

New Testament Foundations: Session Nine

Galatians: The Freedom Letter

"The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine."
Martin Luther

Authorship

1. Galatians is the _____ of Paul's epistles. He wrote it around 48 AD after his first missionary journey (47 AD) but before the Jerusalem Council (49 AD).
2. Paul and Barnabas established churches in the _____ part of the Roman province of Galatia on their first missionary journey. Galatians was a circular letter to the congregations in Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and (possibly) other cities not mentioned in Acts.

Background

1. Teachers known as "_____" had visited the Galatian churches and were upsetting the believers with a "different gospel."
2. The Judaizers were characterized by certain beliefs.
 - They believed that salvation came through faith in Christ _____ keeping the Mosaic Law.

Galatians 3:11

Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."

- They believed that circumcision was the _____ of the Old Covenant and therefore it was essential for salvation.

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

- They believed that Paul's authority was _____ because he was not sent from the Jerusalem church.

Galatians 1:1

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...

3. Paul understood that what was at stake was not merely the ritual of circumcision, but the _____ of the Gospel. If the Judaizers prevail, Christianity becomes another sect of Judaism and the death of Christ is invalidated.

¹ Quoted in, Martin Luther's Commentary on Galatians

Galatians 5:2-4

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law have been severed from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

4. For that reason, Galatians is filled with some of Paul's most pointed and _____ language.

Galatians 5:12

As for those who are troubling you, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

Style

1. The style of the epistle is _____, bold, and abrupt. Paul skips his usual opening expression of thanksgiving for the church and plunges at once into his polemic.
2. Paul was _____ and deeply troubled over his converts and fearful that his labor might have been in vain.

Galatians 4:11

I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

3. The letter falls into three general headings.
 - Chapters 1 and 2 are about maintaining the independence and _____ of his apostle-ship, and the divine origin of the Gospel.
 - Chapters 3 and 4 are about _____ the intrinsic truth of the Gospel.
 - Chapters 5 and 6 are about the moral _____ which legitimately and logically result from the Gospel.

Purpose

1. Galatians was written to _____ the Judaizers, proclaim the true Gospel, and to rescue the believers from a false Gospel.
 - To refute the Judaizers Paul declared the _____ of his Gospel.

Galatians 1:11, 12

The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

- To proclaim the true Gospel he insisted that the message of the Judaizers was not a _____ of the Gospel (Gospel 2.0), but a completely different Gospel.

Galatians 1:6, 7

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

- To rescue the believers he compared their fall into legalism as a return to _____.

Galatians 4:8-9

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

2. Galatians was written to defend Paul's _____ message and authority.

- He was an apostle before he _____ the other apostles.

Galatians 1:15-18

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days

- When he did meet them he was received as an _____.

Galatians 2:6-10

And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

- He found it necessary to _____ Peter, the reputed chief apostle.

Galatians 2:11-14

When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”