

Galatians

Justification by Faith

Historical Context

- Written around 55
- Which Galatia?
 - Northern Galatia, remnant of an old kingdom of Gauls in north central Asia Minor?
 - Southern Galatia, Roman formed province that included Iconium and Lystra?
- What was going on in the community?
 - Troublemakers have questioned Paul's message and his claim to be an apostle

Who Are the Galatian Troublemakers? Three Theories

1. Judaizers — legalistic Jewish Christians who believed one cannot become Christian with observing all Jewish laws; thus Paul is refuting legalism
2. Two opposing groups — legalistic Jewish Christians at one extreme and libertine Gentile Christians at the other, why Paul follows critique of legalism with strong rules to be obeyed (5:13- 21)
3. A gnostic-like group who follow some Jewish rites like circumcision, but who also are libertine in moral practice; explains Paul's warning against worshipping elemental spirits (4:3, 9-10)

Central Themes

- Chs. 1-2:14 — Defense of apostleship
- Chs. 2:15-5:12 — Defense of the superiority of faith over law (justification through faith)
- Chs. 5:13-6 — Ethic of the Spirit

Justification by Faith

- Justification means “being put right with God” or “right-wising.”
 - A legal term connoting being declared free from all charges
- Justification comes through union with Christ, i.e., sharing in Christ’s death and resurrection
- Law (*nomos*) can refer to rules that must be obeyed to be saved, can refer to Torah or Covenant with God

Justification (cont.)

- Paul appeals to Torah (law) to refute the view that the law justifies
 - 3:6-14 — Abraham was justified not by the law (which was given long after Abraham to Moses) but by faith (Gen. 15:6); thus, the **children of Abraham are children through faith**
 - Appeal to contract law (3:15-20) — if God’s covenant with Abraham came first, then the covenant with Moses can neither add or subtract from it without nullifying it

Is the Law Pointless?

3:23 ff.

- Law is “*paidagogos*” — educated slave who served as instructor and protector of master’s children until they were adults
 - This slave was often beloved and made an advisor when the child grew up
- Law is superior to law of elemental spirits (4:2), described as “*oikonomos*” or steward who took care of economic matters and often cheated their masters’ children

Life in Christ

3:28-29

- Baptismal formula describing early Christian view of life in Christ
 - Christ is foundation of a new equality and unity for all persons, regardless of race, station, gender

Freedom of Love is the Law of Love

5:13-26

- Freedom to serve one another in love, “love neighbor as self” (5:13-14)
- Freedom from sexual immorality, impure thoughts, lust, idolatry, etc. (5:19-21)
- Freedom for love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self- control (5:22-23)
