

12.1 The Letter to the Galatians

Paul wrote to the Galatians about 50 AD, to a people located in what is now modern day Turkey.

1A. Introduction of the book (1.1-10)

Paul begins with his calling to be an apostle: **Paul, an apostle- not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father** (1.1a). He is immediately defensive: **not from men nor through man**. Instead, he is an apostle by the call of the risen Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead (v.1c). This is telling and gives a sense of the nature of this letter.

Why begin here, why does Paul labor this point? It is because his calling as an apostle is under attack by people who are trying to pervert the gospel (1:7), who want to alienate the Galatian Christians from Paul (4:17), who persuade in the interests of disobedience and confusion (5:7-10), and who "want to make a good impression outwardly" (6:12).

This is no small matter because an apostle is a divinely authoritative and commissioned mouthpiece of God. An apostle gives an infallible (unbreakable) and inerrant (errorless) proclamation about Christ. His witness is not just the word of men. He gives a divine gospel word.

In other words, to deny Paul's integrity as a preacher and his call as an apostle is to deny the gospel itself. Q: How can we state the difference between apostles as preachers and preachers today (cf. 1 Thess 2.13)? Q: Why does Paul do so much self-defending as in the passionate language of 1.2-9? How can we put Paul's "boasting" into perspective (cf. 6.14)?

2A. The main divisions of the book (Intro, 1.1-10; Body, 1.11-6.10, Conclusion, 6.11-18)

1B. Theme statement

In one word, the theme of this book is "gospel," but Paul presents the gospel in a way that reflects the "goings on" in the churches of Galatia: *Christ gave the gospel to Paul that Paul gave to the Galatians*. Qs: What is a good way to define justification as a *courtroom term* with *both* a positive and a negative element revealing that it is *gospel*? How can we incorporate "justification by faith" and the "work of Christ" into this theme statement? Why does Paul set the gospel forth in this way (again see: 1:7; 4:17; 5:7-10; 6:12)?

2B. Major divisions of the book

Roughly, we have the entrustment of the gospel by Christ to Paul in chapters 1-2 and the gospel entrusted by Paul to the Galatians in chapters 3-6. The first section is on the fact that Christ gave it to Paul; the second covers what it is.

Introduction, 1.1-10

I. The entrustment of the gospel by Christ to Paul 1:11-2:21

A. He states this point in 1:11-12

¹¹ For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

His authority is independent of men and from Christ directly.

B. He supports this point in 1:13-2:21 in four ways

1. His remarkable conversion and call, 1:13-17 (cf. "for," v. 13, 15-16)

2. Being unknown in the Judean churches, 1:18-24 (22-24)

3. Recognized by the leaders, 2:1-10 (cf. v. 1, 2, and 9, 6b)

4. His gospel necessitated Peter's rebuke by "independent" Paul, 2:11-21

Q: Why should we *not* put 2.15-21 in the 2nd main section?

II. The gospel entrusted by Paul to the Galatians 3-6 (note the not/buts)

A. This gospel is not by works but by faith, 3:1-14

(Righteousness before God is not by works, cf. v. 3, but by faith, v. 6).

B. This gospel is not of law but of promise, 3:15-29 (cf. vs. 21-22)

C. This gospel is not for bondage but for freedom, 4:1-6:10; Cf. 4:7; 4:28; 5:1

Freedom is for righteousness of life and fruitfulness in the Spirit, 5:22; 6:8

By its largest section, Galatians is the book of Christian freedom

How can we revise the theme statement in light of the largest section of the book?

Can we precisely define the “other” gospel which is not “another”?

Conclusion, 6:11-18 (note Paul’s bond with the Galatians, v. 18)

3A. Application based on the conclusion, 6.11-18

1) The centrality of the cross in Paul's gospel

A wrong motive in the opposition to Paul was to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ (6:12). Some toned down preaching to elevate the law, especially OT ritual circumcision. How does Paul approach circumcision in 6.15 (does he say, “Do not practice it?”)?

2) The glory of the cross

Paul prays that he never boast except in the cross (6:14a). This is his unusual glory. Could we find glory in a gas chamber, an electric chair, a guillotine, or a hangman's noose? Q: How can we practice boasting in the cross, alone (6.14)?

Paul boasted in the cross and so could we if we knew that this is where Jesus did away with our guilt. It is because someone died the death of a criminal in our place, for crimes we have done, someone adequate to the job: the Lord of glory! Q: what aspect of justification did Jesus not secure at the cross?

Paul uses a series of names of Christ to enrich his presentation of the glory of the cross: it is the cross of *the Lord Jesus Christ*. The exalted Lord God is the man Jesus and Savior who fulfilled His great commission as the Messiah-Christ in perfect obedience to the Father.

So "you who think of sin but lightly nor suppose the evil great, here may view its nature rightly, here its guilt may estimate. Mark the sacrifice appointed, see who it is that bears the awful load, tis the word the Lord's anointed, Son of man and Son of God!"

3) We are to live by the cross (6:14b).

“World” refers to everything outside of Christ, to all that people trust for glory and greatness. However, by the cross, Paul says he is crucified to the world and the world is crucified to him. That former relationship is broken off. Because of Christ, he turns his back on it all. He has learned to put all his trust in Christ. The world has nothing for him. All his hope, all his goals, all his confidence is in Christ. The cross governs His life.

The world is not only empty of true glory but it is bound for destruction. If we have been crucified with Christ then we will not be condemned with the world.

Q: To what kind of life does the gospel- of the cross- lead? Like Paul we too must dedicate ourselves to live a life governed by the cross, to turn our backs on the world, to live always under the banner of the cross facing Christ and serving Him alone in everything. Q: What emphasis does Paul give for the Christian life in light of the cross in his largest section (4.1-6.10)? How does this work out in details?