

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

Acts 15:1–2

1 Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

Galatians 2:11–14

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

12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came,

he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you 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 *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),

2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

5 to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.

#### Reason for the Letter

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

7 which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

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

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

12 For I neither received 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 of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;

14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

15 But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately 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 returned once more to Damascus.

18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.

19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.

- 20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)  
 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.  
 22 I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;  
 23 but only, they kept hearing, “He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.”  
 24 And they were glorifying God because of me.

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

- 2:1 Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.  
 2 It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.  
 3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.  
 4 But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.  
 5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.  
 6 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.  
 7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised  
 8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),  
 9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.  
 10 *They only asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

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

- 11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.  
 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.  
 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.  
 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you 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 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.  
 17 But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!  
 18 For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.  
 19 For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.  
 20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.  
 21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

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

- 3:1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified?  
 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?  
 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?  
 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?  
 5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

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

- 6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. [[Gen 15:6](#)]  
 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.  
 8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.” [[Gen 12:3](#); [18:18](#); [22:18](#)]  
 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

**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 THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.” [Deut 27:26]

11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” [Hab 2:4]

12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.” [Lev 18:5]

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”— [Deut 21:23]

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

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

15 Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is *only* a man’s covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.

16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ. [Gen 22:18]

17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

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

19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. [cf. Deut 33:2]

20 Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one.

21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

**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 all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

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

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

4:1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,

2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then 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

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

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.
  - (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>

<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.

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

## 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:

| 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           |

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