

# JOIN THE JOURNEY™

*A one-year journey with the early church*



## Introduction to Dr. Tom Constable and His Bible Study (Expository) Notes

Dr. Constable is one of the most respected and beloved teachers of God's Word at Dallas Theological Seminary, and he has served as a Bible teacher and elder at Plano Bible Chapel for many years. Learn more about him at: [www.soniclight.com/constable/index.htm](http://www.soniclight.com/constable/index.htm). You can explore the rest of the Sonic Light website by left-clicking in the top lighthouse graphic to return to Sonic Light's homepage, or click on one of the tabs to see other pages:

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NOTES ON

## GALATIANS

2007 EDITION

DR. THOMAS L. CONSTABLE

## INTRODUCTION

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"The most uncontroverted matter in the study of Galatians is that the letter was written by Paul, the Christian apostle whose ministry is portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles."<sup>1</sup>

The Apostle Paul directed this epistle to the churches of Galatia (1:2), and he called its recipients Galatians (3:1). However who these people were and where they lived are problems that have proved difficult to pinpoint.

The traditional opinion held that the recipients lived in the geographical district known as Galatia located in the northern part of the Roman province called Galatia in Asia Minor.<sup>2</sup> This view holds that Paul founded these churches on his second missionary journey after the Spirit forbade him to preach in the province of Asia (Acts 16:6). Paul could have written this epistle then during his third journey either from Ephesus about A.D. 54 or from Corinth about A.D. 57. The main arguments for this "North Galatian theory" are as follows. The popular use of the term "Galatians" usually signified people in this area.

Second, Luke normally referred to geographical districts rather than Roman provinces in Acts. Third, there is some similarity between the Galatians as Paul referred to them in this epistle and the Gallic inhabitants of northern Galatia. Fourth, Paul travelled through this region during his second journey (Acts 16:6-8).



The more popular view today maintains that Paul wrote to the churches located in the Roman province of Galatia that he founded on his first missionary journey (cf. Acts 13:38-39, 46, 48; 14:3, 8-10).<sup>3</sup> The arguments for this “South Galatian theory” are as follows. Acts 16:6 and 18:23 offer no support to the theory that Paul made a trip to the northern part of provincial Galatia. Second, there is no specific information about the northern Galatian churches in Acts. Third, the geographic isolation of the North Galatia district makes a visit by Paul improbable. Fourth, Paul usually referred to provincial titles in his writings. Fifth, the name “Galatians” was appropriate for the southern area. Sixth, the mention of Barnabas in Galatians 2 suggests that the Galatians had met him. Seventh, the absence of a North Galatian representative in the collection delegation referred to in 1 Corinthians 16:1 implies that it was not an evangelized area. Eighth, the influence of the Judaizers was extensive in South Galatia.

If Paul wrote this epistle to the churches of South Galatia, he probably did so at one of two times. If Paul’s visit referred to in Galatians 4:13 is the same one described in Acts 16:6, he must have written this epistle after the Jerusalem Council (i.e., in or after A.D. 49). Nevertheless it seems more likely that Galatians 4:13 refers to the visit described in Acts 14:21, so Paul must have written before the Jerusalem Council (i.e., before or in A.D. 49). Assuming the earlier date, Paul probably wrote Galatians from Antioch of Syria shortly after his first missionary journey and before the Jerusalem Council.<sup>4</sup> Another less likely possibility is that he wrote it from Ephesus during his third missionary journey.<sup>5</sup>

The dating of the epistle affects the occasion for writing. Assuming the South Galatian theory and an early date of writing, Paul wrote mainly to stem the tide of Judaizing heresy to which he referred throughout the letter.<sup>6</sup> He mentioned people who opposed him in every chapter (1:6-7; 2:4-5; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7-12; 6:12-13).

The identity of the Judaizers is also important. Their method included discrediting Paul. The first two chapters of Galatians especially deal with criticisms leveled against him personally. His critics appear to have been Jews who claimed to be Christians and who wanted Christians to submit to the authority of the Mosaic Law and its institutions. They probably came from Jerusalem and evidently had a wide influence (cf. Acts 15). One man seems to have been their spokesman (3:1; 5:7, 10) though there were several Judaizers in Galatia as the many references to “them” and “they” scattered throughout the epistle suggest.<sup>7</sup>

## OUTLINE <sup>8</sup>

- I. Introduction 1:1-10
  - A. Salutation 1:1-5
  - B. Denunciation 1:6-10
- II. Personal defense of Paul’s gospel 1:11—2:21
  - A. Independence from other apostles 1:11-24
    1. The source of Paul’s gospel 1:11-17
    2. The events of Paul’s early ministry 1:18-24
  - B. Interdependence with other apostles 2:1-10
  - C. Correction of another apostle 2:11-21
- III. Theological affirmation of salvation by faith 3:1—4:31
  - A. Vindication of the doctrine ch. 3
    1. The experiential argument 3:1-5
    2. The Scriptural argument 3:6-14
    3. The logical argument 3:15-29
  - B. Clarification of the doctrine ch. 4
    1. The domestic illustration 4:1-11
    2. The historical illustration 4:12-20
    3. The biblical illustration 4:21-31
- IV. Practical application to Christian living 5:1—6:10
  - A. Balance in the Christian life ch. 5
    1. Living without the Law 5:1-12
    2. Living without license 5:13-15
    3. Living by the Holy Spirit 5:16-26
  - B. Responsibilities of the Christian life 6:1-10

1. Toward sinning Christians 6:1
2. Toward burdened Christians 6:2-5
3. Toward teachers 6:6-9
4. Toward all people 6:10

## V. Conclusion 6:11-18

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### FOOTNOTES

- 1 Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, p. lvii.
- 2 J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*, represented this view; as did H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, more recently; A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 4:272-73; and others.
- 3 William M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, promoted this view in the English language. Recent advocates of this view include F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*; Merrill C. Tenney, *Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty*; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*; Longenecker; Leon Morris, *Galatians: Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom*; and Donald K. Campbell, "Galatians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*.
- 4 Fung, pp. 22, 28; Longenecker, p. lxxxviii; Morris, p. 22; Campbell, p. 588.
- 5 See Richard B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 360.
- 6 Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians also deal with the Judaizing controversy to some degree.
- 7 For fuller discussions of these matters, see the New Testament Introductions listed in the bibliography of these notes, particularly Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 2:72-89. Bruce wrote a very readable though detailed treatment of these issues, pp. 3-32, 41-56, as did James M. Boice, "Galatians," in *Romans-Galatians*, vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, pp. 412-20, and Fung, pp. 1-28.
- 8 For rhetorical analyses and outlines, see Longenecker, pp. cv-cxiv.