

11. Letter to the Galatians

The Challenges of the Judaizers and the Libertines at Galatia. Justification by Faith in Christ over the Works of the Law. Ethical Exhortations.

“When Faith Endures”

Hymn no. 128, <https://www.lds.org/music/library/hymns/when-faith-endures?lang=eng>

I will not doubt, I will not fear;
 God's love and strength are always near.
 His promised gift helps me to find
 An inner strength and peace of mind.
 I give the Father willingly
 My trust, my prayers, humility.
 His Spirit guides; his love assures
 That fear departs when faith endures.

Occasional Situation of Galatians

• ===== •
A GENTILE CONGREGATION PREVIOUSLY TAUGHT AND NURTURED BY PAUL, IT HAD COME UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF JEWISH CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES WITH A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE GOSPEL.

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Who are the Galatians?

- In the third century BC, a group of Celts from Europe invaded Asia Minor and settled in what is now north central Turkey
 - The Romans called Celts *Galli*, hence this region was called “**Galatia**”
- An independent kingdom opposed to the Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) kingdoms of Asia minor, it eventually was made a client kingdom and then in 25 BC **a province of the Roman Empire**
- The region of Lycaonia in south central Asia Minor was added to the province for administrative purposes
 - **This included several Greek cities and Roman colonies, including ones visited by Paul and Barnabas in the “First” Missionary Journey of AD 46–48**
- Paul *may* have evangelized the northern area of ethnic Galatia in en route to Troas during the “Second” Missionary Journey of AD 49–53
 - He was detained among the “Galatians” for sickness according to Galatians 4:13
- **Acts 18:23 reports that Paul “went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order” in the “Third” Missionary Journey of AD 53–58**

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When was Galatians Written?

Depends upon to whom the letter was sent!



- If to cities in South Galatia evangelized in the “First” Mission, perhaps before AD 49
- If to the ethnic Galatians of the north province, **probably AD 54–55**

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Overview of Galatians

- Date: Between A.D. 48–60, although mid-50's the most probable time
 - **Similarities in themes and structure to 2 Corinthians and Romans support mid-50's date**
- Audience:
 - **South Galatia** (Antioch, Derbe, Lystra, etc., evangelized in first missionary journey)
 - **North Galatia** (native Galatian communities, perhaps proselytized during second missionary journey, see Acts 16:6)
- From: Antioch (if early), Ephesus, Macedonia, even Rome (scribal guess in subscription)
- Form: **a real letter**
 - the first part of the body of the letter takes the form of a judicial speech and is an example of **forensic rhetoric** meant to **defend a position** (more below under literary questions)
- Authenticity: not questioned
- Unity and Integrity: not questioned
- Themes and characteristics: **Defense of Paul's credentials** (not an apostle of man but of Jesus Christ) and a **defense of “his” gospel** (justification by the faith of Christ and not the works of the law)

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Occasion of Galatians

- Galatian church has come under the influence of missionaries preaching “another gospel.” Two possible groups of opponents:
 - “**Judaizers**,” Jewish Christians insisting upon observance of Mosaic Law
 - Perhaps limited to circumcision and the observance of the major calendar feasts
 - *Remember circumcision was a sign of the covenant before Moses with Abraham*
 - “**Libertines**,” proto Gnostics teaching elemental theories and antinominism (anti-law)
 - KJV “**beggarly elements** (*stoicheia*)” better rendered “those powerless and bankrupt elements” (4:9 NJB), referring to divine spirits representing elements of nature
 - Being freed from these powers, the Galatians *thought that they were freed from all law*
- **Paul and his credentials have been questioned!**

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Literary Questions about Galatians

• ————— •

WHAT KIND OF LETTER IS IT? WHAT KIND OF WRITING AND
RHETORIC DOES PAUL USE IN IT? HOW IS THE LETTER
STRUCTURED?

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A “Real” Letter

- Galatians is an example of **a letter written to a particular audience** (usually an individual or in this case a group) **about a specific situation or topic**
 - Contrast with later “general” or encyclical letters
 - Also distinguish from particular kinds of real letters such as pastoral letters and testaments

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The Style of Galatians

- Paul and his credentials have been questioned**
 - His fiery apologetic produces some of his most emotional Greek
 - [Anacolutha (sing., anacoluthon): grammatical lapses within a single sentence]
- Rhetorical Style:** akin to forensic, or courtroom, oratory to defend a position and prove a point
 - 1. Forensic or Judicial (low)**
 - Past event; meant to accuse or defend; concerned with justice/injustice
 - [2. Deliberative (middle)]
 - [Future event; meant to exhort or dissuade; concerned with what is good/unworthy]
 - [3. Epideictic or Display (high)]
 - [Present event; meant to praise or blame; concerned with virtue/vice]
- Much of the body of Galatians actually takes the form of a courtroom speech**
 - Such forensic speeches had a particular structure, starting with an introduction (*exordium*) and then continuing with points of defense (*apologia*) and proofs (*pistis*)

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Paul Introduces His Case

- In a Classical *exordium* or “opening statement,” a speaker laid out his case, noting the arguments for and against him
- **“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:** Which is not another; but **there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.** As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (1:6–10)
- **“are so soon removed . . . unto another gospel:** Which is not another” can be rendered “returning to a different gospel—or that there is another gospel” (NRSV)
- **“there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ,”** presumably Jewish-Christian missionaries advocating that Gentiles observe all or some of the Law of Moses

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Personal Defense (1:11–2:14)

Against Personal Opponents

- **Divine Origin of Paul's Gospel** (1:11–24)
 - “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” (1:11–12)
- **Paul's Meeting with the Jerusalem Leaders** (2:1–10)
 - “When they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter . . . and when **James, Cephas, and John**, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, *they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*” (2:7–9)
 - “Division of Labor” between the Jewish and Gentile missions
- **Paul Rebuked Peter at Antioch for refusing “table fellowship” with Gentiles** (2:11–14)
 - Were the Jewish Christians who intimidated Peter into not eating with Gentiles the same party who sent Judaizing preachers to Galatia?
 - Is Paul not so much censuring Peter here as he is criticizing those who used this incident to prove that the “real” apostles were still for keeping the Law of Moses?
 - *The whole episode makes better sense if it took place before the Jerusalem Council (although Peter's Cornelius episode still should have helped Peter know better!)*

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Defense of What the Gospel Is (2:15–21)

Against Judaizers

- **“Justification” by Faith**
 - “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ (*dia pisteos Iesou Christou*), even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (2:16)
- **Position of Paul’s opponents**
 - Emphasizing the Law of Moses over the saving mission of Jesus Christ
- **Obstacles preventing many modern interpreters from understanding Paul’s teaching on justification:**
 - Quoting the simple “justified by faith not works” rather than the full “not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ”
 - Not understanding the meaning of Justification
 - Not understanding works of the law
 - Not understanding the full breadth of meaning possible in the phrase “the faith of Jesus Christ”
 - → both faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ and faith/trust in Jesus Christ

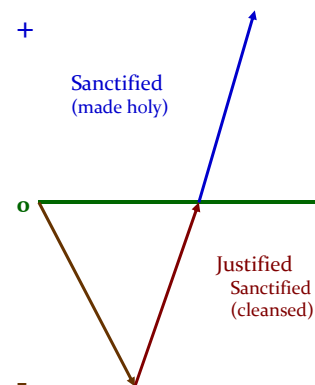
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Justification

- **Justification (*dikaioσynē*) is the state of being in harmony with law (*dikaioσ*)**
 - For Paul, the verb “to make in harmony with [God’s] law” or “to make righteous” (*dikaioō*) is frequently passive → one “is justified (is righteousness!)” or brought into harmony with law by an outside party
- **Law determines sin** (see 2 Nephi 2:13, 9:25; Romans 5:13)
 - *Essentially then, justification = forgiveness* (Horton, 86)
- **Justification ≈ salvation ≠ exaltation**
 - salvation from sin and death
 - “saved in the Celestial Kingdom” = exaltation
- **Sanctification** = cleansing (English usage) + “being made holy” or more like God (Greek meaning of *haigōsynē*)
 - This may approach more of what we think of in terms of “being exalted”



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“Righteousness” by Faith (Sanders, 53–57; *this is Aunt Bertha detail!*)

English often has two words where Greek has one, adding to the confusion!

- Another problem with understanding Paul’s teaching is the meaning of words such as righteousness and faith/belief
 - In Greek “**righteousness**” = “**justification**”; there is an English verb “to justify” but not “to righteous”
 - In Greek “**faith**” = “**belief**”; there is an English verb “to believe” but not “to faith”
 - Example: “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for **righteousness**. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would **justify** the heathen through faith...” (3:6-8)

| | Greek | Anglo-Saxon | Norman French |
|------|-------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Noun | <i>Dikaisoune</i> | Righteousness | Justification |
| Verb | <i>Dikaion</i> | X (no verb “to righteous”) | To justify |
| Noun | <i>Pistis</i> | Belief | Faith |
| Verb | <i>Pisteuein</i> | To believe | X (no verb “to faith”) |

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Works of the Law

- Exegesis: here **the works of the law** were particular **ceremonial performances of the Law of Moses** (purification rituals, sacrificial performances, kosher laws, and esp. circumcision)
 - In Romans Paul begins to speak of law more broadly → **Jews had the law of Moses, Gentiles had “natural” law**
 - Did performing the works of law bring one back into harmony with law (i.e. bring forgiveness)?
 - Remember also that **Jews were bound by the law only when they were alive** (this will have important implications for Paul’s “being crucified in Christ”)
- Once again, **the purpose of law: to determine sin** (see 2 Nephi 2:13, 9:25; Romans 5:13)
- Exposition: **Consider the interpretive impact of D&C 76**
 - “Carnal” or worldly law, including and esp. the Law of Moses, **delineates Telestial and Terrestrial states** (D&C 76:82–84, 103)
 - “Spiritual” or gospel law, that is the Law of Christ, **delineates Terrestrial and Celestial states** (D&C 76:50–70)

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Justification by Faith of/in Christ

- **Faith of or in Jesus Christ?**
 - The KJV maintains a more literal “faith of Jesus Christ” here, whereas other translations frequently render it “faith in Jesus Christ”
- **“Faith of Jesus Christ” (*dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou*)**
 - “Jesus Christ’s faith” or “the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (subjective or possessive genitive) can be construed to mean that ***we are saved because Christ was faithful in completing the Atonement!***
 - **“Faith in Jesus Christ”** (objective genitive), the more traditional but not necessarily more grammatical interpretation
 - Possible that the construction is ambiguous and that both obtain: *we trust Christ because he was faithful in suffering and dying for us*
- **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me . . .” (2:20)**
 - note what we will later call the **participationist model** of salvation

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Proofs

Centerpiece consisting of 6 examples that justification is by faith no the works of the law

- **Galatians had the spirit before the law** (3:1–5)
 - Cf. the example of the spirit coming upon Cornelius and his speaking in tongues
- **Promises to Abraham** (3:6–14)
 - “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” (3:6–7)
 - **All would be blessed in Abraham** (3:6–9)
 - Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law (3:10–14)
 - “Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.” (3:10 NRSV)
 - **“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law . . .** That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (6:13–14)
- **Law was not given until 430 after Abraham** (3:15–29)
 - **Abraham lived before the law was given**
 - **Purpose of the Law** (3:19–29)
 - “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” (3:24–25)
 - schoolmaster = *paidagogos*, a slave who led children to school— **the law did not even teach of Christ, it brought Israel to the point where he could be taught**
 - **“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all on in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then ye are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” (3:28–29)**

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More Proofs

- **Heirs and Children of God** (4:1–11)
 - “My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but **they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father**. So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world.” (4:1–3 NRSV)
 - No Turning Back—if the Galatians turn back from Christ, they will need to go all the way back to paganism
 - *After being freed from elemental spirits, why do the Galatians want to be enslaved again? (see 4:8–11)*
- **An Appeal to Friendship** (4:12–21)
 - “I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.” (3:12–14 NIV)
 - *after being so good to Paul, how could the Galatians become his enemies?*
 - **This is a personal, not a scriptural argument!**
- **The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah** (4:21–5:1)
 - Judaizers (and Genesis!): **Sarah (Israel), Hagar (Gentiles)**
 - Paul: **Sarah (heavenly city), Hagar (earthly city still under the law)**
 - *This reverses the natural expectation, since Israel was the blood descendant of Sara*

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Ethical Exhortations: Walk by the Spirit (5:1–6:10)

Against Judaizers and, in particular, Libertines

- **Warning Against Circumcision** (5:2–12)
 - “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again **to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law**. Christ is become of no effect unto you, **whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace**.” (5:2–4)
 - *This would suggest that they thought that the law made them part of Israel, not the Atonement of Christ*
 - **“I could wish that those who are unsettling you would go further and mutilate themselves.”** (5:12 NJB, Paul is a little intemperate in his wish for the Judaizers!)
- **Freedom for Love** (5:13–15)
- **Reject the Works of the Flesh** (5:16–21)
- **Fruits of the Spirit** (5:22–26)
 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance**: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**” (5:22–25)
- **Bear One Another’s Burdens** (6:1–10)

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Conclusion (6:11–18)

- Includes Paul's **personal signature**: "See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!" (6:11 NKJV)
 - Another example of a postscript
- "***But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, **peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.**" (6:14–16)
 - "**The Israel of God**" are all the true heirs of Abraham, Jew and Gentile, through Christ