

## **Introduction to Galatians**

### **Author**

The author of this letter is the apostle, Paul, who identifies himself an apostle “not from men or through men but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead” (Gal. 1:1). It is not clear where Paul was when he wrote it or who accompanied him in its writing. He gives a greeting from himself as well as “all of the brethren who are with me”. It is evident that Barnabas was one of his travelling companions during the initial visit (Acts 13:2).

### **Date**

The date of writing is believed to be circa 48 A.D., a relatively short time after Paul’s travels to the Galatian cities of Lystra, Iconium, Derbe and Pisidian Antioch, during his first missionary journey (Acts. 13:13, 14). If this date is correct, then this is the oldest of Paul’s letters that are extant! The early date may make sense out of the fact that he takes note to inform them that he was chosen by God and by Jesus Christ. The fact that he had been a persecutor of the church is not that far back in the rear view mirror.

### **Recipients**

Those of the southern part of Galatia (which is in modern day Turkey), those of the cities where Paul travelled and ministered to include Lystra, Derbe, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:51; 14:1, 6, 8, 20; 16:1, 6; 18:3). These believers were predominantly Gentile Believers. As was his custom, Paul first went to the synagogues but was met with much resistance (Acts 13:44-52). It is evident that said believers had assembled at various churches in the area as Paul writes to the Galatian “churches” (Gal. 1:2).

### **Occasion for Writing**

After evangelizing the region of Galatia, Paul moved on and, as was often the case, false teachers infiltrated the church and introduced heresies. The false teachers in view appear to be Jewish Christians or Gentiles who had been proselytes, who had convinced them that they needed to keep the Old Testament Law as part of the CWL (Gal. 2:4). Hence Paul is writing is to dispute the legalism and false religion that has bewitched the Galatians leading them to turn to the Mosaic Law and practice circumcision. It is evident that when Paul and Barnabas first travelled through Galatia that their teachings were opposed by the Jewish Leadership (13:44-52). However there is not Biblical record of Jewish leaders infiltrating the church. This movement may have been started by some of the “God-fearing” Gentiles who attended synagogue and were attempting some sort of synthesis between Judaism and Christianity.

### **Canonicity**

Galatians was accepted from the very earliest of days and is mentioned as being accepted early on by Clement, Polycarp, Justin Martyr and other early writers (Carson, Moo & Morris, p. 297). There is absolutely no reason whatsoever to question its authenticity as a letter written by Paul and his associates to the believers of the Galatian Churches in response to the heresy regarding legalism and Judaism.

**Work Cited:** Carson, D.A., Douglas Moo & Leon Morris, An Introduction to the New Testament ©1992, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.