

Outline of Galatians

Setting:

The setting of the Paul's letter to the Galatians is that of the conflict between the more conservative Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and the more "liberal" Christians in the Gentile parts of what today is modern day Turkey. As we begin we need to be clear that this is not a conflict between legalism and grace, which is how the letter is often portrayed...and as it was used in the Reformation. The issue was whether one had to become Jewish (a racial designation) and thus obey the Law of Moses (which all good Jews did) in order to be part of God's chosen people and thus be saved in the Day of Judgment. Jews believed that 1) they would be saved because they were God's chosen people...not because they were perfect 2) they could not be perfectly obedient...which is why one had the sacrificial system 3) if one was one of God's people one showed it by obeying the Law as well as one could. Paul objected to this because Christ was the completion of the Law and thus those non-Jews could become rightly related to God through faith in Christ and not through becoming and acting Jewish. Jesus alone was enough to be in relationship with God.

The Church:

There was no one church called Galatia. It was instead a number of congregations (Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) which had been founded by Paul when he traveled through Asia Minor. The persons in the churches were mainly pagans who had converted to the faith. The ethnic make-up of these persons was Celtic. They had slowly migrated from central Europe to Asia Minor over a period of centuries.

The Purpose of the Letter:

The purpose of the letter was to insure that the Galatians did not abandon Christ in order to become Jewish. The issue was not being aligned with the ethics of the Law, but with being dependent upon Jewishness for salvation.

Galatians: (from Scot McKnight in The NIV Application Commentary Series: Galatians)

1. Introduction (1:1-9)
 - a. Salutation (1:1-5)
 - b. Occasion of Letter (1:6-9)
2. Paul's personal vindication of his Message (1:10-2:21)
 - a. Declaration of his Independence (1:10-12)
 - b. The Demonstration of his Independence (1:13-2:21)
 - i. From Human Teaching (1:13-17)
 - ii. From the Major Church (1:18-24)
 - iii. From the Jerusalem Pillars (2:1-10)
 - iv. From the Apostle Peter (2:11-21)
3. Paul's Theological Vindication of His Message (3:1-4:31)
 - a. The Thesis Stated (3:1-5)
 - b. The Evidence Given (3:6-4:31)
 - i. From the Old Testament (3:6-14)
 - ii. From Covenants (3:15-25)

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- iii. From Sonship (3:26-4:20)
- iv. From the Law (4:21-31)
- 4. Practical Application of his Message (5:1-6:10)
 - a. Thesis (5:1)
 - b. Application (5:2-6:10)
- 5. Conclusion (6:11-18)