

# GALATIANS

## Study One: Introduction and overview.

This epistle was written by Paul in ~ AD57 after the third of his missionary journeys, each of which included a visit to cities of Galatia. After this last visit, he was saddened to hear that other teachers, Judaisers, had followed him, so his reason for writing was to re-emphasise the 'gospel of grace' and to refute the new legalism being taught.

The Galatians are the early Gauls (or Celts) of northern Europe, a stubborn people who caused the Roman armies many problems. When finally subdued, their lands became known as Galatia and among them, Paul had many converts and many churches had been established.

It is a severe letter, having no commendations, words of praise or personal greetings. It comes from the heaviness of Paul's heart, with the same message that came from his head in his letter to the Romans, with which it has many parallels. It is a 'fighting epistle' – a declaration of emancipation from the bondage of legalism. It has been called 'the Magna Carta' of the church and was Luther's favourite epistle. He said, "I am wed to it!" It was also the epistle that most moved John Wesley, the father of Methodism and 'the holiness movement', from which came the C&MA and the Pentecostal assemblies (among others). It was from the letter to the Galatians that he most frequently preached, resulting in the great revivals that accompanied his work.

Paul knows himself under attack. There is an attack on his authority (his apostleship) and an attack on his teaching (Justification by faith alone). He answers both attacks by going on the offensive.

McGee presents the following outline:

### 1) Introduction, Ch 1:1-10

- (i) Salutation: a 'cool' greeting, vv1-5
- (ii) Subject stated: a warm declaration, vv6-10.

### 2) Personal – authority of the apostle and glory of the Gospel. Ch 1:11 – 2:14

- (i) Experience of Paul in Arabia, 1:11-24
- (ii) Experience with apostles in Jerusalem, 2:1-10
- (iii) Experience with Peter in Antioch, 2:11-14.

### 3) Doctrinal – Justification by Faith. Ch 2:15 – 4:31

- Faith versus works; liberty versus bondage
- (i) Doctrine stated, 2:15-21
- (ii) Experience of Galatians, 3:1-5
- (iii) Illustration of Abraham, 3:6 – 4:18
- (iv) Allegory of Hagar and Sarai, 4:19-31.

**4) Practical – Sanctification by the Spirit. Ch 5:1 – 6:10**

Spirit versus flesh; liberty versus bondage,

- (i) Saved by faith and living by Law perpetrates falling from grace, 5:1-15
- (ii) Saved by faith and walking in the Spirit produces fruit of the Spirit, 5:16-26
- (iii) Saved by faith and fruit of the Spirit presents Christian Character, 6:1-10.

**5) Autographed Conclusion. Ch 6:11-18**

- (i) Paul's own handwriting, 6:11
- (ii) Paul's own testimony, 6:12-18
  - (a) Cross of Jesus versus Circumcision, 6:12-15
  - (b) Christ's handwriting on Paul's body, 6:16-18
    - The new circumcision of the New Creation,*