

### Paul Rebukes Peter at Syrian Antioch (late 48)

Acts 15:1–2

Galatians 2:11–14

1 And some men came down from Judea *and* began teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom *prescribed* by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

2 And *after* there was no little strife and debate by Paul and Barnabas against them, they appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others from among them to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this issue.

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed *him* to his face, because he was condemned.  
12 For before certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles,  
but when they came,

he withdrew and separated himself, *because he* was afraid of those *who were* of the circumcision,  
13 and the rest of the Jews also joined in *this* hypocrisy with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with them in *their* hypocrisy.  
14 But when I saw that they were not being straightforward with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of *them* all, “If you, *although you* are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you try to compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

### Paul’s Letter to the Galatian Churches – Part 1 (late 48)

Galatians 1:1–4:7

#### Introduction

1:1 Paul, an apostle not from men nor by men but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead,  
2 and all the brothers with me, to the churches of Galatia.  
3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,  
4 who gave himself for our sins in order to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,  
5 to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

#### Reason for the Letter

6 I am astonished that you are turning away so quickly from the one who called you by the grace of Christ to a different gospel,  
7 not that *there* is a different *gospel*, except there are some who are disturbing you and wanting to distort the gospel of Christ.  
8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim a gospel to you contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let him be accursed!  
9 As we said before, and now I say again, if anyone is proclaiming a gospel *to* you contrary to what you have received, let him be accursed!  
10 For am I now making an appeal to people or *to* God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ.

#### Declaration of the Divine Origin of Paul’s Gospel

11 For I make known to you, brothers, the gospel that has been proclaimed by me, that it is not of human origin.  
12 For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

#### Autobiographical Detail Supporting Paul’s Declaration

13 For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism, that to an extraordinary degree I was persecuting the church of God, and trying to destroy it,  
14 and was progressing in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my nation, *because* I was a far more zealous adherent of the traditions handed down by my forefathers.  
15 But when the one who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called *me* by his grace was pleased  
16 to reveal his Son in me in order that I would proclaim the gospel *about* him among the Gentiles, immediately I did not consult with flesh and blood,  
17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me, but I went away to Arabia and I returned again to Damascus.  
18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days,  
19 but I did not see *any* others of the apostles except James, the brother of the Lord.

20 (Now *the things* which I am writing to you, behold, *I assure you* before God that I am not lying.)

21 Then I came to the regions of Syria and of Cilicia,

22 but I was unknown in person to the churches of Judea *that are* in Christ,

23 and they were only hearing, “The one formerly persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith that formerly he was attempting to destroy,”

24 and they were glorifying God because of me.

### **The Famine Visit (see Acts 11:27–30)**

2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking along Titus also.

2 Now I went up *there* because of a revelation and laid out to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles, but in private to the influential people, lest somehow I was running, or had run, in vain.

3 But not even Titus *who was* with me, *although* he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

4 Now *this was* because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, in order that they might enslave us,

5 to whom not even for an hour did we yield in subjection, in order that the truth of the gospel might remain continually with you.

6 But from those who were influential (whatever they were, *it makes* no difference to me, God does not show partiality)—for those who were influential added nothing to me.

7 But these, *when they* saw that I had been entrusted *with* the gospel to the uncircumcision, just as Peter to the circumcision

8 (for the one who was at work through Peter for *his* apostleship to the circumcision was at work also through me for the Gentiles),

9 and *when* James and Cephas and John—those thought to be pillars—acknowledged the grace given to me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right *hand* of fellowship, in order that *we should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision.

10 *They asked* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing I was also eager to do.

### **Paul Opposes Peter at Syrian Antioch**

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed *him* to his face, because he was condemned.

12 For before certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles, but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, *because he* was afraid of those *who were* of the circumcision,

13 and the rest of the Jews also joined in *this* hypocrisy with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with them in *their* hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that they were not being straightforward with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of *them* all, “If you, *although you* are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you try to compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

### **Justification by Faith Apart from Circumcision**

15 *We are* Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles,

16 but knowing that a person is not justified by the works of the law, if not by faith in Jesus Christ, and we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified.

17 But if *while* seeking to be justified by Christ, *we* ourselves also have been found *to be* sinners, then *is* Christ an agent of sin? May it never be!

18 For if I build up again these *things* which I destroyed, I show myself *to be* a transgressor.

19 For through the law I died to the law, in order that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ,

20 and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me, and that *life* I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

21 I do not declare invalid the grace of God, for if righteousness *is* through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.

### **The Galatians’ Conversion Confirms Justification Apart from Circumcision**

3:1 O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* having been crucified?

2 I want only to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now trying to be made complete by the flesh?

4 Have you suffered so many *things* for nothing—if indeed also *it was* for nothing?

5 Therefore does the one who gives you the Spirit and who works miracles among you *do so* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

### **Abraham’s Conversion Confirms Justification Apart from Circumcision**

6 Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness, [[Gen 15:6](#)]

7 then understand that the ones who have faith, these are sons of Abraham.

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the good news in advance to Abraham: “In you all the nations will be blessed.” [[Gen 12:3](#); [18:18](#); [22:18](#)]

9 So then, the ones *who have* faith are blessed together with Abraham who believed.

### **The Unity and Nature of the Law Contradict Justification by Law-keeping**

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who does not abide by all *the things* that are written in the book of the law to do them.” [[Deut 27:26](#)]

11 Now *it is* clear that no one is justified in the sight of God by the law, because “the one who is righteous will live by faith.” [[Hab 2:4](#)]

12 But the law is not from faith, but “the one who does these *things* will live by them.” [[Lev 18:5](#)]

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law *by* becoming a curse for us, because it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree,” [[Deut 21:23](#)]

14 in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

### **The Nature of the Abrahamic Covenant Confirms Justification Apart from Circumcision**

15 Brothers, I am speaking according to a human perspective. Nevertheless, *when* the covenant of a man has been ratified, no one declares *it* invalid or adds additional provisions *to it*.

16 Now to Abraham and to his descendant the promises were spoken. It does not say, “and to descendants,” as concerning many, but as concerning one, “and to your descendant,” who is Christ. [[Gen 22:18](#)]

17 Now I am saying this: the law, that came after four hundred and thirty years, does not revoke a covenant previously ratified by God, in order to nullify the promise.

18 For if the inheritance *is* from the law, *it is* no longer from the promise, but God graciously gave *it* to Abraham through the promise.

### **Digression to Discuss the Purpose of the Law**

19 Why then the law? It was added on account of transgressions, until the descendant should come to whom it had been promised, having been ordered through angels by the hand of a mediator. [cf. [Deut 33:2](#)]

20 Now the mediator is not for one, but God is one.

21 Therefore *is* the law opposed to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, certainly righteousness would have been from the law.

22 But the scripture imprisoned all under sin, in order that the promise could be given by faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were detained under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed.

24 So then, the law became our guardian until Christ, in order that we could be justified by faith.

25 But *after* faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

### **Our Spiritual Union with Christ Confirms Justification Apart from Circumcision**

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,

27 for as many *of you* as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are descendants of Abraham, heirs according to the promise.

4:1 Now I say, for as long a time *as* the heir is a child, *he is* no different from a slave, *although he* is master of everything,

2 but he is under guardians and managers until the time set by *his* father.

3 So also we, when we were children, we were enslaved under the elemental spirits of the world.

4 But when the fullness of time came, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 in order that he might redeem those under the law, in order that we might receive the adoption.

6 And because you are sons, God sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba! (Father!),”

7 so that you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, also an heir through God.

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**Chronological Notes**

## 1) Identity of the Galatians.

- A) Galatians is the only Pauline letter that is not addressed to either an individual or to Christians in a specific city.<sup>1</sup> In the period of late antiquity, “Galatia” was an elastic term reflecting the changing political developments of central Asia Minor (Turkey).<sup>2</sup>
- B) Galatia became a Roman province in 25 BC, and the province included people from many ethnic groups, including the “Celts” or “Galatians,” who had migrated to Asia Minor by 278 BC. In Paul’s day the province was a large area that reached from the Black Sea in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south. As time passed, however, the province was reshaped and much of the territory in the south was removed and formed into the new province of Pisidia with Antioch as its capital.<sup>3</sup>
- C) Commentators in early church history naturally thought Galatians was written to the province as it existed in later Roman history (to the north). But the work of William Ramsay<sup>4</sup> and others has led modern scholars to reexamine this position in light of the earlier dimensions of the province in Paul’s day (to the south).<sup>5</sup> This has led to the development of two theories regarding Paul’s intended audience:

## (1) North Galatia.

- (a) Geography: the middle to upper part of central Turkey.
- (b) Cities: unknown cities to the north. Perhaps Ancyra (modern capital of Turkey), Pessinus and Tavium.
- (c) Missionary Journey: churches founded on the second missionary journey and revisited on the third (Acts 16:6; 18:23).

## (2) South Galatia.

- (a) Geography: the southern part of central Turkey.
- (b) Cities: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.
- (c) Missionary Journey: churches founded on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:13–14:23).

- D) While there are strong arguments for both theories, the south Galatia theory is preferable.<sup>6</sup> Below are some arguments for the south Galatian theory:<sup>7</sup>

- (1) We have clear record of the apostle’s visit to, and establishment of churches in, the cities of the Roman province of southern Galatia, whereas we have no definite record of such in northern Galatia proper.
- (2) Paul repeatedly alludes to Barnabas in Galatians 2 as though he were well known to them. We know Barnabas accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey, but he was not with Paul on his second or any subsequent journey as far as is known.

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<sup>1</sup> The destination of most of Paul’s letters is clear: Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, Thessalonica, Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy George, “Galatians,” *New American Commentary*, 38.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 2–5.

<sup>4</sup> William M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, “Galatians,” *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Older commentators favor the north Galatia theory (Lightfoot), while most modern commentators favor the south Galatia Theory (F. F. Bruce).

<sup>7</sup> For more arguments see: Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxiii–lxx; Rainer Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period*, 286–291; Schreiner, *Galatians*, 24–29.

- (3) In Galatians 1, Paul makes a strong case for his independence from the Jerusalem apostles by detailing each visit he made to Jerusalem. If he omitted a visit, he would open himself to the charge that his gospel was influenced by the apostles. Since only two visits are recorded in Galatians (matching Acts 9:26–30 and 11:27–30), the letter must have been written before the Council of Acts 15 and thus must be addressed to the only churches that existed in Galatia at the time (cities in the south).<sup>8</sup>

## 2) Date.

- A) As can be seen from the third argument in favor of the south Galatia theory, the date of the letter and its destination are linked:
- (1) If addressed to churches in south Galatia, then the letter was written shortly after Paul's first missionary journey and either prior to or just after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. This puts the letter's date at AD 48–50 (Early Date).
  - (2) If addressed to churches in north Galatia, then the letter was written after Paul's second missionary journey and either prior to or during his third missionary journey. This puts the letter's date at AD 53–58 (Late Date).
- B) Another important factor for dating the letter is the correlation of Paul's visits to Jerusalem recorded in Acts and Galatians.
- (1) In Acts, Luke records five visits by Paul to Jerusalem:
    - Conversion visit (Acts 9:26–30).
    - Famine visit (Acts 11:27–30).
    - Jerusalem Council visit (Acts 15:1–29).
    - Hasty visit (Acts 18:22).
    - Collection visit (Acts 21:15–17).
  - (2) In Galatians, Paul records only two visits to Jerusalem:
    - Conversion visit (Gal 1:18–20). This corresponds with the account in Acts 9:26–30.
    - Private Meeting visit (Gal 2:1–10). Now we come to the main difficulty—which visit is this?
  - (3) Proposed Solutions.
    - (a) Solution 1: Galatians 2:1–10 is Luke's third visit (Jerusalem Council) recorded in Acts 15:1–29, with the famine visit of Acts 11:27–30 left unmentioned by Paul in Galatians. This is the traditional view that held sway virtually unchallenged until the early twentieth century. This view allows for either an early or late date.
      - (i) This view has to answer the following questions: Why did Paul fail to mention a visit to Jerusalem in his autobiographical presentation? Why did Paul not mention the decision of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 in his letter to the Galatians? Why did Peter feel so pressured by the Jewish circumcision party at Syrian Antioch after the Council had just ruled on the issue?
    - (b) Solution 2: Galatians 2:1–10 is Luke's second visit (Famine Visit) recorded in Acts 11:27–30, with the Jerusalem Council visit of Acts 15 taking place after Galatians was written. Main proponents include: Ramsay, Bruce, George, Guthrie, Longenecker. This view obviously places an early date on Galatians making it Paul's first epistle (AD 48).
      - (i) In this view the time spans of Galatians 1:18 and 2:1 are understood to be concurrent rather than consecutive (i.e., three years after conversion and fourteen years after conversion). In my opinion, this solution is the better of the two.<sup>9</sup> See the table below for a summary of the chronology for Galatians:

<sup>8</sup> Schreiner, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Chronological Problem of Galatians 2:1–10", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120.480 (1963): 335–340.

Galatians	Event	Acts	Event
1:15–17	Paul's Conversion	9:1–25	Paul's Conversion
1:18–20	First Jerusalem Visit	9:26–30	With Barnabas in Jerusalem
2:1–10	Private Meeting Visit	11:27–30	Famine Visit
2:11–14	Dispute in Antioch	15:1–2	Dispute in Antioch
---	Paul writes Galatians	---	---
---	---	15:3–29	Jerusalem Council Visit
---	---	18:22	Hasty Visit
---	---	21:15–17	Collection Visit