

Key to GALATIANS

1. BACKGROUND:

Paul is the writer; the time is about A.D. 57, the place of writing undoubtedly Corinth. The Galatians were citizens of certain sections of Asia Minor, near the Black Sea (see Acts 13; 14).

The occasion: Paul had evangelized these people, and they had gladly received the word of the Gospel. After Paul had left, there had come Judaizing teachers endeavoring to show that Christianity was sort of an exalted Judaism, and that every Christian must also keep the law. The Galatians were following them, and were turning aside from the truth of the Gospel.

2. THEME

Galatians is the great Magna Charta, or Declaration of Independence of the Gospel. The key word is "liberty." The key verse is 5:11. This book is closely related to Romans, but the emphasis is somewhat different. In Galatians the stress is on the fact that the Christian LIVES by faith. Here is an Emancipation Proclamation to all who are in the bondage of the law.

3. MAIN DIVISIONS

Note seven main divisions: Salutation; theme; Paul's gospel a revelation; justification by faith without law; the believer's rule is grace, not law; sanctification through the SPIRIT not law; exhortation.

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

This letter is severe in its tone. The theme is considered to be one of vital importance. There is not a single word of commendation given. Paul shows himself to be very indignant against the Galatians.

Paul considers this error (mixing grace and law) to be extremely dangerous. It is moreover, infectious. The reason, Paul thinks, is not ignorance but unfaithfulness.

Paul's usual custom in writing letters was to use a secretary. Here, however, he writes with his own hand (6:11). This may have been due to the seriousness of the matter before him.

The real trouble in Galatia was legalism. False teachers were endeavoring to combine Judaism with Christianity. This is a subtle form of error. Paul calls this "**another gospel**" and roundly condemns it (1:7-9).

The character of the Galatians themselves seems to be that of being emotional, impulsive, and changeable. This is evidenced by their first worshipping Paul, and then suddenly changing and stoning him (Acts 14:13-19).

5. OUTLINE:

Introduction (1)

Personal Authority

Call (1)

Endorsement (2)

Controversy (2)

Gospel Authority

Justification by Faith (3)

Purpose of the Law (3)

Servants and Heirs (4)

Personal Application

Law and Liberty (5)

Personal Responsibility (6)

Conclusion (6)

6. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS

The tremendous importance of Paul's teachings is clearly indicated and repeated by the strong statement in verses 8 and 9 of chapter 1, where any other teaching is said to bring GOD's curse.

Nowhere in the Scriptures do we find stronger statements concerning the sufficiency of the grace message. Galatians is GOD's answer to the many cults of today which propose a mixture of Old and New Testament teachings.

Most clearly are we shown the true character of the law as Paul uses the term "**schoolmaster**" or child conductor in referring to its purpose (3:24, 25).

Other error can be prevented when we remember that to be "**fallen from grace**" (5:4) is to fall into law.

7. KEY:

Before you study Galatians, refresh yourself on Galatian history in Acts 13 and 14; then read again the book of Romans. Then you will be ready to read and understand Galatians.

~ end of Galatians ~

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