

Brief Survey of the Epi\$Tle of Galatians

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The letter to the Galatians is the ninth book of the New Testament Bible. It was written by apostle Paul to early Christians community at Galatia. The letter of Galatians was written to the churches dispersed in the entire region of Galatia, now modern Turkey. Scholars say that it is Roman province of Galatia in Southern Anatolia or large region specified by Galatians. The letter to the Galatians reveals the truth of salvation by grace. This epistle is among Paul's greatest and vital letters (Galatians 1:12). A lot of Theologians have described the epistle of Galatians as "short Romans". The epistle of Romans is an extension of Galatians. The epistle of Romans and Galatians are similar in terms of themes and contents. Both of the epistles educates about Pauline doctrines of justification by faith and the gospel of love. During reformation era, the epistle of Galatians was the declaration of freedom and revival of Biblical truth. The epistle of Paul to the Galatians is also known as epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Galatians. The original recipient of the epistle were disturbed by Judazing division. Apostle Paul wrote the epistle from Ephesus about 53-54 to a church he planted in the territory of Galatia in Asia Minor. Apostle Paul wrote the epistle of Galatians around AD 40 and planted the church in Galatia during his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-14-28). The epistle of Galatians was written in Koine Greek and at certain point in time it was translated into other

languages. It is mentioned twice in the epistle that apostle Paul is author (Galatians 1:1;5:2). The date of writing the epistle is not certain. Nobody knows the actual date of the epistle. Many Conservative Scholars believe the epistle was written from Corinth in the winter around AD 57. According to Barnes' research it was hard to declare when the epistle was written. After apostle Paul had established churches in Galatia, false teachers penetrated into the churches and tried to bring the Christians under Mosaic law. The major purpose of the epistle is to defend the call of apostle Paul by God and the gospel of grace (Galatians 1:6-7). The people in the churches attack Paul and the doctrines of salvation by grace. The Galatian churches compose of Jews and Gentiles but many of the Jewish Christians still follow the Jewish law and traditions. The word "Judaizers" implies "to live according to the Jewish customs". The Judaizers believed that the grace of God and human effort were demanded for salvation. Apostle regarded this doctrines as heresy and those who taught such doctrines as false teachers. These false teachers claimed to love Christ. The issue of the Galatian churches stands on two points: 1. If they continue to followed the law, then they believed an individual was partially saved by faith and partially by works. 2. To pursue the traditions and the Jewish customs, it implies spiritual growth of a person was partially by faith and partially by effort. To the

Judaizers faith in Christ means persuading major ritual of religion especially circumcision, observing ceremonies, traditions and rituals of Judasim. This became a problem to the Gentile converts. Their doctrines were not in line with Pauline doctrines. Apostle Paul teaches that salvation is received through Jesus Christ. An individual cannot win or deserve salvation. Salvation is a gift of God and not human effort (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Judaizers declared that Paul's gospel was false and he was not genuine apostle of Christ. Due to this, apostle Paul wrote this epistle to defend his call and the gospel. The epistle educates the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians to encourage unity in Christ and forget about racial differences. Through this epistle, we understand that Christ's sacrificial work on the cross is perfect to redeem man from the bondage of sin. With respect to original recipient of the epistle of Colossians two theories have been developed namely, North Galatia Theory and South Galatia Theory. The "North Galatia Theory" says apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Celtic group of believers in Northern Galatia, now modern Turkey. The "South Galatia Theory" holds that apostle Paul sent the epistle cities he visited during his first missionary journey in Acts 13-14. With the internal evidence of the Pauline authorship of the epistle, his name is mentioned in the beginning and getting to the end of the letter as a writer. Externally these bear witness of Paul as the writer of the letter: Galatians is quoted in 1 Peter, Barnabas, Clement, Polycarp letter to the Philippians, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Marcion's and Muratorian Canon.

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