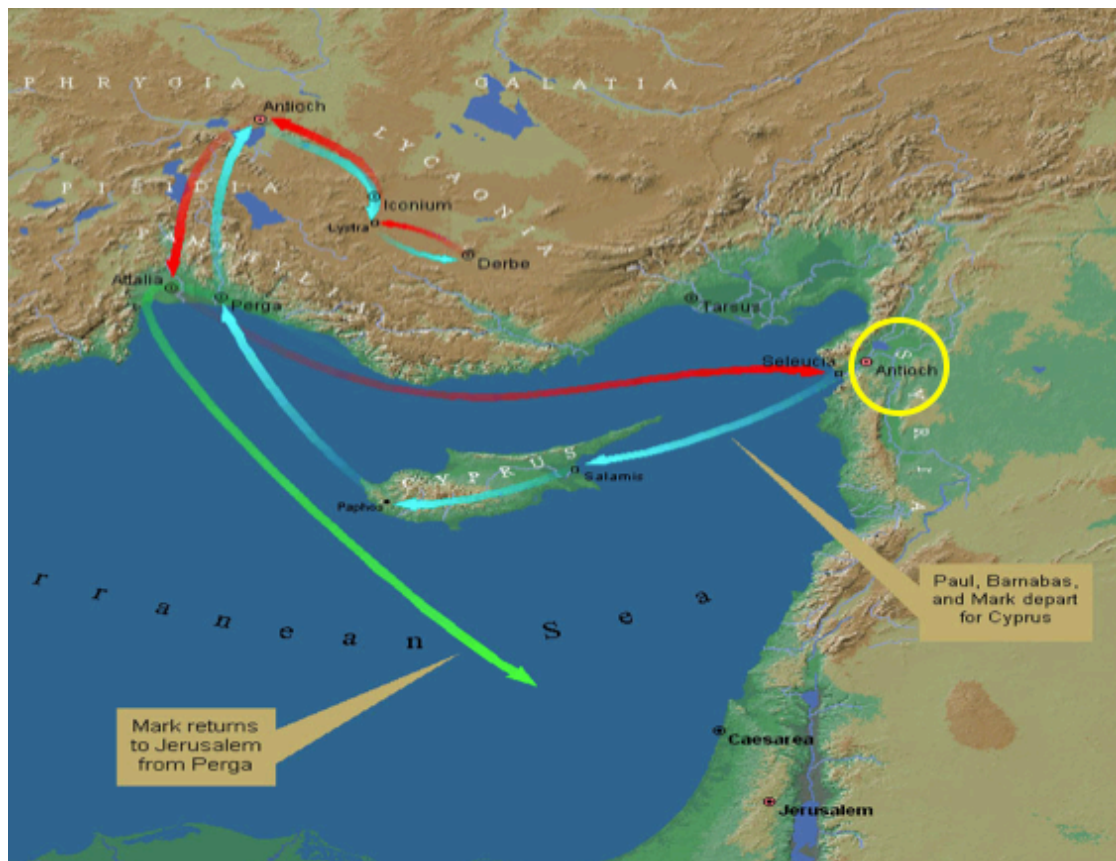
Gal 1:1: Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through human agency, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),

Gal 5:2: Look! I, Paul, tell you that if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

- Pauline theology

Paul's theology as outlined in Galatians is identical to his other epistles, primarily Romans

- Southern Galatian Theory
  - Majority view
  - Paul planted churches in southern Galatia on his 1st missionary journey
  - Paul wrote to these churches from Syrian Antioch at the conclusion of his 1st missionary journey (Acts 13-14) but before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15, 49 AD)



(2) Who was it written to?

- Galatians (1:2; 3:1)
- Believers (3:3; 4:6) - one of the most important things to understand to interpret Galatians accurately is that Paul is writing to believers/Christians

(3) Where was it written from?

- Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:27-30) - headquarters of the early church (after Jerusalem)
- Launching place of Paul's three missionary journeys

(4) When was it written?

- 49 AD
- Earliest of Paul's Epistles

(5) Why was it written?

- New converts (Gal 3:3; 4:6) from the first missionary journey
  - After Paul left and returned to Antioch, Judaizers (Pharisees) had infiltrated the southern Galatia churches, preaching a false gospel (salvation by works/obedience to the Mosaic Law. There were three types of Judaizers/Pharisees:
    - The first type of Judaizers/Pharisees did not separate justification and sanctification. They mixed the faith from justification with works or obedience to some type of "system" in order for someone to be saved.
    - They taught that you have to obey the Mosaic Law to accomplish some facet of your salvation. Jesus defeated this type of Pharisee/teaching in Matt 5:20.
    - They came in after Paul left and short-circuited Paul's gospel of faith alone in Christ alone, teaching that you have to also adhere/obey the Mosaic Law in order to be saved and go to heaven.
  - Another type of Judaizer/Pharisee believed that you had to adhere to some "system" or perform good works, not to be justified, not to be sanctified, but to join the church.
    - Many Gentiles came to faith in Christ during Paul's first missionary journey, including these Galatians
    - Some of the Jews and the apostles were not sure that Gentiles could come to Christ without going under the Mosaic Law, so they had a council meeting (Acts 15) and determined that a person did not have to submit themselves to the Mosaic Law to join the church.
  - The third group of Judaizer/Pharisee taught that it was great that you were saved by faith alone, it's great that you're now a member of the church, the body of Christ, but if you want to grow in your faith as a Christian, you have to obey the Mosaic Law. The Law is the guideline for believers to grow in Christ; it defines God's will for the church age believer.
    - This group mixed faith and works, not for justification or ecclesiology (in order to join the church), but for sanctification.
    - This is the group of Judaizers/Pharisees that Paul directs Galatians toward...those who believed and taught that a believer had to adhere to the Mosaic Law in order to grow in their practical sanctification.

- Galatians is not a book about justification, even though many think it is. Paul's point when he brings up justification in this epistle is to teach believers that we are sanctified in the same way that we are justified: by faith.
  - In order to make this point, Paul asks how the Galatians were justified: by faith alone in Christ alone, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - Paul's point is now that you're saved/justified, follow that same pattern/trajectory in your sanctification process so that we'll understand that we will be sanctified in the same way we were justified: not by obedience to the Mosaic Law, but through faith alone in Christ alone, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- One of the reasons that Christians today are confused about the theme and purpose of Galatians is that the Protestant Reformers quoted Galatians extensively. Martin Luther referred to the book of Galatians as his "wife."
  - In his arguments with the Roman Catholic church, Luther often quoted Galatians because it teaches that we are saved by faith alone. The Roman Catholics of Luther's day taught that one was justified by faith plus works.
  - This is why today many Christians think that Galatians is a book about justification, when in actuality it is not. When Paul states that we are justified by faith alone, he's making a larger point. He's saying look how you were saved...faith alone in Christ alone...now use this same formula/recipe in your sanctification.
- Once Paul returned to Syrian Antioch after his first missionary journey, he learned that after his departure, these Judaizers/Pharisees came in and converted the churches there to a belief that in order to be sanctified, they had to adhere to the Mosaic Law.
  - This frustrated Paul, that they departed so soon from the true gospel that he had taught them, so he wrote this letter to them to set them straight and counter the attacks of these Judaizers/Pharisees.
- *Ad hominem* attack against Paul
  - One of the ways these Judaizers/Pharisees wedged their way into these churches that Paul planted was to attack Paul's character. They didn't attack Paul's arguments, they attacked him personally. They had two lines of attack:
    - His apostleship (1 Cor 15:8-9) - Paul was not one of the original 12 apostles. Paul did not walk with Christ during His ministry; he did not see the resurrected Christ and spend 40 days under His teaching before the Ascension. Paul wasn't converted until long after Jesus ascended back to heaven.

- Their line of attack against Paul to these new Galatian believers went something like: don't put too much stock/trust in Paul because he wasn't one of the original apostles; he's an apostle in name only
- He taught license - the second line of attack of these Judaizers/Pharisees is that they said Paul teaches that you're saved without the Law, you join the church without the Law, and you are sanctified without the Law, but if you don't adhere to the Mosaic Law, you're going to live like the devil and give yourself over to licentious behavior.
- They argued that the only thing available to restrain your flesh/sin nature was strict adherence to the Mosaic Law. Otherwise, one could not live the Christian life.

#### (6) What is inside?

- Galatians 1-2: autobiographical
  - Paul attempts to rehabilitate his reputation with the Galatians, specifically around how he became an apostle, since it was not the traditional route
  - So Paul describes his process to becoming an apostle so the Galatians could understand that he was indeed an apostle called by God, which would boost his reputation and the trustworthiness of his teaching.
    - He'll describe how he went to Arabia and was personally tutored by God through direct revelation
    - He'll describe how the message that he received from God while there was in perfect harmony/congruence with previous apostolic teaching
- Galatians 3-4: doctrinal
  - We learn that we are sanctified in the exact same way that we were justified: by faith alone in Christ alone, through the power and resources of the Holy Spirit
  - Paul will say that if believers will walk in the Spirit through the same process, they will find that they will make tremendous progress in the realm of sanctification
  - We are not sanctified by the Law, contrary to what the Judaizers are teaching, but are sanctified by faith alone in Christ alone, through the power of the Holy Spirit
- Galatians 5-6: practical
  - Paul explains that sanctification without the Law does not lead to license (one of the two primary attacks against him by the Judaizers)
  - He explains that if you take yourself outside of the Mosaic Law and simply trust (by faith) in the power of the Holy Spirit for your sanctification, that will not cause you to live like the devil.

- Instead, what it will do is lead you into a level of holiness and sanctification that can never be accomplished in the power of our human flesh. A level of holiness that cannot come from us trying harder or working more.

(7) What is it about?

Message: Christian sanctification is achieved by depending upon the resources of the Spirit rather than through submission to the Mosaic Law.

Purpose: To convince the Galatian believers to embrace Paul's understanding of sanctification and reject the Judaizers understanding of sanctification.

The key verse in Galatians is 3:3. If you understand this verse, you'll understand the entire book of Galatians: Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

(8) How does the book apply to daily life?

Many believers follow a list of "do's and don'ts" rather than depending upon the Spirit's resources in a misguided attempt to please God in their daily lives.

The average Christian is taught the importance of holiness, but they are never taught how holiness in daily life is achieved. Because the Christian desires to be holy, but doesn't know how to achieve it, they begin to create false standards, such as don't drink and don't smoke, don't go to R-rated or PG-13 rated movies, my skirt must be a certain length, etc. This is what legalism does.

Legalism is the outworking of the Christian heart that knows they have to be holy, but doesn't know how to attain it. So what they do is generate a personal standard on how to obtain holiness. But Galatians comes alongside of that believer and says, You want to be holy...it's not as complicated as you're making it out to be. To obtain holiness, you simply follow the same pattern/formula that you followed when you were saved: faith alone in Christ alone, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is how you achieve holiness: in the same way you were saved to begin with.

Galatians tells us to dump the Mosaic Law, dump our own manmade standards, and avail yourselves to the resources of God, and you will begin to understand holiness.

*Now you have the country filled with preachers. If you could have stopped in to all the services held last Sunday between the Atlantic and the Pacific, you would have heard a mess of sermons. All of them could be boiled down to just two words: be good. But how*

*many sermons were preached last Sunday that told people "how" to be good? They just don't know anything about that. That involves the plan of deliverance from the reigning power of sin and I have tried to tell you that that is one of the most neglected things: how to be good. God has a way, a plan, and a provision but you must know and understand it. And I'm just ambitious enough to hope that you men are going to get out there and teach it. Don't say that it's too big a job to make the average audience understand. They have to understand if they are to walk as Christians.* [Notes from Lewis Sperry Chafer, from an unpublished lecture in 1948]

Sanctification is not something that automatically happens in the life of a believer. You have to learn about the resources of God and avail yourself of those resources to grow as a Christian. It doesn't happen by itself. We have to learn of the plan of God, the provision of God, and I have to actively avail myself to the resources/provision of God if I'm going to grow as a Christian.

(9) What makes the book different?

- Autobiographical - Paul talks a lot about himself in order to defend his apostleship and the Judaizer attacks against him (Cf. Gal 1-2)
- Circular letter - it was sent to many churches; it is not addressed to a single church, but to the new believers in the many churches that Paul planted in the area of Galatia on his first missionary journey
- Severity of tone (1:6; 3:1) coupled with tenderness (4:19)
- Multiple literary devices - Paul uses every tool in his linguistic arsenal to get his point across. He appeals to personal experience, OT exegesis, logic, warning, rebuke, rhetorical questions, allegory, and exhortation

Some other notes about the uniqueness of Galatians:

(1) If you compare this epistle with the other Pauline epistles, you will see that it is different: it is a stern, severe, and solemn message (Cf. 1:6-9; 3:1-5). The Galatian believers were in grave peril because the foundations of their faith were being attacked. The epistle contains no word of commendation, praise, or thanksgiving. There is no request for prayer, and there is no mention of their standing in Christ. No one with him is mentioned by name.

(2) In this epistle the heart of Paul the apostle is laid bare, and there is deep emotion and strong feeling. This is his fighting epistle: Paul has no toleration for legalism. Someone has said, "The Epistle to the Romans comes from the head of Paul; The Epistle to the Galatians comes from the heart of Paul." "Galatians takes up controversially what Romans puts systematically."

(3) This epistle is a declaration of emancipation from legalism of any type. This was Martin Luther's favorite epistle. It is the manifesto of Christian liberty, the impregnable citadel, and a veritable Gibraltar against any attack on the heart of the gospel. As someone put it, "Immortal victory is set upon its brow."

(4) Galatians is the strongest declaration and defense of the doctrine of justification by faith in or out of Scripture. It is God's polemic on behalf of the most vital truth of the Christian faith against any attack. Not only is a sinner saved by grace through faith plus nothing, but the saved sinner lives by grace.

### **Relevance Today**

Galatians is not only a proclamation of liberty, it is also a protest against legalism.

"Legalism" is both a belief and a practice. As a belief, legalism is the conviction that we *can make ourselves acceptable* to God by keeping rules. Often the rules in view are those imposed by man, not those required by God. However, misapplying biblical laws is also a form of legalism. As a practice, legalism is the keeping of rules with a view to gaining merit with God. In a larger sense, legalism is the belief that we can make ourselves acceptable to God by our good works. Many religious systems today mix law and grace and present a garbled, confused way of salvation that is actually a way of bondage (2:4; 4:9; 5:1).

Keeping the Sabbath, dietary laws, an earthly priesthood, holy days, obeying rules—all of these are swept away in Galatians and replaced by the glorious liberty the believer has through faith in Christ!