

THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA

Introduction

- 1) The epistles of Paul are mostly addressed to a specific individual or church (Timothy, Philemon, Corinth, Ephesus, etc.)
- 2) The epistle of Paul to the Galatians is an exception – it was written to several churches in the region of Galatia

I) THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA

- A) Galatia was a Roman province located in southern Asia Minor (modern day Turkey)
- B) Churches were established during Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:14–14:23)
 - 1) Included the churches at Antioch (in Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe
- C) Paul revisited area on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-6); Timothy joins Paul
- D) Paul revisited area again at the start of his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23)
- E) Paul writes his epistle to these churches in either the late 40s or the early 50s AD
 - 1) He mentions these churches again in 1 Corinthians 16:1 and the region in 2 Timothy 4:10
 - 2) Peter mentions Galatia with other Roman provinces where Christians lived (1 Pet. 1:1)

II) OCCASION OF WRITING

- A) Paul troubled by the destructive influence of a “different gospel” (1:6-9)
 - 1) “Different” gospel (*heteros*) – another of a different kind; distorted, perverted
 - 2) Not “Another” gospel (*allos*) – another of the same or similar kind
- B) Paul's apostleship and message had been questioned, attacked, and/or denied (1:10-2:14)
- C) Judaizing teachers were teaching that one must keep the works of the Jewish law to be justified/saved (2:14-5:6)
 - 1) Connected to same issue in Antioch (of Syria) that was discussed at the Jerusalem gathering of apostles and elders (Acts 15:1-35; cf. Rom. 3:28)

III) WHEN ISSUES ARISE WITHIN LOCAL CHURCHES

- A) Each congregation must determine if it will follow the apostles' doctrine (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1)
 - 1) Elders were appointed “in every church” (Acts 14:23) – each local church had its own leadership, and was autonomous (self-governing) and independent
 - 2) No human governance or hierarchy among local churches in the New Testament
- B) Every member of each local church must strive to continue in the faith (Acts 14:21-22)
 - 1) Distinguish between individual and congregational instructions (Gal. 6:10 – individual)

IV) DANGERS TO AVOID AS MEMBERS OF LOCAL CHURCHES

- A) Deserting the truth and being charmed by error (Gal. 1:6; 3:1)
 - 1) “Foolish” = unwise, without understanding the will of the Lord (Eph. 5:17)
 - 2) The apostles' doctrine is the doctrine of Christ (Gal. 1:1, 11-12, 15)
- B) Despising those who tell us the truth because they fear for our soul (4:8-20)
- C) Biting and devouring one another because of pride and conceit (5:7-15, 24-26)
- D) Thinking that we will not reap what we sow – must sow to the Spirit (6:7-9)
 - 1) Walk in the fruit of the Spirit, not the works of the flesh (5:16-23)
 - 2) Restore the fallen and bear one another's burdens (6:1-5)
 - 3) The one taught should share (fellowship) with him who teaches (6:6)
 - 4) Do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith (6:10)

Conclusion

Paul states his own declarations of faith to the brethren in the churches of Galatia and to all of us today (2:20; 6:14-15). May we have the same declarations of faith living and active in our own lives as individual Christians and members of the body of Christ.