

Galatians Outline

Introduction: In Galatians we overhear Paul writing to his church with a serious concern. When Paul started the church he gave them a foundation of freedom in Christ and the sense that as Gentiles that faith in Christ was sufficient, that they didn't need to take on the more formal trappings of Judaism. However, in the intervening time, other teachers have spread different ideas amongst the Galatian community- especially regarding the importance of circumcision and the need for all believers to become circumcised.

We hear Paul at his most theologically radical, as when he talks about all being one in Christ, and even at his most exasperated, as when he vents about these other teachers saying he wishes they would castrate themselves...ouch! We also see Paul at his most personal here- he closes this letter writing a little note to them in his own hand. And in this sense the ancient world is not all that different from our own. Handwritten letters are meaningful to us mainly because of their rarity- it was the same in Paul's day. While Paul didn't have email, he did write letters using an amanuensis or secretary. So when Paul writes a little postscript on to the end of the letter, you can imagine the kind of personalizing effect this had and how touching this must have been. It shows the pastoral side of Paul and that he realized the harsh language he uses in the body of the letter needed to be tempered by this softer, more personal appeal.

Chapter 1: Greeting; appeal to stick with Paul's teachings; Paul's conversion

Chapter 2: Paul's meeting with the disciples in Jerusalem; Paul and Peter's snit over Circumcision; believers justified by faith not law

Chapter 3: Criticism of Galatians; Abraham justified by faith; purpose of law to convict; Now no longer slave or free, Jew or Gentile...

Chapter 4: Not slaves anymore but children of God; allegory of Hagar and Sarah

Chapter 5: For freedom we are set free; warning about circumcision; summary of law; Fruits of spirit

Chapter 6: Bear one another's burdens; reaping what one sows; Paul's large letters

Stories/texts to know: Paul's tiff with Peter (Chapter 2:11-14); Baptism and being clothed in Christ (Chapter 3:26-29); Fruits of the spirit (Chapter 5:22-26)