

Galatians

Week 1- Introduction



Recommended Reading:

- Prof. John Stott –
 - The Message of Galatians
- Tom Wright
 - Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians
 - Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978-2013

Introduction:

Before diving into the letter to the Galatian churches it is important that we take time to ask some appropriate questions;

- Who wrote it?
- When was it written?
- To whom was it written?
- What was the purpose in writing it?
- What sort of writing is it?

Who Wrote Galatians?

The letter opens with a statement identifying the author as Paul, an apostle. The question of Paul's authorship of this letter has never been seriously raised.

It (Galatians) appears in broken, but almost complete form, in **p**⁴⁶, a papyrus collection of the Pauline epistles, dated to about the year 200. It is cited, with attribution to Paul, the first great missionary to non-Jews, as early as Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria, that is from about AD 175, and may well be alluded to by earlier second-century writers. So far as we know, no question was ever raised in these early centuries as to its integrity or authenticity.¹

When was this letter written?

DVD Tom Wright – Dating of Galatians

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZUDuBu1xvY>

Who were the Galatians?

These churches spread through the southern area of what is now Turkey, so this letter is written to Christians not to non-Christians. The hearers were already followers of Jesus.



¹ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1993), 1.

The people of this area were probably from Celtic decent, known as Galli, hence the term Galatian.

What was the purpose in writing the letter?

Paul begins the letter with the explanation for why he is writing. Chpt. 1:6-8 tells us about Paul’s concern that the Galatians are moving away from the Gospel that Paul preached to them to another gospel.

The purpose of the letter then is to bring the Galatian Christians back to the true gospel that Paul told them in the first place.

What sort of writing is it?

The purpose of the letter dictates the style of the letter. This is a letter of persuasion. Paul is seeking to persuade the Galatians that his position on the gospel is the correct one. This type of letter would be known as rhetoric.

DVD Tom Wright – Galatians Overview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZUDuBu1xvY>

Thoughts on the Letter:

As you listen to the whole letter read what ideas, themes, words jump out at you?

Chapter 1:

The word 'gospel' appears 13 times in 11 verses in the book but 6 of those times are in chapter 1 – Gospel is why Paul is writing!

But what is the gospel?

Good News About What?

If Paul's statement in verses 2-5 constitutes the good news, then what is the news and why is it good?

1. The story of Scripture, especially the Old Testament, is a story leading up to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the climax.
2. This story was to climax in the renewal of the lost kingdom. Mt 21:42
3. Mt 22:29, Mt 26:54, Mk 12:24, Mk 14:49, Lk 24:27, Lk 24:32, Lk 24:45, Jn 5:39,
4. Jesus' death came about because of the rebellion humans chose to be in towards God.
5. He really died, the tomb was empty.
6. Our decision in regards to these events has significant consequences.
7. His resurrection was a historical event and he was raised bodily and visible.

This definition of the Good News must fit within Mark's opening statement in 1:14 "Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News."²

Tom Wright "What is the Gospel?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWoezpvIEz4>

² Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), Mk 1:14.

Scot McKnight's "What is the Gospel?"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vgkfx1QMqA&index=2&list=PLF09FNd-pDxjaQ0_L0ZNGwibjcvNNYbqq

Tom Wright puts it this way:

It (*The Gospel*) meant that the Scriptures had been fulfilled, that the kingdom of God had arrived, that the new age had broken in to the midst of the present age, and had dawned upon a surprised and unready world. It all happened "according to the Scriptures"; which, as I have argued elsewhere, does not mean that Paul could find a few biblical proof-texts for it if he hunted hard enough but that the entire biblical narrative had at last reached its climax, had come true in these astonishing events.³

³ N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 142.