



Galatians

Background

Acts 15:1-36

I. Background

- a. Galatians is an important letter that was significant in the Reformation. Martin Luther wrote “The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am, as it were, in the wedlock. Galatians is my Katherine”.

- b. The letter to the Galatians was written to an entire region. This is in stark contrast to the letter to the Philippians that was very specific to a city.
- c. This letter is a defense of Paul's apostleship and gospel. The Judaizers had infiltrated the region with the law and circumcision as a necessity. This letter is also a defense of liberty in Christ versus legalism in the law.
- d. The Gauls/Celts settled in Asia Minor around 200 B.C. They were under Roman authority within 11 years. Eventually, by 25 BC, the territory grew to include Phrygia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Isauria and was a Roman province. This was Asia Minor in Biblical times. Today it is Turkey.
- e. There are two theories about who this letter was addressed to. The issue arises from what Luke mentions in Acts versus the size and scope of Galatia. Thus we have the Northern Galatia Theory and the Southern Galatia Theory. This gives us two potential timeframes for writing the letter.

i. What did Luke say?

1. **Acts 13:14** ¹⁴But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.
2. **Acts 13:47-49** ⁴⁷For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. ⁴⁸And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹And the word of the Lord was **published throughout all the region.**
 - a. **1st Missionary Journey**
3. **Acts 16:5-6** ⁵And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. ⁶Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were

forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

a. **2nd Missionary Journey**

4. **Acts 18:22-23** ²²And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. ²³And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed, and went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

a. **3rd Missionary Journey**

f. The dating of the book typically is seen as early after the counsel (Acts 15) and during the 18 months in Corinth on second missionary journey. This would place the writing in the range of 51-57 AD. The Northern Galatian theory will push the date a little farther assuming Paul established churches in the North outside of scripture.

i. **We do know that Paul clearly established these churches.**

1. **Galatians 4:13-15** ¹³Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. ¹⁴And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

ii. We also know that Paul mentions “so soon removed”. That could not only mean that they were removed quickly unto another gospel, but also Paul sending this letter soon after.

1. **Galatians 1:6** ⁶I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

iii. Paul also says they were bewitched. The Judaizers had infiltrated and influenced the believers in Galatia.

1. **Galatians 3:1** ¹O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

II. The Council of Acts 15

a. **Acts 15:1-2** ¹And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. ²When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

i. **Certain other...Titus**

ii. **Galatians 2:1** ¹Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also.

b. **Acts 15:3** ³And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

i. Declaring conversion of the Gentiles...not being silent

ii. **Joy- makes sense since Samaritans had no dealings with Jews and could relate to second class citizen view. Gospel**

c. **Acts 15:4** ⁴And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and *of* the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

i. The “they” and “them” were Barnabas, Titus and Paul.

d. **Acts 15:5-6** ⁵But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses. ⁶And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

i. **Pharisees**

1. **Galatians 5:4** ⁴And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:
2. **Galatians 2:2** ²And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.
3. **Reputation/ apostles and elders**
4. **Galatians 1:18-19** ¹⁸Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

a. **James increase...Peter's decrease**

- b. James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars

ii. **Titus**

1. **Galatians 2:3** ³But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

e. **Acts 15:7** ⁷And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

i. **Peter**

1. Last time the name "Peter" was used in Acts. Simeon was used in verse 14.
2. Why Peter? Acts 10 Cornelius
3. The Spirit had to tell him to doubt nothing
4. **Acts 10:19** ¹⁹While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek

thee. ²⁰Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

5. **Acts 10:28**²⁸ And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

6. **Acts 10:44-48**⁴⁴ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. ⁴⁵And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. ⁴⁶For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, ⁴⁷Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? ⁴⁸And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

f. **Acts 15:8-11**⁸ And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; ⁹And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹**But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.**

i. **Peter treated Cornelius as though they were Jews at Pentecost.**

III. A second council

i. **Acts 21:18**¹⁸ And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. ¹⁹And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by

his ministry. ²⁰And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: ²¹And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

1. **James was still leading the Kingdom Church to keep the law.**

2. **Paul's Response in Galatians**

i. **Galatians 2:5-9** ⁵To whom we gave place by **subjection, no, not for an hour**; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. ⁶But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed *to be somewhat* in conference **added nothing to me:** ⁷But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter; ⁸(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) ⁹And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

IV. The Verdict of the Council of Acts 15

a. **Acts 15:12-18** ¹²Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. ¹³And after they had held their peace, James answered,

saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me: ¹⁴Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. ¹⁵And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, ¹⁶After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: ¹⁷That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. ¹⁸Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

- i. **James references the prophets, which was known, but Paul is preaching a message that was kept secret before the world began. Remember the second council where James is leading Israel under the law of Moses.**

b. James Sentencing

- i. **Acts 15:19-21**¹⁹Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: ²⁰But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. ²¹For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

1. **Abstain from Idols**
2. **Abstain from Fornication**
3. **Abstain from things strangled**
4. **Abstain from Blood**

c. An epistle instructing the Gentiles

- i. **Acts 15:22-34**²²Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: ²³And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of

the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

²⁴Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have **troubled you with words**, subverting your souls, saying, **Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:** ²⁵It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth. ²⁸For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; ²⁹That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. ³⁰So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: ³¹*Which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. ³²And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*. ³³And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. ³⁴Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

d. Paul and Barnabas set to visit the brethren

- i. **Acts 15:35-36**³⁵Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. ³⁶And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do.